President’s Message by Diana Abasta

Another year to start afresh and another year to fight the good fight. Welcome back and thank you for making Burbank your number one choice. I appreciate the work you put in starting day one when you plan for the year, assess your students, and roll with all the changes and hiccups. What we do is complex and requires knowledge, perseverance, and resiliency. It isn’t surprising that soon we are feeling the fatigue that goes with the end of the day. I want to tell you that we have to do a better job of self-care. We cannot accomplish everything in a day or even a week. The work will always be there but we have to learn to manage the planning and grading so it does not override our lives and make us give up on the things we like to do but so often put off because we are either too tired or too school busy. How do we maintain balance? By building in time to work-out or pursue hobbies or just relax on the couch we take control of our daily routines. It isn’t easy for all; I happen to be one of those but when I do, I am able to reserve some energy for me and that gives me balance. Let’s encourage each other to take time out for ourselves sooner rather than later so we can keep some energy in reserve for life outside of school.

Moving ahead I want to talk about the upcoming March 2020 primary and the placement of a new parcel tax on the ballot. The last parcel tax failed by 948 votes which was not bad for a grassroots campaign on a shoestring budget. This year we are off to a great start and have formed a steering committee with District, parents, and community members. Make sure you read Nate Banditelli’s article for more information on the parcel tax.

As we get ready to go through Open enrollment for Health Benefits, I want to let you know that BTA along with CSEA, BASA, and Management has revived the Health and Welfare Benefits Committee. Nate Banditelli, Lisa Raluy, and I along with CSEA leadership and District personnel met with Kathy Rollins, a CTA trainer in Benefits, to start a discussion on our plans and the benefits that go with them as well as the costs. This is just the beginning and we’ll work together to bring you more information as we move ahead. We will try to put together a power-point that will at least give you some information regarding your plan options. There are many things not being utilized and members are not aware of the services that some plans offer that others don’t. It seems like the majority of our members subscribe to Kaiser but may not be aware of other benefits that other plans may have. For example, how many of you are aware of the benefits having a FLEX account? How about Disability and other types of insurance through Standard versus American Fidelity? Does your plan offer free wellness programs, 24/7 Nurse Line, access to a doctor on the phone or through video chat? I have Wellvolution through Blue Shield Access HMO and it set me up with a wireless pedometer for free and I earn points as I walk that.

Thank you, teachers, for fighting for what students need.
UniServ Director’s Message by Nate Banditelli

UPDATE

Parcel Tax

You may recall the article that I wrote in the May, 2019 Benchmark, discussing why BUSD needs a local funding source. Since then, the BUSD Board of Education has taken action and Burbank voters will have an opportunity to approve a parcel tax during the March, 2020 election. Unlike Measure QS, though, BUSD stakeholders have united and have launched a well-organized campaign to support the initiative.

What is the Parcel Tax?

The new initiative will be titled “Burbank Unified School District Quality Teacher, Staff and Schools Measure”. Initiative does not have a letter assigned yet. The text of the initiative states:

“To maintain high-quality Burbank schools by retaining excellent teachers/staff; small class sizes; and maintain/expand career/college courses, art, music, science, innovative programs, safety and wellness support, shall this Burbank Unified School District measure to levy $0.10 per square foot of improved property per parcel annually, exempting seniors/certain disability recipients, providing approximately $9,100,000 annually for 12 years and requiring independent oversight/audits, be approved?”

• Funding is protected and dedicated to BUSD schools only.
• $0.10 per square foot of improved property – average home of 1,700 sq. ft. would pay $170 per year.
• Individuals who are 65 or older and who own and live in their property can file an exemption.
• Persons with disabilities receiving supplemental security income for a disability can file an exemption.
• Sunsets after 12 years.
• No cap.
• Independent oversight committee.
• Annual independent performance and financial audit.

Why Do We Need to Pass a Parcel Tax?

