Negotiations Update

At the negotiations session on October 7, the District asked for the following concessions from our membership:

1. 18% cut in all stipends.
2. 4 additional furlough days for a total of 7.5.
3. A benefit deduction of $50 for employee, $100 employee + 1 and $200 for family (monthly).
4. $1,500 pay cut for all members starting in 2011-2012.

The District turns in a budget to the county for three years out and they are facing a negative balance for 2012-2013. Their hope is that we will make concessions which will help turn around the deficit spending over the next few years. At the present time, the TRUE Executive Board is not willing to make concessions for the 2010-2011 school year.

Paul LeFrancois
TRUE Lead Negotiator

PAC Event: Meet the CTA Endorsed Candidates

On Wednesday, September 29, 2010 from 5:00pm-7:00 p.m. the Twin Rivers United Educators Political Action Committee (TRUE PAC) sponsored a Candidate Night with CTA endorsed candidates. The candidates that attended were: Chris Parker (Board of Equalization District 2), Dr. Richard Pan (Assembly District 5), and Dr. Ami Bera (Congressional District 3).

Each of the candidates spent part of the evening mingling with members introducing themselves, asking questions, and offering their possible solutions. It was a great opportunity to get a real impression of the candidates and their platforms. The evening ended with each of the three candidates addressing the group and emphasizing their ideas.

PAC would like to thank the TRUE members who attended, and hope it helped in your voting decision. Remember that teachers and their Unions are under attack by the media, so we need to support those candidates who are supportive of our issues. Don’t forget to vote November 2, 2010.

Lisa Gant
TRUE PAC Chair
President’s Message

October 15, 2010

As most of you know, negotiations with the District have reached an all-time low. Despite the fact we are one quarter through the school year, the District is asking for concessions for 2010-2011. Our Bargaining Team has consistently said NO. We believe the District had a beginning reserve balance of $35 million dollars at the start of this school year. On September 24, 2010 the District received 5.2 Million dollars from the Federal Jobs Bill. TRUE is entitled to 54% of those monies. The money has to be spent by September 2012, but could be used Spring 2011 to offset any potential lay-offs.

The state budget for education is becoming clearer. The legislature has suspended Prop. 98, a minimum funding guarantee. However, the per-pupil spending rate has gone up about $250 per student. The District has plenty of money to reduce class sizes, increase transportation, and re-hire classified employees. TRUE has lost all patience with the financial smoke screen.

John Ennis
TRUE President

CTA Region II Leadership Conference

California Teachers Association Region 2 Leadership Conference took place October 1st to 3rd at the Grand Sierra Resort in Reno, Nevada. TRUE sent seven teachers to this conference. Attendees to the conference had the opportunity to take workshop classes on bargaining, building strong locals, communications, community outreach, human rights, health care, instruction and professional development, school finance, legal rights, and political & legislative action. Members also had the opportunity to participate in the CTA phone bank in support of Jerry Brown, Tom Torlakson, and Proposition 24. Articles written by the conference attendees are included in this publication.

Julianne Neal
TRUE Director-at-Large for Elementary

Supplementing Your Retirement

“If I only knew then, what I know now.” These are words too often spoken the closer one gets towards retirement. One session I attended during the Leadership Conference was titled: “The Importance of Supplementing Your Retirement with 403(b) and 457 Plans”. Now I do not claim to be an expert in this area, but I do know that a steady and consistent contribution to the plan of your choice will certainly help pay the bills when you enter your retirement years.

We are in the era of pension plan attacks, teachers are not able to collect on a deceased spouse’s Social Security, and the financial outlook for our state is grim to say the least. Politicians are debating the need to get rid of Medicare as I am typing this article. The real focus is that we need to not expect our teacher’s retirement to be adequate to cover our living expenses years down the line and we need to be more diligent than ever to protect our financial future.

So, seek advice from your own financial advisor or from CTA (visit www.ctainvest.org) and begin to plan for your future.

