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# California EDUCATOR

June/July 2012 Volume 16 Issue 9

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## ARE YOU CULTURALLY COMPETENT?

INCREASE UNDERSTANDING  
AND LEARNING

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## GRANT ELECTRIFIES CHEMISTRY CLASS

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#### FEATURES



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Use of marijuana (now considered a prescription medication) and other drugs is on the rise. Diane Farthing, a Pleasanton health teacher, shows the effect of drugs on the brain's neurotransmitters.



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Jenny Chomori's students learn about the wartime internment of Japanese Americans 70 years ago.



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#### ON THE COVER



► Mykayla Martin raises her hand in Ann Jayne's classroom in Tracy.

## A visionary framework

**IN MY PERSONAL VISION** of how education should work in California, schools would be adequately funded, have small class sizes, offer a comprehensive curriculum that includes art, music and physical education, incorporate counseling and support services, and prepare our students to be citizens of the future.

But even before all that, schools would have a dedicated, highly qualified professional in every classroom who knows how to reach and teach the broad spectrum of students who are there. Our teaching staffs would be balanced by new teachers who can share their enthusiasm and veteran teachers who can share their experience. They would have time to plan and work collaboratively, and they would be given opportunities for continued professional development. They would learn what works and what doesn't work with their students.

And teachers would know whether they've done a good job reaching their students because they have been observed and evaluated by their colleagues and administrators who provide feedback that enables them to change and improve their teaching.

Those of us in the profession know there's a huge learning curve to becoming a good teacher and we need all the help we can get along the way. We want and need to be evaluated. I don't think I've met a person in the profession who did not want to know how they were doing and how they could improve.

As a new teacher, I had two very different experiences with evaluation. One was fraught with tension and anxiety, with the only goal being to satisfy my principal. The other was a collegial effort, working with my principal to identify my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher and develop a process for building better professional practice and continually improving my skills. Guess which one was more helpful?

I hear from many teachers that their evaluation amounted to a five-minute drop-in by an administrator, if they received that. Unfortunately, that's become the rule, rather than the exception. Sadder yet, student test scores are being used as criteria in evaluating teach-

ing ability. It's not fair, it's not accurate, and it's the lazy way out.

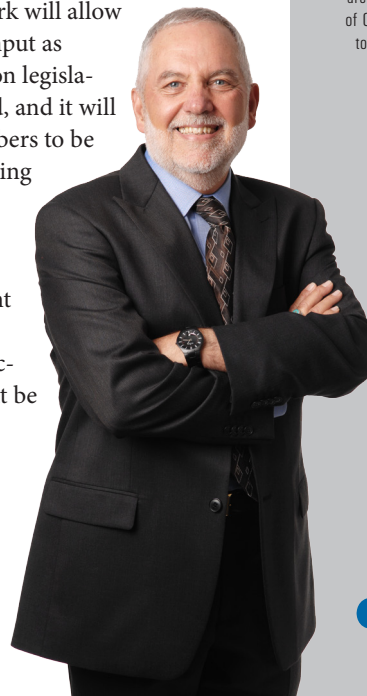
That's why I am so pleased to report that after more than two years of work, CTA has set forth a visionary evaluation framework for California teachers and school districts — visionary because it makes us part of the process, as we should be.

The CTA Teacher Evaluation Workgroup forged the 36-page plan after hearing from CTA members and numerous experts, such as Linda Darling-Hammond of Stanford, and looking at assessment systems used across the country. The framework rejects using "value-added" measures based on student test scores in teacher evaluations. Research shows that this controversial method is highly unstable. These measurements are affected by the differences in the individual students assigned to a teacher, and the data does not accurately reflect the many influences on student progress over time.

Instead, the CTA guidelines stress formative assessments that focus on the process of increasing knowledge and improving professional practice. They provide teachers with feedback on how to improve their practice to promote student learning, and guide what types of professional development opportunities will enhance their practice.

You can find the framework and guiding principles online at [www.cta.org/evaluationframework](http://www.cta.org/evaluationframework).

The framework will allow us to have real input as teacher evaluation legislation is developed, and it will enable our members to be proactive in leading our profession. It is time that teachers define what is important in strengthening the teaching practice, and not let it be defined by politicians.



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**CONTRIBUTORS**  
Scott Buschman, Len Feldman, Jaimie Graham, Bill Guy, Stephen R. Harris III, Dina Martin, Mike Myslinski, Frank Wells

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# CTA online

» WHAT'S NEW AT CTA.ORG



## Campaign 2012 news

The CTA-opposed Special Exemptions Act, also known as the Corporate Power Grab, has qualified for the November ballot and will be assigned a number by the secretary of state in mid-July.

[www.cta.org/campaign2012](http://www.cta.org/campaign2012)



## Take a classroom supplies survey

Tell a Bay Area nonprofit what supplies your students need and help shape the contents of supply kits they'll distribute to more than 100,000 students and classrooms. You may win \$2,500!

[surveys.ktcollege.org/s3/californiateachers](http://surveys.ktcollege.org/s3/californiateachers)



## NEA Representative Assembly

This summer, California will send more than 1,000 delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly in Washington, D.C., to set policy and chart the direction of NEA business. Learn more.

[www.cta.org/neara](http://www.cta.org/neara)

**f MOST POPULAR FACEBOOK POST**

360 likes, 258 shares



## **t** TOP TWEETS

**@KyleneBeers**  
#leadfromwithin means being brave enough to say what must be said. Here goes: I'm a teacher, not a tester.

**@dihoppy**  
Unions private or public and their pensions did not crash the global economy. Wall Street did.

**@steveweinstein**  
GOP is going after public employees to kill their union's ability to fight right-wing billionaire money in political campaigns. That's it.

## **s** FAVORITE COMMENTS

**Sheila Reed**  
1:52pm | 6 Jun  
I had a student hand me a heartfelt Thank You letter last night as she walked in to graduate. Let's just say I cried. :)

**Jeanne Berrong**  
9:40 pm | 7 Jun  
Let the President know that Race to the Top and its impending barrage of standardized testing will only benefit Pearson. Our students deserve a rich curriculum that honors the unique individuals that they are.

» VIRAL VIDEO



## 3) They Can Afford It



**The Truth About Taxes:** Robert Reich succinctly explains why taxes should be raised on the rich: "Demanding that the wealthy pay their fair share isn't class warfare. It's common sense."

[www.cta.org/campaign](http://www.cta.org/campaign)



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# calendar

JULY

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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## JULY 23–26

CONFERENCE

### Presidents Conference

*Asilomar Conference Grounds, Pacific Grove*

This four-day training program is geared toward local chapter leaders. New presidents and presidents of locals in the Community College Association arrive Monday to engage in specially tailored core sessions. Other participants join them Tuesday for electives and workshops to enhance leadership skills and understanding of issues. This year's Presidents Conference will focus on the November 2012 election.

Find out more: [www.cta.org/conferences](http://www.cta.org/conferences)

## AUGUST 5–9

CONFERENCE

### Summer Institute

*UCLA Conference Center, Los Angeles*

The premiere workshop of its kind, Summer Institute offers sessions in areas that assist chapter leaders in the day-to-day representation and support of members. Sessions include Communications, Instruction and Professional Development, Emerging Leaders, Bargaining, School Finance, Health and Welfare Issues, Legal, Member Benefits, and Community Outreach.

Find out more: [www.cta.org/conferences](http://www.cta.org/conferences)



## OCTOBER 5–7

CONFERENCE

### Region II Leadership Conference

*Grand Sierra Resort, Reno, Nevada*

This conference is designed to advance the advocacy skills of our leaders and members and to enhance the cause of public education. Training sessions include leadership development, advocacy, chapter infrastructure, and internal and external communications.

Find out more: [www.cta.org/conferences](http://www.cta.org/conferences)

## OCTOBER 12–14

CONFERENCE

### Region I Leadership Conference

*Asilomar Conference Grounds, Pacific Grove*

This conference is an opportunity to learn new skills, improve upon your existing attributes, and obtain information to assist you and your chapter in taking action. It is also an excellent opportunity to introduce newer members to the intricacies of association leadership.

Find out more: [www.cta.org/conferences](http://www.cta.org/conferences)



SEPTEMBER

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# SEPTEMBER 21

HOLIDAY



Find out more:

[www.internationaldayofpeace.org](http://www.internationaldayofpeace.org)

# OCTOBER 12-14

CONFERENCE

## CCA Fall Conference

*Holiday Inn San Jose Airport, San Jose*

The 2012 Community College Association Fall Conference will feature Philip Dray Doubleday, author of *There is Power in a Union: The Epic Tale of Labor in America*. Workshops include: Bargaining Foundations Budget Analysis; Verbal Skills for Bargaining; Bargaining Relationships; Preparation for Bargaining; Strategic Planning; Bargaining for Part-time Faculty; and Evaluating Your Health Benefits with CTA Software.

Find out more: [www.cca4me.org](http://www.cca4me.org)



**SAVE THE DATE!**  
Tuesday, July 10, 2012

# Inequality, Poverty and School Achievement: Relationships too Powerful to Ignore

## 8th Annual Summer Institute on Leadership for Educational Justice Tuesday, July 10, 2012

Join us this summer in Southern California to explore questions such as:

- To what extent do we have inequality in our schools?
- How is school achievement affected by inequalities in wealth?
- What is the relationship among inequality, poverty and student achievement?
- How can schools address the relationships between inequality, poverty and student achievement?



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# letters and comments



The *Educator* welcomes letters to the editor. There is a 250-word limit. Signed letters with the writer's name, address and a daytime telephone number will be considered for publication. All letters will be edited. Write to [editor@cta.org](mailto:editor@cta.org).

## THANK YOU, CTA EDUCATOR

We were surprised and delighted to find our daughter on the cover of the [May] *Educator*. Everything about Rebecca having been chosen



National Teacher of the Year has been pretty amazing.

We knew that she was a good teacher and that she loved her job, but who would have guessed that our self-confessed "goofball" would be so composed and unflappable in all the interviews and speeches?

It was such a thrill to go with her to the White House and to meet President Obama. She'll be a wonderful spokesperson for the teaching profession, and I'm sure she'll continue to surprise us all year.

### Bill and Sue Lipshultz CTA/NEA-Retired

Parents of National Teacher of the Year Rebecca Mieliwocki

## PIG KISSING IS BULLYING?

The "Would you kiss a pig? Creative fundraising" article [in April] sports a large photo of a person kissing a pig, which is disturbing and incites bullying in its purest and most insulting form.



The political practice of requiring citizens to prove their loyalty to the state by kissing or touching a pig has been used throughout human history to excuse the tortures and executions of innocent humans of faiths that bar the touching or use of swine for any reason.

Surely there are better challenges to be used than this divisive practice. Let's not teach students disregard for their neighbors' beliefs. Bullying is not new. Why encourage it? ... Although fundraising activities are good for schools, this is a shameful story as it promotes the "bullying" attitude those schools work so hard to stop.

### A. Tygard Hawthorne Elementary Teachers Association

## APPRECIATED DEAN VOGEL'S MESSAGE

I usually enjoy the president's article, but I am writing because this time I was VERY impressed with the personal style and specific issues you handled in the May issue. Keep it up.

### Ken Hewitt CTA/NEA-Retired

## HUNGRY TO READ

I greatly enjoyed your "Hunger Games" article [in May]. I fell in love with the books last summer and was determined to teach the first novel in conjunction with *Fahrenheit 451*. After my principal generously purchased my juniors a class set, I was set to reinforce the elements of dystopia with this popular young adult book.

