

# california educator

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2023 VOLUME 28 ISSUE 2

**Unique Issues  
at Charter Schools,  
County Offices  
of Education**

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**Community  
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**Ingrid Hutchins**  
Sacramento City  
Teachers Association

**MEMBER BENEFITS  
DIRECTORY **PAGE 54****

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# california educator

VOLUME 28 ISSUE 2



## #WeAreCTA

OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

### MAGAZINE

#### PROTECT OUR STUDENTS...

and #TeachTruth. Educators fight back against extremism in our schools. **PAGE 24**

#### AI IN THE CLASSROOM

A teacher explains why he's not worried — and why he is. **PAGE 17**

#### CHARTER SCHOOLS

Same but different: Chapter leaders organize to win for their members - and the profession. **PAGE 39**

#### UNIQUE ISSUES AT COE'S

Educators at county offices of education offer students specialized services, but safety is a concern. **PAGE 45**

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##### A FAMILY AFFAIR

By truly listening to parents, one school turns their gym into a shelter for unhoused families. **PAGE 32**

[youtube.com/californiateachers](https://www.youtube.com/californiateachers)

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At CTA's New Educator Weekend you'll learn new skills and find solutions to real-life challenges. NEW-North, Nov. 3-5; NEW-South, Feb. 23-25, 2024) **PAGE 9**  
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### MEMBER BENEFITS

#### CALM FOR THE FAMILY

Your subscription to the Calm app can be used by anyone in your family. **PAGE 52**  
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Tear out this page that lists CTA Member Benefits services and discounts. **PAGE 54**  
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Photo: San Francisco's Buena Vista Horace Mann Community School; story on Page 32. Credit: Chris Robledo

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Photos from top: Sac City Teachers Association (SCTA) site rep Fernando Rodríguez; Orange Unified Education Association members work to recall extremist board members; the Stay Over Program at Buena Vista Horace Mann Community School in San Francisco turns its gym into a shelter for unhoused families at night. Cover: SCTA's Ingrid Hutchins; credit: Christie Gimpel, [christiegimpel.com](http://christiegimpel.com).





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▼ At a July school board meeting, Associated Chino Teachers members supported LGBTQ+ students' privacy rights in the face of a new district policy.



## Equity for All Students

*In response to an earlier version of "Defending Our Schools and Students" (page 24), which appeared on [cta.org/educator](https://cta.org/educator):*

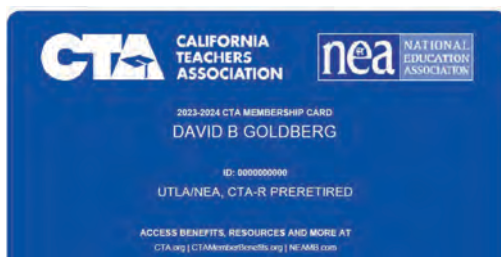
As a retired school counselor, I am tremendously concerned about equity for all students. Every child is special. When I was still counseling at a high school, we were just beginning to actively and openly assist students of the LGBTQ+ community. Though it was a difficult time for them, they were so relieved to have advocates. That was long past due, but it is horrible to think that school districts are going backward and once again denying these students respect and acceptance. If something does not harm anyone else, and certainly LGBTQ+ does not, it is not contagious, there should be no reason for dissent.

CAROL HEINZ SHUPEK  
CTA/NEA-Retired

## Your CTA Membership Card Is Here

Your 2023–24 CTA Membership Card should be in your hands right now, as it was mailed with this issue to all members. Use the card to get access to a variety of benefits, discounts and programs to enhance your life and career.

We hope you'll carry this card as a reminder that **CTA is with you every day** as we collaborate, advocate and organize for change. [#UnionStrong!](https://twitter.com/UnionStrong)



## Get in the Educator!

We'd love to hear from you. We publish members' feedback, photos and longer articles. Email [editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org) with the specific topic (in boldface below) in the subject line, and include your name, chapter and contact info. Submissions are subject to editing for clarity and space.

- **Letter to the editor** — Let us know what you think of content you've read or viewed in print or at [cta.org/educator](https://cta.org/educator) in 200 words or less.
- **Your Voice** — Have something to say about your students, the art and science of teaching, or being an educator in the trenches? Tell us about your experience or thoughts in no more than 650 words.
- **Photo(s)** — Send us high-quality, in-focus photos of you and your colleagues at a CTA or chapter event, with details of who, what, where and when.
- **Lit From Within** — We make note of members' new(ish) works — including books, blogs, videos, podcasts, albums and more — and lean toward material that can be used in the classroom. See page 56 for examples.

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## MISSION STATEMENT

The California Teachers Association exists to protect and promote the well-being of its members; to improve the conditions of teaching and learning; to advance the cause of free, universal and quality public education for all students; to ensure that the human dignity and civil rights of all children, youth and adults are protected; and to secure a more just, equitable and democratic society.

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Subscription to the *California Educator* is \$10 per year, available to persons or institutions not eligible for CTA/NEA membership.

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# Small Victories, Larger Outcomes

**FOR CTA MEMBERS**, being both educators and union members go hand-in-hand as we work to improve public education and outcomes for our students, as well as working conditions for each other. While we fight for big issues that will help to make those things happen, like increased school funding and supportive school boards, it's strength in our work sites that builds the power to accomplish larger goals.

I learned this 25 years ago as a brand-new site rep. Coming from a strong union family of educators, I was eager to share my enthusiasm and connect with my colleagues about the power of unions. But there was a glaring disconnect at our own school. We had a principal who routinely violated our contract by going over the one hour of weekly professional development she led.

I know that may sound like a small thing, but cumulatively it added up and felt to us like we were being disrespected.

We worked our hearts out all day and deserved respect for our time. Seeing this happen, I knew my colleagues would have no faith in our union to win big struggles if we couldn't even win respect at our own school.

Because I was the new rep, people wondered what I was going to do about it. I realized that addressing this one-on-one with the principal wouldn't empower my colleagues to work alongside me to address issues in the future. Instead, we invited everyone to a site union meeting and listened to how this situation was impacting us all. We collectively voted to offer her a compromise: We'd grant her the occasional hour and a half time she thought she needed, in exchange for eliminating one after-school meeting a month. She agreed.

**"Strong worksites lead to strong local chapters, which leads to an even stronger CTA as we take on the big issues facing public education."**

We were thrilled! Our collective action had produced results. Then, when she slipped up and started going over the hour and a half, we met again and collectively voted to all walk out the next time she did this. When I told her of our decision, she knew we meant business. It never happened again, and the process led to monthly union meetings at our school where we tackled other important issues, such as reviving the bilingual program at our site.

The types of victories we achieved at my school site are mirrored by site reps and other CTA members at school and worksites all over California. (See our site reps cover story on page 19.) Of course, the reality is some sites are further along than others. That's one reason CTA has made a substantial investment in a new organizing plan that focuses on building power at the local level (see page 37). Strong worksites lead to strong local chapters, which leads to an even stronger CTA as we take on the big issues facing public education.

As CTA fights back against decades of disinvestment in public education, against attacks on honesty in our curriculum, against book bans, and discrimination against LGBTQ+ students and members, it's our collective strength that is getting the job done. It's that strength that is expanding our Community Schools across the state. That strength begins at the site level. It begins with you!

Getting involved in your union at its most basic level, your workplace, can lead to great things. I hope that you'll consider being a site rep or assisting the one(s) you have, that you'll continue to build solidarity with your colleagues in your workplace, get more involved in your local chapter, and join with 310,000 fellow CTA members as we build a better future for educators, for students and for public education together.

**David B. Goldberg**

CTA PRESIDENT





# Getting Hot in Here

**HOT LABOR SUMMER** blazed into fall as American workers continue to fight for fairness and dignity. From high-profile national strikes in multiple industries to California educators organizing and bargaining for improved teaching and learning conditions, unionism is *alive*.

Stories on these pages reflect this moment. The essential role of site reps in mustering rank-and-file member participation and action is showcased in **“Site Reps: Building Power, One School at a Time”** (page 19). Oakland’s expanded bargaining team — and a strike — resulted in more nurses, librarians, counselors and other important benefits for students, community and educators (**“Big Bargaining Led to Big Gains,”** page 36).

How current issues and perspectives of educators at charter schools and county offices of education affect their union work are highlighted in **“Charter Schools Organize to Win,”** page 39, and **“Specialized Services, Unique Issues in County Offices,”** page 45. Also noted are locals large and small that exhaust all other avenues and are ready to strike (**“Bargaining Roundup,”** page 47).

The fight extends to equity and social justice, as well as to the ballot box: CTA and its chapters are supporting educators statewide as they battle with fringe extremists on school boards who are banning books and curriculum, and instituting forced “outing” policies that harm LGBTQ+ students (**“Defending Our Schools and Students,”** page 24).

Is there a need for all this collective action among educators? The answer is a resounding *yes*, bolstered by any number of facts that show how students, schools and educators have suffered from years of disinvestment. The latest is a report by the Economic Policy Institute (see box) that finds the pay penalty for teachers — the gap between the weekly wages of teachers and college graduates working in other professions — grew to a record 26.4% in 2022, way up from 6.1% in 1996.

▼ Protesting the forced outing policy passed by the Rocklin Unified school board; story on page 30.



Larry Itliong would no doubt be outraged that the labor movement’s historic wins during the Delano Grape Strike almost 60 years ago were just a temporary blip in an ongoing struggle. The activist, who came to the U.S. at 15, spent years toiling in West Coast fields and canneries before leading fellow Filipino Americans and other migrant workers in strike actions for better pay and humane treatment. His collaboration with Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta led to the creation of the United Farm Workers.

It’s fitting that California celebrates **Larry Itliong Day** on Oct. 25 and honors a pioneer who inspires our work today for fairness, dignity and social justice. “The Constitution said that everybody has equal rights and justice,” Itliong said. “You have to make that come about. They are not going to give it to you.”

Stay hot. Happy Fall.

**Katharine Fong**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

[editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org)

## Teacher Pay Declines; Unions Are Part of the Solution

In September, the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) reported on the “teacher pay penalty,” the gap between the weekly wages of teachers and college graduates working in other professions. It found that on average, teachers made 26.4% less than other similarly educated professionals in 2022 — the lowest level since 1960. Teachers earned 73.6 cents for every dollar that other professionals made in 2022 — much less than the 93.9 cents on the dollar they made in 1996.

EPI recommended three solutions, among them: **“Public-sector collective bargaining should be expanded since unions can advocate for improved job quality and a higher level of resources.”**

For the full report, go to [epi.org/publication/teacher-pay-in-2022](https://epi.org/publication/teacher-pay-in-2022).





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*"The best thing parents  
and teachers can do is to  
teach their children to love  
challenges, be intrigued by  
mistakes, enjoy effort, and  
keep on learning."*

—Carol S. Dweck, PhD  
Stanford University

## TEACHING ENGAGED BRAINS: IMPROVING STUDENT ATTENTION, MOTIVATION, AND MINDSETS IN A DISENGAGED, DISTRACTED AGE

**FEBRUARY 22-24, 2024**

Pre-Conference Workshops: February 22

**AT THE HISTORIC FAIRMONT HOTEL, ATOP NOB HILL,  
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**Mindsets: Engaging the Brains of Students – and Teachers**

Carol S. Dweck, PhD, Stanford University and Stanford Graduate School of Education

**The Distracted Mind: Improve Student Attention Through Technology**

Adam Gazzaley, MD, PhD, University of California, San Francisco

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Kelly M. McGonigal, PhD, Stanford University and Stanford School of Medicine

**Attention Span: Restoring Focus and Balance in a Distracting, Digital Age**

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**The Secret to Motivation: The First Step to Changing a Child's Perspective  
Is to Understand It**

Tommie Mabry, PhD, Tougaloo College

**The Science of Motivation and Getting It Done**

Ayelet Fishbach, PhD, University of Chicago

**The Science of Achievement Motivation: What We Know, Where We Are Going**

Jacquelynne S. Eccles, PhD, University of California, Irvine

**The ABCs of Being Engaged: Creating Schools That Promote Student  
Wellness, Belonging, and Full Engagement**

Denise C. Pope, PhD, Stanford University

**The Impact of Attention Problems on Children's Academic Achievement  
and Efforts to Improve Children's Attention Skills**

David L. Rabiner, PhD, Trinity College of Arts and Sciences and Duke University

**Peak Mind: Finding Your Focus and Owning Your Attention**

Amishi P. Jha, PhD, University of Miami

**Bright Kids Who Couldn't Care Less: Rekindling Your Student's Motivation**

Ellen B. Braaten, PhD, Harvard Medical School

**The Minds of Media Multitaskers: Attention, Learning, Memory, and  
the Brain in Multitaskers**

Anthony D. Wagner, PhD, Stanford University

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OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2023

# CALENDAR

FANHS-CCCC Mural Project, Lompoc



## FILIPINO AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH

In October, the month honors Filipino Americans' many contributions to the United States. This year's theme, from the Filipino American National Historical Society (FANHS; [fanhs-national.org](https://fanhs-national.org)) is "1898: Recognizing 125 Years of Philippine-American History." After the U.S. annexation of the Philippines in 1898, Filipino migrants were considered U.S. nationals and entered the U.S. during an era when other Asian migrants were prohibited. American curricula and educational systems in the Philippines meant English proficiency among its citizens and recruitment of Filipino teachers, nurses and other professionals to the U.S. Yet Filipino Americans faced legal and social discrimination. Their involvement in the labor and civil rights movement is notable, and includes Larry Itliong (dominant in the mural above), who organized a successful grape strike in Delano in 1965 that later led to the formation of the United Farm Workers union.

Today, Filipino Americans are the third-largest Asian American group in the nation, with the vast majority in California. Resources to teach about the Filipino American experience: FANHS; Filipino American Education ([filameducation.com](https://filameducation.com)); the Bulosan Center for Filipino Studies at UC Davis ([bulosancenter.ucdavis.edu](https://bulosancenter.ucdavis.edu)).

The two most common risk factors of breast cancer are **being born female** and **getting older**.

## BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

The month promotes screening and prevention of the disease, which affects one in eight women in the United States every year and 2.3 million women world-wide. Campaigns and programs throughout October support people diagnosed with breast cancer, educate people about risk factors, stress the importance of regular screening, and fundraise for research. Oct. 13 is nationally recognized as Metastatic Breast Cancer Awareness Day. In 2021, President Biden designated Oct. 17–23 as Men's Breast Cancer Awareness Week. Find information at [breastcancer.org](https://breastcancer.org), [breastcancernow.org](https://breastcancernow.org) and [komen.org](https://komen.org).

CELEBRATE  
National  
Higher  
Education  
Month!

## NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION MONTH

Remember the professor who changed your perspective, or the staffer who made you feel safe or at home? October is National Higher Education Month, a time to highlight and celebrate the dedicated and inspiring faculty and staff who help students pursue their American Dream.



## CTA Conferences & Notable Events

Unless noted, find registration and details at [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences).

### CCA Fall Conference

**OCT. 13–15** Hyatt Regency SFO, Burlingame.

The Community College Association's fall conference is dedicated to enhancing bargaining skills and coordinating strategies focused on collective bargaining. Includes professional development sessions and CCA's California Leadership Academy.

### Fall CUE Conference

**OCT. 21–22** Teachers College of San Joaquin, Stockton. The ed tech conference by CUE (Computer-Using Educators) offers a multitude of sessions and special keynotes. [cue.org/events](https://cue.org/events)

### LGBTQ+ Issues Conference

**OCT. 27–29** Margaritaville Resort, Palm Springs. Theme: "The State of the Movement: The Fight for LGBTQ+ Justice in Schools." The 15th annual gathering is open to all CTA members and provides a venue to discuss a variety of issues affecting educators, students and the community. Sessions will focus on awareness, capacity & skill building, taking action & organizing. Booking deadline: Oct. 13.

