

california educator

APRIL / MAY 2024 VOLUME 28 ISSUE 5

THE TIME IS NOW

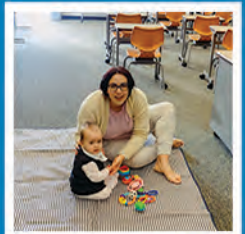
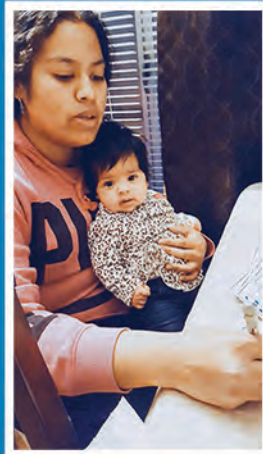
Our union's fight
for Paid Pregnancy Leave

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**ORGANIZING
AGAINST
EDUCATOR
LAYOFFS**

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**CTA'S HUMAN RIGHTS
AWARD WINNERS**



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Sometimes you just want more...



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VOLUME 28 ISSUE 5



#WeAreCTA

OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

MAGAZINE

CTA ESP OF THE YEAR

Steven Acosta is the 2024 CTA Paula J. Monroe ESP of the Year. **PAGE 49**

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS

The 40th anniversary of CTA's prestigious awards highlights inspiring work by members.

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IT'S TIME TO END THE TPA

Why Teaching Performance Assessments do more harm than good in preparing our educators. **PAGE 18**

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS LAB

National Community Schools Learning Lab launches this fall in Anaheim. **PAGE 28**

DIGITAL

TAKE ACTION!

Urge legislators to pass the Pregnancy Leave for Educators Act and to support the Social Security Fairness Act. cta.org/takeaction

OUR LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

Want to know your union's position on all bills, including sponsored legislation? It's all here: cta.org/legislative-advocacy

PRIMARY ELECTION RECAP

CTA members won elections from Glendale to Alameda County to LA. **PAGE 40**

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GRANTS, CONFERENCES

Make it a hot PD summer with programs to hone skills, network and more. **PAGE 8**
cta.org/grants,
cta.org/conferences

SUMMER INSTITUTE

CTA's premier training, in LA July 24-28, assists chapter leaders in day-to-day representation and support of members. **PAGE 8**
cta.org/conferences

LGBTQ+ SAFETY IN SCHOOLS GRANTS/SCHOLARSHIPS

CTA's program promotes human and civil rights. Application deadline: May 31. **PAGE 10**
cta.org/scholarships

MEMBER BENEFITS

MUSIC, ARTS GRANTS

California Casualty Music and Arts grants are awarded to CTA members for their classroom or program. **PAGE 54**
just4members.com/musicarts

PLAN NOW FOR LATER

Created with you in mind: CTA's Retirement Savings Plan.
CTAMemberBenefits.org

Photo: At a March rally to rescind school layoffs, San Diego Education Assn. members and allies held pink signs noting the number of students who will be impacted by their layoff. Story on Page 38.

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Paid Pregnancy Leave for Educators

CTA members advocate to end long-standing inequity

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CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS
2023 - 2024

CTA's 2024 Human Rights Award Winners

Our inspiring social justice warriors

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Time to End the TPA

Teaching Performance Assessments fail our aspiring educators — but there is a solution

PAGE 18

Top photo: Lydiana Alfaro, Natomas Teachers Assn., carries her baby as she speaks at a February CTA press conference at the State Capitol in support of AB 2901, the Paid Pregnancy Leave for Educators Act. To her right is CTA Secretary-Treasurer Erika Jones; to her left is Asm. Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, the bill's author. Cover photos, clockwise from the top: CTA officers, board members and members at the Capitol in March, lobbying for AB 2901; Clara Hutar, San Carlos Teachers Assn., with her daughter; Zully Valdez, East Side Teachers Assn.; Victoria Kim, Folsom Cordova Education Assn., with her children; Vanessa Rodas Romero, United Teachers of Richmond, with her baby; CTA's Erika Jones with her newborn.

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK. We accept signed email and letters; we excerpt user posts from CTA social media platforms and cta.org/educator. Content subject to editing for clarity and space. Photos must have permissions. Opinions expressed by writers are not necessarily those of CTA. Editor@cta.org; [#WeAreCTA](https://twitter.com/WeAreCTA)

TPA Cruelty

Re: “Redundant, Stressful, Time-Consuming” (Dec./Jan. 2023–24), I teach in a teacher preparation program at a UC campus. We need to remove the Teaching Performance Assessment requirement from our licensure programs. Cruel, costly, distracting — that is what TPAs are about for our work in preparing teachers.

JOHNNIE WILSON

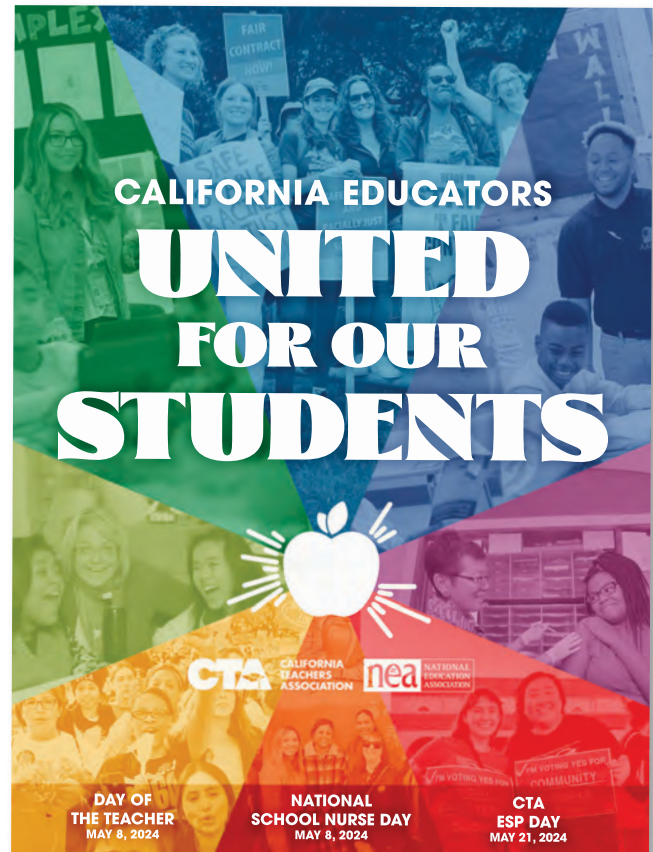
See our TPA opinion piece on Page 18.

Thanks to an Advocate

Re: “Be the Change”: Bridey Thelen-Heidel Creates Safe Space for Students (Feb./March 2019), I was once a student of hers at South Tahoe High School. I remember being gay and in the closet throughout high school, and students used the term “that’s gay” to describe anything and everything that had a negative connotation. The equivocation of gay and lame caused me great distress during my teenage years. Mrs. Heidel [was] the first teacher I ever had who vocally denounced the use of the word gay for anything except its proper use. This small solace was what first encouraged me to take a leap of faith and tell my truth to friends and family. LGBTQ+ students generally have immense inner struggles and battles raging against their own consciousness and knowing we have advocates who have our back is essential, otherwise we may lose all hope. Thank you, Mrs. Heidel, for being that advocate, that friend, that adult with dedication and compassion towards your students. You allowed us to speak our truths and be embraced. Your work continues to allow us to be comfortable in our own skin.

PETER BROWN

See more about Thelen-Heidel on Page 56.





California Educators United for Our Students

Join CTA in celebrating some very special days in May. Our 2024 theme: California Educators United for Our Students. The **California Day of the Teacher** and **National School Nurse Day** are on May 8. **CTA Education Support Professionals Day** is on May 21. Show your appreciation for all that educators do at your school and in your community. For ways to demonstrate your support and for your own pull-out poster, see the back of this issue, or go to cta.org/dayoftheteacher.

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For our full social media directory, see cta.org/social.

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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.

EDITORIAL INFORMATION

California Educator is published for the information and edification of CTA members. The editorial philosophy is governed by the policies of CTA. Articles and advertising reflect that philosophy. Letters to the editor may be sent to editor@cta.org.

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CTA/NEA membership dues for the fiscal year (Sept. 1, 2023, to Aug. 31, 2024) are \$994, including a \$20 refundable contribution (see cta.org/contribution for details). \$22.98 of CTA annual dues is designated for CTA/ABC political activities to support state and local candidates and/or initiatives, and \$15.00 of CTA annual dues is designated for independent expenditures, totaling \$37.98 not deductible for income tax purposes. Please consult your tax adviser.

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

CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

1705 Murchison Dr., Burlingame, CA 94010-4583
 650-697-1400; fax 650-552-5002; editor@cta.org, cta.org

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An Affront to Us All

Educator layoffs do not address the need for long-term, robust school funding



IN MARCH, 2,000 of our colleagues received preliminary layoff notices: classroom teachers, school librarians, counselors, school social workers and other educators who bring life to our schools and change the lives of students. Each one received a letter that told them their livelihood is in jeopardy.

These pieces of paper carry heavy burdens. We all know the devastating impact that even one layoff can have — on the person who receives it, the students they serve, and the entire community around them.

It would be easy to blame it all on this year's budget shortfall (which is estimated by the Governor at \$38 billion and by the Legislative Analyst at \$73 billion). While that may be the immediate issue before us, it's only a current symptom of an issue that has been plaguing us for decades. Since the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, our state budget has disproportionately relied on revenue from income taxes that are subject to the ups and downs of the economy. As we have all seen, revenues can be unpredictable and public schools remain chronically underfunded.

This isn't an accident, it's by design. California is a state of deep inequity where corporations pay only around half of what they paid in taxes a generation ago. Our system enriches corporations who can afford to pay more — and it comes at the expense of our students, educators and communities.

We need long-term, robust funding for our schools. California is the fifth-largest economy in the world; there's no excuse to have chronically underfunded schools. It's time for corporations to pay their fair share.

"Our system enriches corporations who can afford to pay more — and it comes at the expense of our students, educators and communities."

California is still grappling with a near- and long-term teacher shortage; classrooms in some districts went months this year without a full-time instructor in place. Laying off educators will only exacerbate the problem by discouraging aspiring educators from entering the profession.

In the coming weeks and months, we will treat every layoff notice as an affront to us all. We'll never make it easy for districts to lay off dedicated educators.

That means challenging Reductions in Force (RIFs) through hearings and local organizing, including working with parents and our communities to call attention to the real-world impact layoffs have on students, educators and communities.

CTA and our local chapters will support any member fighting a layoff to the full extent possible. And our organizing is critical — together we have the power to stop layoffs.

There is power in our union — in our connections to each other, in our commitments to each other. We are devoting our resources to local chapters to build that power and connection at every worksite. This includes continuing historic release time for local presidents and organizing grants for local chapters into the next school year.

We will fight back, in solidarity, because as a union we truly believe that an injury to one is an injury to all.

David B. Goldberg

CTA PRESIDENT



Fully Committed

EDUCATORS ARE WELL KNOWN for selfless devotion to their students and communities — beyond what they do in classrooms and schools. Many of these social justice warriors have been honored for their work as CTA Human Rights Award recipients. Lori de St. Aubin, one of this year's winners, is a striking example: The elementary school teacher has been helping feed and house families since the pandemic; at one point she used funds she'd saved for a root canal for groceries for families in need.

Olive Garrison, another honoree, has literally put their life on the line speaking out for LGBTQ+ students. Yet another, Deborah Schneider Solis, is a tenacious advocate for students with exceptional needs and their families.

This kind of commitment, demonstrated by awardees year after year, is truly awe-inspiring. Read **"CTA's Human Rights Award Winners"** — a program celebrating its 40th anniversary this year — on page 32.

Commitment is a big part of our members' ongoing work. It was on display when CTA officers, local presidents and members converged on the State Capitol in March to lobby legislators to vote for AB 2901 (**"Paid Pregnancy Leave for Educators,"** page 20). Putting aside the fact that California educators have zero paid pregnancy leave — barbaric, considering that the state has the fifth-largest economy *in the world* but pales in comparison to what many other countries do — lobbying can be grueling. Members trudged up and down hallways, crowded into legislators' offices, and spoke passionately about the inequities and hardships endured by educators who choose to start or grow their families. They did this all day, for two days.

CTA has an abundance of members fully committed to their union family. Take Steve Acosta, CTA Paula J. Monroe ESP of the Year (**"One of the Family,"** page 49). His

▼ CTA Board Member Jesse Aguilar, members MaryKay Scheid and JoAnne Johnsen and Board Member Robert Ellis speak to a legislative aide at the State Capitol.



▲ Lori de St. Aubin buying groceries for families in need.

day job is as a school district's technology technician. And as an Association of Classified Employees-Culver City member, he is constantly working to support fellow members and help them reach their personal goals. This includes coming up with ideas for their professional growth, helping show them options for becoming teachers or taking on other roles in education, and encouraging them to strive for their dreams.

It is this commitment — to students, families, communities and to each other — that makes all of us and our union stronger and capable of so many great things. We can and are fighting RIFs (**"Standing United Against Layoffs,"** page 38), winning elections (**"Public Education Wins in Primary Election,"** page 40) and scoring legal victories; read our higher education stories on a suit by part-time college instructors that is now a class action lawsuit (page 41) and United Faculty winning its case against a district's retaliation and interference with protected rights (page 44).

Because CTA encourages, invites and supports member commitment, it's a better world. Happy Spring!

Katharine Fong

EDITOR IN CHIEF

editor@cta.org

April / May 2024

CALENDAR



INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY

MAY 1

May 1 is International Workers' Day, also known as May Day or Labour Day. It has its roots in the 1886 Haymarket strike in Chicago, which secured the eight-hour workday. The famed poster above by Ricardo Levins Morales reminds us of what the Labor Movement has achieved.

As a CTA member, you're a proud part of labor history. CTA has been advocating for our profession, our students and our public schools since 1863. Visit cta.org/about-us/history for a few of your union's significant accomplishments over the years. Here's to many more!



Earth Day

APRIL 22

STUDENTS CAN LEARN and bring awareness to the state of our earth on Earth Day — and every day — through environmental education and action. This year the focus is on eliminating plastic usage, with a goal to decrease plastic production by 60% by 2040 through shopping sustainably, voting, participating in cleanups and practicing climate literacy. Examples: Students can help phase out all single-use plastics, push for a strong United Nations Treaty on Plastic Pollution, and demand an end to fast fashion. Find resources, lesson plans, cleanups near you and more at earthday.org.





