Due to the severe budget cuts, the district has had to make devastating changes. First and foremost, TRUE membership was harshly affected by the teacher lay offs last spring. Now, the district has to consider school closures to reduce the cost of the facility budget, as well as classified lay offs. There was a facility committee formed with more than 25 representatives that included district administrators, teachers, classified employees, parents and community members. There were 17 criteria established from the state guidelines on school closures. TRUE understands that the committee took steps to ensure that the process was as fair as possible from the standpoint of facility use.

After the initial recommendations were made, as recommended by state guidelines, the district scheduled community forums. These forums were to furnish an opportunity for the community to provide input to the recommendations. TRUE leadership attended many of these forums. Members of the public, parents, students and teachers presented the district representatives with suggestions and shared their feelings regarding the initial committee recommendations (see TRUE News Vol. 2 Issue 4). This information will be taken back to the original committee members. They will use this feedback to complete their final recommendations to the superintendent. Then Frank Porter will make his recommendations to the TRUSD board on January 28th. The board will make the final determination. The board of trustees will make their decision public at the February 16th board meeting.

At the January 5th TRUSD board meeting there was a large crowd of people to address the board regarding the school closure process. Before the meeting opened, Trustee Chasten greeted members of the Urban League, the black parallel school board and others from the North Sacramento neighborhood. When asked, she said that she felt they were in attendance to express their concerns with the realignment of the district and how that will in turn affect the achievement of minority students.

Comments by some but not all included the following: James Shelby, mayor of Citrus Heights and past president of the Urban League who helped campaign for and supported the reorganization of the district. Now he has concerns about the members of the school closure committee and is not sure the process was proper. David Deluse, the current president of the Urban League, had supported the unification and ran for school board. He understands the financial situation, but wants academic equity for all students in Twin Rivers. Carl Perkins from the Parallel school board had concerns that the committee did not look at the impact on the achievement gap. Harry Block asked if the district went to the school site councils, did they go to the community, he hoped that they understood how they are affecting the school community in his neighborhood. Many more spoke with similar concerns.

The district will continue to follow the state guidelines and the committee will make their recommendations. There have been many suggested changes, but nothing will be final before the February 16th TRUSD board meeting. If any of the district’s school campuses do close this year, TRUE will negotiate the process of staff transfers in the best interests of the membership.

Joyce Childs
TRUE Secretary
January 13, 2010

At the halfway point of the school year, TRUE is facing many challenges. TRUE decided not to join the District in their application for the Federal Race-to-the Top (RTTT) money. Although we didn’t sign the MOU, the District would still have to bargain with TRUE the implementation of RTTT. The teacher unions from Elk Grove and San Juan signed the application. CTA has recommended not signing it. In any case, this issue won’t go away and it will be revisited along with the re-authorization of NCLB (No Child Left Behind). Also, in negotiations, we believe the District’s number one priority is repressive language related to the evaluation process.

The TRUE officers and negotiators are closely following the 2010 State Budget proposals. As related to K-12, the Governor’s proposal is not as bad as it could be. However, his relying on the Federal government to kick in $6 billion dollars, as part of a “Stimulus 2” package is probably unrealistic.

Another problem we face is school closures. Economically, we see the need for school closures, and philosophically, we understand the need for grade-level reconfigurations, but our foremost concern is protecting the rights of our members, regardless of the School Board’s recommendations. In consultation with the affected educators, we will negotiate with the District the details of the school closures.

John Ennis
TRUE President

Race to the Top - Negotiable!

On Monday, January 11, 2010 an article was written in the Sacramento Bee stating that teachers’ unions were not as powerful as we think we are. It claimed, “We tasted a rare political defeat.” The article referenced how Kevin Johnson and his education adviser Margaret Fortune were instrumental in turning Sacramento High School into a charter school. They were proud of the fact that they got rid of all the union teachers and replaced them with nonunion staff.

