President’s Message by Diana Abasta

It has been a tough few months with negotiations and other school demands. I would like to begin by thanking our organizing committee because although it may not be large in number, it is large in work effort and planning. The members Maggie Hess-Witucki, Anthony Franco, David Cohen, Julie Grair, Monique Corral, and Mark Norberg have been meeting regularly to plan the organizing activities.

It seems like the battle to ensure competitive salaries and healthy work and learning environments is one that never ends with the closing of a contract. Nonetheless, we must be forever vigilant to make sure that our rights are being protected through due process. We must persevere and be there for each other. We need to remember and remind our members of the benefits we enjoy because of our union presence. All one must do is look at one of our sister unions in Wisconsin who lost fair share to see what our conditions would be without a union.

Today I want to thank the large number of BTA members who work day in and day out to advance the work of our union. They work tirelessly to benefit our teachers, nurses, counselors, and speech and language pathologists.

The following members participate in Board of Education welcomes and meetings, Open House leafleting, support rallies, and BTA organizing events. Without you and your efforts we would not have a union. As BTA president, I’m proud to walk with you and I’m proud to be your colleague.

Continued on Page 6
More than 500 members of the California Teachers Association met in Torrance in the first week of March to attend the annual Equity and Human Rights Conference. This conference is an opportunity for teachers to listen, discuss, and reflect on the social challenges that face students and themselves.

Attendees have their choice of four from the more than thirty sessions available. It’s also an opportunity to hear from the union leadership about efforts to make classrooms safer and more equitable for all. Saturday night saw the awarding of Human Rights awards to teachers who were working to make a difference in their communities.

The available workshops were designed around the basic principal that each student who walks into our classroom deserves to learn in a safe and supportive environment. As a second year attendee, I once again found that choosing four workshops was a challenge.

This year, I went for a variety of subjects. The first workshop on my agenda was “Creating a Safe Space,” focused specifically on the rights of LGBT students and Title IX regulations. The workshop’s opening was devoted to the history of human rights battles in America and the reality of current challenges across the country. Among the topics discussed was the fact that teachers are not required to disclose a students’ orientation to parents as well as discussion revolving around California’s new Social Studies standards of inclusion.

I chose my second session, “Does Your Dress Code Discriminate,” due to the current discussion in Burbank. I shared with the other participants that Burbank is currently involved in “dress code negotiations.” Some people inquired about the process and were impressed that it was student led. This session made me consider ways that dress codes infringe upon the rights and expressions of many types of people even though we mostly discussed gender inconsistencies.

After listening to speakers during meal times and the intensive discussions of my first two sessions, I needed a break. I got one thanks to the “Stressed Out” workshop. I was one of many teachers who found solace in the workshop. This session reminded us that we need to take care of ourselves. We were introduced to very simple breathing and stretching exercises as well as in-class techniques that could help students relax. Old favorites like taking deep breaths during passing period and playing classical music while the students worked sounded new in this setting.

My final session of the weekend was “DACA: A Bad Game of Chicken” which was a very informative session about the different sides of the DACA debate on the day before the program had been set to expire. The presentation brought attendees up-to-date on where things stand now and what challenges face our undocumented students.

This conference brings teachers directly into some of the most controversial (and yet basic) discussions in the country. It’s important work and deserves quality reflection. CTA celebrates those who don’t always get celebrated and ensures that teachers are at the forefront of positive change.
Everywhere you go, the conversation right now is school safety. As educators, our number one priority is keeping our students safe. The recent tragedy in Florida has led to innumerable political debates. While there are a variety of opinions on every end of the spectrum on how to keep our students safe, one idea getting a lot of press is that of arming teachers. There are already other states that have begun moving this forward, but many educators here in California do not think this is the right solution.

CTA President Eric Heins has taken a stance on this issue, and I’d like to share his thoughts with you.

