



# VEA Voice

Educating Vallejo's Future!

March, 2015

Dear Colleagues,

I'm often asked 2 simple questions. Who is VEA? What does VEA do for me and my students? We are an association of people with a common interest. We are an association of people who work in Vallejo because we choose to teach here. We choose to work with, and for, Vallejo's students. Our association is here because we have the right to be treated as educated professionals, to be respected for our knowledge, and to receive the appropriate compensation for our dedication and expertise. Being a member of VEA is not something that is separate from what we do for our students. Instead, being a member of VEA enhances what we do for our students. By joining together as an association, we have the strength to make our working conditions better so that we can perform our chosen professions to the best of our abilities. When our working conditions are better, the learning conditions of our students improve. Recently, I heard Eric Heins, CTA Vice President, speak. He summed it up nicely, "Student learning is at the center of everything we do."

So what does VEA do for you and your students? VEA works to improve your working conditions and the learning conditions of your students. Who is VEA? WE are VEA!

Sincerely,

Sheila Gradwohl

# **The Grievance Process**

The contract between VCUSD and VEA is an agreement of how most situations will be handled. It is important that every VEA member become familiar with what is in the contract. During the course of the school year there may be disagreements between unit members (VEA) and administrators (principals) who either are unfamiliar with the contract or choose to ignore the agreement.

When the contract is not being followed, it is the responsibility of the unit member to file a grievance as soon as possible, citing the article that was violated. There are specific time lines that need to be met when a member files a grievance. My focus both last year and this year has been to help track the time line for individual grievances. Do not wait until the end of the school year to file a grievance about something that happened earlier in the school year. It may be too late.

If you have questions about how to write or word your grievance contact your VEA Director who can give you advice. It is the responsibility of your VEA Director to support and stand beside you through the level 1 and 2 grievance processes. It is your responsibility to do everything in your power to handle your grievance with your site administrator at the lowest level possible. The simplest way is to get another teacher from your site to go with you to meet with the principal. If you're unable to come to solve the problem, then file the grievance AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

## **Grievance Steps:**

Informal level:

### **Meet with your immediate administrator; try to reach a solution together.**

If a solution agreed upon – no further action required.

If you could not reach a solution – file level 1,

You have 20 student days from the time of the disagreement until you have to give the grievance to your administrator.

Level 1: Fill out the level 1 grievance paper.

Ask a VEA Director for help if needed.

Give a copy to your administrator.

Send a copy to Kevin Steele, Highland Elementary –via district mail.

You have 20 school days after your contract violation is discovered to give the level 1 to your Administrator; they have 10 school days to provide a written response.

If the grievance is solved then no further action required.

Level 2: If you're not satisfied with level 1 response you have 10 days to file your grievance in HR.

Make sure to have HR time stamp your copy when you turn it in to them.

The district has 10 student days to meet with you to try to solve the problem.

Take another VEA member with you to this meeting. Preferably your VEA Director or another VEA member who knows the contract.

If you come to a mutually agreed upon solution then no further action is required.

If you still are not satisfied, contact Kevin Steele to file a level 3. There are 15 student days to file the level 3 grievance.

Level 3: At a level 3 grievance, you will have the opportunity to present your complaint to a neutral 3<sup>rd</sup> party panel. The panel consists of a state mediator, a VEA member and representative from the DO. Sitting beside you will be Mark DeWeerd representing you from CTA, and Kevin Steele representing VEA. You will present your side of the story; your administrator will present their side of the story and the panel will make a decision or recommendation as to what the best course of action is. If you are still dissatisfied the next step is level 4.

Level 4: Binding arbitration, Only VEA Executive Board can make the decision to take a case to arbitration as this course of action typically takes thousands of dollars in lawyer's fees.

**Kevin Steele** VEA Elementary Director/Grievance Chair

[kmerles@gmail.com](mailto:kmerles@gmail.com)

**707-208-7055**



# VEA SCHOLARSHIP 2014-2015

## ***Criteria for Eligibility:***

- ✓ Applicant must be the son or daughter of an active member of the Vallejo Education Association.
- ✓ Applicant must be a graduating senior in high school for the current academic year (mid-year graduates are eligible).
- ✓ Applicant must have a minimum 2.5 grade point average, using the University of California GPA system.
- ✓ Applicant must submit a completed Scholarship Application form, along with letters of recommendations and high school transcript(s) covering sophomore, junior, and senior years (to date of application).
- ✓ Applicant must also be available for an interview on Saturday, April 25, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM.
- ✓ Applicant must intend to enter an accredited college or university. NOTE: Scholarship winner will receive the scholarship funds upon verification of enrollment in college or university.