Jeanie Stockton
TRUE Director-at-Large for Elementary
An Editorial by Joyce Childs

I have spent a great deal of time attending meetings, reading press articles, and talking with employees in Twin Rivers Unified School District. Early on my intention was to make sure that teachers had a voice in the new district. As time wore on I started sending out updates so people who could not attend all the meetings and read Board packets would have a sense of what was happening. After I was elected as an officer to the TRUE Executive Board I continued to send out updates. Then I started to hear claims that my updates could be considered official TRUE communication. This is not the case, but I have cut way back on my updates due to these claims. People have started to ask why I am not sending out my notes. So when you see Joyce’s notes in your email, realize these are not official TRUE communications.

TRUE is hearing concerns from members about many issues. My greatest disappointment with the district involves the class size numbers. The original intent of the district was to keep class sizes at reasonable numbers. When TRUE approaches the district they usually quote class size averages based on district wide numbers. This does not answer how we are to accept neighboring schools with very different teaching environments. We are told that the district transportation is hindering them from balancing the differences by making overflow transfers.

The district has said for three years that the declining enrollment would have a financial affect on the staffing of the district. The district has released and not recalled 135 tenured and temporary TRUE members since the inception of Twin Rivers. Last year TRUE was told the district had projected a decline of more than 1,000 students for this school year, when in reality the numbers indicate we have over 500 more students this year than last year. A recent report at a TRUSD Board meeting clearly stated that Twin Rivers is down 168 students since the first day we became a new school district in Sacramento. So the numbers are.... We are down 168 students and 135 TRUE members since we became Twin River Unified School District.

Joyce Childs
TRUE Secretary

Can we really have spent THIS much on THAT?

At our most recent Site Rep Council meeting in September, I was asked to report to members concerning the appalling amount of funds (nearly 10 percent of last year’s annual budget) spent on legal fees associated with last May’s layoffs.

TRUE spent over $32,000 of members’ dues on attorney fees related to the hearings. CTA also picked up over 50% of our attorney costs, so last year’s legal fees totaled well over $64,000. I’m sure the district’s costs were even greater in these cost-cutting times.

I was directly impacted by the recent layoffs as were many members. I was unnecessarily laid off, sat through those hearings, and then rehired. TRUE President Ennis kept on telling the School Board that the district couldn’t possibly remove the number of teachers the district’s lawyer and Human Resources were so adamant to layoff on May 11, 2010. I am also aware of the fact that we are “not” a school district suffering drastically declining enrollment. We are a school district suffering from drastically declining educators with no class size caps.

If the past two years of this lighthouse district’s history regarding layoffs are any indication of the future, Spring 2011 will once again bloom unnecessary burdens and costs for us all.

Rick Mau
TRUE Treasurer

“A vision without action is but a dream. Action without vision is a waste of time; but vision with action can change our lives.”

M. Ignacio Tinajero
1995 Texas Teacher of the Year
What is CSCC?

The Capital Service Council Center (CSCC) is the link between our Local Association (TRUE) and CTA State Council. CSCC meets four times per year to discuss the business of CTA Members and makes recommendations for State Council (the policy making body of CTA; 800 elected Reps from across the state). TRUE has four elected Reps: Chuck Denonn, Janet Schafer, Kerri Asbury and Wendy Gallimore. TRUE member Ann Murray is a Minority-at-Large Representative of State Council.

CSCC provides trainings for local associations and members which include topics such as leadership, treasurers training, legal rights, ethnic minority training and elections. Keep your eyes open for upcoming events. Visit www.ctascsc.org.

CSCC also provides members with scholarship opportunities to CTA conferences around the state. Applications are due October 29th, 2010. You received an email about them. If you do not meet the deadline, consider applying for a conference next year.

At the Region 2 Leadership Conference, October 1-2, 2010, the CSCC meeting on Saturday talked about what union membership can do for you. CSCC is an integral part of keeping our members informed, trained and mobilized to support each other in education. CSCC meetings are where members have an opportunity to give input on the CTA Budget during the Budget Hearings held each fall. There is power in numbers. Get involved. Ask to attend Service Center General Meeting and come to a training.

Wendy Gallimore
CSCC Secretary

Surviving Parental Complaints

At one time or another, every teacher will need to respond to a parental complaint, whether the complaint is founded or not. According to the “Parental Complaints! OMG” training offered at the CTA Region 2 Conference, the secret to surviving is being prepared.

