

# california educator

*UNION EDUCATORS*

# GET OUT THE **VOTE**

Never underestimate the power of public school educators!

**PAGE 24**

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2024 VOLUME 29 ISSUE 2



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VOLUME 29 ISSUE 2



## #WeAreCTA

OUR VOICE, OUR UNION, OUR PROFESSION

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

### MAGAZINE

#### FORWARD WITH CTE

Programs in hydroponics, welding boost students' careers and offer campus and community benefits. **PAGE 14**

#### COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

##### A TEAM EFFORT

New Community Schools Learning Lab gives locals — and partners — the tools to succeed. **PAGE 18**  
[cta.org/communityschools](http://cta.org/communityschools)

#### WE ARE THE UNION!

Understanding 'the power of us' is critical to win our collective goals. **PAGE 35**



[cta.org/get-involved](http://cta.org/get-involved)

### DIGITAL

#### ELECTION 2024

Take CTA election recommendations to the ballot box with you with our special tear-out page. **PAGE 29**



[cta.org/election](http://cta.org/election)

#### SUPPORT CTA MEMBERS

Meet endorsed CTA members running for school boards. **PAGE 24**



[cta.org/educator](http://cta.org/educator)

#### REPEAL THE GPO/WEP

A critical House vote is coming up: Tell legislators to fully repeal unfair social security penalties. **PAGE 41**

[cta.org/takeaction](http://cta.org/takeaction)

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

#### ARE YOU A NEW EDUCATOR?

At CTA's New Educator Weekend you'll learn about classroom management, lesson plans and ideas, and much more. #CTANEW North: Dec. 6-8; South: Feb. 21-23, 2025. **PAGE 8**



[cta.org/conferences](http://cta.org/conferences)

#### LGBTQ+ ISSUES CONFERENCE

2024's theme: "We Have Always Been Here: Resilience, Resistance and the Road Ahead." A focus on awareness, capacity and skill building, and taking action. Nov. 15-17, Burlingame, **PAGE 8**



[cta.org/conferences](http://cta.org/conferences)

### MEMBER BENEFITS

#### CALM BEFORE THE STORM

Get the Calm app before the busy holiday season and relax! New: How to deal with financial stress. **PAGE 52**



[ctamemberbenefits.org/calm](http://ctamemberbenefits.org/calm)

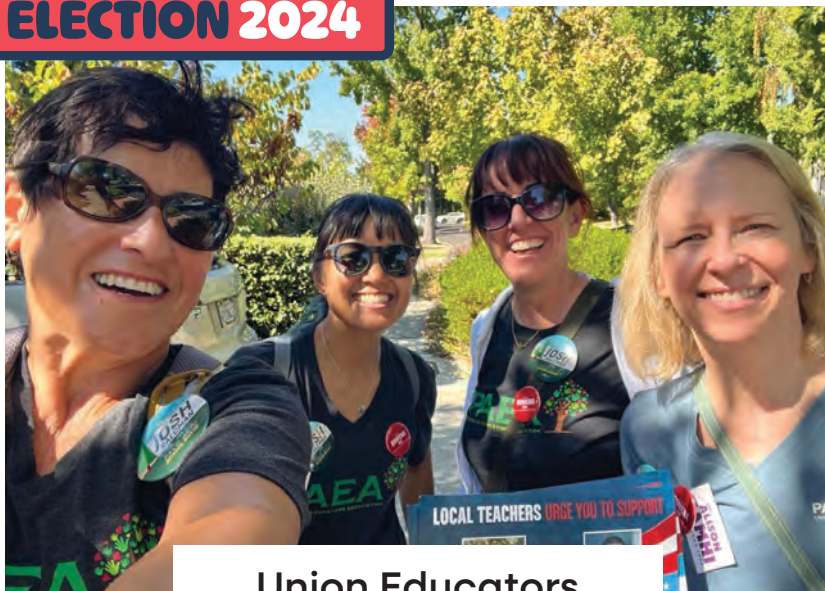
#### YOUR BENEFITS LIST

From insurance to disaster relief to deals on rental cars, you'll want to keep this handy. **PAGE 53**

[ctamemberbenefits.org](http://ctamemberbenefits.org)

Raring to go: Santa Clara Service Center Council was the starting point for many members' canvassing efforts in September. See Page 32 for more.

# ELECTION 2024



## Union Educators Get Out the Vote!

It's GOTV time up and down the state

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## Skills for Life

Career tech educators prepare students for life after school

**PAGE 14**



## We Are CTA

Why taking ownership of our union is critical

**PAGE 35**

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- 13 Quotes & Numbers

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Top photo: Palo Alto Educators Assn. members get out the vote. Middle photo: Hemet Teachers Assn.'s Josh O'Neal, left, with one of his students.

**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](https://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](mailto:Editor@cta.org); [#WeAreCTA](https://twitter.com/WeAreCTA)

▼ Left to right: CTA Legislative Analyst Katie Hardeman, Oakland Education Assn. member Mayra Alvarado, CTA Board Members Angela Der Ramos and Eva Ruiz, NEA Vice President Princess Moss, CTA Board Member Jesse Aguilar (back row), CTA Vice President Leslie Littman (front), San Lorenzo Education Assn. Member Alberto Nodal, CTA Board Members Maritza Avila and Margie Granado, NEA Executive Committee Member Gladys Marquéz, NEA President Becky Pringle, NEA Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria.



## Excellence in Action

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute held its Leadership Conference Sept. 17–19 in Washington, DC. This year's theme: "Latino Excellence in Action: Innovation, Influence, and Representation." The CTA/NEA delegation included officers and chapter leaders, who participated in discussions involving the vast and critical contributions of the Latinx community to U.S. history, society, art, culture, technology and the economy.

▼ CTA member leaders at the State Capitol lobbied hard for SB 1263.



## Educators Against the TPA

I just got my edTPA results and ... I failed by one point. It took so much to complete my tasks and teach all my students. My admin has evaluated me four times over the past two school years and I've done wonderfully. I know I'm a great P.E. teacher, but the edTPA says otherwise. It makes me not want to teach.

MELISAH CORTEZ

*Fountain Valley Education Association*

*Editor's Note: We continue to get feedback on "Teacher Quality: A Better Way Than the TPA," Dec. 2023/Jan. 2024. CTA supports SB 1263, which addresses unnecessary and high-stakes barriers to becoming an educator. See story on page 40.*

## Your CTA 2024–25 Membership Card



Your digital CTA membership card was emailed to you in early September. A paper card is being mailed to you — expect it in late October.

Use your card to access a variety of benefits, discounts and programs to enhance your life and career. [#UnionStrong!](https://twitter.com/UnionStrong)



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For our full social media directory, see [cta.org/social](https://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](mailto:editor@cta.org).

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

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\*\* Automatic or electronic payments using your checking account and routing number are not considered purchases. By providing your payee with your debit or credit card number, your posted automatic payments will be counted as eligible purchases. Some bill payments will meet the monthly requirement for an ACH debit or credit transaction. Debit card cash-back amounts, cash advances on credit cards, and checks do not count towards qualifications.  
 ©FCU 09/2024



# Let's Build Power and Get Out the Vote

**WHAT'S MORE BEAUTIFUL** than our union building collective power and using that power to create a better world?

Up and down the state, union educators are doing the good work of building power to improve the conditions of our work and the learning conditions of our students. It's not just better wages and health care benefits, and better staffing and supports for students. We fight for basics such as clean, lead-free drinking water at our schools, as our Oakland members are doing. And locals are making huge gains in Community Schools, where students, families and educators have a say in decisions about the resources coming into our schools.

We all know that you can't just pass a school board resolution or a bill and hope for the best - we have to organize and fight for public education, and we do. In the past year alone, many of our locals were prepared to strike and ultimately won their demands. Community college chapters have fought and won health care benefits for part-time faculty. It is on *us* and our union to fight back with our students and families to demand better.

The public trusts and respects public school educators, which is why we remain popular among voters. Now there is a big shift happening around the public's understanding not just of what we do every day in our schools but also that we are union strong and proud, and that we use our power to fight and win for our schools and communities.

A recent landmark study showed that strikes are effective at improving the working conditions of educators — *and* for the first time, we have evidence that our victories won on the strike lines benefit students. These victories include smaller class sizes and improved funding for facilities and non-instructional staff such as counselors and nurses. (See study details on page 12.)



The 2,000 school board elections this year provide an opportunity for us to be courageous with our power at the ballot box. We must elect decision-makers who support our schools and students, and to prevent union busters, extremists and the friends of privatizers from causing chaos and disruption in our school communities. Together we have immense power to determine the outcomes of our elections. We can be the difference maker: We win 100% of races when we knock 100% of doors!

We must keep building our power because even though these school board races will have a huge impact on working and learning conditions in our districts, so much of what impacts us at the local level starts with and is deeply impacted by the state. We have statewide challenges coming up that require all of us taking action together in coordinated campaigns to win.

We know that we will see districts attempt more layoffs and cuts, especially as federal pandemic resources come to an end. We cannot solve the root causes of our funding crisis on our own. But there is not a single issue we can't win if we do it together. We win together.

I am proud of our power, proud of the union we are building together, proud to be in this fight with all of you. *You* are what makes our union strong, alive, and vibrant.

**David B. Goldberg**

CTA PRESIDENT



# Real Life, Real Actions

**JOSH O'NEAL PUTS IT BLUNTLY:** “Everyone went off to college to be philosophers but when their water heater goes down, they're out of luck.”

The CTE teacher and member of Hemet Teachers Association is talking about the shrinking number of workers in the trades — workers who are essential to keep our homes, businesses and communities up and running. In **“We Are CTE”** (page 14), O'Neal and other career tech educators are doing their best to address the gap, teaching students the technical and occupational knowledge that gives them a pathway to postsecondary education and careers.

CTE not only leads to lucrative jobs, but teaches broader skills. “Whether it's a welding or ag tech class, these skills are transferable to other industries,” says San Bernardino Teachers Association member Hector Magallanes, who leads a high school hydroponics program. “Exposure is crucial for these students, so they know it's possible.”

Students knowing what's possible — knowing their power — is part of the Community Schools' approach that emphasizes engagement and action with others, not only on campuses but in families and neighborhoods. **“A Team Effort”** (page 18) describes the inaugural session of the National Community Schools Learning Lab in Anaheim, a powerful segment of which showcased how educators center community-based learning. Their students understand the connection between academics and real life, and the important roles they play.

Similarly, our story **“We Are the Union”** (page 35) looks at how CTA members must know their power — and own it. Committing to “the power of us” and not “othering” the union is critical if we are to win our collective goals. “When they say ‘the union,’ who is the union? *I am the union,*” says Amy Kilburn, president of Association of Clovis Educators. “When they say ‘the CTA’ — who is CTA? *I am CTA.*”

Identifying with the union is becoming more apparent as

▼ Members of Franklin-McKinley Education Association canvass for pro-public education candidates and issues.



## We Can Make the Difference!

**From school board to President**, every vote we cast makes an impact. Urge friends, family, colleagues and neighbors to elect lawmakers and pass initiatives that share union values and support public education. See our 2024 Election section starting on page 24 and visit [cta.org/election](https://cta.org/election) for details and updates.

more and more members join in **2024 Election** actions, from running for school board (page 24) to canvassing (page 32).

The common thread through these stories is that all of us — students, educators, unionists, allies — must learn and know what's possible, and act on our power. Who knows — we may never have to worry about broken water heaters again.

**Katharine Fong**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

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October / November 2024

# CALENDAR

▼ Mural at Morningside Elementary School in Delano depicts Larry Itliong, who organized the successful 1965 Delano grape strike and went on to help lead the United Farm Workers; Larry Itliong Day in California is celebrated on Oct. 25. Artist: Eliseo Art Silva.



## Filipino American History Month

The month of October honors Filipino Americans' many contributions to the United States. This year's theme, from the Filipino American National History Society (FANHS; [fanhs-national.org/filam/](http://fanhs-national.org/filam/)) is "Struggle, Resistance, Solidarity, and Resilience." In the 1920s, thousands of Filipino agricultural workers and service laborers moved to California; their abysmal working and living conditions led to notable Filipino involvement in the labor and civil rights movement over the years. Some 4.1 million Filipino Americans reside in the United States today, with 38% of those in California. Resources to teach about the Filipino American experience: FANHS; Filipino American Education ([filameducation.com](http://filameducation.com)); the Bulosan Center for Filipino Studies at UC Davis ([bulosancenter.ucdavis.edu](http://bulosancenter.ucdavis.edu)).



National Breast Cancer Foundation

## Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Breast cancer affects one in eight women in the U.S. every year and 2.3 million women worldwide. The latest federal data shows the rate of new diagnoses in Asian American and Pacific Islander women is rising much faster than that of other racial and ethnic groups; researchers as yet do not know why.

Campaigns and programs throughout October support people diagnosed with breast cancer, educate people about risk factors, stress the importance of regular screening and fundraise for research. Oct. 13 is nationally recognized as **Metastatic Breast Cancer Awareness Day**, and Oct. 17–23 is **Men's Breast Cancer Awareness Week**. Details at [breastcancer.org](http://breastcancer.org), [breastcancernow.org](http://breastcancernow.org) and [komen.org](http://komen.org).



## National Higher Education Month

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





## CTA Conferences & Notable Events

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

### CCA Fall Conference

**OCT. 25-27** *Westin San Francisco Airport, Millbrae.*

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

### LGBTQ+ Issues Conference

**NOV. 15-17** *SFO Airport Marriott, Burlingame.*

Theme: "We Have Always Been Here: Resilience, Resistance, and the Road Ahead." The 16th annual gathering provides a venue to discuss a variety of issues affecting educators, students and the community. Sessions will focus on awareness, capacity and skill building, taking action and organizing. Booking deadline: Oct. 24.

### Voluntary dues contribution

**NOV. 1** **OPT-OUT DEADLINE**

Voluntary annual contributions by members support CTA Foundation's grants/scholarships and CTA's advocacy efforts. New members are automatically enrolled in the default contribution of \$15 for CTA advocacy efforts and \$5 to the **CTA Foundation for Teaching and Learning**. Members may change



their allocation or opt out. New members have 30 days from the date of enrollment; previously enrolled members have a window from Aug. 1 to Nov. 1.

► [cta.org/contribution](https://cta.org/contribution)

### New Educator Weekend North

**DEC. 6-8** *Hyatt Regency SFO, Burlingame.*

For educators in their first three years in the profession, **#CTANEW** has everything you need to be successful, including sessions on classroom management, creating engaging classrooms, lesson plans and ideas, connecting with your union, student loan forgiveness information, member benefits, project grants and more. (New Educator Weekend South is planned for Feb. 21-23, 2025, in Orange County.)

### CTA Aspiring Educators Fall Event

**NOV. 1-3** *CTA headquarters, Burlingame.*

CTA-AE is for anyone aspiring to be a teacher, school librarian, social worker, psychologist, school nurse or college faculty member. For details, go to [cta.org/scta](https://cta.org/scta).

### Veteran's Day

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

### American Education Week

**NOV. 18-22** American Education Week is celebrated the week prior to Thanksgiving week and includes special days to honor parents, education support professionals and substitute educators. Nov. 20 is National ESP Day. ► [nea.org/aew](https://nea.org/aew)

### Transgender Awareness Week

**NOV. 13-19** Every year, people and organizations nationwide participate

in this week to raise the visibility about transgender people and address issues members of the community face.