CTA Summer Institute

JULY 24–28 *Westin Bonaventure, Los Angeles*

At Summer Institute, you will 1) have fun, 2) learn a lot and 3) network with new and old friends. CTA's premier training offers sessions in areas that assist chapter leaders in the day-to-day representation and support of members. Sessions may include "tracks" such as Communications, Instruction and Professional Development, Emerging Leaders, Bargaining, School Finance, Member Benefits and Community Engagement. Sign up with your team — or just you! ► cta.org/conferences

CCA Spring Conference

APRIL 26–28

Hilton Orange County/Costa Mesa
The Community College Association's spring conference highlights membership and features the presentation of CCA's WHO (We Honor Ours) Awards, which recognize CCA local and state union leaders. ► cta.org/conferences

NEA Foundation Grants

MAY 1 APPLICATION DEADLINE

NEA Foundation gives grants in amounts up to \$5,000 for educators to enhance the classroom experience and boost your skills:

- **Envision Equity Grants** — test new ideas and innovations while advancing students' cultural understanding and understanding of civic engagement and democracy.
- **Student Success Grants** — develop and implement projects to enhance students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, communication and collaboration skills, etc.
- **Learning & Leadership Grants** — participate in professional development such as summer institutes, conferences, seminars, travel abroad programs, or action research.

► neafoundation.org

CTA Communications Awards

MAY 3 NOMINATION DEADLINE

The Communications Awards Program recognizes and honors CTA chapters, service centers and UniServs that

communicate effectively with their members. ► cta.org/awards

National Teacher Day

MAY 7 EVENT

National Teacher Day is on Tuesday of National Teacher Appreciation Week (May 6–10). ► nea.org/TAW

ISTE Live 24

JUNE 23–26 CONFERENCE *Denver*

The International Society for Technology in Education holds ISTE Live 24. The virtual conference offers hundreds of presentations and learning experiences by educators and other innovators, and on-demand content that is available for six months afterward. ► conference.iste.org/2024

CA LMI Summer Institute

JUNE 24–26 *San Diego*

The California Labor Management Initiative Summer Institute brings together labor-management teams to energize partnerships, build community, and navigate the upcoming year together. ► cdefoundation.org/clmi

PBL World 2024

JUNE 24–27 CONFERENCE

Napa Valley
"Igniting Joy Through PBL." PBL World, sponsored by the nonprofit Buck Institute for Education, is the premier conference for Project Based Learning. ► pblworld.org

NEA Conference on Racial and Social Justice

JUNE 30–JULY 2 CONFERENCE

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

"Promote. Protect. Strengthen. Public Education: The Foundation of our Democracy!" Educators, creatives, activists, organizers and other leaders will advance racial and social justice for our schools through the power of our stories and organize for our future. ► nea.org/events

NEA Representative Assembly

JULY 3–7 CONVENTION

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The world's largest democratic, deliberative body, by educators, for educators. Each summer approximately 6,000 educators — including CTA members — meet to debate vital issues that impact American public education and set NEA policy and activities for the year ahead. These delegates represent the 3 million members of the NEA.

► nea.org/ra

Presidents Conference

JULY 18–21

Hyatt Regency/Garden Grove

Join CTA for a conference designed to enhance your skills as a local president and help build systems of success for your local chapter. Provides new and returning chapter presidents a foundation to rely upon as we prepare for future challenges. ► cta.org/conferences



Spring Reads



KEEP STUDENTS ENGAGED with a few good books. The picks below, with their focus on art and imagery, are particularly riveting. Find more California Reads suggestions (teacher-vetted books for all grade levels) at cta.org/careads, where you can also purchase copies at an educator discount.

Young children will adore *Have You Ever Seen a Flower* (Shawn Harris, illustrator), an enchanting picture book that explores the relationship between childhood and nature. In a simple yet profound story, one child experiences a flower with all five senses — from its color to its fragrance to the entire universe it evokes — revealing how a single flower can expand one’s perspective in incredible ways.



In *Your Name Is a Song* (Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow, author, and Luisa Uribe, illustrator; for primary school students), a little girl is frustrated by a day full of teachers and classmates mispronouncing her name and tells her mother she never wants to go back to school. In response, the mother teaches her about the musicality, history and magic behind African, Asian, Black-American, Latinx and Middle Eastern names on their walk home. Empowered by this newfound understanding, the girl is ready to return the next day to share her knowledge with her class. Includes a glossary at the back that lists each name used in the story with their meaning, origin and pronunciation.



Ain't Burned All the Bright (Jason Reynolds, author, and Jason Griffin, illustrator; for high school students) is a smash-up of art and text for teens that viscerally captures what it is to be Black in America right now. It explores recent events in America through the voice of a nameless narrator. Publishers Weekly said, “As Reynolds’ lines depict Black people facing police brutality, Covid-19 and general concerns regarding safety, Griffin’s captivating collages literally and metaphorically capture a constant state of worry and panic, leading to visual moments that encourage the reader to find solace and inspiration in the everyday.”



CTA Hits the Books

This year’s Read Across America celebration included read-alouds from teachers and community guests, as well as other special events. CTA President **David Goldberg** and Vice President **Leslie Littman** participated in the festivities at Granada Elementary (Alhambra) and Heidemann Elementary (Tustin), respectively.



APRIL: Autism Acceptance Month

According to the Centers for Disease Control, autism affects an estimated 1 in 36 children in the United States today. Because autism is a spectrum disorder, each person with autism has a distinct set of strengths and challenges. In April and beyond, focus on increasing understanding and acceptance of people with autism. Find information and resources at autismspeaks.org.



CTA's LGBTQ+ Safety in Schools Grant and Scholarship Program in Honor of Guy DeRosa

This grant and scholarship program was created to promote human and civil rights by making our public schools safe for LGBTQ+ persons. It was renamed in 2009 in memory of CTA member educator Guy DeRosa, a lifelong advocate for civil and human rights and LGBTQ+ issues. Award amounts are up to \$2,500. **Apply by May 31, 2024**, at cta.org/scholarships.

- The grant program supports groups, projects and presentations that promote understanding of and respect for LGBTQ+ persons. Active CTA/CTA Aspiring Educators members, or public school students sponsored by such a member, are eligible.
- The scholarship program supports self-identified LGBTQ+ active CTA/CTA Aspiring Educators members enrolled in a teacher/counseling credential or graduate program who are pursuing a career in public education and who understand the importance of LGBTQ+ educators as role models in our public schools.



Grants for CTA Summer Conferences

CTA's Board of Directors is awarding **Incentive Grants** for summer conferences. Grants cover registration fees and reimbursement for transportation. Application deadline for both is May 13, 2024:

Presidents Conference

Hyatt Regency OC, Garden Grove **JULY 18-21, 2024**

Summer Institute

Westin Bonaventure, Los Angeles **JULY 24-28, 2024**

Incentive Grants are available in the following categories:

- Small Chapter
- BIPOC Members
- New Members
- Emerging Leaders
- Education Support Professionals

To learn more and to apply, visit cta.org/grants. Questions? Contact Grants@cta.org.

San Jose Public Library



Harvey Milk Day

Harvey Milk Day is a California state holiday observed annually on May 22 (his birthday). The day honors Milk, one of the first openly gay elected officials in the country, and his legacy advocating for civil rights and the LGBTQ+ community. The legacy includes working alongside labor unions to defeat Prop. 6 (the Briggs Initiative) in 1978, which would have banned gays and lesbians from working in California's public schools. Find educator resources at milkfoundation.org.



Memorial Day MAY 27

Nearly 1.28 million American servicemen and women have died in all major wars involving the United States from 1775 to 2024, according to Statista (most of the fatalities occurred in the Civil War). Memorial Day, a federal holiday observed on the last Monday of May, honors the people who sacrificed their lives while in the U.S. military. Lesson plans at NEA and PBS Learning Media can help educators teach students about the day's significance.



▲ A statue of Piper on the steps of Big Pine High School.



MAY:

National Speech-Language-Hearing Month

Make May a month for educating students about the importance of human communication and what we can all do to prevent and address communication disorders. That message is particularly critical, as — coming out of the pandemic — more children are manifesting communication delays and disorders, and the World Health Organization is warning about hearing loss from loud noise exposure. “It’s a Noisy Planet” offers a teacher toolkit and other resources to help educators teach children about the causes and prevention of noise-induced hearing loss. Find it at noisyplanet.nidcd.nih.gov.



100 Year Anniversary: Alice Piper JUNE 2

2024 marks the 100th year since the victory of the *Piper v. Big Pine* case at the California Supreme Court. Alice Piper was a 15-year-old Paiute girl residing in Big Pine, Inyo County, who was denied entry to Big Pine High School in 1923 due to her race. (California educational law then prohibited Native Americans from attending a public school if a government-run Indian school was within three miles of the public school.) Piper and six other Indian children sued the district for the right to attend. The unanimous court ruling in their favor opened the door to Native American children to attend public schools in California.

Heritage Months:

Celebrating Rich, Diverse Cultures and Contributions

IN HIS RECENT proclamation on **Arab American Heritage Month**, in April, President Biden noted that America is the only nation in the world founded on an idea: that we are all created equal and deserve to be treated equally throughout our lives. Educators can help counter the division, hatred and violence that keep us apart by teaching students and others about different peoples and cultures.

Americans whose heritage connects to one or more of the 22 Arab countries have a rich history in the United States dating back to 1527 when, according to the U.S. Department of State, the first people from Morocco and Lebanon immigrated to this country. Arab Americans are thought to number close to four million people in the U.S. today.

The Arab America Foundation offers an Educator’s Curriculum Kit, which highlights the history of Arab migration to America, geographic understanding of the Arab world, Arab American diversity in faith and language, interesting customs and traditions, issues affecting the community, and Arab Americans’ many achievements in business, politics, education and more. Find it at arabamericafoundation.org.

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, in May, recognizes the 22.2 million Asians and 1.6 million Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander communities in the United States. As with the Arab American and many other populations, AAPIs in the U.S. are a hugely diverse group. The Smithsonian’s Asian Pacific Center has a Teacher’s Guide — a collection of lessons and resources for K–12 social studies, literature and arts classrooms that center around the experiences, achievements and perspectives

▼ Artwork courtesy Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya; from a campaign by the artist, Asian Women’s Shelter and Bay Area Rapid Transit.



of AAPIs across U.S. history. Find the link at asianpacificheritage.gov/for-teachers.html.

Jewish American Heritage Month is celebrated in May. Students can learn about important contributions Jewish Americans have made to America since the first group of Jews arrived in New Amsterdam in 1654. Today, approximately 7.6 million Jewish Americans make up roughly 2.4% of the U.S. population. Educators can use the Library of Congress’ primary resources, ready-to-use lesson plans, student activities, collection guides and research aids in the classroom. Visit jewishheritagemonth.gov/for-teachers.html.

NEA Aspiring Educators Conference

The purpose of the Aspiring Educators Conference is to offer future educators the opportunity to connect with their colleagues, learn about their profession, and take action on important education issues affecting public schools and communities. The conference welcomes NEA members and leaders, regardless of experience level, membership type, or educator category. Attendees will come together in Philadelphia, PA, June 28–July 2. (As of press time, the dates were not confirmed.) Learn more and register at nea.org/events.



QUOTES & NUMBERS

Compiled by **Julian Peeples**

14

Number of weeks of leave with full pay for educators who are pregnant or experience pregnancy-related health issues, as proposed in CTA-sponsored AB 2901 (see page 20).



“They organize and lead the project, and then reflect on their work and how it affects the community – all real-world skills that prepare them for a broad scope of experiences in their lives.”

—**Katrina Mundy**, Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association member, discussing student-led community schools projects in a February NEA Today story.



175

Micro-credentials offered by CTA/NEA, with 23 specifically for education support professionals. Visit cta.org/cta-nea-micro-certifications to learn more.



“I want to give public school teachers a raise!”

—President **Joe Biden**, in March’s State of the Union address.



1,000 to 1

Average ratio of students to school psychologists in California public schools, according to EdSource. The National Association of School Psychologists recommends one school psych for every 500 students.

“Educators devote their lives to their students; yet, when it comes to their own families, they have to constantly sacrifice because of the lack of basic supports such as paid pregnancy leave. In a field that is primarily women, we need to do better.”

—CTA Secretary-Treasurer **Erika Jones**, on CTA-sponsored AB 2901 that would end a long-standing inequity (see page 20).



100

Percentage of CTA-recommended local school measures that passed in the March Primary Election. 88% of state Senate recommendations and 86% of Assembly endorsements were also successful. See rundown on page 40.



“Investing in early childhood education equals investing in our youngest learners getting a head start to reach their full potential.”

—Secretary of Education **Dr. Miguel Cardona**, in a February social media post.

“It means that I can fight for a better living wage because meeting the basic needs of people is simply not enough here in California anymore.”

—**Danny Avitia**, San Diego State University student worker, after 20,000 student workers at California State University campuses voted to join California State University Employees Union in February.

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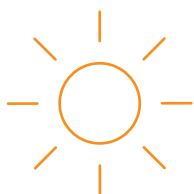
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CTAMemberBenefits.org/Disability



¹ Summer Benefit is offered by CTA to eligible members who meet the Definition of Disability with a Disability date on or after 9/1/2022 who meet additional specific criteria. Summer Benefit is only payable during the calendar months of June and July, for up to two Benefit Years for each instance of qualifying Disability. Summer Benefit is not provided under the Voluntary Disability insurance policy. CTA provides this benefit at no extra cost and The Standard acts only as the claims administrator of this benefit.

For costs and further details of the coverage offered by Standard Insurance Company, including the exclusions, any reductions, benefit waiting periods or limitations and terms under which the policy may be continued in force, please contact Standard Insurance Company at 800.522.0406.

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CELEBRATING DOLORES HUERTA

Iconic labor organizer continues to stand with educators, fight for public schools

By Julian Peeples

“Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist,” said Dolores Huerta. “Every minute is a chance to change the world.”

For more than six decades, the legendary organizer and activist has led the fight for civil rights, jobs with justice and safe, supportive communities for children and families, inspiring generations to fight for an America where everyone has a chance to succeed and thrive. As we celebrate Huerta and her lifelong teachings on her 94th birthday April 10 — Dolores Huerta Day — it’s only appropriate that she spent the last months of her 93rd year making “good trouble”: rallying with in-home support workers in Bakersfield and leading a massive conference in a “sí, se puede” (“yes, we can”) chant in Texas.

Huerta’s presence in labor struggles in the Central Valley and throughout California is a constant for as long as most can remember — and her connection to public schools, educators and CTA is storied. She grew up in Stockton and studied to become a teacher, earning her credential at San Joaquin Delta Community College in the early 1950s. But seeing the condition of her students as they came to school every day cut her time in the classroom short, as she decided to take a different path to help children and families in need.

From her work co-founding the United Farm Workers and shining a light on the most invisible workers in America to fighting for voting rights, stronger communities and resources for public education, Huerta’s efforts and words have inspired since farmworkers first started walking picket



Photograph by Joe Brusky

“I want students to get a sense of their own empowerment and the things they can do to make the world a better place.”

lines in the fields of Delano in the 1960s — and her words have been just as moving more recently in support of educators and CTA.