The first step is to build protections from parental complaints into the contracts, preferably one that ends in binding arbitration. Contracts should have one, not multiple complaint procedures. Members should adopt and publicly promote the position that the association supports the school district in carrying out its educational program and student discipline. Also, members should not tolerate administrative behavior that encourages complaints from parents, students, or the public.

Teachers also need to practice protective behaviors. We should teach defensively—like every other professional. Always return parent phone calls, and document the contacts and nature of the discussions. If students misbehave, discipline them using the school’s or district’s established policies. Practice positive public relations and develop regular communication strategies. Teachers should expect student and parent complaints, so follow school and district directives. Try to remember that you have the parent’s pride and joy, the best they have to send you.

If a serious complaint comes to you from an administrator, seek the advice from your TRUE representative before responding. Remember that anything you say will be used against you, so get advice before you speak. If you get a “see me” note, bring union representation. TRUE members are entitled to have a union representative at meetings with supervisors that are investigatory or that could lead to disciplinary action. Exercise your right to that representation! Pocket-cards with the Weingarten Right, the right to representation, are available at the TRUE office.

Occasionally school employees face charges of misconduct which could form the basis for dismissal, credential revocation, or criminal prosecution. Employees facing such charges need competent legal counsel immediately. Keep a diary of all communications from anyone about the situation, and store this at your home. Do not talk to the police. If the police wish to talk to you, insist on legal representation. Do not share information about the problem with everyone. This opens the legal door, so only discuss the details with the CTA legal team or your spouse. Don’t be misled by school officials who say, “Nothing will happen to you if you will just tell them about the situation.” Finally, do not make any decision about your job until you consult with your lawyer. School employees should contact a TRUE Rep and consult an attorney before making any deals or taking any action which could jeopardize either their employment or their credential. if you feel you need a referral to a CTA lawyer, e-mail the TRUE office (true.office@yahoo.com). Remember, CTA cannot provide a lawyer if you resign.

Julianne Neal
TRUE Director-at-Large for Elementary
At its core, the grievance process is a system for resolving disputes, specifically those that can best be addressed through the parties’ collective bargaining agreement (contract) or past practices. The process involves four individuals or groups: the person alleging a violation of the contract or past practice, the advocate (usually a site rep) providing assistance to the bargaining unit member, the Association leadership, and the District representatives.

Narrowly defined, a grievance is “an allegation by one or more members of the bargaining unit or by the Association that a member has been adversely affected by the employer’s violation, misinterpretation, or misapplication of a specific provision of the collective bargaining agreement.” Although many grievances relate to specific contract language, a grievance may be based on a deviation from past practice. This is especially true with respect to work day, work year issues. When the employer changes the duties of the member by adding requirements to his/her job duties, the member has the right to challenge those changes as violations of past practice. Many TRUE members have voluntarily waived their contract protections by complying with such changes without resorting to the grievance process to verify the right of the District to mandate such changes.

Some complaints of members result from the employer’s violation, misinterpretation, or misapplication of state and/or federal law, and/or of School Board policies, regulations, and/or District practices. These issues may be aired through the grievance process but will be settled through other Association action or the resolution of a complaint as required by state and federal regulations.

Members usually view the grievance situation as one in which they have been treated improperly or unfairly by the employer for whatever reason and that this treatment must be stopped, regardless of what means. Part of the Association representative’s duty is to make the initial determination and distinction between a complaint or issue and a grievance. It is most probably a grievance if a specific provision of the contract can be cited as violated. It is still a probable grievance when contract language is less clear, but a past practice has been changed or modified without Association concurrence.

When the nature of the issue is unclear with respect to being a grievance or complaint, the member should be encouraged to proceed with the grievance process. The Contract Enforcement Committee and Association leadership have more experience and will assist in making the determination. It’s better for the Association to take a member’s case to an Administrative Judge to render the legal decision, than to allow the District to rewrite the contract without negotiating new language through the bargaining process. In the Twin Rivers District, arbitrator decisions are the only binding interpretations of the contract. Until that time, TRUE will energetically pursue members’ claims that their rights have been violated.