At the end of the Great Recession, California moved from the “Base Grant” where districts receive the same amount of money per student to the “Local Control Funding Formula” (LCFF). Under LCFF, Districts with a higher percentage of disadvantaged students receive extra funding. Burbank is a middle-class community so we do not get as much money as surrounding districts. As a result, BUSD and BTA negotiations have yielded salary schedule increases that are near the bottom of the list of Los Angeles County unified school districts. BUSD can only rely on state COLA (cost of living adjustments) for funding increases and these payments do not even cover the increasing costs of educating BUSD students. If the measure fails again, cuts are a certainty and a fair salary schedule increase will be impossible. If the measure passes, BUSD students will have access to more of the educational opportunities that they deserve.

Current Campaign Status

BUSD stakeholders from BTA, PTA, the Board of Education, and community activists have formed a steering committee in order to pass the parcel tax. The Steering Committee is composed of three subcommittees: Communications, Fundraising, and Organizing. The Committee has already raised more money than the Measure QS Committee from 2018. They hope to hire a professional campaign manager, which Measure QS lacked.

The campaign has secured important endorsements from State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond, Senator Anthony Portantino, and Assembly Member Laura Friedman. The first campaign event happened at Back to School Night, where you may have seen volunteers passing out literature that informs parents about the need for a local funding source.

Other important dates include:

A campaign kickoff rally on Oct. 16 at Jefferson Elementary at 9:30 A.M.

Fundraisers in October (time and date TBD) and November 19th (location TBD).

In order to pass the measure, BTA members will need to help whenever possible. Educate yourself, talk to your coworkers, family, and neighbors, and volunteer when you can. BUSD students’ futures depend on the passage of this measure.
President’s article continued:

make me eligible for cash drawings. I have won two $100 gift cards simply by walking and participating in other health challenges. We hope to bring you more information before the Oct. 4 end of enrollment.

Finally, I want to make you aware of events coming up. We have the Thank You Soldier Drive that we participate at Ume Credit Union and the Walk to End Alzheimer’s in November. Heather Good has helped organize a BTA Team so you can go to the website http://act.alz.org/goto/BTA Sign up and join us! Let’s end the scourge of Alzheimer’s.

Now that we are finished with Back to School, please consider self-care. Take some time to go for a walk, ride a bike, go dancing, or take yoga. Planet Namaste is offering classes for teachers. Go online and visit their website.

CONTINUING EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS

To help you continue on your educational path, the California State PTA is proud to offer two continuing-education scholarship programs for school professionals.

Deadline: October 15th

For Nurses

Registered Nurses are eligible to apply for the $500 Continuing Education Scholarship for School Nurses. You must be employed in a California public school during the preceding year, have a nursing contract for the current year – and assignment in – at least one PTA school, plan to continue as a public-school nurse, and use the scholarship at approved institutions or providers, such as nursing schools, hospitals, organized nursing groups and private providers that meet California Board of Registered Nursing requirements.

For Teachers and Counselors

Credentialed teachers and counselors who have a minimum of three years’ experience in a California public school are eligible to apply for the $500 Continuing Education Scholarship for Credentialed Classroom Teachers and Counselors. You must be employed in a California public school during the preceding year and plan to continue working as a teacher or counselor.

Requirements

Forms can be completed online. All scholarships require current PTA membership. For general questions about these important programs, please contact the California State PTA Scholarship and Grant Chairman via grants@capta.org.

Two reference forms and letters are needed to complete your scholarship application packet with:

- First reference – Written and submitted online by applicant’s unit, council or district PTA president.
- Second reference – Written and completed by a person unrelated to applicant and with whom applicant has volunteered during the past two years.

Your references will be able to directly submit their letters to the California State PTA. Please provide this link to your two references: http://castatepta.formstack.com/forms/educationreferenceform

For application: https://capta.org/programs-events/scholarships/continuing-education/
When we are united in purpose, we accomplish great things!

Thank you to all our BTA members who handed out informational Parcel Tax flyers at all of our Back to Schools. We were at all eleven elementary schools, three middle schools, BHS, JBHS, Monterey, and Adult School. We were unable to do Community Day School, but hope to visit their campus soon. These colleagues, as busy as they are with their lives, volunteered their time under the hottest days! Please reach out and thank them because they represented all 824 of us. Don’t worry because there will be other opportunities for you to get involved!