### Voluntary dues contribution

**NOV. 1** **Opt-Out Deadline** Voluntary annual contributions by members support CTA Foundation's grants/scholarships and CTA's advocacy efforts. New members are automatically enrolled in the default contribution of \$15 CTA advocacy efforts and \$5 to the CTA Foundation for Teaching and



Learning. Members may change their allocation or opt out. New members have 30 days from the date of enrollment; previously enrolled members have a window from Aug. 1 to Nov. 1. [cta.org/contribution](https://cta.org/contribution)

### New Educator Weekend North

**NOV. 3–5** Santa Clara Marriott. For educators in their first three years in the profession, **#CTANew** has everything you need to be successful, including sessions on classroom management, creating engaging classrooms, lesson plans and ideas, connecting with your union, student loan forgiveness information, member benefits, project grants and more. (New Educator Weekend South is planned for Feb. 23–25, 2024, Hilton, Orange County.)

### Student CTA Fall Event

**NOV. 18–19** CTA headquarters, Burlingame. For details, go to [cta.org/scta](https://cta.org/scta).

### NEW CONFERENCE 2023 Solidarity Conference

**DEC. 8–10** Westin Bonaventure, Los Angeles. Presented by CTA's four ethnic caucuses, this inaugural year's theme is "Building Power through Culture, Community, and Connections". The conference will provide participants with more knowledge of issues facing our ethnic minority communities and how to advocate for change.

### Veterans Day

**NOV. 11** Honor the wartime service and sacrifice of men and women in the armed forces. Check NEA's extensive listing of K–12 lessons, activities, games and resources that can help your students celebrate service men and women past and present; [nea.org](https://nea.org) (search Veterans Day).

### American Education Week

**NOV. 13–17** American Education Week is celebrated the week prior to Thanksgiving week and includes special days to honor parents, education support professionals and substitute educators. Nov. 15 is National ESP Day. [nea.org/aew](https://nea.org/aew)

### Transgender Awareness Week

**NOV. 13–19** Every year, people and organizations nationwide participate in this week to raise the visibility about transgender people and address issues members of the community face. **Transgender Day of Remembrance**, Nov. 20, honors the memory of transgender people whose lives were lost in acts of anti-transgender violence. [GLSEN.org](https://GLSEN.org)'s Trans Action Kit has student and educator resources, including lesson plans.

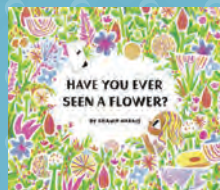


Just out: CTA California Reads 2023–24 recommendations of teacher-vetted books for your students and classrooms. Find book descriptions and links to buy — at a 20% member discount — at [cta.org/careads](https://cta.org/careads).

**Early Childhood Education**



**We March**  
Author & Illustrator: Shane W. Evans



**Have You Ever Seen a Flower?**  
Author & Illustrator: Shawn Harris

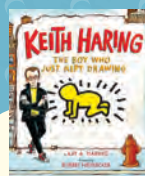


**A Big Mooncake for Little Star**  
Author & Illustrator: Grace Lin

**Primary School**



**Your Name Is a Song**  
Author: Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow  
Illustrator: Luisa Uribe



**Keith Haring: The Boy Who Just Kept Drawing**  
Author: Kay Haring  
Illustrator: Robert Neubecker



**A Is for Ambitious**  
Author: Meena Harris  
Illustrator: Marissa Valdez

**Intermediate School**



**Martin & Anne: The Kindred Spirits of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Anne Frank**  
Author: Nancy Churnin  
Illustrator: Yevgenia Nayberg



**The Undefeated**  
Author: Kwame Alexander  
Illustrator: Kadir Nelson



**Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World's Fastest Woman**  
Author: Kathleen Krull  
Illustrator: David Diaz

**Middle School**



**A First Time for Everything**  
Author & Illustrator: Dan Santat



**Hear My Voice: The Testimonies of Children Detained at the Southern Border of the United States**  
Author: Warren Binford  
Foreword: Michael Garcia Bochenek



**The Best at It**  
Author: Maulik Pancholy

**High School**



**Ain't Burned All the Bright**  
Author: Jason Reynolds  
Illustrator: Jason Griffin



**A Pho Love Story**  
Author: Loan Le



**From Little Tokyo, With Love**  
Author: Sarah Kuhn





Max van den Oetelaar/Unsplash



◀ **NOVEMBER:**  
**Native American/Alaska Native American Heritage Month**  
 During November, we celebrate the history, culture and contributions of Native Peoples. Take advantage of NEA's compilation of Thanksgiving lessons and resources on learning about the tribes indigenous to North America at [nea.org](https://nea.org) (search native-american-and-alaska-native-heritage-month). The California Indian History Curriculum Coalition (CIHCC) offers multiple free, vetted resources and lesson plans at [csus.edu](https://csus.edu) (search CIHCC). And the National Endowment for the Humanities' EDSITEment project has a teacher's guide, lesson plans and media resources on American Indian History and Heritage; find it at [edsitement.neh.gov](https://edsitement.neh.gov).

**Gratitude and Boundary Setting**  
**OCT. 30** 4–5 p.m. Explore the science of gratitude and how we can use gratitude daily to rewire our neural pathways. Practice setting healthy boundaries for the classroom and at home.

**Trauma-informed Classroom Management**  
**NOV. 27** 4–5 p.m. Understanding how trauma impacts students emotionally, physically and behaviorally can help teachers implement behavioral strategies that benefit all students. Includes discussion and practice of self-regulation as adults.

▲ **Don't Miss CTA's Mindful Mondays**  
 Workshops use evidence-based strategies for students, educators. Register with the code or at [tinyurl.com/mindmond](https://tinyurl.com/mindmond).

**Incentive Grants for CTA Conferences**  
 The CTA Board of Directors will award BIPOC, Small Chapter (100 or fewer members) and New Member (applicants within their first 5 years of CTA membership) Incentive Grants for attendance at the following statewide conferences. To apply, visit [cta.org/grants](https://cta.org/grants). Learn more about upcoming conferences at [cta.org/conferences](https://cta.org/conferences).

- **Issues Conference**, Planet Hollywood, Las Vegas, NV, **JAN. 12–14, 2024** Application deadline: **Nov. 6**
- **Good Teaching Conference–North**, Hyatt Regency, Burlingame, **FEB. 2–4, 2024** Application deadline: **Nov. 6**
- **Good Teaching Conference–South**, Hyatt Regency, Garden Grove, **MARCH 22–24, 2024**  
 Application deadline: **Jan. 9, 2024**
- **Equity & Human Rights Conference**, Westin Bonaventure, Los Angeles, **MARCH 1–3, 2024**  
 Application deadline: **Jan. 9, 2024**

### Americans' Approval of Labor Unions, 1936-2023

Do you approve or disapprove of labor unions?



### Support for Unions on the Rise

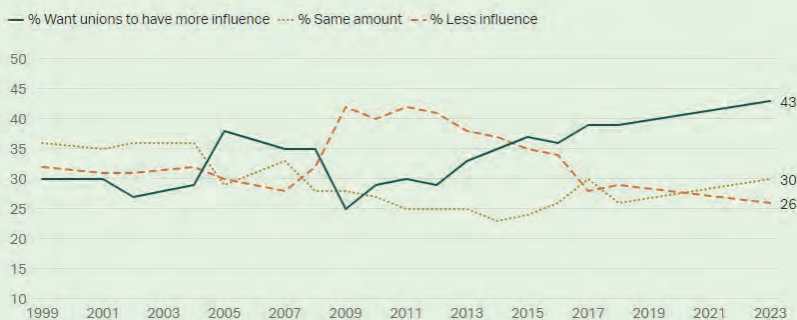
The annual Gallup Work and Education poll, conducted in August, found that “labor unions are enjoying a moment of high public approval and strong belief in the benefits they offer to workers, businesses, and the economy.” Two-thirds of Americans approve of labor unions; longer term, support for unions has been rising since 2009. Record highs show respondents want unions to have more influence and say their power will grow.

While the 67% approval of labor unions today is down slightly from 71% a year ago, it marks the fifth straight year this reading has exceeded its long-term average of 62%. Union approval plunged to an all-time low of 48% in 2009 following the Great Recession; the all-time high of 75% was in the post-World War II heyday of unions in the 1950s, when workers’ union membership peaked at 35%. Today, union membership is about 8%.

Gallup notes that “today’s striking workers may have a stronger hand in their negotiations than they would have had in the past given today’s elevated public support for unions.” For more on the poll, visit [news.gallup.com](https://news.gallup.com) (search “unions”).

### Americans' Preference for Influence of Unions

Would you, personally, like to see labor unions in the United States have -- [more influence than they have today, the same amount as today (or) less influence than they have today]?



### National School Psychology Week

During the week of Nov. 6–10, highlight the important work school psychologists and other educators do to help students thrive. This year’s theme is “Let’s Grow Together,” inspired by the importance of both personal and shared strengths in our growth as individuals and school communities. Find resources at [nasponline.org](https://nasponline.org). [#SchoolPsychWeek](https://twitter.com/SchoolPsychWeek)

### Don't Forget! Daylight Saving Time, Nov. 5

Daylight saving time ends Nov. 5; clocks need to be shifted back an hour starting at 2 a.m. (An extra hour of sleep!)

# QUOTES & NUMBERS

Compiled by **Julian Peebles**



## 570

Number of California schools under audit by the state after reporting that more than 10 percent of the kindergarten or seventh-grade students were not fully vaccinated last school year, according to the California Department of Public Health.

## 1,028

Number of schools awarded grants by the State Board of Education

(SBE) to become community schools or expand their programs, according to an EdSource Column by SBE President Linda Darling-Hammond and California Surgeon General Diana Ramos.



## 187,298

Number of unhoused students in California last year, according to California Department of Education.

## 30%

Percentage of California public school students who were chronically absent in 2021-22 — an all-time high and more than three times the pre-pandemic rate, according to CalMatters.

“When politicians try to push their own agendas and politicize our classrooms, educators can and will push back together in their union. CTA will continue to support educators and students.”

—CTA President **David B. Goldberg**, in reference to extremist school boards who are pushing dangerous and hateful policies. (Read about how educators are fighting back on Page 24.)



“While this fight is far from over, today’s ruling takes a significant step towards ensuring the physical, mental and emotional well-being of transgender and gender-nonconforming students.”

—State Attorney General **Rob Bonta** in response to a judge’s decision to halt Chino Valley Unified School District’s new policy requiring educators to out their transgender students.



“LAUSD is filled with the most astounding, remarkable, inspiring kids, and they are taught and supported by teachers and staff who fight hard every day for them. It’s been the honor of my life to advocate for children. I got into this work, starting with teaching, because I wanted the best educational experience for teachers and students everywhere.”

—**Jackie Goldberg**, L.A. Unified school board member, upon announcing in August her retirement from the board when her term expires in 2024.



“If the district’s finances were managed differently, (San Francisco) USD could pay competitive wages that would attract and retain staff as nearby districts are doing. Instead, our schools continue to go understaffed, and students continue to pay the price of SFUSD’s debt addiction, administrative bloat, resource mismanagement and expensive contracts with unreliable consultants.”

—**Cassandra Curiel**, president of United Educators of San Francisco, during a press conference on the district’s financial mismanagement.





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# A MESSAGE FOR My School Board President

by Karen Poznanski

*Karen Poznanski, a member of Murrieta Educators Association and 12-year public school teacher, spoke at the September 2023 Murrieta Valley Unified School District board meeting in response to comments made by President Paul Diffley at the previous month's meeting. In speaking about MVUSD's forced outing policy, which requires schools to inform parents if a student appears to identify as transgender or gender-nonconforming, Diffley stated, among other comments, "I agree that there are some parents who may beat their kids, spank their kids, ignore their kids.... Yes, there are going to be a couple of parents that 'explode', I understand that. There are parents that will explode for lots of different things. 'You didn't make the baseball team? Whack!'...I understand that."*

**MR. DIFFLEY, YOU STATED** "Entering into a particular 'mood' where the child can bury what he or she is and go through that process can be dangerous because they can be referred to other agencies without the parents ever knowing it, and then boom.... the parents have no control."

I implore you to reevaluate your perception of what I spend my contracted hours doing in my classroom. On any given day, I am lucky if all my students write their name on their paper. I make as much use of my minimal time and abysmal budget as I can to teach struggling middle school students how to read and write a proper paragraph. Your insinuation that I have the time, resources or desire to "refer children to outside agencies" for medical guidance or treatment is a statement that defies logic or fact. You possess a glaring lack of understanding of what actually goes on in the classroom and have no place making statements that accuse teachers of such actions because they are absolutely *false*.

When you speak about a lack of trust between parents and teachers, it is from *your* inaccurate and fallacious statements that such distrust is sown. *You* are manufacturing this chaos, and feeding into a dangerously misinformed moral panic that only serves to distract from real issues.

Furthermore, when confronted about the risk of harm that would fall upon certain queer students if outed to homophobic or transphobic households, you said you agreed and understood why that would happen. Mr. Diffley, as board president you are the purveyor of safety in our schools. I would hope that you would be appalled at *any* child being physically harmed for *any* reason. As a parent, I am disgusted by your comments. As an employee, I am ashamed that someone I work for, who supposedly shares my obligation to student safety and success, would *ever* make such a comment. Up until August 10, you had always done the right thing by supporting students and teachers as a productive board member. But [now], long after your tenure, you will be remembered not for the years of good you did, but for the utter negligence and abandonment of decency you committed when those words came out of your mouth.

I want to finish on a positive, by sharing with you a success story. In 2021, you had a student graduate from MVUSD with a 4.4 overall GPA, president of several accoladed programs like National Honor Society, Link Crew and the dramatic arts. They graduated in the top 10 of their class, and thus their picture hung in the school's front office for a year. As board president, you likely signed one of this student's awards when they were named Student of the Month, a district-level academic honor. This student went on to attend UCLA, the #1 public



**"When you speak about a lack of trust between parents and teachers, it is from your inaccurate and fallacious statements that such distrust is sown. You are manufacturing this chaos."**





▼ Karen Poznanski (back to camera) speaks to the Murrieta Valley USD board meeting on Sept. 14.

university in the U.S., and is set to graduate early with a 4-year degree and a minor. This student exemplifies what the board would highlight as a successful product of MVUSD's outstanding teachers, academic opportunities and extracurricular programs.

This student is also gay and nonbinary. I know this because this student is my own child. Their identity and their success are not mutually exclusive, nor are they successful in spite of their identity; rather, their identity is just another human value that makes them strong, unique and empathetic. When you isolate queer students as the "other," or as a political mob, or as confused and misguided, you fail to represent the students you are supposed to be serving. Your queer students are also your top students,



whether you like it or not. You use their stories for your benefit, when their successes boost the value of your district, yet you just as easily *abuse their humanity* when it serves your discriminatory agenda.

They will be the ones running for office and enacting laws to undo the harm you have sown in this room. They will replace you and

restore fairness and decency to our educational system. They have learned exactly what we teach them: to stand up and fight for what is right. And Mr. Diffley, their fight has just begun. ■

*Read our story "Defending Our Schools and Students" (page 24), which looks at how educators are fighting to protect students from politicized policies that impact learning and safety.*



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# WHY AI DOESN'T WORRY ME

## ... in the classroom, and why it does

By Thomas Courtney

**MANY OF MY EDUCATOR COLLEAGUES** have recently expressed concern about the rise of AI in our classrooms. I don't agree. In fact, AI programs like ChatGPT do not worry me. I'm increasingly convinced that some futuristic version of education will not replace our classrooms, nor our teachers.

And the precise reason I am not worried is because I feel as though AI has *already* been tried in our classrooms.

I mean, what do we call a decades-long educational system that eliminates recess, sports, art, history and science for many marginalized community schools in the name of higher reading and math scores? Or the National Reading Panel's finding in 2001 that reading for pleasure does not impact "achievement"? What would you call the literal scripting of standards-based instruction around key standards and test preparation?

More recently, how would we describe a virtual classroom where one non-credentialed teacher monitors nearly a hundred kids plugged into an online curriculum?

If these are not intelligences of an artificial nature, I do not know what is.

And here's the kicker: They've all failed — and failed spectacularly.

But why did these systems of AI fail, why are they failing now when put into practice? That answer is simple and needs no coding or algorithm. It's because kids are not computers, and what we must teach them to be healthy, happy and well-educated adults has never been less artificial.

### AI cannot teach compassion

During the pandemic, a wave of articles and books found publication about the need for social emotional learning. I know, I published quite a few myself. But what the general public may not realize was that just prior to Covid, legislators were not interested in social and emotional learning. I know, as I was a policy fellow trying unsuccessfully to find champions for a bill in California to fund SEL. But then there was Covid and kids in front of computers expanded the SEL conversation.