Chuck Denonn
TRUE Contract Enforcement Committee Chair

Catastrophic Leave Bank

Thank you to all the TRUE members who signed up for the Catastrophic Leave Bank this enrollment period. We now have about 240 members. The sick day contribution for this year will be deducted from your November 30th paycheck. If you need to use the Catastrophic Leave Bank, please fill out a “Withdrawal from Bank” form and turn it into the TRUE office. This form can be found on the TRUE website: www.trueassociation.org.

Sharon Reichelt
Catastrophic Leave Bank Chair

TRUE Members in Action

TRUE members are at work to get out the vote for CTA endorsed candidates. TRUE President John Ennis and TRUE Secretary Joyce Childs have walked precincts for Ami Bera. Wendy Gallimore has walked with Alyson Huber. Aaron Chan, Maria Elena Gallegos, Paul Le Francois, Chris Moran, Julieanne Neal, Jeannie Stockton, and Chuck Denonn have already made more than 2,000 phone calls for Jerry Brown and Tom Torlakson. Members still have time to help elect these education friendly candidates.
President Barack Obama Presses for Longer School Years

President Obama issued a tough-love message to students and teachers. The school year should be longer and poorly performing teachers should get out.

The president is seeking to revive a sense of urgency that education reform may have lost amid the recessions focus on the economy. He says the future of the country is at stake.

“American students are falling behind some of their foreign counterparts, especially in math and science, and that’s got to change.” Whether jobs are created here, high end jobs that support families and support the future of the American people is going to depend on whether or not we can do something about these schools,” the President said in an interview on NBC’s Today Show.

U.S. schools, kindergarten through high school, offer an average of 180 instruction days per year compared to an average of 197 days for lower grades and 196 days for upper grades in countries with the best student achievement levels like Japan, South Korea, Germany and New Zealand.

“That month makes a difference,” the President said, “it means that kids are losing a lot of what they learn during the school year during the summer. It is especially severe for poor kids who may not see as many books in their homes during the summers; these children are not getting as many educational opportunities.”

Extending the school year comes down to money. It costs money to keep kids in school, although it would be money well spent, cash strapped states and districts can’t afford it. Pay for the teachers needs to be considered. If teachers work more they should be paid more. In the state of Kansas sporadic efforts by local districts to extend the school year, at a few schools, have been met by parental resistance. The communities were not ready for an extended school year. Parents were not ready for kids to be in school all summer long. Kids wanted to go swimming and their families wanted to go on vacation.

Obama said teachers and their profession should be more highly honored as in China and some other countries. He also said he wanted to work with the teachers unions. But he also said that unions should not defend a status quo in which one-third of children are dropping out. He challenged teachers not to be resistant to change. He endorsed the firing of teachers who once given the chance and the help to improve, are still falling short.

Information taken from Yahoo News article by Erica Werner, Associated Press writer
CTA Initiative Recommendations
November 2010 General Election

CTA SUPPORTS
Prop. 24 – Tax Fairness Act
Prop. 25 – Passing the Budget On Time Act of 2010
Prop. 21 – State Parks and Wildlife Trust Fund Act of 2010
Prop. 27 – Financial Accountability in Redistricting Act

CTA OPPOSES
Prop. 18 – State Water Bond
(Legislature expected to postpone until 2012)
Prop. 20 – Congressional Redistricting
Prop. 22 – Taxpayer Giveaways Initiative
Prop. 23 – Dirty Energy Act
Prop. 26 – Polluter Protection Act

Elementary Teachers Meeting

The first elementary teachers’ meeting took place Wednesday, October 13 at the TRUE office. Several elementary teachers from around the district met with TRUE Directors-at-Large for Pre-K - Grade 6 to discuss concerns they are having. While many issues were discussed, a few seemed to be most common among those in attendance. At the top of list was the large class sizes and the resulting negative impact on student learning. Those in attendance expressed fear that they will not be able to meet the needs of each student with so many students in the classrooms. The classes are too full of desks, and this makes it hard to physically reach all students. Teachers at the meeting would like to see class size caps put back in place. Another common issue was the lack of cleanliness in the classrooms this year because of custodial staff reductions. Some sites have not been vacuumed since last June! Trash is not being emptied. Teachers were upset at being asked to do more with the higher class size and then being asked to do the custodians’ job as well. Furthermore, rooms are being left alone, unlocked for several hours after school. Classroom materials and computers could be stolen, or rooms vandalized. Finally, teachers are concerned with the lack of prep time to complete all the extra tasks associated with larger class sizes and less support staff. Teachers expressed concerns that the district just does not care about the needs of their teachers.

