MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. COMMUNITY MARCH

On January 20, 2014, TRUE members joined a very large group of Twin Rivers families and community members to participate in the Martin Luther King, Jr. North Area March. Our group first met at Grant High School and then we walked the six mile course from there to the Sacramento Convention Center. Marchers were treated to warm spring-like weather.

The large crowd was very energetic as they walked to promote peace, equality, and freedom for all. The MLK March participants walked to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his dream of an inclusive community lives on. We should never give up on building a community as envisioned by Dr. King and from the looks of that weekend march, the Sacramento area is making it happen.

Once we arrived at the Sacramento Convention Center, we met with hundreds of marchers arriving from other Sacramento areas. At the Convention Center we were treated to student performances, a diversity resource fair, information on health, careers and education, vendors of different types, and a children’s play zone.

The march was a great opportunity for TRUE to connect with the Twin Rivers community members. Community outreach is an important piece of our local organizing plan. The ties we build with community members now, can be critical for future organizing needs.

Julianne Neal
TRUE Organizing Committee Chair

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”
- Martin L. King, Jr.
So far, the TRUE Negotiations Team has had two days of negotiation sessions with the District. After doing a quick review of the approved Tentative Agreement for 2012-2013 and a few other articles, the only real discussion has been salary. The TRUE team has gone to the table fully prepared with support from our assigned CTA staff person and CTA’s Negotiations Organizational Development Department. The amount of time and energy our negotiators have spent getting prepared has been impressive. The team will negotiate with the District again on February 27th. As negotiations move forward, it will take more than just our team working at the table to get what our students deserve and what we deserve. Be ready to get actively involved and lend your support to our Negotiations Team in the near future, and show the District we are one strong force. Remember, you are the union!

As you are aware, through the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) the Twin Rivers School District will be getting a large pot of money due to our large population of English Learners, low income pupils, and foster youth. The Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) requires “meaningful engagement” of all district stakeholders, and you are definitely one of them, a very important one.

LCAP Stakeholder Meetings will be held by the District on February 27th, 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., at Grant High School, Foothill High School and Rio Linda High School; on March 25th it will be held at the District Office, 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. It is crucial you find time to attend one of these meetings and share how you believe the District should spend this pot of money. There is a reason the word “local” is in this funding formula. This is an important time to have our voices heard strongly and clearly. In separate meetings TRUE Leadership will also be discussing the LCAP with the District.

The LCFF MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) that was presented to the District by TRUE, after approval from our Site Rep Council, was pulled by the District due to what Human Resources called "a mistake" that was made. The waiver for reducing class size for the current year (2013-14) that the District had brought to TRUE never needed to happen; therefore the MOU never came to fruition. The state is not penalizing districts for not meeting the class size requirement this year, so there was no danger that the District would lose the estimated $6.1 million this year.

TRUE Leadership has been sharing concerns with the District about certain Principals and pushing for viable solutions. I hope you had a chance to complete the Principal survey. The survey is completely confidential and anonymous, but your voice will add to our discussions with the District when we share the survey results with them.

Kristin Finney
TRUE President

ON PAGE 3:

On January 23, 2014, the TRUE Elections Committee counted the votes for the Tentative Agreement for the 2012-2013 school year. About half of the TRUE membership cast a ballot, and the Tentative Agreement was ratified with ninety-one percent of the ballots marked “Yes”.

The Elections Committee prepared a timeline for the second re-running of the run-off election for TRUE President. Once CTA approved our timeline, the announcement for the election went out on February 10, 2014. On February 25th ballots for this election will be delivered by hand to all schools by several members of the TRUE Elections Committee. Voting will take place February 25th - March 7th. Please remember that there is to be NO campaigning by anyone, candidate or not, during this President election.

The 2014 NEA Representative Assembly (RA) will take place this year June 30 - July 7 in Denver, Colorado.
Some people wonder: “Is it really appropriate for teachers to have a political voice?”, “Shouldn’t teachers just focus on teaching?”, or “Why is my dues money going to politics?”

These are important questions. It’s good people question where their hard earned money goes. It’s good that members think about how their Union represents them. And… it is for these reasons I became the TRUE PAC Chair for this upcoming School Board election.

Because we are public employees, our jobs from every angle are managed by an elected School Board. That is the way of public entities. School Boards determine the course a district will take with regard to many, many things that affect the classroom daily, that affect schools, kids and teachers: funding for classroom supplies, employee benefits, work year, curriculum taught, school safety, employee evaluation processes, class size, authorize administrative assignments, budgeting practices (like how money if funneled to the classrooms or kept centralized), classroom support services and intervention specialists, etc. This is just a brief list of reasons why it’s important to have a say in who’s making the decisions, and while Board members do not have day to day involvement, they definitely authorize overall policies and curriculum decisions that do affect the daily lives of educators.