**Transgender Day of Remembrance**, Nov. 20, honors the memory of transgender people whose lives were lost in acts of anti-transgender violence. [GLSEN.org](https://GLSEN.org)'s Trans Action Kit has student and educator resources, including lesson plans.



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*“Cynicism is not just harmful,  
but often naive. Hope and  
trust, by contrast, are wiser  
than most people realize.  
It gives people a glimpse  
of a better world.”*

—Jamil Zaki, PhD,  
Stanford University

## TEACHING STRONGER BRAINS: PROMOTING STUDENT STRENGTHS, CHARACTER, GRATITUDE, HOPE, AND AGENCY IN A DEFICIT-FOCUSED AGE

**FEBRUARY 20-22, 2025**

Pre-Conference Workshops: February 20

**AT THE HISTORIC FAIRMONT HOTEL, ATOP NOB HILL,  
IN SAN FRANCISCO, CA, OR VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM**

**The Science of Rewiring Our Brains for Compassion, Optimism,  
Gratitude, and Awe**

Dacher J. Keltner, PhD, *University of California, Berkeley*

**Autism and Education: Focusing on the Strengths of Neurodiverse Students**

Temple Grandin, PhD, *Colorado State University*

**Hope for Cynics: The Surprising Science of Human Goodness**

Jamil Zaki, PhD, *Stanford University*

**Conscience: The Social Brain and Social Learning**

Patricia S. Churchland, BPhil, *University of California, San Diego*

**The Science of Character: PRIMED for Changing the Character of Schools**

Marvin W. Berkowitz, PhD, *University of Missouri-St. Louis*

**Teaching to Every Student's Strengths:**

**Liberating the Brain's Hidden Assets and Talents**

Layne M. Kalbfleisch, PhD, *George Washington University School of Medicine*

**Hacking Deficit Thinking: Strategies for Strength-Based Practices**

Byron M. McClure, EdD, NCSP, Co-Author, *Hacking Deficit Thinking* (2022)

**Hidden Brilliance:**

**Unlocking the Intelligence, Talents, and Strengths of Autism**

Lynn K. Koegel, PhD, CCC-SLP, *Stanford School of Medicine*

**Gratitude in Schools: The Science of Building Character**

Giacomo Bono, PhD, *California State University, Dominguez Hills*

**Evolving Learners: Inquiry Based Strategies to Cultivate Strengths,  
Compassion, and Autonomy in a Digital Age**

Lainie J. Rowell, MA, Author, *Evolving With Gratitude* (2022); Co-Author, *Evolving Learner* (2020)

**The Power of Student Agency**

Anindya Kundu, PhD, *Florida International University*

**The Power of Hope in Education**

Crystal I. Bryce, PhD, *University of Texas at Tyler*

**Register Now to Save!**

For more information and a complete list of speakers, visit  
LearningAndTheBrain.com or call 857-444-1500 x1 or 2.





# Read, Play, Love

**TAKE YOUNG READERS** on journeys of self-discovery and hope through the written word. Choose from the 2024 CTA California Reads selection of books — for all grade levels, and all vetted by teachers. Find the list at [cta.org/careads](https://cta.org/careads). Among them:



*We March* (written and illustrated by Shane W. Evans; early childhood level) powerfully recounts the historic March on Washington, DC, for Jobs and Freedom in 1963. Told through the perspective of a young African American family, the book uses simple yet compelling illustrations to capture marchers' excitement and hope as they gather in the nation's capital to fight for equality and civil rights. The story culminates with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s historic "I Have a Dream" speech, inspiring readers to believe in and strive for racial harmony. On Amazon.



*A First Time for Everything* (by Dan Santat; middle school level) is a National Book Award winner that tells the story of a young boy who struggles with bullying and self-esteem. When he is sent on a summer trip to Europe, Dan initially feels out of place. However, as he travels through France, Germany, Switzerland and England, a series of first experiences teach him valuable lessons about friendship, courage and the importance of welcoming change. A funny and heartwarming look at the challenging yet life-changing middle school years. On Amazon.



A modern fairy tale explores themes of identity and belonging. In *From Tokyo with Love* (by Sarah Kuhn; high school), biracial orphan Rika lives in LA's Little Tokyo with two bossy cousins, has a demanding job in the family business, and can't shake the feeling that she doesn't quite belong. When she sees a famous actress at a festival, she becomes convinced that the woman is her long-lost mother. With the help of cute actor Hank Chen and a mysterious stranger, Rika tries to learn the truth about her past while navigating the complexities of love, family and self-discovery. On Amazon.

## Don't Forget: Daylight Saving Time, Nov. 3

**AN EXTRA HOUR** of sleep! Daylight saving time ends Nov. 3 — remember to shift your clock back an hour starting at 2 a.m.



**NOVEMBER:**

## Native American/Alaska Native American Heritage Month

**TO CELEBRATE** the contributions, achievements, cultural diversity and impact of California's First People, the California Legislative Native American Caucus is hosting its inaugural National Native American Heritage Month Parade, Sat., Nov. 9, in Sacramento. It will include a Native American monument commemoration event. Details at [nativeamericancaucus.legislature.ca.gov](http://nativeamericancaucus.legislature.ca.gov). This year, Indigenous Peoples Day is recognized on Oct. 14; NEA has classroom resources for educators to teach honestly and accurately about Native history and the people whose land we occupy at [bit.ly/4d8bOZs](https://bit.ly/4d8bOZs).

## National School Psychology Week

**NOV. 11-15** honors the contributions of school psychologists and their important roles. This year's theme, "Spark Discovery," recognizes the work that they do to help their communities seek out new ideas, effect change and expand horizons for children and youth. Suggested activities, social media posts and more are at the National Association of School Psychologists ([nasponline.org](http://nasponline.org)).



## CTA Conference Incentive Grants

The CTA Board of Directors is awarding incentive grants for qualifying members to attend the following statewide conferences:

Application deadline: Oct. 31, 2024

### Issues Conference

*Planet Hollywood, Las Vegas*

**JAN. 17-19, 2025**

### Good Teaching Conference – North

*Hyatt Regency, Burlingame*

**JAN. 31-FEB. 2, 2025**

Application deadline: Jan. 6, 2025

### Equity & Human Rights Conference

*Northern CA*

**MARCH 7-9, 2025**

### Good Teaching Conference – South

*Hyatt Regency, Garden Grove*

**MARCH 14-16, 2025**

### Grants to be awarded:

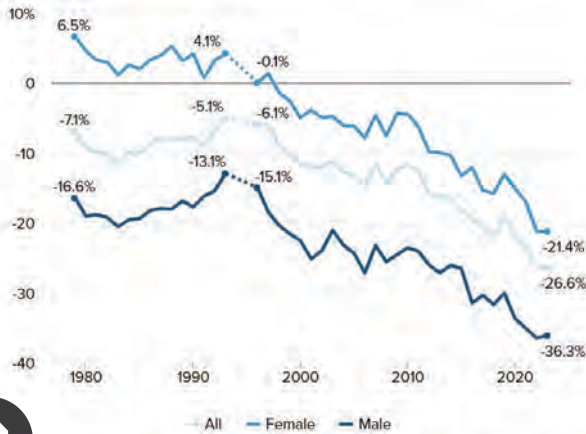
- **BIPOC Grants** — BIPOC members are defined as belonging to one of the following racial-ethnic groups: African American; American Indian/Alaska Native; Asian; Hispanic; Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; or Multi-ethnic. These grants are offered to encourage minority leadership within CTA.
- **Small Chapter Incentive Grants** — for chapters with a unit size of 100 or fewer members. Unit size is the number of persons represented for collective bargaining; chapter membership may be less than the unit size.
- **New Member Grants** — for applicants who are within their first five years of CTA membership.

Apply at [cta.org/grants](http://cta.org/grants). For questions, contact [grants@cta.org](mailto:grants@cta.org). For conference information go to [cta.org/conferences](http://cta.org/conferences).

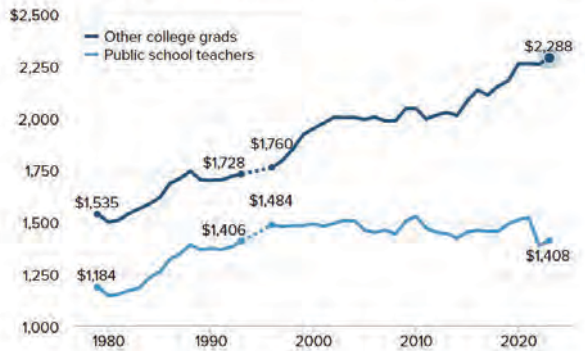


**Teachers earn 26.6% less than comparable college graduates**

Public school teacher weekly wage penalty (or premium) for all teachers and by gender, 1979–2023



**Average weekly wages of public school teachers and other college graduates, 1979–2023**



Charts courtesy Economic Policy Institute



**BARGAIN THIS:**

**The Growing Teacher Pay Gap With Other College Grads**

A SEPTEMBER REPORT from the Economic Policy Institute finds that despite a small improvement of 1.7% in teachers’ average weekly wages, the relative pay penalty between public school teachers and college graduates in other professions remains large.

The report suggests closing this growing pay gap requires targeted policy action by local and state governments, with support from the federal government. It also says: **“Public-sector collective bargaining should be expanded, given the role of unions in advocating for improved job quality and better pay.”**

Key findings include:

- The pay penalty for teachers — the regression-adjusted gap between the weekly wages of teachers and college graduates working in other professions — grew to a record 26.6% in 2023, a significant increase from 6.1% in 1996.
- On average, teachers earned 73.4 cents for every dollar relative to the earnings of similar professionals in 2023 — much less than the 93.9 cents on the dollar they made in 1996.
- Although teachers typically receive better benefits packages than other professionals, they are not sufficiently large to offset the growing wage penalty.
- The relative teacher weekly wage penalty exceeded 20% in 36 states — the largest was in Colorado (38.4%); the smallest was in Wyoming (9.0%). California was 17th, with 20.4%.

Read the report at [epi.org/publication/teacher-pay-in-2023](https://epi.org/publication/teacher-pay-in-2023).

**Educator Strikes Lead to Improved Conditions, No Student Fallout**

**A LANDMARK STUDY OF 772**

teacher strikes in the United States that occurred between 2007 and 2023 resulted in, on average, 8% higher compensation and slightly smaller class sizes. Authors of the study, released in August from the National Bureau of Economic Research, found that strikes led not only to increased pay five years after the strikes but also to increased school funding by states.

Researchers found no evidence that the strikes affected reading or math achievement for students in the year of the strike or five years after.

More than half of strikes called for improved working conditions, such as lower class sizes or increased spending on facilities and non-instructional staff. The study found that strikes led to pupil-teacher ratios falling by 3.2% and a 7% increase in spending on pay for counselors, nurses and other non-instructional staff by the third year after a strike. Read a summary of the study at [bit.ly/4ewLUJS](https://bit.ly/4ewLUJS).

# QUOTES & NUMBERS

Compiled by **Julian Peoples**



**“We can do better. With the fifth largest economy in the world, there is no excuse for California to come up short when it comes to paying teachers a salary they can live on, and fully staffing schools so kids aren’t crammed into overcrowded classrooms.”**

—CTA President **David Goldberg**, in a Labor Day message on the California Educator site ([cta.org/educator](http://cta.org/educator)).



**Average percentage increase** of educator compensation following a strike, according to a new study from the National Bureau of Economic Research that shows teachers’ strikes result in increased salaries and funding for public schools.

## 8

### States with a universal free school meals law

— California, Colorado, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico and Vermont. Lawmakers in 26 other states have pending legislation to enact universal free school meal programs, according to the Food Research and Action Center.

## 402,000

### Number of unionized higher education faculty nationwide

as of January this year — meaning one-in-four faculty are union, according to the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions at Hunter College.



**“We refuse to accept that our students’ educational experience will be defined by cuts. Students deserve more resources today — smaller class sizes, school counselors, nurses and librarians — not less.”**

—**Laura Hoban**, Valley of the Moon Teachers Association, in an announcement that the local union voted to authorize a strike in September.



**“Never underestimate a public school teacher.”**

—**Tim Walz**, governor of Minnesota and vice presidential candidate (and former union teacher!), at the 2024 Democratic National Convention.



## \$7.4 billion

**Amount of state funding needed** to meet school facilities modernization needs over the next five years, according to the California State Auditor. CTA recommends voting YES on Prop. 2, a \$10-billion bond measure to repair and build public schools.



**“When unions are strong, America is strong.”**

—Vice President and presidential candidate **Kamala Harris**, speaking in July to the American Federation of Teachers.

▼ Educators Hector Magallanes and Barbara Pastuschek-Cox with students inside the hydroponic growing facility at San Andreas High.



# *We Are CTE:* Preparing Students for Life After School

**CAREER TECH EDUCATORS DEVELOP MUCH MORE THAN JOB SKILLS**

By Julian Peeples

“**THIS PROGRAM** isn’t really about growing plants,” says career tech and special education teacher and San Bernardino Teachers Association (SBTA) member Hector Magallanes, who leads the hydroponics program at San Bernardino’s San Andreas High School. “It’s about students having exposure to things they’ve never experienced before.”

For more than a decade, the Growing Hope program

at San Andreas High has been introducing thousands of students to the wonders of agricultural technology, a state-of-the-art hydroponic growing facility and a commercial capacity greenhouse. Students of all ability levels at the continuation school learn the basics of horticulture using industry-standard equipment and technology, including the science behind plant growth, fermentation and lighting systems.



▼ Students of all ability levels learn the basics of horticulture using industry-standard equipment and technology.



▼ Greenhouse produce is served to students districtwide in the district's nutrition services program.



Between 6,000 and 8,000 heads of lettuce can be grown simultaneously in the large greenhouse, with the program providing the greens to the San Bernardino City Unified School District (SBCUSD) Nutrition Services Program to be served to students districtwide. But Magallanes says his students are doing so much more than growing produce — they're learning confidence, exploring and learning about their interests and talents, and thriving in a world that isn't always a friendly place for many of them.

"The exposure is most important. Whether it's a welding or ag tech class, these skills are transferable to other industries," says Magallanes, who previously worked as a classified employee in the district. "Exposure is crucial for these students, so they know it's possible."

After 18 years in the classroom as a special education teacher, SBTA Vice President Barbara Pastuschek-Cox was recruited to San Andreas to develop special education-inclusive career & technical education (CTE) programs at the continuation school. She applied for a grant to get her idea of a hydroponics garden program off the ground, and when it wasn't funded, SBCUSD officials decided they wanted to make her idea a reality.

What's blossomed from those initial seeds is a world-class, fully inclusive agricultural tech program where students of all abilities work side-by-side as peers, classmates and friends.

"Not all our students will go to university and we need to provide options for them, too. Our special education students need hands-on learning in math and the sciences that could lead to a career for them," says Pastuschek-Cox. "It's been a great opportunity for all our students to practice leadership

and learn skills that we don't always get to practice in the classroom setting."

CTE Pathway Business Partner Sherryl Anderson has worked with Pastuschek-Cox since the program's inception more than a decade ago. When the two first met, Anderson and her partner were running their project management and marketing business — with a passion for special education and an interest in food ecosystems. They looked at the hydroponics project as an opportunity to reimagine education, working with Pastuschek-Cox to understand the goals for her students and build a professional grade greenhouse with cutting-edge equipment retooled to make it accessible and usable by students of all abilities.