Now, there is concern among teachers that this could happen throughout California as the Race to the Top (RTTT) laws begin to take effect. Teachers do not fear! Our unions are still strong in California and the RTTT laws will not be implemented without input from the teachers’ unions across the state, with guidance from CTA. Unfortunately, there is a lot of money at stake and since California is “broke,” this state will not turn down the RTTT money and all of its strings, like the state of Texas did. The Governor needs the support from the teachers’ unions in order for RTTT to be successful. After all, teachers are the ones who will be implementing RTTT after it is finalized. If we do not support RTTT, the program will fail. So, districts need to be sure that teacher’s are a part of the planning and implementation.

Districts were asking teachers’ unions to sign a Memorandum of understanding (MOU) on RTTT without knowing any details on what the implementation would entail. CTA has advised all teachers’ unions in the state to not sign any documents until all the details are clearly spelled out. The RTTT is negotiable. Some of the areas that most likely will be negotiated are: changes to evaluation procedures, hours of employment, school calendars and days, transfer and reassignment policies, class sizes, salary and other compensation and professional development. Our TRUE negotiations team will be working to ensure that your rights are protected.

Ann Murray
TRUE News Editor

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Visit our website: www.trueassociation.org
Race To The Top Presents Radical Changes

U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, heads federal policy for the federal Race to the Top (RTTT) grant which directs how additional funds may come to school districts. From my research on RTTT, it is not in our member’s best interest to shoot further holes in our evaluation and retention policies. I encourage all teachers to educate themselves about RTTT and the radical changes found in this new policy.

Can you imagine evaluating teachers on two uniquely different sets of students? If implemented, you could lose your job because you’ve been asked to move to a chronically underperforming school because administration feels you are a better fit for that school. Can you imagine being deemed a highly effective teacher at a 800+ API school one year, and then the next year being transferred by an administrator to a sub-performing API school, labeled “ineffective” and then given your pink slip. Duncan’s proposals would seem to indicate you cannot, but I personally have experienced the latter scenario which had little to do with my skills as a teacher.

I see Duncan’s philosophy as wrong for TRUE. Our administrators would use the RTTT federal grant however THEY felt best to support THEIR mission. Year after year I see report card committees, calendar committees, and superintendent representative council meetings being given the premise that there is TRUE input from our members. The district has a mission that runs through us, not in alliance with us.

I don’t appreciate Mr. Duncan’s finger pointing when many teachers have a passion for educating our youth but have obstacles in their way. Passion is lost when you cannot keep up with the onslaught of math test pacing. Passion is lost when you feel report card revisions are directed by those who are not in a classroom. Passion is lost when the façade of a teacher forum with the Superintendent is another avenue to promote the district’s mission statement. Passion is lost when you see the Twin Rivers Community Report with administrators in photos teaching classes when the reality is their time is spent out of classrooms.

One specific statement Duncan’s article in the January / February 2010 issue of NEA Today read, “In district after district, more than 95 percent of teachers are rated good or superior, even in schools that are chronically under-performing year after year.” It is implied then that Duncan feels you cannot have 95% of teachers being rated as good or superior educators. The “X” factor withheld in his argument is that we do not live in a society that existed up and through the mid 1960s. Family dynamics are not similar to what they were 40+ years ago. Many of our elementary and secondary students are in latch key homes and these parenting issues place burdens on schools which negatively affect education today and cloud the true reasons for failing students. Our district should look to solve real issues, not chase after grants that do nothing to fix the problems.

Rick Mau
TRUE Treasurer

Education In The News:

Governor Announces Texas Will Not Participate In Race To The Top

The AP (1/14) reports that Texas Gov. Rick Perry (R) said that the state will not "compete for up to $700 million in federal stimulus money for education because the program smacks of a federal takeover of our public schools." Surrounded by "representatives of teachers' unions" and Texas Education Commissioner Robert Scott, Perry said at a press conference Wednesday that "taking the money would force the state to adopt national education and testing standards and result in Texas losing its autonomy in educating children. The governor also noted that under state and local control schools in Texas are excelling standardized scores are up, the dropout rate is down and Texas has been recognized as one of only four states that is closing the achievement gap in math."
January 12, 2010

Race to the Top Bills Miss Mark, Bring More Mandates to Schools

Looking for media sound bites rather than good school policy, California lawmakers approved and the Governor signed two bills designed to help California apply for federal Race to the Top funds. CTA opposed both of these bills, SBx5 1 and SBx5 4 as they went far beyond the requirements for RTTT and will drain scarce resources from lower-performing schools, lower standards for teacher credentialing and create chaos for local school districts.