“Arming educators or other school employees with guns to prevent mass shootings does nothing to protect students. Bringing more guns into schools is a misguided and dangerously flawed idea. What’s more, thinking more firearms on our campuses is the answer is the most irresponsible solution you could imagine. Instead, we should be arming our schools with more counselors, more books, art and music programs, and more school nurses. We stand with parents, local law enforcement and many other experts in opposing bringing more guns into our classrooms. We need to listen to our students and work with our communities to find commonsense solutions to keeping guns out of the hands of those who target innocent children and educators.

“In the meantime, school safety plans for responding to violent intruders must be developed and reviewed to guarantee their effectiveness. Educators, parents and community members must be part of these reviews. We owe it to the students, educators, parents and communities who have lost love ones to come together as a nation and demand commonsense solutions that will keep our children safe.”

We need to continue the fight here in Burbank for more funding to support our students in the ways that they need it most. Supporting the top-notch educators here in Burbank so they can do their job best; providing them the support they need and continuing to support the wonderful programs we have here in Burbank – the amazing nurses, counselors, teachers and other educators is how our students get the support they need. Our members show incredible devotion and dedication every single day. Let’s continue to encourage the Board of Education to show our members that they are valued for the work that they do.

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Why I Teach... by Jessica Mayes  JBHS

I am fortunate to have been born and raised in beautiful Burbank, California. I attended Burbank schools and returned to teach English 12 and ERWC at my alma mater, John Burroughs High School. Throughout my childhood, I often focused my attention on making favorable career choices, which changed with each school year. When I was a fifth-grader at Roosevelt Elementary in Ms. Hambro’s class, I wrote an essay about my goal of becoming a teacher so that I could celebrate students’ successes firsthand. But as the 90’s rolled on, I had other ideas. In sixth grade, I dreamed of pursuing a career as a backup dancer for famous pop groups, such as Britney Spears, N*SYNC, and the Backstreet Boys. By eighth grade, adorned in punk rock attire and turquoise hair, I aspired to play electric guitar in a famous rock band. By ninth and tenth grade, I seriously considered becoming an orthodontist or a children’s audiologist.

While all of these careers are quite different from one another, they all encompass one theme: Even at a young age, I wanted to help and inspire others. My dream of becoming a teacher came full circle when I noticed a pattern in my daily life: I was constantly critiquing my high school teachers’ pedagogical styles and approaches. I began having an internal dialogue about which choices I would make if I were a teacher. For example, I would think about placing a Parts of Speech poster in an accessible location on the wall, I would break down – or scaffold – major concepts and ideas in simpler terms and steps, and I would take the time to answer individual students’ questions in a more supportive manner. Then, it dawned on me one day: If I am so confident about my opinions, why don’t I get off of my high horse and become a teacher myself? I knew I would never be the “perfect teacher” (as there is no such thing), and that not all of my students would like me or my teaching style, but I knew I had to try my hardest to be the best teacher I could possibly be. There are three main motivations that drive my career: I teach to spread knowledge, to instill self-advocacy skills, and to make learning fun and accessible to all learners.

I teach to spread knowledge.

College and career planning has been a passion of mine since my senior year of high school. I struggled tremendously during my freshman year of college, not because I wasn’t capable of succeeding, but because I didn’t realize I had access to important resources that would help me navigate through college. People often don’t know what they don’t know, so I strive to provide my students with access to as much information about life after high school as possible. I hope my students will use information about different types of postsecondary institutions, the option of taking a meaningful Gap Year, and Financial Aid planning in their individual journeys to becoming successful.

I teach to build self-advocacy skills.

While English is a magnificent subject, there is more to life than simply knowing how to summarize, analyze, and synthesize information and literature that is strictly related to English. I hope that I am able to help guide students through real-life processes, such as completing job and financial aid applications, money budgeting activities, and completing the job application and interview processes so that they are better prepared to tackle professional relationships and endeavors.

I teach to make learning fun and accessible to all learners.

