

ACT NOW

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

To All Members:

I hope that all of you accomplished all that you wanted during summer vacation, even if that was just a very good vacation and relaxation.

ACT/CTA/NEA was/were busy as well. Your delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly (Hank Mollet, Barbara Shiffermiller, Joann Crawford, Gloria Garcia, Don Schulteis, Brian Jeffrey, and Jan Thornhill) participated in the business meetings of the Representative Assembly and the California Caucus, including phone calls to legislators concerning Race To The Top and the Educators' Jobs Bill. The Jobs Bill was recently passed by both the House and Senate and signed into law by the President. \$10 billion of the \$26 billion Jobs Bill is designated for education funding. CTA expects it to save about 14,000 teacher jobs in California.

States have a 30 day window to complete the application for this money, once they receive it from the federal government. The money should be available to the states no later than 45 days after the federal Education Department approves a state's application, according to the McClatchy Newspapers. Approval of money to the states will be based on formulas involving population and school age population. States will then distribute money to local school districts, with allocations based on various funding formulas (so we'll see what that means). The Legislative Analyst's Office, local districts and CTA will be analyzing the legislation to see exactly what the requirements are for states and districts to receive this funding. When ACT was asked to participate in the budget forum in making decisions about budget cuts, we were assured that when money came back in, ACT would also be involved in making those decisions. In keeping with that commitment, ACT will be working with the district to decide how to best allocate any funding that come to the Chaffey District.

To assure passage of this bill, NEA and its affiliates generated 102,000 calls to Congress, 42, 000 postcards and 301,000 e-mails to legislators, as well as personal contacts with legislators from all states. On Facebook, the Speak Up for Education and Kids page has 35,621 fans, and Education Votes had 60,460 visits and 92,889 page views. If you join the Speak Up page, there is a link to the Legislative Action Center that will allow you to thank or castigate your legislator, depending on what their vote was. I have already e-mailed David Dreier to express my disapproval for his 'no' vote on this bill.

In other education news, Race To The Top is influencing many other legislative changes in various states: A Florida district will revamp its teacher evaluation process under A Gates Foundation (which means that student test scores will be involved); many states, (including CA) changed their Ed. Codes to allow more charter schools and evaluations based, to varying extents, on student test scores; Arizona is expanding online course offerings, and a New Jersey district is raising the bar for students by eliminating the 'D' grade. It's a time of great change in education, to say the least.

I will send out updates as more information about the Jobs Bill is available.

I wish for all of you a successful and rewarding school year!

Jan

MESSAGE FROM CTA

CTA to Intervene in Adequacy Lawsuit

Within the next few days CTA will file a motion to intervene in the Adequate School Funding Lawsuit filed by the California School Boards Association, the California State PTA and the Association of California School Administrators. The groups have welcomed CTA into the action. As interveners, CTA will be able to advance legal arguments at every stage of the proceeding and would be guaranteed a seat at the negotiating table during any settlement talks. The groups filed the lawsuit in May, requesting that the state be required to establish a school finance system that provides all students an equal opportunity to meet the academic goals set by the state. Meanwhile a second adequacy lawsuit was filed this month by a coalition of community organizations.

Reminders from THE STANDARD

The Standard is available to answer any of your questions about coverage. Their dedicated CTA Customer Service Department can be reached at 800.522.0406 FROM 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Pacific Time or write to ctaservices@standard.com with any questions or concerns.

Getting Ready to Retire?

As you begin this new chapter in your life, please don't forget that you and your loved ones can continue a portion of your current, active CTA-endorsed Life Insurance if you maintain a CTA-NEA Retired Lifetime Membership and apply within 120 days of retirement. To learn more, contact The Standard's dedicated CTA Customer Service Department at 800.522.0406.

Newly Hired CTA Member, or New to your District?

If you're a newly hired CTA member, or transferring to a new district now's the time to get coverage. During your first 120 days of new employment, you have a terrific opportunity to apply for Disability Insurance and/or up to \$200,000 of Life Insurance – without showing proof of good health. Don't miss this great opportunity – call the Standard's dedicated CTA Customer Service Department at 800.522.0406 for more information.

Summer Wedding or Baby?

Congratulations! Remember that within 31 days of a Family Status Change, you can add or increase Life Insurance coverage up to \$200,000 and/or add Disability coverage, all without providing proof of good health. Family Status Change includes birth/adoption, marriage/domestic partnership and other qualifying events. For more information about this enrollment opportunity, or to file a maternity Disability, visit us at Member Benefits at www.cta.org and click through to The Standard.



