An open letter to members
The UTLA Board of Directors is united in support of the 2015-2017 UTLA Strategic Plan and in support of investing in our union.

Our students, our union, our profession, and public education are under attack by corporate privatizers funded by billionaire “reformers” who seek to turn education into a business, and students into test scores. We face attacks in the media, in politics, and from LAUSD and charter employers that have been heavily influenced by organizations like the Broad Foundation, which promotes continued underfunding and inequities that affect students.

We continue to struggle with LAUSD and charter employers over funding priorities, and we know that we must be prepared to fight back when LAUSD attacks our healthcare and retiree benefits in 2017.

In the face of these attacks, we have a vision for the Schools L.A. Students Deserve and we have shown in the last year that we can win. We have developed an eight-point strategic plan that includes campaigns in the following areas:

- Contract Bargaining
- Shaping Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAP)
- Public School Accountability and Sustainability
- Charter School Educator Organizing
- Building Successful School Models
- Site Empowerment, Contract Enforcement, Member Rights and Working Conditions
- Electoral Politics, Legislation, and Social Issues
- Building a Stronger UTLA

A key to our victory will be generating the resources to fund our union appropriately. We contribute less—far less—in membership dues than any other educators’ union in California. When our state and national affiliates raise dues, it comes out of UTLA’s budget, unlike in other unions where such increases are “passed through” to the membership. Our current dues structure has not changed in 45 years, has resulted in a dangerous structural deficit, has required us to take money from the limited strike fund to pay for our contract campaigns, and does not allow us to provide UTLA members with the legal support they deserve.

We are calling on UTLA members to support the strategic plan and to approve a dues increase from the January 2016 rate of $63 to $82 a month, approve a “pass through” mechanism, and approve a full AFT/CFT-NEA/CTA merger on the local level to allow members access to CTA Group Legal Services. If we do not act now, our union could be bankrupt or a shell of its former self in a few years.

By investing in our union, like every serious organization does, we can win critical improvements for our students, communities, and profession. We can take on our adversaries, get rid of our structural deficit, protect our benefits, provide the legal services that UTLA members want and need, and bring to life the strategic plan through putting money toward more school site support, parent/community organizing, an expanded research department, and an aggressive public relations campaign. Now is the time to fund our union and our future.

Sincerely,
The UTLA Board of Directors

UTLA’s eight-point strategic plan

Read more on pages 4 and 5
### Editorial Information

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PRESIDENT’S PERSPECTIVE
(continued from previous page)

in rallies to raise wages. Yet, while he pub-
licly stated that he supported Proposition
30, he scandalously sent money to a PAC in
Arizona that funneled cash into the camp-
paign to defeat that very proposition. And
if this wasn’t bad enough, Broad made sure
he also gave money to the effort to pass
Proposition 32, which attacked unions.

What other adversaries are we talking about?
We’re talking about billionaire John
Arnold. Arnold gives money to the Walton
Foundation of Wal-Mart fame; to Parent
Revolution, which destabilizes schools; to
Students First, which is key to the Vergo-
nt and Bain lawsuits that target teachers
and unions; to Teach for America; and
to several organizations that were key to
destabilizing public education and creating
new layers of segregation in New Orleans.

But, there’s more. Arnold gives enor-
mous sums of money to extraordinarily
conservative organizations like the Man-
hattan Institute. That institute promotes
policies that directly hurt our students
and their families by dismantling civil
rights and immigrant rights. And, the
Manhattan Institute wants to destroy the
rights of public sector workers who have
served our communities by leading attacks
on health care benefits and by attempting
to eliminate defined-benefit pensions.

Sisters and brothers, this is what we are
facing, and we should have no illusions
that Eli Broad and John Arnold are faraway
forces that don’t touch us.

From Prop. 30 to the LAUSD super-
sintendent search to the Alliance charter
struggle, Eli Broad is pushing against us.
Add to this that many of his billionaire
friends have benefited from an Office of
the General Counsel at LAUSD, led by
David Holmquist, that writes sweetheart
contracts for corporations while promot-
ing “law and order” for educators and
students. Microsoft, DeLoitte, Apple,
and Pearson have all been beneficiaries
of LAUSD’s loosey-goosey, corporate-
friendly contracts. And, it is the funding
and influence of people like John Arnold
that have shaped the public debate on
health benefits and pensions, and that vir-
tually guarantees that LAUSD and many
charter employers will aggressively attack
our health benefits in 2017.

