OPEN FORUMS WITH THE SUPERINTENDENT

The TRUE Organizing Committee hosted two open forums with Superintendent Martinez on November 7, 2013 at Foothill Ranch Middle School, and on November 14, 2013 at Noralto Elementary School. The events provided TRUE members the opportunity to ask the Superintendent questions and share concerns. The forums were well attended by TRUE members representing all grades from pre-K to adult education.

Superintendent Martinez began each forum by giving an overview of his first 100 days as Twin Rivers Superintendent, including his goals and areas of concern. He discussed the need to identify a standard norm for Twin Rivers. “How can we, as a District now set the standard for all students, teachers and facilities across TRUSD?” asked Dr. Martinez. He went on to share his philosophy to help move Twin Rivers forward. He believes that all of the departments (HR, Facilities, etc.) should be working together to support Educational Services because they are the closest support for our schools. He reiterated that kids should come first in TRUSD. He believes connections between teachers and students are critical to learning, and how these relationships set students on the path for success. Dr. Martinez then discussed his concerns and questions regarding the District’s use of money. He posed two questions: “Where is the money?” and “How can we spend District money more wisely?” He discussed TRUSD’s finances and the bond validation process. Twin Rivers is currently in the process of selling bonds to pay off a thirty nine million dollar debt. The bond sale will free up thirty two million dollars that has been set aside to cover that debt. The Superintendent is looking to use the freed up moneys to develop a K-8 VAPA program (potentially providing elementary teachers with additional prep time). He discussed the high volume of litigation within the District that is eating up general funds. Part of the solution was to change the Human Resources Department. Dr. Martinez expressed his desire for teachers, classified staff, and the community to feel supported.

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

A Negotiations’ Survey will be going out by e-mail on Nov. 21st and stay open to Dec. 8th. Please take the time to fill out this survey, as it will guide TRUE’s Negotiations Team. TRUE will need your personal e-mail address for you to be able to participate in this survey. If you have not been receiving e-mails from TRUE, then either the TRUE office does not have your current e-mail address, or the e-mails have been going to your spam folder. In case you are not aware, I’d like you to know that President’s Messages/updates are being sent out weekly, also to members’ personal e-mails.

Class Size Overage Payments should be sent out by Dec. 10th. The District is paying for maximum class size, including secondary, not just maximum total assigned students.

Chris Moran, TRUE’s Vice President, and I had the opportunity to recently visit Norwood Jr. High. Each site visit continues to bring to the surface concerns and issues that may not have been known before those visits. I value this time to hear members’ concerns.

The TRUE Political Action Committee (PAC) has a new Chair, KJ Rhodes. The TRUE PAC process/rules for donating to the candidates’ PAC has changed since last year: checks now require two signatures, no cash contributions are allowed, and PAC will no longer be able to write checks above a certain amount without the previous approval of the TRUE Executive Board.

During December, we will be looking at a possible reconfiguration of TRUE’s Negotiations Team and will be opening the team to members who are interested in joining. Look for an e-mail regarding the criteria, listed in TRUE’s Standing Rules, to be on the Negotiations Team and a timeline for interviewing for this team.

I hope everyone has a wonderful holiday season and Happy New Year!  

Kristin Finney
TRUE President

(Continued from front page)

and valued. He feels we have quality people in Twin Rivers, and stressed the need to let go of the past to focus on the future. He believes focusing on teaching and learning will help us move forward. He knows that the change the District needs will not happen overnight, but knows that it will happen.

TRUE members then had the opportunity to ask Dr. Martinez questions. Several members asked about the varied configurations of our sites, discrepancies in school facilities, and the need to update several school sites (K-8, K-4, 5-8, ext.). The implementation of CCSS was also a topic of concern. Members expressed the desire for additional training and better communication from the District with regards to the implementation plan. Concerns regarding student safety and emotional distress, special education needs and placements, as well as the psychologists concerns regarding services for students were also brought up. Attendees asked about school staffing and the possibility of lowering class sizes for all teachers in the District with regards to the implementation plan for CCSS. The complicated field trip request process, as well as the Transportation Department was questioned. People also asked about adjusting the kindergarten program and expanding the adult education offerings. Superintendent Martinez’s responses were thoughtful and provided an insight into the direction he would like to take the District. -A transcript of the questions and Dr. Martinez’s responses are available at the TRUE office.

Julieanne Neal
TRUE Organizing Chair
Collective bargaining is the process through which TRUE negotiates with TRUSD an agreement, commonly referred to as "the Contract". The Contract is a critical document that is the culmination of this collective bargaining process, for it defines our working conditions. It is important for members to understand both the process and effects of negotiating a Collective Bargaining Agreement/Contract.