**Complete application form must be received at the VEA Office  
by 5:00 PM on Friday, April 17, 2015.**

VEA Scholarship Committee  
701 Southampton Road, Suite 103  
Benicia, CA 94510

## ***Want to get involved?***

Redwood Service Center Council has announced an opening for one At-Large Representative to CTA State Council and one At-Large Alternate Representative. These are both 3 year terms (June 2015-June 2018), and are open to all **ethnic minority members**.

Declaration of Candidacy Forms must be sent to the RRC in San Rafael and are due no later than Friday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 p.m. The local election will be held concurrently with VEA's Officer Election, April 28-April 30.

If you are interested in running for the At-Large positions, or for open VEA Officer positions, contact the VEA office for a Candidacy Form, 745-3372 or [vallejoedassoc@gmail.com](mailto:vallejoedassoc@gmail.com)

## **Help a talented student with a disability win \$2,500 for college**

The Standard is once again partnering with Insight, a nonprofit dedicated to reducing barriers between high school and college for students with disabilities, to offer one-time scholarships in the amount of \$2,500 each to eight students nominated by California Teachers Association (CTA) members.

The deadline to nominate your students is March 15, 2015, and student applications must be completed by April 1, 2015. To learn more and to submit your student nominations, visit [www.standard.com/cta/scholarship](http://www.standard.com/cta/scholarship).

---

### **CLASS SIZE REDUCTION**

**WWW.CTA.ORG**

Small class sizes are key to improving student learning. CTA believes that small class sizes, particularly in grades pre-kindergarten through 12, allows for the optimum development of a student's potential and ensure individual attention to each student.

A reasonable goal for California's class size is a program that places California in the upper quartile of low class sizes in the United States. Right now, California has the largest class sizes in the country.

CTA fought to establish the state's current class size reduction program, which limits class sizes to 20 students in kindergarten through third grade. That program must be expanded to all grades. Research proves smaller classes improve student learning. According to a June 2002 study by the public policy institute of California, five of the state's largest school districts reported significant test score gains since the state's class size reduction program began. Third-grade test scores increased 14% in math and 9% in reading in schools with mostly low-income students.

Smaller classes are especially vital for high-need students. Class size reduction in the L.A. unified school district increased reading scores by 9.5%, math scores by 13.9% and language scores by 14.5%, according to an April 2001 study by vital research. The effects of class size reduction for "high-need" children are nearly double those of children in educationally advantaged neighborhoods - reading scores increased by 19.5%, math scores by 29.2% and language scores by 22.5% for high needs students.

Parents and teachers know smaller class sizes work. Smaller classes mean students are getting more valuable one-on-one attention from teachers - leading to higher academic performance. In addition, more than 70% of voters believe reducing class sizes is a very effective way to improve public schools.

# CTA Credit Union Program

CTA partners with select financially-strong regional credit unions that share our desire to offer CTA members quality programs and services. Credit unions are regional financial institutions that offer alternatives to big banks. Because credit unions are not-for-profit and their members are also owners, they generally offer higher earnings on savings and lower loan interest rates than banks.

Both of our credit unions, Logix Federal Credit Union (newly endorsed in 2012) and Provident Credit Union (originally endorsed in 1950) provide excellent customer service and have strong ties to the education and labor communities. Many of our members enjoy the unique benefits available through our credit union programs including New Teacher Loans, summer savings accounts and summer-skip pay options, and association accounts. In addition, our credit unions offer varieties of savings and checking accounts, auto and home financing, and more.

**Logix** is banking with a twist: we return 100% of our profits to members through better rates, lower fees and improved services. Sometimes we even pay an "extraordinary dividend" -- in 2013, we paid out \$5.4 million.

## **Come see what smarter banking is all about:**

- Voted "best credit union" by readers of the L.A. Times.
- Never lost a penny in 76 years.
- Do your banking anytime.
- Free mobile banking and check deposit.
- Free alerts help avoid fees.
- Access to 30,000 ATMs.

More than 96% of our members say they would recommend us to their friends and family. We think you will, too. Join today!

<http://www.CTAMemberBenefits.org/logix> or [www.logixbanking.com/cta](http://www.logixbanking.com/cta) (800) 328-5328

---

**Provident Credit Union** originally opened its doors in 1950 to serve a community of educators. We are CTA-endorsed and proudly serve CTA members, both active and retired, with branches in the Bay Area and Northern California.

## **Provident provides a comprehensive line of free and low-cost services, including:**

- Super Reward Checking currently paying 1.36% APY\*.
- Auto Loans with a 10-Month Payment Option.
- Summer Savings Plan with a rate of return comparable to a 2-year certificate rate.
- New Member Bonuses.
- Mortgage & Auto Loan discounts - specifically for CTA members.

## **Provident makes life easy:**

- Surcharge-free access at over 28,000 ATMs.
- 19 Provident Community Branches in Northern California.
- Over 200 Credit Union Shared Branches in Northern California.