While I had hoped *The Hunger Games* would engage students, I had no idea it would take off like it did. Boys and girls read it whenever they could. Even students who said they hate to read could not put it down. Our librarian bought extra copies of *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay* to keep up with the interest. One district official who visited while I was teaching the story picked up the book, loved it and even made her husband read it.

The best part was the week after the movie came out when we as a class compared the written and filmed versions. While they mostly enjoyed the film, they were nearly universal in their criticism that the movie did not explain well Katniss' internal motivation. We were able to discuss the differences between first-person and third-person narration with a depth of understanding I had never been able to reach before.

While I love classics like *The Great Gatsby*, *Fahrenheit 451* and *1984*, I have discovered how beneficial it is to introduce new books into our curriculum as a way to engage students in new and exciting ways.

### Dave Milbrandt Bonita Unified Teachers Association

## TEST PREP COMMENTS?

How much time do you spend preparing your students for standardized tests? How does test prep impact their learning? How does it affect you and your fellow teachers?

For a story in a future issue of the *Educator*, we are gathering information and comments from teachers about test preparation for standardized tests, district tests and the High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). We'd like to hear from you. Please help us by taking our online survey at [www.cta.org/testprepsurvey](http://www.cta.org/testprepsurvey). Thank you for your response.



# The Drug of Choice

*Times and types of drugs may have changed, but concerns about drug abuse have not*

By **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin**  
Photos by **Scott Buschman**

**I****MAGES** of Whitney Houston, Michael Jackson, Amy Winehouse and Marilyn Monroe flicker across a computer screen at the front of the classroom.

“What do they have in common?” asks Monica Mallet at Buena Vista Continuation School. The teens, of course, know the answer. They are celebrities who have died from drugs.

Mallet is among the growing number of educators concerned about the effect of substance abuse on teens, specifically prescription drugs and marijuana.

“I’ve worked at schools where students have overdosed,” says Mallet, Los Angeles County Education Association. “Fortunately, they did not die, but it is a wake-up call.”



### Easy access and legal drugs

“Are drugs cool?” asks Mallet. One student says that in movies and videos, dealers are surrounded by fancy cars, beautiful women and plenty of cash. Another boy says his brother takes drugs and nothing bad happens, so why shouldn’t he? A girl shares in a quiet voice that her father died from a drug overdose, so she steers clear. Others ask what the big deal is, since pot and pills are available in pharmacies before being sold on the street.

Mallet notes that even though some drugs are available with a prescription, it doesn’t mean they are safe. Michael Jackson and Brittany Murphy died from prescription drugs, she points out.

“Prescription drugs seem cleaner and safer. Students don’t think they are putting themselves in harm’s way,” says Greg Murphy, who teaches at Sober School, a school for students in recovery in San Luis Obispo. “Seeing a package of heroin on a table might make kids feel fearful, and there could be consequences that could ruin their lives. But if they see a bottle of pills, those worries don’t come to mind, even though Vicodin and OxyContin are powerful opiates and highly addictive. They think it’s OK because it can be obtained legally.”

The same attitude pertains to pot, he says. “Now that kids have access to medical marijuana from friends and relatives, they no longer see it as a street drug. They see it as pharmaceutical.”

Students receive mixed messages from parents and society that it is normal for students to experiment with drugs and alcohol, reports the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA). It is considered a rite

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_



### INVOLVING PARENTS

- Encourage parents to talk to their kids about drugs and alcohol; provide resources, strategies for listening and helpful examples of parent-child dialogue.
- Remind parents it is illegal to provide alcohol; they could get in trouble with the law for “contributing to a minor.”
- Educate parents about symptoms of substance abuse — especially how it can impact brain development of adolescents.

Students demonstrate how neurotransmitters work.

**Monica Mallet** shows students photos of celebrities who have died from substance abuse.

of passage that is inevitable. Sometimes, parents may be using drugs.

“We have meth here and it’s ugly,” says Tom Roberts, Shasta Secondary Employees Association president. “You can drive 20 minutes into the middle of nowhere and people are cooking it up. It’s amazing how many marijuana ‘scripts’ [prescription cards] kids have access to. All you need is a hangnail and 250 bucks to get one.”

Substance abuse affects the most prestigious college prep schools as well as disadvantaged students in poverty-stricken areas. Upscale communities are impacted by the drug epidemic. Teens are using legal designer drugs such as Spice, linked to the hospitalization of celebrity Demi Moore.

“Peer pressure is huge here, and students think it’s the norm,” says Diane Farthing, a ninth-grade health teacher at Amador Valley High School in Pleasanton. “Our community has very high academic standards and high expectations that students will go to college. So you need a high GPA, plus you need to be involved in multiple activities like sports, scouts and volunteer work. Students sometimes feel they need to blow off a little steam on Saturday night. They get drunk or high.”

Farthing, an Association of Pleasanton Teachers member, agrees parents can be part of the problem. “Many students never party during the week, but on weekend nights they do. Parents think that as long as the kids don’t drive, it’s OK.”

## LET’S GET PHYSICAL: Brain damage and bullying

**DIANE FARTHING** tells students something many already know: The reason people do drugs is because it feels good — even though the consequences are bad.

She asks students to join hands and form circles. She explains that the nervous system is composed of billions of cells called neurons that transmit impulses to other neurons. Students are assigned to play the role of neurotransmitters (chemical messengers), synapses, axons and dendrites to demonstrate how the nervous system works and they touch hands in rapid succession mimicking components of the brain transmitting information.

“Drugs can cause permanent changes within the neurotransmitters or receptors. People who use drugs may never feel normal again — even if they stop,” she tells students. “And your brain is still growing. Research shows the part of the brain responsible for judgment and impulse control is not fully developed by adolescence, so the teenage brain is more sensitive to the damaging effects from drugs. That can affect normal brain development and increases the risk of addiction.”

“Drugs activate the prefrontal cortex, which is the brain’s reward center,” explains Farthing. “But drinking and drugs can cause car accidents, which is the number one cause of death among teenagers. Being intoxicated can lead to bad decisions, such as having unprotected sex, that can lead to pregnancy or disease. You think ‘It won’t happen to me,’ because part of being a teenager is thinking that you are invincible.”



Diane Farthing





**Greg Murphy** teaches recovering addicts at Sober Community School, San Luis Obispo.

### Decreased funding = increased drug use?

Educators say that marijuana use is on the rise, partly from the proliferation of medical marijuana dispensaries and the ease of getting prescriptions. One in five teens admitted to driving under the influence of marijuana in a Liberty Mutual Insurance study. Research shows today's pot is stronger than ever: The University of Mississippi's Potency Monitoring Project indicates levels of THC were 10.1 percent last year, compared with less than 4 percent in 1983.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 20 percent of high school students have taken prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription. Meanwhile, CASA reports 75 percent of high school students have used alcohol, tobacco, or either legal or illicit drugs, and 15 percent are addicted. Use of Ecstasy, which is both a stimulant and a hallucinogen, has increased among teens over the past three years, says a study from The Partnership at Drugfree.org and MetLife Foundation.

Economics may be a factor as drug prevention programs are cut back. The U.S. Department of Education's

story continued on page 14 ►

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_



## SPECIFIC SYMPTOMS OF DRUGS

**MARIJUANA:** Glassy, red eyes; loud talking and inappropriate laughter followed by sleepiness; a sweet burnt scent; loss of interest, motivation; weight gain or loss.

**DEPRESSANTS** (including barbiturates and tranquilizers): Seems drunk as if from alcohol but without the associated odor of alcohol; difficulty concentrating; clumsiness; poor judgment; slurred speech; sleepiness; contracted pupils.

**INHALANTS** (glues, aerosols, and vapors): Watery eyes; impaired vision, memory and thought; secretions from the nose or rashes around the nose and mouth; headaches and nausea; appearance of intoxication; drowsiness; poor muscle control; changes in appetite; anxiety; irritability; an unusual number of spray cans in the trash.

**HALLUCINOGENS:** Dilated pupils; bizarre and irrational behavior including paranoia, aggression, hallucinations; mood swings; detachment from people; absorption with self or other objects, slurred speech; confusion.

Source: American Council for Drug Education

\_\_\_\_\_ M.D. Rep. \_\_\_\_\_

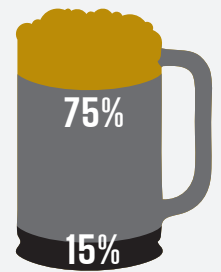
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## DRUGS AND ALCOHOL WIDELY ACCEPTED



20 percent of high school students have taken prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



75 percent of high school students have used alcohol, tobacco, or either legal or illicit drugs, and 15 percent are addicted.

Source: National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse

## THE FOURTH 'R' — RECOVERY

**JOLENE, 17, WAS HOOKED** on prescription pain pills. Her drugs of choice were Percocet and OxyContin. Now a recovering drug addict, she is a student at Sober Community School in San Luis Obispo.

"This school saved my life," says Jolene. "I have grown a lot as a person and learned that I don't need drugs or alcohol to lead a happy and successful life. I can be clean and sober — and still have fun."

Jolene is one of 15 recovering addicts at the school, including five students addicted to meth, four addicted to pot, five addicted to prescription pain medications and alcohol, plus a few who were using cocaine and other drugs, says Greg Murphy, the teacher on site.

"Students enroll in the school voluntarily. Some stay a few months; others stay years," says Murphy. "If a student suffers a relapse, we expect them to work through the incident with the therapists and their peers in group. Only if the relapse is hidden or if such incidents become common or contagious is the student's stay terminated. Relapse is often part of the process and necessary for the sake of understanding the 'We are powerless to stop using drugs' concept that is part of the Narcotics Anonymous philosophy."

Before enrolling in Sober School, some of the students nearly died from using drugs.

"I hit rock bottom," says Jolene, who has been at the school for a year. "I OD'd, and my life was unmanageable. Getting clean was my last option. I can go to school here, take things at my own pace and not feel overwhelmed trying to manage my sobriety." Regular high school, she says, has "triggers" that could make her start using again because drugs are so readily available and students are preoccupied with partying.

A typical Sober School day begins between 9 and 9:30 a.m., as students arrive at different times on city buses. By 9:45 they go to "group," run by drug and alcohol counselors who work under the supervision of a marriage and family therapist. During group they are also tested for drugs before regular school begins.

"When they come out of group, they can be happy and invigorated or sad and depressed," says Murphy, a San Luis Obispo County Education Association member. "I need to determine when to have patience and when to have compassion and when to be strict. There are times when someone needs to be left alone. While group is confidential, I get to know the kids and their stories. I work closely with their parents and speak to them daily. Many of their parents are unaware of the kinds of things their kids have been exposed to."

Megan discusses a book in class at Sober School.

Murphy engages students in literary works that have characters who, like his students, are facing personal challenges or have been traumatized.

Courtney, 15, was hooked on meth before arriving at the school five months ago. Her life, she says, was "constant chaos" and revolved around finding drugs. She was on the verge of flunking out before going into rehab and arriving at Sober Community School.

"I needed to get sober, and I couldn't do it by myself," she says. "Now I'm getting my credits and I'm getting a lot of support here from the other students. If they can do it, I can do it, too."

Dallas, 18, has been at the school for three years. While many do not believe marijuana is addictive, he was unable to quit smoking it on his own. "I know that it's available for medical reasons, but unfortunately, the people I met were just looking for an excuse to get high."

When he first arrived at the school, Dallas says he was stealing things, was angry, and had "issues with authority. I have grown up a lot during my time here." He adds, "Greg Murphy and the staff were willing to give me a chance, and I am grateful for that. They focused on what I needed."