So, why does your teacher Union get involved? Because if we don’t, someone else will, like the people interested in silencing our voices and reducing our income, health benefits and rights. The great thing about our wonderful democracy is that we can be involved; we can stand up and share our concerns; we can be a decisive factor in helping elect real supporters of education and educators.

School Boards are the closest thing to democracy in action. School Board members live amongst their constituents, many have family in our schools, and they hold great power! They are approachable, unlike other politicians, and at their level, change can happen more quickly than at the Senate or Congress level. That is why it is crucial for our Union to get involved in the process of electing Board members. We want to make our best effort to endorse candidates to the Board who are truly interested in making a positive contribution to our school district and that understand and value the fact that educators are the backbone of our educational system, and give us the support and respect we deserve. And yes, that will require investing (not simply "spending") money on the candidates we endorse. The elections process is expensive, and candidates who could be valuable members of our School Board would never get a real chance at getting elected, if it weren't for the financial support they get from others, like us.

Many people feel disenfranchised from the political process. Teachers have to rise above that! We are often the only ones in a child’s life who is providing good role modeling. Having an involved citizenry is at the cornerstone of our democracy. It’s important that young people see teachers being active in the democratic process. I cannot accept that we should be quiet and accept just what comes our way. That undoes years and years of advocacy that worked diligently until their fingers literally bled, and where people lost their livelihood to ensure better working conditions for future teachers.

Get involved, be a role model!

Dr. KJ. Rhoads
TRUE PAC Chair

WHY DO WE HAVE A POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE (PAC)?

(Continued from Page 2 - Elections Update)

Declarations of Candidacy for NEA-RA State Delegates were due January 31, 2014 at CTA. Ballots for this election will be sent to TRUE around Presidents Week, so they will be delivered to all sites after that break; voting will take place February 17 - March 13.

TRUE will also be running the election for seven seats for NEA-RA Local Delegates, with voting taking place March 12 - March 27. TRUE has the right to nine delegates, but there are two previously elected delegates finishing their terms. The approved TRUE budget only includes enough to cover expenses for four delegates, so for this election, of the seven seats only two will be funded (TRUE will cover expenses up to a certain limit) and the other five will be unfunded (each person will be responsible to cover for their own expenses for meals, hotel, transportation, etc). Announcement and timeline for this election were published on February 14, 2014.

Julianne Neal
TRUE Elections Committee Chair
YOGA FOR STUDENTS?

The Good Teaching Conference in San Jose this year was phenomenal. It provided a wide array of topics to assist teachers in and out of the classroom. It would benefit all teachers to go to this conference at least once in their career. This conference gave ample resources from yoga to classroom management techniques, to incorporating music into curriculum, to math strategies, to fun and inclusive physical education activities, and much more. The sessions gave ideas and lessons that could be implemented immediately and met Common Core standards. There is so much valuable information to share with all members. I would be glad to share more information if you are interest, just e-mail me through District e-mail.

The topic that interested me the most at the Conference has been something I’ve been very curious to learn more about, to utilize with my students. My advisor, Dr. Dixon, at Sacramento State, faithfully believes that this technique calms students and assists them to focus better on their studies. I’m talking about yoga. Research has demonstrated that yoga can help our brain to work better by calming the mind through breathing exercises. A study conducted at the University of Wisconsin discovered that a twenty minute a day yoga practice helped the brain to process information more efficiently and to score higher on assessments (Yoga Journal, March 2009). Dayton’s Daily News”, Ohio, 2006, declared that, “children reap benefits from yoga such as: improved concentration and focus, self-discipline, builds self-esteem, eases children into exercise, encourages kids to relax and sleep more soundly, aids in brain development and develops a positive body image.

You can find lots of good videos of “Yoga for Beginners” on Youtube.com, for free. You can also get copy of the Good Teaching Conference presentations about yoga: “Yoga for Teachers and Students” and “Yoga for the Brain” at: www.cta.org/GTCN2014Presentations

Azeta Towfighi
ELA Teacher - Nova Opportunity School

SAVING AND INVESTING FOR RETIREMENT

I was sitting out in the Delta fishing for sturgeon with a fellow teaching buddy. The topic of retiring was one of many topics during the day of good fishing. I had gone to the CTA Leadership Conference in the fall and attended a session on STRS and retirement. The two of us are concerned like many teachers about if there will be anything left for us with the current bashing of public retirement systems in the news lately. Neither of us have contributed to Social Security during our years of teaching in the public school systems in California. I have contributed to CalSTRS for the pass 20+ years.