Why? Because parents and educators alike want their children to grow in their social and emotional intelligence, not just in academics. Computers simply cannot teach compassion, and despite well-advertised efforts, they never will.

### AI cannot teach work ethic

During the pandemic, realities on the computer made work completion *optional* in district after district. Soon, educators

and educational writers were noting a brand new term too — *learning loss*. That's because it wasn't just a loss of access to technology during Covid. If that had been the case, only students not on their computers during class would have experienced learning loss. The simple fact is that AI cannot, nor can any technology by itself, replace a human teacher instilling the values of a work ethic in their students.



*"Artificial intelligence isn't going to teach our kids anytime soon — unless we haven't learned from our earlier experiments with turning children into testing robots."*

### AI cannot teach stewardship for the environment

Climate change and STEAM science are at the top of many priorities nationwide. It's not just for employment sakes either.

AI can relegate tasks to students about environmental issues. AI can teach and even assess content about environmental issues. But AI cannot teach the type of stewardship for the environment that real humans do in various organizations nationwide. That takes real humans, in the very real and natural world, giving hands-on experiences. Computer screens do not have hands.

### AI cannot teach the appreciation of music, theater, dance or any other art

As a colleague recently told me, "Art is what brings them to school!" I couldn't agree more. My best-attended classes during Covid were not mine, they were with our PE coach and our partners in STEAM who gave kids a chance to do hands-on science at home. But why can't AI just teach these things somehow, someday? That's because AI operates in the virtual world, and art is something



that we experience in the real, tactile one. We can produce art virtually, but the experience of it requires a physical presence. And not just by ourselves. Art requires a shared experience from another real human being. Whether they are the watcher, the dance partner, the viewer or the eater, art requires not a person and an AI — it requires *people* in the plural sharing their feelings about the art. AI has no feelings.

### **AI will not be equitable, nor will it affirm anyone's identity, culture or empower anyone**

For AI to do a modern teacher's job, it would have to complete all of the impossible tasks that a real human does just by being human. But there is more required, because a teacher must also consider equity, culture and identity in their classroom.

In *Race After Technology* by Ruha Benjamin, the author gives compelling evidence for why technology, including AI, can't do our job *humanely*. She expertly illustrates that technology's track record is not something anyone should be happy about, whether you are in a minority or a majority. Additionally, AI does not, nor ever will possess the human

ability to understand our differences, or the ability to understand why those differences are beneficial, and often, lead to bias that benefits one group over another.

I feel very sure that artificial intelligence isn't going to teach our kids anytime soon. Unless that is, we haven't learned from our earlier experiments with turning children into testing robots. That part does scare me a little. Because if we no longer prioritize very real human qualities like *appreciation, equity, stewardship, perseverance and compassion*, somebody, somewhere, wanting to earn a buck, is going to give it a try. And it won't take long until we terminate what is best in us as a society.

The good news is that to do that would be a very human decision. One which we, not AI's, control. ■

*Thomas Courtney, a 25-year educator and member of San Diego Education Association, was the 2021 Elementary District Teacher of the Year and a 2022 SDSU Guide Teacher of the Year. He teaches humanities, ELA and ELD at Millennial Tech Middle School.*

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▼ Site rep Lori Jablonski (with glasses) on an SCTA picket line in 2022. Photo courtesy Tammy Abdo, at forefront.



## SITE REPS:

# Building Power, One School Site at a Time

## Sac City's strong site rep program key to major victories

By Julian Peoples

**"OUR SITE REPS ARE SO IMPORTANT,"** says Nikki Milevsky, president of Sacramento City Teachers Association (SCTA). "They have their fingers on the pulse of what is going on in the school sites."

The state's capital was the site of some hardcore grassroots organizing over the past few years, with educators building a massive movement and putting it all on the line to win resources for their students and save Sacramento public schools.

Powered by their inspiring unity, SCTA members won an inspiring list of victories in less than two years: a historic contract that ended their eight-day strike along with SEIU Local 1021 in Spring 2022, flipping the Sacramento City Unified (SCUSD) school board in Fall 2022, leading to the end of the reign of the belligerent former superintendent, and approval of a new contract that will help attract and retain the educators that Sacramento students deserve. And SCTA leadership says none of it would have been possible without committed members at strong local school sites and the site reps who worked to organize them.

"We are only as strong as our rank-and-file members — and they are only as strong as their site reps," says SCTA First Vice President David Fisher, who was president during the strike.


For most members, site representatives are the face of their

local association, serving as the contact point for all union information and surfacing issues from the site to be addressed by local association leadership. For two decades, Lori Jablonski has been a site rep at McClatchy High School, SCUSD's largest school, supporting between 80 and 120 members with issues ranging from scheduling and class sizes to disciplinary matters.

She says site reps also play an important role in helping new educators navigate their first years in the field.

"We're the personification of the union. We exist to protect the interests of our members on campus," she says. "I enjoy getting to know our membership and helping to problem-solve, so little things don't turn into big things."

Site representatives are the first point of contact when members have a question, concern or problem on the job — making them a crucial part of building trust and power at work sites and local associations as a whole. Ingrid Hutchins, transitional kindergarten teacher and site representative at Golden Empire Elementary School, says SCTA's comprehensive site rep program is a deliberate effort, building relationships at school sites and creating a culture where educators know they always have someone in their corner.

"When we have strong site reps and a strong rep support system, we have people who will say 'this is not OK,'" 

**"We are only as strong as our rank-and-file members — and they are only as strong as their site reps."**

—SCTA First Vice President  
David Fisher



▼ SCTA school nurses during the 2022 strike.



▼ SCTA leaders David Fisher and Nikki Milevsky, in action.



says Hutchins, a member of the SCTA Executive Board. “Having reps at every site has strengthened our union. Our members know they have a voice and it feels like nothing is impossible.”

Like many school nurses in SCTA, Nho Le-Hinds hadn’t really been active until district management tried to bring in a telemedicine contractor a few years back without even discussing the matter with their dedicated 20-plus school nurses, who had numerous safety concerns about the idea. When management refused to listen to their voices, Le-Hinds turned to SCTA leadership, who set up meetings and helped the school nurses organize to fight off telemedicine. That victory was the wind in her sails in becoming a site rep; for five years she has kept her mostly itinerant school nurses informed, engaged and organized.

“We nurses go to our sites and work, and we don’t see each other very often,” Le-Hinds says, noting that organizing and fighting together escalated their collective activism. “I don’t think [we] had ever been at a school board meeting before.”

During the 2022 strike, the school nurses worked at the first aid tent during massive midday rallies, and Le-Hinds enlisted their support in the campaign that followed to flip the school board — with school nurses writing letters, walking precincts and knocking on voters’ doors to elect new district leadership.

High school math teacher and SCTA site rep Fernando Rodríguez also walked and knocked every weekend to flip three school board seats and elect leaders who value educator voices.

“We knew we needed to talk to everybody, and that’s exactly what we did. All we were asking for was for our students to have a live teacher in every classroom. It made it clear to people that

## Winning with #SacCitySolidarity

**SCTA members went on strike** for eight days in Spring 2022, along with SEIU Local 1021 members in a glorious display of worker solidarity in the streets of Sacramento. With the rallying cry that every student deserved a teacher in their classroom, educators built a movement that captivated the capital city and saw a group of district moms occupy the school district main office to move the district to an agreement. After eight days, SCTA won an agreement that will help attract and retain quality educators and address the district’s staffing crisis, as well as health and safety contract language improvements.

we were fighting for their children,” Rodríguez says. “The change in leadership has shown how things can be better when we all have a common goal of representing ourselves, representing our community and serving our schools.”

While the site reps were quick to credit Milevsky, Fisher and SCTA leadership for their vision for Sacramento schools, the leaders were just as fast to point to site reps’ willingness to commit to each other to fight for better, together.

“A strong site rep program builds a bond that cannot be broken,” Milevsky says. “Our site reps are leaders at their schools who shine a light on what our educators and students really need. They understand that an injury to one is an injury to all.”

Third grade teacher Marcie Amparo volunteered to be a site rep before she quite understood what the responsibility entailed. When she started as a teacher, there was no rep at her site and there hadn’t been one for years, but she stepped up, learned as much as possible and helped build a new culture at Kimble Elementary School.

**“A strong site rep program builds a bond that cannot be broken.  
Our site reps are leaders at their schools who shine a light on what  
our educators and students really need.”**

—SCTA President **Nikki Milevsky**

## MARCIE AMPARO

**THIRD GRADE TEACHER**, *Kimble Elementary School*  
Educator for 10 years, site rep for six

**Positions held:** Site Representative and Bargaining Team

**Why site reps matter:** “I’m available to my fellow teachers. If they have problems, I try to help them find a solution.”

**Power of strong local sites:** “Working together was the source of the power for all our fights.”

**Site rep pro tip:** “Do what you say you’re going to and don’t break people’s trust.”

**Words of wisdom:** “It all comes down to communicating and working together. You got to trust the process and get on board!”



## INGRID HUTCHINS

**TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN TEACHER**, *Golden Empire Elementary School*  
Educator for 23 Years, site rep for four

**Positions held:** Site Representative, Bargaining Team, Executive Board  
Elementary Director

**Why site reps matter:** “In a job that can be isolating, it’s good for people to know they’re really not alone.”

**Power of strong local sites:** “A robust site rep program precludes a lot of issues on the job, especially with work-life balance.”

**Site rep pro tip:** “Get to know everyone on your staff as individuals. It helps you know what people’s needs and situations are to be able to best help and support them. Be a good listener — that’s what people need from us.”

**Words of wisdom:** “If you’re at a school without a rep and you have even an hour a week, consider stepping up because it really changes a district to have someone at every site to be your voice.”



“It’s empowering to get excited about a shared vision,” Amparo says. “Once teachers get excited about something, there’s really no stopping us.”

Milevsky says a big part of building power at sites is taking advantage of the valuable time that educators get to organize together. Jablonski says that means taking full advantage of union time during school site staff meetings. She says being deliberate about using that time to share information and resources and surface concerns is essential to maintaining a cohesive unit and building power.

“Here at McClatchy, that time has become almost sacred,” Jablonski says. “When it came time to organize and strike, we were ready to go. That wouldn’t have been possible without the site rep program and how serious we take it.”

Le-Hinds echoes the sentiment, adding that face-to-face communication and organizing is key to building the relationships necessary to effect change.

“I feel like we are powerful now and I didn’t feel that way when

Continued on Page 22





## Organizing and Winning on Election Day

**At the center of SCTA's problems** in SCUSD: Superintendent Jorge Aguilar, whose legacy is his refusal to collaborate with educators in any way, regardless of the impact on students. SCTA leaders knew that to make any progress on important opportunities like community schools, they needed leaders on the school board who would listen to educators — and that meant unseating incumbents.

Educators turned to two community members who showed leadership in supporting educators during the strike (Jasjit Singh and Taylor Kayatta) along with fellow educator and NEA Board member Tara Jeane (all pictured above) to run for trustee seats, focusing the power of their robust site rep structure on talking to as many voters as possible and electing a new majority to the school board. The candidates and their supporters, including many SCTA members, spent thousands of hours knocking on more than 43,000 doors and talking to voters about building the schools that all Sacramento students deserve.

When all the votes were counted, the organizing, precinct walking and voter education efforts were successful in electing all three candidates. In June, Aguilar resigned as superintendent after reaching a mutual decision with the school board.

## Addressing Staffing Crisis With Contract Agreement

**SCTA members in September** ratified a contract agreement that will help attract and retain educators, so every Sacramento student has a full-time teacher. The highlights:

- Ongoing, across-the-board 10% pay increase;
- Additional 6% increase for staff in difficult-to-fill positions, including special education teachers, education audiologists, school nurses, social workers and school psychologists;
- Increase in substitute teacher pay to \$355 per day — a more than \$100 increase.



## LORI JABLONSKI

**GEOGRAPHY, AP GOVERNMENT TEACHER,**

*McClatchy High School*

Educator for 23 years, site rep for 20

**Positions held:** Site Representative, Bargaining Team

**Why site reps matter:** “We are the faces of the union. People come to trust us and that’s essential to building power — because how do you build power without trust?”

**Power of strong local sites:** “We’ve had some rocky times with admins. Having a site rep program people trust is essential to getting through that.”

**Site rep pro tip:** “Use the union time at your staff meetings. Use that time to communicate with your members and build union power at your school.”

**Words of wisdom:** “True democracy is a bottom-up phenomenon, and a site rep program is that in action. SCTA’s secret to success has been embracing this democracy.”

*Continued from Page 21*

I was just reading emails,” she says.

Fourth grade teacher Ricardo Martinez says it’s all about building community at school sites. The site rep at Bowling Green Charter School for two decades, Martinez is a go-to when workers need help — whether it’s his fellow educators and SCTA members or front office staff and yard-duty aides.

“People are in need of leadership, of someone to talk to,” says Martinez. “Power can advocate. To function as a school, we need to be working together.” ■

*At a school or site without a union representative? Interested in speaking up for your colleagues and building power for your students? Reach out to your chapter leadership and ask how you can become a site rep.*

*Photo portraits by Christie Gimpel, [christiegimpel.com](http://christiegimpel.com).*





## NHO LE-HINDS

**SCHOOL NURSE**, *multiple sites*

School nurse for 25 years, site rep for five

**Positions held:** Site Representative, Bargaining Team

**Why site reps matter:** "We're that link between SCTA and who we represent. It's really important for us to make that connection."

**Power of strong local sites:** "Face-to-face relationships are everything. It's always so much more powerful when you hear from somebody you know and trust."

**Site rep pro tip:** "Communicate with your people. Let your members know their rights and what they should be getting paid for."

**Words of wisdom:** "Asking people to get involved in whatever way they can is important. Everyone needs to get involved."

## RICARDO MARTINEZ

**FOURTH GRADE TEACHER**, *Bowling Green Charter School*

Educator for 31 years, site rep for 20

**Positions held:** Site Representative, Bargaining Team

**Why site reps matter:** "It's part of building a community. It's asking questions and sharing information. And believing in the power of the union."

**Power of strong local sites:** "We are always being tested on how united we are and if we're willing to stand up for each other. Strong sites are a necessity because we will continue to be challenged."

**Site rep pro tip:** "Sometimes, educators just want to be heard and feel supported. Be there."

**Words of wisdom:** "When you're teaching and dealing with issues, it's very lonely. Believe in the power of leadership and unity. It can be very powerful."



The Rodríguez family; wife Mary Rodríguez was also a site rep at Hiram Johnson High School in Sacramento.

## FERNANDO RODRÍGUEZ

**MATH TEACHER**, *Hiram Johnson High School*

Educator for 18 years, site rep for five

**Positions held:** Site Representative, Bargaining Team

**Why site reps matter:** "They work to make our jobs a lot easier as educators and that impacts our students. Teacher working conditions are also student learning conditions."

**Power of strong local sites:** "When I think of power, I think of confidence — members having the courage, strength and confidence to advocate for themselves and all of us, because we are the union."

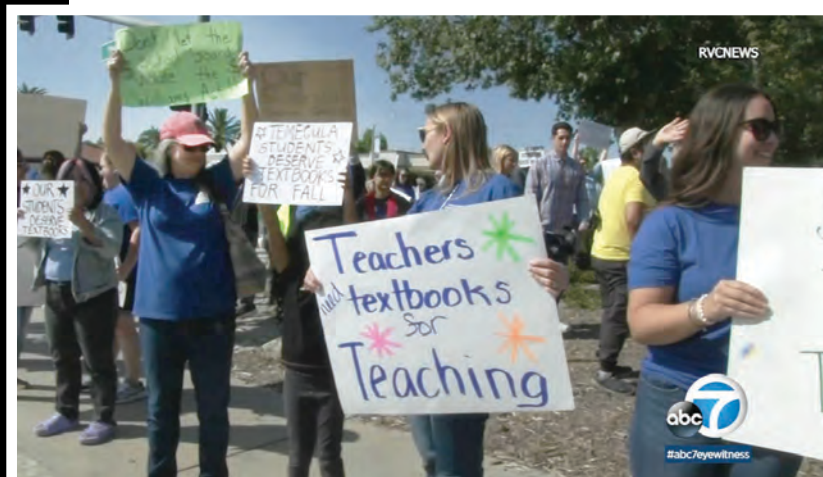
**Site rep pro tip:** "Learn to talk to people in a respectful and nurturing way. The more we know of our contract, the more we can stand up and advocate, as individuals and as a union."