"It's so important to talk about opportunities other than college that are meaningful for students," says Anderson, who says the experience is particularly impactful for students with different abilities. "The level of

confidence by our special education students is astronomical. They lead presentations about the growing process and how the equipment works."

While students in general education cycle through the program every seven weeks, San Andreas' students in special education spend all school year learning about the greenhouse and equipment. This helps create a unique classroom environment where students in special education are literally subject-matter experts and get to teach their classmates about how things work.

"It's a unique program because it's at a continuation school and includes special education," says Pastuschek-Cox, who has presented about the program at Stanford

**"Whether it's a welding or ag tech class, these skills are transferrable to other industries. Exposure is crucial for these students, so they know it's possible."**

**—Hector Magallanes,**  
*San Bernardino Teachers Association*



▼ Hemet Teachers Association's Josh O'Neal, left, with one of his students.

▼ Josh O'Neal's welding classroom.



University and attracted the attention of school districts here in California and around the world. “We have now laid the groundwork so other alternative schools can do this too.”

SBTA has been instrumental in the program’s success since before it was even in existence. Pastuszek-Cox says being involved in the local helped her connect with fellow members to build interest in the program and lean into relationships with district admin to get it approved and supported. Anderson added that SBTA awards scholarships to help some of these students pursue their dreams after graduation.

“I felt like I was ahead of the game with SBTA supporting a brand-new teacher like me,” Magallanes says. “I didn’t have to go through it alone. It’s meaningful for my union to have my back.”

## Teaching the Skills to Pay the Bills

“The largest number of tradespeople were Baby Boomers, who are on their way to retirement, taking their skills with them. So, we need to figure out how to pass those on,” says Josh O’Neal, a CTE teacher and member of Hemet Teachers Association (HTA). “There’s a gap that’s growing — everyone went off to college to be philosophers but when their water heater goes down, they’re out of luck.”

O’Neal had been working in the trades for more than 20 years when he first got a taste of teaching in 2019. A former framing carpenter, mechanics helper and heavy diesel mechanic, O’Neal earned his third associate’s degree and a bachelor’s in

social psychology that year, when he also began teaching night classes at Barstow Community College after finishing his shift at an open pit mine in Boron.

“And I just fell in love,” O’Neal says. “From that point, I tried to figure out how to teach full time.”

O’Neal began teaching at Barstow High School, where he had attended, taking a big pay cut to get into education and looking to make a difference. In 2020, he started working at Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE), teaching welding online (“it was a trip!”), which included how to read blueprints and welding symbols. When school resumed physically, O’Neal realized he was teaching at a continuation school, which made him love the work even more.

“We’re the continuation high school where kids come who are credit-deficient and the perception is that this is where the bad kids go. But here, we all work together to support the students from all angles and get to the bottom of what might be their barriers,” he says. “I’m helping these students graduate with a skill set that will help them make more money out of high school than their parents ever made.”

O’Neal’s impact on students attracted the attention of Hemet Unified School District administrators, who hired him to continue his popular career tech offerings — working with HTA to increase the salary schedule to match RCOE’s and be able to bring O’Neal to their district. O’Neal says it feels good to know the program and his students have the support of his local union.

**“Our special education students need hands-on learning in math and the sciences that could lead to a career.”**

—Barbara Pastuszek-Cox,  
San Bernardino Teachers Association

▼ Students learn hands-on skills to prepare them for careers.

▼ The commercial-grade greenhouse welcomes lots of visitors to see the program in action.



## CTE Vital to Personal, Economic Growth

- 1 Bridging the skills gap:** CTE programs equip students with hands-on skills needed in the job market, preparing them for careers in high-demand fields like manufacturing, health care, information technology and skilled trades.
- 2 Pathway to high-paying jobs:** CTE offers pathways to well-paying jobs like welding, plumbing and electrical work that offer competitive salaries and job security without the need for a four-year degree.
- 3 Addressing workforce needs:** CTE covers a broad range of industries, offering specialized training in fields like agriculture, business, engineering and health care, which allows students to explore careers that align with their interests and strengths. This helps maintain the skilled workforce necessary for economic growth.
- 4 Enhancing student engagement & success:** In addition to technical skills, CTE provides soft skills like communication, teamwork and problem-solving, which are essential for success in any workplace.
- 5 Reducing unemployment and underemployment:** CTE programs often have strong connections with local employers, leading to better job placement rates for graduates — with many students securing employment or internships through their programs.
- 6 Supporting lifelong learning and career advancement:** CTE encourages a mindset of lifelong learning, where students can return to education throughout their careers to upgrade their skills, switch career paths or advance in their current fields.

"I wish people knew how essential CTE is and be more encouraging to students who are pursuing it," says welding teacher and Hemet Teachers Association member Josh O'Neal. "Support your high school students who are on this path."

"HTA supports what we're doing here and really works to involve the community as much as possible," he says. "Our union also supports the first responder and entrepreneur programs, which is giving our students opportunities they didn't have before. HTA understands that we're trying to change the cycle of generational poverty."

Last year, O'Neal had a student with a two-year-old son and a full-time job at McDonald's, who asked for support getting into the construction business. O'Neal supported his learning, helping the student to earn a stick welding certification by graduation and connecting him with the superintendent of a local construction business, who hired him.

"He started making \$30 an hour, now he makes \$47 an hour and he's not even 19 yet. He's one of my success stories," O'Neal says. "I used to ask myself 'what do I want to be when I grow up,' but now I feel like this is what my purpose has always been, because I have the ability to connect with these kids."

O'Neal continues building the program and working to share his knowledge with the greater Inland Empire. He created a program at Mt. San Jacinto College and has also started teaching welding at Hemet Adult School, bringing the same opportunities to Hemet's adult population.

"This was the first time I've ever had parents asking how they can get into my program," O'Neal says, adding that he recently received approval to make his school an accredited testing facility for the American Welding Society, solidifying their place in the community. "I'm bringing the college to our campus!"

O'Neal says it is gratifying to be leading the charge in a renaissance of career tech and vocational opportunities in public schools. With more than 600,000 California high school students currently enrolled in CTE programs, O'Neal is excited to continue supporting California's next generation of trades workers.

"These are essential needs in society," he says. "Our infrastructure depends on the skills of our tradespeople. We need running water, gas to warm our homes and cook, and roads to drive on." ■

▼ The inaugural National Community Schools Learning Lab brought together five local teams from across the state and program facilitators.



# A TEAM EFFORT

## Community Schools Learning Lab gives locals — and partners — the tools to succeed

By Katharine Fong

**FOR CELIA MEDINA-OWENS**, seeing a fully operational Community School up close and hearing from educators, union leaders and district officials directly involved in it was invaluable.

“We were able to get a common understanding of what community schools could be and how to implement them with all stakeholders,” said Medina-Owens, president of Pittsburg Education Association (PEA), of her and her local’s participation in the inaugural program of the National Community Schools Learning Lab. “We read about and discuss community schools, but to experience it solidified the theory.”

The Learning Lab, hosted by Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association (ASTA) and the Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD), took place in mid-September. Teams from four other CTA locals — Association of Rowland Educators, Mountain View Teachers Association, San Mateo Elementary Teachers Association and United Teachers of Pasadena — also participated in the two-day Learning Lab.

Medina-Owens attended with key members of her local as well as Pittsburg Unified School District administrators. Similarly, other teams were comprised of local leaders, educators, district superintendents and administrators and in some cases, parents and community partners.

These teams, in fact, represent the collaborative nature of successful community schools, which work through a shared decision-making model. Specifically, community school steering committees at both the district and site levels are composed of multiple stakeholders — all the above, along with students — who have equal voice and input.

The objectives of the Learning Lab, funded with a \$750,000, three-year grant to ASTA from NEA’s Great Public Schools initiative, are to give participating teams the fundamental tools to

- build and sustain strong, shared leadership and governance;
- connect and forge alliances with families and community partners;
- recruit and train essential staff;
- develop curriculum that is academically robust and responsive to students’ needs inside and outside the classroom.

The ultimate goal 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.

▼ Participants learned about the nuts and bolts of shared governance, among other critical components of community schools, and worked on their own teams' steering committee structure and plans.



## A rundown of the Learning Lab inaugural program:

### DAY 1

Participants gathered at AUHSD offices for introductions before Leading & Learning visits — informational tours at either South Junior High or Katella High schools (the Learning Lab will soon offer elementary school tours as well). These campus walks and classroom visits focused on programming related to community schools, as did presentations by staff, administrators, students, parents and community partners.

Every community school is unique in that each school's students and community have unique needs. South's community school coordinator Denise Osorio, for example, explained that outreach to parents is not necessarily school-based. "Many of our students and families live on the other side of the city where parking is difficult," she said. "Parents don't want to give up their parking spaces. We decided to hold a barbecue in a park in that area, which was very successful [in engaging parents]."

Similarly, the school maintains a dry goods pantry with food and supplies for families but works with community partners to offer fresh produce at various spots that are within walking distance of families' homes.

In another project, students in art and woodworking classes designed, built and painted benches a calming shade of green, placed around campus where students and others can rest and connect. The benches also bring awareness to mental health, featuring a QR code that takes users to mental health resources.

Afternoon activities included a "station rotation" where participants chose from various topic areas for more intensive discussion, including collaborative leadership practices, community partnerships, sustainable funding/budgeting, harnessing student voice for community problem-solving and civic engagement, community school assets/needs assessment, and centering community-based learning.

### DAY 2

Participants met at ASTA offices for an opening panel discussion with AUHSD Community Schools Steering Committee members on committee structure, the process of building consensus and sharing leadership, school board resolutions, and more.

CTA Board Member, CTA/NEA Coordinator and former ASTA President Grant Schuster facilitated the discussion, emphasizing that building trust and "going slow so we can go fast" were essential for the committee.

"At first it was hard to nail down what this was all about," said ASTA President Geoff Morganstern. "But we knew from the very beginning that we wanted all our educational partners at the table."

AUHSD Community Schools Director Carlos Hernandez talked about steering committee consensus-building: "Boy, that's hard," he said. "But it is so worth it and it's the right approach. We go farther together."

Separately, MVTA President Leticia Urias, whose team of 16 included the superintendent, three assistant superintendents and eight teacher leads, echoed the challenges. "It has taken a long time to build a relationship with the district and it takes continuous effort on both sides to keep it going. We have labored hard to make sure all partners are at the table and all voices are heard."

Participants reviewed CTA's Community Schools 5-Step toolkit along with NEA's "Five Steps to Kickstarting Community Schools." Morganstern underscored the importance of codifying community schools in the contract. "Maybe your MOU is imperfect," he said. "But that's okay — we did a second MOU to address additional issues."

Community schools teacher lead Nikki Resch and site coordinator Isabel Tabares-Torres next explained their





▼ The Leading & Learning visit to South Junior High included a tour of an entrepreneurial “market” and club run by exceptional students (bottom left) and presentations by educators, staff, students, parents and community members (below).



leadership roles at Gilbert High School, an AUHSD continuation school. While teacher leads are given partial release time (which lets them remain in the classroom and connect directly with students), both they and full-time community school coordinators work with school staff, administrators, students, families and community partners on curriculum, services and much more.

Resch said that community school initiatives such as “deep listening” and civic engagement have had a real impact on students. An example: One educator listened to a student — who is a parent of a baby — explain how the city bus schedule did not mesh with the end of the school day, leaving her to wait for an hour or seek other ways to get her and her baby home. When it became apparent that many students were affected by the bus schedule, Gilbert students worked to gather information, present it to city officials and get the schedule changed.

“Listening to and giving our students the ability to take larger actions has given them a lot of confidence,” Resch said. “There is a lot more dreaming by our kids about what is possible, what they are capable of doing.”

Learning Lab Lead Christie Bettendorf was particularly proud to include an alternative education school in the program mix. “I don’t want that to be overlooked in the discussion — how community schools can be successful in giving alternative education students what they need, which is a second chance.”

At Gilbert and other community schools, she added,

“every kid gets a chance to be part of a community, that structure is in place. Kids who went to Gilbert, even for a semester or less, come back to help with orientation, work in the *mercadito* (market), make documentaries about the school. Community schools have roots, and kids are rooted in their schools.”

Teams spent the final hours collaborating on their own plans for creating and sustaining a Community Schools Steering Committee and community schools.

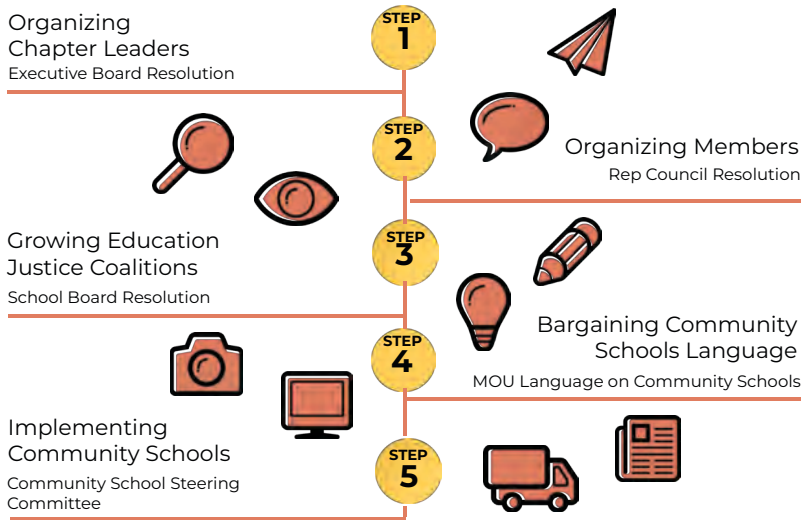
Learning Lab participants were overwhelmingly positive in their evaluations of the program, and Bettendorf is excited at what’s next. “A Portland [OR] team of 20 is coming for the November session,” she said, joining California teams from Alhambra, Fairfield-Suisun, Pomona and Whittier. A Seattle team of five is lined up. The lab is taking the show on the road, traveling to Washington, DC, in February 2025 and fielding interest from teams in Albany, NY; Baltimore; Jackson, MS; and North Carolina.

Teams who complete the Learning Lab program can participate in the NEA Benchmark Academy, which supports attendees through regular professional learning community meetings, customized trainings, and coaching for local district and site teams. They can also enter NEA’s Community School Implementation Institute, which helps community schools that are completing their needs and assets assessment engage in problem-solving around their priority areas. ■

▼ Anaheim district community school steering committee members spoke on Day 2: From left: John Gutierrez, community partner from Ocapica; ASTA President Geoff Morganstern; Katella High Teacher Lead Diana Gomez; AUHSD Community Schools Manager Kenny Perez; Gilbert High Principal Jose Lara; AUHSD Community Schools Director Carlos Hernandez; parent Jesse Alvarez.



## CTA 5 Steps to Community Schools



### CTA and Community Schools

**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.

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.

Read more of our coverage of CTA and members’ work, and find information and resources, at [cta.org/communityschools](https://cta.org/communityschools).

▼ A small-group discussion about centering community-based learning.





▲ Gilbert High's community schools teacher lead Nikki Resch and site coordinator Isabel Tabares-Torres talk about their roles.

## What Teams Learned, What They're Doing

**Participating teams' progress** with community school implementation varies widely. The Association of Rowland Educators and district partners, for example, are preparing their first application for state funding. Nine of Pasadena Unified's 23 schools are community schools — three elementary, three middle and three high schools. Earlier this year, all eight of the Mountain View School District's schools were awarded state implementation grants. Here are thoughts from local presidents who attended the Learning Lab:

"Experiencing the Learning lab with our district partners was truly powerful. The conversations within our group, the questions answered, the connections made, the new possibilities imagined, and the support offered from the folks in Anaheim and NEA gave us some much-needed calm in the storm. We came out of those two days with a stronger sense of 'we can do this, and we can take what we are doing well and make it better.'"