The workshop covered the basics of retirement and reviewed the Medicare A and B programs. I will not receive any Social Security off-sets discussed during the program. The biggest thing I need to do is set up a fast approaching Pre-retirement conference with a CalSTRS counselor. I also have contacted my retirement fund manager to review my 403 and Roth investments in order to review and make necessary adjustments. The workshop covered how the retirement benefit was calculated with my years of work and age of retirement. It is clear that I will be working into my early 60’s to collect my full benefit. In 2012, reforms for new members joining CalSTRS were added which will change their retirement benefits. No more air time purchase and I must wait 180 days before I could work as a substitute teacher, if I want to have some fishing money.

There also is a $39,903 earnings limit for CalSTRS creditable work in a fiscal year, July 1 to June 30. Will it be interesting in the next few years? Yes, but I need to do some additional research to my finance situation, so I am best prepared for the future. I am glad that I went to this workshop and came away with some basic information. I have started reading material available on the CTA website, www.ctainvest.org. It is never too early or late to get your financial life together; start looking into it and get informed. Oh, we did not find the Mr. Sturgeon on the end of our line this time, but enjoyed talking about our dreams about a future retirement from teaching.

Bill Avery
Counselor - Norwood Jr. High
As a teacher of 17 years and with the approaching shift of Common Core State Standards, I needed a reboot and some inspiration to get me re-energized as I continue on my teaching journey. Thanks to a scholarship from Twin Rivers Unified Educators (TRUE), on January 10-12, 2014 I attended the CTA Good Teaching Conference in San Jose. The selections of sessions were outstanding, which made it very difficult to choose. In the end I chose two technology based sessions, two management sessions and one which focused on 3rd-8th grade Common Core Writing Strategies across the curriculum. I got a lot of great teaching strategies and an overwhelming amount of technology resources.

The session that stood out the most was “Technology, Tools, and Apps for the Common Core Classroom”, presented by a team of teachers: Denesa Menge, Educator, Oakland Unified School District and Karen Taylor, Educator, Tracy Unified School District. In their presentation they focused on how teachers could take current curriculum and worksheets and turn them into more engaging and interactive practice. As we shift into the Common Core State Standards, it is important that we are up to speed with the technologically advanced students in our classrooms. They provided a very organized and thorough list of apps, tools, CD ROMs and websites. Their presentation and other sources can be found at: www.techlearningcommunity.pbworks.com, follow the link under “CTA Good Teaching Conference”.

The tool that stuck out the most and has instantly made its way into my classroom is the app Aurasma. This is a free app (teachers favorite "F" word is free!). The application of this app is endless. If you were to Google Aurasma, you would find several You Tube videos that would explain and demonstrate the array of possibilities this app has. It is one of those things you just have to see to understand. Basically the app is “changing the way people see and interact with the world” according to aurasma.com. With the shift to Common Core State Standards, our students will be asked to evaluate and create using technology across the curriculum. This app engages the student to evaluate a book for example, and through audio or video, create a presentation to wow the masses. Once you download the app you can get started.

Currently my students write a report every month based on a book they have read independently at their reading level. So this month I am taking this project to the next level, the technology level. They will still have to write a paper in the form of a script. This script will provide evidence to support an essential question based on the book they have read. They will create a short video and then use the app to make it come to life. Like that of a QR code, students take a picture of a “target” which can be the cover of the book they read. Once the target photo is taken, the app prompts you to pair it with a video on your device or you can shoot one live at the moment it prompts you. Once the “target” and the video are paired, you only have to make it public so other devices can view your creation.

Joining the app requires a username, password, and an email. You can create one for your class if they do not have an email. Don’t worry, making it public will not make it go viral, it just allows other devices with the app to hover over the book or image to view your “aura”. This may not make sense, like I said you have to see it to believe it. I showed my class the 6 minute video on YouTube recently and they were making test “auras” in less than 5 minutes. This app has sparked a fire under my reluctant writers and readers. “It's not simply access to technology that is important, but rather, how teachers use it as a tool to enhance learning” Thompson, Simonson, and Hargrave, 1996. While I love technology and all the wonder it can create, it will never take the place of a good teacher. If you ever get the opportunity, I would encourage you to attend the CTA Good Teaching Conference.

Julia Gordon
6th Grade Teacher - CCAA

Sites to visit:
Teaching with Aurasma (YouTube) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHlxYpBW7sc
Tutorial on Aurasm (YouTube) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJUEfoNzbI
ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

Cleve Jones, born October 11, 1954, is an American AIDS and LGBT rights activist. He conceived of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt which at 54 tons has become the world’s largest piece of community folk art as of 2009. In 1983, at the onset of the AIDS pandemic Jones co-founded the San Francisco AIDS Foundation which has grown into one of the largest and most influential People with AIDS advocacy organizations in the United States.

