Greetings and welcome back colleagues! I hope you have had the best balance of personal growth and relaxation this summer. I always appreciate some unstructured time and the lack of being tethered to an alarm clock or bell schedule.

So now we’re back . . . First, I want to mention the success of our second New Teacher Orientation hosted by BTA and partnered with BUSD. The event took place at the Castaway and thanks to our office manager Alice Holmes, the venue was a hit and all appreciated the amount of support that filled the room. There were 52 new educators in attendance. Kim Anderson, Sue Conway, and Alexis Weiner gave the teachers hands on resources including ideas on first day activities. Rebecca Mieliwocki and Jill Johnson talked about the roles they play as induction support providers and the role they play as Professional Development providers.

The new teachers saw a clip of 2016 National Teacher of the Year Jahana Hayes. Her enthusiasm in the telling of her story on why she became a teacher and who she acknowledges for helping her meet success is inspirational. She credits her union for keeping her grounded and for giving her a voice. She states: “Being constantly faced with negative media perceptions surrounding teaching practices and a perceived lack of accountability makes me much more determined to be vocal and supportive of teachers and teaching as a profession.” She is a professional who is unafraid to advocate for public education.

Eric Heins, the President of CTA was an invited guest. He welcomed the new teachers and told them that “When it comes to public education, it’s not a right or left issue; it’s a right or WRONG issue.” The importance of standing up and voicing our professional concerns when it comes to our students is the heart and soul in the balance of power that we have in our collective agreement with the District. It is this power that advocates for effective education practices, advocates for our students, and advocates for fair and professional treatment in the workplace.

Continued on Page 3
Welcome to the 2017-2018 school year! Welcome to our new members and welcome back to our returning members! While I’m sure the new year already has you running at full speed, I wanted to take a minute of your time to remind you why we at BTA are here, and to remind you of what you are a part of as a BTA member. BTA and CTA are here to support you. Whether you work in a classroom or in the District office, we are here to make sure your work day is the best it can be. We are here to listen and to support you. No question is too silly or too small to ask if it means making your first days at school or at your worksite easier. You have your BTA site rep, the BTA leadership and many other resources available to you.

BTA is your resource for information on contract questions, evaluation procedures and professional development. With our affiliation with CTA and the NEA, we have the key to many valuable benefits and services that can help you be more effective in the classroom.

It is important to remember the reason why we are union members. Our work here at BTA is not just to ensure better wages and benefits. Our goal is to protect the interests of our students. When we fight for lower class sizes, increased safety, reasonable staffing levels, it is because as trusted professionals, educators are best equipped to make school and classroom decisions to ensure student success.

It is easy for us to forget the many advantages to being a member of a union. Our strength is in our numbers, together we are stronger. When we join together to advocate for our students, we have so much more strength than when we try and tackle these issues as individuals. That is the power of a union. Try and remember that this year if you are struggling with something in your classroom and you are trying to work it out on your own. You have many colleagues and fellow members who are there to support you. Together we are more powerful, whether it be brainstorming on how to connect with one particular student, or when we are supporting our negotiations team at the bargaining table.

I wish you a wonderful year full of success and look forward to seeing you at our site visits.
President’s message continued:

Matt Hill, our superintendent, added his support. “Being a leader is important. I want to learn from you so that I can support you.” Assistant Superintendent of Instruction Tom Kissinger was present and encouraged teachers to reach out and contact him if there were ever any questions or concerns. We also had Anita Schackmann, Director of HR, review some information regarding our Employee Assistance Program; “If you need help, BUSD is here to support you.”

We rounded out the event by having Brian Kukan teach us ways to manage our happiness levels and to strengthen our ability to keep focused. It is very important that we take care of ourselves. The airlines always remind parents to make sure they put on their oxygen masks first in the event of a drop in the pressure. Only then can they assist their children or others around them. Makes sense.

If it wasn’t apparent, the main theme was “We are here to support you both as a union and as your colleagues.”

This is your union – our union – and we need to actively support our fellow members. This year please consider giving a little of your time. We are always looking for more input and involvement and if we each do a little, the load will not be so heavy for any one person and we can bring about change faster. Remember, together we are stronger. Together we put students at the core of our advocacy. Together we are more powerful and effective.