“I’m very proud to be in the same space as CTA and the great work that teachers are doing. To be able to stand with teachers is a great honor,” says Huerta. “Teachers are the foundation of our democracy and the soul of our nation. We’ve got to give teachers the respect they deserve and the resources they need.”

Starting in the 1960s, Huerta worked with fellow labor hero Cesar Chavez, first meeting at Fred Ross’ Community Service Organization and leading United Farm Workers together for decades, where she coined the phrase “sí, se puede.” In 2003, she established the Dolores Huerta Foundation



“The only way our country is going to survive as a democracy is that we have strong education and strong teachers that are supported.”



to organize communities and develop future leaders, power massive voter registration drives and empower communities to fight for rights and progress.

There are four elementary schools in California named in honor of Huerta, who was also inducted into the California Hall of Fame in 2013. In 2012, Pres. Barack Obama awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the United States, and her house when she worked and organized in Delano is listed as a noteworthy place by the National Park Service.

Huerta has joined educators for major struggles over the past few years — picketing with her grandson and friends outside their school during the United Teachers Los Angeles strike; leading chants in the pouring rain during a rally for the the Sacramento City Teachers Association strike; and heading a mile-long march through the streets of Oakland during the Oakland Education Association strike.

“The only way our country is going to survive as a democracy is that we have strong education and strong teachers that are supported,” Huerta told thousands in Sacramento in 2022. “Who’s got the power? We’ve got the power! What kind of power? Teacher Power! ¡Hasta la victoria siempre!”

Huerta and her foundation have also fought alongside CTA to support schools and communities through Propositions 30 and 55, championed CTA’s legislation to reform charter schools, and voiced opposition to new charter school petitions in the Central Valley.

Former Gov. Jerry Brown signed a bill in 2018 designating April 10 as Dolores Huerta Day, making her the first and only living person to hold the honor. Instead of a state holiday, the day is intended to recognize Huerta and teach California students about her life.

“I’m glad to share the lessons I’ve learned in my life so that others can learn from them,” says Huerta. “I want students to get a sense of their own empowerment and the things they can do to make the world a better place.”

In 2019-20, a group of CTA educators collaborated with the Dolores Huerta Foundation to develop curriculum to celebrate the famed labor leader and her life and teachings, creating lesson plans and content for students at all grade levels to help examine the essential question: “How do people work together to solve problems and struggle to implement the solution?”

The curriculum is available for free at doloreshuerta.org/curriculum. These lessons cover the rich history of working together for change in the Central Valley and California to help inspire young people to work to better their communities. ■



▲ Huerta with Cesar Chavez.

It's Time to End the TPA

Teaching Performance Assessments do more harm than good in preparing aspiring educators for the classroom. New legislation aims to change that.

By **Leslie Littman**

Leslie Littman is CTA Vice President.

BECOMING A PUBLIC-SCHOOL TEACHER is a calling. It's incredible to see students learn and grow and achieve their dreams. Many see this rewarding career and want to pursue it. Which begs the question — why would anyone be in favor of unnecessary hurdles for these aspiring educators?

In my work as an educator with more than 30 years in the classroom and as Vice President of the California Teachers Association, I've seen first-hand and heard from educators up and down the state about the deeply problematic Teaching Performance Assessments (TPAs).

There are no shortage of horror stories about the TPAs. We hear from talented teachers constantly that the TPAs are long and time-consuming. They are full of low-value tasks and they come at a very busy time for new educators. They do not prepare teachers for the classroom and detract from programs with proven success. Aspiring teachers learn the teaching craft in the real world. Vital preparation for new educators includes working with mentors to improve their instruction, having time to concentrate on developing quality lesson plans, and learning how to apply knowledge gained from a credential program in real classrooms. These programs consistently

“We must end the unnecessary TPA and evolve our state system of educator preparation to better equip teachers to bridge California’s diverse students to bright futures, while continuing to uphold the high standards for teachers that our students deserve.”

assess student teachers. They ensure we meet California's high teaching standards.

The TPAs also keep talented educators out of the profession of public education. This is especially true for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) working to become teachers. Educators of color have raised concerns about racist biases

undermining their success at passing the TPAs. Aspiring teachers must pay \$300 out of pocket to take these assessments. After spending thousands of dollars on a degree, one can see how this costly assessment becomes an impossible hurdle for too many.

This is why CTA is sponsoring Senate Bill 1263 to eliminate the TPAs. This legislation, co-sponsored by Sen. Josh Newman (D-Fullerton), will remove requirements to pass the EdTPA, CalTPA and the Fresno Assessment for Student Teachers (FAST).

Two years ago, I began leading a CTA workgroup with educators from across the state. We met to study the teacher shortage. We aimed to find ways to ease the problem and increase teacher diversity. The CTA State Council of Education Credentialing and Professional Development Committee also studied the issue. Both groups reached the same conclusion. The TPAs hurt teacher training. They harm our new teacher pipeline and hinder efforts to diversify public education careers.

We took the information and analysis from these educators



and practitioners. We also had the results of a survey of educators conducted by CTA on the TPA. We then shared our data with California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) in October 2023. Educators told the CTC that TPAs are disproportionately impacting BIPOC educator candidates — an issue first raised three years ago by the California Alliance of Researchers for Equity in Education when the group asked the CTC to end high-stakes testing in teacher education, citing concerns with “validity, reliability, fairness and bias.”

At the meeting, CTC Commissioner Christopher Davis underscored the TPA’s “disproportionate harm” to BIPOC teaching candidates: “We continue to struggle with the reality that our state, through these examinations, is systematically discriminating against the very diversity it alleges it wants to track into our workforce.”

In December, the CTC heard our call, adopting a secondary passing standard in the event an educator did not complete the TPA requirement. This allows teacher candidates who met all other credential requirements a path to a credential if they demonstrate Teacher Performance Expectations (TPE) through classroom observations, course projects and other similar avenues.

This is a step in the right direction. More than 1,500 aspiring California educators who did not pass the TPA would have met the secondary standard in 2022–23, meaning they would be spared the costs and extreme stress of retaking the TPA. This change also has important retroactive implications for candidates who ended up exiting educator preparation programs. This reopened a door to our profession to potentially over 1,000 aspiring educators.

Our work continues. As Sen. Newman said, the issue is simple: “One key to improving the educator pipeline is removing barriers that may be dissuading otherwise talented and qualified prospective people from pursuing a career as an educator.”

The costly TPA is having real impacts on the ongoing educator shortage across the country — and education officials are changing course for the better. States including New York, New Jersey, Georgia and even Texas have already eliminated the TPA requirement for teacher credentials. It’s time to follow suit here in California.

We must end the unnecessary TPA and evolve our state system of educator preparation to better equip teachers to bridge California’s diverse students to bright futures, while continuing to uphold the high standards for teachers that our students deserve. Join me in supporting SB 1263 — visit cta.org/tpa for more information and to learn how you can help be a part of this important movement to end the TPA. ■

SB 1263:

Following the Bill

Introduced by state Sen. **Josh Newman** (D-Fullerton), SB 1263 would eliminate the use of the Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) in the process by which aspiring educators earn credentials.

At press time, SB 1263 was awaiting a hearing by the Senate Education Committee, which is expected in April.

Keep watch on cta.org and our social media platforms for more information as this bill progresses through the Legislature for information and ways you can help make this bill a law and end the TPA for good.

#EndTPAnow



See the Educator’s previous coverage of this issue at cta.org/educator/tpa.

▼ CTA board members, local presidents and members at the State Capitol during a two-day visit to legislators' offices, seeking support for AB 2901. Top row, from left: Chris Bushee, Paula Kondratko, Greg Abt, Gina Whipple, Shelly Gupton, Jesse Aguilar, Juleus Chapman, Robert Ellis, Wendy Brill-Wynkoop. Second row: Sherrie Starkie, Renata Sanchez, Sesar Carreno, Rachel Merino-Ott, MaryKay Scheid, Miska Pearson, Wendy Eccles, Charles Jones. Front row: Eva Ruiz, Susan Abt, Renee Pena, Luciano Ortiz, Mayra Alvarado, JoAnne Johnsen, Angela Der Ramos, Grant Schuster, Marina Santos.



PAID

Pregnancy Leave for Educators

CTA members advocate to end long-standing inequity

By Julian Peebles

“I AM CURRENTLY PREGNANT with my first child. Rather than being excited, my husband and I are trying to plan how to pay our bills and make sure we have food on the table even though I have a great job and benefits,” says speech language pathologist Ashley Thompson, a member of Menifee Teachers Association. “My child deserves a mom who is present, not one concerned about returning to work as soon as possible so I can receive my full pay.”

Countless educators in our union can relate to this story or a similar version of it. The lack of paid pregnancy leave for public school and community college employees has impacted generations of educators, deepening the widely

documented gender wage gap well into retirement. With the backdrop of reproductive rights under attack across the nation, CTA members are rising up together to demand change.

CTA’s historic sponsored legislation — AB 2901 (Aguilar-Curry) — will provide 14 weeks of paid pregnancy leave to educators and finally end the long-standing practice that unjustly punishes teachers for having children. The change is long overdue in a public education system where three-quarters of educators are women.

In mid-March, the hallways of the State Capitol were filled with educators, as CTA members met with elected

▼ During the pandemic, Clara Hutar, San Carlos Teachers Association, brought her daughter to school when she was setting up her classroom and daycare centers were closed. Hutar, currently pregnant with twins, says "it is so frustrating to think that coming back from my leave, my whole paycheck won't be enough to cover daycare."



▼ Victoria Kim, Folsom Cordova Education Association



"Having protected paid leave for pregnancy is crucial to keeping our teachers. We should not have to choose between doing what is best for our family and our careers that we love so much."

—Bree Koontz, teacher, Irvine Teachers Association

officials to discuss the need for AB 2901, share their stories and ask for legislators' support as the bill makes its way through the State Assembly and Senate over the next few months.

"California is the fifth-largest economy in the world yet there are countries whose economies are less than California's and they've figured it out," says CTA Secretary-Treasurer Erika Jones, who recently gave birth to her first child. "How can we have this much money and power and we can't take care of women in this state?"

Under current state law, educators do not earn any paid pregnancy leave, forcing them to make difficult decisions when considering growing their family. Teachers must exhaust all sick time to be able to access differential pay (less the cost of a substitute), leaving them with the decision to either schedule pregnancies around the school

calendar or try to get by with substantially less pay. The current practice discriminates against women as they are required to deplete their leave balances to bear children and are often forced to return to the classroom before they are physically and emotionally ready.

This campaign to bring paid pregnancy leave to California educators has sparked thousands of educators to share their personal story on a petition urging legislators to vote yes on the bill. As of April 4, the petition had 8,575 signatures.

"When my second daughter was born, I went back to work eight weeks postpartum after a cesarean section," says teacher Amelia S. "I was still bleeding so heavily that I had to wear adult diapers to work"

And since educators are forced to exhaust all sick time while recovering and bonding with their baby, there is



▼ CTA Board Members Chris Bushee and Eva Ruiz, Asm. Dawn Addis, CTA members Renata Sanchez, Marina Santos and Sherrie Starkie.



▼ Jovanna Leon, Golden Plains Teachers Association, and her husband are veteran educators of 10 years in the Central Valley. In March, their daughter was born three months premature and had to be placed in the neonatal ICU. “We have been worried about our sick leave running out and not being able to be there for our daughter in this critical time of her development.”



“Nine months ago, I became a mom. Unfortunately, because I only received half-pay, **I felt I had no choice but to return to work after 12 weeks.** It was an incredibly difficult decision to make.”

—**Cristal De La Rosa**, teacher, *Alhambra Teachers Association*

none available when newborns get sick or have medical appointments, meaning that new mothers must take unpaid days off for the rest of the school year. This discovery is shocking for many new educators.

“I am about to go on maternity leave and realize how few supports there are for women educators wanting to start a family,” says school counselor Aubrey Buchanan, a member of Visalia Unified Teachers Association. “Running out your sick time as ‘maternity leave’ is ridiculous, and returning to work with a new baby and no sick time is even more ridiculous!”

The financial impacts of this inequity are long-lasting — because women are forced to use all sick time with each pregnancy, they have substantially less sick days at retirement, meaning that they need to work longer or earn less in retirement. On average, women receive almost \$100,000 less in retirement than their male colleagues.

“After 35 years of teaching, the lack of pregnancy leave is still affecting me in retirement,” says Susan Heflin, a member of CTA/NEA-Retired. “I lost about six months on my years of service credit in retirement from my pregnancy leaves, but I also lost the years of service credit for the lost sick days. It’s not right!”

This effort to fix a broken system is just the latest example of educators working together in their union to improve working conditions for educators.

In 1975, educators in two local chapters in Mt. Pleasant and Berryessa school districts organized and filed discrimination lawsuits in the fight for maternity rights. The local school boards had been enforcing policies that would “relieve a woman of their duties without pay when the woman began to show in their seventh month of pregnancy and not allow them back until their child was at least six months old.” Through collective action, the

▼ CTA leaders at the Capitol to urge the Assembly Education Committee to vote YES on AB 2901: Twin Rivers UE Organizing Chair Brittoni Ward, Folsom-Cordova EA President Jeannette Sansenbach, Twin Rivers UE President Rebecca LeDoux, Natomas TA President Mara Harvey, Anderson Union HSDTA President Shaye Stephens, CTA Secretary-Treasurer Erika Jones, Sacramento City TA President Nikki Milevsky.



AB 2901:

The Pregnancy Leave for Educators Act

AUTHOR: Assemblymember **Cecilia Aguiar-Curry** (D-Winters)

SPONSORS: CTA, Superintendent of Public Instruction **Tony Thurmond**, State Treasurer **Fiona Ma**

SUMMARY: Grants public school employees up to 14 weeks of leave with full pay when an employee is pregnant or experiences pregnancy-related health issues, including childbirth, miscarriage, termination of pregnancy or recovery from those conditions.

chapters put enough pressure on the district to rescind those policies.

The profession of public education has evolved over the years thanks to the collective power of women and allies working together to fight for their rights. AB 2901 is the next step forward.

Stay up to date on AB 2901 as it progresses through the Legislature, download shareable graphics, join thousands of fellow CTA members in signing a petition in support of the bill, and share your own story by visiting cta.org/ab2901.

“AB 2901 would help women like me be able to confidently continue growing my family,” says education specialist Angeles Llamas, a member of Fresno Teachers Association, “while staying employed and doing what we love most: growing little minds!” ■

▼ CTA Secretary-Treasurer Erika Jones speaks in support of AB 2901 at the press conference; to her left is the bill's author, Asm. Aguiar-Curry. CTA member Lydiana Alfaro (holding her baby) also spoke.



Advocacy at the Capitol

CTA brought educator power to the State Capitol in February and March to talk with legislators and bring awareness to the long overdue need for paid pregnancy leave for educators and CTA-sponsored AB 2901 (Aguiar-Curry).