THE OPENING BELL



Leading the News

No Federal Officials Speaking At NEA Conference This Year

The [New York Times](#) (7/5, A8, Dillon) reported that “in a sign of the Obama administration’s strained relation with two of its most powerful political allies, no federal official was scheduled to speak at” the National Education Association’s “convention this month, partly because union officials feared that administration speakers would face heckling.” Some speakers at the convention that opened Saturday in New Orleans have called for Education Secretary Arne Duncan to resign, and NEA president Dennis Van Roekel told attendees, “Today our members face the most anti-educator, anti-union, anti-student environment I have ever experienced.” The Times notes that The Obama administration has so far supported “historic increases in school financing to stave off teacher layoffs,” charter schools, and “the dismissal of ineffective teachers as a way of turning around failing schools.”

NEA Delegate Vote “No Confidence” On Race To The Top. Stephen Sawchuck wrote in the [Education Week](#) (7/4) “Teacher Beat” blog that on Monday, “after a protracted debate, delegated to the National Education Association approved a new business item... that takes a position of ‘no confidence’ in the US Department of Education’s Race to the Top guidelines and in the use of competitive grants as a basis for the reauthorization of ESEA.” According to Sawchuck, “the item passed by a razor-thin margin.” While some delegated said that a no confidence vote “didn’t accurately represent the diversity of opinion about the program,” others “felt that it was time for the NEA to come out more strongly against the administration.”

NEA Conference Aids New Orleans Economy Amid Gulf Oil Spill. The [AP](#) (7/6) reports that “New Orleans has seen steady convention traffic and a high volume of visitors virtually throughout the 2^{1/2} month” Gulf oil spill. Roughly 35,000 hotel rooms “are booked for the weekend because of the [Essence] music festival, spill relief workers, and the National Education Association’s 15,000-delegate conference,” the AP adds.

Educators Criticize LA Times Teacher Performance Database

Study Criticizes “Value-Added” Teacher Evaluation Method. Valerie Strauss wrote in a blog for the [Washington Post](#) (8/29), Student standardized test scores are not reliable indicators of how effective any teacher is in the classroom, not even to Strauss, “Value-added modeling’ is indeed all the rage in teacher evaluation: The Obama administration supports it, and the Los Angeles Times used it to grade more than 6,000 California teachers in a controversial project.” However, the rush to implement this evaluation system “is being done without evidence that it works well.”

Duncan Supports Public Release Of Teacher Performance Data

The [Los Angeles Times](#) (8/17, Fetch, Song) reports that Secretary of Education Arne Duncan on Monday endorsed “the public release of information about how well individual teachers fare at raising their students’ test scores,” saying that “parents have a right to know if their children’s teachers are effective.” Duncan framed public disclosure of teacher performance as a way to recognize outstanding teachers. Said Duncan, “We can’t do enough to recognize them, reward them, but – most importantly – to learn from them.” California Secretary of Education Bonnie Reiss also weighed in on Monday, saying, “Publishing this data is not about demonizing teachers... It’s going to create a more market-driven approach to results.” Reiss also said that “the state will encourage districts to develop and release value-added scores for teachers.”

(Cont’d on page 4)



THE OPENING BELL (CONT'D)



United Teachers Los Angeles President Calls For Boycott of Los Angeles Times. The [Los Angeles Times](#) (8/16/, Song, Felch) reported that A. J. Duffy, president of NEA affiliate United Teachers Los Angeles is calling on members to boycott the Los Angeles Times “after the newspaper began publishing a series of articles that uses student test scores to estimate the effectiveness of district teachers.” The Times analysis looked at “effects of more than 6,000 elementary school teachers on their students’ learning.” It “found huge disparities among teachers, some of whom work just down the hall from one another.” Later this month, the paper will “publish an online database with rating for the more than 6,000 elementary school instructors.” Said Duffy, “[The Times is] leading people in a dangerous direction, making it seem like you can judge the quality of a teacher by ... a test.”

Also in the News

Later School Start Time Improves Student Performance, Study Finds

The [AP \(7/7\)](#) reports, “Giving teens 30 extra minutes to start their school day leads to more alertness in class, better moods, less tardiness, and even healthier breakfasts, a small study found.” According to the AP, “The results appear in July’s Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine” and the “results mirror those at a few schools that have delayed starting time more than half an hour... “There’s biological science to this that I think provides compelling evidence as to why this makes sense,” said Brown University sleep researcher Dr. Judith Owens, the study’s lead author and a pediatrician at Hasbro Children’s Hospital in Providence, Rhode Island.”