May the year bring you continued good health and success.

In unity, Diana
Defending Public Education in Trying Times

By Sue Conway

APPROPRIATELY set in the midst of Revolutionary Boston, the 96th annual Representative Assembly (RA) for the National Education Association (NEA) tackled issues that reflect the scurrilous attacks on public education in the United States today. Faced with powerful and continuous efforts to undermine public schools, the 7,500 representatives from all 50 states gathered to vote on the priorities of the NEA for the coming year. Representing Burbank as a part of the California Teachers Association were Diana Abasta, Sue Conway, Dahlia Dobbertin, Brad Frank, Maggie Hess-Witucki, Jerry Mullady, and Robyn Russon.

ONE important task of the Representative Assembly is to elect the leadership of the NEA. The RA chose to continue the leadership of President Lily Eskelsen-Garcia, a Utah elementary school teacher and the 1989 Utah Teacher of the Year. Also, Vice President Becky Pringle and Secretary-Treasurer Princess Moss were re-elected.

THE Representative Assembly concentrated much of its time on the challenges and dangers of the Trump-DeVos agenda. Of particular concern were the policy prescriptions favored by Education Secretary Betsy DeVos. DeVos is a strong proponent of vouchers for private schools, for profit education, and the expansion of unregulated charter schools. In response to the appointment of DeVos, NEA president Lily Eskelsen-Garcia set a precondition to a meeting with the new secretary: answer basic questions about education.

UNFORTUNATELY, the answers are clear. Betsy DeVos favors dismantling public education to support privatizing schools across the United States. President Eskelsen-Garcia was equally clear. In her keynote address, she said, “I will not allow the National Education Association to be used by Donald Trump and Betsy DeVos. I do not trust their motives. I do not believe in alternative facts. I see no reason to assume they will do what is best for our students and their families.” President Eskelsen-Garcia reiterated that the National Education Association would not be complicit in the education secretary’s denigration and privatization of American schools.
NEA Representative Assembly Report continued:

In addition to the Betsy DeVos’ dangerous views, the Trump administration’s education budget would devastate public education. The plan would cut $10.6 billion in funds for the nation’s schools. The budget would give $400 million to expand charter schools and vouchers, and use $1 billion to incentivize districts to expand choice programs. In her keynote address, President Lily Eskelsen-Garcia articulated the stark environment facing education today, “This is not a drill. We stand in a dangerous place. We stand between a profiteer and his profits.”

The Representative Assembly responded to the dangers of the Trump-DeVos agenda. The delegates approved a policy statement that makes a distinction between charter schools that are held accountable and privately managed unregulated charter schools that undermine public education. The statement called for charter schools to be authorized by a local, accountable entity and that they comply with the same open meetings and public records laws that public schools do. Also, charters should follow the same rules and requirements that govern public schools and that for-profit organizations should be prohibited from creating charter schools.

The message at the Representative Assembly was alarming, but hopeful. Both National Teacher of the Year, Sydney Chaffee and the Educational Support Professional of the Year, Saul Ramos gave uplifting speeches that called for unity and justice for our students. In addition, the recipient of the Friend of Education Award, LeVar Burton, gave a resounding endorsement of the work of educators. He said, “I believe that what you have to offer is essential to the nation. And our desire to lead the world in any meaningful manner depends on you . . . Without you we go nowhere.”

FINALLY, in her keynote address, President Eskelsen-Garcia reiterated the vital role NEA and the nation’s teachers play in educating the children of America. We have the power to challenge an indefensible assault on public education by the Trump administration and their attempts to silence the voice of our Association. “They won’t succeed,” she said. “We are the National Education Association. We are the voice of the education professionals. Our work is fundamental to the nation, and we accept the profound trust that is placed in us.” The Representative Assembly in Boston showed that the nation’s educators are up to the task. Our responsibility is clear. We must continue to stand up for public education and the rights of our students, especially in the times that challenge us the most.
Various members of BTA’s negotiations team, comprised of Lori Adams, Kim Anderson, Les Cohen, Sue Conway and Sonya Lowe met with members of BUSD’s negotiations team, Anita Schackmann, Tom Kissinger, David Guyer, David Jaynes, Laura Flossi and Steve Andelson twice over the summer – on June 7th and July 18th.