Kim Anderson, Glenda Arriola-Alcazar, Kate Bailey, Aimee Blisten, Nate Banditelli*, Eric Carter, Sue Conway, Becca Cooper, Darlene Crain, Nicole Drabecki *, Julie Davis, Dave Engel, Sandy Engel, Maria Esquivel, Jennifer Flores, Amy Fuhr, Hilde Garcia, Courtney Gordon, Dug Gutierrez*, Luke Gattuso, Robert Hammell*, Adam Hochberg, Beth Jacob, Joshua Junkermeier, Robert Labrada, Theresa Landin White, Jessica Mayes*, Jerry Mullady, Bridget Murphy, Mark Norberg, Kelly Ohrt, Natalie Ohrt, Tito Proano, Dana Ragle, Lisa Raluy, Anna Rodriguez, Natalie Setaghiian, Oakley Gillett, Sandy Solis, Ashley Suhr, Jill Tobin, Margarita Tubbs, Alexis Weiner, Rhonda Wright, and Joanne Yao, a NEWBIE!!

Plus, we had 6 retirees return Deb Atherton, Bonnie Shatun, Carolyn English, Les Cohen*, Michael Hammell, and Bob Smallenburg. That’s unionism for you!

*Special thanks to our point people who picked up the flyers and carried the water to hand out to the volunteers and for those who helped out on more than one day. Nicole Drabecki worked all three Back to Schools and was even at two schools in one night.
International Educators of Japan 2019

By Eric Blinder

I have been a teacher at Muir since 2011. This summer I was selected as a representative of Southern California on an educators trip to Japan. Muir has a special relationship with the Japanese community of LA through hosting Japanese students, a unique sister school program, a Japanese culture class, and schoolwide Japan Day every September. The purpose of the trip was to introduce Japanese culture to teachers and administrators from around the world that teach Japanese students and classes.

The trip itself was an amazing experience. All of the participants were treated with so much respect that we felt welcome and special everywhere that we went. We had the privilege of visiting Tokyo, Hiroshima, Kyoto, and Nara. Visiting religious temples and shrines was definitely a highlight of the trip. Other meaningful experiences included a private lecture from a survivor of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima and a unique home-stay experience with a family in Nara.

Of all the amazing sights and food and lectures, perhaps the greatest aspect of this trip was visiting multiple schools and classrooms. We visited elementary, middle and high schools that were both public and private. In addition, we were able to teach a lesson to elementary students at a public school in Tokyo. The teachers and principals were so welcoming and thankful for our visit and were genuinely excited to share their school culture with us. Through observation of foreign school culture, I feel as though I have gained a better understanding of how our culture performs and prepares students for the future. Being able to compare and contrast student life and student performance among cultures gave me a unique perspective that I never had before. I look forward to embracing this new perspective and letting it motivate me into the coming school year.
A WEEK OF MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

By Mark Norberg

On July 2, over 6,500 elected delegates from school districts across the nation descended on Houston, Texas for the National Education Association’s annual Representative Assembly (or, “RA” for short). I had the honor of attending for the first time as a representative from the Burbank Unified School District in California -- and boy, what a ride!

The California caucus – over 1,000 delegates strong, and the largest delegation in the union – settled in at the beautiful Marriott Marquis hotel, which was an ideal location as it is situated directly across the street from the convention center. Every morning our days began with each state delegation meeting privately for two hours to review the day’s business and vote on the many constitutional amendments, bylaw amendments, and “New Business Items” (or NBI’s) – which every individual delegate has the right to propose and vote on. Newly elected CTA president Toby Boyd led our state delegation with humor, patience, and a gentle but firm hand – all the qualities you’d expect from a former kindergarten teacher. Then, after a short break, it was time to head over to the national meeting.