Thanks to the lobbying efforts of CTA and the phone calls to lawmakers from all of you some of the most disingenuous provisions of the bills were reduced and limited to a smaller number of schools. CTA supports, welcomes and encourages parental involvement in our schools. Unfortunately, these bills encourage abandonment, rather than involvement in creating quality public schools for all kids. Once again lawmakers passed legislation without thinking about how it would be implemented in local school districts, and our students and teachers will be forced to live with the consequences.

The state has also failed to release a full or final version of California’s Race to the Top plan. Without those details, CTA recommended that local chapters not sign the state’s RTTT Memorandum of Understanding. Local chapters should be assured that because of language CTA secured in the state MOU, districts must bargain over RTTT implementation, regardless of whether or not the local association signs the MOU. California must submit its RTTT application by January 19.

Governor’s Hollywood Budget

It’s certainly not the beautiful magic that James Cameron created with “Avatar”, but the governor’s proposed state budget for 2010-11 is definitely a land of make-believe. Filled with more gimmicks and funding tricks, the governor’s promise to “protect” public education will cost K-12 schools and community colleges more than $2.4 billion in additional budget cuts. He proposes to increase funding for higher education by privatizing state prisons and eliminating union jobs. While another budget fantasy relies on the federal government to give California more than $6 billion to offset the state’s $21 billion deficit.

Rather than smoke and mirrors, and more cuts to public schools, it’s time for real changes to the state’s tax structure, and those start with repealing the corporate tax breaks that were handed out to big businesses last year. In these tough economic times, everyone should be paying their fair share.

In addition, the governor is again mixing policy proposals into his budget package with a series of changes that would make it harder to recruit and retain quality teachers, including changes to seniority rights and layoff notification processes. These proposals will not save one dime and do not belong in the budget proposal.

Campaign 2010

More than 60 initiatives have been filed for the November 2010 election, including proposals that would reduce our secure retirement benefits and limit our participation in the political process. CTA has filed an initiative that would repeal three tax breaks given to corporations last year. The State Council of Education, CTA’s governing body, will decide if CTA moves forward with this initiative at their meeting later this month.

Institute for Teaching Launches Learning and Resource Center

Need resources and tools to develop lesson plans and set strategic goals for your classroom? Be sure and check out the new Learning and Resource Center from the CTA Institute for Teaching at www.teacherdrivenchange.org. Whatever your grade level or subject matter, the IFT has books and resources for you. The IFT has joined with Amazon.com to provide hundred of books, materials and classroom supplies that have been selected and grouped into three Learning and Resource Centers: Professional Development, Elementary Education and Secondary Education.
**Negotiations Update**

On Tuesday, December 15th, the TRUE Negotiations Team met with the Twin Rivers Negotiations Team to "sunshine" articles for re-openers for the 2010-2011 school year. In our contract articles 4 (work day/work year), 14 (salary) and 15 (benefits) are automatically reopened. Each side is entitled to open up three additional articles.

The district decided to open up two articles, 9 (Department Chairs/stipends) and 10 (evaluations). The TRUE Negotiations Team, based on the membership survey, opened up articles 7 (class size), 8 (transfers) and 11 (discipline). The "sunshining" of articles should be on the board agenda for January 5 and must stay open for a thirty day time period. We are able to begin negotiations anytime after the thirty day window closes.

*Paul Le Francois*
TRUE Lead Negotiator

**Elections Update**

There are several elections that must take place before the school year ends. First, TRUE will have two open **CTA State Council** seats. Each seat will have a three year term that expires in 2013. Timelines and declarations of candidacy forms will be available January 26, 2010 both on the TRUE website and at the Site Council meeting. The second election will be for the **NEA Representative Assembly**. Timelines and declaration of candidacy forms will be available in February. The final election will be for **TRUE Directors-at-Large**. Seats will be available for Directors of: preschool, K-6 regular education, 7-12 regular education, K-12 special education, and specialty groups. Each seat will have a two year term. Timelines and declaration of candidacy forms will be available in March.