**Words of wisdom:** "With courage, we can empower people to get so much done — to stand for our students and community."



# DEFENDING OUR SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

▼ Temecula educators picket after the school board refused to adopt textbooks because they included a section on LGBTQ-rights icon Harvey Milk.



ABC7

## Educators fight to protect students from politicized policies that impact learning, safety

By Julian Peeples, Ed Sibby and Frank Wells

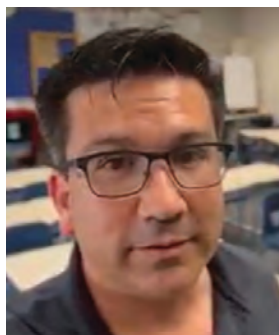
**“EVERYTHING IS A DISTRACTION** from educating our students and rebuilding our schools after the pandemic — and that’s intentional and by design,” says Dr. Heather Chapman, an educator in Orange Unified School District, where extremist school board members are impacting students and families. “This is about sowing distrust in public education.”

In Orange and communities including Chino Valley and Temecula, educators are rising together with communities to defend their students, schools and each other from extremist board members and their politically driven policies that are diverting district resources and putting safety at risk. At a time when students have so many needs that school board members should focus on supporting, trustees in each of these communities are centering their personal political beliefs and dragging their districts into court and chaos with their egregiously irresponsible actions.

In what appears to be a coordinated effort by anti-public education groups to sow division in local communities and distrust in educators and public schools, newly elected board members in these districts are bringing the culture wars into classrooms and putting politics above the well-being of students and educators.

“It is our responsibility to push back on those who look to politicize our classrooms and erode our students’ freedom to learn,” says CTA President David Goldberg, “whether that’s extremists’ attacks on textbooks that teach truth in history or ensuring the safety of all students in our schools.”

Often funded by groups outside their communities and fueled by nationwide coverage on cable news networks, these extremist officials have turned school board meetings into contentious affairs and meme fodder that would be laughable if not so dangerous and such a waste of time and resources.



**“Teachers have had their reputations irreparably harmed. The inability to facilitate academic discussions based on student ideas is causing educators to worry about discipline and their jobs.”**

—TVEA President  
**Edgar Diaz**

▼ Associated Chino Teachers at a July school board meeting supporting LGBTQ+ students’ privacy rights in the face of a new district policy.



Even Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond was caught up at a July Chino Valley school board meeting — getting thrown out by the extremist school board president.

“Tonight, I went to a school board meeting to stand up for LGBTQ+ students who invited me to join them as they spoke out against a radical new policy that threatens their safety. When done speaking, the board president verbally attacked me and instructed the police to remove me,” Thurmond tweeted that evening. “If I am forcibly removed from a public school board meeting as the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, how are everyday parents and students in Chino Valley Unified supposed to have their voices heard? I will always stand with California students and will use every power of my office to protect them from politicians who seek to divide our communities instead of keeping our kids safe.”

Other elected leaders statewide have also stepped up to defend students and hold these extremist politicians accountable. On Aug. 28, California Attorney General Rob Bonta announced a state lawsuit to immediately halt the enforcement of the Chino Valley Unified Board of Education’s mandatory

forced outing policy. Bonta’s office also launched a civil rights investigation into the new policy. Meanwhile, Gov. Gavin Newsom threatened to fine Temecula Valley Unified School District (TVUSD) \$1.5 million after their extremist-controlled board refused to adopt textbooks because they included a section on LGBTQ-rights icon Harvey Milk. And educators in these

districts continue to lead the charge, staying focused on real issues impacting their schools and communities, while also stepping up to defend their students in these manufactured controversies. Temecula Valley Education Association (TVEA) joined students and educators in filing a lawsuit in August against the school district for censoring instruction; Associated Chino Teachers

(ACT) filed an Unfair Practice Charge the same month for unilateral policy changes enacted by the school board without negotiation; and Orange Unified Education Association (OUEA) joined a campaign to recall extremist board members and take their school district back.

“This movement has been organized — large, growing and passionate — through grassroots fundraising and action, a signature drive to gather enough voters to petition a recall

**“We will never waver when it comes to advocating for our students and their safety. We will not support policies that harm children.”**

—CTA President **David Goldberg**





▼ CTA Board Member Wendy Eccles with ACT President Brenda Walker.



“Our members want kids to be safe at school and to learn. They don’t want to be forced to go against state laws and policies to further divisive priorities of a majority of the board.”

— ACT President **Brenda Walker**

is underway,” says OUEA President Greg Goodlander. “Parents are sad, upset and angry at the behaviors of the board majority, and when not collecting signatures, they are making their voices heard at school board meetings and on social media.”

Goldberg says CTA will continue to stand with students and communities and against divisive and dangerous policies.

“We will never waver when it comes to advocating for our students and their safety. We will not support policies that harm children,” Goldberg says. “We will not be distracted by headline-chasing extremists who attack our schools from within. Rather, we will continue to urge our elected officials to focus on what matters: providing more resources for our students, recruiting and retaining quality educators, and keeping our schools safe.”

## TEMECULA:

### Educators file lawsuit to defend students and truth

After more than eight months of unrest and community division, students, parents, educators and TVEA filed a lawsuit against the TVUSD school board majority that brought culture wars and chaos to an award-winning school district.

With the representation of non-profit legal organization Public Counsel, TVEA filed suit in early August alleging the school board violated the law in adopting a resolution last December banning the teaching of ambiguously defined, race-related

topics. Educators say the politicized action by TVUSD has impacted district safety.

“TVEA joined the lawsuit to guard against the negative impacts to Temecula students and educators in the classroom,” says Edgar Díaz, TVEA president. “In the months following the resolution’s implementation, we’ve seen its broad and vague language used as a weapon. Educators are identified and harassed on social media and classroom voicemails with horrible accusations that go against the nature of our service to the students of Temecula.”

The lawsuit is a civil rights action challenging the imposition of curriculum censorship of what students can learn about American history, gender subject matters, and their racial and gender identities. During a press conference announcing the lawsuit, Temecula fourth grade teacher Amy Eytchison teared up while reading comments from a student about the impact the board’s decisions have had and could continue to have on students and the community.

“Young adults became targets for social media harassment, not by children, but adults,” Temecula student Mary M. wrote. “Although this resolution has impacted my personal life, the continuation of the board’s ideological policies has the potential to harm the future of this district.”

Díaz notes that TVUSD’s current board majority has created a chilling atmosphere where teachers choosing the “wrong” book, topic or discussion results in the educator being removed from the classroom due to the vague nature of the resolution.

- ▼ Attorney General Rob Bonta announced a state lawsuit in August challenging Chino Valley Unified's forced outing policy.



- ▼ Temecula Valley Educators Association members Jennifer Scharf (at mic), Dawn Murray-Sibby and Amy Eytchison at the August press conference announcing the lawsuit against the school district.



“Teachers have had their reputations irreparably harmed — one for incorporating a school library book in a project, others for serving as student advisors to clubs and guiding students to focus on school attendance while balancing students’ First Amendment rights,” he said. “The inability to facilitate academic discussions based on student ideas is causing educators to worry about discipline and their jobs.”

Educator thoughts of reprisal are constant and palpable, according to Dawn Murray-Sibby, a high school teacher, TVEA member and one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

“This ban has created a climate of fear in our classrooms, and it is preventing my students from learning about the history and diversity of our nation,” she said. “I’m proud to be a plaintiff in this case to fight for my students, who deserve an education not censored by board members’ ideological beliefs.”

TVUSD’s board garnered national headlines earlier this year when they refused to approve textbooks with sections on LGBTQ+ history including civil rights leader Harvey Milk. After the short standoff with Gov. Newsom, the school board quietly approved textbooks to comply with state law. The battle continues over the right to learn without censorship in Temecula.

“What the board is doing is not only morally wrong — it is illegal,” Temecula student Susan C. said.

## CHINO VALLEY: Fighting back against hate in schools

ACT members are fighting back against discriminatory, anti-LGBTQ+ policies recently adopted by the CVUSD Board of Education. These policies include a new regulation banning the pride flag (and other flags and emblems) from district properties and a policy requiring educators to “out” trans students to their parents in writing.

With the assistance of CTA attorneys, ACT sent a



## What to Do When Hate Comes to Your School District

Lessons learned by educators who have experienced the battles firsthand have resulted in some best practices on fighting extremism in your district:

- **Start the work now.** Get engaged in your community before extremists go public, so your local is an established partner in community issues. Getting active in your local elections is key.
- **Strength in numbers.** Ask members from neighboring CTA locals to show support by attending your school board meetings. Be in close contact with CTA leaders and staff, who can provide important assistance.
- **Safety above all.** Have a conversation in your local about how to ensure safety for members and students at school board meetings and other events.
- **Tell your story.** Establish a presence on social media to share your story as educators in your community.
- **Take care of you.** Self-care is especially critical in these highly charged environments.
- **It’s a marathon.** Prepare and pace yourself for a lengthy fight that can be very draining, even in the best of conditions.

▼ Orange Unified Education Association members joined a campaign to recall extremist board members and take their school district back.

cease-and-desist notice to the district while it was considering the two new policies. After their adoption, the local filed an Unfair Practice Charge in August with the California Public Employment Relations Board, stating that the pride/flag policy could improperly restrict union speech and that CVUSD failed to collectively bargain with ACT before enacting these new policies.

The board policies targeting LGBTQ+ students and community come after changes on the board following the last election. Despite ACT members' efforts to elect more mainstream, pro-public-education candidates, those with more extreme views prevailed — including the current board president Sonja Shaw, who narrowly defeated ACT's endorsed candidate in an expensive race that saw at least one \$50,000 donation to Shaw from a local contractor who does business with the school district. The new board has drawn national notoriety for the new policies, and community members have packed board meetings to share emotional voices from all sides.

President Goldberg, CTA Board members and presidents from other local associations attended a recent school board meeting to support ACT and oppose the outing policy. ACT President Brenda Walker has been leading efforts to have the policies rescinded.

"Unfortunately, our board is creating headlines by focusing on things that don't benefit students and only divide our community," Walker says. "They need to rescind these harmful and divisive policies and join us instead in focusing on things our union is fighting for, such as better support systems for special education students and recruiting and retaining quality educators for our community. Chino has already been struggling to attract teachers; the extreme views being imposed on the district and unfavorable publicity this board is garnering will only make it more difficult."

Walker continues to check in with her members and says a clear majority strongly oppose the new rules. She hopes one of the multiple avenues being used to get the policies reversed ends with them being rescinded permanently.

"Our members just want kids to be safe at school and to learn in supportive environments. They don't want to be forced to go against state laws and policies in order to further the divisive culture war priorities of a majority of the board," Walker says.



Attorney General Bonta said he is committed to challenging school policies that target and seek to discriminate.

"Students should never fear going to school for simply being who they are," said Bonta. "Chino Valley Unified's forced outing policy threatens the safety and well-being of LGBTQ+ students vulnerable to harassment and potential abuse from peers and family members unaccepting of their gender identity. California will not stand for violations of our students' civil rights."

### **ORANGE:** School board embraces distraction over students

OUEA members are organizing and fighting back to defend Orange Unified School District from an extremist majority on its school board. Following a contentious election in November, a new school board majority took control on the back of a razor-thin 221-vote margin in the deciding race — and wasted no time cleaning house, firing the superintendent and assistant superintendent before taking aim at the district's sex education and gender identity curriculum.

The politics of the new board majority have created an environment where a single parent complaint about a misclassified book caused the district's digital library to be shut down for weeks, disrupting learning and instruction for thousands of students. Chaos like this has caused 30 percent of district leadership to either retire early or resign and change school districts.

Educators say there has always been a political movement in Orange to undermine public education, but never with the



▼ Orange Unified Education Association leaders  
Dr. Heather Chapman, Greg Goodlander and Karin Barone.



scorched earth mentality employed by the current extremists at the helm, which is a major distraction from the issues that matter for students and families.

“We had the opportunity to reimagine schools in Orange but we’re fighting this,” says OUEA Vice President Karin Barone, an educator at a gifted and talented magnet school. “I worry that there will be further strain.”

OUEA President Goodlander says he’s already seeing impacts in classrooms, where teachers are less willing to think outside the box or try new and innovative pedagogy due to fear of potential retribution from the extremist politicians.

## The Fight to Stop Extremism

**This is the first in a series** of stories where we look at how educators and allies are fighting back against fringe extremist policies and initiatives that erode trust in public education and hurt students and educators. Look for more coverage in our upcoming issues.

“The association has always had a collaborative relationship with the district,” he says. “This has put undue stress on our relationship.”

The situation has created an environment where Orange educators are wary about what they say and teach in their classrooms, lest they end up on social media incurring outrage and phoned-in threats from extremists across the country. Goodlander said some educators who have left the district said they felt like they were being “hunted.”

In response to the new, extreme direction of the school board, OUEA joined Orange families and community members in working to qualify a recall election for the four school board members currently in the majority. OUEA members including Barone and Chapman have been walking neighborhoods to gather signatures on recall petitions — the recall initiative needs to gather more than 13,000 signatures by November to qualify for an election next spring (visit [ousdrecall.com](https://ousdrecall.com) for more information and to spread the word [#ousdrecall](https://twitter.com/ousdrecall)).

“Most of our voters still don’t know what’s going on,” says Chapman, OUEA political action committee chair. “When we’re out there talking to people about the recall, we’re getting a lot of ‘okay, where do I sign?’” ■

## Extremists Rear Ugly Heads Throughout State

Check out our story on Kern County, next page. Other school districts where extremists have worked to undermine public education and sow division in communities:

- **Glendale:** Since April, educators, parents and community members have dealt with anti-LGBTQ+ attacks at school board meetings and on social media, culminating in violence at a June board meeting. The attacks have inspired counter-organizing from educators and the community — especially around this year’s school board elections. Previously, a Glendale teacher was publicly harassed and threatened for providing administration-endorsed Pride curriculum to students. The local chapter and CTA helped the member respond to the harassment and fight the district’s inappropriate attempts to discipline her.
- **Hayward:** Educators, students and community showed up at a June meeting to support the LGBTQ+ community after a Hayward Unified board member made outrageous and misleading homophobic comments about the school district’s curriculum and support for inclusive policies. On a 4-1 vote, the board adopted a resolution declaring support for LGBTQIA+ youth, staff and families.
- **Murrieta:** In August, Murrieta Unified’s school board approved a “parental notification” policy similar to Clovis’ and Chino Valley’s, citing CVUSD’s policy as a model.



▼ Coalition members against the proposed “outing” policy show support at the Kern school board meeting, including Marisa Wood (CTA member and candidate for U.S. House of Representatives District 20; at right in blue).



# A VICTORY – FOR NOW

## Kern County school board tables vote on forced outing policy

By Cynthia Menzel

**THE 16-YEAR-OLD STUDENT** stood before the September 12 Kern County Board of Education and told their story. After they were outed to their parents, their parents kicked them out of the house.

“As you should have been!” shouted a woman from the back. The student ignored the outburst, waiting for a board member to stop the commotion that followed. When that didn’t happen, they took a breath and continued speaking: They now had nowhere to live.

The student was part of a coalition of students, parents and CTA locals, including Bakersfield Elementary Teachers Association, Kern County Education Association, Kern High School Teachers Association and Kern Community College District/CCA. The coalition also includes supporters such as the Democratic Women of Kern.

Coalition members shared concerns about the policy, which would require educators to “out” students who choose to be identified as any name, nickname and/or gender that does not match enrollment records or is not of the “common” nicknames recognized by the school.

Ultimately the county board tabled the vote on the proposed gender disclosure policy until a legal decision is made on a similar policy in the Chino Valley Unified School District, a legal process expected to take two years.

Similar policies have been proposed in other school districts. CTA and local chapter educators say such policy endangers students, is discriminatory, promotes bullying and threatens educators by jeopardizing their teaching credentials if they violate state laws.

An outing policy was passed in Anderson Union High School District in

“Our students are our top priority. We will continue to work with parents to provide the highest quality public education to our students.”