Collective bargaining for public school educators was established in 1975 by then Governor Jerry Brown, when he signed Senate Bill 160, also known as the "Educational Employment Relations Act", with the purpose "to promote the improvement of personnel management and employer-employee relations". Collective bargaining allows the union to negotiate with the District an agreement, not to exceed a term of three years, about certain topics. Not everything is negotiable. For example, we do not get to tell the District how to do its budget or how to determine its staffing needs. Other matters are determined by law (Ed. Code, etc.) and are not subject to change through negotiations. The critical job issues within the scope of bargaining include: compensation, hours of work, safety matters, class size, evaluation and disciplinary procedures, health benefits, access to personnel files, preparation time, early retirement, a grievance process with binding arbitration to settle major disputes, and leave, transfer and reassignment policies. Once a union contract settlement is reached (Tentative Agreement) it must be ratified by a majority vote of the non-management certificated staff, and then by the School Board.

Where are we in the collective bargaining process?

We are getting ready to ratify a Tentative Agreement from last year’s negotiations (re-opener articles of the Contract, 2012-2013). Voting will most likely happen in December. We are also gearing up for this year (2013-2014) as well as for the next Contract, which will be in effect July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2017. A survey has been sent out to members seeking their input on a variety of issues pertaining to our Contract. Our Officers and Executive Board members are coming out to school sites to gain further input. Also, our Negotiations Committee Chair, Paul Le Francois, is hosting meetings at TRUE to gather suggestions from our members. All of this input will be synthesized and the information will be used to develop goals for the TRUE Bargaining Team. For this reason, it is critically important that as many members as possible participate in the survey and give their input.

In January the "sunshine" process begins: the Contract Articles that both TRUSD and TRUE plan to negotiate will be on a School Board meeting agenda for approval. After that, we will begin negotiations. By definition, negotiation is a process of give and take. Both sides, TRUSD and TRUE, present their proposals and work to come to agreement. This means that not everything we request will be accepted by the District, and the other way around. Updates on the negotiations process will be published regularly in our newsletter, the TRUE News.

Chris Moran  
TRUE Lead Negotiator  
TRUE Vice-President

TRUE PAC CANDIDATE INTERVIEW PANEL

School Board elections are coming in June! The TRUE PAC (Political Action Committee) is already preparing for the upcoming elections. Determining which candidates TRUE will endorse for TRUSD School Board is important work and will help determine how our School Board functions in the future.

TRUE is asking for volunteers that are interested in serving on the interview panel. Interviews of School Board candidates will take place the first week of January 2014. If you are interested in serving on one of the interview panels, please let us know via e-mail to: true.office@yahoo.com. Remember to include your cell phone number and personal e-mail address.

Rebecca Le Doux  
TRUE Political Action Committee
I want to begin by thanking our TRUE Association for sponsoring my attendance to the CTA Region 2 Leadership Conference at the Grand Sierra Resort in Reno, Nevada and trusting that I would represent our local members by bringing back as much information as I could absorb in one weekend. I have been an active member of TRUE since 1995 when I first began my teaching career. I come from a long line of union members and I know how important the union is to our job security and benefits. In the past few years, I have become more active as a member of the TRUE Elections Committee, but I have not taken an interest in any events outside of our local. Thus, I was a blank slate when I went to this conference, eager to absorb as much information as possible, in a short period of time, from the sessions and from my fellow conference attendees. There were many sessions available during the weekend. I chose to focus on those that were discussing bullying: from parents, to faculty, and the most devastating, acts of bullying amongst our students. The sessions focused on different areas of our work environment, but all revealed the pain and torment associated with bullying and the unfortunate outcomes if not handled correctly. The following is just some of the things I learned while I was there; I hope to retell some of what the presenters revealed to me, in a way that will be helpful to other educators.

Session 1: DEALING WITH PARENTAL COMPLAINTS

I know what you’re thinking: “What does a parent complaint have to do with bullying?” I thought the same, but as the session unfolded, it became very apparent that it was the teacher who was being bullied by parents and students. The focus at the beginning of this session was that of parents and students posting unfavorable or untrue information about a teacher on Facebook and other social media. Further discussion focused on the possibility of Smart phone videos and recordings being placed on You Tube to embarrass and misrepresent the teacher. Most often this type of bullying happens at the high school level of teaching. Other acts of bullying stemmed from parents going straight to the principal instead of the teacher to discuss their complaints. These actions then causing mistrust and a sense of uneasiness between the teacher and the parent. Sometimes parents take unfounded rumors and set out to get a teacher fired. When this happens, there are measures available to help protect teachers. Contact your union office for guidance. There was a lot of information discussed during this session about the importance of teachers knowing their rights.

Session 2: WORKPLACE BULLYING: ARE YOU NEXT?