*Julianne Neal*
TRUE Elections Chair

**“The Political Mind”**

Interested in learning more about politics? Then this is the event for you. Come out and join the Democratic Party of Sacramento County through the Farm Team Committee when it presents *The Political Mind*, an event for all interested in learning the basics of running for political office and beginning to get involved in the further development and integrity of the community. There will be speakers, including Cortez Quinn, a short educational presentation, and pizza. The event is January 30, 2010 at 12:00 p.m. at Straw Hat, off E. Commerce Way.

**TRUSD Payroll/Benefits Manager Speaks to TRUE Site Representatives**

The **TRUSD Payroll and Benefits Manager**, Kimbely Barnett, was the guest speaker at the November Site Representative Council meeting. She was invited to respond to Site Rep questions and to explain some changes that are taking place in payroll and benefits. The time cards for teachers, as well as for classified, is one change. Kim explained that in past years there has been fraud in recording leaves. This should be solved now that everyone is filling out a time card. CalPers medical coverage areas have changed. New packets were sent out to all members stating this change. If you live in Davis or Yolo County, your region is now in the bay area. The tax shelter annuities (TSA) is a huge issue. The district and Great American are both at fault and are trying to fix the problem. Accounts were closed by some of the 403b companies and funds were returned to the District, but refund checks came without a detail of names of the owners of those funds. Many of those refunds still need to be distributed to the right investment companies or owners. Great American has stated in writing that they will be responsible to cover some of the losses caused by issues with 403bs, but at TRUE’s request CTA has assigned a lawyer to help TRUE members having problems with their 403b accounts. Check your investment statements for errors!

If you have questions about payroll and benefits, send an e-mail to Kimbely.Barnett@twinriversusd.org.

*Ann Murray*
TRUE News Editor
The Achievement Gap

Last summer TRUE created the concept of our Professional Development Committee to organize local workshops/trainings and recommend CTA conferences to encourage membership participation. TRUE wants to support the membership to be actively involved in affecting changes that will help the students in the Twin Rivers Unified School District achieve their highest potential and close the “achievement gap.”

Trustee Alecia Chasten has regularly asked that the district address the issue of the achievement gap at TRUSD board meetings. The district has presented statistics covering the gap within the Twin Rivers Unified School District. Mrs. Chasten has continued to ask for a presentation on the strategies that will help close the gap between minority students and their white classmates.

Most of the educators in the Twin Rivers neighborhoods have attended conferences or training regarding strategies to close the achievement gap. As educators our members know that the achievement gap is a result of multiple variables. Students need well-designed and well-implemented after school programs that provide quality instruction. There should be a variety of programs to reach out to all interests not just remedial strategies. The students need educators that have knowledge of their subject, that posses effective pedagogic strategies and the ability to establish a relationship with their students. Educators also need to remember that young people value success in academic achievement, but they value peer approval even more. All of these factors must be considered when developing programs to meet the needs of students that fall behind their peer groups.

TRUE would like to work to form a committee of members who would be interested in researching current strategies that can effectively improve student achievement. Testing subgroups are not going to go away. As a district the TRUE members already know that we must work together to provide the best education our students can receive.

If you are interested in joining this group please email TRUE at jensmith@trueassociation.org to help form our first professional development committee to work toward closing the achievement gap in TRUSD. This committee will be chaired by Jeannie Stockton.

Joyce Childs
TRUE Secretary

Open Meeting of the NEA Resolutions Committee

The California Delegates to the NEA Resolutions Committee met in mid-January to plan the year’s activities and to conduct a Resolutions hearing. TRUE member Chuck Denonn was one of the 18 California representatives to the NEA Resolutions Committee to attend the meeting. He was elected last July to represent all TRUE members and the thousands of other Sacramento-area teachers. The committee members spent considerable time working to improve language on a number of issues including charter schools and alternative compensation.