—RTPA President  
Travis Mougeotte

Shasta County in August. The **Anderson Union High School Teachers Association** filed an Unfair Labor Practice charge demanding the policy be rescinded.

The **Rocklin Teachers Professional Association** (RTPA) has asked the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) to order the outing policy passed by the Rocklin Unified School District board in September be rescinded.

RTPA was denied the legal right to bargain the effects of the outing policy on teaching and learning; bargaining after the fact puts RTPA educators at a disadvantage and enables the board to benefit from unlawful, unilateral changes. RTPA is asking that the district restore the status quo by rescinding the policy entirely before the chapter agrees to bargain its effects.

RTPA has also filed an unfair labor practice charge on this issue. CTA local leaders say they will defend against any attempt to discipline educators for refusing to follow any directive that violates state law.

“Our students are our top priority,” RTPA President Travis Mougeotte said. “We appreciate and have great respect for our parents. We support all parent rights under the law. We will continue to work with our local parents to provide the highest quality public education to our students.”

▼ Example of 93rd Street Elementary School greening, part of the successful grant application.



*"As a community school we are eager to engage in an inclusive, collaborative process that includes all our community stakeholder groups."*

—Ingrid Villeda,  
93rd Street Elementary  
community school  
coordinator

# Greening Our Schools

## New grant program aims to convert pavement to green space at school sites

By Amy Peruzzaro

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or CAL FIRE, has awarded multiple implementation and planning grants to school sites and districts across California. The goal of these Green Schoolyard Grants is to help schools convert pavement to green space, create drought-tolerant natural areas on school grounds and develop other activities to help children connect to nature.

The awards include a \$2.5 million implementation grant to 93rd Street Elementary School in Los Angeles. Funds will be used to make widespread environmental improvements to the 850-student, high-needs community school, which at present has few trees and does not provide enough nature or shade for students, especially during high heat months.

Improvements include providing a park-like space where children can play and learn outdoors and planting 25 trees to create shade, cool schoolyards and reduce energy usage in nearby buildings. The plan involves the entire school community in the design, implementation and stewardship of the new schoolyard.

The school's surrounding area is a historic environmental justice neighborhood that has been plagued by high pollution, water contamination and lead, resulting in respiratory and cardiovascular disease and low birth weight for its residents. Work

on the project will begin in November and will be completed by March 2026.

With the support of United Teachers Los Angeles, LA Unified and community partners including Reclaim Our Schools Los Angeles, and with the collaboration of 93rd Street Elementary Community School Coordinator Ingrid Villeda, the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust applied for the grant. CAL FIRE developed the program this year to reduce the impacts of climate change and extreme heat through school greening. It draws from \$117 million in statewide funds dedicated to improving nature and tree canopy cover on public school campuses.

A local stakeholder committee will guide the 93rd Street Elementary project. The final project design will rely heavily on feedback from students and staff on how they use the schoolyard and how to allow for more green areas.

"As a community school we are eager to engage in an inclusive, collaborative process that includes all our community stakeholder groups," Villeda said. "We know how important it is to work in unity to create something special."

For information about the Green Schoolyard Grant program, visit [fire.ca.gov](https://fire.ca.gov) and search for Urban and Community Forestry. ■



▼ Students relax at Buena Vista Horace Mann.  
Photo: Chris Robledo



# FAMILY POWER

## San Francisco Community School puts family needs front and center

By Katharine Fong

**TYPICALLY**, says Nick Chandler, community schools coordinator at Buena Vista Horace Mann K–8 school in San Francisco, the family power structure in schools tends to fall within families with privilege. “Families with income, families with access, families with time,” he explains.

At BVHM, such families are few. A dual-language Spanish Immersion Community School in the city’s Mission District, BVHM enrolls about 600 students; in 2021–22, 86% identified as Hispanic/Latino, 64% were socioeconomically disadvantaged and 63% were English Learners.

“To ensure that we had authentic partnership with our families of students who needed the most support, we’ve had to be really strategic about how we engage families and set up shared decision making to hear the voices that often go unheard,” Chandler says.

The strategy involved continuous outreach, listening to and encouraging leadership from families — especially monolingual

Spanish-speaking families — and responding to their needs. This included creating the Stay Over Program about five years ago, which allows unhoused San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) families to sleep at the BVHM gym and receive case management services to support their eventual housing.

Housing remains one of the major challenges BVHM families face. Other immediate challenges identified by BVHM families are immigration and mental and physical health needs. “Basic needs supports have evolved over time. They’ve been a direct result of that family voice, of that student voice,” says Chandler.

*“We’ve had to be really strategic about how we engage families and set up shared decision making to hear the voices that often go unheard.”*

—BVHM Community Schools Coordinator  
**Nick Chandler**

It’s almost 6:30 p.m. on a late spring evening, and several families are already standing patiently outside the BVHM gym, backpacks and bags in hand, waiting for the doors to open at 7. Inside, workers are setting up partitions that give each family a modicum of privacy where they can unroll bed mats and settle in for the night.

▼ The Navas-Torrez family prepares their beds at the Buena Vista Horace Mann school gym.



▼ Not pictured is the eldest son, who will join the family later in the evening.



“[The Stay Over Program] is important because our kids aren’t in the streets. They have a place to be after school, a place to study. For them it feels like a second home.”

—Parent **Mayel Navas**

Bathrooms, with showers, are at one end of the gym; at the other end is the room where families enter, sign in and eat dinner. Students can use the dining tables for homework.

Some 70 people will sleep at BVHM tonight. They’ll eat breakfast before leaving the gym by 7 a.m.

“When we arrived in San Francisco, we didn’t have a place to live, so we were living in the streets,” says Mayel Navas, who with her husband Saul Torrez has been staying at the gym with their four sons — one of whom is still in a stroller. “We met a friend who told us about this program. We feel super grateful.

“This place is important because our kids aren’t in the streets. They have a place to be after school, a place to study. For them it feels like a second home.”

“We came to the United States because our country [Nicaragua] was going through a time of social-political unrest and there was a lot of government persecution,” Torrez says. “We don’t have the words to say how much we appreciate [the Stay Over Program].”

A joint use agreement allows this S.F. Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing program to be operated on school district property by the nonprofit Dolores Street Community Services.

**W**hile each community school is unique, their common denominator is shared governance among educators, students, families, administrators and community partners. By achieving a truly equitable model of shared decision making and listening to all stakeholders, BVHM’s Stay Over Program and other initiatives are meeting vital needs that have led to healthier families, more engaged and productive students, educators who are able to teach and nurture children to their fullest potential, and stronger connections to the community.

CTA and local chapters are working in partnership with the state, school districts, students, families and community to help grow and support California’s community schools, bolstered by the state’s nation-leading \$4.1 billion investment. A primary focus among locals is to ensure shared decision making is contractually codified — necessary for all stakeholders to be heard and participate as equals.

“UESF has been working on three different levels” with SFUSD, says Cassondra Curiel, president of United Educators of San Francisco (UESF). “The first is in bargaining a contract that would codify community school language and the shared decision-making protocol.”

The second is UESF’s agreement with SFUSD to help select and hire a district director for community school



BVHM Community Schools Coordinator  
**Nick Chandler**



▼ Bilingual teacher Marcos Espino with 7th grade students.



▼ BVHM Principal Claudia DeLarios Moran.



“What does every child need to be self-regulated enough to learn today’s lesson? The community school approach allows us to wrap ourselves around a child and their family’s need so we can get them there.”

—BVHM Principal **Claudia DeLarios Moran**

implementation, “working closely with them to make sure we are in close alignment with state guidance”; the person hired has a background in community nonprofits. Third, the local is involved at the ground level with UESF Secretary Leslie Hu, who is on full-time release as UESF’s Community Schools Initiative Coach.

“It’s a position we felt was important to have to bring up member ‘Community Schools IQ’ and to help directly at sites as they navigate the community schools process,” Curiel says. Hu works with educators, school staff and administrators.

Curiel adds that for “our 6,500 UESF members, learning about community schools is an ongoing process. We’ve been working to educate and elevate this — not just the application to become a community school, but what it means to be part of a community school.

“At school sites operating with a shared decision-making model where families are actively invited to help make decisions and embraced and empowered, we’re seeing a big impact.... At one elementary school, the administration and educators were trying to seek an intervention to raise reading and math scores. [Stakeholders] devised a plan collectively to shift schedules and carve out the school budget for extended hours so educators could work with the after-school program [toward] those math and reading goals. It spread into what families engaged their students on at home as well.”

Curiel points to multiple other examples of community

schools’ collective decision-making that have successfully addressed challenges at individual sites, and made students and families feel like they are represented and have a voice.

**B**oisterous students congregate in the BVHM yard at mid-day, some eating lunch and talking with friends, others engaged in games. The administrative offices also bustle with students and educators. In contrast, students in Marcos Espino’s 7th grade class upstairs quietly work on assignments. Espino, who grew up in the Mission District, moves from table to table, speaking in Spanish.

BVHM Principal Claudia DeLarios Moran is a native San Franciscan whose children attended the school before she stepped into her current role. She notes that BVHM has been a community school since its inception in 2012; she expects the new funding and protocols will amplify the school’s resources and programming. While DeLarios Moran was BVHM vice principal, she worked to pilot the Stay Over Program.

“The shelter started out of desperation during a particularly rainy winter,” she recalls. “A number of families asked us directly if they could stay overnight. We quickly realized that that is exactly what we should do.

“Our true north is ‘What does every child need to be self-regulated enough to learn today’s lesson?’ The community school approach allows us to wrap ourselves around a child and their family’s need so we can get them there.”



▼ Stay Over Program participants line up for dinner.



▼ A family set up to sleep in the BVHM gym.



This results in students who flourish academically and on a social-emotional level — and parents who are empowered to speak up, get involved and become leaders themselves. “We now have parents who serve on important boards within SFUSD, for example, on the community advisory council for special education. We have parents that are extremely adamant about demanding the kind of facilities our students deserve — having conversations not even at the district level, but at the state [level].”

Chandler says the development of the Stay Over Program taught BVHM administrators and educators a lot on how to engage families — how to build authentic partnerships and shared decision-making structures. “We surfaced flaws in how we were governing our school and how families participated. By having those hard conversations and building programming that was responsive to the highest needs as defined by our families, we were able to disrupt that pattern. It shifted our programming and our focus and intention. It shifted our goals and our mission.

“It forced us to really articulate ‘Why are we here? Who are we here to support? How are we going to be inclusive in that work?’”

Current needs, according to surveys and data, center on mental health. As Chandler puts it, “How do we deliver trained,



**“UESF is very intent on making sure that community schools is not a trend. This is not a moment. This is a cultural shift.”**

—United Educators of San Francisco President  
**Cassandra Curiel**

qualified bilingual mental health professionals to our students and families that need it?”

BVHM educators, he says, are fully aligned with the community school’s objectives, particularly around family involvement. “We have intentionally brought in teachers that have the vision and philosophy of teaching that includes the family. Teachers are always strong advocates for families at our site.”

Educators city-wide are working hard to make community schools work long-term, says Curiel. “UESF is very intent on making sure that community schools is not a trend. This is not a moment, but instead this is a cultural shift, a movement from traditional schooling to a community schools model that includes so much community input, so much student, family, educator [input] that the school itself is fundamentally changed

to be a place where families and students feel they are part of the entire day.” ■



To view videos on BVHM Community School and its Stay Over Program, visit [youtube.com/californiateachers](https://www.youtube.com/californiateachers). Learn more about CTA and community schools and read previous coverage at [cta.org/communityschools](https://cta.org/communityschools).

## BIG BARGAINING LED TO BIG GAINS

Oakland's expanded bargaining team helped retain educators and develop new leaders

By **Vilma Serrano** and **Tim Marshall**

*In Oakland, California, students and educators returned to school this year with added nurses, counselors, librarians and art teachers; smaller gym classes; guaranteed free transportation; and various other improvements thanks to an Oakland Education Association contract campaign that culminated in a May strike. A look back at how all these gains were won:*

**AFTER A SEVEN-MONTH CONTRACT** campaign and a seven-day strike, the Oakland Education Association (OEA) won substantial raises and broad benefits, including “common good” demands.

It was a hugely popular tentative agreement—ratified with a 90% yes vote, with nearly 80% of members voting — in large part because of our “big bargaining” approach, meaning an expanded bargaining team with robust communication back and forth with the members.

Thanks to big bargaining, the union has 50 new leaders who have developed confidence and skills. Now they want to learn how to keep up the fight at their schools by enforcing the contract.

### ‘NEXT TIME...’

Even before Keith Brown was elected OEA president in 2018, he had attended a training about big bargaining. He knew it had potential at OEA.

But it took a while to organize it. Brown inherited a five-person bargaining team that was already at an impasse after a fruitless year and a half of bargaining. After a seven-day strike, the union settled an agreement with the Oakland Unified School District in 2019.

“Next time,” Brown warned OUSD chief negotiator Jenine Lindsey, “we will have 80 people at this bargaining table,

▼ Teachers and other school workers struck for seven days in May in Oakland. Credit: Brooke Anderson



representing all of our school sites and specialist groups.”

### RECRUITING THE TEAM

We launched the big bargaining team approach in February of 2022. Our goals were clear: Give workers the power at the negotiating table and win a strong contract that would slow the significant turnover of Oakland teachers and specialists (school nurses, speech pathologists, school counselors, school psychologists). We also aimed to include community demands and develop new leaders through the contract campaign.

To recruit people to the bargaining team, we tried many avenues: virtual question-and-answer sessions, going out to school and specialist group union meetings, inviting area union leaders to help recruit, and meeting one-on-one with any member interested in joining the team. We were looking for solutions-oriented members who were interested in learning more about bargaining and about the union.

The one-on-one meetings (virtual or over coffee) turned out to be the most effective way to engage potential bargaining team nominees. Investing time in one-on-ones between March and August led to the recruitment of nearly half the team.

All the recruits submitted their official nomination forms — signature forms with endorsements from a majority of members within their specialist group or work site — and were ratified by the OEA leadership and representative council.

### TRIAL BY FIRE

Then this 50-member bargaining team spent seven months across the table from the school district’s bargaining team. The process was deeply frustrating and often felt like it was going nowhere.

The district proposed to add more work, more hours of work,

and two-tiered salary schedules for teachers; its proposals would have left 40 percent of the bargaining unit completely out of additional compensation.

OUSD wanted to connect evaluations to test scores and continue micromanaging us. It completely rejected adding any additional full-time employees and rejected all our common good demands — including support for Black students, shared governance over funding at the school site level, and safety at school facilities.

A rank-and-file Bargaining Communications Committee developed new strategies to keep members engaged. One committee member created a website where, at the end of every bargaining session, members could see any proposals put forth by the district and OEA.

Another developed a format for a short text-message update that she sent out to her school staff after every session. The committee soon adopted this as a formal communication sent out by all bargaining team reps.

## JOINED THE LINES

The strike reinvigorated members in unexpected ways. New leaders emerged through the strike and picket captain trainings; the new levels of engagement surprised even veteran organizers.

“I really didn’t want to go on strike and was feeling very nervous about it,” said elementary teacher Lindsey Pothast. “The joy and unity of the strike was incredibly healing, however.

“Teaching during and post-lockdown has been extremely hard, isolating and demoralizing. Being on the picket line reminded me that there’s so much that we can do to change things when we come together.”

Every morning before heading into bargaining, every member of the bargaining team joined several picket lines to connect with members and counteract the district’s lies and propaganda. And at the midday rallies, a small contingent from the bargaining team was always present to report any updates from the table.

This daily contact between members and bargainers became a key source of strength that helped both groups find the strength to keep holding the line.

## INSPIRED BY STRIKE

After 21 days of marathon bargaining and the strike, we reached a tentative agreement that made strides toward dignity in teaching and learning conditions (see sidebar). Nearly every classification of worker in OEA, not just classroom teachers, could speak to improvements relevant to their daily work.

Going back into the classroom after the strike was “therapeutic,” said fifth-grade teacher Tim Douglas, one of the union’s

“Being on the picket line reminded me that there’s so much that we can do to change things when we come together.”

—OEA member **Lindsey Pothast**

bargaining co-chairs. “I felt re-inspired by what we had collectively accomplished as a union and as a community.