Let’s face it, learning isn’t always fun or enjoyable, but I make sure that every assignment in my class is interesting and purposeful at the very least. With free choice on independent projects like the Senior Research Paper, Genius Hour, and character expert groups, students work independently and collaboratively to bring it all together at the end of each unit. My hope is that students will strive to continue their educational careers and to realize that learning can be fun, enjoyable, applicable, fulfilling, and rigorous all at the same time.

I will continue to teach.

Ultimately, through spreading knowledge, instilling self-advocacy skills, and encouraging a personal love for learning, I hope that a domino effect will be set into motion where my students will share their experiences and love for learning with the world. I also hope that I can make students feel excited about coming to school and that their time and efforts are appreciated today and many years into the future because they deserve the best possible chance at happiness and success. While I can’t personally make their dreams come true, I will try my hardest to help guide them in the right direction so they can begin their postsecondary journeys with strong internal foundations.

"Education is not a form of entertainment, but a means of empowering people to take control of their lives." - Anonymous
The Burbank Teachers Association promotes and celebrates Read Across America. This year on March 2nd BTA purchased and donated the following books to our schools: *They All Saw A Cat* by Brendan Wenzel for TK/K, *Separate is Never Equal* by Duncan Tonatiuh for grades 1,2, and *Grand Canyon* by Jason Chin for grades 3-5. These books were teacher recommended books taken from the California Reads list and were donated to each of our eleven elementary schools and Horace Mann Child Development Center.

For our three middle schools the book selected was *The Real Boy* by Anne Ursu. Burbank High, John Burroughs High, and Monterey received *The Hate You Give* by Angie Thomas.

Diana Abasta, BTA President, was invited to read to second grade students in Ms. Anderson and Mrs. Sorensen’s classes at Jefferson Elementary. “As an English teacher, I cannot think of a better way to promote reading and critical thinking. It is so rewarding to see all the work my elementary colleagues do to help our students become proficient readers.”

This year BTA donated Dr. Seuss pencils to every elementary teacher to share with his or her students. Students must always be encouraged to read to become life long learners.
President’s Message Continued:

Thank you to these BTA members for their tireless service on behalf of our union.

