Dear members:

The day is here and finally Tier 1B is getting the vaccine! Many of you have already received your first dose and many are just waiting for their appointment. If you had planned to take the vaccine through BUSD, but have since received it elsewhere, please fill out and email the Declination Form (Opt out of Vaccine) to vaccine@burbankusd.org.

Some members have asked if California Public School Employers can mandate employees to take one of the COVID vaccines and the answer is yes, generally, subject to certain exceptions such as medical and religious accommodations. At this time, however, BUSD is not mandating the vaccine. However, the effects of a COVID vaccination policy whether mandatory or voluntary are subject to bargaining.

On the subject of standardized testing, it looks like California is going to move forward with state testing, although the State Superintendent, Tony Thurmond is urging a “go slow” policy. According to a February 22, 2021 EdSource article by Sydney Johnson, Thurmond stated, “our students, families and educators have experienced extraordinary trauma this past year. As our classrooms continue to slowly welcome students back to campuses, we must resist the urge to rush into stressful high-stakes testing, when in fact our students will be in a better position to learn if we first prioritize positive connections, relationships and their mental health and wellbeing.”

Most educators agree that these tests right now will not be the best indicators of student achievement and there will be a logistics issue regarding how the students will test; however, the State Board of Education ultimately voted to develop a waiver proposal that could provide districts with test options if they are unable to bring students back on school campuses safely. The CDE will write the proposal and bring it to state BOE on or before March 17, 2021. I am including an excerpt from a new release so you can see the latest from the CDE:

California Department of Education News Release: #21-11
February 24, 2021

“We understand that this is an emotional issue and that these are difficult circumstances with less than perfect choices,” said State Board President Linda Darling-Hammond.

“Supporting schools in caring for students and staff and supporting learning must be our most important priorities. We clearly need to value time for learning and carefully prioritize how we allocate time for assessments so that results can be useful and well-used.”

Board Vice President Ilene Straus noted: “At this point, with more and more schools just starting to bring students back to the classroom for in-person instruction, there are complex issues demanding educator and student time, ranging from managing new routines required by mitigation strategies to supporting students who are experiencing trauma in their lives to seeking to understand and address learning gaps.”
If granted, California’s federal flexibility request would:

- Decouple state assessments from federal accountability requirements, as applicable. Instead, any data collected would be used to inform local educators, parents, and the public and align resources to student supports.

- Waive federal penalties for student testing participation rates of less than 95 percent on the state’s Smarter Balanced English language arts and math assessments.

- Extend the window by which schools must complete test administration to July 30 for both the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) and the English Language Assessments for California (ELPAC), which measures English learners’ progress toward language proficiency, as applicable.

- Waive administration of the state’s science test altogether for 2021. English language arts. Students typically take the test on a computer, and it can take up to eight hours to complete. Each device requires a secure browser and high-speed, stable internet. In November, the state board approved a shortened version of the test.

In conclusion, I cannot agree more with our State Superintendent, “The most valuable metrics we can use to understand a student’s academic progress will always remain the ones that are collected by educators and schools on a regular, ongoing basis in classrooms — even virtual ones — where individual relationships with students are fostered and strategies for support can be designed in real time,” Thurmond said.

Finally, we want to reiterate that the safety of our students, families, educators, and school staff has always been a priority. We appreciate our legislative leaders and Governor prioritizing safety for in person instruction as community infection rates decline and educators are increasingly being vaccinated. **Now we have time to gather feedback from our members before we negotiate what a return to our sites will look like.**

**We want to make sure that there are enforceable safety measures in place.**

**Please look for a survey to come to your personal email the week of March 8th.**

In unity,

Diana

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**March is Women's History Month**

The Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Gallery of Art, National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum join in commemorating and encouraging the study, observance, and celebration of the vital role of women in American history.

**Girlhood (It's complicated)**

Spanning a timeframe of more than 200 years and showcasing over 200 objects, this exhibition examines the ways American girls have spoken up, challenged expectations and been on the frontlines of change. Girlhood (It's complicated) commemorates the anniversary of woman suffrage by exploring the concept of girlhood in the United States, but also how girls changed history in five areas: politics, education, work, health, and fashion. (Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History)

Image credit: Graphic courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.
Governor Newsom and California Legislature Reach Agreement on
Return to In-Person Instruction

I’m sure that you’ve heard about the resistance that Governor Newsom faced
when he rolled out his proposal for reopening schools before the end of the
2020/21 school year. He has found a compromise, though. AB/SB 86 will include
funding for Districts that reopen for in-person instruction before the end of the
school year. Districts only get money if they offer the required in-person
instruction. They don’t get penalized if they don’t. It’s a carrot, not a stick. In order
to receive the funding:

- BUSD will need to offer small cohorts, offer elementary students the
  option to return to campus for in-person instruction (while in the Purple
  Tier), and offer at least one grade level between 7-12 (once in the Red Tier)
  a return to campus. In order to receive full funding, students would need to
  return to campus by April 1st and the District will lose the funding
  opportunity if students do not return by May 15th.
- BUSD will need to offer COVID-19 testing to students and staff every two
  weeks while in the Purple Tier.