“We heard from OEA members across the district that this tentative agreement was a reason for them to stay, even after strongly considering leaving the district. This means that we will be able to retain experienced teachers here in Oakland, and that students will have experienced teachers welcome them on their first day back in the fall.” ■

*Vilma Serrano is an early elementary teacher-on-special-assignment and elected executive board member of OEA. Tim Marshall is a 26-year veteran teacher and co-lead of a union cluster. This story originally appeared in Labor Notes.*

## WHAT WE WON

- Across-the-board salary increases ranging from 15% to 20%
- Additional full-time employee allocations for school counselors, nurses, teacher-librarians and visual and performing arts teachers
- Class-size reduction for middle school physical education classes
- More incentives for substitute teachers
- Additional support for newcomer students



### What we won to help us build worker power:

- Increased rank-and-file engagement, led by newly developing organizers on the bargaining committee
- More democratic participation into the bargaining process
- Stronger and more efficient site-to-leadership communication throughout bargaining and during the strike

### Common good wins:

- More direct investments at our schools with higher percentages of Black students
- Shared decision-making over community schools funding
- Commitment from the district to support free transportation for all students
- A one-year engagement and equity impact analysis for schools going through a school closure process





# Legislative Update

By Julian Peeples

**IN SEPTEMBER**, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed into law several pieces of legislation, among them bills directly related to education and educators and co-sponsored or supported by CTA, as noted.

## **AB 5: Cultural Competency Training for All Educators**

All public schools serving students in grades 7-12 will be required to provide one hour of paid LGBTQ+ cultural competency training to all certificated employees starting in the 2025-26 school year, after Newsom signed CTA co-sponsored AB 5 (Zbur) into law on Sept. 23.

"This is a great day for public education," said CTA President David Goldberg. "The Safe & Supportive Schools Act will bring opportunities to expand our LGBTQ+ cultural competency with annual training for educators across California, a strong step forward for our schools and communities."

## **AB 897: Allowing Adult Ed Teachers to Obtain Permanent Status**

Newsom signed this bill into law which will allow adult education teachers to obtain permanent status, starting in 2024. CTA-co-sponsored AB 897 (McCarty) details and codifies how adult ed teachers become permanent employees.

## **ACA 13: Protecting the Majority Vote**

Legislators acted to protect the principle of one person, one vote in approving CTA-supported ACA 13 (Ward), which is currently awaiting

Newsom's signature.

ACA 13, the Protect and Retain the Majority Vote Act, requires that any future ballot measures that propose increasing voter approval requirements pass by at least the same margin being proposed. It would also preserve the right of local government agencies to place advisory questions on the ballot to ask voters their opinions on issues.

## **AB 1078: Protecting Textbooks From Censorship**

Gov. Newsom signed CTA-supported AB 1078 (Jackson) into law on Sept. 26, requiring instructional materials to accurately portray the history, viewpoints and experiences of California's diverse and underrepresented racial, ethnic and other groups, including LGBTQ+ Californians. The new law states that school boards that refuse to include materials or remove library books or textbooks that would interfere with the FAIR Act (which requires schools to teach about contributions of women, BIPOC, and other underrepresented groups) would be committing censorship and discrimination.

AB 1078 creates a new process to request that the state superintendent of public instruction investigate and overrule a local school board's book ban if it is found to violate the FAIR Act or other anti-discrimination laws.

## **Local President Release Time for Organizing**

**CTA is launching** a release time program for local presidents to lead and carry out a site-based organizing program within their chapter. The goal of these efforts is threefold:

- To increase union membership, expand site leadership and member participation, and run successful campaigns to win on issues that members, students and communities care about;
- To take effective collective action to solve site-based issues and win strong contracts;
- To join together with other CTA chapters to more effectively address key statewide issues like school funding, educator recruitment and retention, and attacks on public education.

The program will launch in January 2024 and run through June 2025. Presidents can join the program at the start of each new semester (Spring 2024, Fall 2024, Spring 2025). Online application for the January 2024 start opens in mid-October; application for the Fall 2024 start will open next spring.

The president release time for organizing will be by formula with up to certain amounts that don't exceed full-time release. Chapter leaders can contact their PCS or board member for details and to apply.

▼ United PCS President Mary Gardner, second from left, and members won their second-ever bargain in Spring.



# CHARTER SCHOOLS ORGANIZE TO WIN

Supporting chapter leaders as they build power for educators and students

By Julian Peebles

**“WE HAVE A LOT** on our plates holding charter operators accountable,” says Kyna Collins, honors English teacher at El Camino Real Charter High School in Los Angeles and member of United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA). “It’s an everyday struggle for us.”

Across the state, educators in charter schools are organizing to build power and exercising their voices to advocate for their students and themselves — and with the collective strength of a union. At one time a rarity, charter educators are increasingly overcoming union-busting practices to win unions, negotiate their wages and working conditions, and use their collective power to fight for their students.

“Organizing, bargaining and surfacing important issues is how we show our members their voices matter,” says Jeremy Zuniga, former government and economics teacher at Oscar De

La Hoya Animo Charter in East Los Angeles and president of Asociación de Maestros Unidos (and current executive director of South Bay Teachers United).

In the past year alone, some of CTA’s most inspiring victories were accomplished by charter school locals that didn’t exist as recently as a decade ago: High Tech Education Collective (HTEC) members won their first contract ever after winning their union last year, while United PCS built power and won a major victory in their second-ever bargain that will help attract and retain the educators their students depend on and deserve.

The victories won by these educators are even more impressive due to the “mega waiver” that exempts charter schools from most of education code, which requires local charter unions to negotiate for most of the basic rights guaranteed to all employees of traditional K–12 school districts. ➔

▼ Solidarity rocks! High Tech Education Collective members kicked off the year by winning their first contract ever.



"This first contract is the first time we have guaranteed sick days and personal time," says Micah Wullschleger, five-year humanities teacher at High Tech High in Chula Vista and HTEC member. "To have a sustainable contract is what's best for our students."

For HTEC, in San Diego County, that meant also negotiating a 25-to-1 student-to-teacher ratio into their contract, which benefits the whole school community. In Santa Cruz, United PCS members are hoping their new contract will mean Pacific Collegiate School stops losing a significant number of teachers every year. Both victories made ripples throughout the California educational landscape — United PCS President Mary Gardner says a colleague from a neighboring local said the campaign made a difference for all educators in the area.

"That really meant a lot to have that impact," she says. "It's all about raising teacher voice because we understand what students need."

These leaders and 23 of their colleagues who are members of CTA-affiliated charter school unions were the initial cohort in a pilot program born out of a recommendation by the CTA Charter School Advisory Committee to the CTA Board

of Directors. The result was the Charter Leader Strategy meeting, which brought 25 charter local leaders to the March CTA State Council of Education meeting in Los Angeles.

The goal was to provide a space for these educators to have discussions about issues important to charter school educators and give them a firsthand look at the inner workings of State Council, CTA's policy-making body, so they can bring a charter educator voice as the cohort expands and continues.

"It was cool to see it all in operation and realize 'I'm a very small part in a very big machine,'" says Sal Williams, English teacher and president of San Jose's South Bay Educators United (SBEU), which was the first educators' union to organize during the 2020 quarantine.

While some of the charter leaders were still fighting for their first contract, others are more experienced like Nicole Piper, president of California Virtual Educators United (CVEU), who is in her sixth contract campaign. Even a seasoned leader like her found the meeting informative and powerful, learning that many of the charter management organizations across the state are represented by the same law firm.

## ON UNIONIZING:

### MARY GARDNER

"Having a union gives you a sense of dignity in our profession that is often quite lacking in our society. Our union has been huge for building community and welcoming new faculty."

### SAL WILLIAMS

"Winning transparency has made a huge difference. We used to not know how much money we had to spend and now I know exactly what's in the budget that we can spend on books, supplies or field trips."

### JEREMY ZUNIGA

"Having our voices heard is incredibly important. Any decision from management is going to impact our students, and ensuring educator voice is why we're all here."

### NICOLE PIPER

"Teachers are loving, caring and generous people and sometimes managers take advantage of that. Organizing makes school better for your students. Unionizing helps the whole community."

### KYNA COLLINS

"A union gives you a voice. It provides you with resources, opportunities and support. If we want public education in California to succeed, educators need to be at the table, and the way to do that in a meaningful way is in a union."

### MICAH WULLSCHLEGER

"Regardless of the beautiful, unique things we can do at our charter schools, we are all deserving of some basic labor rights and protections that are worth fighting for."



## ON THE POWER OF SOLIDARITY:

### MARY GARDNER

"As educators, we all want the same things. We're all in this because we love our students and want to serve them as best we can."

### SAL WILLIAMS

"I feel really comfortable knowing that CTA puts political power to protect educators and students."

### NICOLE PIPER

"We're advocating for students to have a place and accountability for charter schools and the industry, so students are at the center."

### KYNA COLLINS

"We just bargained for catastrophic leave. It was something that didn't exist in our contract. Anything that impacts the educator environment is going to impact the students."

### MICAH WULLSCHLEGER

"The number of unionized charters in the past few years is inspiring — you're not alone and this feels like a good thing."

## ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER CHARTER LOCALS:

### MARY GARDNER

"So much of what CTA does is connect people. Having the space and time to build with other educators and CTA staff has been so important. It's been sustaining."

### TIERRA ALLEN

"Seeing our fellow union siblings having success makes our fight feel worth it to know that there's an end in sight. It inspires me as we work on successor language for our classified unit."

### JEREMY ZUNIGA

"I'm inspired by charter locals' victories around parental leave. It inspires me to push for that for us."

### NICOLE PIPER

"We're watching what's working for other charter locals and when management says it's not possible, we know otherwise."

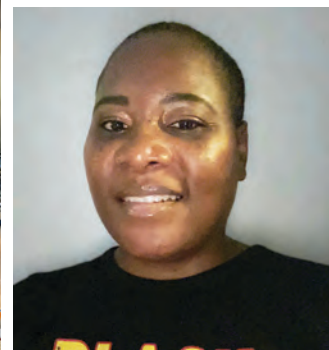
### KYNA COLLINS

"Being a part of these networks, we pay attention to and support each other and spread awareness about our campaigns."

▼ Kyna Collins and Jeremy Zuniga are co-chairs of the CTA Charter School Issues Advisory Committee.



▼ Micah Wullschleger and Tierra Allen say the struggles and successes of fellow charter locals inspired their members.

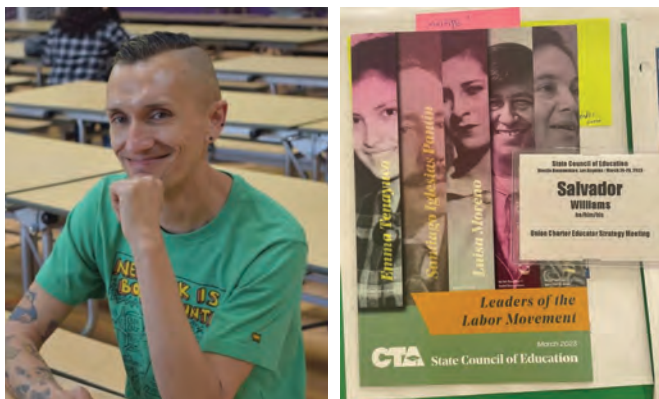


"We're actually interconnected by the [law firms] we're working with [that represent management] and that was an eye-opening experience for me," Piper says.

The ability to build together in person and network remotely as educators and union leaders at charter schools has been invaluable. Tierra Allen, an independent studies and health teacher at Five Keys Charter in San Francisco, says the educators have been sharing information on a group chat and following each other's bargains and struggles on social media.

"They say we're stronger together and that's true. One of my biggest takeaways is we're never alone," says Allen, a member of United Educators of San Francisco-Five Keys. "It's a resource, because now there's a network of charter unions to feed off each other, support and help strategize. There's a wealth of information being shared among these unions." →

▼ Sal Williams says the visit to CTA State Council showed how members are a part of something much larger than themselves.



Charter local union leaders also had the opportunity to learn and connect with each other at CTA Summer Institute's charter educator-specific strand. Gardner called the experience invaluable.

"I can't say enough about that week, the trainers, the charter educators I met and the planning I was able to do," says Gardner, who attended in 2022. "When you're involved in union leadership, it can be exhausting, so it's great to meet other people who are doing the same work — it makes me hopeful to see so many people working hard to make things better!"

## ON SUPPORT FROM CTA:

### MARY GARDNER

"Our CTA staff has been invaluable. As teachers, we look out for our students' best interests; we both advocate for them and empower them to advocate for themselves. That's what my CTA staff is to me — all our work would be impossible without that support."

### TIERRA ALLEN

"I can't tell you how much being connected to CTA means to our unit. The charter school strand at CTA Summer Institute helped me understand that my management was using the same tactics as other charter operators."

### SAL WILLIAMS

"Even though we're union now, it's still very new to us and we rely on the expertise of our CTA staff. Everyone in our local benefits from staff support."

### JEREMY ZUNIGA

"CTA is looking out for all educators."

▼ Nicole Piper (top row, middle) and the CVEU leadership team are working on their sixth contract campaign.



As the Charter Leader Strategy meeting continues this year, the network of charter educators is growing, with work continuing on statewide contract standards that lift the floor of charter educator compensation, complement existing teacher contracts and improve the quality of life for all educators.

"Until educators are the ones making decisions and have power, things are not going to change," Gardner says. "The teachers that are going to be the best are going to be the most respected and feel like they have some control of their environment. I feel that the only way to achieve that is organizing." ■

## WHAT YOU WISH TRADITIONAL K-12 EDUCATORS KNEW ABOUT CHARTER EDUCATORS:

### TIERRA ALLEN

"We are stronger together and we can help each other. We want the same things: safe, nurturing learning environments, safe working conditions and fair pay."

### SAL WILLIAMS

"When we're establishing a contract, we're essentially fighting for Ed Code. We're organizing for basic rights that most K-12 educators already enjoy."

### NICOLE PIPER

"We're in the same fight on the same team working toward the same end — and we are not our employer. We are trying to change things from the inside to make them better."

▼ Breaking ground at 231 Grant.



▼ Palo Alto Education Association President Teri Baldwin and Los Altos Teachers Association President Chris Hazelton.



# Investing in Educator Housing

**Development will allow teachers, ESPs to live where they work**

By **Julian Peoples**

**AS EDUCATORS** across the state grapple with the ability to afford to live where they work, a public-private partnership in Palo Alto broke ground in August on a housing development that will bring 110 new units set aside for teachers and education support professionals in the expensive San Francisco Bay Area.

The housing project, called 231 Grant, was made possible through an innovative partnership that saw Santa Clara County contribute \$37 million, social media giant Meta give a \$25 million grant, and the San Francisco Housing Accelerator Fund provide a \$24.7 million permanent loan. Four school districts — Palo Alto Unified, Los Altos, Mountain View Whisman and Foothill-De Anza Community College District — contributed a total of \$3.25 million to the development.

Educators and ESPs in these districts will be eligible to apply for an apartment when the project is completed in mid- to late-2025.

"These 110 units will ultimately serve thousands of educators and these educators will serve tens of thousands of students," said Joe Simitian, the Santa Clara County Supervisor who championed the development. "We know that when classified staff and teachers are residents of the places where they work, we are all beneficiaries."

Simitian first proposed educator housing in 2018 in response to an environment where teachers were commuting three to four hours round-trip because wages were not keeping pace with rising housing costs. The son of a teacher who bought his childhood home in Palo Alto on a single educator's salary, Simitian knew something needed to happen to provide present-day educators some relief. The result is 110 affordable studio, one- and two-bedroom rental homes with amenities including gardens, a children's play area and bicycle parking.

Palo Alto Education Association President Teri Baldwin and Los Altos Teachers Association President Chris Hazelton were both seated in the front row at the ground-breaking ceremony, beaming with excitement about the project moving forward.

"By making this investment in housing for educators, our community is showing how valuable these essential workers are," Hazelton said. "It is often said that teaching is an art. If you ask a teacher, they might say it's the art of balancing time and energy. By making their lives easier, a teacher is able to focus more time and energy on their students, not on worrying about housing, working a second job or their commute."





A specific number of units are set aside for educators from each of the school districts, which contributed \$50,000 for each unit to secure priority access for their workers. To qualify for residency, applicants must be employed by one of the school districts or approved schools and meet income requirements. Rent will be set based on household income and size of the unit — and should not exceed 30 percent of a household's income.