For Murphy, the job is challenging, but extremely rewarding. "These kids take responsibility for their own difficulties in a way that most adults never have the courage to do," he says. "They throw themselves in, open themselves up and discuss the kinds of things we all run from. They are highly intelligent and very motivated. They are an inspiration."





**Dana Jones** teaches at-risk students at Windsor Oaks Academy, a continuation school in Sonoma County.

» continued from page 12

Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program was cut by a third between 1999 and 2008. State grants from the federal program dropped from \$38 million for 2004-05 to \$28 million for 2009-10 in California — and funding was completely eliminated in July 2010.

#### IF YOU SUSPECT A STUDENT IS USING DRUGS:

- Don't ignore the problem.
- Talk to the student about being healthy and making good choices.
- Share suspicions with parents and urge them to seek help immediately.
- Refer the student to appropriate guidance counselor or administrator as needed.

There were valuable strings attached to the funding of drug prevention and intervention programs, says Stephanie Papas, a school health education consultant for the California Department of Education. “Recipients had to administer the California Healthy Kids survey to gather data directly from students on current drug use, tobacco use and alcohol use. Schools also had to implement programs proven to be effective in preventing drug, alcohol and tobacco.”

While the Healthy Kids survey is no longer administered, Papas believes drug use is up.

Budget cuts at the state level have led to a shortage of school counselors to reach out to troubled students. California ranks last in the ratio of students per counselor; the state averages 945 to 1, compared with the national average of 477 to 1.

Rebecca Bendickson is the only counselor at John Still Middle School in Sacramento, and she received a pink slip. She believes counselors are crucial in helping stu-

dents avoid drugs and alcohol.

“Middle school is the starting ground for this behavior, because students are trying to become adults and want to grow up fast,” Bendickson says.

When she suspects drug use or abuse, Bendickson talks to the student and parents. She counsels students and refers them to programs with trained substance abuse counselors.

“It’s important for me to build trust with students,” says the Sacramento City Teachers Association member. “We are a child’s last hope. They know they can come to us when they have problems.”

Papas agrees. “It goes beyond the ‘just say no’ campaign. Programs and curricula stressing decision-making skills, conflict resolution skills and life skills go beyond the topics of drug and alcohol prevention. They encourage kids how to make better choices for themselves,” she says.

### **Standing firm**

Teachers say that “just say no” is not enough. A comprehensive approach works best. Surveys show that all these personal interactions make an important difference.

“You can’t just tell them not to take drugs,” says Dana Jones, who teaches at Windsor Oaks Academy. “Encourage them to respect themselves and feel good about themselves. Encourage them to be healthy, and to have good relationships with parents and friends. Kids take drugs because they may not necessarily like who they are or how they feel. We can change that.”

Jones urges her students to be “independent thinkers, instead of lemmings running off a cliff. Deal with family or emotional issues in a positive way instead of getting high.” Windsor Oaks Academy is a continuation school with at-risk students, so staff and students work closely with a counselor from the Drug Abuse Alternative Center.

Besides appealing to their sense of individuality and helping them develop coping skills, Diane Farthing educates students about the dire impact drugs can have on their brains (see sidebar, page 11).

What happens if students come to school high? “We take a firm stance in our district,” says Jones, Windsor District Education Association. “It has helped us to curb a lot of issues.” If students come to school under the influence, they are immediately suspended and the authorities are notified.

Other districts also take a firm stance. Shasta Union High School District is drug-testing students in extra-curricular activities such as choir, the school band and Future Farmers of America.

“It gives students an easy way out if they feel pressured to take drugs. Students sign a waiver agreeing to this, so it’s a personal choice,” says Roberts, a resource specialist at Enterprise High School. “I think if a student is repre-

senting our school in any way, shape or form, they should be held accountable.”

In some school districts, including Pleasanton, dogs sniff out illegal substances on a random basis. The district decided to bring in dogs, which have sniffed out pot and prescription pills in students’ cars, after an increase in drug-related suspensions.

“I wouldn’t mind if they brought the dogs onto campus and into the classroom. Drugs have no place at school,” says Farthing.

Mallet believes school employees can help stop students from using.

“If you feel a student is using drugs, help that student. Talk to them. Get involved,” she says. “Call the parents. Call the police if you have to. Don’t let them walk out that door. You could be saving that kid’s life.”

## **A NEW RESOURCE**

**RX FOR UNDERSTANDING** The NEA Health Information Network (NEA HIN), with the support of an educational grant from Purdue Pharma L.P., has created “Rx for Understanding,” a new resource for middle school teachers focusing on the critical health problem of prescription drug abuse and misuse. Consisting of 10 standards-based, cross-curricular lessons for grades 5-8, “Rx for Understanding” is available free from NEA HIN. For more information go to [www.neahin.org/rxforunderstanding](http://www.neahin.org/rxforunderstanding).

### **MORE RESOURCES**

The National Institute on Drug Abuse, which oversees programs helping to combat the drug problem.  
[www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)

Parents: The Anti-Drug.  
[www.theantidrug.com/advice](http://www.theantidrug.com/advice)

American Council for Drug Education.  
[www.acde.org](http://www.acde.org)

Office of Safe and Healthy Schools (formerly the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools).  
[www.ed.gov/print/about/offices/list/osdfs/programs.html](http://www.ed.gov/print/about/offices/list/osdfs/programs.html)

Drugs and Teen Substance Abuse: Explains the effects various drugs cause on the human body.  
[www.focusas.com/SubstanceAbuse.html](http://www.focusas.com/SubstanceAbuse.html)

California Department of Education: Provides a list of state-approved substance abuse education programs.  
[www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/at/scibprog.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/at/scibprog.asp)

# SIGN OF THE TIMES

*A Newspaper the People Read*



## JAPANESE AMERICAN INTERNMENT: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?



**T**HEY WERE TOLD they were going to the camps for their own protection. But the guns weren't facing out. They were facing in."

There is silence as Jenny Chomori describes how innocent Japanese Americans were incarcerated during World War II. Sixth-graders at Thomas Starr King Middle School in Los Angeles are shocked that U.S. residents were locked up after the bombing of Pearl Harbor just because they were Japanese. Most lost their homes and all their possessions. How could that happen, asks Chomori, in a land dedicated to justice for all?

Her class is creating podcasts and movies about the Japanese American internment and reading

Eileen Ngoy and Estuardo Casteneda at Thomas Starr King Middle School in Los Angeles listen to Jenny Chomori talk about the Japanese American internment.

### IT'S 1941

**FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT** is president. The nation is just emerging from the Great Depression of the 1930s. Racial segregation is legal. Frozen foods, antibiotics and TV are essentially unknown. Children gather around family radios to listen to series such as "The Lone Ranger." In Europe, U.S. allies are at war with Hitler, but many Americans want to stay uninvolved. Few people outside Hawaii have ever heard of Pearl Harbor.

*Farewell to Manzanar* Sourcebook

ference as a powerful experience. "For me, it was personal. It was where my family lived."

Attendees ate meals in the reconstructed mess hall and met in the auditorium. They visited the interpretive center; talked with former inmates and visited the campground, ending the conference at the Manzanar monument and cemetery.

Now, 70 years later, history may not have repeated itself, but it did take a similar turn after Sept. 11, observes Kusaba.

"The panic after 9/11 was similar to what ensued after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor," says the Teachers Association of Long Beach member. "The Patriot Act brought civil rights and privacy into ques-

*It's about civil rights, freedom and what it means to be a citizen.*

**Cliff Kusaba**

U.S. military. Some 6,000 served in the Military Intelligence Service, playing a key role in the Pacific Theater, intercepting and decoding enemy messages.

Thousands who served defended the reputation of their community with their lives while their families were interned. It wasn't until the 1988 Civil Liberties Act (often called the Redress Bill) was signed into law that the United States apologized for the unjustified

*Farewell to Manzanar*, a memoir about a concentration camp near Mt. Whitney that once held 10,000 Japanese inmates.

For Chomori, the internment issue is personal. Her father's relatives were imprisoned in Manzanar while her father fought in the U.S. Army. Her mother's relatives were sent to an "assembly center" at Santa Anita, also in Southern California, where they were put in horse stalls before being shipped to a camp in Arkansas and then relocated again to Arizona.

"When they registered at the camps, they became just a number," says Chomori, a member of United Teachers Los Angeles. "How

would you like to no longer be a person and just be a number?"

Students wonder why the inmates didn't try to escape from Manzanar.

"They had nowhere to go," Mikhail Holliday says to his classmates, explaining that Manzanar was surrounded by wilderness and the Mojave Desert.



Jenny Chomori

## Anniversary of an injustice

This year marks the 70th anniversary of Executive Order 9066 signed by President Roosevelt, which resulted in 120,000 Japanese Americans being relocated to detention camps. Inmates lived in primitive and challenging conditions.

Those interned at camps such as Manzanar reacted in different ways. The Japanese culture taught *gaman*, to persevere or to endure, so some accepted their fate. Others resisted, protested, or organized politically. Many others enlisted or were drafted.

*Nisei* are the first generation to be born in America. Ten thousand volunteered in the all-Nisei 100th Infantry Battalion, the foundation for the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Active for just the last two years of the war, the 442nd was the most decorated unit, for its size and length of service, in the history of the

internment of Japanese Americans.

"There was shame in being incarcerated. They wanted it to be forgotten," Chomori said, adding that she is grateful her parents talked about the camp, because many former inmates never discussed it.

As a college student, Chomori visited Manzanar with other activists and helped raise awareness about what happened there. Manzanar Pilgrimage Day became an annual event thereafter, held the last Saturday in April and attended by people from throughout the country. Now a national historic site, Manzanar still has the original guardhouse plus reconstructed barracks and mess hall.

Redlands Teachers Association member Gary Peplow takes his fourth- and fifth-graders to Manzanar every year. He believes that studying the Japanese internment helps students question what the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence really stand for. Both are required reading in his class.

Student Carl Schubert called the visit "amazing. We could see the guard towers. The cabins had dirty wood floors, no insulation or walls to separate the cabins. It's hard to imagine that thousands of people lived that way."

Peplow says his students are always indignant to learn about this unpleasant chapter in American history, and for that reason alone it should be taught.

"I use the past to focus on what's going on right now. I ask them to consider whether racism still causes people to react in the same way today. By learning from our mistakes, we can make the world a better place."



Cliff Kusaba

## History repeats itself?

To commemorate the anniversary, CTA's Pacific Asian American Caucus conference in May was titled "Manzanar: A Living History Experience."

Cliff Kusaba, chair of the caucus, describes the con-

tion. Members of the Muslim community have come to Japanese Americans to ask us about our experiences. They feel a connection to us because they are also under attack."

Kusaba says that the Japanese American internment story is usually glossed over in history books and seldom taught in depth. "But these things should be taught—it's an issue of civil rights, freedom and what it means to be a United States citizen." ❖

By **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin**  
Photos by **Scott Buschman**



**Gary Peplow** and his students at Smiley Elementary School in Redlands discuss their field trip to the Manzanar War Relocation Center.

**A**CTOR GEORGE TAKEI, best known for his portrayal of Mr. Sulu in the “Star Trek” TV and movie series, was interned with his family during World War II.

### **What camps were you sent to?**

We were forced out of our homes in Los Angeles. The first camp my family was sent to was Camp Rohwer in the swamps of Arkansas. The second camp we were transferred to was in northern California near the Oregon border, a camp called Tule Lake. It was a dry lake bed, always cold and windy. We were in Rohwer for a year and Tule Lake for three years, totaling four years—the entire duration of World War II.