Bad behavior in the workplace was the focus of this session. Participants discussed the behaviors of bullying and harassment in hopes of identifying the differences between the two behaviors. The following is an excerpt from an Equity Alliance article written by JoEtta Gonzales & Kori Hamilton. It stated that bullying has three elements:

1.- There is aggressive behavior that involves unwanted, negative actions
2.- A pattern of behavior is repeated over time
3.- There is an imbalance of power

Harassment includes any conduct (verbal, written, graphic, digital, or physical) relating to another’s race, national origin, religion, color, disability, sexuality, or gender that is sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent.

Many stories of bad behavior in the workplace were shared and discussed as a means to differentiate between bullying and harassment. It became clear to those present that bullying carries a huge aspect of intent to hurt through intimidation and fear. It is a mean-spirited behavior. This behavior oftentimes includes bystanders or onlookers who do nothing to stop the bullying and sometimes even join in. By doing nothing, the bystander becomes part of the problem and those that join in just escalate it.

Protect yourself by reporting any instances of bullying to your principal and/or District office and to the TRUE office.

Session 3: WHEN BULLYING IS NOT JUST TEASING

As stated in the conference material, bullying has become a serious and pervasive problem in our schools today. Whether a person is a target, a victim, or a bystander, EVERYONE is hurt by a bullying act. It is not “just a phase” that kids go through and it is not something that kids simply “grow out of.” Bullying, including cyber bullying, can cause lasting harm and the results of ignoring it can sometimes be fatal. This session included information on CTA Polices and Ed Code definitions. The explanations were wordy and numerous. There were also alarming statistics given as to the future of a bully. A few are:

- Almost 30% of youth in the United States are estimated to be involved in bullying as either a victim or the bully.

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CTA Region 2 Leadership Conference - Bullying
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- 60% of those characterized as bullies in grades 6 – 9 had at least one adult criminal conviction by age 30. -Source: National Violence Prevention Center
- Prior to most violent school incidents, the attacker told a peer about the plan; in only 2 of 37 school shootings, did a student notify an adult.
- Bullying is 2 – 3 times more likely to occur at school than on the way to and from. -Source: US Secret Service and Department of Education Threat Assessment

I felt fairly confident that as educators, we are all quite familiar with the Verbal and Physical Bully, but what I found really interesting was the emphasis on the Social / Relational Bully. This bully tells secrets, spreads rumors, or uses exclusion to hurt another person. This type of bully is sneaky and conniving and brings about the worst of all possible outcomes when the victim can no longer cope with the pressure of being bullied. This type of bullying usually includes some cyber messaging which can occur 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days of the year. The victim feels as though there is no escaping the torment and strikes out violently or internalizes it in the worst possible way.

The last type of bully that was discussed was the Reactive Bully. This bully sets up the conflict and then waits to be attacked. They taunt their victim until there is a reaction like pushing, shoving, or name calling. The set-up victim starts lashing out at the instigator, and then the bully claims to be the victim. You begin to notice a pattern because this person seems to be involved in every reported incident whether large or small. This is the type of bullying that happens most often with younger students, but is not limited to this.

Bullying has been a hot topic for quite some time and I hope while reading my article you will either be able to say that it is not a problem at your work site or that it is being managed and preventative measures are in place. Bullying is not silent; the victim may be, but if we look carefully we can see the signs. Any repeated hurtful act, whether from a parent, a fellow employee, or amongst students, can be considered bullying. We need to step up and do something and not just hope it will go away! Remember there can be devastating consequences connected to unresolved bullying. We need to take measures to stop bullying before irreversible consequences happen.

For more information on bullying, please check the Student Services page of the District’s website for information on bullying policy and resources. You can also find there a form to report suspected student bullying.

Edie Kuntz
Hillsdale Elementary
WHY A UNION?

“Had the employers of past generations, all of them, dealt fairly with their men, there would have been no unions.”
- Stanley Baldwin

“Although it is true that only about 20% of American workers are in unions, that 20% sets the standards across the board in salaries, benefits, and working conditions. If you are making a decent salary in a non-union company, you owe that to the unions. One thing corporations do not do is give away money out of the goodness of their hearts.”
- Molly Ivins

Want more information?

Being new to the union I did not understand what the purpose was or why we even needed one. I guess I thought the union was there to protect teachers when they got in trouble. I believed that if you were a great teacher, you would never need a union, so why do we have one? Well, I was wrong. Yes, the union does help with situations like what I described, but that is not the primary function at all.

What is a union? A group of workers united, joining to create power to have a voice in what affects their everyday lives. Unions have changed the lives of working people for hundreds of years now. Without knowing where unions began and why they were created, it is difficult to understand where we are going and what we are fighting for.

Brief History:

1794 - The first teacher organization, the Society of Associated Teachers of New York City, was organized in. It consisted of school masters with an interest in improving the education of their students and finding teachers they felt worthy of certifying. (http://goo.gl/Ydmuy4 Case sensitive) The conversations about what the profession should be were finally organized and recorded in minutes.