When first entering the main convention center, the thing that was most apparent was the immense amount of planning and coordination that had gone into the event. At nearly every turn there were volunteers in green vests guiding the crowd, answering questions, or popping up out of nowhere to lend a delegate a hand. In my prior career in the sales industry, I’d been to my fair share of conventions – but nothing of this size, complexity, or smoothness of operation. As I heard mentioned more than once, “teachers know how to organize things!” I could not agree more. In fact, several of the delegates I spoke with commented that the RA was better organized than even the Democratic National Convention, which they had previously attended.

The NEA conference took up both of the two cavernous halls of the convention center. The first hall was filled with information booths, restaurant kiosks, and vendors selling everything from classroom supplies to clothing and jewelry to professional services for educators. There was even a large dining area complete with jumbotron screens to allow attendees to follow the activities in the main room – as well as several “work areas” complete with complementary computer workstations and printers.

If the first hall impressed with its vast buzz of activity, the main hall was absolutely mind-blowing. Here, the 6,000 assembled delegates could all be seated and presided over by our dynamic president Lily Eskelsen García. As just one indication of how impressive our numbers are, when called to order, our national meeting becomes the single largest democratic body in the world. Watching my fellow educators propose, debate, and vote on the course our national union is to take for the next year was one of the most inspiring events I have ever participated in.

The tremendous influence of the NEA did not escape the 2020 candidates who arrived to participate in a one-on-one forum with President Garcia. Joining us this year were Vice President Joe Biden, former HUD Secretary Julián Castro, Sen. Amy Klobuchar, Gov. Jay Inslee, former Rep. Beto O’Rourke, Sen. Bernie Sanders, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, and Sen. Kamala Harris. Selecting questions written by our members, each candidate had ten minutes to give us a brief introduction and then speak to our concerns. Seeing the candidates live and in person was a testament to the importance of education to our nation. Even more surprising was when the candidates stopped by the individual caucuses for surprise visits. As a member of the “Bad Ass Teachers” caucus, I was particularly thrilled to have Jay Inslee and Bernie Sanders swing by for quick hellos. After the presidential forum, over 1,000 of the delegates reinforced our commitment to civil service by marching to a nearby shelter which had recently been turned into a detention center for undocumented immigrants. Standing side-by-side with my fellow educators and shouting for justice for those desperate and in need was easily the highlight of the trip.

Not all our time was spent trying to change the world, however. We also made time to relax and enjoy the wonderful hospitality that Houston had to offer – from dining out, to enjoying a Houston Astros game, to floating down the “lazy river” pool at the Marriott Marquis. But, in the end, there was no doubt after the week concluded that we are an organization of some of the most passionate and committed people in the world, people who have dedicated their lives to the nurturing and uplifting our nation’s beautiful children. I have never been more proud to say “I teach.”
This year’s California’s Democratic convention took place on May 31st to June 2nd, 2019 in San Francisco. I had the honor to be a delegate for Congressman Adam Schiff’s 28th Congressional District. I attended the convention with Chandra Collins an elementary SPED teacher at Washington Elementary and elected delegate for Assembly member Laura Friedman’s 43rd District. It is always a special opportunity to attend with someone who is new to the arena of state politics. Chandra hit the ground running the day we arrived. We attended our first Labor Caucus meeting which is one of the largest state’s caucuses. There was great business at hand as the delegates who were running for the Democrat Party Chair were on hand to give their speeches. After much debate, it was clear that Rusty Hicks, former President of the LA Co. Fed. Of Labor, had received the most votes in the endorsement. Later, Rusty won the race and became the Democrat’s Party’s new chair.

On Saturday we attended a luncheon hosted by Senator Anthony Portantino. After that event Chandra and I worked in the CTA booth and handed out information on the passing of AB1505 and 1507.

On June 8, 2019 the Burbank Teachers Association hosted its first Community Read-In on the terrace of the Burbank Mall. This event has long been in the making and thanks to the hard work of BTA and retired teacher Linda Walmsley, we were able to bring this to fruition. We wanted our BUSD students to see reading as an activity that goes beyond the walls of the classroom and library.