### **What were the living conditions like at the camps?**

All 10 camps were in the most godforsaken parts of the country—the blistering hot desert of Arizona, the sultry swamps of Arkansas, the cold, wind-swept high plains of Utah, Idaho, Wyoming and Colorado. Skimpy, tar paper covered army barracks with no plumbing, one latrine to a block, one laundry room, one mess hall, one mass shower—all communal. Each family had one wood-burning potbellied stove for heat. It was all very primitive.

### **How did you feel about the reparations paid to the internees by the government in the ‘90s?**

President Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act in 1988, and the first reparation check signed by President George H.W. Bush was cut in 1991, which went to the oldest survivor of the internment, a 101-year-old lady. I got my check in 1992, and I donated it all to the Japanese American National Museum. My father,



who suffered the pain of the internment most, had passed away by the time of the signing of the bill. He died never knowing the government apologized, and my mother, his widow, received only her reparations check. Nothing was paid for my father.

### **Has this event affected your outlook on life?**

The internment has forever shaped my life. I am an activist for justice and equality. I speak at universities and other institutions on the internment. We built the museum because I consider it my mission as an American to make our democracy a better, more just democracy. We developed the musical *Allegiance* to tell this story in music and drama.

### **What do you hope the audience will take away from “Allegiance”?**

The story of the internment is still little known in our country. I hope the audience will leave the theater with a better understanding of the fragility of our democracy and the importance of all Americans to work to make our system a better, more just America.

### **Why should American citizens learn about this event?**

Americans need to know about the internment of American citizens of Japanese ancestry because the internment happened to innocent American citizens without charges or trial. It was a terrible violation of the United States Constitution. We need to know our history good and bad—in order to keep this kind of outrage from being inflicted on other Americans.

### RESOURCES FOR TEACHING ABOUT THE JAPANESE AMERICAN INTERNMENT

- *Farewell to Manzanar*, memoir by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston. It was adapted into a made-for-TV film in 1976.
- National Japanese American Historical Society curriculum for teaching about the internment, and other lesson plans. [bss.sfsu.edu/internment/lessonplans.html](http://bss.sfsu.edu/internment/lessonplans.html)
- PBS documentary “Children of the Camps.” [www.pbs.org/childofcamp/documentary](http://www.pbs.org/childofcamp/documentary)
- Library of Congress materials. [www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/internment](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/internment)

... ARE YOU A ...

# CULTURALLY COMPETENT

... TEACHER? ...

By **SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN**  
Photos by **SCOTT BUSCHMAN**

LOOK AROUND

YOUR CLASSROOM

Chances are several of your students come from a different culture and different ethnic background than your own.

“Does a fish swimming in water realize he’s in water? You may think you are operating in the norm, but your norm is not somebody else’s norm,” says Lisa Adams, a CTA Human Rights Department trainer. “If you are part of the majority culture — which most white people identify with — you don’t realize what you are bringing to the classroom.”

Being culturally competent improves teaching and provides educators with resources to connect to students’ families. It can also help close the achievement gap, since the “cultural gap” between students and their teachers can contribute to achievement gaps among different student groups, reports the NEA.

TEACHERS

TEACHING TEACHERS

# What Does Cultural Competency Look Like?



**BRIAN JEFFREY**

**LOS OSOS HIGH SCHOOL**  
ASSOCIATED CHAFFEY TEACHERS

*Took CTA's unconscious bias training*

**NOT ENGLISH ONLY:** I don't know any language besides English. Without some degree of cultural competency, it can lead to uncomfortable situations. When I meet Muslim parents, I know it is appropriate to shake the father's hand, never appropriate to take the mother's hand, and that I should pat my heart twice to say it's a pleasure to meet you as a greeting. Cultural competency makes interacting in the world a lot easier.

**STUDENTS SEE THEMSELVES:** When kids walk into my room, they notice something that reflects their culture. There are posters or wall hangings from African American, Asian, Middle Eastern, Tongan and Latino cultures. I care about who they are individually and culturally.

**WE'RE ALL BIASED:** Recognize that everyone has certain biases. Make sure your unconscious bias does not become conscious. I may have an unconscious bias that a football player is probably not a good student, but I don't allow myself to act on it. Sometimes we get defensive when misunderstandings happen with students. It's important to ask, "What did I do to create this situation?"



**ENID PICKETT**

**WALDO ROHNERT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**  
ROHNERT PARK COTATI EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

*NEA Diversity Cadre trainer, trains teachers nationwide*

**IN THE CLASSROOM:** My kindergartners see something from their homeland and relate it to their family. I celebrate the differences of my children, not just with foods or a party. I celebrate their history. I attend birthdays, quinceañeras and graduations. If there is a behavior problem, we can have a cultural collision. I take a social justice approach. You can get mad or you can say, "I'm glad this happened so we can talk about it" and discuss cultural values so nobody wins and nobody loses. Without blame or judgment, we see things are handled in different ways.

**ABOUT "ISMS":** It's about understanding "isms" including racism, ageism, classism, sexism and homophobia. It's a mindset, a belief system and viewpoint that says: "The world belongs to everybody." It's never assuming I know what someone's world is and always assuming they can teach me a lot about their world. I ask myself, "What kind of ancestor are you going to be?"

**BE A KEEN OBSERVER:** I have a refrigerator, a car and a college degree. I check my own privilege constantly. You do not become culturally competent automatically by virtue of being a person of color. I do my own investigative work. I connect the dots to see how systemic and systematic oppression exists. I am a listener. Being a diversity trainer with the NEA Human and Civil Rights cadre and on the Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance Advisory Board, I am always reminded to check my ethnic integrity, my speech and my behaviors, in order to walk the talk of a social justice teacher.





In **Enid Pickett's** classroom in Waldo Rohnert Elementary in Rohnert Park, Jazmin Amador finds Japan on a map.

There are four basic cultural competency skill areas, and growth in one area supports growth in another.

- **Valuing diversity:** Respecting different cultural backgrounds and customs, different ways of communicating and different traditions and values.
- **Being culturally self-aware:** Understanding that your own culture — all your experiences, backgrounds, knowledge, skills, beliefs, values and interests — shapes who you are, where you fit into your family, school, community and society, and how you interact with students.
- **Understanding the dynamics of cultural interactions:** Knowing there are many factors that can affect interactions across cultures, including historical cultural experiences and relationships between cultures in a local community.
- **Institutionalizing cultural knowledge and adapting to diversity:** Designing educational services based on an understanding of students' cultures and institutionalizing that knowledge so that educators and the learning environments they work in can adapt and better serve diverse populations.

Source: NEA Human and Civil Rights Department



**ANN JAYNE**

**SOUTH/WEST PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**  
TRACY EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

*Completing her dissertation on cultural proficiency*

**DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE:** I moved to Germany when I was in high school and struggled to learn another language. I understand the challenges of learning another language and the perspective of kids who come here and have to learn not only a new language, but also a whole new way of life.

**REFLECTIVE TEACHING:** I'm always evaluating my own culture and my own effectiveness. I ask: What can I do to make curriculum culturally relevant? When teaching about the Bear Flag Revolt — where different parties in California under Mexican rule argued over territory and statehood — I might compare that to civil unrest in Burma to a Burmese student. I look at what I'm teaching through multiple perspectives, whether math, science or history.

**EDUCATE YOURSELF:** Cultural differences exist within the same ethnicity. I have students from three different cultures within India, as well as students from Burma, Thailand, Korea, Vietnam, the Philippines, China, and various culturally different Latino students. We do things — we don't intend to — from our own cultural perspective that can be misconstrued. For example, a common assumption is that an Asian male is going to be great at math and science, but that's not always true, and it is unfair to the child to make those assumptions. Be aware of your own biases, even positive ones.



Kenji Sakamoto shows how to fold an origami crane during a class on the Japanese American internment at Smiley Elementary School in Redlands.



In an activity to promote awareness of equity issues, **Brian Jeffrey's** students are divided into teams to make paper chains. Some are "haves" (provided with staplers, glue or paper clips), while others are "have-nots." Read more about Brian Jeffrey's class on page 20.



**MITCH WEATHERS**

**SEQUOIA HIGH SCHOOL IN REDWOOD CITY**  
 SEQUOIA DISTRICT TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

*Is "self-taught" in cultural competency*



## Resources for becoming culturally competent

- *Cultural Competence: A Primer for Educators*, a book by Jerry V. Diller and Jean Moule.
- NEA's Diversity Toolkit, available at [www.nea.org/tools/diversity-toolkit.html](http://www.nea.org/tools/diversity-toolkit.html).
- Contact CTA's Human Rights Department for trainings on cultural competency: [www.cta.org/CTAhumanrights](http://www.cta.org/CTAhumanrights).

**DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE:** In my first teaching job, every kid in my room was African American. It was the first time I was the only white guy in the room. In high school I was friends with the only two African American kids and one Latino in my school. I immediately understood that this is how my friend Carlos felt every day when he was in school. Now I teach in Redwood City, which is 65 to 70 percent Latino students.

**AVOIDING MISUNDERSTANDINGS:** You might think that because students are late for class, their culture doesn't value education. You might be wrong. Cultural relevancy is about teaching the "hidden" curriculum. My lesson plans include not just biology standards, but things such as: How do you study? What does it mean to be a student? How can you stay organized? What does it look like to be on time? When there are cultural differences, a teacher can feel disrespected, and the kids think the teacher is being a jerk and there is conflict. So my lesson plans include expectations.

**MAKING IT RELEVANT:** Many of my students are from the Michoacán community in Mexico, so a lesson in photosynthesis might include something about farming in that region. I bring Latino scientists, nurses, doctors, sales reps and other role models into the classroom. I don't always have answers, but I want to give these kids hope.



# CAMPAIGN 2012

**YES**  
ON SCHOOLS AND SAFETY PROTECTION ACT

*It's time to invest in our common future and put California back on track!*  
**YES ON SCHOOLS AND LOCAL PUBLIC SAFETY PROTECTION ACT**

Our public school budgets were cut \$20 billion in the last four years. California ranks 47th in the nation in per-student funding and has the largest class sizes in the country. Additional education cuts of \$6 billion are being proposed.

**NO**  
ON SPECIAL EXEMPTIONS ACT

*Don't let corporations silence our collective voice to advocate for our students, our schools and our profession!*  
**NO ON SPECIAL EXEMPTIONS ACT**

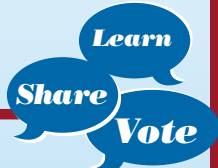
Corporations and Wall Street bankers are systematically dismantling the middle class. The only thing that stands in their way is working people like CTA members. Make corporations play (and pay) by the rules!

## Get Involved. It's easy! Just go to [cta.org/campaign](http://cta.org/campaign)

**THE NOVEMBER ELECTION** is critical for the future of California's public schools. Use CTA's resources to understand the issues, share what's happening in your school, and Get Out The Vote!



### Cool Tools



-  **Voter's Guide** – Help friends and neighbors understand why their vote is important! Includes links to register to vote and find your legislative district. Provides a helpful voter checklist.
-  **Tell a Friend** – Provides pertinent information to e-mail friends and neighbors about issues that are important to our students and schools.
-  **Share This** – Features "show and tell" videos that highlight the need for increased school funding.
-  **Mobile Warrior** – Sign up to receive text messages about 2012 Campaign actions and information.
-  **Facebook** – A direct link to CTA's Facebook page, where you can ask questions, get answers and share ideas.
-  **Twitter** – Find out what's happening right now on issues you value.
-  **E-mail** – Share CTA's informative and cool videos, websites and photos.

## Corporate Power Grab = Special Exemptions Act

We believe in freedom of speech for individuals, not giving special exemptions to billionaires

ENVISION MASKING TAPE being placed across your mouth. That's what the Special Exemptions Act, formerly called the Corporate Power Grab Initiative, will do to you.