"By allowing educators to pay rent that corresponds to their income, we show them meaningful support as they start their professional lives, and we demonstrate their importance in our community," Hazelton said. "I look forward to seeing more projects like this in our community."



**"By making their lives easier, a teacher is able to focus more time and energy on their students, not on worrying about housing, working a second job or their commute."**

—Los Altos Teachers Association President  
**Chris Hazelton**

There have been a series of bills signed into law over the past seven years aimed at alleviating the teacher housing crunch, the most recent of which signed by the governor last year allows staff housing to be built on any property owned by a school district without requiring the district to request zoning changes from city or county officials. A 2022 report on education workforce housing in California (located at [csba.org](https://csba.org)) stated that 46 school districts and other educational agencies were pursuing projects at 83 sites, though only four had been completed at the time of publication. ■



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▼ San Diego County Association of Educators leaders at CTA's Region 4 Leadership Conference.



# Specialized Services, Unique Issues in County Offices

**Educator safety among top priorities**

By **Julian Peeples**

**"WE SERVE JUVENILE HALL,** we serve at risk youth, probation, career and technical education, moderate to severely disabled students, visually impaired students, — there are so many different programs" says resource teacher Shelby Rider, president of Yuba County Certificated Employees Association. "We work in the most difficult conditions and we teach the most vulnerable kids."

California's 58 county offices of education provide a support infrastructure to local school districts, approving district budgets and Local Control Accountability Plans, registering teacher credentials and developing programs to serve students with special needs throughout the county. These programs support students that local school districts often lack the resources or facilities to serve.

Steph Cruz has been working for San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) since 1996. The San Diego County Association of Educators (SDCAE) president says her members work in programs

that specialize in a variety of student populations: the unhoused, foster youth, students on probation and incarcerated, expelled students, students with alternative living situations, migrant education, students who are deaf and hard of hearing, those who are visually impaired, and infants and toddlers. The focused nature of the work allows her more time to reach and teach her students.

"I'm not working with 200 kids. I've had classes with 20 kids that were self-contained," she says. "A lot of educators in the county office never leave. We start here and retire here. I think so much of that has to do with a passion for serving the underserved."



Shelby Rider

## Staffing and safety

Working with these populations comes with specific safety concerns for each, Cruz says, such as the array of challenges that stem from working with students and families experiencing trauma in different educational settings.



▼ Association of County Employees members rally for safety in Spring 2023.



Maintaining safe teaching and learning environments is a major priority for SDCAE — "it's an equity issue," Cruz says. The local recently collaborated with SDCOE as part of a joint safety team (contractually negotiated), members and working with management to develop recommendations to increase safety. Cruz says it's been a positive experience.

"The county has done more than support us — they've been partners in this," she says.

The experiences differ vastly based on the county office. Association of County Employees (ACE) members rallied earlier this year before a Santa Clara County Office of Education board meeting to call attention to injuries suffered by educators at the hands of students while on the job, ranging from bites and bruises to broken bones and busted teeth to wounds that required stitches. ACE President Tara Guerrero said during the Spring rally that educators do not blame their students for the injuries, calling them "a result of management's failure to provide appropriate student-specific learning, training, support and resources including staff."

ACE educators point to inadequate staffing as a major reason for ongoing unsafe teaching conditions. While the teacher shortage is impacting public schools nationwide, county offices endure specific challenges related to their relationship with local school districts that compound staffing problems. Rider says local school districts often believe they can better support students they have transferred to the county office and save money, leading to districts reclaiming these students — to the detriment of everyone involved.

"It's a nightmare and it really affects our moderate to severe special education students," Rider says. "When districts take back, they look at numbers— they don't

understand the severity of disabilities and needs."

## Job security, local connections

This causes great turmoil in county offices, which often lay off educators when programs are transferred back to local school districts, causing folks to reconsider where they work.

"Everybody's worried about the quality of care. The county provides specialized programs that serve multiple districts

by sharing costs. It's cheaper in the long-run to operate these programs through the county than the districts," Rider says. "How do we get our members to stay at the Yuba County Office of Education when everything is in flux and members don't know if their job will be there next year?"

County educators' local associations continue to organize and build power across the state to support their members, advocate for their students and fight for safe and equitable conditions — even when facing basic obstacles like distance. San Bernardino County is more than 20,000 square miles (the largest county in the nation) and while virtual meetings have helped to make distance less of an issue, there's still no substitute for building together in person. Even at a fifth of the size, Cruz says the geography of San Diego County can be challenging.

"We try to have in-person events around the county and in multiple locations," she says.

County office local association leaders also meet regularly statewide and regionally to discuss their unique issues and collaborate on approaches. Cruz says that while they tend to

be overlooked, county offices serve the most underserved students and have the greatest potential for impact.

"If you send kids to us, they're in good hands," Cruz says. ■



**"A lot of educators in the county office never leave. I think so much of that has to do with a passion for serving the underserved."**

—San Diego County Association of Educators President **Steph Cruz**



# BARGAINING ROUNDUP

Compiled by **Julian Peebles**



## SAUSALITO:

### *Unanimous Vote as Educators Get Strike-Ready*

The 27 members of **Sausalito District Teachers Association** (SDTA) are united and ready to strike for a fair contract that attracts and retains the quality educators Sausalito-Marin City students deserve, voting unanimously in September to authorize a strike if necessary.

Educators are currently at impasse with Sausalito Marin City School District management after trying to reach a fair settlement since January. SDTA and the district are headed to fact-finding, the final step before a possible strike.

SDTA members are working without a contract for the second school year in a row, with the district failing to show it values educators. Also at issue is binding arbitration and pay for additional work performed for the district.

"Our membership at SDTA is composed of passionate, qualified educators who deeply value the Sausalito and Marin City community and students. Our greatest hope is to be provided a fair contract that keeps up with the increases in housing and living costs, and that meets or exceeds what other Marin County school districts provide so that we can attract and retain the best educators for our students," said SDTA Co-President Sean St. Denny.

"I'm confident that independent fact-finding will make it clear that it is possible to meet our demands, while still being able to increase district reserves substantially. We urge SMCSDD management to negotiate fairly so that we can agree to a contract and continue school without interruption."



## FRESNO:

### *Strike Vote Scheduled*

The 4,000 members of **Fresno Teachers Association** (FTA) will vote on whether to authorize a strike as the union enters the second year of difficult bargaining, with management failing to listen to educators and proposing healthcare contribution cuts. FTA has set Oct. 18 for a strike authorization vote, as they continue their fight to reimagine education and provide the services and support all Fresno students deserve.

"I know a strike isn't ideal, but it could help us make real changes in our classrooms and all the schools in our district. But for that to happen, we need to stand together or just accept the status quo system and the cuts that the district is proposing," FTA President Manuel Bonilla said in a message to members. "When we come together, we can make big things happen. We have the power to create changes that will make our classrooms and schools even better for everyone."

Follow FTA's fight on Facebook at @FresnoTA or at [fresnoteachers.org](https://fresnoteachers.org).



## RIALTO: *Agreement Reached*

After a successful rally in late September, **Rialto Education Association** reached a settlement with its district. Highlights: Member pay increased 9% on the pay schedule and 1% off the pay schedule (one-time bonus), retroactive to July 1, 2023; Kaiser benefits were maintained; all non-Kaiser benefits will be charged at the lower CSEA rate. At press time, REA members were anticipating approval of the tentative agreement.





## HARTNELL COLLEGE:

### *Rallying for Fair Contract*

Educators at **Hartnell College** in Salinas are continuing their fight to attract and retain qualified part- and full-time faculty, with the college's compensation stuck at the bottom compared to community colleges in the region. Hartnell College Faculty Association (HCFA) members have been rallying and organizing to change the culture at the college and win fair pay, lab time for faculty chairs, healthcare benefits for part-time teachers and equitable class sizes.

"Hartnell College management's refusal to put the money into instructional excellence has allowed teachers' salaries to fall close to last in the state," said Nancy Schur-Beymer, HCFA president. "If this board of trustees is serious about helping our students achieve their educational goals, then attracting and retaining quality teachers must be a priority."

The Hartnell College Board of Trustees showed a major lack of respect for educator voices in June when trustees invoked a rarely used policy to silence faculty during a board meeting. HCFA is investigating whether the incident was a violation of open meetings laws.



## GILROY:

### *Impasse After Year of Unsuccessful Bargaining*

**Gilroy Teachers Association (GTA)** and Gilroy Unified management are at impasse after more than a year of difficult bargaining and a collaborative end not currently in sight. Gilroy teachers rallied in September to call on school board members to negotiate a fair and respectful contract around effective learning conditions, student and educator wellness and fair compensation.

GTA members are among the lowest paid county-wide despite dealing with large class sizes that impact student learning conditions and having excessive outside-the-classroom duties.

"With the district's significant reserves and funding from the state, there are enough resources to improve working conditions and pay us as the professionals we are through a salary increase that can allow us to live in the area we work, ensure every student has a dedicated, qualified educator in the classroom and provide adequate service to students without being pulled from our job duties because the district cannot retain its educators," said GTA President Caitlin Madolora. "We are tired of GUSD's de-prioritization of educators and the stress it puts on our students."

At press time, GTA leaders were preparing to file for a fact-finding hearing.



## BASSETT:

### *Resources to attract and retain educators*

**Bassett Teachers Association (BTA)** members organized and won a contract that helps attract and retain quality educators. BTA won an agreement that will increase educator pay by 17 percent over three years and increase the healthcare contribution by Bassett Unified School District, based in Los Angeles County. BTA also won contract language improvements.

Multiplication Tables					
1 ONE	2 TWO	3 THREE	4 FOUR	5 FIVE	6 SIX
1 X 1 = 1	2 X 1 = 2	3 X 1 = 3	4 X 1 = 4	5 X 1 = 5	6 X 1 = 6
1 X 2 = 2	2 X 2 = 4	3 X 2 = 6	4 X 2 = 8	5 X 2 = 10	6 X 2 = 12
1 X 3 = 3	2 X 3 = 6	3 X 3 = 9	4 X 3 = 12	5 X 3 = 15	6 X 3 = 18
1 X 4 = 4	2 X 4 = 8	3 X 4 = 12	4 X 4 = 16	5 X 4 = 20	6 X 4 = 24
1 X 5 = 5	2 X 5 = 10	3 X 5 = 15	4 X 5 = 20	5 X 5 = 25	6 X 5 = 30
1 X 6 = 6	2 X 6 = 12	3 X 6 = 18	4 X 6 = 24	5 X 6 = 30	6 X 6 = 36
1 X 7 = 7	2 X 7 = 14	3 X 7 = 21	4 X 7 = 28	5 X 7 = 35	6 X 7 = 42
1 X 8 = 8	2 X 8 = 16	3 X 8 = 24	4 X 8 = 32	5 X 8 = 40	6 X 8 = 48
1 X 9 = 9	2 X 9 = 18	3 X 9 = 27	4 X 9 = 36	5 X 9 = 45	6 X 9 = 54
1 X 10 = 10	2 X 10 = 20	3 X 10 = 30	4 X 10 = 40	5 X 10 = 50	6 X 10 = 60
1 X 11 = 11	2 X 11 = 22	3 X 11 = 33	4 X 11 = 44	5 X 11 = 55	6 X 11 = 66
1 X 12 = 12	2 X 12 = 24	3 X 12 = 36	4 X 12 = 48	5 X 12 = 60	6 X 12 = 72
7 SEVEN	8 EIGHT	9 NINE	10 TEN	11 ELEVEN	12 TWELVE
7 X 1 = 7	8 X 1 = 8	9 X 1 = 9	10 X 1 = 10	11 X 1 = 11	12 X 1 = 12
7 X 2 = 14	8 X 2 = 16	9 X 2 = 18	10 X 2 = 20	11 X 2 = 22	12 X 2 = 24
7 X 3 = 21	8 X 3 = 24	9 X 3 = 27	10 X 3 = 30	11 X 3 = 33	12 X 3 = 36
7 X 4 = 28	8 X 4 = 32	9 X 4 = 36	10 X 4 = 40	11 X 4 = 44	12 X 4 = 48
7 X 5 = 35	8 X 5 = 40	9 X 5 = 45	10 X 5 = 50	11 X 5 = 55	12 X 5 = 60
7 X 6 = 42	8 X 6 = 48	9 X 6 = 54	10 X 6 = 60	11 X 6 = 66	12 X 6 = 72
7 X 7 = 49	8 X 7 = 56	9 X 7 = 63	10 X 7 = 70	11 X 7 = 77	12 X 7 = 84
7 X 8 = 56	8 X 8 = 64	9 X 8 = 72	10 X 8 = 80	11 X 8 = 88	12 X 8 = 96
7 X 9 = 63	8 X 9 = 72	9 X 9 = 81	10 X 9 = 90	11 X 9 = 99	12 X 9 = 108
7 X 10 = 70	8 X 10 = 80	9 X 10 = 90	10 X 10 = 100	11 X 10 = 110	12 X 10 = 120
7 X 11 = 77	8 X 11 = 88	9 X 11 = 99	10 X 11 = 110	11 X 11 = 121	12 X 11 = 132
7 X 12 = 84	8 X 12 = 96	9 X 12 = 108	10 X 12 = 120	11 X 12 = 132	12 X 12 = 144

## Learning from "Silent Teachers"

① Look closely to remind yourself what it teaches

② Think, "What am I working on?"

③ Ask, "How can this teacher help with that?"

④ Be brave and try something you learned

Courtesy Meghan Hargrave

# Charts: The Silent Teachers

## 3 considerations for using classroom charts effectively

By **Meghan Hargrave**

**BEFORE MY FIRST YEAR** of teaching, I scoured local teacher supply stores and scored charts that defined prime numbers and fractions, listed parts of speech, and named the writing process. Throughout the year, I spent hours perfecting the charts that would hang on my classroom walls, making sure handwriting was perfect, borders just right.

But I never taught students how to use the charts as cueing systems for learning, and I rarely referenced them during lessons. Instead of changing them as the year progressed and new units started, I added more, covering every inch of wall space by the time the last day of school rolled around.

If I could go back, I would teach students early and often how to use charts more effectively, in ways that support their independence and agency. To help all learners access and use these powerful "silent teachers," we should take into consideration visibility, timing and student ownership.

### Visibility

Will students be able to visually access charts? I have been in many classrooms — including my own! — where teachers have charts reaching all the way to the ceiling. It is highly unlikely that students will look up that high and equally unlikely that teachers will remember to reference these charts while teaching. Instead, when considering the placement of charts, think about student line of sight. What will they be able to see from their workspaces?

It's also important to think about how to make wall displays aesthetically supportive of student learning. One strategy used in a New York City school involved color-coding specific subject areas. You could walk into any fourth-grade classroom and know exactly where to look for a given subject area. Students knew that purple/yellow meant writing, red/blue meant math, green meant a resource that could be used across subjects, etc.

### Timing

Ask yourself, when is the best time to share this particular chart with students? Hold back from putting everything up at once; instead, share it when a lesson is taught. Remind yourself that it's OK to start a unit with empty walls and unfinished resources. In due time, you will fill those spaces with content that matches your teaching. Adding content to a chart at the time you teach it will make the usefulness of the tool obvious to students.

Consider how resources will change and grow over time. It should be rare that a chart is put up at the start of the year and remains up until summer break. As the year progresses, think about what you could add or change. When you move to a new unit or start a new semester, ask students what charts they're using or not using. Have discussions about whether a resource is helpful or if something else might

Continued on Page 51





# Strategies for Test Prep

Interactive practices can help students show what they know

By **Meghan Hargrave**

**AS TEACHERS**, we sometimes see a discrepancy between the skills that students demonstrate during daily instruction and their transfer to different contexts like standardized testing. It can be tempting to try to help students bridge this gap by asking test-like questions on homework assignments, using a multiple-choice unit test, or offering constructed-response questions throughout the year.

Although these approaches can be helpful, they are more about practice than preparation. To instead implement practical strategies and simple teaching moves throughout the curriculum, the following strategies offer a wraparound approach. They also create consistency that helps students demonstrate learning, increase confidence, and feel more successful in their ability to demonstrate knowledge in new context.