—DEREK HOLLINGSWORTH, *Association of Rowland Educators*

"At the Learning Lab, I saw that Anaheim's community schools are not test-driven, the curriculum is not based on some tech. Instead, learning is integrated into kids' lives through authentic projects.... The rest of the team (including administrators and a community partner) saw how the union can be helpful in our district. Not only with integrated supports but also with leveraging all resources — [especially] community school teacher leads. It is hard asking for member release time, but they saw how powerful it is with teacher leads freed up."

—JONATHAN GARDNER, *United Teachers of Pasadena*

"Our attendance group was small — just one of our site steering committee members and me — but our greatest takeaway was that we need to have representation of some of our district people to come and hear the same information. The only way that this is going to work is if we are all on the same page."

—KATHY PRATT, *San Mateo Elementary Teachers Assn.*

"Being able to bring 16 members, including our superintendent, saved MVTA and MVSD months of creative work. We feel better prepared to continue the work because we all had the same experience together. We just received the \$11.6 million implementation grant; the assets and needs assessment is next.... MVTA has done school site visits and staff luncheons [to build community schools awareness]. This is why seven out of eight community schools site leads applied for the positions when they were posted — they heard our message and were excited to be part of such an important journey!"

—LETICIA URIAS, *Mountain View Teachers Assn.*

"It took us from August 2023 to April 2024 to get an MOU. The district didn't want to negotiate.... Now, we have a relationship; the district is holding community schools meetings at sites — it's a paradigm shift. All 13 of our schools are classified as community schools, but only 11 got grant funding. The district funded the other two. We used CTA site visit and member engagement grants for release days for PEA community schools committee members to talk to our parents, attend events. We're still doing one-on-ones with our 615 members."

—CELIA MEDINA-OWENS, *Pittsburg Education Assn.*



## The Role of Community Schools Teacher Leads

**COMMUNITY SCHOOL TEACHER** leads' roles vary depending on site needs. One important focus: helping develop curriculum that incorporates community-based learning. Teacher leads are given partial release time, maintaining a presence in the classroom. The Learning Lab showcased three teacher leads and their work:

**Diana Gomez**, Katella High School, special Ed and English teacher. "My main focus is on instruction, on community-based learning — how we connect learning to real life. We empower students to have agency and voice while still adhering to rigorous state standards. Right now I'm having students read a novel where a virus kills all the adults and the kids survive. It reminds them of the coronavirus; they share stories of resilience. I challenge them to have conversations with their families: 'What if there's another emergency? How can we be better prepared to lessen the effects of trauma and increase our safety?'"



**Jason Collar**, South Junior High School, history and CTE teacher. "Whole child education is a collaborative effort. We are very intentional about what we do. This allows opportunities for us to elevate voices and engage students and families. An example: I had students research their communities' assets — 'What brings you joy in your neighborhood and school, what are the resources for your family. And what are the resources that we should have and why?' Students really thought about this. I was able bring their input to our site team, and we considered making changes based on their work."



**Nikki Resch**, Gilbert High School, English teacher. "Gilbert is a continuation school and has been doing a lot of relationship-building, deep listening and civic engagement for a very long time. [With community schools,] however, it has become more of a site-wide approach — connecting with our students and finding out 'What are you really interested in learning?'; so instruction and content is more relevant in all classrooms and not just sprinkled into a few. All our students learn to advocate for themselves — they can collaborate with their peers and know that their teachers have their back."



▼ The Learning Lab team includes Geoff Morganstern, ASTA president; David Greenberg and Angelia Ebner, NEA senior policy analysts and community schools specialists; Lisa Eck, ASTA executive director/CTA UniServ; Learning Lab Lead Christie Bettendorf; Adriane Dorrington, NEA program manager for community schools; Grant Schuster, CTA board member and CTA/NEA Coordinator.



### ANAHEIM:

## The Local and the District

**The National Community Schools Learning Lab** draws from ASTA and AUHSD's expertise and experience with community schools. To date, 15 of 21 middle and high schools in AUHSD have transitioned to community schools and have received more than \$23 million in state funding. The ASTA/AUHSD Leading & Learning Lab — informational tours and presentations at those schools — has drawn hundreds of educators nationwide.

"AUHSD has been super helpful with the Learning Lab, they want this to be successful," said Learning Lab Lead Christie Bettendorf, who made sure the district steering committee and district cabinet gave input on and approved the Learning Lab components. "They've been with us every step of the way to fulfill the goals of the NEA grant."

The relationship between ASTA and the district can sometimes be strained — the recent move to lay off Anaheim teachers, for example, was a difficult time. "Despite what happens, the kids are going to come first — our shared vision is still the priority," Bettendorf said. "That's what community schools are about."

### Interested in the Learning Lab?

Contact [astacslab@gmail.com](mailto:astacslab@gmail.com) for information. Ideally, teams are composed of all stakeholders, but teams who have not yet formed collaborative relationships are welcome. The cost of the Leading & Learning Lab (tour), materials and some meals are covered. Attendees pay for travel and lodging.



# CTA Members Run for School Boards

**EDUCATORS STEP UP TO LEAD IN THIS CRUCIAL ELECTION**

By Julian Peoples

**UNION EDUCATORS** up and down the Golden State are among those running for the opportunity to serve on more than 2,000 school board seats this November — an election with significant implications for our students and communities.

CTA President David Goldberg says it's up to all members to work together to elect fellow educators and union siblings to school boards.

"People trust us — showing up on their doorstep matters to them. Every one of us has a role to play," Goldberg says, asking CTA members to get involved in their local union's election efforts.

Meet a few of the members running for election this fall below. Visit [cta.org/election](https://cta.org/election) to read about other members running for office and how you can join our movement to win for our public schools and students.

## Mikki Cichocki

CTA/NEA-Retired

**RUNNING FOR:**

San Bernardino City School Board

[facebook.com/Mikki4SBCUSD](https://www.facebook.com/Mikki4SBCUSD)



### Why are you running for reelection?

Over the past two years, we hired a new superintendent who has initiated a positive vision for our school district. Our board is working very well together and with the superintendent and his cabinet as well as with our unions. I am running because I believe with this board and superintendent we can improve outcomes for our students and make SBCUSD shine.

### What are your top priorities?

My top four: Support the district mission to ensure that each student has the skills, resilience and determination to create their path and thrive in school, career and life; enhance access to science, technology and fine arts; ensure accountability and fiscal responsibility; and provide students and staff with safe and welcoming schools.

### Why is it important to have educators on school boards?

Educators are on the front lines with our students. If we want to know what is going on in our schools; how our decisions impact schools, classrooms and student activities; and to make the best decisions possible, we have to hear from those directly impacted.

### What does it mean to you to be part of the movement to protect and defend our public schools?

"Never underestimate a public school teacher." When I heard Gov. Walz say this, I felt it deeply. Being a teacher gives you an understanding and insight into our future generations that no other profession can give. It gives you strength and empathy, and compassion and tenacity. Bringing that viewpoint to a school board enriches the diversity and capacity of thought on a board. Our board has educators, parents and business professionals. We learn from each other and make our decision-making power stronger.

### How important is the November election?

The safety and education of our students is at stake. We need school boards that put students first, believe in a well-rounded education for students and don't limit access to books and resources. We need to help students thrive mentally, physically and intellectually. We need to prepare our students for the world they will live in, college and career. Talk to your friends, family and neighbors about local races like their school board. Their vote on the school board will impact your community for years.

## Angela Der Ramos

Alisal Teachers Association,

CTA Board of Directors

**RUNNING FOR:**

Hartnell College Board of Trustees



### Why are you running for election?

Education is a path to equity, and this is especially true of community colleges like Hartnell. [I want to help remove barriers such as] language difficulties and financial hardship, and [help assist] students who struggle academically.

### What are your top priorities?

We have a teacher shortage. One of my goals is to widen the educator pipeline by providing opportunities for students to work and learn on local campuses. There are so many paid positions that would give students a financial boost, while also giving them invaluable experience in the educational field. Moreover, many of our students across the system are immigrants. Having adult educators who share these lived experiences with our students absolutely is a benefit!

### Why is it important to have educators on school boards?

As an elementary school teacher, I have witnessed the strength of having educators who look like their students. And as an advocate who is also well versed in policy, I am aware of how policies made in board rooms by folks in suits affect the learning conditions of students as well as the working conditions of our educators. Having educators on school boards lends a very necessary dose of reality when it comes to financial and policy decisions. In addition, educators who serve on school boards can counter destructive extremist groups and candidates and ensure that democracy prevails.

### How important is the November election?

School boards have a direct impact on the day-to-day lives of our students, members and communities. With or without educators on the ballot, it is incredibly important for members to flex their constituency muscle and get involved by getting out the vote, volunteering, donating resources and by spreading the word. We are pillars of the community and people trust and listen to us!



## Charlie Jones

Hayward Education Association

**RUNNING FOR:**

Pleasanton Unified School Board  
[CharlieForSchoolBoard.com](http://CharlieForSchoolBoard.com)



### Why are you running for election?

Our district has lost its way and is no longer prioritizing the needs of students and staff, especially when it comes to their budget. We need an educator's voice on the board to push back against the cuts to the classroom the district is trying to make.

### What are your top priorities?

Our school district has been deficit spending for five years, which has led to harmful budget cuts and damaged the relationship between the district, parents and employees. I want to bring together all stakeholders to truly assess and understand our current budget and plan ahead. We also need to foster true collaboration with our labor partners, parents and the rest of the Pleasanton community. Lastly, while our schools are among the best in California, not everyone has an equitable learning experience. We haven't fully expanded our Dual Language Program or Multilingual Learner program, meaning that immigrant and newcomer students aren't able to participate or be a part of the school site to the same level as their peers.

### Why is it important to have educators on school boards?

We see firsthand what is truly needed by our families to best support students. We know best what is missing from our students' experiences and what can be done to better support all our school sites.

### What does it mean to you to be part of the movement to protect and defend our public schools?

I am honored to be a part of the fight to defend public education. Our students deserve an education that supports them as a whole person. Being a part of this movement means we are fighting to uphold honest, factual and science-driven education for our students.

### How important is the November election?

Your support will determine whether we have pro-education school boards or ones run by those who wish to turn the clock back. The best thing you can do is support your local unions, whether it's door-knocking, phone banking or donating. You have the power to move us forward on the path to progress.

## Gayle Olsen

CTA/NEA-Retired

**RUNNING FOR:**

Chico Unified School Board  
[gayleolsenforchicounified.com](http://gayleolsenforchicounified.com)



### Why are you running for election?

I knew that we needed to elect someone who believes in public education and supporting all students. [So] I knew I would retire in June 2024 when I learned that my trustee area was up for election. I still love my students and this will allow me to stay connected to the students!

### What are your top priorities?

Student rights, which are connected to mental health. Additionally, students deserve a quality, well-rounded education, which includes facilities that promote learning.

### Why is it important to have educators on school boards?

We need people who have literally been in the trenches in schools involved in decision making, as we truly understand how decisions impact our students and teachers.

### What does it mean to you to be part of the movement to protect and defend our public schools?

The timing couldn't be better for educators to be involved in running for office. We have to protect our schools, students, teachers and staff. We need to fight to keep what we have and to continue moving forward.

### How important is the November election?

If we want democracy to continue — if we want the right to a free and appropriate education to continue — everyone must get out and vote. And everyone must get their friends to vote. There are no excuses.

## Ken Tang

Garvey Education Association

**RUNNING FOR:**

Alhambra Unified School Board  
[facebook.com/VoteKenTang](https://www.facebook.com/VoteKenTang)



### Why are you running for reelection?

I feel I'm an education expert and therefore the best person to advocate for my students and colleagues.

### What are your top priorities?

The health and well-being of students and staff, especially mental health, school safety, transparency and clear communication.

### Why is it important to have educators on school boards?

Educators are at ground zero, where everything is happening. We are the experts. We know what our students need. We know the real struggles of teachers and educators in the school and in the classroom. We need people who understand what goes on and what is needed when it comes to making important decisions that affect our students and educators.

### What does it mean to you to be part of the movement to protect and defend our public schools?

I ran four years ago and became the first Vietnamese refugee immigrant to be elected in the city of Alhambra. The work continues. In these uncertain times, we need school board members who will protect public education and fight for our students and educators.

### How important is the November election?

Please vote! It's not just school board races, but we need to vote to protect democracy, women's right to choose and public education, and keep the ugly monster out of our White House.

## Ken Wagman

Gavilan College Faculty Association

**RUNNING FOR:** Cabrillo College Board of Trustees



### Why are you running for election?

I will be retiring soon and want to keep contributing to community college students. I've been the president and a negotiator for my union local, and I've been trained to understand the budget over many years.

### What are your top priorities?

The state's current contributions to community college funding are falling far behind the rate of inflation. At times like these, we need to keep any reductions as far away from the classroom as possible, so the college can offer a complete schedule for students to graduate on time. We need to hang on to our excellent part-time faculty so we can grow back the programs when the money returns. Now is the time to tap into college budget reserves that exceed recommended levels to keep classes available and faculty able to afford to live near where they teach.

### Why is it important to have educators on school boards?

We teachers have seen the impact to the students and faculty of the cutbacks from the recession 15 years ago. We need to make sure current students and faculty aren't impacted that way again.

### What does it mean to you to be part of the movement to protect and defend our public schools?

The California community college system is a valuable community resource — we need to make sure it stays that way for future generations.

### How important is the November election?

It has the potential to dismantle this hyper-partisan divide, which is turning off great candidates to run for local public education positions. I'm optimistic that if Kamala Harris is elected, it will begin the long healing process and encourage more folks to run for local trustee seats.

Read more interviews with CTA members running for office at [cta.org/educator](https://cta.org/educator).



## Joshua Christ

Mt. San Antonio College  
Faculty Association

**RUNNING FOR:**  
Fontana Unified School Board  
[christ4fontana.com](http://christ4fontana.com)



### Why are you running for election?

Our students are the future, and our schools are where that future transforms from a fuzzy far-off dream into a clear, achievable reality. Every student deserves a robust education that prepares them for the real world in a safe, equitable and inclusive environment that highlights and encourages individual strengths while fostering a sense of belonging and community.

### What are your top priorities?

- Center students within the district's decision-making: always focusing on better outcomes for our students, especially regarding equity, inclusion, safety, belonging and social justice.
- Be a responsible steward of public funds: balancing the district's reserve between having the ability to survive an emergency and spending tax dollars inside our classrooms.
- Protect our students and their future: ensuring access to books, making decisions that promote climate justice, protecting our students from violence, and ensuring equitable access to health care for students and families.

### Why is it so important to have educators on school boards?

Educator voices on the school boards of California will always speak up for students and the importance of learning. We will hold districts accountable when they act like businesses and lose sight of the purpose of education. We bring a classroom perspective that is often missing from important board discussions.

### What does it mean to you to be part of the movement to protect and defend our public schools?

(It) makes me a little bit sad, but also filled with hope and humility. I'm sad that we have allowed the state of education in California to fall prey to extremist and partisan politics that make this movement necessary. I am [hopeful] because California teachers step up when our students need us most. Teachers are putting our foot down, literally pounding the pavement, to keep education focused on what matters most — the students.