Under sunny skies children ages 3 to 10 gathered under canopies to hear community members read a favorite book. Dressed in their uniforms, our readers read to different age groups. Dr. Herrera and Nurse Buffham read to children ages 3-6. They chose a book about visiting the doctor’s office and not being afraid. Police Chief LaChasse and Battalion Chief Hatch read to students 7-9 years of age. Dug Gutierrez read to a group of students in Spanish. The group that included both children and adults had the pleasure of having Congressman Schiff read to them. He read the book, *Amelia, and Eleanor Go for a Ride*, which is about Amelia Earhart and Eleanor Roosevelt.

The event ended with a Reader’s Theater of Charlotte’s *Web* by E.B. White. Compost Productions guided the Drama students from Donovan Glover’s Drama classes at BHS. Everyone enjoyed hearing their favorite characters come to life!

Many thanks to all of our readers as well as Sara Sherman, the marketing manager from Jones Lang La Salle as well as Macy’s, the Burbank Public Library and Dewey the Dragon, and of course, Barnes and Noble who donated cookies and books for the giveaway. Also, a thank you to Alice Holmes, BTA Office Manager, and BTA members Darla Gerharter and Tracy Sorenson, and BTA Vice President, Nicole Drabecki for making the day go smoothly.

Congressman Adam Schiff
Vice Mayor Sharon Springer
Burbank Police Chief Scott LaChasse
Burbank Fire Battalion Chief Mark Hatch
Burbank Library Director Elizabeth Goldman and Dewey the Decimal Dragon
Dr. Christian Herrera Emergency Medicine - Providence Saint Joseph Medical
Critical Care Nurse Debby Buffham - Providence St Joseph Hospital
Dug Gutierrez BUSD 2018 Teacher of the Year
Compost Productions Voice Over Actors Bill Holmes, Shane Salk, and Dana Powers
BHS & Muir Drama students: Grace Glover, Abby Griffith, Malia Le’au, Zane Byrd, Alex McGee, Will Stern & Nico Pierce
WHY I TEACH... Darlene Crain

I didn’t go the traditional route when I decided to become a teacher. I was married to a news anchor and had to move to a different city every two years, which was brutal to my professional career. No one wants to hire and invest their time in a person who they know will be leaving soon, so I had to choose a profession which could be more flexible with my lifestyle. This is how I found teaching at age forty!

I thought I would absolutely love teaching, so I pursued my new dream through the alternative certification route. I went in to the profession like a wide-eyed doe. I remember accepting a job in the middle of the school year. My team at the time was nice enough to hand pick six kids from each of their classes to create my one life-changing class. I’m sure you can imagine which children they chose to initiate the new teacher. Those seven and eight-year-olds were brutal, and I can remember crying more as an adult that year than all the times combined in my professional life. It was a tough five months, but the experience I gained in that short time was invaluable.

Since then, I’ve been a teacher in three states and had numerous challenging students, but I wouldn’t change my profession ever again. Each experience is a gift, molding me into a better educator each time. At least that’s what I tell myself! I truly appreciate my career and I love stepping into my classroom at Bret Harte every morning. It is the hardest and most rewarding job I’ve ever had, and I wouldn’t have it any other way.

BTA Business Buddy Enters its Second Year

Last year the Burbank Teachers Association started an outreach campaign to the small businesses in Burbank. We asked members to help us approach business owners and to ask them for their support. In doing so, they agree to post our signs in their windows or inside their businesses. We have had tremendous response from some of our business buddies. They have been generous in offering discounts to BTA members. BTA is thriving but cannot exist without the support of our wonderful community.

Please remember to thank them for having our sign when you go to these places. A complete list will be posted in the near future as we finish updating our web site.

Health & Beauty:
- Nail Time and Spa
- Richard’s Hair Salon
- Rose Nails
- Burbank Infrared Sauna
- Krimson Hair Salon
- Fashion Nails
- Golden Age Studio -Hair by Mandy
- Karen Pharmacy
- Scott Drugs
- Planet Namaste

Professional Services:
- Roman Empire Insurance Agency, Inc
- Falchini & Associates, Inc

Home Improvement:
- Laura Lee Designs, Inc
- Future Glass Co.

