



PRESIDENTS MONTHLY LETTER

Dear Colleagues,

As many of you know, Christal Watts resigned from VCUSD and VEA on Oct. 25, 2013. As president, Christal was a vocal advocate for the rights of teachers. As I transition into my new position as president of VEA, I embrace the responsibility, as well as the opportunity, that I've been given. During the last 13 years, I've held many positions in VEA. I've been Site Rep, Elementary Director, Grievance Chair, Bargaining Chair, and most recently, Vice President. These positions have helped me develop the knowledge, skills, and relationships that I will need as president of VEA.

The President of VEA is usually released from working in a classroom 80% of the time. Since I had already made a commitment to my 4th grade class at Pennycook School, I will remain a classroom teacher. The district has found a credentialed sub that is willing to work in my class 2 days a week until the end of the year. This will allow me to complete my commitment to my class, as well as give me time to fulfill my responsibilities as president. I believe that remaining in the classroom will give me a unique perspective in my new position.

Since taking over as president, I've been busy learning the ropes of the new job. During the last couple of weeks, I've talked to many unit members and met with representatives of the Solano Labor Coalition, Common Ground, and several School Board members. During the next few months, I plan on coming to each school site and meeting with as many of you as I can.

This is also a time of transition in education. With the end of CST, and the implementation of Common Core and the Smarter Balance Assessments, educators are being asked to change the way they deliver instruction. We are being told that our professional judgment matters again. This is also the first time, in many years, that the financial stability of the State and District means there will be more money for VCUSD. Our Bargaining Team is working diligently to ensure that our members are recognized for their dedication and sacrifice over the past several years.

I'm looking forward to representing the dedicated teachers of Vallejo. Working together, I know we can make sure that Vallejo is a place where we are proud to teach and are rewarded for our professionalism.

I would like to congratulate one of VEA's own teachers for being selected as one of the state's Teacher of the Year! We are so proud of Angelo "Ang" Bracco – 6th-8th grade Special Education Teacher at Solano Middle School. Congrats Mr. Bracco!!!

Sheila Gradwohl, President

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How Are My Union Dues Spent?

by Charla Yakabe

For ten months out of the year, most of us rip open our payroll statements and see that more than \$97 is being deducted from our income each month in the name of the Vallejo Education Association. This is the equivalent of a really nice dinner for two—including drinks and dessert—or two tanks of gas. The purpose of this article is to inform VEA members about how their highly valued dues are being utilized.

Currently, a full-time teacher's annual union dues are \$976 (\$97.60 per month for 10 months). Not all of this money goes to VEA, your local association. Your monthly dues are distributed in the following way:

- **\$18.20 goes to NEA** (National Education Association)
- **\$64.40 goes to CTA** (California Teachers' Association)
- **\$15.00 goes to VEA** (Vallejo Education Association)

CTA advocates for teachers at the state level, design professional development opportunities for California educators, and provides legal representation for members when required in work-related situations. NEA is the voice of teachers at the national level.

Your local association, VEA, is required to spend at least 80% of its members' dues directly on members themselves. 20% is spent on endeavors that promote the cause of education in the Vallejo community. Below is a list of ways that your dues are spent.

Expenditures with direct benefits to members (2012-13):

- VEA paid for roughly 40 different members to attend professional development conferences in locations such as Asilomar and UCLA. VEA covers registration fees, transportation, and lodging.
- Maintenance of an office and office manager
- Annual VEA college scholarships are awarded to selected high school seniors who are children of current members.
- Retirement dinner and retiree gifts
- Day of the Teacher (dinner and prizes)
- Chevy's Monday Socials
- VEA Breakfast (before the beginning of the school year)
- Release time for VEA Executive Board members, Committee Chairpersons, and Bargaining Team members to communicate with and inform teachers about issues that affect them
- Food for Site Representative Council meetings, Executive Board meetings, and Site Visits

Other expenditures in support of education (2013-14):

- Helping Hands (annual school supply giveaway)
- Information tables at community events such as Juneteenth or the Pista Nasyon Festival

Want some VEA gear?

Then check out www.cafepress.com/weareeducators

There is a huge selection of shirts, bags, stickers and a lot more!

Check it out and customize your gear!

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 3rd 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@msn.com**](mailto:kmerles@msn.com)

707-208-7055

CTA/NEA Updates

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION 2014 HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS AWARDS

As NEA marks its 48th year of honoring human and civil rights champions, VEA would like your help in identifying exemplary individuals to recognize through the 2014 NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards. The interactive nomination forms, tips sheet, brochure and flyer for the NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards are available online interactively at:

[http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/General Nomination. Application.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/General%20Nomination%20Application.pdf).

You may type your information into the form online, print it and mail it with supporting material. You cannot email the nomination form. **The nomination applications and supporting materials must be postmarked by Tuesday, December 10, 2013.** Brief descriptions of the 12 award categories are attached. The awards will be presented at the 2014 NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner.

Cesar Chavez Accion y Compomiso Human and Civil Rights Award

This award goes to a nominee who follows in the footsteps of Cesar Chavez in philosophy, work and leadership.

Ellison S. Onizuka Memorial Award

This award goes to a nominee whose activities in Asian and Pacific Island affairs have made a significant impact on education and the achievement of equal opportunity for Asians and Pacific Islanders.

George I. Sanchez Memorial Award

This award goes to a nominee whose activities in Hispanic affairs have made a significant impact on education and the achievement of equal opportunity for Hispanics.

H. Councill Trenholm Memorial Award (Black and Non-Black)

This award goes to one Black and one non-Black educator.

Leo Reano Memorial Award

This award goes to a nominee whose activities in Indian/Native affairs have made a significant impact on education and on the achievement of equal opportunity for American Indians/Alaska Natives.

Rosena J. Willis Memorial Award

NEA presents the dual Rosena J. Willis Memorial Award to NEA state and local affiliates that have the most effective or improved human relations programs.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Award

This award goes to a nominee who emulates Dr. King in leadership and philosophy

If you have any questions, feel free to contact the CTA Human Rights Department (650) 552.5313 or at QGill@cta.org.

\$100,000 Available for High School Athletics Through California Casualty's Thomas R. Brown Athletics Grant Program

California Casualty, the CTA-endorsed auto and home insurance vendor, is seeking grant requests for their Thomas R. Brown Athletics Grant program with a \$100,000 pool of funding. Grant applications received through January 15, 2014 will be considered for the next award of grants. Guidelines and application forms can be found at www.calcasathleticsgrant.com

Did you switch school districts this year?

If you moved to a new school district this year, you have a special, limited-time opportunity to apply for CTA-endorsed Disability and Life Insurance from Standard Insurance Company (The Standard). Eligible CTA members who apply within 120 days of starting work in their new jobs can get up to **\$200,000 of Life Insurance** coverage without answering any health questions. You can also get **Disability Insurance**, which can help with everyday bills that continue even when you can't work – like your mortgage and utilities. The CTA-endorsed Disability Insurance plan was specially designed to address the gaps in coverage that many California educators face.

VEA GIVES BACK!

The Executive Board of VEA would like to give a huge thank you to those teachers who were able to donate their time to make this year's event a huge success! It was so great to see how many people we as an association were able to touch just by giving back a little. We were featured on the front page of CTA.org and had a great write up in the Vallejo Times Herald. This year, we were able to serve over 1,000 students with school supplies and books donated from the Friends of the Library. Once again, thank you for making this a huge success!

Straight out of the Vallejo Times Herald dated **October 14, 2013**: To help their hard-hit community and the families they teach, members of the union representing educators in the Vallejo City Unified School District will spend three afternoons this week supplying much-needed school supplies and books that the union is donating to 2,000 Vallejo students. The donating starts Monday, making this the fifth year in a row that educators are helping students with free supplies.

"As educators, we understand that investing in our students and schools means investing in our community's future," said Christal Watts, president of the Vallejo Education Association (VEA), a chapter of the 325,000-member California Teachers Association. "Even though the economy is getting better, many of the families we serve are still struggling in Vallejo. We are proud of this effort to give back and provide just a little bit of extra help by giving school supplies to help our kids in school." Teachers will distribute to students 2,000 bags of pens, pencils, notebooks, coloring pencils, crayons, erasers and bookmarks at four locations in town. In addition, as in previous years, the Vallejo Friends of the Library are donating several hundred books for students to take home and enjoy. Teachers will also be on hand to talk to parents about upcoming events. The Vallejo Education Association spent nearly \$10,000 on its "Helping Hands" community outreach project this year.

Here's what's coming up next...

- 👍 VCUSD Board Meetings: November 6 and November 20. 5pm
- 👍 Rep Council: November 7th – VHS South Campus Library, 4pm – 6pm
- 👍 GLBT Conference, Nov. 15- 17, 2013, Palm Springs, CA
- 👍 Good Teaching Conference, C. 10- 12, 2014, San Jose, CA
- 👍 Issues Conference, Jan. 17-19, 2014, Las Vegas, NV
- 👍 Equity and Human Rights Conference, Feb. 28- Mar. 2, 2014, Irvine, CA
 - Preference for conferences is to those that have never attended a CTA Conference. Please fill out the form on www.myvea.org.

If you go to www.myvea.org, and you have a smart phone, you can directly link VEA's calendar to your calendar. Just click the subscribe button and connect it with your calendar. It will update automatically as new dates are added in. If you do not have a smart phone, please check the calendar on www.myvea.org for upcoming events.

Introducing your Executive Board for VEA...

President: Sheila Gradwohl, Pennycook, s.gradwohl@sbcglobal.net

Vice President: Unfilled Position, Election Coming Soon!

Secretary: Sue Levy, Independent Study, mssuelevy1@aol.com

Treasurer: Leanne Duden, Vallejo Charter School, leanne.duden@gmail.com

Transitional Kinder/Childcare: Loree Tackmier, Glen Cove, loreeT22@hotmail.com

Elementary Directors ... please check www.myvea.org for specific sites:

Dave Henderson, Loma Vista, pac4vea@gmail.com

Kevin Steele, Highland, kmerles@msn.com

Katie Vevoda, Federal Terrace, veaelemdirector@gmail.com

Middle School Director: Katherine Catanzarite, Everest, rete45r@yahoo.com

High School Directors ... please check www.myvea.org for specific sites:

Scott Heinecke, Jesse Bethel High School, scottheinecke@sbcglobal.net

Carol Bishop, Vallejo High School, cairilouise@comcast.net

K - 8 Academies Director: Charla Yakabe, Vallejo Charter School, cyakabe@hotmail.com

Adult School Director: Effie Dudley, Vallejo Adult School, effie_dudley@sbcglobal.net

Special Education Director: Deanna Dunn, Cooper/Widenmann, dspeciald@live.com

~*~*~* **NEW EMAIL CHANGE** ~*~*~*

There is a new email address for

Sheila Gradwohl ~ President of the Vallejo Education Association

myvea4you@gmail.com