Hot Topics - We discussed the temporary to probationary hiring process in detail. We also discussed the pros and cons of having Middle and High school counselors holding the same credential and the implications of that when it comes to leaves and school placements.

Budget Update- David Jaynes presented the Third Interim Budget update. He also gave us an update on the $2.1 million dollars in one-time funds the District is receiving and the way the District plans on using those funds. While the new state budget numbers were not included in the District’s adopted budget, we were informed that the changes are only a couple of million dollars, which is immaterial to the District’s overall budget according to the District.

Special Education Update – BUSD has hired a new Special Education Director who has been a school psychologist here in BUSD. The Special Education Master Plan is expected to be ready to present to the Board of Education by October. Tom Kissinger explained the new Special Education programs and positions that will be added in the 2017-18 school year.

Article 11 Class Size – On June 7th, the District presented BTA with a class size proposal that incorporated many of the elements we discussed over the year and agreed upon. However, the District still has not agreed to implement language that would memorialize the current system under which we are working – a school site average of 30.5:1. In the June 7th session, the District proposed extending the existing Class Size MOU for one more year. BTA gave a counter-proposal on July 18th with the language containing site based class size average, as is currently in our MOU. The District’s counter-proposal once again removed the site-based class size average making it a district-wide average.

Middle School Zero Period - The District requested to add an English zero period class in the middle schools. This would be for students who are now required to take two English classes – there is a new ELA/ELD Framework in place that requires Designated English for EL students that provides specific time to work on ELD standards at the level of the English Learner. This requirement is not satisfied by transitional English or SDAIE. This period must be equal in length to periods offered the rest of the students in the school in their other core subjects. The zero period would be voluntary. BTA rejected the District’s request as BTA does not believe over programming our students is a healthy plan.

Articles 7: Wages and Article 8: Health and Welfare Benefits - In response to BTA’s proposal for a 2% off schedule bonus for all bargaining unit members, a .2 salary increase for Speech Language Pathologists, and a .2 salary increase for elementary teachers who agree to teach combined class of two grade levels, the District has responded with no salary offer for all bargaining unit members. The only offer the District has made at this point is for the Speech Language Pathologists, due to their recognition of the difficulty of recruiting and retaining the SLPs. BTA gave a counter-proposal on July 18th for elementary combo classes to be equivalent to the stipend rate in the Exhibit G, High School Category B. The District’s counter proposal offered no stipend for combination classes for elementary teachers. The District’s counter-proposal on July 18th offered a $7,000 retention bonus replacing the previously agreed to hiring bonus for the SLPs, and again, nothing for all bargaining unit members.

Next negotiations is set for September 8th.
Did you know.....

You can start saving money by ACCESSING MEMBER BENEFITS for CTA/NEA? Look and see what you’ve been missing

Accessing CTA and NEA Member Benefits programs requires that one be “registered” with both Member Benefits systems. To “register,” you must know your membership number:

Membership Number: DO include the zeroes shown on your membership card when you are registering: (0000########). In fact, include the zeroes whenever you are providing your membership number. It may be requested for a variety of benefit programs from actual approved vendors.

Registration websites:

CTA MEMBER BENEFITS: 1-650-552-5200

Go to www.ctamemberbenefits.org. Without registering, you will have limited access to information at this website. Register by providing a Username and a Password. You only have to register once and will have access to the website.

NEA MEMBER BENEFITS: 1-800-637-4636

Go to www.neamb.com. You must “register” as a “member” at this website also. To complete this registration, you will need a Username and a Password. Once registered, you will then be able to click into the many NEA Member Benefits programs.

Be sure to attend the 10-minute meeting at your site to find out about your AUTOMATIC BENEFITS.
WHY I TEACH...

By Alexis Weiner (JBHS)

“I teach so the next generation will know how to THINK!”