The initiative's intent is to strangle the collective voices of California labor and to prevent teachers from being a force for good in classrooms and worksites.

The Special Exemptions Act shackles the political power of working men and women and creates special exemptions for billionaires. Secretive super PACs (political action committees) are exempted from restrictions so they can continue to be used by corporations to raise unlimited amounts of money to support their candidates and thwart their critics. The end result: Billionaires garner even more political power.

Proponents hypocritically call this the "Stop Special Interest Money Now Act." We call it the Special Exemptions Act because its goals are misleading and unnecessary and because it benefits Wall Street. This initiative would allow super PACs and billionaire businessmen to write their own

rules to have an even greater influence in politics, while unions would be silenced.

Corporations already outspend unions 15 to 1, and thanks to the Citizens United ruling declaring corporations

are individuals, the Koch brothers and other deep-pocketed Wall Street barons poured millions of dollars into elections across the country.

"They made a mockery of democracy and nearly drowned out the voices of

working families," says CTA President Dean Vogel. "But we've got right and truth on our side. We just have to use our voice."

The Special Exemptions Act makes it harder for unions to raise funds for political purposes, adding layers of red tape and denying union members the right to make voluntary political contributions out of paychecks. CTA members already have the right by law to opt out of having dues money spent on political campaigns.

"This initiative hurts students, our profession and our communities," says Dean Vogel. "It silences our voice on the political discussions that impact our classrooms, from class sizes, textbooks, due process and bargaining rights to testing, pensions and safety standards."

CTA is looking for people who care. "People who are not afraid to stand up for what is right for their profession and for the students they serve," Vogel adds. "The public deserves to know about what is going on in our schools from the people who are doing the work in our schools."

Spend this summer educating yourself, your friends and family about the Special Exemptions Act and then vote no in November. Check out CTA's website, [www.cta.org/campaign2012](http://www.cta.org/campaign2012). There you'll find what you need to learn and share.

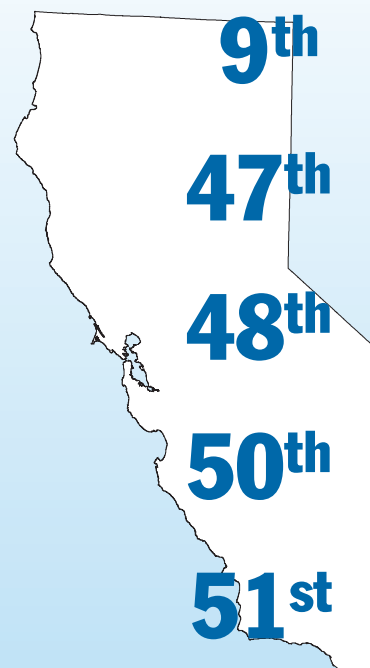
"Take every opportunity to talk about this attack on our rights and the attempt to silence the voice of the middle class," Vogel says. "Let parents, friends and neighbors know that if they take away our ability to advocate for their students, they are taking away the chance at a better tomorrow for all of us. Use our voice to say: We are CTA and we will not be silenced!"

By Mike Myslinski



KNOW TH

This is what happens adequately invest in



And nationally...

1 in 8

15 to 1



## FACTS

**when Californians do not  
public education.**

**Largest economy in the world**

**In per-pupil funding**

**In student to teacher ratio,  
in K-12 schools**

**In student to counselor  
and nurse ratios**

**In student to teacher ratio,  
in high schools**



**Students in America  
are educated in California**

**Corporations outspend unions  
by this ratio**

# Why Republicans support the tax initiative

**SIXTH-GRADE TEACHER** Dale Kennedy is a dyed-in-the-wool, no-tax Republican who feels strong enough about his convictions that he is an activist in the Republican Party.

Yet Kennedy, a member of the Kings Canyon Education Association, spent several weeks this spring collecting signatures to place the governor's tax initiative on the November ballot, an action that might seem anathema to other members of his political party.

Kennedy doesn't see it that way. The 25-year veteran educator from Reedley, a city in Fresno County, has seen the erosion of public education in California and is doing something about it.

"I believe we can raise revenues by cutting taxes. However, that's a long-term goal," Kennedy says. "Right now we're bleeding at the jugular. That's why I collected signatures and tried to target Republicans and teachers. We have to put a tourniquet on to stop the bleeding."

Stopping the bleeding is a graphic metaphor for what's happened to education in California. Educators are more than familiar with the story.

In the past four years, public education has been cut by more than \$20 billion. Class sizes have soared at all grade levels. More than 40,000 educators have been laid off. Art, music, vocational education and after-school programs have been eliminated. School libraries have been closed. Tuition has increased more than 300 percent at state colleges and universities, pricing many students out of getting a higher education degree. Community college courses have been slashed, and classrooms are overcrowded.

That's why CTA was an early supporter of the Schools and Local Public Safety Protection Act of 2012, an ini-

tiative that will temporarily increase income taxes on high-wage earners while adding a quarter-cent increase to the state sales tax. The measure is expected to generate about \$9 billion a year. And if the initiative fails, public education faces an additional \$6 billion in budget cuts next year, forcing many districts to consider cutting the school year by 15 more days.

Kennedy, who sits on the Financing Public Education Committee of State

Council, would like to see a new model of funding public education developed in California, but until that happens, he's supporting the governor's tax initiative.

While sports programs have been cut and facilities have been neglected in Kings Canyon Unified School District where he teaches, Kennedy notes there have been even more dramatic

cuts in neighboring districts where teachers have already been required to take furlough days.

"Someone who is unemployed might not be sympathetic with teachers who lose five days, but I'm concerned about the students. And next year the number of furlough days may be increased to 15 days," he says. "When I was in school, there were just 165 days a year. But what I did in eighth grade they're doing now in fifth grade. They've compressed what we're expected to do with the kids. All the time in class is precious if we are going to be competitive."

Vicki Soderberg, president of Capistrano Unified Education Association, is another Republican supporting the tax initiative. Despite the tremendous support of Capistrano schools from parents and the community, Soderberg says, the impact of budget cuts has been dramatic in her district. Salaries have decreased in the district and teachers



Dale Kennedy

have accepted three non-student furlough days. Even with the passage of the initiative in November, the Capistrano Unified School District will implement five more student furlough days and three non-student days. If it fails, there



Vicki Soderberg

will be another 10 furlough days on top of the eight implemented.

“It will be difficult on our teachers because they are already working as hard as they can. If the initiative doesn’t pass, we will have more students in our classrooms, less pay, and less time to teach,” Soderberg says.

Soderberg says CUEA members have been willing to accept their share of cuts, “but we need the public to do their share. We need to support our schools the way

we used to. The Brown initiative is a modest way of doing that.”

Bradley Reynolds, who teaches history at CSU Northridge and College of the Canyons, where he is a member of the faculty association, is also a Republican who is supporting the governor’s tax proposal.



Bradley Reynolds

“My personal interest is with the college, and I see students being hurt by budget cuts,” he says. “Courses have been cut, the size of classes has increased, and they won’t let professors add students to a class, even if they wanted to. There are a lot of students out there who can’t finish community college in two years or CSU in four years because they can’t get the classes they need. I think it’s terrible that our students can’t afford college and that they are going into debt to get an education.”

For those reasons, Reynolds will work to pass the Schools and Local

Public Safety Protection Act. In fact, the CTA-affiliated Community College Association plans to launch an outreach campaign to both faculty and students who are voting age.

Reynolds would like to see less government and fewer taxes, but he maintains the governor’s initiative is well-crafted in a way of providing minimum taxation.

“I believe that if there is any place the government should play a role, it’s in providing education, because education is the basis of our democracy. I do think it’s important for Republicans to put up a fight to limit taxes, and I think Democrats have to look at limiting spending. But it’s a mess right now, and they are going to have to work together. Both sides are going to have to give.”

By Dina Martin



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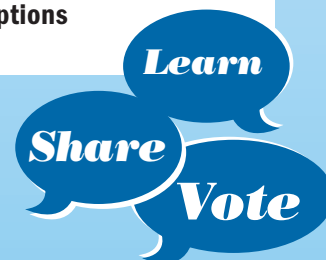
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## ACTION

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## State Council walks the talk

**DECLARING THAT** “we have right and truth on our side,” CTA President Dean Vogel asked State Council delegates to help defeat the Special Exemptions Act aimed at silencing our political voices — and to fight to pass the governor’s November tax measure to avoid billions in immediate new cuts to education.

In a rousing, animated speech, Vogel said, “We have a great challenge ahead of us, but this union — all of us — wouldn’t be who we are without taking on challenges.”

Feeling the urgency of the CTA campaign, Council delegates at their June 9-10 meeting took the unprecedented step of canceling the regular Oct. 20-21 session in Los Angeles. Instead, the nearly 800 delegates will mobilize in their communities, working to make a huge difference late in the campaign at the local level.

On the November ballot is the Special Exemptions Act, the misleading, unfair and unnecessary attempt by wealthy, anti-union forces to silence the political voices of CTA members and of all unions across the state. Disguised as reform, it’s a corporate power grab that prevents educators from using their collective voice to protect



**Tim Nichols** of Fremont Unified District TA reacts to Council’s mobilization for the 2012 campaign.

students, improve schools and colleges, and enhance the teaching profession.

“This initiative would allow super PACs and billionaire businessmen to write their own rules to have an even greater influence in politics,” Vogel warned. “We must stand up and speak louder here in California! We won’t have a government by and for the people as long as politicians are paid for by big corporations and the 1 percent.”

This attack on the middle class would prevent unions and corporations from using voluntary payroll-deducted dues for political purposes, such as protecting class sizes, school funding and other priorities. All union members can already opt out by law from having dues used for political purposes.

Most corporations use profits, not payroll deductions, to press their agendas.

Vogel urged all CTA members to spend the summer warning their communities about this attack. “Let parents, friends and neighbors know that if they take away our ability to advocate for their students, they are taking away the chance at a better tomorrow for all of us,” he said. “Use our voice to say: We are CTA and we will not be silenced!”

He also urged support for the governor’s Schools and Local Public Safety Protection Act, thanking delegates for turning in more than 300,000 signatures earlier this year to qualify the measure. It taxes the wealthy to generate about \$9 billion annually for schools and communities.

“This initiative is a temporary tax that asks the richest Californians to pay their fair share to help fund public education and other essential services,” Vogel said. “If the initiative fails, public education is facing an additional \$6 billion in budget cuts.”



In her speech to Council delegates, CTA Executive Director Carolyn Doggett reminded delegates what our profession and our students would lose if corporate special interests succeed in silencing the political voice of CTA members.

In just the past dozen years alone, Doggett said, CTA members have defeated a school voucher initiative, passed more than \$20 billion in statewide school construction bonds, made it easier to pass local school bonds by lowering the vote required to 55 percent, and defeated attacks on educators’ collective bargaining rights and a secure retirement. In 2005, CTA and its allies defeated an “all-out assault” by then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on school funding, educator rights and the rights of union members.

Doggett also cited CTA’s passing of legislation requiring the teaching of contributions of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans and Americans with disabilities in schools, and the stopping of a “terrible reauthorization” of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, which would have made the flawed law only worse.

“This is the power of the ballot,” Doggett said. “And this is the voice we will lose if the Special Exemptions Act is passed.”