### How important is the November election?

"When we fight, we win!" Teachers, it's time to stand up and fight back.

## Randa Wahbe

United Faculty of North  
Orange County Community  
College District  
CCA Vice President

**RUNNING FOR:**  
Citrus College Board of Trustees  
[Randa4Citrus.com](http://Randa4Citrus.com)



### Why are you running for election?

I believe in strengthening our community colleges, which are a critical pathway for so many to achieve their dreams. As a community college educator for over 25 years and a leader in educational planning at the local, state and national levels, I have the experience, knowledge and relationships to continue building upon the great partnerships between our community and the college.

### What are your top priorities?

Equity and access. We need to expand the dual enrollment program to meet student demand and increase their access to a college education. Our community would benefit from a Puente Program, apprenticeships with the trades, and a partnership with the Boys and Girls Club to provide childcare for students and staff.

### Why is it so important to have educators on school boards?

As a longtime educator, I understand public education. As a union leader, I've been in rooms where decisions on education are made and was able to share my experience and knowledge to help inform the outcome. We need educators in these rooms because we are the experts who know what our students and educators need and deserve.

### What does it mean to you to be part of the movement to protect and defend our public schools?

This entire experience has been so invigorating and exciting. The amount of support I've received from other educators, board members, elected officials and organizations gives me great pride in being part of running for public office as a union educator.

### How important is the November election?

We need to send a resounding message that public education cannot be bullied into submission, and democracy will prevail. Vote!



# CTA's 2024 Election Recommendations

Tear this page out and take it to the ballot box with you

## President / Vice President

Kamala Harris / Tim Walz

## State Assembly

AD 2 Chris Rogers (D)  
 AD 4 Cecilia Aguiar-Curry (D)  
 AD 5 Neva Parker (D)  
 AD 6 Maggy Krell (D)  
 AD 7 Porsche Middleton (D)  
 AD 10 Stephanie Nguyen (D)  
 AD 11 Lori Wilson (D)  
 AD 12 Damon Connolly (D)  
 AD 13 Rhodesia Ransom (D)  
 AD 15 Anamarie Avila Farias (D)  
 AD 16 Rebecca Bauer-Kahan (D)  
 AD 17 Matt Haney (D)  
 AD 18 Mia Bonta (D)  
 AD 19 No Recommendation  
 AD 20 Liz Ortega (D)  
 AD 21 Diane Papan (D)  
 AD 23 Marc Berman (D)  
 AD 24 Alex Lee (D)  
 AD 25 Ash Kalra (D)  
 AD 26 Patrick Ahrens (D)  
 AD 27 Esmeralda Soria (D)  
 AD 28 Gail Pellerin (D)  
 AD 29 Speaker Robert Rivas (D)  
 AD 30 Dawn Addis (D)  
 AD 31 Dr. Joaquin Arambula (D)  
 AD 34 Ricardo Ortega (D)  
 AD 35 Dr. Jasmeet Bains (D)  
 AD 37 Gregg Hart (D)  
 AD 38 Steve Bennett (D)  
 AD 39 Juan Carrillo (D)

AD 40 Pilar Schiavo (D)  
 AD 41 John Harabedian (D)  
 AD 42 Jacqui Irwin (D)  
 AD 43 Celeste Rodriguez (D)  
 AD 44 Nick Schultz (D)  
 AD 46 Jesse Gabriel (D)  
 AD 47 Christy Holstege (D)  
 AD 49 Mike Fong (D)  
 AD 50 Robert Garcia (D)  
 AD 51 Rick Chavez Zbur (D)  
 AD 52 Jessica Caloza (D)  
 AD 53 Michelle Rodriguez (D)  
 AD 54 Mark Gonzalez (D)  
 AD 55 Isaac Bryan (D)  
 AD 56 Lisa Calderon (D)  
 AD 57 Sade Elhawary (D)  
 AD 58 Clarissa Cervantes (D)  
 AD 61 Tina McKinnor (D)  
 AD 62 Jose Solache (D)  
 AD 63 Chris Shoults (D)  
 AD 64 Blanca Pacheco (D)  
 AD 65 Mike Gipson (D)  
 AD 66 Al Muratsuchi (D)  
 AD 67 Sharon Quirk-Silva (D)  
 AD 68 Avelino Valencia (D)  
 AD 69 Josh Lowenthal (D)  
 AD 73 Cottie Petrie-Norris (D)  
 AD 74 Chris Duncan (D)  
 AD 76 Darshana Patel (D)  
 AD 77 Tasha Boerner (D)  
 AD 78 Chris Ward (D)  
 AD 79 Dr. LaShae Sharp-Collins (D)  
 AD 80 David Alvarez (D)

## State Senate

SD 5 Jerry McNerney (D)  
 SD 7 Jovanka Beckles (D)  
 SD 9 Marisol Rubio (D)  
 SD 11 No Recommendation  
 SD 13 Josh Becker (D)  
 SD 15 Dave Cortese (D)  
 SD 17 John Laird (D)  
 SD 19 Lisa Middleton (D)  
 SD 21 Monique Limón (D)  
 SD 23 Kipp Mueller (D)  
 SD 25 Sasha Renée Pérez (D)  
 SD 27 Henry Stern (D)  
 SD 29 Eloise Gomez Reyes (D)  
 SD 31 Sabrina Cervantes (D)  
 SD 33 Lena Gonzalez (D)  
 SD 35 Michelle Chambers (D)  
 SD 37 Josh Newman (D)  
 SD 39 Akilah Weber (D)



For your personalized voting guide, visit [cta.yourvoter.guide](https://cta.yourvoter.guide).



## U.S. Senate

Adam Schiff (D)

## U.S. House of Representatives

CD 2 Jared Huffman (D)  
CD 3 Jessica Morse (D)  
CD 4 Mike Thompson (D)  
CD 6 Ami Bera (D)  
CD 7 Doris Matsui (D)  
CD 8 John Garamendi (D)  
CD 9 Josh Harder  
CD 10 Mark DeSaulnier (D)  
CD 11 Nancy Pelosi (D)  
CD 12 Lateefah Simon (D)  
CD 13 Adam Gray (D)  
CD 14 Eric Swalwell (D)  
CD 15 Kevin Mullin (D)  
CD 16 Evan Low (D)  
CD 17 Ro Khanna (D)  
CD 18 Zoe Lofgren (D)  
CD 19 Jimmy Panetta (D)  
CD 21 Jim Costa (D)  
CD 22 Rudy Salas (D)  
CD 23 Derek Marshall (D)  
CD 24 Salud Carbajal (D)  
CD 25 Raul Ruiz (D)  
CD 26 Julia Brownley (D)  
CD 27 George Whitesides (D)  
CD 28 Judy Chu (D)  
CD 29 Luz Rivas (D)  
CD 30 Laura Friedman (D)  
CD 31 Gil Cisneros (D)  
CD 32 Brad Sherman (D)  
CD 33 Pete Aguilar (D)  
CD 34 Jimmy Gomez (D)  
CD 35 Norma Torres (D)  
CD 37 Sydney Kamlager-Dove (D)  
CD 38 Linda Sanchez (D)  
CD 39 Mark Takano (D)  
CD 40 Joe Kerr (D)  
CD 41 Will Rollins (D)  
CD 47 Dave Min (D)  
CD 49 Mike Levin (D)  
CD 50 Scott Peters (D)  
CD 51 Sara Jacobs (D)

\*Congressional candidate recommendations are not final until approved by the NEA



## Initiative Recommendations

### **YES** on Proposition 2

This \$10 billion bond measure will build or repair public schools and community colleges across the state. Vote YES on Prop. 2 so we can invest in our kids and neighborhood schools.

### **YES** on Prop. 3

Reaffirm the right of same-sex couples to marry

### **YES** on Prop. 4

Ensures access to clean drinking water and wildfire prevention

### **YES** on Prop. 5

Funding affordable housing and infrastructure projects

### **YES** on Prop. 6

Outlaws slavery as punishment for a crime

### **YES** on Prop. 32

Raise the minimum wage to \$18

### **NO** on Prop. 36

Divert funding from mental health programs into prisons

For the latest updates and more information, visit [cta.org/election](https://cta.org/election).





VOTE UNION  
STRONG!



# The 2024 General Election: Things to Know

## For the latest information:

Election Day is Nov. 5. Visit [cta.org/election](https://cta.org/election) for updates on initiatives and candidates throughout the state that are recommended by our union. For your personalized voting guide, check out [cta.yourvoter.guide](https://cta.yourvoter.guide).

## The facts:

- Tues., **Nov. 5, 2024**, is the date for the General Election.
- The last day to register to vote for the Nov. 5 General Election is **Oct. 21, 2024**.
- Vote-by-mail ballots can be returned by or before **Nov. 5** by mail, at a drop-off location, or at your county elections office.
- Vote centers open for early in-person voting in all Voter's Choice Act counties beginning on **Oct. 26**.
- Vote-by-mail ballots must be postmarked on or before Election Day and received by **Nov. 12**.

Visit the California Secretary of State website at [sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration](https://sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration) for more information (in multiple languages) and to register.

## Where can I:

- Check if I am registered to vote?
- Check where I am registered to vote?
- Check my political party preference?
- Check my language preference for election materials?
- Check the status of my vote-by-mail or provisional ballot?
- Find my polling place?
- Find contact information for my county elections office?

## The answer to all: [voterstatus.sos.ca.gov](https://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov).

If you recently registered online, please wait at least 24 hours before checking your status.

## I missed the voter registration deadline (Oct. 21). Can I still vote?

Yes — eligible citizens can “conditionally” register or re-register to vote within 14 days of an election at their county elections office, polling place or vote center. Your ballot will be processed and counted once the county elections office has completed the voter registration verification process.

See [sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/same-day-reg](https://sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/same-day-reg) for more.

▼ CTA Vice President Leslie Littman and President David Goldberg (second and third from left, respectively), Temecula Valley Educators Assn. President Edgar Diaz (center) and others walk for school board candidate Steven Schwartz (second from right). At far right is David Sola (see pullquote below).



“I’ve fought for my country in Afghanistan and Iraq but this race is my biggest battle yet because at its core it is a fight to protect our students, our public schools and our democracy.”

—David Sola, public school parent, 20-year U.S. Marine, and TVUSD school board candidate.



# Getting Out the Union Vote!

**CTA LOCALS, LEADERS CANVASS FOR STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS**

**MEMBERS HAVE BEEN** walking the neighborhoods, knocking on doors, writing postcards, making calls and more in efforts to pass initiatives and elect public education allies across the state. There are 2,000 school board elections alone — and every vote counts. Find ways to get involved at [cta.org/election](http://cta.org/election).



“I’m the president of United Teachers of Santa Clara and I’m walking in Campbell Elementary School District because all of our kids are all of our kids, regardless of the district they go to school in.”

—Margie Wysocki, UTSC President

“Knocking on doors and getting involved as teachers is crucial because school board elections matter. Electing the right school board members means better outcomes for teachers, students and their families.”

—Nico Vaccaro, Natomas Teachers Assn.



“I’m out walking for our endorsed candidate for school board, who is an amazing supporter of teachers and the person we need to make sure students have what they need to be successful.”

—Jay Mason, Campbell Elementary Teachers Assn. President



“We have been able to make great changes by electing a majority of SCTA-endorsed candidates to our school board, beginning with a new superintendent. This year’s election is just as important to make sure that we keep moving forward.”

—Fernando Rodriguez, Sacramento City Teachers Assn.

▼ Santa Clara Service Center Council was the starting point for many members' canvassing efforts in September. The group included CTA Board Member Maripaz Berlin, and leaders from Campbell Elementary Teachers Assn., San Jose Teachers Assn., Franklin McKinley Education Assn., Palo Alto Educators Assn. and United Teachers of Santa Clara.



“We’re walking for Measure R for appropriate funding for our schools. Our schools are lacking in facilities, including electric, HVAC, fencing and security cameras. Measure R will help us get the safe schools that our students deserve.”

—Melissa Urbain, San Jose Teachers Assn. Vice President



“I’m out here walking for school board because my family really wants to elect a school board candidate who takes politics outside of the classroom.”

—Aiden, Rocklin High School student



“I am voting for Jen Brookover because she is going to prioritize our students over politics and that’s what we need in this district.”

—Colleen Crowe, Rocklin Teachers Professional Assn.



“I’m out walking to support our candidates for the Palo Alto Board of Education. They want change and we need change, including more transparency and listening to our community.”

—Teri Baldwin, Palo Alto Educators Assn. President



# WE ARE THE UNION

## Understanding and committing to ‘the power of us’ is critical to win our collective goals

By Julian Peebles

“**THE UNION IS NOT** one person, it’s all of us coming together to meet with management and find a solution together,” says Amy Kilburn, president of Association of Clovis Educators (ACE). “We try very hard to empower others to do the work and be a part of the change. We have power when we come together.”

In Clovis, where classroom educators continue to organize to win a union, Kilburn says the danger of “third-partying” the union is real and ever-present. Third-partying the union refers to the act of portraying the union as a separate, external entity, rather than an organization composed of the workers it represents. This concept often arises during labor disputes when employers attempt to depict unions as outside forces that are disconnected from the members’ interests.


This tactic can undermine the solidarity and effectiveness of the union, and it is important to understand why and how to avoid this pitfall.

“The damage of ‘othering’ a union is alive and well in our district. People will still say ‘the CTA’ or ‘the union’ and not know what it means,” says Kilburn. “Who taught us that message? Management taught us to keep us apart. This is a tool to keep Labor from realizing we have the power to impact our communities.”