## Academic graffiti walls

We've all seen student-facing materials (rubrics, test questions) that include academic language not typically used in day-to-day teaching. Helping students access and understand these words is essential to their success. If students can think flexibly — replacing an unfamiliar word with one that they are more comfortable with, for example — they will better understand what they are being asked to do.

Start by creating an interactive academic vocabulary graffiti wall — a word wall that groups together terms that mean the same thing. Put a word theme on the wall — for example, *central idea* — and invite students, throughout the year, to add words that share that theme's meaning (for

*“These strategies create authentic opportunities for students to practice critical thinking, deductive reasoning and engage in argument from evidence.”*

*central idea*, synonyms might be *message*, *lesson learned*, or *mostly about*).

The graffiti wall serves as a reference tool, but its central purpose is to prepare students to think flexibly about language. Its presence promotes students' ability to parse the meaning of unfamiliar academic vocabulary by relating new information to prior knowledge — a critical skill across contexts.

## In-the-moment multiple choice questions

Multiple choice questions are often presented in two ways: a question set with one very obvious answer, or a set with more than one accurate answer that requires students to decide between two or more decent options. The latter includes questions containing phrases like “which answer most” or “which answer best,” requiring learners to rank before selecting.

To prepare students for these question sets, write multiple choice questions with possible answers created by the students. When reading aloud or solving a group problem, pose a question and ask each student to write down their answer on a sticky note or small piece of paper. Grab answers, at random, from three to five students: These will serve as your multiple choice possibilities.

Once you've collected several possible answers, invite the rest of the class to work together to rank/sort the options. Ask them

which answer best fits the question, or which has the strongest evidence, and why.

To get creative with this activity, you can also ask students to make a case for which incorrect answer is the best, and why (perhaps it is the most creative or closest to the



Continued from Page 49

be more helpful. When it feels as though students have mastered a skill, make a big deal over their graduation from one chart to another. Of course, if you have a few students who would still benefit, you can give them an individual chart to use as needed.

## Student ownership

Charts are for students, and the ultimate goal is that the students will use them independently. They serve as reminders of lessons taught, a list of skills to practice, and a guide for next steps. However, we all know that getting students to use charts independently is no small feat. Consider teaching a replicable protocol that gives students specific steps they can use to get the most out of the silent teachers around the room.

You might find that some students benefit from having copies of charts on their desk. It could be that they're more likely to use the resource when it's right next to the assignment they're working on. If this is the case, teach students a "prep minute" routine where they get out any charts they might want to reference before the lesson begins. This will

**"Hold back from putting every chart up at once; instead, share it when a lesson is taught. It's OK to start a unit with empty walls and unfinished resources."**

remind them to use this resource as they work, instead of waiting until they struggle and then having to search for something that would help.

It can be tempting to keep charts on a slide deck, pulling them up when you move to a particular subject or start a certain lesson. That said, refrain from letting the slides replace the need for

charts around the room. Digital access is helpful but sometimes falls under the category of "out of sight, out of mind."

All educators strive for transference, independence, and productive practice. Thinking about the ways our classroom walls can be tools to achieve these goals is essential. Being deliberate about every choice we make, including how we decorate our walls, pays off. When we are intentional and thoughtful about the way we use visual material, students will respond accordingly.

*This story originally appeared in Edutopia.*

Continued from Page 50

correct answer). This creates authentic opportunities for students to rank, sort and choose from possible answers, engaging critical thinking skills while preparing for assessments that require similar reasoning.

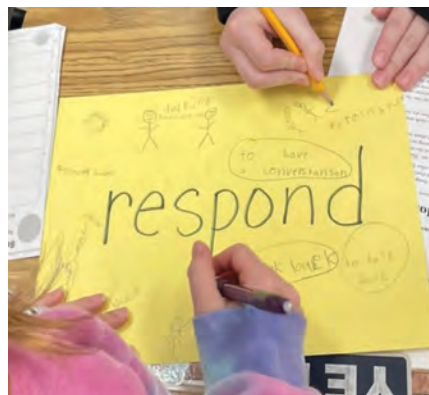
## Stem sorts for questions

If you look across various assessment types (e.g., diagnostic tests, state tests, entrance exams), certain types of questions come up over and over. Students will be asked something about finding the main idea of a text, naming a theme, or defining vocabulary, for example.

Naming these broader categories with students can help them identify the many ways they might be asked to apply these core skills.

To do so, give students a handful of questions on cards, and have them sort the cards into categories. You might name the categories ahead of time or leave it up to students to identify how they would like to group the patterns that emerge. What similarities do they notice between questions? How do they know?

▼ Students collaborating on a graffiti wall project. Courtesy Meghan Hargrave



After students have done a sort like this, ask them to create more questions for each category or design a new sorting activity for a group of peers. Doing so familiarizes them with different types of questions bound to arise in assessment tasks and invites concept attainment through the use of examples and nonexamples that will boost their ability to strategize during testing.

## From testing to transference

Using the activities above to create authentic opportunities to engage

students allows them to practice critical thinking, deductive reasoning, and engage in argument from evidence. This readies them for tests threaded throughout many school systems, but more important, invites them to show what they know through a variety of mediums, across the curriculum.

*This story originally appeared in Edutopia.*



# YOUR FAMILY'S MENTAL HEALTH

## Use the Calm app as a resource for parenting, pregnancy and to support your children

**DID YOU KNOW** your CTA mental health benefits also extend to your whole family? Calm ([calm.com](https://calm.com)), our mental health partner, can be used by anyone in your family at various life stages, including parenting and pregnancy. For those with small humans, Calm Kids ([calm.com/app/kids](https://calm.com/app/kids)) is a wonderful resource to support your children as they grow.

Here's a selection of resources to get you and your family started on the mental health journey:

### ■ Conscious Parenting Masterclass

In this masterclass series, Dr. Shefali Tsabary, a renowned clinical psychologist, shares how you can create a mindful environment for your children so they can ease their anxieties and authentically connect with who they are.

### ■ Calm Kids

In this collection, you'll find a variety of content offerings for your little ones — soundscapes, lullabies, meditations, sleep stories, kids' movements and more — that they can use whenever they need it.

### ■ Nurturing Pregnancy

In this pregnancy collection, you'll learn empowering practices and hear reassuring talks to help you through the entire journey of pregnancy. You'll also be able to lower stress, reduce anxiety and improve sleep. For medical advice, please consult your doctor.

### ■ Postpartum Healing

In this postpartum collection, you'll learn practices designed to support you during this tender and powerful time as you care for your baby. For medical advice, please consult your doctor.



## Activate Your Subscription

To activate your Calm subscription, make sure you are logged in to [CTAMemberBenefits.org](https://CTAMemberBenefits.org).

Once you are logged in, under **How to Enroll**, scan the QR code below or use the unique CTA link to activate your account.

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- Sign in to your existing Calm account or create an account.
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- Download the Calm app and log in to your account to access the premium content.





# ACCOLADES

*Kudos for members and chapters around the state*



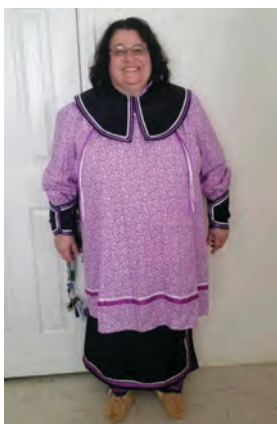
## High Tech Honor

The San Diego Labor Council recognized **High Tech Education Collective** (HTEC) as Organizer of the Year at its annual dinner in the summer. The event, attended by local elected and labor leaders, bestowed the honor because of HTEC's "unrelentless efforts to organize teachers across San Diego and Imperial counties." The award was photographed with various HTEC members in the following days.



## Gone Global

Science teacher and San Ramon Valley Education Association member **Teresa Butler-Doran** won't be in her classroom come January. Thanks to a prestigious Fulbright Distinguished Teacher Award, she will instead spend the second semester in Finland designing curriculum that connects students across borders. Follow her journey on Facebook, under Teacher Teresa Gone Global.



## Dressed for the Occasion

Madera Unified Teachers Association member **Beth Morris** was recently named the 2023 Teacher of the Year at her school, Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School. The teacher librarian was congratulated on social media by Naqiba Gregory, CTA Board advisory chair for the Ethnic Minority Early Identification & Development program and NEA Board director. Gregory noted that EMEID alum Morris is a member of the indigenous tribe Delaware Lenape of Canada, and wore her regalia for the award celebration. She lauded Morris' "wealth of knowledge" and dedication to her students and community.

## Public Pensions Help Close the Wealth Gap

**A NEW REPORT** finds that defined benefit pensions, especially public pensions, provide a key buffer against economic hardship for women, Blacks, Latinos and those without a four-year college degree, and narrow the wealth gap among older families.

NEA partnered with the National Institute on Retirement Security and UC Berkeley to support a research project on retirement inequality titled, "Closing the Gap: The Role of Public Pensions in Reducing Retirement Inequality." (NEA will hold a webinar about the report on October 19; at press time, details were not known but can be found at [nea.org](https://nea.org))

Defined benefit plans offer guaranteed retirement benefits for employees. The report finds that public pensions play an outsized role in the retirement income security of older adults and reduce wealth inequality by race and gender. As private pension coverage declines, according to the report, public sector retirement benefits form a bulwark of middle-class retirement security, particularly for marginalized communities who have been shut out of other wealth-building opportunities. Read the report at [nirsonline.org/reports/closingthegap](https://nirsonline.org/reports/closingthegap).



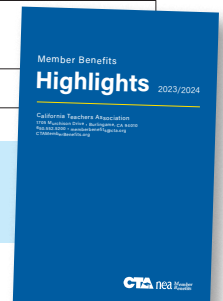
# ADDED VALUE OF CTA MEMBERSHIP

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Whether you are trying to save money on your back-to-school supplies or looking for ways to protect yourself and family with insurance or financial solutions, we have you covered.

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CTA/NEA Educators Employment Liability Insurance (EEL) & Group Legal Services (GLS)	CTA Legal Department or your Regional CTA office 650-552-5425, <a href="http://CTA.org/legal">CTA.org/legal</a>
Disaster Relief Fund	<a href="http://CTAMemberBenefits.org/drpf">CTAMemberBenefits.org/drpf</a>
VOLUNTARY INSURANCE	CONTACT
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CTA Group Disability and Life Insurance by The Standard	800-522-0406 <a href="http://CTAMemberBenefits.org/standard">CTAMemberBenefits.org/standard</a>
RETIREMENT SAVINGS	CONTACT
CTA Retirement Savings Plan 403(b)	<b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:Team@ctaretirementplan.org">Team@ctaretirementplan.org</a> <b>Info:</b> <a href="http://CTAMemberBenefits.org/rsp">CTAMemberBenefits.org/rsp</a>
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CTA Credit Card Services	<a href="http://CTAMemberBenefits.org/cc">CTAMemberBenefits.org/cc</a>
NEA Pet Insurance	<a href="http://neamb.com/pet">neamb.com/pet</a>
INFORMATION/TOOLS	SOURCE
Federal Student Loan Debt	<a href="http://NEAMB.com/loanforgiveness">NEAMB.com/loanforgiveness</a> <a href="http://CTAMemberBenefits.org/studentloans">CTAMemberBenefits.org/studentloans</a>
Member Benefits Leader Tools	<a href="http://CTAMemberBenefits.org/leaders">CTAMemberBenefits.org/leaders</a>

Download the 2023–24 Member Benefits Highlights for a complete look at the programs. [CTAMemberBenefits.org/download](http://CTAMemberBenefits.org/download)





# 2023–24 IFT Innovation Grants Awarded

## Next application period opens Dec. 1

**THE MISSION OF** CTA's Institute for Teaching is to enhance, support and sustain high-quality teaching and high-quality public schools for all California students. This includes grants to educators for innovative classroom and school projects that support strength-based, teacher-driven change.

Sixty-seven CTA members and local chapters received grants for 2023-24 for projects ranging from "When Food Meets Tech" to "To Infinity and Beyond Inflat-able Planetarium." Grants are funded by CTA member dues; to date, CTA members have funded 569 grant projects totaling more than \$6.7 million.

Application for the 2024-25 year opens Dec. 1. All CTA members are eligible to apply for an Educator grant (up to \$5,000) or an Impact grant (up to \$20,000). See details, find resources and current and past grant summaries, and get ready to apply at [cta.org/ift](https://cta.org/ift).

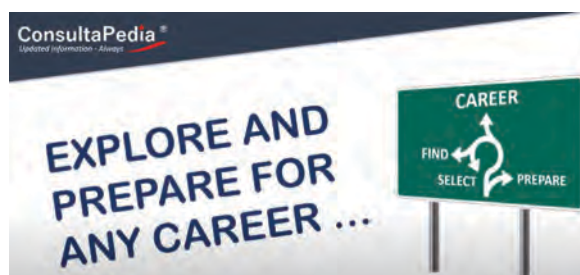
Educator Grant	Impact Grant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Up to \$5,000</li> <li>Implemented by a single educator</li> <li>Impacts a classroom or single group of students at a school site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Up to \$20,000</li> <li>Implemented by a team of 2 or more educators</li> <li>Impacts multiple classrooms or sites within a school district</li> </ul>



*Continued from Page 56*

## All-Important Career Prep

Ralph Jagodka, a professor of business management and former longtime member of Mt. San Antonio College Faculty Association, found that one of the most important issues for his students over the years was career preparation. He developed and continues to update free, comprehensive career resources to fill the need, which are used by students, career advisors and staff. Through interactive pages at [consultapedia.com/career](https://consultapedia.com/career), students will find not only an online test to identify their interests but resources to explore/prepare for various careers — including writing resumes and interviewing — as well as how gain experience and build skills (class projects, volunteer activities, etc.), network and find appropriate professional development.



Got something for Lit From Within — a video series, podcast, album or something else? Tell us at [editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org) with "Lit From Within" in the subject line. We lean toward new(ish) work that can be used in the classroom. Check out past issues at [cta.org/lit](https://cta.org/lit).

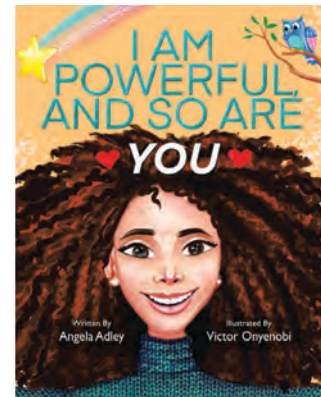




Often educators' creativity spills over into a book, blog, app or other work. We're happy to showcase members' talents.

### “I Am Powerful!”

Speech language pathologist, author and UTLA/NEA member Angela Adley has a new book, *I Am Powerful, and So Are You*, the first in a unique series to promote self-help, self-esteem and confidence in children K-3. One primary exercise for readers demonstrates how superpowers are voice-activated, starting with the words “I am” in your statement and concluding with the word “now” (for example, “I am... great at math... now!”). Writing these statements down is also a powerful tool to unlock the biggest desires of our hearts — something we can all learn. At Archway Publishing and Amazon.



### Superheroes Among Us

After many years in the classroom, Spanish teacher CJ Charles noticed that students had lost the ability to see the daily superheroes in their lives. So she wrote *My Mother is a Superhero* / *¡Mi mamá es una superheroína!*, in which 6-year-old Justine thinks her mother Alice is a superhero because she can do amazing things. The Murrieta Educators Association member followed up with *Mrs. April is a Superhero* / *La Sra. April es una superheroína*, where Justine also finds her teacher to be amazing. The bilingual books provide much-needed representation in children's literature and also teach children ages 2-10 to appreciate those daily, caring adults in their lives. On Amazon and [mymotherisasuperhero.com](http://mymotherisasuperhero.com).



### Meeting Life Challenges

Fifth grade teacher and San Ramon Valley Education Association member Lisa Freels has written two novels for upper elementary students, *Fourth Grade Heroes* and *Fourth Grade Changes*. They deal with students who must cope with changes — both personal and in the world — and the challenges that come with them. Freels has incorporated Notice and Note signposts in the books, creating engaging and educational read-alouds for the classroom. She also wrote a novella, *Fourth Grade Realizations*, that is free to read at [mrsfreelsbooks.com](http://mrsfreelsbooks.com), and is currently working on a third novel as part of this series. At Archway Publishing and Amazon.

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