Story and photos by **Mike Myslinski**



CTA Vice President **Eric Heins** applauds departing Council members, including **Mark Galipeau, Laura Finco, Dianne Garcia-Stevens, Brenda Hensley, Mary Dick, and George Melendez.**

## In other action, State Council:

- 1** Approved a new CTA Teacher Evaluation Framework (see story, page 30).
- 2** Heard speeches of support by NEA President Dennis Van Roekel and NEA Secretary-Treasurer Rebecca Pringle.
- 3** Elected Gayle Bilek (District G) and re-elected David Goldberg (District J-LA) to the CTA Board of Directors.
- 4** Authorized up to \$9 million from the Initiative Fund to support CTA's positions on the November ballot initiatives.
- 5** Approved a new CTA budget for 2012–13.
- 6** Adopted policy on student dating violence: School districts should "provide dating violence training to administrators, teachers, nurses and mental health practitioners at the middle and high school levels, and should offer age-appropriate curricula for middle and high school students."
- 7** Adopted statewide bargaining goals for local CTA chapters on salary, health and welfare benefits, and conditions of teaching and learning; the adopted goals are unchanged from last year's goals.



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## State Council OKs Teacher Evaluation Framework

Read it at [www.cta.org/evaluationframework](http://www.cta.org/evaluationframework).

**SELDOM DO VOTES** by CTA's State Council get a standing ovation. The nearly 800 delegates rose from their chairs and applauded the unanimous approval of the new CTA Teacher Evaluation Framework, knowing that the new policy gives California's educators a stronger voice in teacher appraisal.

More than two years in the making, the framework is to be used when developing and bargaining local evaluation programs. It centers on the underlying principle that the goal of any evaluation system is to strengthen the knowledge, skills and practices of teachers to improve student learning.

"This is exactly the kind of framework we need," said Council delegate Betty Olson-Jones, Oakland Education Association president. "It really lays it out in a way that we can use in bargaining."



**Barbara Wooley**, Cupertino EA, is a member of the Teacher Evaluation Workgroup.

The framework provides guidance to local educators and their unions, as well as local school districts and the state Legislature, in how to approach teacher evaluation.

The framework builds on the 17 teacher evaluation principles approved by State Council in June 2011. The CTA Teacher Evaluation Workgroup forged the plan after hearing from CTA members and numerous experts and looking at assessment systems used across the country.

The framework formally introduces the practice of "formative" and "summative" evaluation procedures. The formative process focuses on increasing knowledge and improving professional practice; test scores may be included

but are not used for employment decisions. The summative process summarizes a teacher's practice based on teaching and learning standards and can be used in employment decisions.

The broad framework rejects using the controversial "value-added" measures based on student test scores in teacher evaluations.

While the state's Stull Act places the emphasis on summative high-stakes decision-making, the CTA guidelines stress formative assessments that improve teachers' skills and student achievement, said CTA Vice President Eric Heins, who chairs the Teacher Evaluation Workgroup.

"We are expanding the conversation to formative



CTA members wrote, discussed and voted on the new Teacher Evaluation Framework. Here **Donald Stauffer**, Washington TA in West Sacramento, votes during a workgroup meeting.

evaluations, which is really what evaluations should be about. That means improving our practice in order to improve student achievement," Heins told delegates.

To combat the cursory "drive-by" nature of many teacher evaluations, the framework calls for making the process truly a joint endeavor where "the teacher is an active participant, fully engaged and focused on learning and improving practice, while the evaluator is a knowledgeable partner providing comprehensive, consistent and timely feedback, information and guidance."

The CTA framework empowers teachers, said Neil Wilson, a member of the East Side Teachers Association in San Jose. "It shows teaching is a partnership not only between us and students, but with the community and parents and administrators."

By **Mike Myslinski**  
Photos by **Dina Martin**

## CTA's road map for the future

WHAT DO YOU WANT your CTA to look like in five years? CTA is embarking on a strategic planning process to answer that question for current and future members.

"I am proud to say we are starting down that path," says CTA President Dean Vogel. "All members will have opportunities to be involved in critically examining who we are, exploring who we want to be, and creating a plan to get us wherever members want us to be — to ensure we are a strong, vital and relevant union for all our members into the future."

Based on recommendations at a State Council meeting last year, CTA hired the Labor Education and Research Center at the University of Oregon to assist in this extensive process. LERC is nationally recognized for its strategic planning expertise and for its work with labor unions across the country.

"This process is going to start while we are also engaging in this political campaign to increase school funding and defend our right to be politically involved, because the two are intertwined," says Vogel.

Vogel wants the process to engage, to be very inclusive and very transparent. "I hope you will be involved in this strategic planning process." It may take a workgroup or a committee to decide how the process will work or a leader to facilitate discussions in local areas.

"We must not be afraid to ask ourselves the tough questions or to propose something new — even if it's not the way we've done it for the last 25 years," Vogel says. "Building this strategic plan is our opportunity to embrace new ideas, engage new members, and build the CTA we all want for our future."



New!

### Introducing the Clear Credential Program (Single and Multiple Subject)

The UC San Diego Extension SB 2042 Clear Credential program is designed for public, charter and private school teachers who are employed in a school or district that do not have an Induction program.

After completing the program, students can then initiate the formal recommendation to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

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- 100% online.
- designed to meet the new standards defined by the CCTC.
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- UC San Diego Extension is now accepting applications for the new program.

To view credential requirements, the program FAQ and to download an application please visit our Clear Credential program page at [extension.ucsd.edu/clearcredential](http://extension.ucsd.edu/clearcredential).

### UC San Diego Extension also offers accessible and affordable online programs for K-12 and Postsecondary Educators.

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[extension.ucsd.edu/education](http://extension.ucsd.edu/education)

W112-3047

## Fifteen journalists honored for media excellence



Left: John North receives award from CTA President **Dean Vogel**, Conejo TA President **Colleen Briner-Schmidt** and Communications Chair **Katie Young**.

Below: CTA Secretary-Treasurer **Mikki Cichocki** with double winner **Matthew Wilson**.



**MEDIA STORIES** ranging from a look at one 10-year-old homeless boy's struggle to fit in at his school to construction project woes sparked by layoffs in Los Angeles Unified School District are among the works honored by CTA's education journalism contest.

The winners of CTA's 53rd annual John Swett Awards for Media Excellence were recognized for outstanding achievements in reporting and interpreting public education issues during 2011. Fifteen winners, selected from 90 entries by an independent panel of media professionals, were honored at a State Council reception June 8 in Los Angeles.

"These winners are using their skills to tell the story of public education in so many compelling ways," said CTA President Dean E. Vogel. "These journalists capture the challenges and triumphs that teachers and students experience across the state. Their insights shape public opinion and deserve special recognition."

Following are this year's John Swett Award winners.

**Newspapers:** Matthew Wilson, *Cupertino Courier*, won two awards for a feature story about technology inspir-

ing students to learn, and a news article about high school senior Angela Zhang winning a \$100,000 Siemens scholarship for research on using nanotechnology to fight cancer; Jill Tucker, *San Francisco Chronicle*, for a feature story about homeless students in San Francisco Unified School District; Sandy Banks, *Los Angeles Times*, for a feature column in which LAUSD cafeteria workers explain how their health benefits are mending families; Connie Llanos, *Los Angeles Daily News*, for a series of investigative stories about layoffs in LAUSD leaving district construction sites without inspectors to ensure compliance with building safety codes; Diana Lambert, *Sacramento Bee*, for a news story about financially strapped Sacramento City Unified School District hiring an executive chef for district headquarters; Amy Crawford, *San Francisco Examiner*, for a news story about funding for arts programs in SFUSD; Katy Murphy, *Oakland Tribune*, for a story and video on her education blog about inner-city kids discovering the importance of learning during summer break; Shannon Barry, *Milpitas Post*, for continuous coverage of education news in Milpi-

tas and Fremont school districts; Cosmo Garvin, *Sacramento News and Review*, for an investigative news story questioning the results and high costs of a school reform program in Sacramento.

### **Journals, Magazines, Websites:**

Louis Freedberg and Stephen Doig, *California Watch*, won for an online story about inequalities in per-student spending; Anthony Cody, *Education Week*, for blog entries about unfair attacks on teacher seniority rights, the "Save Our Schools" national rally in Washington, D.C., and other education issues; Susan Luzzaro, *San Diego Reader*, for a series of online stories on mismanagement of school construction projects involved with Sweetwater Union High School District and Southwestern College; Mayra Flores de Marcotte, *Campbell Patch*, for a series of online profiles of high school graduates in Campbell Union High School District.

**Radio:** John North, KCLU Radio, Thousand Oaks, won for a program on bullying.

Story and photos by **Mike Myslinski**

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# Your retirement is worth saving!

## "Boots on the ground" at the Capitol to protect your pension

**IN THE FACE OF** increasing attempts to roll back public employee pensions, CTA is working with other unions to persuade lawmakers to preserve retirement benefits. Through CTA-organized protests, press conferences, letters to the editor and opinion columns, your voice is being heard in the debate.

Maggie Ellis chairs CTA's State Council Retirement Committee. We caught up with the Elk Grove Education Association president at a California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS) board meeting to get the latest on the governor's 12-point pension proposal.

### WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH THE GOVERNOR'S PENSION PROPOSAL?

The Legislature's pension committee is putting their report together, and we anticipate hearing something anytime between now and early August. We've had boots on the ground in the Capitol, organizing retirement pension committee lobby days. A lot of our members had face-to-face meetings with legislators to explain how pension reform measures affect our CalSTRS members. We've talked about all the governor's pension points.

### WHAT DO TEACHERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THEIR RETIREMENT?

Retirement is emotional because it's your security. It's the rest of your life. Teachers need to be educated about what a defined-benefit plan is. Having a secure defined-benefit (DB) plan allows us to have security in our retirement.

Teachers need to know that CalSTRS is a solid system and an integral part of California's economy, because we are investors in things that are not just local, but statewide and even worldwide. The CalSTRS is a system

worth investing in. It's worth keeping and worth expanding for all people. This is not an entitlement. It's an investment.

Teachers need to know that we do have a funding problem, and that increased contributions are going to have to be addressed. What that looks like is part of the conversation we're having with the Legislature.

### THIS ISN'T THE MESSAGE THAT EDUCATORS ARE COMMONLY GETTING?

No. We are hearing that this is the *Titanic*, it's already sinking and there's no way to save it. That's so far from the truth. I believe it's part of a political agenda or a financial agenda to get rid of defined-benefit systems and turn them into defined-contribution (DC) systems. The only people who benefit from a defined-contribution system are Wall Street and vendors who are selling 401(k)-style defined-contribution plans.

### DOES IT SEEM LIKE TEACHERS HAVE A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF CALSTRS?

Teachers tend to take care of themselves last. We take care of our students, we focus on the classroom, and only in the last few years of our career do we start

## The proposal:

**AMONG CTA'S CONCERNS** about the governor's 12-point pension plan being considered are proposals to:

- Implement a "hybrid" plan that combines the current employer-sponsored defined-benefit pension with a risky 401(k)-style defined-contribution plan.
- Increase the retirement age of teachers and public employees from 60 to 67.
- Change the one-year final compensation to the highest average annual compensation over a three-year period.



to think about retirement. That's when it means something. I hope the positive out of this so-called crisis is that everyone will become aware of their retirement throughout their career, what their benefits are, and will become active in managing their retirement benefits.

#### HOW DO OUR PENSIONS BENEFIT THE STATE AND THE PROFESSION?

Having a secure retirement system helps recruit better people to the profession. I worry about teaching becoming a revolving door where people just do it for three or five years and get out. A revolving door means you don't get the quality of teachers we want for our students.

The state gets the economic activity of our retirees. With a DB plan, teachers are guaranteed a regular income, which means every month retirees are spending money in their local economy. That trickles down to local businesses that hire people and sell their products.