High school English Language Arts classes, by nature, dive deeply into literature--novels, poetry, informational texts, among myriad other genres. The Common Core State Standards call for students to develop their skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation when dissecting these works. My freshmen must examine the text of Animal Farm closely in order to interpret political and social commentary, and they must puzzle through the buildup and dramatic irony of Romeo and Juliet to understand how Shakespeare manipulates his audience’s attention and emotions. They must go far beyond the entertainment factor of the story itself; they learn to scrutinize diction and tone for deeper meaning, to sift through the superficial for significance. They must learn to think.

The ability to think critically has always been a necessary skill for students to develop as they begin to navigate the realities of the world. However, in an environment of “fake news” and “alternative facts”, it is more essential than ever that our students--those who will compromise the workforce and will vote in the not-so-distant future--be able to cut through the spin and talking heads to the information that must inform very consequential decisions.

Critical thinkers also are more likely more ethical humans! They are reflective about and conscious of themselves, others, and their environments. They are more empathetic and generous, with the analytical ability to step metaphorically into another’s shoes. Thoughtful, complex, and reasoned voices of the next generation could be beacons of light to lead us out of the current political and social wilderness.

I teach because I want all my students to feel included and empowered! It is important to show them that there is more than 1 way to learn!

Danielle Gill, Emerson

I teach so that my students, who see worlds beyond their reach, can actually grab them! Thinking is eternal!

Hilde Garcia, Disney Dual Immersion

I get great satisfaction helping young people develop into people who make good, wise, educated choices for their success and the success of our world.

Ryan Long, BHS

I teach to help raise responsible adults and the future leaders in our communities!

Dina Harney, Luther
REVITALIZED RETAIL + A NEW DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD

New Neighborhood-Serving Retail and Restaurants

A Variety of Residential Living Options

A Walkable Neighborhood With Accessible Transit Connections

VISIT US AT OUR NEW UPDATED WEBSITE:

iheart BURBANK .com
Wanted: All the details of what’s happening at your site. What special accomplishments have colleagues achieved that deserves recognition in the Benchmark?

Please email the Benchmark editor, Kim Allender, at kimallender@earthlink.net

Subject line: Benchmark Site News

Some news worthy ideas:
* Special recognition
* Higher education degrees
* Grade level team accomplishments
* Special programs such as performing arts or technology

Join us on Facebook
@BurbankTeachersAssociation

And On Twitter
@BurbankTchrAssn

Even if Facebook is not your thing, here are a few compelling reasons to sign up and join our closed Facebook group:
• Staying Up-To-Date on Important BTA Information
• Sharing Photos and Celebrations of Events at Your School
• Giving and Receiving - Get or Give Classroom Items
• Building a Stronger, More Connected Union!

BTA Policy on Anonymous Letters

BTA would like to emphasize that we do not encourage or condone anonymous letters written for any purpose. The only appropriate use of anonymous communication would be to report fraud or malfeasance on the District’s Fraud Hotline.

FREQUENTLY REQUESTED PHONE NUMBERS

BTA Office
Alice Holmes, Office Manager
818.846.1304

Questions Regarding Your Health Insurance?
Blue Shield - 1.800.334.5847
Kaiser - 1.800.464.4000
Blue Cross - 1.877.737.7776

Mental Health
(Employee Assistance Plan)
1.800.866.6534

State Teachers Retirement System
(STRS)
1.800.228.5453

The Standard
(Income Protection)
1.800.522.0406

California Casualty
Auto and Home Insurance
1.888.439.1416

CTA/NEA Retired
1.650.552.5355

CTA Member Benefits
(Insurance, Financial, Discounts, Travel)
1.650.552.5200
CTAMemberBenefits.org

NEA Member Benefits
1.800.637.4636
neamb.com/learnmore

REMEMBER TO SEND US YOUR SITE NEWS
2017 - 2018 Who’s Who in BTA Faculty Representatives

Each school site has at least one BTA Faculty Representative, or, in the case of larger sites, one representative for each 15 members or major fraction thereof. Listed in the column at the right is a list of representatives for the 2017-2018 school year who were elected in June by the members of their respective sites.