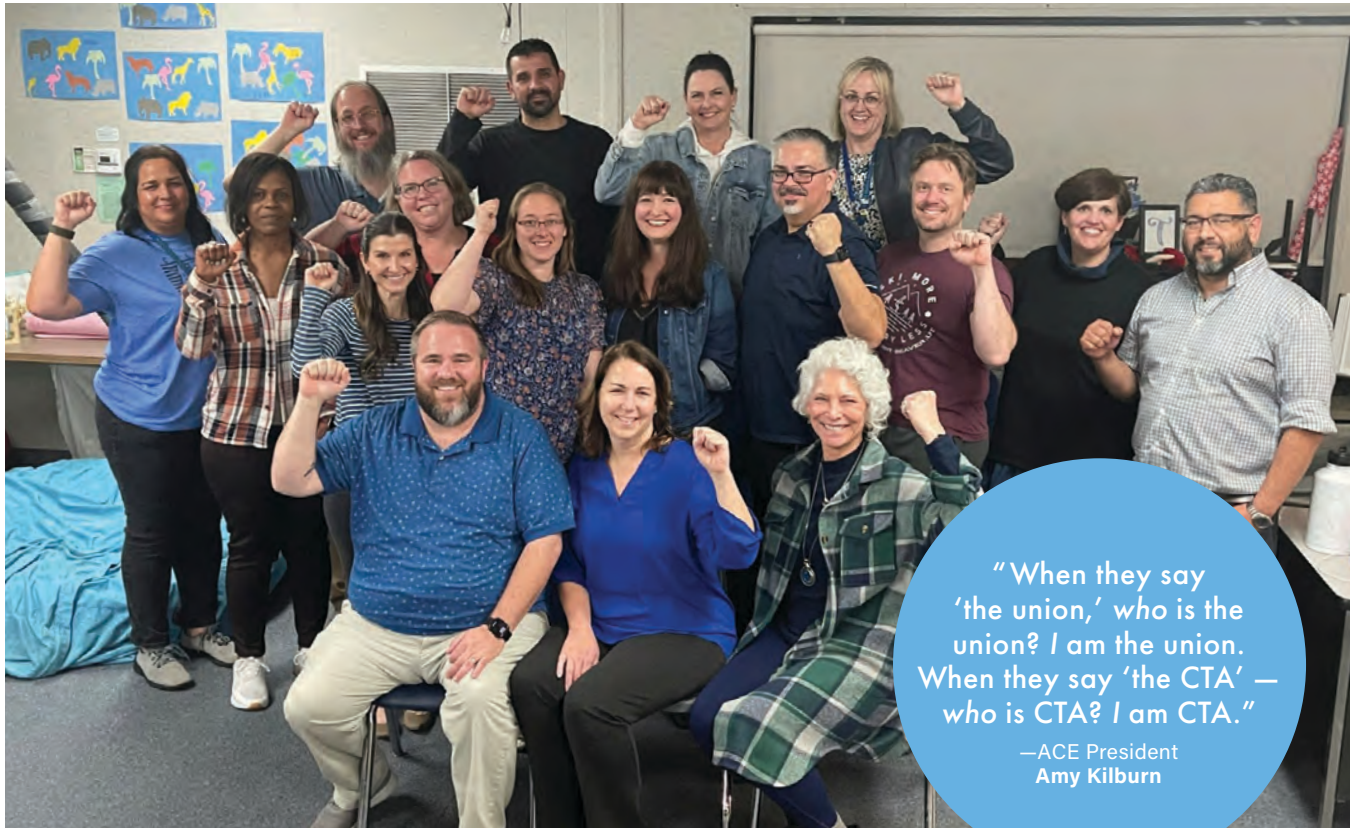


Amy Kilburn

The othering of the union can impact a local even when it’s not being weaponized by a school district, weakening our connections to each other and hampering us from achieving our collective goals — not only for ourselves but for our students and communities. As union educators, we need to shout out the power of us whenever possible to remind each other what’s possible when we work together.

“It’s important to show we believe in more than ourselves. The power of helping somebody else and them helping you as a solid group — you can’t put words to that,” says Frank Mata, high school English teacher and Corona Norco Teachers Association 

▼ Association of Clovis Educators in May of this year; ACE President Amy Kilburn is second from right.



“When they say ‘the union,’ who is the union? I am the union. When they say ‘the CTA’ — who is CTA? I am CTA.”

—ACE President Amy Kilburn

(CNTA) member. “Union activism has changed my lens and how I view meaning in my work and as a human being — and it’s changed my life.”

Mata said that our union is about bettering ourselves to better all of us, to help our students grow and our communities to thrive. He said third-partying the union was an issue in CNTA until leaders held one-on-one meetings with every single member to talk about their needs — “it’s amazing what it yielded, just that one thing,” Mata says. This is why our solidarity and how we talk about our union is so important — maintaining a unified front is crucial for achieving better wages, working conditions and resources for our students, and building power at the bargaining table.

For Michelle Nickell-Ramos, former president of Covina Unified Education Association (CUEA), building agency in the union also means working to ensure “the union is all of us” isn’t just a slogan. This includes decentralizing union leadership and empowering

members to work together at the site level to solve problems.

“We’ve been very assertive with admin about insisting their principals talk to members at their sites before escalating it to local union leadership. We’ve been very deliberate about training and empowering our site reps,” says Nickell-Ramos, Service Center Council One chair. “Our reps feel supported because we’ve given them the resources and space to hold meetings and handle our union issues at their site.”



Frank Mata

This member empowerment strengthens our locals, raising collective knowledge and surfacing activists and leaders at sites throughout school districts. Nickell-Ramos says this is especially important because it reinforces that speaking up about problems helps to resolve them and shows members that there isn’t one person to call to fix things.

“It is easier to be a union leader when everyone feels like a union leader,” she says. “I’m not a speech pathologist or a school counselor — those people need

*Continued on Page 38*

# How Not to ‘Other’ Our Union

**BY CONSISTENTLY APPLYING** these strategies, you can build unity and help ensure that our union is seen as a member-driven collective rather than an external organization — strengthening your collective power, ensuring your voices are heard, and achieving your shared goals.

## 1 REFER TO THE UNION AS A COLLECTIVE

Say “we” instead of “they.” When discussing union activities or decisions, frame it as something that everyone involved is part of. For example, say “we are fighting for better wages” instead of “the union is fighting for better wages.”

*Discuss the union in the first person:*

Use “we,” “us” and “our” to describe union actions and goals, reinforcing that the union is a collective effort. Use terms like “our union” or “the members of our union” to reinforce the idea that the union is made up of the people who belong to it.

*Don’t externalize the union:* Avoid phrases like “the union wants,” which can make it sound like the union is a separate, external entity. Instead, use “we want” or “our union is advocating for.”

“If you can lock this down, you can be unstoppable,” says ACE President Amy Kilburn. “The ownership of the union and those kind of community ideals is what we’re trying to build here. The moment when we crack the term of ‘the union’ is when we make a difference with people and turn them into union activists.”

## 2 HIGHLIGHT MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

*Focus on member contributions:* When discussing union actions or decisions, emphasize the role of members in shaping those actions. “Our members voted to strike because we believe in fair pay,” rather than “the union decided to strike.”

*Acknowledge member voices:* Regularly emphasize that the union’s direction is driven by the collective voices of our members. This reinforces that the union is an expression of the members’ will.

## 3 EDUCATE ABOUT THE UNION’S ROLE

*Clarify what the union is:* Remind yourself and others that the union is not a separate entity but a democratic organization made up of workers. This helps to combat the misconception that the union is an outside force.

*Discuss the union’s democratic processes:* Highlight how union decisions are made through votes and member

participation. This can help to demystify the union and show that it’s an active representation of the workforce.

“We’re really big on ‘We are CUEA.’ You don’t go to CUEA or call them. It’s not a service or entity,” says Michelle Nickell-Ramos, CUEA leader and Service Center Council One chair. “As local leaders, we’ve tried to model this to support our members in learning and growing as union members and activists.”

## 4 EMPHASIZE SHARED GOALS

*Focus on common interests:* Frame union goals as shared objectives that benefit everyone involved, such as safer working conditions, better wages or more resources for our public schools, which are in everyone’s interest.

*Link the union’s success to member success:* Make it clear that the success of the union translates directly to the success and well-being of members and our broader communities.

“Invite folks and appeal to shared values to show that our union is the collective of our shared goals,” says Frank Mata, CNTA leader and NEA Alternate Director. “I lead with solution-oriented language and then the union becomes associated with the results and outcomes.”



CUEA’s official water bottle.

## 5 ENGAGE IN UNION ACTIVITIES

*Be active and encourage others:* By being involved and encouraging others to participate, it becomes natural to think of the union as “us” rather than “them.”

*Share personal experiences:* Talking about personal involvement in the union can help frame it as an integral part of your professional life and identity.

## 6 CORRECT MISCONCEPTIONS IN CONVERSATIONS

*Gently correct language:* If someone refers to the union as a separate entity, gently remind them that the union is made up of members. For example, you might say, “Actually, we’re all the union, and together we decided to ...”

“One of the first union calls I was on, I was third-partying the union and I got corrected and didn’t quite understand why,” says Kilburn. “When somebody ‘third-parties’ the union, we correct them on it nicely. When they say ‘the union,’ *who* is the union? *I* am the union. When they say ‘the CTA’ — well, *who* is CTA? *I* am CTA.”



▼ CNTA's PAC Committee held a Postcard Party in early September to kick off their local election campaign; more than 50 volunteers took part.



“We’re really big on ‘We are CUEA.’ You don’t go to CUEA or call them. It’s not a service or entity.”

—Michelle Nickell-Ramos,  
Covina Unified Education Association leader

*Continued from Page 36*

to feel enough support from the collective that they feel comfortable to express their needs and wants. It’s hard work, but it’s worth it.”

## Sí, Se Puede

While some of the terminology may be modern, the ideas of worker empowerment and collective power have long guided our inspiring struggles. Legendary organizer Dolores Huerta’s rallying cry of “sí, se puede” (yes, we can) embodies the spirit of collective empowerment, where the union is inseparable from the workers. Huerta has always taught of the importance of grassroots organizing, where workers take ownership of their union and use it as a vehicle to express their collective power.

Along with César Chávez, Larry Itliong and Philip Vera Cruz, Huerta led the United Farm Workers (UFW), empowering some of society’s most essential yet undervalued workers and helping them see how much they were capable of accomplishing together. Chávez also emphasized the importance of unity and solidarity, recognizing that the strength of the

union comes from the workers’ active involvement and shared commitment. He believed that when workers understood that they were the union, they would be more motivated to engage in organizing efforts, strikes and boycotts, all of which were crucial in the UFW’s fight for better working conditions and rights for farmworkers.

Kilburn says this plays out today in schools throughout Clovis — just a short ride north from the fields of Delano where Huerta, Chávez, Itliong and Vera Cruz helped build a movement. She says it makes a huge difference for members when they feel connected to each other and committed to shared goals in a real way. The power of struggle to unite is real.

“Our members feel heard and know that they’re part of the solution. They’re excited they can come together and fight for what’s best for workers and students,” Kilburn says. “It also builds faith in your organization. Our school psychologists have their first contract with a grievance process — it resonates with our members so much because none of our other members have that option and so it makes it real for us.” ■



Michelle Nickell-Ramos



▼ Frank Mata speaks in his capacity as vice chair of CTA's Civil Rights in Education State Council committee.



“Invite folks and appeal to shared values to show that our union is the collective of our shared goals.”

—CNTA leader **Frank Mata**

### What Is Third-Partying the Union?

Third-partying the union is a tactic often used by employers to weaken the power and solidarity of workers. By framing the union as an external entity, employers try to create a divide between union leadership and the rank-and-file members, suggesting that the union's interests aren't aligned with those of the workers.

This undermines the fundamental principle that the union is the collective voice of the workers themselves. Prominent labor organizer Jane McAlevey stressed the importance of workers seeing themselves as the union rather than separate from it — when workers understand they are the union, she said that they are more likely to participate in organizing efforts, decision making and collective actions.

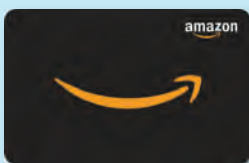
The main strength of our union lies in our active participation, unity and commitment to each other. Third-partying, or othering, is a deliberate attempt to weaken that strength by driving a wedge between union leadership and the rank-and-file membership.

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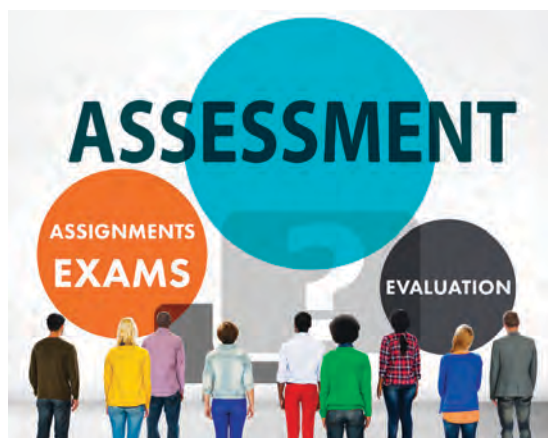
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# The Work Continues

## CTA-SPONSORED LEGISLATION NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

By Julian Peebles



### AB 2901:

#### Organizing Continues After Paid Pregnancy Leave Bill Gets Pulled

**OUR UNION AND** members' organizing efforts continue to win paid pregnancy leave for all public school educators in 2025. This follows a series of problematic amendments added to AB 2901 (Aguiar-Curry) that forced the author to move the bill to the inactive file.

The amendments would have delayed the implementation until 2028, made paid pregnancy leave conditional upon allocation in the state budget and could have delayed it indefinitely. This was unacceptable when the need to act is so urgent.

Our union is in continued communication with Assemblymember Aguilar-Curry, the Legislative Women's Caucus and a growing coalition to pass this vital legislation in 2025, which will be introduced again next year.

This year's campaign to pass AB 2901 captured attention throughout California. Nearly 18,000 people signed the CTA petition championing the historic legislation and more than 1,000 letters were sent to legislators urging them to support the bill.

Join CTA for a virtual town hall on Thurs., Nov. 21, to discuss plans for 2025 and how you can take action. Learn more at [bit.ly/CTATownHall\\_PaidPregnancyLeave](https://bit.ly/CTATownHall_PaidPregnancyLeave).

### SB 1263:

#### Workgroup to Make Recommendations on TPA Changes

**THE FIGHT TO END** the unnecessary and high-stakes Teaching Performance Assessments (TPAs) as a requirement to earn a teaching credential continues, following the adoption of an amended SB 1263 (Newman) that sets a path to make changes to the TPA. The amendments to the bill include convening a workgroup to review the TPA and make recommendations for changes to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) by March of next year.

This is an opportunity to address the systemic issues of the TPA raised by both early and veteran teachers in the continued effort to remove unnecessary and high-stakes barriers to becoming an educator. The fight was powered by the advocacy and support of members across the state — more than 6,000 members signed our petition supporting this bill and thousands of letters were sent to legislators urging their vote.



**H.R. 82:**

**Historic Progress on Unfair Retirement Penalties for Teachers**

**AN END MAY BE** in sight for laws that unfairly reduce retirement benefits for more than 3 million public workers, including CTA members, with a vote to repeal them coming soon in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Lawmakers in Washington, D.C., announced in September they had the signatures needed to force a vote on H.R. 82, the Social Security Fairness Act, which would eliminate the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) rules that reduce Social Security benefits for certain retirees who also receive pension income. A vote in the House of Representatives could come during the “Lame Duck” session after the general election in November.

The bill has 329 co-sponsors in the House and 62 in the U.S. Senate — the “most bipartisan and co-sponsored bill in the United States Congress,” according to Rep. Greg Landsman, D-Ohio.

The historic effort would not have been possible without the advocacy and activism of NEA members. Since the start of this Congress until Sept. 20 when the signature threshold was reached, NEA members and allies have sent more than 180,000 messages to Congress urging the full repeal of GPO-WEP. Additionally, the NEA Board of Directors has held more than 600 meetings with members of Congress during this session.

“Today marks a major milestone brought forth by the tireless advocacy of educators and other public servants,” NEA President Becky Pringle said in September. “Educators dedicate their lives to public service, but when it’s time to retire, far too many find that they have been stripped of Social Security and retirement benefits due to an unjust and morally wrong penalty.

The WEP reduces Social Security benefits of people who work in jobs covered by Social Security and jobs not covered by Social Security over the course of their careers, for example, educators compelled to take part-time or summer jobs to make ends meet — affecting more than 2.8 million Americans. The GPO reduces or eliminates—the Social Security spousal or survivor benefits of people who also get a pension based on federal, state or local government employment not covered by Social Security — affecting about 800,000 retirees. Both laws have been unjustly impacting dedicated public workers for more than 40 years.

“Record levels of Americans are demanding a change to these archaic and punitive laws,” Pringle said. “The time to act is now because everyone should be able to retire with dignity and receive the benefits they earned through a lifetime of public service.”

For more information and to sign a petition to urge congressional leaders to repeal the GPO and WEP, visit [nea.org/gpowep](http://nea.org/gpowep).



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▼ Two CTA locals, one focus: New Jerusalem United and New Jerusalem Educators Assn. members.



