

# VEA Voice

Volume 2, Issue 4

December 2010

## President's Message

I can hardly believe that it is already December and that we will soon be on out on break. I know that everyone has been busy as the semester draws to a close. Getting report cards ready, meeting with parents, grading papers, and lesson planning make up a huge portion of our time outside of the classroom. I think many people would be surprised if we were to keep a record for a week of how much we do above & beyond our 6.5 contracted work day. So, enjoy your break—you deserve it!

### Update on PAR Program

On December 2, 2010, a letter from CTA was sent to the District regarding unilateral changes to

the PAR program. In the Spring of last year, the District swept approximately \$70,000 of PAR funding into the general fund. As a result of this sweeping, the District has attempted to eliminate PAR, after the contract was ratified, and has hired retired teachers to work as PAR support teachers. It also disbanded the PAR committee which is responsible for overseeing the program and our buy-back days. The District is paying (or will pay) over \$40,000 to the retired teachers offering support services. All of this was done without any agreement with VEA. It is our hope that the District *will do the right thing*, restore the PAR program as defined in our contract & avoid the unnecessary costs of arbitration, an unfair practice proceeding & court litigation.

received an overall unsatisfactory evaluation shall be required to participate in an improvement program and shall be referred to the Peer Assistance and Review Program (PAR) . . ."

The contract clearly states that only unit members who have received an unsatisfactory evaluation are referred to PAR. Unit members who were simply moved from Process B to A are not required to meet with a District assigned support provider. We would also argue that any teacher who received an unsatisfactory evaluation has the right under our contract (Article 15.7.2) to choose their consulting teacher and not have someone arbitrarily assigned to them by the District.

Any unit member who believes that they have been forced to work with a District appointed support provider needs to contact Chris Coulter at [chrcoulter@comcast.net](mailto:chrcoulter@comcast.net)

On behalf of VEA Leadership, we hope that everyone has an enjoyable holiday break. I hope that each of you comes back renewed & rejuvenated & ready to tackle the rest of the school year.

Christal Watts, President

### Inside this issue:

■ NEA Legislative Update 2

■ CTA Conferences 3

■ Teacher Led School Reforms Working 3-4

■ Your Contract—Article 7: Leaves 4

■ Calendar of Events 4

### ■ Moving from Process B to A

■ Teachers are being told that they must work with District assigned support providers if they received an unsatisfactory evaluation OR were moved from Process B to A at the end of the school year.

■ This is what the VEA/VCUSD contract states: "11.8 Permanent unit members who have

## NEA Legislative Update

Action is underway in both the House & Senate, with over 20 hearings having taken place, on a wide variety of Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA) related issues. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions Committee recently held hearings on career & college readiness in practice; school turnaround; teachers & leaders; standards & assessments, special populations; improving secondary schools; early childhood education; child nutrition, as well as other education issues. The House Education & Labor Committee held hearings on corporal punishment; teacher & leaders; & the school improvement model. NEA provided comprehensive packets of information to members of Congress prior to each hearing.

NEA has urged Congress to work with educators to craft a reauthorization package that:

- Promotes innovation & 21st century skills in public schools, using research-based approaches & strong collaboration among stakeholders.
- Provides students with a rich, challenging curriculum that allows multiple ways to show what they learned.
- Elevates the profession to attract great educators & leaders for every public school.
- Facilitates greater parental & community involvement & engagement in all schools.
- Champions adequate, equitable, & sustainable resources/opportunities.

School accountability & teacher effectiveness will be major issues during reauthorization of ESEA. On the accountability front, NEA will push for the use of multiple measures, in both identification & improvement stages. Much attention will also be paid to assessments, including what needs to be done before any new assessments are ready for implementation.

Teacher effectiveness continues to be a significant focus in the reauthorization, including whether evaluations should be determined at the federal, state, or local level & what role student achievement should play in such evaluations.

The outcome of the recent elections will impact ESEA reauthorization. Republicans controlling the House are likely to be more focused on local control of school systems & local decision making. However, supplemental services, testing, & charter school are likely to be major points of contention between NEA & the House. In addition, NEA will need to be vigilant on federal school vouchers & civil rights issues. Democrats continue to control the Senate, but by a smaller margin. This will present new challenges given Senate rules allowing for non-germane amendments that could lead to fights over far-right priorities, such as school prayer, vouchers, & abstinence only education.

### *Social Security*

The National Commission on Fiscal Responsibilities & Reform has recommended cuts to cost of living increases, raising the retirement age, mandating Social Security coverage for public employees not currently covered by the program, & means-test benefits. NEA strongly opposes these proposals. NEA is a member of Social Security Works (a group of over 60 organizations) which represents 30 million members. The goal of the coalition is protest Social Security & demand that Congress not make any benefit cuts. Working with a handful of members in the House, a letter has been circulated that opposes any cuts to Social Security benefits, including raising the retirement age, & expresses opposition to privatizing Social Security. Senator Feinstein, along with two other Senators, introduced NEA-supported Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 235/S.484) to repeal the Government Pension Offset & Windfall Elimination Provision.

## Upcoming CTA Conferences—Reminder!

Now is the time to look at some great ways to get professional development that won't cost you anything! CTA is offering two conferences in January. If you are interested in attending either of these conferences, **contact Daly Jordan-Koch @ dalyjk@comcast.net**, for information on how to register.

