

Back to the future with California teachers

This Thursday, May 9, marks the 150th anniversary of the California Teachers Association. Somewhere in between the time that President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation and delivered the Gettysburg Address, John Swett founded the California Educational Society, which was to become the California Teachers Association.

It's a long history and it's a proud history. Since its inception in 1863, CTA has been at the forefront of every major victory for California's public schools and colleges. You may be interested to know that:

- In 1866, CTA secured funding to establish free public schools for all children in California.
- In 1911, CTA led the fight to establish community colleges.
- In 1927, CTA won a major legal victory when state Supreme Court ruled that a school board couldn't fire a female teacher simply because she got married.
- In the 1940s, CTA emerged as one of the only "mainstream" organization in California to protest against the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II.
- In 1988, CTA drafted and won passage of Proposition 98, the minimum funding guarantee for K-14.
- In 1995, CTA won the Class Size Reduction law for K-3 classrooms after massive media and lobby campaign.
- In 2005, CTA won a major Prop. 98 lawsuit against the state and created the Quality Education Investment Act, which used the settlement to fund proven reforms at lower-performing schools.
- And in 2012, CTA was instrumental in the passage of Prop. 30, preventing \$6 billion in cuts to schools, and for the third time, defeating an onerous "paycheck deception" initiative.

For 150 years, with the help of their union, teachers have helped make sure all students have an opportunity at a quality public education. And we continue to do so today. As classroom experts, teachers know firsthand what works. That's why the California Teachers Association has been championing proven reforms for all students, especially those that are struggling.

Through its internationally recognized and innovative Quality Education Investment Act, CTA is leading efforts to make sure at-risk students get the resources they need to succeed. QEIA employees research-based reforms like smaller class sizes, more counselors and better teacher training. The program's success can be seen in communities all across California as it helps close the achievement gap for many lower-income students.

Under the umbrella of the CTA Foundation for Teacher and Learning, the Institute for Teaching is an incubator for educational innovation. Through its successful grants, teachers are able to propose and lead change based on what is working in their classrooms.

Years in the making, CTA members have created and are advancing a framework for fair teacher evaluation that puts the emphasis on constructive reform, not punishment. We believe the goal of any evaluation system is to strengthen the knowledge, skills and practices of teachers to improve student learning.

We are excited to be celebrating 150 years of advocacy on behalf of our profession and our students. We know there are many challenges ahead for California's schools, but working in partnership with the public, we know we can meet them just as we have for the past century and a half.