The members listed at the right are your representatives, so please take a minute to introduce yourself and to let them know if you have any questions or concerns.

These dedicated colleagues are your voice at the monthly BTA Representative Council meetings. They may also be a witness for you at any potentially negative meeting with a parent or administrator.

Your Faculty Representatives will also put communications from BTA into your mailbox, conduct elections for leadership positions and contract ratifications, recruit new members, and assist you in finding answers to your contract questions.

ADULT SCHOOL — Julie Grair, Monique Corral
BRET HARTE ELEM. — Dahlia Dobbertin, Allison Shaw
BURBANK H.S. — Gina DiFrancesco, Bob Shaw, Bob Camacho, Natalie Setaghian
BURROUGHS H.S. — Robyn Russon, David Hedin-Abreu, Jeil Salem, Rex Bullington, Les Cohn, Alexis Weiner
DISNEY ELEM. — Bridget Highfill, Lesli Melchor
EDISON ELEM. — David Engel
EMERSON ELEM. — Samantha Robman, Robin Jankiewicz
HORACE MANN CHILDCARE — Jocelyn Garfiaz
INDEPENDENT LEARNING ACADEMY — Heather Good
JEFFERSON ELEM. — Anna Basinski, Kris Uribe
JORDAN M.S. — Dana Ragle, Amy Fuhr, Lori Pacino
LUTHER M.S. — Lisa Raluy, Sue Conway, Nick Lundy, David Evans
MCKINLEY ELEM. — Monique Kalachi, Amanda Pohlman
MILLER ELEM. — Brian Collins, Debra Baird, Helen Yoon
MONTEREY H.S. — Lisa Jo La Mere
MUIR M.S. — Barry Sarna, Heidi Sasaki, Jessica Wertlieb
PROVIDENCIA ELEM. — Kate Bailey, Lola Stewart
ROOSEVELT ELEM. — Rhonda Wright
STEVENSON ELEM. — Heidi Lavitt, Jasson Przebieda
TOSA — Jill Johnson
WASHINGTON ELEM. — Chandra Collins, Dorothy Hernandez

Burbank Night Out

Jessica Wertlieb and Diana Abasta present cookies to Burbank Police Officer Burrows

Although the thermometer was almost at a record breaking high, the community came out and supported Burbank’s National Night Out on August 1, 2017. Booths from different organizations including the Burbank’s PD and Firefighters and your Burbank Teachers Association lined Chandler Street that was blocked off next to the Chandler Path. BTA members Jessica Wertlieb, Theresa Landin-White, Alexis Weiner, and Diana Abasta handed out pencils to incoming students looking to enjoy the last moments of summer and informational pamphlets to parents getting ready to send their children back to school. A raffle was held and two lucky winners went home with beautifully decorated and yummy tasting homemade cookies made by Jefferson Elementary teacher Heidi Stevenson. We hope that this is the first of many community events that we can work on together.

BTA Benchmark is a monthly publication of Burbank Teachers Association
3021 W. Burbank Blvd.
Burbank, CA 91506
(818) 846-1304
www.burbankteachers.org
It is extremely important that in the event of any adverse action affecting your employment status that you immediately contact the BTA office at (818) 846-1304. Examples of adverse actions are: notification of dismissal, suspension, child abuse, non-renewal, transfer, demotion, civil or criminal charges, or any contract violation.

Assert your rights: If an administrator wants to meet with you concerning any adverse action, the appropriate response for you to use is: “I am a BTA member and I am claiming my right to union representation for this meeting.”

Until you are able to contact the BTA office:

DO NOT:
Admit Anything; Sign Anything; Make Any Verbal or Written Statement; Resign or Be Insubordinate. The above includes not speaking to your colleagues, principal, administrators, parents, or the police about the incident.

DO:
Remain calm and courteous. Immediately upon receiving notice of any adverse action, contact the Burbank Teachers Association at: (818) 846-1304. Keep copies of all papers relating to the situation.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:
Halt any conference already in progress if it becomes disciplinary. Reschedule when representation is available. Have the meeting at a time and date that is convenient for you and your BTA Faculty Representative.