### Issues Conference: Unity and Advocacy in Public Education

Come to Las Vegas over the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend and participate in this inaugural CTA conference, which combines CTA's Rural, Urban, and Education Support Professionals (ESP) conferences into one event. This conference will bring together CTA members with diverse in-

terests and multiple perspectives for an innovative training opportunity to enhance the skills, knowledge and unity needed to face the challenges confronting public education.

**Date:** January 14–16, 2011

**Location:** Rio All-Suite Hotel, Las Vegas

**Deadline to Register:** January 4, 2011

### Good Teaching Conference—North

CTA's Good Teaching Conferences are designed to support excellent teaching and learning practices for classroom teachers. Offering a variety of diverse workshops in curriculum content areas for K–12 teachers, the two conferences set in Northern

and Southern California provide opportunities for professional development and offer time to network and share ideas with colleagues and experts in the field.

**Date:** January 21–23, 2011

**Location:** Marriot, San Jose

**Deadline to Register:** January 6, 2011

Register for **GTC—North by December 1, 2010** & be entered into a drawing to have lunch with one of CTA's Executive Officers, David Sanchez, CTA President, Dean Vogel, CTA Vice President or Gail Mendes, CTA Treasurer at the Saturday Lunch of the conference.

## Teacher-led School Reforms Working

Burlingame – The California Teachers Association recently announced that early results show the teacher-led reforms implemented in CTA's Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) are making measurable improvements for California's most at-risk students. The analysis of performance benchmarks for schools participating in QEIA shows that the program is contributing to significant student progress when compared to similar schools not participating in the program. For the 2009–2010 year, QEIA schools made 50 percent higher gains on California's Academic Performance Index (API) than did their non-QEIA counterparts, outpacing significant gains they had also made the prior year.

"There is a lot of talk and speculation about education reform these days," said CTA President David A. Sanchez. "With QEIA we have a working model for teacher-led reform with proven results."

The QEIA program was the result of the 2006 settlement of a CTA funding lawsuit against Governor Schwarzenegger, and of CTA-sponsored legislation authored by state Assembly Member and former teacher Tom Torlakson. The program is infusing nearly \$3 billion over seven years

into 488 schools scoring in the bottom two deciles of the API. The additional funding is targeted toward proven reforms like reducing class sizes, ensuring qualified teachers in all core subjects, increasing the number of high school counselors, quality teacher and principal training, time for collaboration, and promoting parental involvement.

In addition to backing the legislation that made QEIA a reality, CTA has been deeply involved in working with participating schools, offering group and individual training to participating school staff, and assisting with actual program implementation and monitoring.

QEIA is helping close the Achievement Gap. The program serves 500,000 students, the majority of whom are Latino/Hispanic, with 42 percent English Learners and 85 percent qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

"Test scores are improving but it goes far beyond that," said Amy Lee Duprey, who teaches at QEIA participant Washington Elementary School in Compton. "We're seeing kids make real progress in all areas. The time for collaboration and additional resources QEIA pro-

## Teacher Led Reforms (continued)

vides are really paying off.” (continued pg. 4)  
 Here are some of the results from last year alone:

- 393 schools had positive growth on their API scores
- 2 schools had growth of 100 points or more
- 9 schools had growth of 75 points or more
- 40 schools had growth of 50 points or more
- 164 schools had growth of 25 points or more

Twenty-six schools have exited their status as Program Improvement Schools, a designation given to persistently struggling schools facing state intervention and potential sanctions.

“These results show that student achievement is directly tied to resources, and having those resources targeted to the right things,” said Eric Heins, the CTA board member who chairs the organization’s QEIA workgroup. “It’s clear that QEIA is making a difference for students, teachers and all staff at schools participating in the program.”

## Calendar of Events ...

Date	Event	Location
12/1	1st Observation Deadline	
12/15	VCUSD School Board Meeting	District Office
12/16	E-Board Meeting	Farragut @ 4
12/20-31	Winter Break	
1/3	Winter Break Ends—Return to Work	
1/13	Rep. Council	FMS Library @ 4
1/14	Rural/Urban Issues Conference	Las Vegas, NV
1/17	Martin Luther King, Jr.—NO School	
1/18	Political Action Meeting	Loma Vista w/Dave Henderson
1/19	VCUSD School Board Meeting	District Office
1/20	Grievance Meeting	Federal Terrace @ 4
1/21	Good Teaching Conference	San Jose, CA
1/27	E-Board	Farragut @ 4

## Your Contract— Article 7:Leaves

There are two leaves in the contract that confuse a lot of people. This often results in money being taken out of your paycheck, followed up with a call to Payroll & VEA to try to get it straightened out.

Article 7 of the VEA/VCUSD contract has “Paid Leaves” (7.1, pg. 46) and “Unpaid Leaves” (7.2, pg. 50). Unit members often get confused between “personal necessity leave” (7.1.4) and “personal business leave” (7.2.4).

**Personal Necessity Leave** uses your accumulated sick leave and is paid leave as long as you have accumulated sick leave. **Personal Business Leave** is UNPAID leave and also may effect your STRS retirement because it is charged “in not less than one-half day increments.”

It important to make sure that you are marking the correct type of leave when submitting your absence sheets to your office/site manager. If you have any questions regarding this issue, do not hesitate to contact your elementary, middle school or secondary director. Their contact information can be found by going to myvea.org. If you believe that the District made a mistake in regards to your sick leave, contact Chris Coulter, Grievance Chair, chrcoulter@comcast.net or 707-342.8788.