CTA Secretary-Treasurer Erika Jones kicked off the press conference at the State Capitol announcing the Pregnancy Leave for Educators Act. A new mother herself, Jones said educators across the state have expressed how important this issue is to them.

“I have met with concerned teachers across the state who struggle and stress about what their pregnancy needs will be. Teachers have absolutely zero paid pregnancy leave,” Jones said. “The time is now to provide teachers with the dignity to build their families without the added stress of trying to figure out sick days and lower pay. We need to pass AB 2901 now.”

Jones was joined by fellow CTA members and elected leaders including AB 2901 author Assemblymember Cecilia Aguiar-Curry (D-Winters).

“As the author of this bill, I aim to end discriminatory practices that force some of the most important professionals in our society to choose between their careers in service to our children and their financial security, the health of their families and the health of their school communities,” she said.



▼ Vaness Rodas Romero, United Teachers of Richmond, went back to work six weeks after giving birth in 2016. “I did not have any wiggle room since I couldn’t afford it and had to use all my sick leave in order to collect disability.”



▼ “My pregnant self running around on graduation day to assist with graduation practice and all other counseling responsibilities in May 2023,” explains Lissenia Marquez, East Side Teachers Association, of this photo when she was eight months pregnant.



“As a Women’s Studies teacher, I talk to my students about the disparity between male and female teachers regarding the **‘maternity penalty.’** It does affect retirement and women shouldn’t be penalized for bringing future generations into the classroom!”

—**Jessica Jacobs**, teacher, *Tahoe Truckee Teachers Association*

▼ CTA members Gina Whipple, Rachel Merino-Ott, CTA Board Members Wendy Eccles and Grant Schuster, Sen. Monique Limon, CTA member Luciano Ortiz.



▼ CTA Board Member Greg Abt, CTA members Renee Pena and Susan Abt, Asm. Al Muratsuchi.





The Time Is Now

By **Erika Jones**

Erika Jones is a kindergarten teacher, the Secretary-Treasurer of CTA and a new mom.

LAST AUGUST, I gave birth to my first child, Josephine. Bringing her into the world was one of the greatest moments of my life and she continues to be a joy, but she's also a struggle to care for beyond just sleepless nights. I, like other teachers and school employees across the state, receive zero paid pregnancy or maternity leave.

California school districts treat pregnancy as an "illness." An educator who takes leave because of pregnancy or for recovery after giving birth is forced to use accumulated sick leave.

Here in California, 73% of the teaching workforce is composed of women. Nationwide, roughly half of all U.S. teachers have children who live at home. Because women giving birth tend to be younger and teachers having children are generally at an early stage in their careers, most, like me, will not have banked enough sick leave to carry them through a pregnancy-related absence. Once sick leave is exhausted, mothers go on differential pay (their salary minus the cost of a substitute) to cover pregnancy-related disabilities, resulting in a 50% or greater pay cut.

This loss of sick leave to pregnancy-related disability is a double-dose of gender discrimination. Not only are most women forced to exhaust their sick leave early in their careers, they also are less likely than their male colleagues to have an adequate leave bank if they later have a serious illness or medical need.

As a new mom, it is unfathomable to me that most of us must choose between a paycheck and recovering from childbirth while caring for our newborns. Educators devote their lives to their students; yet, when it comes to their own families, they have to constantly sacrifice because of the lack of basic supports such as paid pregnancy leave.

I can't tell you how many conversations I've had in the teachers' lounge with female educators still recovering from childbirth or a miscarriage who are forced back to work, or mothers who should be home due to sickness but are working because they have no sick leave to fall back on. This struggle for adequate paid family leave is forcing many teachers out of the profession.

If they stick around, it doesn't get much better. When a teacher leaves the classroom at the end of their career,



"As a new mom, it is unfathomable to me that most of us must choose between a paycheck and recovering from childbirth while caring for our newborns."

unused sick leave is converted to service credit for retirement. In real dollars, this means that, on average, women earn almost \$100,000 less in retirement than their male colleagues.

California is currently facing a severe teacher shortage. Among the factors driving this: low pay compared to other fields, a lack of support systems, and educators choosing to leave due to stress and political attacks on the profession. The absence of paid maternity leave is certainly a contributing factor — and one that can be addressed.

Assembly Bill 2901 (Aguilar-Curry), the Pregnancy Leave for Educators Act, would grant public school employees up to 14 weeks of leave with full pay when pregnant or experiencing pregnancy-related health issues. It's important legislation that is long overdue.

AB 2901 will bring California, the fifth-largest economy in the world, into alignment with a worldwide, fundamental standard for reproductive rights. Most advanced democracies are far ahead of us in treating maternity leave as a human right. And many states have recently passed legislation for maternity leave — including Tennessee, Oklahoma and South Carolina.

It fills me with hope that our union is leading the charge to improve the lives of educators and our families. Passage of AB 2901 will benefit all of California's children by helping the state's public schools recruit and retain teachers. Additionally, California's public schools, which have a mission to focus on the well-being of children, will be able to contribute to the well-being of a large group of children — the children of their own workforce.





Educators Share Pregnancy Leave Stories

NEARY 1,000 EDUCATORS SHARED their pregnancy experiences in support of AB 2901 and the need for [#PregnancyLeaveNOW](#). Add your story and sign the petition in support of the bill by visiting cta.org/ab2901:

"I gave birth to three children (1986, 1988 and 1991). I was shocked to discover we had no maternity leave, so I used up all my accumulated sick leave, and after that had to have my paycheck docked to pay for a sub! And I returned to work way too soon after each birth because we needed my paycheck to survive. This has to change!"

—**Janice Wong**, teacher, *CTA/NEA-Retired*

"I had a high-risk pregnancy. I didn't realize that teachers do not get social security disability. I was out of the classroom for an entire semester. Thankfully my local members donated hours, but I still could not afford diapers and formula when my daughter was born."

—**Melanie Bean**, training specialist, *Sacramento City Teachers Association*

"As a currently pregnant teacher, I am very worried about the impacts of my upcoming need for Pregnancy Disability Leave and [how] it will possibly completely wipe out all my accumulated sick days before I even get to my maternity child bonding leave. My partner is also a teacher and we've been in the profession less than 10 years each. We want to stay in the profession AND raise a family."

—**Chris Clauss**, special education teacher, *United Educators of San Francisco*

"I am currently 36 weeks pregnant, unable to go on maternity leave until my due date because I am new to this district, and I have used up all my sick leave when I caught COVID and other illnesses from my students this school year. It is taking a toll on my body and my students and I deserve better."

—**Talia Wadhwa**, SDC inclusion teacher, *Fremont Unified District Teachers Association*

"As a first-time parent in January, choosing between less pay or spending time with my newborn was the worst decision. Ultimately, I returned to the classroom five weeks after my child was born, leaving my wife and first-time mom alone with our child with no support from me. In a profession where we put children first, why do we continue to put educators' newborn children last?"

—**Gary Cao**, teacher, *Hayward Education Association*

"I lost out on a year of service and retirement benefits due to the current policies in place for maternity leave. This is not an equitable practice as my male counterparts are not required to take at least the six weeks of postpartum time away from the classroom and can flex how they use their paternity time in a way that will not impact their placement on the salary schedule, sick days available to them or retirement options."

—**Brittani Alfaro**, teacher, *Temecula Valley Education Association*

"I had to deplete my accumulated sick leave during both of my six-week pregnancy leaves. Considering that unused sick time is factored into our retirement benefit, this is a glaring example of sexism that can be rectified with this bill."

—**Catrina Choudhry**, teacher, *Association of Colton Educators*

"As an educator, I had a hard time paying my bills on maternity leave. I had to get rental assistance and go on food stamps to make ends meet while I was out bonding with my baby and waiting for her to be old enough to start daycare. I didn't qualify for disability insurance to cover me during this time because I had just found out the day before that I was pregnant and no longer qualified due to my 'pre-existing condition.'"

—**Victoria Kim**, teacher,
Folsom Cordova Education Association

"As union president, I see how difficult it is for new mothers to navigate the disability system and figure out how to manage compensation during their leave. Many members have spent their first days with their baby on the phone with insurance providers, district officials and state agencies trying to figure out how they'll support their families and substitute their lost income. Women should not be penalized for having children."

—**Hayden Gore**, teacher,
High Tech Education Collective

"Coming out of working for the hospital and experiencing traditional paid maternity leave, the experience in the schools was awful. I was forced to pay for my sub, one was never found but my pay was still docked, and I had incredible financial hardship postpartum."

—**Amanda Deardorff**, school nurse,
San Juan Teachers Association

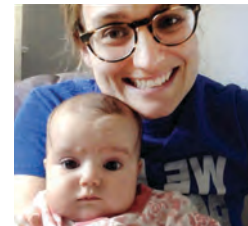
"During both of my pregnancies, I was floored at my lack of options. This is a concrete reason that we are facing teacher shortages. I personally would not advise other women to go into teaching at the community college system here in California under the current conditions."

—**Emily Lohorn Carpenter**, adjunct faculty,
Southwestern College Educators Association

"I'm currently pregnant and would like more people to understand the challenges and concerns teachers face just in deciding to try to get pregnant all because of the lack of paid disability/parental leave. We make so many sacrifices to teach the children of other families, but this system doesn't honor or respect our own decision to have children by not guaranteeing paid disability/parental leave."

—**Liz Martinez**, teacher, *United Teachers Los Angeles*

▶ Chelsea Jones, Rocklin Teachers Professional Association, and her daughter in their last Zoom class of the 2021 school year.



"I returned to teaching via Zoom when Charlotte was six weeks old and she frequently napped on my chest while I balanced the workload of teaching remotely."

—**Chelsea Jones**,
Rocklin Teachers Professional Association

"I had two children during my work in the school district. My wife is also an educator. My children are adults now, but we remember vividly how difficult it was for my wife to return to work after only six weeks maternity [leave]. This should not happen in this country. Mothers should not have to choose between work and their children."

—**Ariel Tellez**, teacher, *United Teachers Los Angeles*

"I worked for a charter school for eight years and paid into state disability; I had access to pregnancy disability and baby bonding, and then took my paid time off. I was able to have three-to-five months off because of how my benefits worked. I now work for a traditional school district and am appalled with how they do leave here."

—**E. Reyes**, *Associated Teachers of Pomona*

"My family and I had to endure several weeks of no pay not long after I gave birth. It created a lot of extra stress [on us] physically and emotionally. With my second child I had to go back to work sooner than I had hoped and then took a week off because I got shingles. My doctor attributed my case to the fact that my body was worn down from birth and having to go back to work before I was physically ready."

—**Kelly Earlywine**, teacher,
San Carlos Teachers Association

"My family and I shouldn't have to struggle because I had a baby and I shouldn't have to put off having a baby because of a lack of paid maternity leave. I feel like I have to choose between being a teacher or a mom."

—**Kayla**, *Modesto Teachers Association*

▼ AUHSD teacher leads, who collaborate with other teachers to develop curriculum and classroom lessons, and lead their site team that includes administrators, parents, students and community partners.



A Learning Lab for Community Schools

New program in Anaheim serves nationwide need

By **Katharine Fong**

THE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS MOVEMENT in Anaheim is flourishing, in no small part due to the efforts and shared leadership of Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association (ASTA), Anaheim Union High School District, students, parents and community partners.

To date, 16 of 21 middle and high schools in AUHSD, whose students speak almost 50 languages in their homes, have transitioned to community schools. The ASTA/AUHSD "Leading and Learning Days," which are informational tours and presentations at those schools, have drawn hundreds of educators from across California and nationwide.

While each community school is different because of the unique needs and assets of the communities they serve, they all work through a shared decision-making model, where community school steering committees (CSSC) comprised

of multiple stakeholders — educators, district administrators, students, parents, community partners — have equal voice and input.

The Anaheim steering committees (at the district level and school site level) have proved models of collaboration and effective leadership. So much so that in February, ASTA received a \$750,000, three-year grant from NEA's Great Public Schools initiative to establish, in collaboration with the district and other partners, a National Community Schools Learning Lab.

Starting this fall, NCSLL will offer a series of multi-day programs to help teams of stakeholders across the state and the country launch inclusive, functional steering committees. The Lab will also focus on training community school teacher leads, and training on curriculum and instruction that reflect

▼ Steering committee meetings, such as this one in Anaheim, bring together all stakeholders; everyone has an equal voice.



▼ Learning Lab Coordinator and high school teacher Christie Bettendorf.



▼ A lesson in the community garden at Anaheim's Magnolia High School.



Starting this fall, the Learning Lab will help teams across the state and country launch inclusive, functional steering committees.

and incorporate the cultures and peoples in the communities at individual school sites.

The goal is to give participating teams the fundamental tools to build strong, shared leadership and governance; connect and forge alliances with families and community partners; recruit and train essential staff; and develop curriculum that is both academically robust and responsive to students' needs inside and outside the classroom. The result is racially and socially just community schools that support student success and well-being, where students, families, educators and community partners are engaged and invested in their schools *and* in their communities.

The NCSLL is also an effort to show chapters and districts that they can use their own resources — as well as resources from NEA and CTA — to build thriving community schools.

Some districts have outsourced community schools management to outside agencies, which dilutes the power and efficacy of a steering committee.

"We've seen a lot of success in Anaheim. We do have a supportive district — true shared leadership," said Christie Bettendorf, the Learning Lab coordinator and ASTA member. "We want to steer locals and districts away from outsourcing to give support and structure through the CSSC, which is a more interior and organic leadership model."

Bettendorf and NCSLL leaders understand that for many locals, shared leadership may not yet be in place, or district buy-in may not be at an optimal level. For example, educators and chapters may be on board with community schools but districts are not, or a district may be using state funds earmarked for community schools on other



CTA and Community Schools

CTA is deeply committed to growing and supporting community schools. Community schools' democratic model of shared decision-making ensures all students' needs are addressed so they can thrive and helps build power with community that leads to a more equitable society.

Community schools have been shown to improve student outcomes, including in attendance, academic achievement, high school graduation rates, and reduced racial and economic achievement gaps.

California has made a historic \$4.1 billion investment in community schools and CTA, in partnership with the state, school districts, students, families and communities, is working to help create new community schools and transition traditional schools. Read more of our coverage of CTA and members' work, and find information and resources, at cta.org/communityschools.

▼ Leading and Learning participants observe a community school classroom.



▼ Students at Magnolia High's Agriscience Community Center after preparing a community dinner.



things, or a district may balk at the release time required to make community schools work. (AUHSD gives teacher leads two periods of release time to collaborate with other teachers and develop curriculum and classroom lessons, and lead their site team that includes admin, parents, students and community partners.)

The Learning Lab will demonstrate to administrators how teacher lead release time is integral to community schools' success. And while participant teams will ideally be composed of all stakeholders, teams that have not yet formed collaborative relationships are also welcome. The Lab, Bettendorf said, "can empower associations with strategies and structures" to overcome all these barriers.