As Jones spoke to the crowd at the CTA GLBT Conference in Palm Springs last November, he did not just speak of gay rights. He spoke of changing the world. There was not a dry eye in the room when he recalled his life at the time of Harvey Milk’s assassination in 1979. The tears weren’t for the sadness of the murder, but rather the hope that arose from it and the senseless deaths of the AIDS epidemic which hit his neighborhood with a vengeance. Jones said that by 1980, many of his friends were dead or dying from the terrible disease. Yet, the room of educators at the conference wept with joy at Jones message of hope. His message was simply that anyone can make a difference. ANYONE!

“What I would like people to know is that Harvey was an ordinary man. He was not a saint. He was not a genius. His personal life was often in disarray. He died penniless. And yet, by his example and by his actions, he most certainly changed the world. And again we see that history is full of examples of ordinary men and women who, by speaking the truth, by their own courage, do in fact change the world. At this time in our country’s history, people of all ages, races, and backgrounds need to understand what one person can do”.

In our classrooms, we are faced with the challenge of raising young people to believe they too can change the world. No matter the trauma they face, or the challenges that burden them daily we MUST empower them to believe. That is our calling as educators. Remember Mr. Jones the next time you feel rushed to meet a pacing guide target or dissect a Measures report. Remember our charge. Remember, one person CAN change the world. Is that person you or a student you teach?

Mr. Jones would say it is each and every one of us. Google him. You won’t be disappointed. Thank you CTA for bringing his message to us.

Wendy Gallimore
TRUE Representative to CTA State Council

WHY THREE DAYS OFF ON OUR CALENDAR?

Have you been wondering why in the next few months we have 3 days off: March 14, April 21 and May 23?

Because we started school a week later than we have in the past, and certificated staff ended furlough days this year, we had to add 2 weeks to the calendar. If we had left everything as is with the 2 added weeks back on the calendar, we would have gotten our last day of school on MONDAY, June 9th. The Calendar Committee felt some adjustments needed to be made to this date. The Committee consensus was that ending school on a Monday, Tuesday, or late-start Wednesday would affect ADA, so we decided to end school on Thursday June 12th. In order to fit that end-date into our 186 day work year, we had 3 days to play with. The Committee decided the best option was to place them as follows:

- Friday, March 14th, the Friday before Elementary shortened days for parent conferences
- Monday, April 21st, to extend our Spring-break one day
- Friday, May 23rd, to extend our Memorial Day weekend

These three days are non-work (not paid) days. If a Principal says you have to go to work on those days, be aware our Contract states that for direct student instructional duties on non-work days you should each be paid $40 per hour; if it’s for attending mandatory meetings or professional development / training, then the pay must be $30 per hour.

Sharon Reichelt
TRUE Rep on TRUSD Calendar Committee
TRUE CARS MEETING JANUARY 15, 2014

Sacramento area CARS+ members know the connection with our friends and colleagues provide strength and pride for our profession. Members from Region 7 in the Sacramento area met January 15, 2014 to reconnect and celebrate the profession of special educators. Being a special educator takes an extra bit of dedication and love. The event was time to come and meet together to recognize the hard work, commitment and passion of those who work with students who have special needs. The TRUE CARS Chapter knows that these connections are the best support system for our members in the Sacramento area.

Sometimes the chapter has guest speakers with the latest in legislation or professional development on the latest interventions and strategies. This meeting was a time to refresh their educational batteries and strategize the group’s attendance at this year's convention in Irvine. They request funding from both their school district, Twin Rivers Unified School District and their local teachers association, Twin River United Educators. They make travel arrangements and pick out roommates to save on hotel costs.

The value of CARS+ membership is well known in Twin Rivers and the chapter added four new members at this meeting. John Sayler, the new Director of Special Education for the District, used the event as an opportunity to come and meet some of the professionals in his new district. Everyone left looking forward to the convention in February, and then sharing all they learned at the next chapter meeting.

Joyce Childs
Director Region 7-CARS Plus
DATES TO REMEMBER

March 03 ………… Nurses Meeting at TRUE
March 04 ………… TRUSD Board Meeting
March 05 ………… Psychologists Meeting at TRUE
March 06 ………… PD Committee Meeting at TRUE
March 11 ………… TRUE Executive Board Meeting
March 14 ………… Non-Student, Non-Work Day
March 17, 18, 20, 21...Shortened Days-Elementary Parent Conferences
March 18 ………… TRUSD Board Meeting
March 25 ………… TRUE Rep Council Meeting
March 31 ………… Professional Development

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