

SANTA CLARITA STAR

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FALL 2007

SANTA CLARITA VALLEY TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

The Importance of Staying in Touch

TEACHERS MEET WITH CONGRESSMAN TO MAINTAIN LINES OF COMMUNICATION

Santa Clarita Valley Teachers Association chapters have been busy and consistent in their efforts to communicate with state and federal legislators. Local political contacts routinely communicate with state legislators about issues and proposed laws that affect the education community. E-mails are sent, phone calls are made and letters are written, especially in conjunction with CTA efforts to “make contact with lawmakers.”

Just last spring, a group of local teachers joined

with our SCV Uniserv executive director to meet with Congressman Howard “Buck” McKeon at his office in Santa Clarita. The one-hour meeting gave association leaders a chance to provide McKeon with information about the NCLB reauthorization process. Teachers emphasized the need to have multiple measures to assess school success rather than relying on just one test score. McKeon also heard about the importance of using growth models for assessing students, so

measurable improvement is properly recognized. The congressman himself seemed to be aware of the need for different assessment for students with severe disabilities and for ELL students.

Teachers this fall have also communicated with Congressman McKeon by delivering petitions to his office signed by delegates who attended the summer NEA Representative Assembly in Philadelphia. These petitions thank McKeon for his continuing efforts to help

repeal the punitive Government Pension Offset (GPO) and the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) laws. It is these laws, first enacted in the 1970s, that prevent public employees such as teachers from receiving their fully earned Social Security benefits.

Keeping the lines of communication open with elected officials is one way that SCVTA works to make local schools, students, and educators a priority in the legislative arena.

SCVTA Reps Fit in a Little Summer Work

SCVTA chapter leaders and other teachers spent at least part of their “summer session” taking part in a variety of activities to support national, state and local Association goals. In July, Hart, Newhall, and Sulphur Springs chapters sent representatives to the NEA Representative Assembly in Philadelphia. This is the NEA’s national convention and one of the nation’s largest democratically structured decision-making bodies. Thousands of delegates from all over the nation deliberated for many hours each day before voting and setting policy for the NEA for the year.

Closer to home, representatives from Castaic, Hart, Newhall and Sulphur Springs chapters attended either the CTA Presidents Confer-

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SCVTA reps from the Hart, Newhall and Sulphur Springs chapters spent a part of their summer at the NEA’s national convention, the Representative Assembly in Philadelphia.

DISTRICT ROUNDUPS

Hart

The school year started with the annual New Teacher Luncheon, where we welcomed more than 125 new unit members. They will be working at one of our 18 school sites. Construction and renovation finished at some sites, continues at some sites and will start at others as the school year progresses.

Over the summer, Leslie Littman, HDTA president, and Brian Breslin, chief negotiator, represented the association at the annual NEA Representative Assembly in Philadelphia. At the meeting, eight of the presidential candidates spoke to the delegation about their plans for education should they be elected. NEA also presented its plan of action for the reauthorization of NCLB. Littman and Breslin also attended the School Finance Strand at the CTA Summer Institute held at UCLA in August. Joining them at UCLA was Pam Egleston, a member of the bargaining team who attended the Advanced Bargaining Training. They returned with information that will be beneficial as the team negotiates with the district this year.

HDTA also congratulates Sean O'Brien, the Hart District Teacher of the Year. He teaches English at West Ranch High School.

Castaic

A big welcome to our new teachers this year! At Castaic Middle School we have Stacy Furr, Paul Barr, Lina Talukder, Susan Bowen and Wendy Hall. Live Oak Elementary welcomes Beth Wood and Dulce Muga. Northlake Hills Elementary now has Carey Durfee and Aubrie Fairbanks. We'd also like to congratulate Janene Maxon in her new position as the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction.

The year is off to a great start. Back to School Night was a success at the middle school and elementary schools. On

Sept. 9, the sixth grade held "Parent Shadow Night." Castaic Elementary School will hold "Family Fitness Night" on Sept. 19 and Live Oak Elementary will be holding their annual Fall Festival/Cow Plop on Oct. 20.

The ExCEL Program continues to be a success. Many of the major improvements in our students were illustrated in our state scores. Castaic Middle School received 802, Live Oak Elementary received 789, Northlake Hills Elementary received 842 and Castaic Elementary received 828. Ellen Wylder and Carol Carsten will be acknowledged for their contributions to our schools as our guests of honor at an upcoming retirement party to be held on a date to be announced.

We look forward to another successful school year!

Newhall

Welcome Back! There are a lot of new faces in our district — please introduce yourselves and welcome them. Back to School Night was very successful and informative for the parents. Thank you for doing an outstanding and professional job with your presentations. We have a school board election this year; more information will be sent out to each of you. Attending school board meetings can be very informative, so look for the schedule posted at your site. May your year be successful, enriching and rewarding!