Last year, because of CalSTRS, \$10 billion circulated through the state. That's a lot of money! It drives the entire economy in many areas, especially in our little tiny towns where teachers retire and stay. Imagine if that disappeared.

Too, CalSTRS invests in businesses and infrastructure projects in the state. I think of it as a partnership with the state in terms of the economy. Public pensions are less than 4 percent of the state budget, and yet the state gets back \$10 billion in return.

#### WHY DO ATTACKS ON PENSIONS CONTINUE?

CalSTRS has a strong corporate government program and policy — that makes it a target because it expects corporations and boards to do the right thing, to have transparency and report to their shareholders. When they don't, CalSTRS steps in. CalSTRS uses its proxy shares to vote on compensation for CEOs and has often voted no when it's not in the best interest of shareholders. There's a check there, and I don't think Wall Street likes to be checked. Remember, there are a lot of good businesses. CalSTRS does a good job of engaging them, and a lot of businesses have chosen on their own, or with a little bit of prodding, to be more transparent. But the transparency says a lot about CalSTRS and who they invest with. They have a high standard, and it's good for our economy.

#### ANYTHING ELSE MEMBERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CALSTRS?

Oh yes. CalSTRS has a lot of services and staff who will come out and conduct presentations to answer your questions and help you understand your retirement benefits. It's a fabulous way of educating our members. Sessions will share information you need to know wherever you are in the profession.

Also, CTA members should beware of vendors who are out there hawking their goods. CalSTRS will never come to your house and will never buy you a piece of pizza (unlike those selling defined-con-

tribution plans) for your business. Know that some are passing themselves off as CalSTRS. If that happens, let us know. Be vigilant! We don't want you to be taken advantage of.

By Dina Martin

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *At press time, the Legislature was poised to approve a pension reform package, which the Educator will more thoroughly cover in the fall.*

## What is a defined-benefit (DB) plan?

### A DEFINED-BENEFIT RETIREMENT PLAN

is one under which a retiree has a guaranteed benefit set by a formula. Contributions to the plan while working are set by the plan and funds are pooled and managed as a group. The participant's retirement benefit is guaranteed regardless of the portfolio performance. Under a defined-benefit plan, participants are protected from the ups and downs of the market.

## What is a defined-contribution (DC) plan?

### A DEFINED-CONTRIBUTION RETIREMENT PLAN

is one under which the retirement benefit is determined by how much was invested or contributed (the participant's defined contribution) and how well those investments paid off. Such contributions may come from the employer only, the employee only, or some combination — it depends on the plan. There is no guaranteed retirement benefit in a defined-contribution plan. Under a defined-contribution plan, a participant's benefit is subject to the ups and downs of the market.



**Maggie Ellis**, president of the Elk Grove Education Association and chair of CTA's State Council Retirement Committee, explains why CTA must counter attacks on CalSTRS. *Photos by Scott Buschman*

CHEM - IS - TRY!

Associated Chaffey Teachers members **Jaimie Graham** (left) and **Karen Montoya** show off analytical balances purchased through an NEA Foundation Student Achievement Grant. Photo by student Ricky Padron



## NEA Grant adds substance to chemistry class

**JAIMIE GRAHAM** teaches science at Ontario High School in Ontario, San Bernardino County. She received an NEA Foundation Student Achievement Grant. Here's her story:

We are always trying to improve the laboratory investigations for our students. It is extremely important to have students experience hands-on laboratory investigations and demonstrate a skill or concept they have learned about in class. Labs are a way for teachers to assess student learning and reteach, if necessary. Students are engaged, excited, willing to participate and work together as a team to do their best during labs.

We decided to write this grant to expand our laboratory program. The grant funds were used to purchase electronic balances for our Chemistry/AP Chemistry classes and two analytical balances for our AP Chemistry classes.

Electronic balances are necessary for almost every chemistry laboratory activity. Most labs begin with students required to determine the mass of a substance. Analytical balances are very expensive and provide a level of accuracy and precision superior to regular electronic balances. The analytical balances allow our AP Chemistry class to experience college-level laboratory investigations and prepare for the AP examination.

### WRITING GRANTS ISN'T AS INTIMIDATING AS YOU'D THINK

The NEA grant application process is very straightforward and can be completed with ease. I have found that writing

grants may seem intimidating at first. I was always worried about my ability to write, especially being a chemistry major who avoided English classes.

If you are passionate about a project in your class that will improve the education of many students, it seems to translate in your writing. There are many grants available, especially for the sciences. If you have a project in mind and the time to fill out many grant applications, put yourself out there. You might be surprised.

By **Jaimie Graham**

## Grants, grants, grants!



**CTA UNDERSTANDS** that the best way to help students learn is to help teachers teach. One resource to do that is the NEA Foundation, which funds and shares successful strategies to educate students.

The best teaching methods come from educators like you and Jamie. NEA has awarded more than \$8 million to fund 2,500 grants to public school educators to enhance teaching and learning.

There are two grant categories: Student Achievement and Learning & Leadership. Applications for both can be completed online at [www.neafoundation.org](http://www.neafoundation.org).

## Meet your local negotiators

MEET A FEW colleagues among the many who are working hard to enhance your teaching and working conditions and professional compensation.



### JIM McBRIDE

San Joaquin Delta College Teachers Association



**Time spent before bargaining starts?** I'd say around 50 hours.

**Major issues on the table?** We gained a 3.46 percent pay increase, 1.73 percent for this year and 1.73 percent for next year, and part-time faculty will have a right to an automatic interview for full-time jobs. We kept health benefits.

**What is the best thing local members can do to support their bargaining team?** Stay united behind the negotiating team.

**What do you get out of this role?** I feel that faculty have rights and you only get what you bargained for.



### DAVE WERRA

Folsom-Cordova Education Association

**Time spent before bargaining starts?** I have 20 percent release time, which allows me five hours per week, plus time I spend on my own. Much of my time is answering questions from members about the contract. I get a lot busier during negotiations and probably spend eight to 10 hours a week.

**Major issues on the table?** We earned new language on voluntary transfers (voluntary transfers were nonexistent in the last few years). We came up with PAR (Peer Assistance and Review) language that enables us to reinvigorate a program to give teachers more peer support. Even though there is no money from the state, this will allow new teachers to get some assistance.

**What is the best thing local members can do to support their bargaining team?** Stay informed. Ask questions.

**What do you get out of this role?** Other than high blood pressure? I get an appreciation for working with other people and I like working to solve problems.



### JENNIFER TARABOCHIA

Western Placer Teachers Association  
(Rocklin)



**Time spent before bargaining starts?** Before each session I spend at least three to five hours preparing myself and my team. We meet 20 to 30 times per year.

**Major issues on the table?** We're bargaining stronger safety language and special education class size.

**What is the best thing local members can do to support their bargaining team?** Organize, organize, organize. Stand behind your team that is fighting for what you want. Communicate your thoughts, needs and concerns often to your bargaining team members.

**What do you get out of this role?** As bargaining chair, I have had the privilege of getting to know teachers from all levels. They never cease to impress me with their intelligence and dedication. It is their voices that help guide our bargaining team to the best decisions for our association.

## TAKING A STAND

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### A day at the Capitol with CTA leaders

#### THIS IS WHAT

a journal entry might look like if it were written by one of the local chapter leaders who came to Sacramento to participate in Presidents Lobby Day.

### May 22, 2012

*I was among over 200 educators from across California to attend CTA's Presidents Lobby Day in Sacramento — we educated lawmakers about the impact of funding cuts on our students and classrooms. We urged lawmakers to stave off any additional reductions, to defeat legislation that would harm schools and students, and to avoid changes in the state's retirement system that would undermine California's ability to attract and keep its highly qualified force of educational professionals.*

*The morning started with a meeting of the chapter leaders. CTA President Dean Vogel stressed the importance of advocacy. He said that we, as classroom experts, can best tell lawmakers what is happening in our schools.*

*Then we went to meet lawmakers. Here's a photo of United Edu-*

*cators of San Francisco President Dennis Kelly, CTA Board member Curtis Washington, and UESF Vice President Linda Plack during a meeting with members of a legislator's staff. Just after lunch, CTA Board member Theresa Montaño, NEA Director Sonia Martin-Solis, CTA Board member David Goldberg, CTA Board member Mary Rose*



*Ortega, NEA Director Sue Cirillo, CTA Board member Tyrone Cabell, and UTLA Secondary Vice President Gregg Solkovits prepared to meet with Sen. Alex*

*Padilla (D-Pacoima) to discuss with him the need to revise his SB 1530. It's a bad bill that undermines teachers' rights and does not protect students from predators.*

*While this was happening, East Side Teachers Association President Marisa Hanson and Evergreen Teachers Association President Brian Wheatley met with Sen. Elaine Alquist (D-San Jose). Valley College CCA President Gaylla Fennell, Montaño, Ortega, and CTA Board member Marty Meeden talked with Assembly Member and former teacher Tony Mendoza (D-Artesia).*



*Texting is THE thing to do! Here's a photo of Barstow Education Association President Candy Michelson and Adelanto District Teachers Association President La Nita Dominique using their phones to text and connect to their elected officials. CTA calls it the "Mobile Warrior."*



*That evening, we talked to Gov. Jerry Brown at a CTA legislative reception. Gov. Brown, Treasurer Bill Lockyer and Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg were among the elected officials from both parties who spoke with us.*

*All in all, a good day. I thought talking to lawmakers would be intimidating.*

*They asked questions that I could answer... and the CTA resources were helpful. Everyone should take the opportunity to visit elected leaders — in Sacramento and at home!*

**Story and photos by Len Feldman**

## Revised budget raises stakes for schools in November election

WHEN GOV. JERRY BROWN prepared to unveil his revised budget built on updated projections of revenues and costs, he warned that the picture would not be pretty.

The final budget sent to him by the Legislature just prior to the June 15 deadline proves the point. Should voters reject the governor's revenue initiative in November, the budget's automatic "trigger" cuts would slash another \$6.1 billion from schools and higher education.

The governor's original budget had projected that about \$4.9 billion in trigger cuts to K-12 schools would hang on the outcome, but a slow-to-recover state economy and lower-than-expected revenues have boosted schools' stake in

the outcome to \$5.5 billion. The state's higher education systems could lose another \$600 million, should the governor's Schools and Public Safety Protection Act of 2012 not gain the needed majority in the general election.

Fearing voters may reject the initiative, school districts have issued an estimated 20,000 layoff notices and made local budget proposals that include sharp reductions in vital educational programs.

"We must win passage of the governor's revenue initiative," declared CTA President Dean E. Vogel. "More than 6 million students are counting on us. The additional revenue won't turn around years of underfunding, but it will stop the additional havoc the trigger cuts

would wreak on our classrooms."

Throughout California, CTA members are being urged to communicate frequently and effectively about the devastation that cuts of more than \$20 billion over the past five years have inflicted on their students.

More than 200 local leaders came to the state Capitol on Presidents Lobby Day, May 22, to urge lawmakers to protect school funding. They shared stories about how cuts will impact their classrooms.

The new warnings about the importance of the November election came as EdSource, a nonpartisan education think tank, released its study of how budget cuts have swelled class sizes in schools

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around California. The erosion of class reduction programs has hurt all students, with class sizes rising to as large as 40 in some districts, the study says. Minority students and those from families living below the poverty line have been especially harmed by the swelling class sizes.

As the *Educator* went to press, the budget bill was on the governor's desk, and lawmakers were in the process of finalizing a handful of technical implementation measures related to the spending plan. Among them were bills that would authorize school districts to bargain reductions of three weeks in the academic year for 2012-13 and 2013-14.

The governor had until June 30 to make any reductions in the spending plan and sign it into law.