Food & Beverage:
- The Palm Coffee Bar
- New Buenos Aires Bakery and Café
- Otto’s Hungarian Import Store & Deli
- Handy Market
- U.M. Liquor
- Flavor of India
- Wokcano
- Gyu-Kaku Burbank
- Aleppo Kitchen
- La Bamba

Specialty Stores:
- Burbank’s House of Hobbies
- Stotts Bicycles
- Gorilla Art Studio
- Trophy King
- Glenmar Gift Shop
- Batcade
AN ALERT FROM
BTA/CTA/NEA

WOLVES IN TEACHERS' CLOTHING
How to deal with Union Busting SPAM texts.

UNIONS PROTECT US WHILE WE ADVOCATE FOR STUDENTS

ANTI-UNION
Spammers text Union Members pretending to be teachers.

Hi its Catherine, I opted out of my teachers union and saved hundreds of dollars! No union = more money in your pocket. Learn more: TeacherEmpowered.com

ANTI-TEACHER
DeVos supporting, right-wing think tank Mackinac Center for Public Policy is behind these attacks.

FIGHT BACK
Report the spammers to your Union local and to your cell carrier.

7726 (SPAM)
Copy the text body and send it to 7726 (SPAM). You will get a reply asking for the source number. Reply with the number and you are done.

STAND STRONG, STAND WITH YOUR UNION

BE AWARE

Mackinac Center for Public Policy funded by Betsy DeVos Foundation

My Pay My Say is a $10 million front group set up by The Mackinac Center to aid public sector union members in not paying fees to cover a union’s cost for negotiating better pay and benefits on their behalf following the Janus v. AFSCME labor case.

They call it the Opt Out Campaign.

Other names are The California Teachers Empowerment Network and the Choice for Teachers.

These sound innocuous BUT they aren’t! They are funded by corporate billionaires who are trying to privatize education by weakening our union, our voice, and our power.

Make no mistake. They misrepresent their real agenda. They want to bust unions.

California Policy Center

They send flyers that say you will save money and that opting out won’t impact your health benefits and that you can get disability insurance elsewhere.
**BTA Continues to be Involved in Community Events**

BTA participated in its third annual Burbank Police Dept. Community Night Out on August 6, 2019. Each year BTA hosts a table and hands out informational pamphlets for parents as they prepare to get their children ready for back to school. We also give out our BTA pencils to kids so they can add to their supplies for back to school.

This year Nicole Drabecki, Bridget Highfill, Alexis Weiner, and Diana Abasta were on hand to greet the parents and community members. Matt Hill stopped by as well as BOE President Roberta Reynolds and BOE member Dr. Armond Aghakanian to take a group photo. Senator Anthony Portantino stopped by and so did Assembly member Laura Friedman’s aide Maria Azilazian.

It was a great event and we managed to keep people cool with free water to anyone who stopped by our table. The event always ends with BTA President Diana Abasta donating a dozen custom made cookies by BTA member Heidi Stevenson to our Police Chief Scott LaChasse. The event ends with the raffling of a dozen homemade cookies. The winner this year (Carlos) had already left the event but came all the way back to get his cookies. He was so happy to win these yummy treats that he agreed to pose for a picture!
This year’s New Teacher Orientation was held at the Pickwick Gardens. We had thirty-eight new teachers attend. They were introduced to BTA as well as District Supt. Hill, Asst. Supt. of Instructional Services Sharon Cuseo; Asst. Supt. of Human Resources Sarah Niemann; Asst. Supt. of Business Debbie Kukta; Director of Elementary Education Peter Knapik. Board members Steve Ferguson and Steve Frintner were present and each welcomed the new teachers. Sue Conway talked about evaluations and Article 12, and Alexis Weiner gave an overview of best teaching practices along with tips on how to survive the first year.

Each teacher received a packet of information and were treated to a delicious lunch. They were able to take selfies and participate in the “Why I Teach” Twitter campaign. Before the day ended, we were treated to some relaxation and mindful breathing techniques from Juliet Kaluznizcki of Planet Namaste. Finally, teachers had a chance to win several raffle items donated by Standard Insurance, California Casualty, and Barnes and Noble.