Learning Lab details

The NCSLL will draw from ASTA/AUHSD's expertise and experience with community schools, specifically in implementing steering committees, recruiting and training teacher leads, creating resources and professional development opportunities for educators, and collaborating with external partners including educational experts, community organizations and more.

This also includes strategic planning, such as setting clear goals, timelines and performance metrics, and identifying potential challenges and solutions.

Bettendorf and her colleagues are currently refining the Learning Lab program; it may include:

- A pre-visit virtual meeting to assess participants' needs and assets and review Learning Lab objectives;
- Day 1 (in-person): Leading and Learning Day, an immersive experience that includes a community learning tour, visits with community partners, classroom observation, best practices for designing and implementing community schools, and a focus on addressing the root causes of educational inequities;
- Day 2 (in-person): Participants
 - learn and discuss steering committee structure, the process and procedures of consensus building and shared leadership, and subcommittee structure;
 - review the CTA Community Schools 5-Step Toolkit and the NEA 5 Steps to Kickstarting Community Schools;
 - discuss the role of teacher leads and best practices for classroom instruction;

- develop a plan to create and sustain a CSSC;
- receive guidance in organizing around community schools.

Learning Lab leaders will work with NEA and CTA on participant follow-up and support, in person and virtually. Participants who receive teacher lead training will be expected to train colleagues back at their district schools, with help and resources: "We have a training for teacher leads that we already use — we will provide that," said Bettendorf.

The NCSLL will serve as an entry point into the NEA Implementation Institute for Community Schools, which supports participants through monthly professional learning community meetings, customized trainings, coaching for local district and site teams, and access to a step-by-step guide to developing community schools. Ideally, participants would attend the Learning Lab before applying for the Institute.

Learning Lab attendees must pay for travel and lodging. The Lab will cover the cost of the Leading and Learning Day, materials and meals.

Interested in the Learning Lab? Email astacslab@gmail.com. ■

IFT Grants for Community Schools Programs

START THINKING BIG about grants available from CTA's Institute for Teaching. While the 2025 grant application period won't open until December, members with program and project ideas that could be a part of Community Schools' work should know that IFT grants may apply.

IFT offers competitive grants for projects and initiatives that foster change that is teacher-driven and strength-based — the latter meaning what is working and successful in schools and classrooms. IFT awards two types of grants:

- Educator Grant, up to \$5,000, implemented by an individual educator and impacting a classroom or single group of students at a school site;
- Impact Grant, up to \$20,000, implemented by a team of two or more educators and impacting classrooms or sites within a school district.

IFT grants can be used in Community Schools work if projects meet grant program criteria and fit within program parameters. For example, a network of educators has been working with immigrants and students and families of color for several years on restorative and

transformative justice/practices. The educators realized that an IFT grant would allow for expansion of the work at Community Schools where some are based.

"This was an opportunity to get funding for stuff that we were not able to get through the Community Schools grant for our first year, such as food, stipends and field trips," says UTLA/NEA member German Gurrrola, community schools coordinator at Valley Oaks Center for Enriched Studies.

The group received an IFT Impact Grant of \$17,400 for its Transformative Justice Leadership Program. The shared governance committees at the LA Unified School District and individual sites agreed that the program was important and supported the application.

The project expands student leadership at four LAUSD Community Schools sites. Components include healing dialogue circles, arts workshops facilitated by community artists, and an after-school program that develops leadership and community organizing skills.

For more information, visit cta.org/ift.



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Full photo caption is on page 37.



CTA's

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD WINNERS



Celebrating 40 years of inspiring work by members, chapters and service centers

Winners of CTA's 2023-24 Human Rights Awards were recognized at the CTA Equity and Human Rights Conference on March 2 in Los Angeles. The theme for the 40th anniversary of the prestigious awards was "Celebrating Change Makers." This year's awardees indeed have made positive change in public education, the union and labor movement, and our greater society. Their contributions have been profound.

"Today is about our incredible awardees," said CTA President David Goldberg in opening the event. "They — and every one of us — deserve to be recognized for the work we do and the commitment we make to each other, to our students and to a better world."

The Human Rights Awards program's goal is to promote the development of programs for the advancement and protection of human and civil rights within CTA. Awards are given annually to CTA chapters, service center councils, and members in up to 11 categories (find more information at cta.org/awards). Congratulations to the winners!



Denisha Jordan

United Teachers Los Angeles

AFRICAN AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS
AWARD IN HONOR OF LOIS TINSON

Denisha Jordan leads by example, refusing to accept mediocrity and relentlessly pursuing excellence. Her integrity, coupled with her commitment to positive change, has made her a pivotal figure in educational and community development.

As a member leader of United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA), she has significantly contributed to shaping policy and decision-making processes, ensuring that African American voices are heard and their concerns are addressed. Her role as a policy influencer has been crucial in advocating for equality and upholding the rights and interests of African Americans in the education community.

Jordan has 22 years of teaching experience. "She communicates with students through her language of perseverance, her language of love," said Stacey Yakimovich Chavez, who nominated Jordan for the award. "You hear the love that she pours into her classroom."

Jordan's work preserving and teaching African American history, culture and values has profoundly influenced students, peers and the broader community. As a cofounder of LA Educators for Racial Justice, she developed programs focused on racial equality, cultural awareness and inclusivity in schools. This includes advocating for the end of school policing on high school campuses.

Jordan promoted human rights and racial justice as Women's Advocacy Coordinator for UTLA/NEA's Equity Team. She fostered an inclusive and empowering environment, inspiring African American women within the union to embrace their leadership potential while emphasizing the transformative power of love. As a CTA Equity Team Women's Advocate, she tackled specific challenges encountered by African American women in education, driving forward initiatives that support development and leadership.



William H. Scott

Porterville Educators Association

AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE HUMAN
RIGHTS AWARD IN HONOR OF JIM CLARK

William (Billy) Scott is a member of the Delaware/Cherokee Nation and Osage Nation. He teaches classes on Native American heritage, culture and tribal values. He has lobbied and fought for 25 years for all Native American students to be offered equal educational opportunities in K-12 and colleges/universities.

Scott was instrumental in convincing the University of California to offer free tuition to all Native Americans and is still trying to get the California State University system to offer the same. He has worked with school districts, educational programs and Nike N7 (Nike's investment in non-profits that elevate Indigenous communities through youth access to sport, and helps eliminate the stereotyping of Native American people). He is a member of the National Congress of American Indians, National Indian Education Association and Fresno State University Native American Club.

He has been a positive role model to all Native Americans. He received an athletic scholarship to Fresno State University and played professionally in the Canadian Football League. He also obtained his B.S. and two M.S. degrees along with his California teaching credential. As a licensed general contractor he has assisted Native Americans in getting their license, and learning about government set-aside contracts and other small business programs.

While working with Running Strong he solicited corporations for donations to build housing on reservations and spent many summers performing the labor to build those homes.

Scott's biggest accomplishment is when one of his Native American students graduates from college. He tells them, "Now it's your responsibility to make time and help the next future generation."



Below, FTA's Equity Team. At right, de St. Aubin, top, with family members and a family from her school who receive grocery deliveries.



Fontana Teachers Association

CTA CHAPTER HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

In the past year, Fontana Teachers Association went from merely listing a Human Rights contact to creating an Equity Team that meets monthly and has taken on several projects. They have designed and implemented projects to inform the membership about the meaning of human and civil rights, promoted human rights training and programs, and created a social justice book club that meets monthly.

In addition, the chapter convinced the Fontana Unified School District professional development department to fund more than 25 members' CTA conference fees and expenses every year. Chapter members created and initiated plans that identify and encourage the use of teaching materials that reflect the value of diversity, with an online database of resources for teaching authentic history.

The chapter worked to reduce violence and promote peace by sponsoring a "Celebrating Diversity" art/writing contest for students throughout the district.

Equity Team members are an essential part of the committee working to establish the district's first community school, building effective family, school and community partnerships. Members are also involved in the LCAP process, viewing it and community schools through a lens of equity for students.

Recently Fontana schools and educators were targeted by an organization that asked the school board to put a proposal for a forced outing policy onto a meeting agenda. "Our members rallied the school board so that the proposal did not make the agenda," said Angela Wysocki, an FTA member who nominated the chapter for the award. "They also showed up at the meeting so that we had a large contingent. I am very proud of the members of FTA."



Lori de St. Aubin

San Lorenzo Education Association

CTA MEMBER HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

At the height of the pandemic in 2020, Lori de St. Aubin made home visits to all the students in her class. When she asked them what they needed, most said food. When she received her stimulus check, she purchased groceries for them. When that money ran out, she turned to others for help to keep the grocery delivery going. "She literally had a pantry set up in her living room," said Melissa Galletti, who nominated de St. Aubin for the award.

When de St. Aubin saw how great the need was, she started a nonprofit called Bridging Grace. To date, Bridging Grace and de St. Aubin have made 1,600 grocery deliveries. She has delivered to the same 55 families continuously for the past three years. Many mornings before work she shops at Costco, stores perishable food in her school's staff room, and makes deliveries after work.

At one point she had saved up for a root canal but ended up using the money to buy groceries for families. She has helped provide unhoused families at her school who have moved into a new place with furniture and new beds. Last year, she rallied the community for donations to replace work tools stolen from a school family father's truck. She has also "adopted" families during the holidays, gathering and delivering gifts from the community.

De St. Aubin, now in her 19th year of teaching, went through the process to become a foster parent and has taken in many former students who needed a stable place to live. At school, she volunteers during her prep or lunchtime to train students to help other students solve conflicts and express their feelings in positive ways.





Southeastern Service Center Council

CTA SERVICE CENTER COUNCIL HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

Prior to and post pandemic, the Southeastern Service Center Council (SESSC) has made a commitment to their community. In partnership with the SESSC Equity Team, SESSC leadership and local chapters in the service center, all involved have made it a priority to lift up marginalized segments of the community.

Each member of the SESSC supports this work by highlighting a different Community Based Organization (CBO) at each service center meeting. A representative from the highlighted CBO gives a presentation. Some of the CBOs work with women/children in crisis, foster youth, LGBTQ+ youth, and families with incarcerated parents. These emotional, joyful presentations have helped to grow empathy and understanding for all.

The Equity Team follows up with the CBO to discuss their needs and service center members step up to bring in the needed donations. Chapters have included budget lines to support organizations in SESSC communities. The Equity Team also hosts a reception and toy drive in December so that children in the community can receive holiday gifts.

"Southeastern is so giving, [and has] a very family feel inside and outside of meetings," said CTA Board Member Margie Granado, who nominated SESSC for the award. "It's just very connected. Even before we started doing community-based work, at every meeting we would raise funds for CTA's Disaster Relief Fund. We want to make sure we support our own members."



Olive Garrison

Kern High School Teachers Association

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD FOR LGBTQ+ ADVOCACY IN HONOR OF NANCY BAILEY

Olive Garrison has persistently fought to eliminate stereotyping, discrimination, harassment and hate-motivated violence directed toward LGBTQ+ students, fellow educators and others.

Garrison has literally put their life on the line speaking out for LGBTQ+ students. After being quoted in a January 2023 New York Times article that was widely shared in right-wing media, they've been targeted with transphobic/homophobic hate, including doxing and death threats.

Despite all this, Garrison has forged on with their work. "They taught me that as important as having a Gender & Sexuality Alliance and other affinity groups in our schools [Garrison has been a GSA advisor since joining Kern High School District (KHSD) in 2017], *teaching* LGBTQ+ history is more powerful because it affects all students. It decreases bullying and makes it a safer community," said Elise Sotello, who nominated Garrison for the award.

Garrison also trains educators throughout the state in teaching LGBTQ+ history, and presents and trains at the ONE Archives Foundation, The Center on Colfax — LGBTQ Colorado, the California Department of Education, the California Council for the Social Studies (CCSS), and at CTA and other conferences.

Their efforts in and outside the classroom as a voice for the marginalized have not gone unnoticed. They've received the Don Romesburg Prize from the American Historical Association's Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender History, and CCSS' Equity, Inclusion & Social Justice Award. Last year, at the first-ever KHSD Lavender Awards, they received Advisor of the Year.

While continuing to teach LGBTQ+ history in high school and community college, Garrison is pursuing a doctorate degree (Ed.D.) in Educational Leadership.



▼ Below, Potts with the CTA Officers.



Jessica Potts

Irvine Teachers Association

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD FOR WOMEN'S ADVOCACY

Jessica Potts was a part of the group of educators who worked tirelessly for years at the state and national level for a law that allows women in California to take bereavement leave for a miscarriage or failed adoption or other “reproductive loss event.” The law, supported by CTA and passed in 2023, requires covered employers to provide up to five days of leave for qualified employees.

The law is life-changing for women across the state, who were previously forced to return to work immediately after losing a baby. “She did a lot of work for women who lost a baby to have the right to grieve, to be able to say, ‘You know what? I do need a couple of days to process that and to grieve that,’” said Shellie Ann Bittner, who nominated Potts for the award. “Nobody even knew about this, it was all behind the scenes — the meetings, the emails, the follow-up.”

Potts, a high school forensics teacher, currently serves as vice president for Irvine Teachers Association, president of the Orange Service Center Council, and was recently elected CTA Women’s Rights Committee chair. On the ITA Social Media/ Communications committee, she regularly shares information about women’s rights and resources available at the local and state levels. She leads and speaks at countless conferences throughout the state.

Potts is known for her willingness to have hard conversations in support of female educators who experience sexist treatment, and for her efforts to make things better professionally and on a personal level for women and all people.



▼ Alegre with fellow CTA Cadre trainers.



Gabriel S. Alegre

San Mateo Elementary Teachers Association

PACIFIC ASIAN AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

Gabe Alegre’s multifaceted contributions speak volumes about his dedication to various aspects crucial to the enrichment of his community.

As an ethnic studies teacher, Alegre ensures that students’ educational experiences are equitable and reflective of diverse perspectives. His dedication to dismantling barriers to education is testament to his unwavering commitment to fairness. His plurilingual abilities enhance the learning environment and contribute to the inclusivity of educational programs.

Alegre’s organizing and political lobbying, as well as his participation in rallies, marches and protests on issues from education to human rights, showcase his ongoing commitment to bring about systemic change. He consistently lends his voice to causes that align with principles of justice and liberation.

Alegre’s impact extends to the community. His leadership within APALA (Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance) inspires others and demonstrates a path they can follow. He actively contributes to programs that empower individuals and fosters a new generation of leaders.

For three years, Alegre has served as a CTA Cadre trainer in Racial Justice Advocacy. He has helped create content for sessions that include “Moving Beyond Awareness to Allyship: How Educators Can Take Action” and “Decolonizing the Classroom and Me.” “He is not a passive observer to things going on that affect marginalized students,” said fellow Cadre trainer Cassandra Talbot, who nominated Alegre for the award. “He’s an active participant. Youth and children today need someone who shows up, teaches in an intersectional and culturally responsive manner, and also does their own work outside of the classroom — that they can see out in the community. That is who Gabe is.”