By Len Feldman

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## TAKING A STAND

### Bargaining Updates Negotiations hinge on passing the governor's tax initiative

#### THE CAPITOL: Fighting for fair dismissal rights

At press time, CTA member lobbying efforts helped kill SB 1530 in the Assembly Education Committee. CTA will closely monitor the bill for possible further action.

SB 1530 stems from the failure of Los Angeles Unified School District officials to report alleged misconduct to the state licensing agency, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. LAUSD claims the current law prevented the reporting. In fact, current law requires the district to make the reports and holds the superintendent personally liable for failing to comply.



SB 1530 would make radical changes to the current teacher dismissal law and undermine a teacher's right to a fair hearing. It does nothing to add new penalties for administrators or districts that fail to comply with reporting laws.

#### ALAMEDA: Modest settlement on class size, work load

The Alameda Education Association settlement includes a K-3 class size maximum of 25 students until a new three-year contract is settled. No change in

salaries, but that will be discussed in the future. "We need to see positive results in the November election so that AUSD can make teachers a priority and put resources in the classrooms," says Gray Harris, AEA president.

#### CALEXICO: Settlement after 23-hour session

After a lengthy contract stalemate, Associated Calexico Teachers reached a tentative agreement with Calexico Unified School District that includes concessions on

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Members of Associated Calexico Teachers demonstrate during lengthy negotiations with the district that culminated in a settlement after a marathon 23-hour session. Photo by Bill Guy

health care. Potential furlough days can be eliminated if the governor's tax initiative passes in November. "Claiming any victory in these troubled times is difficult, but we did surpass all our internal bargaining goals with this settlement," says ACT bargaining chair Chad Cooper.

#### **INGLEWOOD: Fighting for smaller class sizes**

The Inglewood Teachers Association is fighting district efforts to have unrestricted class size maximums and to cut the instructional year by up to 25 days. "Class size matters," says ITA president Peter Somberg. "The students, parents, and teachers of Inglewood have already sacrificed far too much because of terrible district financial decisions. We're not going to see our students and their futures thrown away by a board that seems more concerned about holding on to their own positions than in doing what's right for kids."

#### **LA QUINTA: Teachers protest furloughs**

Teachers showed up en masse to the Desert Sands Unified school board meeting in La Quinta to oppose the district's proposed five furlough days. The Desert Sands Teachers Association will have 15 furlough days if the governor's tax initiative does not pass in November. "Furlough days mean one less instruction day for students," says DSTA President Mona Davidson.

#### **MILL VALLEY: Teachers ask voters to do their part**

Mill Valley School District teachers have done their part. Now, they say, it's up to the citizens of Mill Valley to do theirs. Under a two-year agreement approved recently, some teachers will be taking between \$4,000 and \$5,000 in pay cuts to help close a \$1.4 million budget deficit.

"The teachers really stepped up to the plate," says Superintendent Paul Johnson. "We really owe a lot to them. They love the school district, and they've made sacrifices to hold on to what we have."

Under a "shared solutions" strategy, the district's teachers and administrators hope their sacrifices persuade Mill Valley voters to do their part and approve a \$196

"Save Our Schools" parcel tax on the November ballot.

Says Kim Kirley, Mill Valley Teachers Association bargaining chair, "It's important that all facets of our community come forward to preserve the quality of education that students of Mill Valley deserve."

#### **RIO: Teachers bearing too much of the financial burden**

Rio Education Association members have been teaching without a contract since June 30, 2011. Negotiations are now headed to fact-finding. Major sticking points include salary and benefits. Both sides say a lot depends upon the passage of the governor's tax initiative in November.

Student enrollment has grown, and the amount spent on administrative positions has increased in recent years, while the money spent on teachers and other employees has dropped, says REA President Rebecca Barbetti. The amount of the deficit the district is facing also is in dispute.

"We're willing to take concessions, but the burden of concessions needs to be equitably distributed," Barbetti says.

#### **SACRAMENTO: Concessions, furlough days**

Sacramento City Teachers Association members OK'd a tentative agreement that includes health benefit concessions and two furlough days. That number will increase to 10 if Gov. Jerry Brown's tax initiative fails in November.

Sacramento City Unified approved \$28 million in cuts earlier this year from its \$421 million budget. If the November tax measure doesn't pass, the district anticipates having to slash another \$15 million. The district will continue to pay the full cost of health insurance for SCTA employees and their families.

"In light of the way the school district has managed its money, it is as good as we can do," says SCTA Vice President Erik Knudson. "The district is happy with it enough, and we are happy with it enough. Education — it's grim out there right now."

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SHOULD  
STUDENTS  
STILL  
BE  
LEARNING*cursive?*

Story by **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin**  
Photos by **Scott Buschman**

## Cursive connects us to our past and our future

By Eldra Avery



**WE CREATE OUR OWN CULTURE.** If we deem a skill irrelevant, then we eliminate that skill. If we believe that a skill is worthy, then we will work to reinforce that skill. Legible penmanship is a worthy skill, not only as a communication tool, but as a portion of our individual identity.

As opposed to keyboarding, handwriting is a reflection of our humanity and connects us to our past and to our future. If students can't write cursive, they can't read cursive. And if they can't read cursive, how can they read historical documents, like the Declaration of Independence?

We dream of a future with technology and less labor as our savior, but truthfully, if technology prevents us from honing skills that are intrinsically human, I wonder if that can be called "progress."

I failed a handwriting assignment in eighth grade, and my teacher told me that I was way too smart to have that type of penmanship. So I improved my handwriting and now have beautiful handwriting. I teach AP English, and at times I have forced all of my students

to do assignments in cursive. Since students will be taking timed writing exams throughout their educational career, it is imperative that they practice writing at a speed that will enable them to finish their task. When you have three letters connected in a word, it flows, and when you lift the pen only at the end of a word, it is faster than printing, which lifts the pen at the completion of each letter.

Legible penmanship is not a skill that can be purchased; therefore, it is one more way to create equity in the classroom. Through practice comes improvement, and with improvement comes self-esteem and pride in a task successfully accomplished. In a society that equates status with wealth, it is refreshing to see status awarded for practice and accomplishment.

Penmanship develops fine motor skills, and most students find that when they practice, they can radically improve their handwriting. With Internet plagiarism a concern, many teachers have increased in-class writing assignments, and these essays must be legible.

Copying text is a process that promotes "internalizing language." Because students are continually distracted by technology, they spend fewer hours reading, which translates to inadequate "internalizing of language." Copying by hand can help many students. My students complete a poetry explication paper each year. Many of them tell me that they couldn't begin to understand their poem until they copied it by hand.

Penmanship is an art form, and in truth, if you want to get someone's attention, handwrite your note. An e-mail can get deleted in a millisecond; not so with a handwritten communication. Communication through handwriting will always be a necessity. To imagine that the entire world will communicate via keyboard access is a rather narrow view.

*Eldra Avery is an English teacher at San Luis Obispo High School and a San Luis Coastal Teachers Association member.*



## Cursive is unnecessary

By Dustin Ellis

### Should *fancy loops and flowing letters* of cursive still be taught to students? Is cursive writing an obsolete skill no longer relevant in today's technological society?

**CURSIVE IS UNNECESSARY**, as was calligraphy before it. Writing is a means to communicate, and we are past the world of the physical art of writing. Whatever could be created by the pen can now be recreated by the computer. This is the world our students live in. If they can print, they can communicate in the written word. If they need it to be beautiful, computers have many font options to do just that.

According to state standards, kids must learn cursive in third grade. When they come to me in fourth grade, they are out of practice and their cursive is a train wreck. Half of what they write is unreadable. Writing needs to be a functional thing, and students should be able to do that any way they can.

I've heard colleagues say students write faster in cursive, but I have timed my students, and they take longer to write in cursive than if they are printing. I have noticed this on test prep for STAR exams.

When it comes to the argument that cursive helps fine motor skills, I disagree. Cursive is not all that different from printing. Students can still learn to make curves in printing as well as straight lines, which is not possible with cursive, since it is all circular.

One hundred years ago, every student learned calligraphy. Some people had to pay an artist to do calligraphy for them. But calligraphy is now dead, for all intents and purposes, and you don't need it to be a successful writer. The same is now true of cursive.

I want my students to be compatible and competitive with what the world is going to look like in 20 years. Cursive is

not going to be a part of that world. In the next 10 years, every piece of historical source documents will be digitalized and translated into standard font. Students who will go on to become historians can learn cursive, but most of them are not going to be spending a lot of time looking at source documents.

There is so much information that teachers have to cover nowadays for state tests, plus there is character education and much more. At the beginning of school, I send home a packet and ask students to practice cursive and turn it in to me in a month. It's not perfect, but it's one of the trade-offs I have to make.

I teach in a high-performing school, and many parents say they want more "challenges" for their child, and they put cursive in this context. But I am not going to spend a lot of time on this because this is the age of iPads, cell phones and computers. When a kid can text 70 words per minute, does he really need to learn cursive?

*Dustin Ellis is a fourth-grade teacher at Big Springs Elementary School in Simi Valley and a Simi Education Association member.*

The new Common Core State Standards for English do not require cursive. However, under the new standards, states are allowed to teach cursive if they choose, and California still does. Some states, like Georgia, are considering abandoning longhand lessons altogether, since cursive is not on standardized tests.

This issue is being hotly debated in teacher lunchrooms around the state. We asked two CTA members to weigh in. Here's what they have to say.



## PROFILE

## Blades of glory



► “The absolute best thing about the experience is that students learn about wind energy and demonstrate their knowledge through their own building of a turbine.”

**TAKING SECOND PLACE** in the national KidWind competition was not exactly a breeze. For the students at Desert Mirage High School, it took hard work and experimentation for their model wind turbines to run circles around the competition, says **Arthur Kimball**, who facilitates the school’s GREAT Academy.

GREAT stands for GReen Energy And Technology, and students built the contraptions as part of the academy.

“The absolute best thing about the experience is that students learn about wind energy and demonstrate their knowledge through their own building of a turbine,” says Kimball. “The hands-on project was a welcome diversion from the textbook theory of wind motion and energy.”

Kimball is proud of the team members, Arturo Gutierrez and Jesus Gutierrez (no relation). They competed against some elite private schools in the national

KidWind competition in April. While in Washington, D.C., for the competition, Kimball made sure students visited the Smithsonian Space and Aeronautics Museum — which has huge propellers — as well as other landmarks.

The KidWind program is designed to stimulate interest in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) by having students design model wind turbines. The windmills are less than 3 feet tall, and students hook them up to a voltmeter to measure how much electricity is generated. The faster they go, the greater the electrical output. Students put their creations in a wind tunnel and adjust the angle of the blades so they can determine factors resulting in the highest speed.

Before going to D.C., the team from Desert Mirage High School won second place in a Coachella Valley competition. Since then, the students have gone to ele-

mentary schools to teach younger students about wind power and turbine building, says Kimball.

Teachers in many schools are powerless to find time for students to create hands-on projects, but Kimball is pleased his administration is supportive.

“It’s fun, but it is also a way of preparing our students for college and career readiness.”

The school is located in the town of Thermal near Palm Springs, where temperatures reach 130 in the summer. That makes interest in alternative energy, well, personal, says Kimball, a member of the Coachella Valley Teachers Association.

By **Sherry Posnick-Goodwin**  
Photo by **Scott Buschman**

## BONUS

See a video interview with Kimball at [www.cta.org/arthurkimball](http://www.cta.org/arthurkimball).



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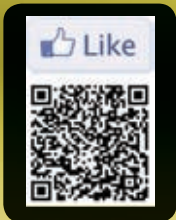
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