The full list of elementary issues discussed will be presented to the TERC (Twin Rivers Employee Relations Council) and discussed with School Board members. However, if we want things to improve, teachers will need to ORGAN-IZE. Please look for information from our organizing team, and volunteer to help out.

Our next Elementary Teachers Meeting is scheduled for December 9, 2010. The location is still to be determined, for we would like to have the meetings at different schools around the district. If you would like to volunteer your classroom for one of these meetings, send an e-mail to julieanneneal1@surewest.net. Please join us as we work to improve working conditions for all teachers.

Julianne Neal
TRUE Director-at-Large for Elementary

TRUE CARS+ CORNER

The state of California has declared December 3rd the Day of the Special Educator. TRUE CARS is planning on hosting an event that will celebrate all members that work with students in Special Education. The chapter plans on inviting members to come and meet. Look for more information to come.

TRUE CARS will also be working with the parent association to insure the CARS+ convention next February in Sacramento is a success. Special Education teachers from throughout the state will come to our neighborhood to work together to collaborate with colleagues. The CARS+ convention will include presenters from Twin Rivers United Educators as well as other professionals within the field of Special Education.

Joyce Childs
CARS+ Region 7 Director
EXECUTIVE BOARD:

OFFICERS:
- President: John Ennis - true.office@yahoo.com
- Vice-President: Kristin Finney - pazgirlk@yahoo.com
- Secretary: Joyce Childs - joyandmic@sbcglobal.com
- Treasurer: Rick Mau - rickmau@trueassociation.org

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE:
- For Pre-K - Grade 6: Julieanne Neal - julieanneneal1@surewest.net, Sharon Reichelt - sreichelt23@gmail.com, Jeanie Stockton - davejavu1@comcast.net, Lisa Gant - lisasring@sbcglobal.net
- For Grades 7-12: Paul Le Francois - lefrancois1@earthlink.net, Chuck Denonn - cdenonn@peoplepc.com
- K-12 Special Ed.: Chris Bach - bacher3@aol.com
- Minority Rep.: Aaron Chan - achan19@yahoo.com
- Specialty Groups: Maria E. Gallegos - gallegos4@gmail.com

NEGOTIATIONS TEAM
- Lead Negotiator: Paul Le Francois - lefrancois1@earthlink.net, Michelle Dice-Hodgdon - chris.moran@trueassociation.org, Patty Reetz

CONTRACT ENFORCEMENT (Grievances)
- Chuck Denonn - cdenonn@peoplepc.com
- Paul Le Francois - lefrancois1@earthlink.net
- Ann Murray - annblowmurray@earthlink.net
- Sharon Reichelt - sreichelt23@gmail.com

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
- Committee Chair: Julieanne Neal - julieanneneal1@surewest.net

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE (PAC)
- Committee Chair: Lisa Gant - lisasring@sbcglobal.net

TRUE Reps on the Employee Relations Council (TRERC)
- John Ennis, Paul Le Francois, Chuck Denonn, Mark Hales, Chris Moran, Kathy King, Shirley Chambers

CTA STATE COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES
- Janet Schafer, Kerri Asbury, Chuck Denonn, Wendy Gallimore, Ann Murray, Alternate: Catherine Roller

TRUE NEWS
- Editors: Ann Murray - annblowmurray@earthlink.net, Julieanne Neal - julieanneneal1@surewest.net
- Editing Assistant: Evelyn Alvarado

Calendar of Events
- Nov. 2......Election Day
- Nov. 9......TRUSD Board Meeting
- Nov. 11......Veteran’s Day
- Nov. 12.....TRUE Newsletter Articles Due
- Nov. 16......TRUE Executive Board Meeting
- Nov. 18-19..K-8 Parent Conferences
- Nov. 18-19..Collaboration Day
- Nov. 22-26...Thanksgiving Break
- Nov. 30.....Site Rep Council Meeting
- Nov. 30......TRUSD School Board Meeting