Deborah Schneider Solis

United Teachers Los Angeles

STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONAL NEEDS
HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD

Deborah Schneider Solis has been a special education teacher at the elementary level for 19 years.

She has been a strong advocate for students with exceptional needs and has combined her union work with that advocacy. She is currently on the UTLA Board of Directors representing special education teachers.

As a resource specialist, she models a partnership with general education teachers where she team teaches as opposed to a program where students are pulled out for instruction. She has developed strategies and relationships to foster an environment where students with exceptional needs feel no different than other students and have access to curriculum and activities.



Schneider Solis has helped organize parents of students with exceptional needs, fostering lasting relationships and helping train parents to advocate for their children. She has also been a strong advocate for how the expansion of unregulated charters and specifically their exclusionary practices toward students with disabilities has had both a fiscal and programmatic impact on traditional public schools. She helped organize and expose how these exclusionary practices led to extreme increases in the overall caseloads for the entire district.

She has testified in Congress and the State Assembly for the need for more funding for SPED and has been active in organizing for fully funding IDEA.

Schneider Solis has “led the charge to create spaces for opportunity — not only for growth, but for voice” — for special ed educators, said UTLA President Cecily Myart-Cruz, who nominated Schneider Solis for the award. “With that voice, when we went on our solidarity strike in 2023, Debby and the [SPED] committee put forth bold ideas that are now being implemented in our schools.”



CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS
2023 - 2024

40th
Anniversary

For short videos of the nominators of this year's Human Rights Award winners, go to youtube.com/californiateachers.

Caption for photo on page 32: Front row, from left, CTA Secretary-Treasurer Erika Jones; Olive Garrison (Kern High School Teachers Assn.); William H. Scott (Porterville Educators Assn.); CTA President David Goldberg; Jessica Potts (Irvine Teachers Assn.); CTA Vice President Leslie Littman. Back row, Human Rights Awards Selection Committee member and CTA Board Member Robert Ellis; Denisha Jordan (UTLA); Deborah Schneider Solis (UTLA); Gabriel S. Alegre (San Mateo Elementary Teachers Assn.); Human Rights Awards Selection Committee members Camille Butts and Maya Walker; Lori de St. Aubin (San Lorenzo Education Assn.).

▼ Students, educators and community members turned out in force at a March 26 rally to protest layoffs.



▼ San Diego Education Association sign



Standing United Against Layoffs

CTA organizes to protect educators and students

By Julian Peoples

EDUCATORS AND THEIR LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS across the state are organizing to fight against proposed layoffs in school districts statewide — with more than 2,000 Reduction In Force (RIF) notices reported in 94 districts this year, a figure that could increase as additional reports are submitted. Local chapters are fighting back to demand that RIF notices are rescinded in the coming months.

The number is a massive increase from recent years, reminding of difficult budget years more than a decade ago when school districts balanced their budgets on the backs of their dedicated educators and the students and communities they serve.

“This is a traumatic and stressful experience for any educator, and layoffs ultimately harm students and our communities,” says CTA President David Goldberg. “While our union works to

ensure that all educators’ rights are maintained in this process across the state, we’re also calling on districts to rescind these layoff notices and bring back educators for the next school year.”

In many of the cases, the spike in layoff notices are an over-reaction by school districts to a projected deficit in the state budget. But rather than recognize that “rainy days” are here and tapping into reserve funds, many districts are hoarding reserves and instead proposing layoffs.

“Districts should be exhausting their reserves and looking for other ways to balance their budgets before laying off educators,” Goldberg says. “Our students deserve fully staffed schools — now is not the time to be laying off educators.”

The short-sighted layoff proposals come during a severe educator shortage, and will only compound the issue,

▼ In mid-March, students, parents and community members marched from Brookhurst Junior High to the Anaheim Union High School District offices in protest of cuts that aim to reduce teacher staffing by 10%. Photo courtesy LA Times.



◀ At a school board meeting, SDEA members held “pink slips” received by educators, along with the number of students who will be impacted by their layoffs.

“While our union works to ensure that all educators’ rights are maintained in this process across the state, we’re also calling on districts to rescind layoff notices and bring back educators for the next school year.”

—CTA President **David Goldberg**

causing aspiring teachers to reconsider whether they want to start in a career where they fear getting a pink slip every spring. And for seasoned educators, the layoff notices mean the potential for doing even more with even less — adding more and more onto the plates of an already exhausted and understaffed educator workforce.

Despite California’s economic power as the fifth largest economy in the world, our K–12 public schools are chronically underfunded, meaning that fluctuations in the state budget often lead to instability, Goldberg says.

“We need to fix California’s broken school funding system,” he says. “California’s students, schools and communities deserve a more stable and robust funding system to support an equitable education system for all.”

CTA local associations are already organizing to fight back layoff proposals. Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association held a march and rally in March to shine a light on the impacts of more than 100 proposed layoffs, while San Diego Education Association (SDEA) members rallied outside the San Diego Unified School District office later that month to protest the proposed layoff of 178 educators.

“Anything that we’re doing as a district that’s going to dissuade people from applying for positions where we so badly need quality educators is a huge mistake,” SDEA President Kyle Weinberg said in a news interview. “We need to be moving in the direction of bringing more educators, more counselors, more psychologists into our schools, and we’re going in the opposite direction as a district. It’s heartbreaking.” ■

Educator Layoffs Proposed Across State

Most layoff notices

(credentialed and classified) issued as of March 26:

- San Francisco Unified School District — 236
- San Diego Unified School District — 178.5
- Anaheim Union High School District — 119
- Chula Vista Elementary School District — 77.42
- Los Angeles County Office of Education — 72
- Coachella Valley Unified School District — 70
- Pasadena Unified School District — 64.6
- William S. Hart Union High School District — 63
- Santa Rosa Unified School District — 57.9
- Inglewood Teachers Association — 52

Public Education Wins in Primary Election

CTA members win school board seats

By Julian Peeples

UNION EDUCATORS WON strong victories on Election Day in March — another example of our power in numbers!

While the bulk of California's more than 2,000 school board seats are up in the November 2024 election, CTA members were successful in winning elections from Glendale to Alameda County to Los Angeles.

"Once again, California voters put our students and public schools first on Election Day," said CTA President David Goldberg. "A huge thanks to all members who walked precincts, reached out to voters and put in work to win for our students. Onward to November!"

Brentwood Teachers Association and CTA Board of Directors member Angela Normand won re-election to the Alameda County Board of Education, while Beverly Hills Education Association member Telly Tse won election to the Glendale Unified Board of Education. United Teachers Los Angeles member Karla Griego received the most votes in her bid for Los Angeles Unified School Board, and she advances to the runoff in the General Election.

"From the very beginning, this was a campaign of the community, by the community and for the community," Tse says. "This victory is not mine — it belongs to our children, our families and our educators."

As of press time, two-thirds of CTA's recommended candidates for local school board races were victorious in March



"Once again, California voters put our students and public schools first on Election Day."

—CTA President David Goldberg

(12 out of 18) and 100% of recommended local school measures (four of four) were successful. In state legislative races: 86% of recommended Assembly candidates advanced to the November election and 88% of state Senate recommendations advanced. Unofficially, 90% of recommendations for House of Representative seats were successful.

In Woodland and Orange, educators successfully recalled school board members who had pushed for policies and spewed rhetoric to harm LGBTQ+ students and families.

They join educators in Temecula Valley, also deeply engaged in a recall effort with parents and students in their community.

In the Sacramento area, Twin Rivers United Educators members walked door-to-door to encourage voters to elect an educator-recommended candidate and finally oust an incumbent — recently embroiled in a corruption scandal — who had been on the board since the 1970s.

With voter turnout around 34%, the old adage of "every vote matters" was even more appropriate — with some races still undecided weeks after the election, including Proposition 1, which eventually secured a narrow victory (about 28,000 votes with more than 7 million ballots counted at press time). Prop. 1 is a \$6.38-billion effort supporting a major transformation of the state's behavioral health care system.

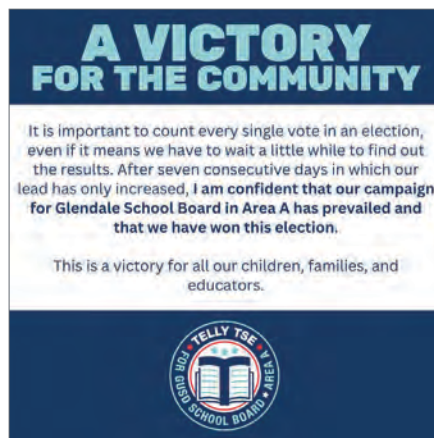
"This is a huge victory for doing things radically different when it comes to tackling homelessness. (It's) the biggest change California has seen in decades," Gov. Gavin Newsom tweeted when the results became apparent. "Now it's time to get to work — repairing the damage caused by decades of broken promises and neglect to those suffering from severe mental illness."

Tse thanked CTA members and local associations for the support during his campaign, saying that victory in November will require all educators getting involved to win for our students and public schools. Normand was also grateful for member and allies' support.

"Winning doesn't happen in a vacuum. I am incredibly thankful for all the support I received from CTA members, labor allies and those in community — every dollar, door-knock, social media post, one-on-one conversation, and of course, every vote that was cast," Normand said.

"This was a collaborative win. My seat is unique in that it is decided in the primary, but I want to urge us all to keep the momentum for the 2,000-plus school board elections to be determined in November. Together, we win." ■

Keep up with the latest on Election 2024 at cta.org/election.



"I want to urge us all to keep the momentum for the 2,000-plus school board elections to be determined in November. Together, we win."

—CTA Board Member **Angela Normand**

Legal Victory for Part-Time Long Beach City College Instructors

Suit alleging violation of minimum wage laws becomes a class action lawsuit

IN A VICTORY for CTA, a Los Angeles County Superior Court judge ruled that a lawsuit brought by two part-time instructors against the Long Beach Community College District over its failure to pay part-time staff a minimum wage for required work can now proceed as a certified class action lawsuit. The March 27 ruling expands the class represented in the suit, paving the way to include more than 900 other impacted adjunct faculty.

The suit was originally filed in April 2022 by Visual Arts Department instructors and Community College Association members Karen Roberts and Seija Rohkea. The plaintiffs alleged that the College violated state and federal minimum wage laws by failing to compensate part-time instructors for all required work outside of lecture hours, including grading, class and syllabi preparation, administrative duties and student office hours.

Long Beach Community College adjunct faculty have been compensated only for their actual time teaching a class, an

issue that the adjunct faculty's union has tried to have LBCC address at the bargaining table repeatedly without success.

"I'm relieved and excited," said Roberts about the ruling. "I deeply appreciate that the judge took into account all we do as adjunct faculty."

The suit is seeking back pay plus interest, missing retirement system contributions for unpaid wages, a court declaration and injunction requiring LBCC to pay its part-time faculty for all hours worked, and any other penalties available under law.

"We are in solidarity with our part-time faculty," said Long Beach City College Faculty Association President Suzanne Engelhardt. "We look forward to this case moving forward and to our colleagues getting the pay they deserve."

No trial date has been set. The judge ordered the parties to confer about issues including class notification, possible mediation or settlement negotiation. Both sides will update the judge on June 25. ■

BARGAINING ROUNDUP

Compiled by **Julian Peeples**



PLEASANTON: *Deal reached days before planned strike*

Association of Pleasanton Teachers (APT) members were only days away from going on strike in mid-March when they reached a tentative agreement that will provide an overall compensation increase of 13.22%.

After months of bargaining with little progress, APT members stepped up their organizing and nearly unanimously approved a strike authorization vote. This after declaring impasse last October.

Highlights of the agreement include smaller high school class sizes, a 10% on-schedule salary increase, fully paid Kaiser health care coverage, increased stipends, and improved credit for years of service. Following the release of a neutral fact-finder's report, Pleasanton Unified had imposed its "last, best and final offer" but reached out to APT leadership to ask them to continue negotiations to attempt to reach a deal.

"While we didn't get everything we wanted, we were able to get an agreement that supports our guiding principles of APT —best class sizes and caseloads, best resources and supports, and best educators, which will help to give our Pleasanton students the best," APT President Cheryl Atkins told Pleasanton Weekly. "We thank our community, parents and students that reached out to the school board and district management to support our efforts."

DUBLIN: *Educators Prepared to Strike Win Agreement*

Dublin Teachers Association (DTA) always strive for the best for their students, particularly retaining and recruiting the best educators. To that end, DTA organized and escalated for months, including authorizing a strike. DTA won a tentative agreement a week before potentially going on strike. Details of the deal were not known as of press time.

DTA contract work was part of the DTA Student Success campaign and members were focused on a pay increase and other improvements. Educators packed school board meetings and built a movement in their fight for the best schools for all Dublin students.



SANTA BARBARA:
Educators organize as bargaining heads to mediation

Santa Barbara Teachers Association (SBTA) members have been building power as their negotiations with Santa Barbara Unified have dragged on. The two sides were certified for mediation in January but the district delayed that process as well, highlighting the difficulties SBTA has had in getting district admin to take the bargain seriously.

"We could have had a settlement by now, putting Santa Barbara in the best position possible to compete for new employees for next year," SBTA President Hozby Galindo said. "They have been dragging this out as they fail to bring proposals that will attract and retain the educators Santa Barbara students deserve."

Follow SBTA on Instagram at [@SBTAunite](#) to learn more and support their struggle.



CHINO VALLEY:
Teachers rally, march as talks hit impasse

Associated Chino Teachers (ACT) formally declared impasse last month as educators continue the fight for a fair contract settlement. Mediation is scheduled for mid-April.

ACT members rallied and marched to show they are united in their fight for resources to recruit and retain educators and more support for special education students.

"ACT members are standing up for themselves, for their students, and for the community," said ACT President Brenda Walker. "The school board should join us in finding ways to retain quality teachers in our schools, and to support special education students, rather than driving educators away and ignoring the needs of students who often need the most help. We urge them to enter mediation with the right priorities, and help Chino Valley avoid a strike that no one wants."

Follow ACT on Facebook at [@chinotchrs](#) to learn more.



CONTRA COSTA COUNTY:
Educators picket for better

With negotiations ongoing, Contra Costa County educators are rallying and picketing to tell Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE) to put students first.

Members of **Contra Costa County Schools Education Association (CCCSEA)** are calling for a pay increase that keeps up with inflation to help recruit and retain quality educators. CCCSEA also wants more input in the district's intake process to create better outcomes for new students.

"Our students have high needs and educators want to ensure that they are served by the best educators possible," said CCCSEA Bargaining Chair Jill Stein-Wirth.