To take advantage of Provident's products and services or to find a nearby branch, call (800) 632-4600 or visit <http://www.CTAMemberBenefits.org/provident> or [www.providentcu.org/cta](http://www.providentcu.org/cta).

## California Republicans announce teacher evaluation, employment overhaul

Saying a major court decision that rejected California's teacher employment rules compels them to act, Assembly Republicans on Wednesday unveiled a legislative package to overhaul how the state evaluates, dismisses and grants tenure to educators.

"We've seen over time court cases can drag on and on for years, and we want to make sure that California's schools are of the utmost quality today," said Assembly Minority Leader Kristin Olsen, R-Riverbank. "We are hopeful that (court) decision will be a game-changer for policymaking and education," she added. "We really need to reset the conversation."

Judge Rolf Treu sent a shiver through California's public school system last year in ruling unconstitutional the state's process for dismissing teachers and awarding tenure, finding that they deprived kids of their right to a quality teacher and a sound education. Treu specifically faulted rules he said allow underperforming teachers to remain in front of classrooms.

Teachers unions objected to the ruling in *Vergara v. California*, and Democratic state officials appealed. Republicans, meanwhile, called it an unavoidable call to reconfigure education policy, with gubernatorial candidate Neel Kashkari making it a centerpiece of his campaign.

Now Assembly Republicans are touting a set of proposals echoing changes that have been attempted at the national level and in states across the country, often sparking fierce fights and antagonizing teachers unions. The bills will likely face a tough road in surmounting the California Teachers Association's considerable clout in Sacramento.

The proposals include a bill repealing the "last in, first out" rule in which inexperienced teachers go first during budget-driven staff reductions; a bill extending from two years to three how long it takes to win tenure and allowing teachers to lose tenure if they receive poor evaluations; and a bill from Olsen, requiring annual teacher evaluations that incorporate test scores and student feedback and would give teachers one of four ratings (many districts now rate teachers simply satisfactory or not satisfactory). "The evaluations that take place, if they do take place, are really meaningless," Olsen said.

Also in the package is a bill reversing a limit, imposed through last year's budget, on how much money school districts can keep in reserve. Republicans have repeatedly assailed the change. "Our school districts know best what their reserves need to be and what to plan for," said Assemblywoman Catharine Baker, R-Dublin, saying the cap "is jeopardizing the financial stability of all of our school districts." Assembly members made their announcement in the office of **StudentsFirst**, an education reform organization that was founded by the polarizing former Washington, D.C. schools chief Michelle Rhee (she has since stepped down). Frequently on the opposite side of issues from unions, **StudentsFirst** spent \$592,000 to support or oppose legislative candidates last cycle, some of them Democrats.

Call Jeremy B. White, Bee Capitol Bureau, (916) 326-5543.

March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Want to attend a  
**FREE Educators Conference??**

April 17-18, 2015

The Sheraton Hotel, Petaluma

Redwood Service Council is excited to offer this dynamic conference for all CTA members in the Northern California Area! This will be a great opportunity to learn and network with colleagues. Trainings have been selected for the diverse needs of our members. There is something for everyone!

Common Core

*LCFF and LCAP*

**GLBT ISSUES**

**Ethnic Minority leadership Development**

**CALSTRS**

**Education Support Professional Leadership**

**Special Guest Speaker: CTA President DEAN VOGEL**

Registration Deposit: \$60 which includes workshops, Double Occupancy Room and Meals. When you attend the conference, your deposit will be returned back to you. If you do not attend or do not cancel before the March 6, 2015 registration deadline, you will lose your deposit. For questions or registering, email [rsc@cta.org](mailto:rsc@cta.org) OR call 415-479-6616!

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

**\*\*VEA REP COUNCIL AT FRANKLIN MIDDLE SCHOOL: April 16, May 14 and June 4 (4pm)**

**\*\*VEA Eboard: March 26, April 30, May 28**

**\*\*VCUSD SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS: March 18<sup>th</sup>, April 15<sup>th</sup> and April 22, May 6 and May 20, June 3 and June 17<sup>th</sup> - 5pm at the VCUSD Board Office (unless otherwise noted)**

# 2015 VEA Elections



**President**

**Vice President**

**Secretary**

**High School Director**

**Elementary School Director (2 positions open)**

**K-8 Director**

**Child Development/TK Director**

All terms are TWO year terms, and are open to any VEA member.

***See Your Rep To Get Your DECLARATION OF CANDIDACY Form***

## **Timeline:**

Announcement of Upcoming Election – Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup>  
Declaration of Candidacy – Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup> – Friday, April 17<sup>th</sup>  
Deadline to submit Declaration of Candidacy – Friday, April 17<sup>th</sup>  
Ballots go out to school sites – Wednesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>  
Election from Tuesday, April 28<sup>th</sup> to Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup>  
Counting of Ballots – Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup> – VEA Office  
Announcement of Election Results – Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup>