

# sdta **HOTLINE**

**August 14, 2014**

**CTA • NEA**

**14/15 – 1**

## **Message from the President**

To our returning members, welcome back to another school year! For our newly hired members (and those of you who still need to join...), welcome to the district. Hopefully I have already gotten an opportunity to meet you at the new teacher luncheon this week. If not, please don't hesitate to stop me in the hall if you see me on your campus. I look forward to getting out to all our sites – including the new Myrtle Street home of East Palo Alto Academy! – to meet you and hear how your years are starting.

*-Edith Salvatore*

## **SDTA WELCOMES EPAA**

East Palo Alto Academy is experiencing a lot of new things in the 2014-15 school year. On July 1<sup>st</sup>, they officially became incorporated into the Sequoia Union High School District as a dependent charter (their charter had been "independent" in previous years) and as such, their certificated employees become part of SDTA's bargaining unit. On top of that, they have also moved to a new SUHSD facility at 1050 Myrtle Street in East Palo Alto. SDTA President Edith Salvatore is scheduled to visit the new EPAA campus on Thursday, August 14<sup>th</sup> to welcome the staff and we look forward to holding elections for site representatives in the near future.

## **CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS**

At the end of the school year last year, SDTA and the district had not yet reached a settlement on the 2014-15 contract and agreed to suspend negotiations until the Fall. We will return to the table on September 16<sup>th</sup>, with another date scheduled in October. Until a new settlement is reached, the current 2013-2014 collective bargaining agreement remains in place, along with the salary schedule from last year. Remember that last year's agreement included a 1.5% off-schedule "bonus" that is not part of this year's salary. While the discussions at the bargaining table are confidential, the written proposals are public. If you are interested in knowing where the proposals stand, please check in with the bargaining team representatives from your sites.

## **NEW DISTRICT GRADING AND COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM**

As you learned from the Superintendent's welcome-back letter, and no doubt had reiterated in the mandatory trainings offered at our first day back, the district is implementing a new Communications Management System, School Loop, to replace the grading and communications components of Infinite Campus. SDTA was involved in a series of committee meetings last spring to preview and discuss the options available in this switch and while the ultimate decision lay entirely with the district, we think the switch to School Loop is one that will benefit our members. That said, we understand the apprehension that many members may have felt upon reading the superintendent's words that "all teachers will be required to use School Loop as of January, 2015" and we want to reassure you that we will be in discussions with the district about the scope and impact of this new requirement prior to its unilateral implementation second semester. Please forward any input or concerns on this topic to your site reps so that they can share them with SDTA leadership.

## **ATTENTION NEW MEMBERS**

As a new employee of the school district and a member of CTA, you are entitled to certain benefits that expire after 120 days of employment. Chief among these is the opportunity to enroll in disability insurance with The Standard without any sort of medical exam or medical background check. This means you can qualify for coverage despite pre-existing conditions if you apply within the first four months of this year. To get more information about this and other benefits available to you, visit <http://www.cta.org/en/Member-Services/Member-Benefits.aspx>

**Don't Forget!**

**Wear your SDTA Shirt or  
Button on Bargaining Days!  
September 16<sup>th</sup>!**

## MEASURE “A” PASSES!

During the hubbub of final exams and graduation, one additional exciting turn of events the first week of June was the passage of Measure A, the school district's facility bond. This bond provides our district with much needed funds to address the needs of our continued population growth. Committees at the sites worked with architects over the summer to get the ball rolling on needed enhancements to our existing sites and that work will continue into the school year. The district has assured SDTA that there is member participation on these committees at all sites, so our members are encouraged to find out who is representing them on building committees and request updates throughout the process. Construction is always disruptive and the more inclusive the planning process the better the end result will be for our members and our students.

An additional facet of the bond is the creation of two small “magnet” schools to help alleviate the anticipated overcrowding at many of our sites. While this is targeted for a later phase of bond implementation, we encourage members who are interested in the theme and focus of these new schools to speak up and give their input to the district and the board of trustees.

## THE “VERGARA” DECISION

Just after school let out, the news was awash with the California Supreme Court decision in the “Vergara” case which purported to improve educational access for students by doing away with the teacher tenure system in place in California. In the months since, similar cases have popped up in New York state and elsewhere across the country. As our members know, this lawsuit has highlighted the wrong problems, proposed the wrong solutions, and followed the wrong process. This lawsuit was not about helping students, but yet another attempt by millionaires and corporate special interests to undermine the teaching profession and push their agenda on California public schools and students.

Rest assured that CTA and its education partners, including the California Federations of Teachers are appealing this decision while we continue to proceed with providing all our students a quality education. There is nothing unconstitutional about these laws and the plaintiffs clearly failed to show

harm to any student. Testimony and research actually showed that experience enhances teacher effectiveness and increases student productivity at all grade levels, and that all three of the issues in this case contribute to better outcomes for students.

Circumventing the legislative process to strip teachers of their due process rights does not improve student learning, makes it harder to attract and retain quality teachers in our classrooms, and ignores all the research that shows experience is a key factor in effective teaching. California's probationary law gives a school administrator two years to determine if a teacher is effective or not. During those first two years a teacher can be fired for no reason at all. Prolonging the probationary period does not benefit students, and would have the unintended effect of keeping ineffective new teachers in classrooms longer.

California's experience-based layoff-system is fair, objective, and the most efficient way for school districts to deal with the unfortunate circumstance of layoffs due to budget cuts or declining enrollment. Current law allows districts to consider student needs and other factors when issuing layoffs. But switching to an “effectiveness”-based system based largely on student standardized test scores, as the plaintiffs advocated, would turn a streamlined system into a logistical nightmare.

California's due process in performance-based dismissal cases helps ensure teachers are not fired for speaking out on behalf of students, or for teaching subjects some find controversial. They allow teachers facing dismissal to present their side of a case, and to have their case heard by objective third parties.

In a related matter, CTA is pleased that in June the state legislature and governor passed AB 215, which updates and streamlines California's teacher discipline and dismissal process, saving the state time and money while protecting students and ensuring an educator's rights to due process.

**Join our Facebook Group for Updates**  
**<http://www.facebook.com/groups/MySDTA>**

### Your SDTA Site Reps:

#### **Carlmont**

Katya Burton  
Connie Dominguez  
Maddie Fox  
Cary Milia\*  
Hai Nguyen  
Carolyn Wade\*  
Kelly Redmon  
(communications)

#### **Menlo-Atherton**

Tim Bowler\*  
Nancy Day  
Karina Escobar-Weaver  
Tania Kranzler\*  
Patrick Maier  
Liane Strub  
(available opening)

#### **Sequoia**

Belén Álvarez-Iglesias  
Debolina Dutta  
Jonathan Hoffman  
Guadalupe Navarrete  
Edith Salvatore\*  
Dylan Shelley\*  
Kate Sheehan

#### **Woodside**

Adele Alvarez  
Rick DeFrancesco  
Greg Gruszynski\*  
Diana House  
Tony Mueller  
Sue Rhodehouse  
Marian Welch

#### **Redwood**

Javier Galaviz  
Mike Martin  
Devon Mullane

**District Office**  
(available opening)

\*bargaining team

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