Adam Hochberg  Chandra Collins  Heather Broidy  Kate Bailey  Marianna Orsini  Robin Jankiewicz
Aimee Blisten  Cindy Sullivan  Heather Good  Kathy Wills-Sarna  Marianne Noss  Robyn Russon
Alex Carlton  Courtney Gordon  Heidi Lavitt  Kaye McMahon  Katie Murray  Mark Norberg
Alexis Weiner  Dahlia Dobbertin  Heidi Sasaki  Kelly Ohrt  Kay Cee Mills  Marlene Wieden
Alicia Boylan  Danielle Gill  Helen Park  Kelsey Morgan  Martin Collazos  Rosie Delgado
Alyson Edge  Dara Lee  Henry Alexander  Kendall Roberg  Mary Edmundson  Rosie Rivera
Allison Shaw  Darlene Crain  Hillary Iffrig  Kevin Hiatt  Mary Grace Zehnpfennig  Roxanne Hunt
Allison Wyly  Dave Engels  Jacques Marashlian  Laura Mixon  Megan Powell  Ruby Mazur
Amanda Pohlman  Dave Thomson  James Bentley  Lauren Masters  Krista Pensini  Sandy Engels
Amy Fuhr  David Cohen  Janice Gresham  Lee Carlton  Laura Mixon  Sandy Sutter
Amy Lucas  David Hedin-Abreu  Jamie Davis  Krista Pensini  Laura Mixon  Scott Davis
 Amy Walker  Dayana Franco  Jason Lohr  Krista Pensini  Laura Mixon  Selin Zadoorian
Anass Benjelloun  Debbie Armes  Jasson Przebieda  Laura Mixon  Laura Mixon  Stacey Bowren
Andrea Terrell  Deborah Gal  Jeanne Santoyo  Lee Carlton  Laura Mixon  Starr Brown
Anita Kazaryan  Debra Atherton  Jeil Salem  Leo Martinez  Laura Mixon  Stephanie Carrillo
Ann Ouellette  Debra Baird  Jeff Thompson  Lisa Cohen  Lester Kiernan  Stephen Rivera
Anna Basinski  Debra Gilmore  Jen Ruben  Lisa Cohen  Lisa Ferguson  Terri Daou
Anna LeMaster  Deborah Peris  Jenn Ruben  Lisa Cohen  Lisa Ferguson  Theresa Heldt
Annie Hakopian  Denise King  Jennifer Eidem  Lisa Ferguson  Lisa Ferguson  Theresa Landin White
Annie Cavanaugh  Diana Wong  Jenny Niwa  Lisa Freeman  Lisa Freeman  Tony Franco
Annie Martirosyan  Diane Metcalf  Jerry Earwood  Linda Gregorczyk  Linda Gregorczyk  Tracey Grogan-Collazos
Arby Tacub  Donald Durham  Jerry Mullady  Linda Gregorczyk  Linda Gregorczyk  Tracy Sorensen
Armida Chow  Dorothy Hernandez  Jessica Guyon  Linda Lorent  Linda Lorent  Tula Papavasiliou
Barry Sarna  Dorothy House  Jessica Wertzlieb  Linda Pham Liu  Linda Pham Liu  Vivian Zarkarian
Beth Bitner  Doug Grimshaw  Jill Sullivan  Lisa Chung  Lisa Chung  Wendy Thompson
Beth Jacob  Doug Smith  Jill Tobin  Lisa Chuang  Lisa Chuang  Yvette Keshishi
Bob Shaw  Ellen Dobbins  Jocelyn Garfias  Lisa Chuang  Lisa Chuang  Yvonne Oliver
Brandon Herrera  Emilie Coyne  Jodi Levy  Lisa Chuang  Lisa Chuang  Zoya Aboolian
Brenda Kosbab  Emily Pierce  Jodie Coffey  Lisa Chuang  Lisa Chuang  Zoya Aboolian
Brian Collins  Emily Reynolds  Jonathan Vasquez  Lori Adams  Maggie Hess-Witucki  Rebeca Cooper
Brian Rosa  Erica Eldridge  Jose Valle  Lucy Chakerian  Maggie Hess-Witucki  Rebeca Cooper
Bridget Highfill  Frank Barberia  Joshua Junkermeier  Maggie Phillips  Maggie Phillips  Rich Broman
Candace Cobery  Gajan Fernando  Juan Carlos Reyes  Mara Lungu  Mara Lungu  Rich Broman
Cari Knight  Gina Aldoyan  Judy Shalhoub  Margaret Cooney  Margaret Cooney  Rich Broman
Carol Walcoff  Gina Boulais  Julie Grair  Margaret Cooney  Margaret Cooney  Rich Broman
Carolina Almanzar  Gina Di Francesco  Julie Knoop  Margaret Cooney  Margaret Cooney  Rich Broman
Caryn Tomer  Gina Loweth  Justin Riner  Margaret Cooney  Margaret Cooney  Rich Broman
Casey McAllister  Glenda Arriola-Alcazar  Karen Levein  Maria Carman  Maria Carman  Rich Broman
Catherine Fritz  Glenda Gonzalez  Karyn Anderson  Maria Carman  Maria Carman  Rich Broman
Cathy Marcy  Harley Shine  Karyn Lombardo  Maria Carman  Maria Carman  Rich Broman

In unity,
Diana
The BTA Relay for Life team is asking that each school either make a basket to use as an opportunity basket for the May 5th and 6th Relay For Life event, or make donations for the making of a basket for the event. We sincerely appreciate anything you can come up with and/or help facilitating. We are looking for gift cards that include but are not limited to: restaurants, sporting goods stores, grocery stores, everyday living, gas cards, Visa or Master cards, health/hair/beauty and anything edible (chocolate, candies, popcorn), any movie tickets. Honestly no gift will be rejected or unappreciated.