"We must stand up for student success and push the superintendent to stand with us so that our CCCOE students receive a quality education. Hoarding money is not the way to serve our students," said CCCSEA President Soula Nikolakopoulos.

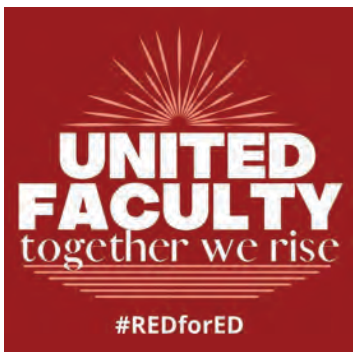
PERRIS: **Teachers win after united fight for students**

After six months of negotiations, **Perris Elementary Teachers Association (PETA)** members won an agreement that will help recruit and retain the educators Perris students deserve. Disappointed that school district administrators continued to devalue Perris students who are among Riverside County's most economically disadvantaged, PETA members rallied outside a February fact-finding hearing to show the district they were united. PETA members also worked to rule to show how much unpaid work teachers do outside their normal teaching day to provide the experience students deserve, according to PETA President Socorro Gonzalez.

"Working to rule shows how much unpaid work teachers do outside their teaching day to give Perris students a great elementary school experience," she said.



Continued on Page 45



Legal Victory Holds Administrators Accountable

North Orange County chapter wins case against district's retaliation, interference with protected rights

IN LATE DECEMBER, United Faculty of North Orange County Community College District (UF) won an Unfair Labor Practice case against the North Orange County Community College District (NOCCCD). UF proved that the district violated the Educational Employment Relations Act (EERA) by retaliating against UF's lead negotiator and by interfering with EERA-protected rights.

The lead negotiator, a tenured professor, endured more than two years of retaliation due to frivolous claims made by the district.

A viral video from April 2021 set the wheels of this case in motion: Another professor, who is Muslim, of Middle Eastern descent and who identifies as LGBTQ+, assigned students to take a position on an issue and defend that position when questioned by the professor. One student chose the topic of policing and chose the pro-policing stance, which left the professor to take the opposite view. In the clip, the student asserts that police officers are heroes; the professor responds by saying, among other things, that modern policing has its roots in groups who tracked down runaway enslaved persons in the South. The professor, along with other faculty of Middle Eastern descent, female faculty, LGBTQ+ faculty, and UF leaders were harassed and threatened after the video went viral on local and national news and social media platforms.

"UF's lead negotiator and I received disgusting voicemails

and emails from all over the country," says Christie Diep, president of the 550-member UF. "The district did basically nothing. It was so utterly disappointing for faculty, and it had a chilling effect in the classroom."



Christie Diep

Diep says, "People saw the importance of having their union protect them because the administration is not going to."

The UF lead negotiator attended several subsequent faculty senate and other meetings where district administrators were present. The UF lead negotiator, other faculty and students called out the district for not responding appropriately to protect academic freedom, employee dignity and workplace safety, especially for faculty of color and LGBTQ+ faculty. Faculty and students called on administrators to act. They described the administration culture using words such as "white privilege," "white fragility" and "toxic masculinity."

The UF lead negotiator also addressed the contentious issue of NOCCCD's predominately male administrators determining when the predominately female faculty should return to in-person teaching in the midst of the Covid pandemic.

During a bargaining session between UF and the district in October 2021, where in-person instruction was discussed again, a male administrator who had been present at the other meetings alleged the lead negotiator's comments were discriminatory. The next month, this administrator filed

a formal complaint against the lead negotiator with accusations of unprofessional conduct, gender discrimination against the male administrators and creation of a hostile work environment. The district began an investigation and unlawfully directed the lead negotiator not to discuss the district's complaint or the investigation with anyone.

CTA legal counsel sent a letter to NOCCCD in February 2022 expressing concern that the district was engaging in unlawful retaliation and interference with protected speech and activity under the EERA, and asking NOCCCD to rescind the unlawful directive.

The district did not issue a revised directive until the end of March, meaning the unlawful directive remained in place for nearly four months. It also extended the timeline of its investigation three times, to mid-June 2022 — essentially extending the chilling effect of its retaliation for more than half a year.

"No one holds administrators accountable," Diep says, alluding to UF members' past experiences as well as this case. "The only way we're protected is through our power together in our union."

"People saw the importance of having their union protect them because the administration is not going to."

—United Faculty President
Christie Diep

CTA and UF filed an Unfair Labor Practice charge against NOCCCD in April 2022. The case went to hearing before the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) which issued its decision in November 2023. PERB found that NOCCCD violated the EERA by retaliating against employees exercising their EERA rights. PERB also found the language the professor had used while representing UF, and the manner in which the language was used, was appropriate and did not fall outside the scope of EERA protection. PERB ordered the district to withdraw its complaint, post PERB's findings and expunge all its files pertaining to the case and UF's lead negotiator.

"This represents a victory over an abuse of authority, power and title," Diep says. "It is standing up to people who do not have good intentions or the same values or hold the same things to be true."

"Our job as faculty is supposed to be encouraging and helping students think about the world more critically, to question things and to advocate for themselves. If we can't do that for ourselves, it's pretty difficult for us to convey that to our students." ■

Bargaining Roundup *Continued from Page 43*

VALLEJO: ***Educators organize and win agreement***

After five months of difficult negotiations, **Vallejo Education Association** members won a contract agreement that prioritizes students and invests in educators.

The victory was powered by the solidarity of VEA members, who were committed to winning the best resources for students and a permanent, qualified educator in every classroom. Highlights of the agreement, reached during mediation, include:

- Retroactive to July 1, 2023, a 5.5%-wage increase.
- For 2023–24, all members employed upon ratification will receive a \$6,000 off-schedule retention bonus.
- For 2024–25, all unit members employed on Sept. 30, 2024, will receive a \$5,000 off-schedule retention bonus.
- Teachers with a Bilingual, Cross-cultural, Language and Academic Development (BCLAD) or bilingual credential will receive an additional stipend.
- Effective July 1, 2024, the masters, second credential, doctorate and BCLAD/bilingual stipend(s) will increase to \$2,000.
- The classroom materials stipend will increase from \$135 to \$250.

VEA and management will resume negotiations in one year for the 2025–26 successor agreement.

"Through this whole process, our bargaining and organizing teams were focused and committed to our guiding principle that all Vallejo students deserve the best education," said VEA President Kevin Steele.





CHALLENGE BASED LEARNING

High school and younger students can participate in hands-on, relevant projects that provide effective solutions to community problems and issues **By Jodie Deinhammer**

CHALLENGE BASED LEARNING (CBL) is a powerful pedagogical approach to reengaging students in the classroom. CBL promotes active participation, critical thinking, problem-solving skills and, more important, a sense of purpose among students. By engaging in hands-on, relevant tasks, students develop the necessary skills to thrive in a future where continuous learning is essential.

The Challenge Based Learning Framework can be adapted to any subject or grade level and provides a structure in which students identify a problem, ask questions and conduct research that leads to a proposed solution. Then, they put that solution into action to create change in their school or community. When students get to identify a problem, they're more invested in the learning process and outcome.

Come up with the big idea and essential question

For a CBL project, you need a big idea that captures

students' imagination and interest and addresses a real-world issue like the environment or inequity. In my anatomy and physiology classes, our big idea is always health and wellness.

At the beginning of the year, I ask my students, "What are the health and wellness issues that impact our community and world?" Once they've generated plenty of thoughts, they develop a "How can we..." question based on those issues. I have them share their questions in Padlet to promote discussion and use these questions throughout the year to develop challenges within our units of study.

Investigate, implement and act

The "investigate" stage of CBL encourages students to explore and learn more about the problem. The process supports research skills and promotes a good understanding of the challenge itself. For my classes, the investigation phase usually takes us one full class period for research and



planning. Next, I have them put together a quick presentation to pitch their ideas to the class so we can vote on the best option.

Students engage in collaborative discussions, look for unique perspectives and develop a plan that would address the challenge. It's important for them to be well-informed about the problem to suggest a solution.

The implementation phase of CBL is the moment it all comes together. After investigating, discussing and planning, we finally have a plan of action and are ready to move forward. This phase of dealing with real-world problems involves collaborative teamwork and effective communication and promotes accountability, adaptability and resilience within students.

Process snapshot

Here's how we go through the CBL process in my class:

Big idea: Health and wellness

- **Essential question:** How can we improve mental health in our community?
- **Investigate:** With a solid question in place, students need more of a background in mental health in order to know how to improve it. I typically give them some research questions to get started but allow them to follow any path that interests them. Here are some prompts I've given them:

- How do certain mental health conditions alter brain chemistry?
- How can your environment impact your mental health?
- What are some healthy ways to reduce stress and anxiety?
- How does social media play a role in mental health?

“Dealing with real-world problems involves collaborative teamwork and effective communication and promotes accountability, adaptability and resilience within students.”

During this phase, we do activities that help students learn more about the topic, such as a sheep brain dissection, reaction-time experimentation and reflex testing. These activities allow me to cover the content of the class but still connect to the topic.

We discuss how mental health impacts brain structures and how age can alter reaction times and reflexes, and we identify good solutions to maintaining a healthy brain.

- **Implementation:** After researching and learning more, each group comes up with an idea of how to accomplish our essential question and pitches it to the class. They create a presentation that includes all the details of their idea and implementation plan.

Choose a project and reflect

Groups present on a range of topics and ideas such as developing intramural sports teams to give students an outlet to reduce stress, putting on a holiday party at the local senior center, and incorporating mental health days into classes. After each group presents, we vote and decide to move forward with two big projects.

This year, the first project was a holiday party at our local senior center. The group that presented the idea reached out to the senior center for approval and organized the whole event. They designed games and competitions, all the while learning about brain development, age-appropriate activities, and project planning. More than 35 anatomy students volunteered to host the event on their day off from school. Each group ran a station for the seniors to attend. The senior center had more than 75 people show up that day. Watching my kids interact with the elderly community was the best part of my year. Students were there because they wanted to be, as none of it counted toward their grade.



The second project we'll implement is a mental health fair. Many students had great ideas of little things to do, so someone suggested that we just host a festival of some sort. We contacted a local nonprofit and will host an event with them this May. Groups will host tables that feature pet adoption, crafts, journaling, pickup sports games, art therapy and yoga.

At the conclusion of any activity, I ask students to reflect on their learning. A typical reflection is in the form of a survey that asks them, "What did you like? What would you change? How could we improve it for next time?" This always helps me to make improvements for the next one.

Be brave — it's worth it

Change is hard. Doing something out of your comfort zone is hard for most people.

At the beginning of the year, when my students suggested

"Embracing change in education isn't merely about staying current, it's about instilling a particular mindset within ourselves and modeling the values of lifelong learning, creative thinking and a willingness to take risks."

we do a CBL event each month, I was a bit overwhelmed and anxious. However, I knew it would be for the good of everyone involved. Students get opportunities to hold leadership positions and build strong relationships within our classroom and community. We've run six mini CBLs this year and have two more left, with the mental health fair as the finale. My students have stepped up — doing things beyond my expectations to make

these events successful and fun.

We want our students to learn how to navigate the evolving landscape of technology, improve their problem-solving skills, and make a positive impact on society. Embracing change in education isn't merely about staying current, it's about instilling a particular mindset within ourselves and modeling the values of lifelong learning, creative thinking, and a willingness to take risks. ■

This story originally appeared in Edutopia.



We're Working Hard to Repeal the WEP-GPO

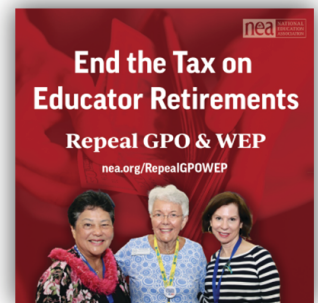


What are the WEP and the GPO?

The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) significantly reduce the amount of money that you and your surviving spouse receive from Social Security. Many career part-time instructors will not receive a livable retirement benefit from CALSTRS and may be counting on previous work giving them a sizable Social Security benefit to supplement their CALSTRS retirement.

However, past surveys have shown that up to half of part-time faculty members are not aware that a significant portion of their earned social security retirement benefits might be taken

away from them and their surviving spouses as a result of the WEP/GPO. CCA and CTA are working hard to repeal these burdensome policies that adversely impact our membership.



But we can't do it without you. We are stronger together! Visit cca4us.org for more information and ways you can join the fight.

Tag us on social media:

#cca4us

#wearecta

#nea



One of the FAMILY

Steven Acosta
is CTA Paula J. Monroe
ESP of the Year

By **Julian Peoples**



"I GET ENERGIZED by CTA," says Steven Acosta, a member of Association of Classified Employees-Culver City. "I get energized by the membership and everyone who supports us and helps us grow. It all makes me glad to be a part of this family."

A technology technician in Culver City Unified School District for 25 years, Acosta is the 2024 CTA Paula J. Monroe Educational Support Professional of the Year. Acosta says he is truly honored for the recognition from his CTA siblings.

"I feel that CTA gives us a great opportunity to become family with the people we work with — I really value the union because of that," Acosta says. "Learning about advocacy and supporting fellow workers."

On the job, Acosta is a tech wizard, supporting the technological needs of students and staff alike. The district's most senior technician provides technical assistance and maintenance for everything from video app support to Chromebook repairs.

In his local, Acosta is similarly a powerhouse — constantly working to support his fellow members and help them reach their personal goals. He first got involved in the local after getting bumped to a part-time position with fewer hours, which meant Acosta had more time on his hands for the local and he was recruited to be on the executive board. He found a passion for helping colleagues with ideas for their professional growth, working to show them options for becoming teachers or taking on other roles in education and encouraging them to strive for their dreams.

"I'm very happy when I see that somebody has grown and decided where they want to go," says Acosta. "I don't have children, but I feel like this is a way that I am imparting

something to somebody. Even if it's not my goal to become a teacher, I can help others reach their goals. I was able to motivate several instructional aides to become teachers."

Acosta has served his local in a variety of capacities, including membership contact, site representative and he currently serves as a State Council of Education representative, representing 450 fellow ESPs on the highest decision-making body in our union. He has attended multiple NEA Representative Assemblies and he served for many years on the CTA LGBTQ+ Issues Conference Planning Committee.

"Steven has advanced the image of ESPs," wrote Palos Verdes Faculty Association member Samantha Weiss in her nomination of Acosta for the award. "He is currently serving as CTA's ambassador to CALPERS (California Public Employees' Retirement System), where he monitors and synthesizes the public meetings with an eye on flagging important information and developments related to the classified pension system."

Acosta gets emotional when he talks about what CTA means to him. He said it meant so much to him to be accepted so easily into the CTA family, underscoring how much influence

it's had on his life.

"CTA means opportunity. It means education and growth," Acosta says. "CTA says 'Hey Steven, grow, become something.'"

In that vein, Acosta wishes the same for all 310,000 members of the CTA family.