Law & Policy

Michigan Supreme Court Says Teachers Can Sue School District Over Student Discipline

The [AP](#) (8/3, White) reports, “The Michigan Supreme Court has...loosened the standard for people who want to file some civil lawsuits.” Overruling decision by the former majority in 2001, justices said Monday that “Lansing teachers had a right to sue the school district over how it disciplined students.” The “four teachers and their union, citing state law, sued the Lansing School District, saying it should have automatically expelled four students, not suspended them, for” violent assaults on teachers. Lower courts “said school boards had discretion in how to handle students and teachers had no standing to sue.” But Supreme Court Justice Michael Cavanagh wrote in an opinion that “The statute is intended to not only make the general school environment safer but additionally to specifically protect teachers from assault and to assist them in more effectively performing their jobs.”

Immigration Law May Have Contributed To Lower Enrollments In Some Arizona Districts

The [AP](#) (8/2) reported that Arizona’s “immigration law may be a contributing factor to reduced school enrollment” in the Phoenix Balsz Elementary School District and the Chandler Unified School District, some officials say. Phoenix Balsz has lost 500 students this year and Chandler enrollment “is down by about 100 students.”

Nevada District Braces For Increased Enrollment Due To Arizona Immigration Law. The [Las Vegas Sun](#) (8/2, Richmond) reported, “Arizona’s incendiary immigration law has “education leaders in Clark County, NV “keeping a close eye on enrollment for the upcoming academic year because of the potential influx of students fleeing the Grand Canyon State.” The new law, which has yet to be fully implemented due to a federal court order, “would require Arizona police officers to verify the immigration status of anyone believed to be in the United States illegally.” According to the Sun, “it’s too early to tell whether families with school-age children will leave Arizona, particularly because a federal judge last week suspended the more severe elements of the law.”



THE OPENING BELL (CONT'D)



School Finance

California School Funding System Unconstitutional, Lawsuit Alleges

The [Oakland \(CA\) Tribune](#) (7/13, Murphy) reports, "California's substandard school system is depriving students of the opportunity to receive a meaningful education and to meet the standards the state has set for them, a coalition of parents, students and civil rights advocacy groups argued in a lawsuit filed Monday in Alameda Superior Court against the state and the governor. The plaintiffs argue that education is a fundamental right under California's constitution, and far too many students are failing to read and write at grade level or graduate from high school." The Tribune adds, "To remedy the problem, the coalition is demanding equal access to preschools, increased school funding, better data systems and an efficient, coherent school finance system that provides more resources to children with greater need."

The [AP](#) (7/13, Chea) reports, Groups representing low-income families sued the state of California Monday in the second major legal action alleging the government is failing to adequately fund public education ... The plaintiffs, including the Campaign for Quality Education and Alliance for Californians for Community Empowerment, asked the court to declare the current school finance system unconstitutional and force Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger [R] and the Legislature to create a new system that adequately funds public schools." Schwarzenegger "said he hopes he can work with the plaintiffs to reach a mutually acceptable agreement that puts the needs of students first." Lesli Maxwell also covered the story in a blog for [Education Week](#) (7/12).

On the Job

Study Says Chicago Teacher Pay-For-Performance Program Is Ineffective

The [Chicago Tribune](#) (6/2, Ahmed) reports that Chicago Public Schools "efforts to link teacher compensation to student achievement has done little to improve test scores or retain teachers," according to new report. The study by the research group Mathematica shows that schools selected for the Chicago Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) "are performing no differently than schools that did not implement the program." One of the participating schools has even "been closed for poor performance." The Tribune points out however, that "research on such efforts has been mixed. A previous study of the national TAP model, which operates in more than 200 schools across the country, found some gains at the elementary level."

San Antonio District May Restrict Jeans, Flip Flops In Teacher Dress Policy

The [San Antonio Express News](#) (7/6, Kastner) reported that the San Antonio Independent School District is considering teacher dress code revisions that "would prohibit jeans, T-shirts, shorts and flip-flops." In addition, "halter tops, spaghetti-strap tank tops and other revealing clothing... would be no-nos." Jeans are "a big point of discussion" within the district. Some argue that jeans can be worn "in a professional manner." A spokesperson for the district "said jeans likely would be permitted on Fridays or designated 'spirit days,' when students and staff dress in shirts with school or college logos." The revisions are being considered in "an attempt to provide greater clarity for employees." The current dress code "simply states that employee dress 'shall be clean, neat, in a manner appropriate for their assignments."