Saugus

Superintendent Dr. Judy Fish and Assistant Superintendent of Instruction Joan Lucid will join Saugus Teachers Association President Joan Oxman and Treasurer Maritza de la Cruz at the next meeting of the Teacher Union Reform Network (TURN) to be held Oct. 8–10 in Miami. The ongoing participation in TURN has helped foster the relationship between teachers and administrators in the district, and has

been the basis for ongoing dialogue regarding innovative ideas in education and alternative salary schedules, which could provide teacher-leaders with a career ladder for salary advancement while continuing to teach in the classroom. Association leaders and Saugus administrators have been meeting regularly with the goal of developing a plan for alternative salaries for increased responsibilities. The timeline for the voluntary plan calls for beginning the implementations in the 2008-09 school year. The plan will need to go to the bargaining table and be approved by a vote of members before it can be implemented.

Each September, Saugus teachers hold goal-setting conferences with parents to discuss student strengths and areas in need of improvement. Plans are made to help students meet their goals. It is a huge undertaking for teachers who work long hours gathering work samples and test results for the conferences, but it demonstrates the commitment teachers have in maintaining a strong working partnership with parents.

Sulphur Springs

Welcome Back!

I know for some the first day of school came very early, and others are getting a second chance to set up their classrooms at a new school and grade level. Then there are those who are counting the days until Golden Oak is open next August to help alleviate the overcrowding at Fair Oaks. I have been busy visiting all the school sites during lunch hours and answering questions. I have enjoyed meeting new faces and promise I am taking copious notes. Please feel free to join us at our Rep Council Meetings, which are open to all Sulphur Springs District Teachers Association members.

The next meeting is Oct. 10 at Mitchell School. Meetings begin at 3:45 p.m., with an on-time drawing at 4 p.m. Hope to see you there.

Summer

FROM PAGE 1

ence in Monterey or the CTA Summer Institute at UCLA. The Presidents Conference allows chapter leaders from throughout the state to share their challenges and re-

sponsibilities and offers a variety of training sessions with practical ideas for organizing and serving members at the local level. The Summer Institute is a focused week of intensive education for chapter leaders involved in bargaining, with an

emphasis on understanding the school system and state education budgets.

Right here in Santa Clarita, our SCV Uniserv executive director, Laura Terman, has already offered a negotiations training workshop for Castaic and Saugus chap-

ter participants, to prepare for the 2007-08 bargaining cycle. And so, the process of staying current and educating local Association leadership continues as SCVTA chapters pursue their responsibility of representing all members.

Teacher Tips

The greatest tip for a new teacher is a management tool. This simple technique saves hours of time. First, give each child in the class a student number. Write that number on everything that they use and then on a set of clothes pins, which are used to mark on class charts which student does different classroom jobs. Have the children move their clothes pins when they turn in an assignment. Soon you have a visual record of who is done with a particular assignment. The clothes pins can mark who's in the math groups for the day, allowing for flexible grouping. The uses for classroom numbers are endless. For ideas on how to use numbers, check out Rick Morris' Classroom Management.

— Joan Hasler

*Third grade, Old Orchard,
32 years of experience*

Make two or three positive phone calls to parents about individual student behavior. Parents love to hear positive feedback, and it actually catches the students and the parents by surprise. It also has the added benefit of allowing the teacher to be considered "okay" ...at least for that week!

— Joan Feldner

*Third grade, Mountainview,
35 years of experience*

All teachers, but especially new teachers, should help students be organized. Junior high/middle school students, especially boys, have not yet developed the portion of their brain that helps them organize information. Many times our students have completed assignments but cannot find them when needed. I find AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) methods to be very good for organizational skills. AVID students must keep a very structured notebook that is graded on a regular basis. The notebook rubric can be found on the AVID Web site. The use of Cornell notes is also a very structured system that will help students remain organized.

These methods must be taught by giving examples, guiding them in the process and checking student work.

Some high school students still have not completely developed the organizational portion of their brains. The ability to find completed work and resources provided during class are important to success in school. When material is organized, they are able to focus on higher-level thinking skills — the direction in which we want them to move.

— Michael Ballard

*Social studies, Canyon High,
28 years of experience*

Santa Clarita Voters to Shape School Boards

Tuesday, Nov. 6 is election day for Santa Clarita voters. School board races in two districts — the William S. Hart Union High School District and Newhall Elementary District — have both challengers and incumbents vying for open seats. Candidates have been interviewed by PAC representatives from both the Hart District Teachers PAC and the Santa Clarita Valley Elementary PAC. The chapters that make up the Santa Clarita Valley Teachers Association have taken a prominent role in local school board campaigns for a number of years. For Association endorsements of school board candidates, please go to the SCVTA Web site, www.scvteachers.com. Remember to vote by mail or on election day, Nov. 6.



(From left) Leslie Littman, Suzanne Graff, Nancy Butler, Joan Oxman, Patty Fitzpatrick

Santa Clarita Valley Teachers Association

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Leslie LittmanHart
Nancy ButlerNewhall
Linda MetzgerNewhall ESP
Richard SealNewhall ESP
Joan OxmanSaugus
Patty FitzpatrickSulphur Springs

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