1845 - First statewide teachers associations are organized in Rhode Island and New York. Between 1845 and 1861, 30 state associations are formed.

1857 - The National Teachers Association (later NEA) is organized.

1863 - The California Education Society (later CTA) is formed by John Swett. First resolution was to petition state legislature for increase in San Francisco school funding.

1918 - Memphis teachers strike for higher salaries (http://goo.gl/Jg5cWw Case sensitive)

1933 - At least 2,000 rural schools fail to open for the fall term and numerous colleges and universities close. More than 200,000 teachers are out of work and 2 million eligible students are not in school.

1946 - CTA sponsors Proposition 3 which guarantees $120 per ADA from the state and a minimum teacher salary of $2,400.

Let’s jump ahead . . .

1988 - CTA sponsors Prop 98 establishing a minimum for state school funding.

1996 - CTA membership reaches 260,000. NEA membership reaches more than 2.2 million.

How and Why:

How can teacher unions make change in our state or our country? The union’s power is created through determination, organization, courage. The power of the union is created through unity and solidarity. The basic elements of solidarity include: identity of interest, clarity of vision, honesty of intent, and oneness of purpose.

“Our labor unions are not narrow, self-seeking groups. They have raised wages, shortened hours, and provided supplemental benefits. Through collective bargaining and grievance procedures, they have brought justice and democracy to the shop floor.” - John F. Kennedy

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What does union power look like? Advocacy, support, action, change, and the ongoing struggle for equity and social justice. Advocacy starts with listening, and support is based on the principle that an injury to one is an injury to all. Action and change, both internal and external, and with the understanding that if change is to come, we are going to have to make it happen.

Unions have an effect on the area outside of their membership. Case in point: there are several small school districts throughout California that are not unionized, but educators there earn competitive wages, have decent working conditions, and get most of the benefits of being organized. Why? Because at the moment, their districts want to attract good employees, to be competitive with their surrounding districts. If the unionized districts get a pay increase and the nonunion district wants to keep their teachers, they need to offer a raise as well to be competitive. However, those non-unionized districts can take it all away at the drop of a hat, and their employees would be completely powerless to stop it. On the other hand, collective bargaining through the labor union provides protection and stability.

Our union is not about individual people and incidents. Although it can help with that, it is about wanting a better life for all of our certificated employees, and most importantly, a better learning environment for our students.

More on this in the next issue of the TRUE News.

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**Mysti Lingenfelter**  
TRUE Director-at-Large for Grades 7-12 & Adult Ed.

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**TRUE PAC UPDATE**

I am excited to be the new Political Action Committee Chair for TRUE. Over the past 20 years I have held many union positions, but none more exciting than PAC Chair!

I look forward to working with an experienced team and appreciate everyone’s commitment to this very important committee. Please refer to the PAC article on page 4 of the August/September issue of the TRUE News, which clearly outlines the process for endorsing School Board candidates. We will be following the very same, transparent procedures for the upcoming June 2014 election.

I’d like to invite TRUE members to the Community Stakeholders Forum on Wednesday, December 4th from 5:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m. at the TRUE office. We will be holding a forum for community stakeholders to provide input for possible School Board candidates. Area 2 - Dexter, Area 4 - Bastian and Area 6 - Sandoval are up for re-election.

We will need lots of volunteers for the phone-bank and precinct walking this spring. This is your chance to affect the culture of TRUSD. It is an opportunist time…. WE NEED YOU!

“...Let us not seek to fix the blame for the past. Let us accept our own responsibility for the future.” -JFK

Please contact the TRUE office (true.office@yahoo.com) letting us know you would like to help.

**K.J. Rhoads**  
TRUE PAC Chair
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  Wendy Gallimore
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  Alternates: Lisa Gant, Catherine Roller

TRUE Reps on TRERC (Employee Relations Council)
Paul Le Francois Shirley Chambers

TRUE NEWS Editor:
Ann Murray - annmurray456@gmail.com
Editing Assistants:
  Evelyn Alvarado and Jen Turner

DATES TO REMEMBER
Dec. 02 …. TRUSD School Board Meeting
Dec. 04 ….TRUE PAC Meeting
Dec. 04 ….. Stakeholders Meeting
Dec. 05 …..Prof. Dev. Committee Meeting
Dec. 10 …..TRUE Executive Board Meeting
Dec. 17 …..TRUSD School Board Meeting
Dec. 20 …..Student Minimum Day
Dec. 23-Jan. 3…. Winter Break
Jan. 07 …..TRUSD School Board Meeting
Jan. 07 …..TRUE Executive Board Meeting
Jan. 17 …..Prof. Dev. Day - Non-Student Day
Jan. 20 …..Martin L. King Jr. Holiday
Jan. 21 …..TRUE Rep. Council Meeting
Jan. 22 …..TRUSD School Board Meeting

Happy Holidays