The law also requires 10 percent of the state’s vaccine supply to be offered to
child care and K-12 education sector staff. The bill specifies that vaccination of
school staff or students is not a prerequisite for providing in-person instruction,
though. It does not suspend our collective bargaining rights, and BTA does not
have an agreement for a return to on-campus instruction.

You can read [CTA President E. Toby Boyd’s statement](#) on the legislation.

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**WHY I TEACH... by Victoria Cuseo (Muir)**

I pretty much always knew I was going to be an
educator. It was just a decision that came naturally for
me -- I never felt conflicted about my major, I never
considered other professions. As soon as high school
was over, I decided I would teach Spanish. Four years
later, I started to teach Spanish.

Only recently, though, have I really been cognizant of
WHY I’m a teacher. I never really thought about it much
before and I struggled to think of something other than,
“well...because I do?” when I was asked that question.
I think it’s hard sometimes to verbalize things that are
so personal and innate. However, over the last year I’ve gotten so much clarity on
why education was my path.

I teach, because teaching is my way of improving the world for myself and for others.
There are so many wonderful things about our education system as we know it, but
there are so many things that are harmful and oppressive for many. As a teacher, it’s
my job to do whatever I can to disrupt that harm and oppression in any way I can for all of the young people that come into my orbit. I co-advice the LGBTQIA+ Club at Muir with my dear friend Jessica Wertlieb. Both of us have expressed that creating space for, and building connections with those students is probably the best thing we do as teachers.

I teach to bring LGBTQIA+ representation into my Spanish class as much as possible. I teach to tell the stories of the Latinx community, including the indigenous peoples who contribute so much to Latinx culture and the Spanish language as we know it. I teach to send a message to young people that learning does not happen on my timetable, learning happens when it happens. Learning is a process.

Do-overs ARE okay in life. I teach to make connections with young people -- but also to make their learning environment safe for them. I teach to challenge racist policies and beliefs in our education systems. I want to make best use of my skills and to bring equity into the center of the things that I do. I teach to be in a position to stand up for BIPoC students, to stand up for Armenian students, to stand up for all students. I teach, but I’m a student myself, and all of this is a BIG work in progress for me. I enjoy learning, changing and growing each year. I guess my answer has come a long way from, “because I do”!

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Nominations are now open for the following offices to the 2021 – 2022 BTA Board of Directors.

- **PRESIDENT**: 2-year term
- **SECRETARY**: 2-year term
- **HIGH SCHOOL DIRECTOR (BHS)**: 1-year term to fill vacant seat
- **HIGH SCHOOL DIRECTOR (JBHS)**: 2-year term
- **AT LARGE DIRECTOR**: 2-year term
- **ELEMENTARY DIRECTOR**: 2-year term

(Elementary Director seat eligible candidate must be only from one of these schools: Emerson, Jefferson, McKinley, Miller, Stevenson)

- **State Representative (Alternate)**: 3-year term

Any active member’s name, upon request, shall be placed on the ballot for an office of the Association. Any active member may be nominated by any other member, with the consent of the nominee.

**DEADLINE FOR FILING**: Wednesday, April 14, 2021 5:00 p.m.

**DECLARATION OF CANDIDACY FOR 2021-2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**DECLARATION OF CANDIDACY STATE COUNCIL ALTERNATE**

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**PROMOTING READING ALL YEAR LONG**

**Read Across America** has always been something that BTA has participated in because we believe that reading is essential. Each year BTA purchases books from the CTA California Reads list for every school
library, pre-school to high school. The book titles are always presented at a Board of Ed meeting with the intent to show that we understand and recognize the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

This year we will be sending the books to the schools directly. Please check them out at your library. There are many titles that also come with teacher resources. You can find more information at the following links. California Reads - CTA
Read Across America | NEA

In May, we are planning a reading activity; a modified story walk. We are hoping to utilize each elementary school fence as a safely, physically distanced means of taking a deconstructed book, page by page and encouraging students to take a walk and read. More to come in April.
NEA Representative Assembly Delegates

Representing BTA at the "virtual" 2021 assembly will be Diana Abasta and Jerry Mullady. No election was necessary since the number of declarations to be a delegate was below our allotted amount (5).

Burbank Teachers Association

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Unsubscribe