NEA Resolutions are the formal expressions of opinion, intent, belief, or position of the NEA. Broad in nature, they set forth general concepts in clear, concise language. They express positions of the NEA positively, consistent with the goals set forth in the Preamble to the NEA Constitution. NEA Committee members will use the input of members made at local and regional hearings to develop the Preliminary Report of the NEA Resolutions Committee at the winter meeting in Washington, in February. The report will be voted on by delegates to the annual Representative Assembly.

Any member can request that NEA take a position on matters related to education by attending a hearing or working directly with a committee member. In addition to the January Hearing, a local hearing was held in conjunction with the most recent Capital Service Center Council meeting, and a regional hearing was held in conjunction with the Region 2 Leadership Conference last October. Another Open Hearing will be held in conjunction with the NEA Pacific Region Meeting in March. Members can also contact Chuck Denonn directly to make recommendations for changes to the NEA Resolutions Report. He can be reached at (916)765-2431 or by e-mail: edenonn@peoplepc.com.

Chuck Denonn
NEA State Delegate
CARS+ Meeting

On December 3, 2009, the first ever “Day of the Special Educator” was celebrated in California. Special education teachers in the Twin Rivers Unified School District celebrated this historic event by holding their first official CARS+ meeting. CARS+ is the acronym for the California Association of Special Educators, the only organization whose sole purpose is to represent the unique needs of resource specialists and other special education teachers. Members of CARS+ have the opportunity to benefit from training, networking and professional development provided by the organization. While CARS+ represents special educators, ALL educators are welcome to join.

Twin Rivers has established its own chapter of this professional organization, and is proud to be the newest chapter in the state. The president of the Twin Rivers chapter is Joyce Childs who will be appointed as a director to the CARS+ board representing Region 7 at their conference in February.

The first meeting was attended by many special education personnel from Twin Rivers. The guest speaker was Dee Torrington, the current director of Region 7. She presented information on their annual conference which will be held in San Diego from February 19-20. A raffle was held and various prizes were handed out including two annual memberships that were donated by TRUE. The winners of those were Roslyn Johnson and Alicia Sansing.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 10, location to be determined. Please contact Joyce Childs (joyandmic@sbcglobal.net) for more information on this organization.

Christine Moran
TRUE Member

First TRUE Scholarships Awarded

At the Site Representative Council meeting on December 1, 2009 the TRUE Scholarship Committee presented two scholarship checks to the selected recipients, Krysten Neal and Amy Berry. The two awardees gave a brief explanation of what they were to use the scholarship money for.

Krysten Neal, daughter of TRUE member Julieanne Neal, explained that she is enrolled at Sierra College in the field of counseling/psychology. She wants to help improve the lives of others. TRUE hopes that Krysten will one day return to Twin Rivers to help the children that encompass our district. Our best wishes go with you, Krysten.

Amy Berry is currently a Kindergarten teacher at Babcock Elementary. She will be using her scholarship to get her National Teaching Certificate. TRUE hopes that Amy continues to use her knowledge and skill toward her wonderful Kindergarten students. Together with Amy and TRUE, we will continue to “inspire our children and our teachers” each day!

In the spring, the Scholarship Committee will be opening applications for the 2010 Year. We encourage all TRUE members and their children to consider applying. Watch for the posting of the announcement on our website: www.trueassociation.org

Dawn Walker
Scholarship Committee Chair
TRUE TEAM:

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- Secretary: Joyce Childs - joyandmic@sbcglobal.com
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- Chuck Denonn
- Mark Hales
- Kristin Finney
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- Bob Wadman
- Chris Moran

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TRUE/CTA/NEA

Calendar of Events

January 26......Site Rep Council Meeting @ CTA
January 28......Special TRUSD School Board Meeting @ Bay A
January 29-31...CTA State Council @ Los Angeles
February 05......Sacramento Kings Teacher Appreciation Night
February 02......TRUSD School Board Meeting @ Bay A
February 08......Due date for Newsletter Articles
February 09......TRUE Executive Board Meeting
February 15-19...No School, President’s Week
February 16......TRUSD School Board Meeting @ Bay A
February 26-28...CTA Urban Issues Conference