# United, We Are Strong

## NEW JERUSALEM PARAEDUCATORS ORGANIZE AND WIN THEIR UNION

By Julian Peoples

“WE ALL HAD the same struggles, but we just weren’t saying them together,” says Martha Duran, president of the newly formed New Jerusalem United (NJU) — representing paraeducators at the one-school New Jerusalem School District. “Because we had similar problems, we realized our voices were stronger together.”

Inspired by their credentialed colleagues in New Jerusalem Educators Association (NJEA), the previously unrepresented education support professionals at New Jerusalem Elementary School organized late last year, collecting signatures and filing for recognition in January — the first new CTA local union in San Joaquin County in decades. They immediately started bargaining and the united members of NJU won their first-ever contract in March.

“It was very empowering to bargain our own contract,” says Duran, a paraeducator. “We were able to voice our truth and the only option was to be heard.”

**“It was very empowering to bargain our own contract. We were able to voice our truth and the only option was to be heard.”**

—NJU President **Martha Duran**

NJU’s first bargain was an amazing success — with members winning life-changing victories, including pay raises of up to 18%, a six-month probationary period and a move from hourly pay to salaries. Members say the difference between last year without a union and this year with one is substantial.

“We were frustrated, overwhelmed, unseen and unheard, then we were nervous and intimidated and then it was empowering,” Duran says. “We knew we were making a difference with our district, but we didn’t know how much it would be different. Not that we’ve never been told we were important, but this year they’re definitely making us feel that way.”

NJEA members supported NJU’s organizing efforts and have been their biggest allies throughout the process. NJEA President Miriam Patterson started as a paraeducator in New Jerusalem before earning her teaching credential, which gave her firsthand

▼ NJU executive board members Katie Christensen, Martha Duran and Isabela Gonzalez are ready to build on their victories. Below, Duran and Miriam Patterson, presidents of NJU and NJEA, respectively.



## Welcome to the CTA Family!

### New Jerusalem United

*New Jerusalem School District, Tracy*

**Members:** 10 education support professionals

**Founded:** 2024

**President:** Martha Duran

### FIRST CONTRACT:

#### What NJU Won

- Immediate pay raises up to 18%
- One-time stipend of two weeks pay
- Six-month probationary period
- Eliminate cap on leave accrual
- "Out-of-class" pay when temporarily covering better paid positions
- Paid federal holidays
- Parental leave
- Current employees prioritized for assignment changes

insight on the problems and struggles classified staff were facing at the school.

"As teachers, we want to make sure they're getting as much support as possible. We're all here for the same reasons," Patterson says. "Showing up together has made a big difference. Speaking up for each other and showing that unity has helped all of us in this district."

Harnessing their unity in serving New Jerusalem students and supporting each other, NJU Secretary Isabela Gonzalez says that raising their voices together is building power in the small Tracy school district.

"It's just not me alone. I know I'm not the only one reaching out to people," she says. "Our voices are definitely stronger."

Duran says the unionizing process was daunting at times but fueled by their commitment to each other and lifted by the support of their teacher siblings, NJU and NJEA members built real power to make change together for their students.

"There's a lot to be said about having numbers. It's worth every emotion that you go through. Just to know that you have control over your working environment makes it that much more worth it," Duran says. "It's not easy being in education. I would love teachers to know that we're all aspiring to be them. Their support throughout this has been so helpful — there's always a hand for us to reach for."

What's next for these two New Jerusalem unions? Patterson says it's all about leaning into their unity and focusing on what's best for their students and supporting each other.

"Sticking together and continuing our work to advocate for our school," she says. "It really does make a difference. We love our students and each other, and we also have to take care of our families, so we want to make sure our pay stays competitive in our area." ■

▼ SDEA leaders at the Union Academy in August.



# A Convocation for Us

## SAN DIEGO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION'S UNION ACADEMY PREPARES REPS FOR YEAR AHEAD

By Julian Peoples

**EVERY AUGUST** in school districts across the state, admin brings all educators together for a big pep rally and professional development for the school year ahead, begging the question: What if our local unions held our own convocations focused on building power for our members and students?

San Diego Education Association (SDEA) did just that a couple days before members had to report to work, starting the year off right with their Union Academy. More than 150 SDEA site representatives and program chairs converged for a day of skills development, power building and fellowship to fill their cups with solidarity as the new year began.

"Thank you for taking the time during your last days of vacation to come to Union Academy to learn and build a stronger SDEA together, so that we are able to achieve even greater wins for our fellow educators and the students and communities we serve," SDEA President Kyle Weinberg told member leaders in attendance.

The academy included workshops on a variety of resources and tools to help site reps best advocate for their fellow educators and build power at schools throughout San Diego Unified, including sessions on members' rights regarding student discipline and special education, the role and responsibility of site reps, and assertive advocacy. SDEA also offered workshops on community schools, shared decision making and the power of unity.

"This work you do as leaders fills me with awe. That two days before you return to school you are here at Union Academy doing the good work and building your collective power is no small thing and it is why our union is strong and alive," CTA President David Goldberg said at the academy. "It's a good thing too, because I think you know better than anyone that the difference between having a union and not having one is the difference between winning the schools our students deserve and losing public education as a fundamental part of our democracy."



▼ SDEA President Kyle Weinberg welcomes SDEA leaders.



▼ Site reps and other SDEA leaders learned best practices for supporting members on the job.



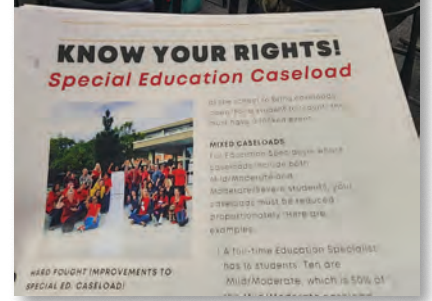
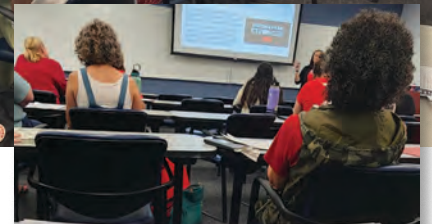
*“That two days before you return to school you are here doing the good work and building your collective power is why our union is strong and alive.”*

—CTA President **David Goldberg**

The academy comes after a school year that saw SDEA successfully organize to fight teacher layoffs and defend San Diego schools from draconian cuts. Weinberg said that SDEA members are preparing for the continued fight for the resources all students deserve and the public schools our communities need.

“Through collective actions like putting up signs on the doors of our classrooms throughout the district, rallying at school board meetings, passing out thousands of flyers to parents asking them to contact board members and demands that layoffs be rescinded, we were able to push the district to rescind the layoff notices. And we will bargain our salary increase for next year together with our successor contract negotiations,” he said.

“But if we don’t address how schools are funded by the state, we will continue to find ourselves on the defensive and battling the district over the impact of the latest budget crisis.” ■



▲ Sessions included workshops on special education and community schools.

# BARGAINING ROUNDUP

By **Julian Peoples**

▼ Palmdale Aerospace members organized to win a historic victory, winning their first contract after a marathon mediation session.



## **PALMDALE:**

### **Teachers Win First-Ever Contract**

After forming their union in late 2021, Palmdale Aerospace Teachers Association (PATA) members finally have their first-ever contract.

Years of organizing and difficult bargaining led to the historic victory in August, which came at 1 a.m. after a marathon fact-finding session with The Palmdale Aerospace Academy. PATA members had authorized a strike, showing their unity in the fight for their first contract.

Highlights of the agreement include a three-year probationary period, after which educators will be deemed permanent and have due process rights. All permanent employees enjoy contractually stipulated progressive discipline, and there is binding arbitration for grievances of contract violations.

PATA members received a 6% salary increase on July 1, with an additional 2% on-schedule salary increase in February if the charter school has an unmodified audit and makes its 1.2% bond covenant. Members received a one-time, off-salary schedule bonus of \$12,000 upon the ratification of the agreement.

“This is a victory for the entire school community,” said PATA lead site representative Daniel Lagomarsino. “There is no daylight between certificated staff members’ working conditions and students’ learning conditions. The academy can now turn its attention to fully staffing our vacancies and staff members can turn our full attention to doing what we do best — preparing students for college and the workforce. This effort to unionize has always been about our students first and foremost.”





▼ Educators turned out for a picket and rally showing they were strike-ready.



**HALF MOON BAY:**

**Educators Win New Contract Hours Before Scheduled Strike**

Just hours before they were scheduled to go on strike, members of the Cabrillo Unified Teachers Association (CUTA) won a tentative agreement that includes a 6% raise retroactive to July 1, 2023, and \$100 per month toward family health care.

Since June 30, CUTA educators had been working without a contract and put in the impossible position of choosing between serving the families of Half Moon Bay and being able to support their own families. This deal is the culmination of years of tireless efforts of CUTA members organizing and standing together in solidarity.

“For far too long, educators were shouldering the burden of

no salary increases with the soaring cost of living increases. This deal will put us on a path to ending the educator retention and recruitment crisis and ensure every student has access to a permanent teacher in the classroom,” said CUTA President John Carey. “Together, we achieved so much and are excited to be in the classroom with our students, rather than on a picket line.”

▼ Valley of the Moon members voted unanimously to approve a strike, if necessary.



**SONOMA VALLEY:**

**Unanimous Strike Authorization Leads to Contract Win**

Valley of the Moon Teachers Association (VMTA) members were united in their fight for resources for students, winning a tentative agreement at press time.

In early September, members voted unanimously to authorize a strike, if necessary, as the local continues mediation with Sonoma Valley Unified School District. “We refuse to accept that our students’ educational experience will be defined by cuts. Students deserve more resources today — smaller class sizes, school counselors, nurses and librarians — not less. VMTA is demanding SVUSD put its resources towards the classroom instead of wasting money on consultants and contractors,” said VMTA Co-President Laura Hoban.



## MENLO PARK/ATHERTON:

### Las Lomitas Educators authorize strike

**Las Lomitas Education Association (LLEA)** members overwhelmingly authorized a strike, as they demand a contract that puts students first. LLEA members have been working without a contract since July 2023 and have been at a complete standstill due to district management's failure to show they value and respect educators.

This year alone, LLESD lost 11 teachers — more than 11% of educators in the district. The gap in compensation continues to widen between LLESD and neighboring districts. LLEA members are now the lowest paid compared to nearby districts, forcing unprecedented turnover rates for this community.

"It's about time district management reprioritizes educators instead of focusing resources on newly created administrative positions, salary increases for top administrators and administrative luxury retreats," said LLEA Co-President Daniella Lefer.

"Management should be working with us to identify what is needed for our students, rather than investing in non-student-facing programs and initiatives, added LLEA Co-President Jennifer Montalvo. "As educators, we don't want to strike, but we will if it means putting students first."

## KENTFIELD TEACHERS:

### Educators organize and win landmark contract

After months of negotiating, a declaration of impasse and several sessions with a state mediator, **Kentfield Teachers Association (KTA)** members won a landmark agreement. The new agreement provides a 5% pay increase retroactive to July 1, and 4% for the 2025–2026 school year.

"We want the best and brightest educators to join our Kentfield family and continue to teach (here)," said KTA Bargaining Team Chair Andrea Livengood. "KTA educators had the seventh lowest starting salary out of 17 school districts in Marin County. With this new contract, KTA educators now have the eighth-highest starting salary in the county. We believe this new contract will attract and retain quality educators for our students."

▼ KESPA bargaining team member Jeanne Seller, President Gretchen Harris, Secretary Susan Sharpe.



## KENTFIELD ESPS:

### Pay increase and protected health benefits

**Kentfield Education Support Professionals Association (KESPA)** members won a new contract in September that will raise their pay and maintain their health benefits at current levels.

The new agreement provides for a 5% pay increase retroactive to July 1, and a 4% increase effective July 1, 2025. Members organized to win after the school district made a proposal that would have effectively cut their pay.

"This agreement will help attract and retain the best educators for Kentfield students. It takes a village to run a school and KESPA plays an important role in our students' education," said KESPA President Gretchen Harris.

## SHORELINE:

### Victory for educator recruitment and retention

**Shoreline Education Association (SEA)** members won a new contract in September that will help recruit and retain the educators that Shoreline students deserve.

The new agreement provides a salary increase of \$4,000 per educator plus an additional 4% retroactive to July 1. The agreement further provides for a 4.5% increase and a 5% increase for the 2025–2026 and 2026–2027 school years, respectively. In addition, the contract provides increases to employee health benefits.

"The starting salaries for Shoreline educators were the fourth lowest in Marin County, ranking 13 out of 17 Marin County school districts. Our starting salaries now rank fifth out of 17," said SEA Bargaining Chair Dee Lynn Armstrong. "It was extremely difficult to recruit and retain high-quality educators. Now, we can compete — our students deserve the best and we want to give them the best."



# STRATEGIES FOR WORK-LIFE BALANCE

How new and veteran educators  
can keep their joy and energy levels on high

By Christie Rodgers

**TEACHER BURNOUT IS REAL**, and it can happen at any time of the year. Balancing school responsibilities and personal life can leave you feeling exhausted and inadequate. This is a side of our profession that teacher preparation programs don't always fully address, leaving many new educators feeling emotionally, mentally and physically depleted.

I've been in education for almost 30 years now, and there have been times when I balanced the complexities of teaching relatively well. However, there have been other moments when I failed miserably, struggled, and suffered in silence, thinking that it was weak to complain. To avoid making the mistakes I've made, try a few strategies that have worked for me and many teachers over the years.

## 1 Organize Your Week

**Arrive early:** Although hitting the snooze button feels great, trying to play catch-up as students are arriving on campus can cause more stress than you need. Consider arriving 30 minutes before your assigned report time so you can get settled in, check your email and grab a refreshing drink to get you through to lunch. This piece of advice is the best I received as a new teacher!

**Copy materials a few days in advance:** It never fails

— when a teacher is in need of a copier to reproduce the day's copies right before school starts or during their lunch break, the copier is either broken or being used. Avoid this stressor by copying as much as you can ahead of time.

**Use that enrichment section in your teacher's manual:** There will always be one or more students who finish early, and for me, it always happened in math class. Trying to work with all students and teach with differentiation was my biggest struggle. As you are copying materials for the week, be sure to copy all of the enrichment activities so you can keep all of your learners engaged.



## Prepare everything the night before:

Pack your teacher bag, lunch and big tumbler of whatever refreshing drink you enjoy throughout the day the night before school. Bonus points for planning your wardrobe the night (or even the week!) before. With your teaching bag in your car, all you have to do is grab your lunch and drink out of the refrigerator and go the next day!

## 2 Build a Support Network

**Find the support of trusted colleagues:** Having a teacher bestie is one of the greatest gifts in our profession. Sometimes, teachers just need to vent so they can release stress, refocus and jump back into the game. For me, this was a game changer — talking to others in the profession who are going through the same thing truly helps.

**Seek out professional development opportunities:** While attending more professional development is not always at the top of an educator's list of to-do items, it does provide you the chance to connect with like-minded professionals who have the same goals in mind. This also provides you with a broader network of educators, which can really help you build a great network of people to call upon when you need deeper expertise.

## 3 Find Ways to Decompress at School

**Play music:** Play soft music in the background as students come in to begin their morning routines and during independent work time. Listening to music during your break time can also help you shift your mood.