We really thank you from the bottom of our hearts and appreciate your time, effort and help. We know this isn’t easy and anything you can help with means everything to the people that we can help with these donations.

Please send the baskets/donations to: Jefferson Elementary or BTA Office
Attn: Nicole Drabecki
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The BTA negotiating team comprised of BTA’s Executive Director, Sonya Lowe, Lori Adams (BHS), Sue Conway (Luther), Kim Anderson (Jefferson), Heidi Lavitt (Stevenson), and Les Cohen (JBHS) as well as BTA President Diana Abasta met with the BUSD team, Anita Schackmann (Human Resources Director), Sarah Niemann (Asst. Sup. Human Resources), Matt Hill (Superintendent), David Jaynes (Asst. Supt. Business Services), Laura Flosi (Edison), Sandra De Barros (Jefferson), and April Evans-Weaver (Jordan).

Hot Topics

1. Coordinator Positions – Members have expressed concern over how coordinator positions/assignments are filled at the high schools. The positions in question usually are one period positions and the concern is that they are not always offered to all faculty members.

Budget

David Jaynes gave a report on the Second Interim budget. The District continues to maintain the position that even though they are receiving millions of dollars in new, ongoing money, they are still unable to find money for a salary increase for our members. The BTA team pushed back with concerns about the growing OPEB account which has risen to $8.4 million, the misconception that the ending of one-time funds means the end of new money, and asked for their ongoing estimation of what budget monies will never be spent.

Article 4

BTA presented an initial proposal to BUSD on Article 4, Association Rights.

Memorandum Of Understanding

BTA and BUSD signed an MOU extending middle school zero period for one more year. The MOU maintains the limits on elective classes for eighth grade students only.

Future meeting dates: April 6, April 20, May 10.
Debt Forgiveness Workshop

“Am I going to have to work until I am 80, or will I be able to pay off my loans before I retire?” This is not an uncommon quote from teachers and other educators who graduated from college with high debt.

Because salaries in BUSD are not always as competitive as neighboring school districts, BTA looks for ways to recruit and retain highly qualified educators. BTA President Diana Abasta recently talked to new teachers to see if a workshop on debt forgiveness would be helpful. BTA Executive Director, Sonya Lowe was able to contact a NEA Organizer, Sean Mabey, from the Utah Education Association. Sean is very knowledgeable and has helped thousands of educators when it comes to seeing if they qualify for loan forgiveness.

The workshop was held at the BHS library and members from the Burbank Teachers Association, Glendale Teachers Association, and United Teachers of Los Angeles attended. Sean’s PowerPoint talked about Stafford versus Perkins Loans and he also explained the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program. Because there are different types of loans, it is wise to look at the loan forgiveness website below or you may contact Sean Mabey at:

Student Loan Forgiveness - CTA Member Benefits
https://www.ctamemberbenefits.org/studentloan

CATESOL Conference 2018

Burbank High School ELD Coordinator Laura Messian recently presented at the CATESOL Conference, (the California Association of Teachers who teach English to Students of Other Languages). Her workshop “Get Organized: Help Student Writers Organize and Expand their Ideas” focused on a variety of easy to use outlines and templates that help second language learners write well organized and develops essays. Laura has been working with learners of other languages for 25 years and is a proud member of BTA.
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CTA NEW EDUCATOR WEEKEND

BY Amelia Merwin Cheatum

When given the opportunity to attend CTA's New Educator Weekend at the end of February, four teachers from Muir jumped at the chance! Shelly Burish, Amelia Merwin Cheatum, Tori Cuseo and Corey Howard hopped on a plane, landed in Burlingame, CA and spent the weekend taking in everything CTA has to offer. We attended sessions on student loan forgiveness and Special Education. We also walked away with a helpful tool for our students to practice making strong arguments. We loved getting to spend time with each other as well as with other new teachers from all over California.