In the Classroom

Oregon Students' Writing Scores Lower On Computer Tests

The [AP](#) (6/14) reported that principals and other officials in Oregon's Bend-La Pine school district "have puzzled over recent preliminary writing test scores showing students who took the online version of a state writing test scoring lower than students who completed a paper version." The state began "offering the state writing exam to" middle school students this year. "But the tests have come under scrutiny because some schools around the district and state have report significant score differences between the online and paper-based tests." According to Education Week, "the tests used the same prompts and were identical," and "test scorers are trained to read both handwritten and typed essays." Students who took the online tests attributed the discrepancy to having trouble "proofreading their work on-screen," not having access to "spelling and grammar tools," and writing more quickly on the computer.

NEA Women's Caucus



Ratify CEDAW.

Ratify CEDAW!

Tell the White House to Take the Lead on Women's Rights!

This is a critical year for U.S. leadership on women's rights and human rights. The prospects for ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the international women's rights treaty, have never been better. Worldwide, 186 countries have ratified the treaty; the United States is one of only seven countries that have not.

CEDAW has had a real impact on improving lives of women and girls by strengthening communities. Countries that have ratified it have used it as a blueprint to pass laws making domestic violence a crime, to increase girls' access to education, and to combat workplace discrimination. Ratification of CEDAW would encourage the United States to take stronger action on issues such as gender-based and domestic violence, human trafficking and discrimination against women in housing and in the workplace, and could improve access to educational and employment opportunities for women and girls.

We are within striking distance of CEDAW ratification, but the window of opportunity is closing – fast. Right now, we need the Obama Administration to send a strong signal to the Senate that ratification of CEDAW is a priority before Congress adjourns for the year. **Contact the White House today and urge the ratification of the CEDAW treaty.**

Call: 202-456-1414

Email: www.whitehouse.gov/contact

Write a letter: The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

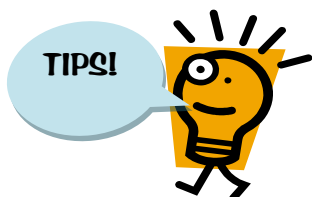
Visit the NEA Legislative Action Center during the RA to send a message to your senators about CEDAW!



The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights is a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States. The Leadership Conference works toward an America as good as its ideals.

For more information, please visit the NEA [website@www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)

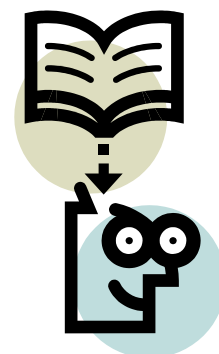
Works4me *Ideas and tips by teachers, for teachers*



FAMILY COMMUNICATION

From Diane Postman, a teacher in Yorktown, Virginia

“I feel it is best to send communication to ‘families’ rather than ‘parents.’ Children often are not part of a two-parent home, and even if they are, other family members often play an important role in their lives. I begin my relationship with families by asking them to share their knowledge with me. I ask about the child, how the family sees him, and what their priorities are for the school year. I try to treat them as partners on a mission to help the child to grow. I do this in person or through a questionnaire. I explain that I can do a better job of teaching their child if I know his history. I request their expertise in order to gain an understanding of the child. I find that families respond well to someone who wants input and is willing to listen. This has helped me to get more families to attend conferences. When the child has any difficulties, I begin by asking the family what they are seeing at home and asking how they provide support for their child. I will even ask for their advice before offering any of my own. When I do offer advice or explain how I am handling things at school, I am prepared with a ‘Plan A’ and a ‘Plan B.’ I get their reactions and adjust accordingly. And finally, all conferences begin and end on a positive note. Every family wants to hear amusing stories and the strengths of their child.”



PROACTIVE SUCCESS

From Yvonne L., a yearbook advisor, art and CTE teacher at Cascade High School in Everett, Washington

“Being proactive early on sets everyone up for success. My students’ first assignment is to have their parents email me with a greeting and their expectations for their students. I give out an invitation to create a free account to parents without email or ask them to contact me via my school classroom number. Once they email or phone me, I have easy access to contact them if and when their children need help. I try to do a personal email message to each and every parent as soon as I have those contact emails or numbers. A missed deadline means an immediate contact from me. Conferences are set up without formal dates, since I teach high school and formal parent teacher conferences only happen when there is a problem. Using this model, parents use the informal communication option with me most often. I have an open door policy, and parents are extremely confident in contacting me when they have concerns. It takes some time on my part in September, but by December we are all on the same page. Parents and teachers want the same thing for their students – success and engagement. I am on their side, and they know that right from the beginning. I attribute the fact that I seldom have failing students in my classes to this strategy.”