**Don't forget to eat your lunch:** My first year, I allowed the responsibilities to my class overwhelm my physical needs. I would skip lunch to grade an extra set of papers or copy things in the teacher workroom, thinking I was getting ahead. But doing this sets you up for failure and hunger. Always take time to sit, eat your lunch in peace, and get some quality time with your colleagues.

**Build in mindful brain breaks:** This is one of my favorite suggestions because not only does it refresh me, but it is a fantastic tool for students! After lunch and recess, students can become unfocused. Begin a tradition of mindful brain breaks. To do this, I would turn off the overhead lights but keep my desk light and other smaller lights on. Then I would project images on the whiteboard like beta fish swimming, ocean waves crashing onto a calm beach, or nature scenes.



## 4 Save Positive Resources

**Write a letter:** At the beginning of the year, write yourself a letter expressing why you chose this profession. Be specific. On days that are particularly tough, get it out and read it to encourage yourself that things will get better. You can keep this going throughout the year by journaling to record the sweet and simple moments of the day that made you giggle or smile.

**Keep student and parent letters of encouragement:** Whether it is a handmade card, picture, email or letter, keep these items and browse through them to remind yourself of the powerful and positive impact you have made already. These mementos have meant so much to me, as they are reminders of the positive work that we as teachers do every day.

**Take lots of photos:** Looking back on the special projects, field trips, fun assignments and other things that are personally special and memorable to you will be an essential way to keep your spirits up and your motivation high. It is rewarding to glance through old photos of students who now have families and careers of their own, thanks to the work teachers do.

Finally, when you're home for the day, take a break. If you enjoy binge-watching your favorite show, spend a little bit of time doing that. If reading is your happy place, get lost in another time and setting. If exercising helps you release tension, be sure to schedule it into your day. These things are most important to staying mentally and physically healthy.

*Christie Rodgers is an educator, adjunct professor and author. This article originally appeared in Edutopia.*

# An Excellent Educator

By Amy Peruzzaro

**CONGRATULATIONS TO** Katrina Mundy for winning NEA Foundation's 2025 Travelers Award for Teaching Excellence. The Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association member is one of 48 educators from across the country who were recognized for their exemplary work in the classroom, advocacy for the profession, engagement with families and communities, and commitment to equity and diversity.

"Any honor given to me is always shared," Mundy told the Educator. "I have not been alone in my work!"

Mundy, a senior English/Google Project Management teacher and Community Schools Teacher Lead at Magnolia High School in Anaheim, is a big proponent of student-led community engagement. Her classes have a civic engagement and problem-solving focus. An NEAToday story earlier this year described community improvement projects designed by her students, including a "pop-up library" built by woodshop students and stocked with donated books. The pop-up helps students and surrounding community who have limited library access. "Students 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," Mundy explained.

Mundy founded the nonprofit Magnolia SAFE (Sentinel Assistance Funding Essentials) during the COVID-19 pandemic to address food insecurity and other basic needs of Magnolia High School students and their immediate families. "Most of our donations are from our faculty and alumni and we have raised over \$110,000 since March 2020," Mundy said, adding that SAFE partners with the school social worker, teachers, counselors and family resource team.

The NEA Foundation's Awards for Teaching Excellence were established in 2001. Five of the awardees are then selected to receive the Horace Mann Awards for Teaching Excellence as well as \$10,000 each. Finally, one of the awardees is selected for the NEA Member Benefits Award and receives \$25,000. For more information, visit [neafoundation.org](https://neafoundation.org).



## Genius Idea to Capture Chapter's Year

**Menifee Teachers Association** captured all their 2023–24 events, campaigns, camaraderie and accomplishments in nifty book form — a precious archival document and a reminder of the local members and union activism that supported their students and schools. Pictured with the "yearbook" is MTA President Heather Tortoreti, who credited the idea to a former executive committee member.



# Financial Stress? Get Calm!

A free new program supports CTA members' mental health

**PEOPLE ARE LOSING SLEEP** over money. In fact, the rising cost of living and financial instability are the top stressors negatively impacting employee mental health, according to wellness app Calm's survey of more than 4,000 adults in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany and India.

Worries about money have a cascading effect: About 60% of employees who experience anxiety or trouble sleeping say it affects their performance at work.

A new series on Calm — free for CTA members — can help you combat financial stress and move toward financial wellness. Calm has launched "Navigating Financial Stress," developed in consultation with independent Certified Financial Planner Kelley C. Long, CPA/PFS, CFP®. The program uses mindfulness tools to address the challenging thoughts and emotions that arise around finances. The goal is to help

you alleviate your anxiety related to money, reframe uncertainty, and gain clarity and confidence, ultimately helping you improve your relationships with money and yourself.

Narrated by Long, the program focuses on a shift in mindset, which for many people is the most important step in moving toward financial wellness. Long has more than 20 years of experience in the financial services industry and is an independent financial coach and workplace financial wellness consultant.

For strategies and tips to help you manage your finances more effectively, watch Calm's on-demand webinar, "Tackling Employee Financial Stress at Your Organization."

To sign up for your free premium CTA subscription, visit [CTAMemberBenefits.org/calm](https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/calm).



## Retirement plans can be confusing. Don't let that stop you from saving!

The CTA-endorsed 403(b) plan features a team of fiduciaries to assist you with enrolling, reviewing your current plan, or answering any questions you may.



**Let's connect!**

Scan the QR code or call [916-235-9800](tel:916-235-9800)

# Added Value of CTA Membership

**CTA/NEA MEMBER BENEFITS** programs are designed exclusively for educators with competitive rates, excellent customer service, and have been vetted at the highest level with continued monitoring and advocacy by your union. Whether you are trying to save money on your back-to-school supplies or looking for ways to protect yourself and family with insurance or financial solutions, we have you covered.

GENERAL INFORMATION	MEMBER BENEFITS DEPARTMENTS
<b>CTA Member Benefits Department</b>	<b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:MemberBenefits@cta.org">MemberBenefits@cta.org</a> 650-552-5200 <a href="https://CTAMemberBenefits.org">CTAMemberBenefits.org</a>
<b>NEA Member Benefits Department</b>	800-637-4636 <a href="https://neamb.com">neamb.com</a>
AUTOMATIC BENEFITS	CONTACT
CTA Death & Dismemberment Plan	<a href="https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/dd">CTAMemberBenefits.org/dd</a>
NEA Complimentary Life Insurance	<a href="https://neamb.com/complife">neamb.com/complife</a>
CTA/NEA Educators Employment Liability Insurance (EEL) & Group Legal Services (GLS)	CTA Legal Department 650-552-5425 <a href="https://CTA.org/legal">CTA.org/legal</a>
Disaster Relief Fund	<a href="https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/drif">CTAMemberBenefits.org/drif</a>
Calm	<a href="https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/Calm">CTAMemberBenefits.org/Calm</a>
CTA Classroom Setup Grant	<a href="https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/Classroom">CTAMemberBenefits.org/Classroom</a> 650-552-5200
VOLUNTARY INSURANCE	CONTACT
CTA Auto/Home/Renters Insurance by California Casualty	866-680-5142 <a href="https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/calcas">CTAMemberBenefits.org/calcas</a>
CTA Group Disability and Life Insurance by The Standard	800-522-0406 <a href="https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/standard">CTAMemberBenefits.org/standard</a>
RETIREMENT SAVINGS	CONTACT
CTA Retirement Savings Plan 403(b)	<b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:Team@ctaretirementplan.org">Team@ctaretirementplan.org</a> <b>Info:</b> <a href="https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/rsp">CTAMemberBenefits.org/rsp</a>
DISCOUNTS	CONTACT
CTA Access to Savings — MyDeals App	888-818-5217 <a href="https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/access">CTAMemberBenefits.org/access</a>
CTA Rental Car Program	<a href="https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/rentalcar">CTAMemberBenefits.org/rentalcar</a>
CTA Credit Union Services by Provident Credit Union	800-632-4600 <a href="https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/provident">CTAMemberBenefits.org/provident</a>
CTA Credit Card Services	<a href="https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/cc">CTAMemberBenefits.org/cc</a>
INFORMATION/TOOLS	SOURCE
NEA Student Debt Navigator powered by SAVI	<a href="https://NEAMB.com/loanforgiveness">NEAMB.com/loanforgiveness</a> <a href="https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/studentloans">CTAMemberBenefits.org/studentloans</a>
Member Benefits Leader Tools	<a href="https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/leaders">CTAMemberBenefits.org/leaders</a>
Member Benefits 4 You Webinars	<a href="https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/MB4U">CTAMemberBenefits.org/MB4U</a>



Scan the QR code for the CTA Highlights Brochure 2024–25, or download it at [CTAMemberBenefits.org/download](https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/download).

▼ Santa Maria Elementary Education Assn. member Ashley Sandoval, right, with district representative Espie Rui and California Casualty's Chris Neito.



### Team Up With California Casualty

**GIVE YOUR ATHLETES A SPORTING CHANCE** with a Thomas R. Brown Athletics Grant. These grants were established to provide support to public school sports programs impacted by reduced budgets.

As a CTA member, you can apply for a grant award of \$1,000 for your middle or high school's team. Apply at [CTAMemberBenefits.org/calcas](https://ctamemberbenefits.org/calcas). Applications for this year will be accepted through Jan. 15, 2025.

Santa Maria Elementary Education Association member Ashley Sandoval received a grant earlier this year. "I am so thankful to be a recipient of the California Casualty's Thomas R. Brown Athletics Grant," she wrote. "My volleyball teams will use this grant to purchase much-needed volleyball equipment. The grant will truly make a difference in our Titan student-athletes' experience!"

### California Teachers Association Giveaway



### Provident Credit Union Raffle

**IN HONOR OF CALIFORNIA EDUCATORS**, Provident Credit Union is hosting a giveaway with a chance to win one of three cash prizes: first place, \$2,500; second place, \$1,000; third place, \$500.

Founded by CTA in 1950, Provident Credit Union continues to serve the needs of the educational community by celebrating you with this raffle! Enter at [CTAMemberBenefits.org/provident](https://ctamemberbenefits.org/provident).

Contest rules:

- You don't have to be Provident member
- You do have to be a CTA member
- Must be a resident of California
- You can enter once a month (max 3 entries) per household

Entry deadline: Oct. 31, 2024.

Winner will be announced Nov. 15, 2024.

You can also enter the raffle by scanning this:



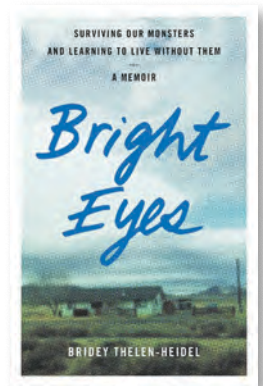
### Ready for the Holidays? Access to Savings Has Your Back

**CTA Access to Savings** offers members great deals and discounts — not only on end-of-year travel and seasonal gift-giving, but everyday dining, shopping, auto services, movies and entertainment, home and garden needs and much more. Check out [ctamemberbenefits.org/access](https://ctamemberbenefits.org/access).





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▲ **Left:** CTA/NEA's Robert V. Rodriguez, NEA Director from North Carolina Mark Jewell, NEA Executive Committee member Gladys Marquez. **Right:** CTA member leaders Veronica Talton and Ever Flores (middle row), NEA Director from Illinois Bill Farmer, CTA's Tara Jeane.

### Gathering of Global Educator Unions

**Education International**, a global union federation of teachers' trade unions, held its World Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina, this past summer. CTA educators who participated as delegates and observers included CTA Board Member Maritza Avila, Ever Flores, Naqiba Gregory, Tara Jeane, Robert V. Rodriguez, Matthew Seymour and CTA/NEA Retired members George Sheridan and Elaine Merriweather. EI consists of 383 member organizations in 178 countries and territories representing over 32 million educators.

### Surviving Our Monsters

Bridey Thelen-Heidel, South Tahoe Education Assn. member and high school English teacher, has a new memoir. *Bright Eyes: Surviving Our Monsters and Learning to Live Without Them* tells of growing up with her mom, who is addicted to dangerous men who park their Harleys in the house and kick holes in all their doors. Bridey gets used to stuffing her life into black trash bags and changing schools every time her mom moves in with a new monster or runs away from one. She earns her way into a fancy private college, where she tries to forget who she is — until her mom calls with a threat that brings her to her knees. A story about a brave, resilient girl who survives to create her own happily ever after.



**Reminder: GOTV!**  
**Sacramento City Teachers Assn.**  
President Nikki Milevsky holds the first batch of 1,000 handwritten letters from SCTA urging people to vote.



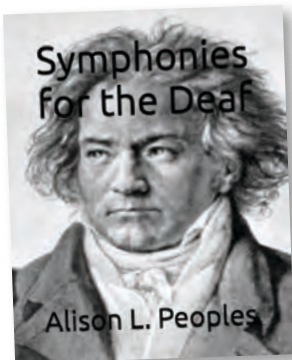
### Mr. Roger's Neighborhood

**Public broadcaster KIXE** honored famed children's TV host — and staunch labor advocate — Mister Rogers at Anderson River Park in Anderson on Sept. 28. CTA's Shasta Cascade Service Center Council had a table at the community event, offering free children's books. Pictured is Junction Teachers Assn. member Roger McCoy, who helped celebrate the spirit of kindness and community, and respect for workers, that Fred Rogers shared with the world.



# Lit From Within

Often educators' creativity spills over into a book, album, blog or vlog, or other work. We showcase our members' talents:



## Visual Symphony

Alison Peoples, a member of Santa Rosa Teachers Association, has a new book titled *Symphonies for the Deaf*. Peoples wrote the book to share her love of Beethoven's music with the deaf or hard of hearing. While reflecting on how Beethoven was not able to hear many of his end pieces due to deafness later in life, Peoples thought about how he could likely feel and see them in his mind. In this work of fiction without illustrations, Peoples lets the deaf or hard of hearing experience all of Beethoven's nine symphonies by exploring images, scenes and colors of his music, brought to life by her imaginative descriptions.



## Mind Over Might

United Teachers Los Angeles member and middle school teacher Evan Baughman has published his fourth book, *Try Not to Die: In a Dark Fairy Tale*. Baughman and co-author Mark Tullius tell an action-packed, interactive story for young adults — who choose their own adventure. The plot: King Dorian sends his twin sons on a quest to determine his successor. Keaton is a skilled warrior; Barnaby is a bookworm. To make things fair, Barnaby receives a talking sword and a book of knowledge but must prove himself worthy. Both brothers face dangers in the Wild Woods and must decide how far they are willing to go to become the next ruler of Vallorum.



## Life's Curveballs

Fifth grade teacher and San Ramon Valley Education Association member Lisa Freels has published a third novel in her Playa Vista Elementary Series called *Fifth Grade Resolutions*. Rising fifth grader Penny has been having a less than stellar summer. She is worried about her mother's health, her father's absence and her friendships. As she navigates the challenges of growing up, Penny wonders if things will improve. A story for young readers about coping with life's uncertainties. Freels has also written a novella, *Fourth Grade Realizations*, that is free to read at [mrsfreelsbooks.com](http://mrsfreelsbooks.com).

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Got something for this page? Tell us at [cta.org](http://cta.org) with "Lit From Within" in the subject line. Check out past issues at [cta.org/lit](http://cta.org/lit).

# Take Along a Friend!

 access



*This fall, give friends and family big thrills —*

**and give yourself big savings** — at California's great theme parks. Just one of the many benefits of membership in CTA, NEA and your local union. [CTAMemberBenefits.org/Access](https://CTAMemberBenefits.org/Access)





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