"Keep educating yourself for yourself," he says. "Keep growing!" ■

"CTA gives us a great opportunity to become family with the people we work with — I really value the union because of that."

When We Fight Together, We Win Big Together

CTA Executive Director **Jeff Good** brings history of building power with educators and school communities



JEFF GOOD, CTA's new executive director, brings years of experience teaching in the classroom, as a leader in his own local chapter, and organizing throughout our union.

In a short interview, Good shared his motivations and vision for the years ahead.

On his union perspective

A union is like-minded people coming together, acting collectively to create change and to make their lives better. We have serious challenges in front of us, both as a union and as a society. School funding in California is tumultuous. We are living in an educator shortage. Our students and communities go without the resources they deserve. The only way to confront those challenges is to take action together to change the playing field upon which those challenges are met.

When educators come together to determine shared goals and then move in the same direction there is no victory — at the worksite or statewide, that is outside of our reach.

On his union background

I've been either a member of CTA or an employee of CTA for almost 30 years. In those 30 years, there are many examples of educators coming together in their union and winning. One strong example was the State Capitol mobilization in 2000, when thousands of CTA members from across the state went to the steps of the Capitol to demand an increase in funding that yielded 10% salary increases in many locals statewide.

Another was the 2005 campaign against Arnold Schwarzenegger's attempt to degrade every aspect of working conditions for workers in this state; we overwhelmingly defeated him.

And one of my greatest sources of pride was to work alongside the members of United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA), to build structures for collective action, and secure victories in our contract campaigns, political campaigns and common good campaigns. Every campaign had a powerful impact on public schools, the labor movement and the lives of working people throughout Los Angeles.

We had two strikes at UTLA that were very impactful. In 2023, educators walked out with classified workers in true solidarity. I'll always remember my daughter asking me a clarifying question, "Dad, are you saying that teachers are giving up pay so that other people can get paid more?" And I said, yes, that's exactly what they were doing. That's the kind of solidarity built through collective action that can have a lasting impact on our communities and potentially the entire state.

On his early life influences

I grew up with parents who injected in me a sense of obligation to do my part to make the world a better place. And I loved politics — I was a political junkie.

That's why I operate at a fast pace, feeling like I've got to maximize my time on this earth to do things that make a difference in people's lives. I was always supportive politically of organized labor. But at my first teaching job in Washington, D.C. — back

“The way we handle everything, address every situation, and confront every strategic challenge must be driven by organizing and acting collectively.”

in the early '90s — within a couple of days of being a classroom teacher, I realized that the union was going to be the vessel for change. There were so many things missing in that school, in my classroom, in terms of what students needed, what parents needed, what the community needed, what I needed as an educator to be able to do my job effectively.

It was very clear to me that it was going to take my colleagues and I working together in our union to make the change we wanted to see. It was my wake-up moment on the power of unionism and its marriage to creating real change in public education.

On what he's learned from others

I admire people for how they approach their own lives. Do they approach their life with passion? With a work ethic? In a way that embraces the people around them and appreciates what people around them bring to the table?

When I started as a teacher, I wanted to learn from the people around me. When I started working at CTA, I immediately started identifying other staff who I wanted to learn from — and realized the value in hearing all of the various approaches to teaching in the classroom and getting active in the union. Educators have such a wealth of knowledge, generosity, compassion and grit. We are a force to be reckoned with.

On what he hopes to build with CTA members and staff

My goal is to work alongside CTA members to be a fighting union that can win — at our school sites, in our local districts and at the state level. I firmly believe that we are the most powerful union in the nation. With that power comes great responsibility. We must constantly build and exercise our power for transformative change and inspire our members and community partners to fight for it.

I see California as being kind of the tip of the spear for the entire planet. We draw people from every corner of the earth. Despite the challenges in front of us, I'm excited. There are no limits to the creativity, intelligence and resiliency of our members in attacking those challenges. ■

In Brief: Jeff Good

Then and now: Born in Dallas, Texas; lives in Los Angeles

Family: Wife Ngozika Anyanwu teaches second grade at Hudnall Elementary in Inglewood. “We met when we were teaching at the same school, and I signed her up to join the union.” They are parents to son Justice Anyanwu-Good, 17, and daughter Truth Anyanwu-Good, 14. “My family is my greatest source of strength. Peace, relaxation and sanity. I could not survive without them. They are truly at my core, who I am. We call ourselves the Fantastic Four.”

Education: Brown University; majored in History

Most influential book: *Native Son* by Richard Wright. “It was a really impactful book at a certain point in my life that has affected how I have approached life.”

Current reading: “A book about the 1990s New York Knicks who were a group of like-minded people who fought systematically to achieve the goals that they wanted to achieve.”

Random facts: He loved sports as a kid and “grew up pretty determined to be an NFL football player.” He has a twin brother, a former educator, who along with his parents and another brother all live in LA. (Another brother remains in Texas.) Daily morning routine includes working out and reading the LA Times, NY Times or Sacramento Bee. Downtime finds him with family, reading or watching sports, or some combination of them.

Good adds that he “has an amazing family of parents, siblings, nephews, nieces and cousins through marriages and relationships who all spend time together and provide constant support for the Fantastic Four.”

Workplace Wellness

How to use Calm in your everyday work life

CALM CAN AID in offering mental well-being support to people. But what does that look like in practice? And how can Calm support you throughout the workday, both during and outside of work hours? Here is a closer look at some of the ways you can use Calm to manage stress, combat anxiety, sleep better, rekindle motivation, find focus and get moving.

When you find yourself feeling anxious

Even if you're not one of the 40 million adults in the U.S. estimated to experience an anxiety disorder, you are still likely to experience it in stressful situations. Meditation exercises and relaxing sounds can help you get past anxiety attacks and back on track.

When you need to physically loosen up

The nature of many jobs today is that a lot of us don't tend to move around much while doing them. Or when we do, it's repetitive motions that strain the body. This is a fast track to body aches, restlessness and low productivity. Moving around helps us physically — and mentally — reset. This is why it's so important to take time out of your day to go for short walks, or to do a few quick stretches.

When you need to destress

Stress is increasingly part and parcel of modern life. Whether it's work, relationships or something else entirely, we all deal with stress at some point. Meditation and mindfulness exercises can help you improve your stress management skills and mental resilience, while breathing exercises can help to alleviate the physical effects of stress.

When you need to find your focus

If you have a lot on your mind, it can be hard to focus on the task at hand. Your work can suffer as a result — which, in turn, can cause further stress and anxiety as tasks build up. With a wide library of helpful, focus-building content such as guided meditations, breathing exercises and educational master classes, Calm can help you



train your mind to be more mindful and grounded, so you can focus better in the moment.

When you need to boost your motivation

Loss of motivation is not something to beat yourself up about. But when there's work to do and deadlines to meet, re-finding motivation is essential. When you're motivated, you're engaged. And when you're engaged, you do your best work — and, importantly, you enjoy yourself in the process. When you next find yourself feeling unmotivated and uninterested in the task you're doing, try listening to one of Calm's motivational meditations or pick something uplifting in Calm Music.

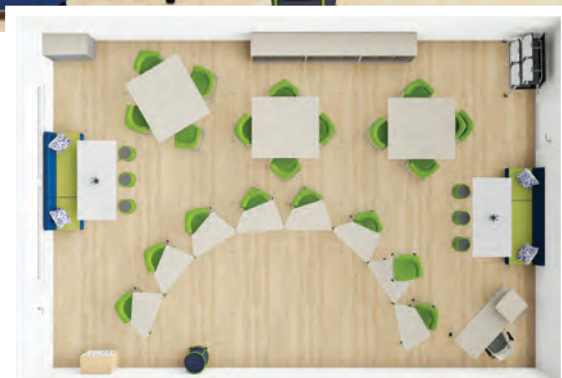
When insomnia is affecting your work

Work is easier when you've had a good night's rest. But sometimes it can be hard to get an adequate amount of sleep — especially when you're anxious about the next day's big meeting or long to-do list and are finding it hard to turn off your brain. The Calm library of Sleep Stories and gentle music can help. With soothing voices narrating a range of stories, soft instrumental music and even simple meditations designed to help facilitate sleep, there's something for everyone.

There's no "right way" to use Calm. You can experiment to find the exact combination that works best for you. It's important to remember that mental health and well-being are intensely personal journeys, and there's no one-size-fits-all method that will work for everyone. ■

This article is from Calm. CTA members (active or retired) can activate your free Calm subscription for you and your family at ctamemberbenefits.org/calm. Questions? Contact CTA Member Benefits at 650-552-5200 or MemberBenefits@cta.org.

▼ Youssofi designed a classroom to give her students a more personalized learning experience.



“This classroom might be the best, safest and most beautiful space that my students have in their lives.”

A Flexible Space for Learning

By Amy Peruzzaro

TERESA YOUSSOFI KNOWS how powerful a well-designed space can be for her students. The Chula Vista Educators member and 6th grade Spanish and English dual immersion teacher was intent on enhancing the students' learning environment in her classroom, so she entered the 2024 Learning Space Design Competition by furniture manufacturer KI.

Youssofi won one of four grand prizes, receiving \$40,000 in KI furniture to create her dream classroom.

Her winning entry, created through the interactive KI Classroom Planner tool, was an inclusive classroom design that offers her students a more personalized learning experience, with different zones to accommodate students' unique communication and learning styles.

She chose KI's Ruckus collection for the worktables, stools, chairs, white boards, tote storage, student desks and booth lounge seating. The design gives her students a more flexible, collaborative and active learning experience. It was

important for her to offer students different seating options that work best for them. If students prefer group over individual seating, they have the option to sit at a worktable or folding table.



Teresa Youssofi

In addition, Youssofi opted for the tote storage to facilitate the engineering activities for her students by having supplies very organized and readily available. Finally, the new individual-sized white boards will replace the broken ones in her classroom.

Youssofi is thrilled that she will be able to provide her students with the best-equipped space to enhance their learning every day.

“This classroom might be the best, safest and most beautiful space that my students have in their lives,” she said of her design, which will soon become real. “I want them to

be proud and extremely happy while they're here getting an education.”

Learn more about Youssofi's design at ki.com/design2win. ■

▼ Kim Baioni, holding certificate, with California Casualty's Amanda Keidel.



Music and Arts

GET A BOOST

Educators make use of grants from California Casualty

CTA members **Kim Baioni** and **Coleen Topper** each won California Casualty Music and Arts Grants for their schools.

Baioni, a member of Center Unified Teachers Association in Antelope, teaches English and art at a continuation high school that services many disadvantaged youth. "My goal with the grant is to bring in a local artist to work with my students to create a mural for the school — we are hoping to paint the mural this spring." She adds that it should be an amazing experience for students.

Topper, a member of Grossmont Education Association in El Cajon, is a high school special education teacher at the ELITE

\$2.2 BILLION

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING FOR CALIFORNIA PUBLIC EDUCATION

FY 2021-22



▼ Coleen Topper

Academy. The Academy provides academic and behavioral intervention services for students with moderate to severe disabilities, including a music therapy program. "The grant has benefitted all our students at ELITE," Topper says. "Music provides a pathway to speech, and calms students who have anxiety and behavioral issues. The data shows more engagement in the students' Individualized Education Plans. We have just begun to see the benefits of the music therapy program."

The California Casualty Music and Arts Grant program was established to provide support for K-12 public schools negatively impacted by reduced budgets. It awards individual CTA members with a \$250 grant for their classroom or program. To apply for your school, complete the online application at just4members.com/musicarts. Applications received by July 2, 2024, will be notified of their status by Sept. 30, 2024. Applications received after July 2 will be considered for an award during the next program cycle.

If you have questions, contact CTA Member Benefits at (650) 552-5200 or Memberbenefits@CTA.org. ■



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Lit From Within

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



◀ Colette Dunn-Kottke, history teacher, Palos Verdes Faculty Association

School's Out!

James Stiles, a member of Palos Verdes Faculty Association, has a new photography book — *School's Out for Teachers* — focused on his fellow Palos Verdes Peninsula High School staff. He began the project in 2019, cut it short during the pandemic and returned to it in the 2022–23 school year. He asked his subjects to bring personal things to be photographed with — serious, whimsical and everything in between.

"My hope is to show the three-dimensionality and richness of these individuals beyond the school day, providing a small glimpse of their personal worlds," says Stiles, a photo, video and broadcast journalism teacher. "I'm told through showing these images that many staff are getting to know each other a bit better — their hobbies, passions, accomplishments and dreams."

To date, 75 PVPHS faculty and staff have participated. The book is available on Amazon.



◀ June Choi, Korean language teacher, Palos Verdes Faculty Association



A Healing Talk

Bridey Thelen-Heidel, a high school English teacher, LGBTQ+ youth advocate and South Tahoe Education Association member, was 33 and had beaten the odds stacked against someone raised by addicts and abusers. But the trauma she tucked away waited to be triggered by a song or a familiar smell; it wreaked havoc on her body. While she used therapy, meditation and self-help guides to heal, she found that the very qualities we developed to survive can also help us thrive. In a February TEDx Talk, Thelen-Heidel spoke about how we all have the power to overcome our trauma, put a safety lock on the triggers, and create a normal and functional life. Educators and counselors have told her that the talk helped them understand what students deal with and gave them talking points when reminding their students of their strengths. Watch it at bit.ly/BThelen-Heidel.

Got something for Lit From Within — a video series, podcast, album or something else? Tell us at 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.

CALIFORNIA EDUCATORS United for Our Students

*Celebrate 2024 California Day of the Teacher,
National School Nurse Day and CTA ESP Day*

Day of the Teacher, National School Nurse Day and ESP Day are all about honoring and celebrating the work that teachers, nurses and education support professionals do every day, and the support and guidance they give to our students. Our theme this year, "California Educators United for Our Students," also acknowledges what we can accomplish together in our union, including organizing for the best working and learning conditions in our public schools.

Get ready to celebrate California Day of the Teacher on May 8, National School Nurse Day on May 8, and CTA ESP Day on May 21!

A few ways to show your appreciation:

- Post this poster in your classroom, school hallway or other public area.
- Have students make and deliver cards to their school educators.
- Join your local chapter's celebrations and attend upcoming union meetings and actions.
- Consider food, gift cards and other items to make the days special.
- Use hashtags in school and chapter social media messages of gratitude: **#DayoftheTeacher**, **#SchoolNurseDay** and **#ESPDay**.

Got a photo of your celebration? Use the link to the online form at cta.org/dayoftheteacher to upload it. Be sure to include names of the people pictured, and your name and chapter.

Find resources and more ideas at cta.org/dayoftheteacher.



CALIFORNIA EDUCATORS

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STABLE
SCHOOLS

SAFE, STABLE
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ASSOCIATION

**DAY OF
THE TEACHER**

MAY 8, 2024

**NATIONAL
SCHOOL NURSE DAY**

MAY 8, 2024

CTA

ESP DAY

MAY 21, 2024

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