UTLA’s unprecedented long-term roadmap
As never before, we will need to be
ready to build escalating actions, and we
will need to build the capacity to strike in
2017. Will we be ready? Are we going to
start getting ready now?

While Broad and Arnold stand for the
1%, we have to just as clearly stand for the
rest of us: our students, their families, our
co-workers, our profession. That is funda-
mentally what the Schools L.A. Students
Deserve campaign is about.

I’m excited to share with you that the
UTLA Board of Directors has approved a
strategic plan for 2015-2017 that carries the
Schools L.A. Students Deserve campaign
into its next phase.

A strategic plan is a long-term roadmap.
It is unprecedented for UTLA to have a
plan of this clarity and breadth—and we
need it.

The plan is based on three strategic
anchors for UTLA over the next two years.
• Strengthening Our Union
  Those strategic anchors lead us into
eight issue areas that will define our work.
  First, contract bargaining in LAUSD and
  UTLA-represented charter schools. In the
  LAUSD contract, we have reopeners this
  year around class size, staffing, and evalu-
  ation. There are several reopeners and con-
  tract renewals across UTLA-represented
  charter schools. In order to prevent a
  competitive race to the bottom in learning
  conditions, working conditions, and pay, and
  instead to create a progressive launching
  pad from which to build all contracts, we
must organize around bargaining this year.
  Second, we have to inject the Schools
  L.A. Students Deserve priorities into the
  District-wide LAUSD Local Control
  Accountability Plan and charter system
  Local Control Accountability Plans. These
  LCAPs guide and direct state funding.
  We have a huge opportunity to link
  them to our reopeners and push for further
  investments in class-size reduction, health
  and human services and other staffing,
  student services, classes that make a well-
  rounded curriculum, and real educator
  development and support.
  Third, we must take on the issue of
  public school accountability—fighting for
  basic standards across all publicly funded
  schools, District and charter alike.

• Strengthening Our Union

We’re talking about common-sense
standards like equity and access for all
students, management by the public not
by corporations, financial transparency,
and more. Quite simply, if you use public
money, you have to serve and be account-
able to the public.

Public school accountability’s partner is
public school sustainability. This means that
we have to fight for basic regula-
tions that create an entire school system
that works collaboratively, publicly, and
under regulations—not competitively,
influenced by corporations, and without
unacceptable alternatives. Are we going to
accept that?

Fourth, we must support charter school
educator unionization and voice. Thou-
sands of educators and tens of thousands
of students, whose parents we need to
engage, are in charter schools—more than
any other place in the country. It is the right
thing to do to support these educators’
right to a union and professional voice.

And, it is an essential thing to do to work
with these educators and engage these
parents as we organize to win basic stan-
dards, basic regulations, and coordinated
contracts that raise the floor for learning
conditions and working conditions.

When I taught at Crenshaw High
School, I took on a student teacher each
year from UCLA. Kristi McLaughlin was
one of the best, connecting with students
and families, teaching critical thinking
rather than narrow test-taking, and always
sitting in on our weekly union meetings.

When she was finished with student
schooling, and with jobs in LAUSD hard
to come by, Kristi took a job with a charter
school. She didn’t drink the anti-union
Kool-Aid; she just took a job.

Kristi is an educator serving the stu-
dents of Los Angeles. She has great ideas
about teaching and schools, and she is a
great advocate. We need to be connecting
with, learning from, and building a move-
ment with the Kristi McLaughlins of Los
Angeles charter schools.

Fifth, we need to highlight, support, and
build successful school models. For too
long, UTLA, with our silence, has allowed
them to project themselves as experts on
teaching, learning, and school improve-
ment. Eli Broad, John Arnold, and John
Deasy have stepped into that vacuum.
(continued on page 25)
UTLA’s 2015-2017 strategic plan

Its eight points are the union’s road map for the next two years.

UTLA is embarking on the next phase of the Schools L.A. Students Deserve campaign as we enter the new school year. Our road map is the UTLA 2015-2017 Strategic Plan, which was developed and approved by our Board of Directors. The plan builds on the hard-won victories of last year and expands our vision and resolve. This plan is ambitious because it has to be. We face more challenges to our profession and to public education than we did just a year ago. We must organize and fight on many fronts, but we know from our experience last year that when we all work together we have the power to win.

UTLA officers and board members will be visiting schools in the coming weeks and months to get your input, and chapter chairs will be meeting with staff at their school sites as we continue to build UTLA into a stronger organizing union.

The plan is built around three strategic anchors:

**Standing for Fairness:** Improving all schools for all students. Corporate competition doesn’t work.

**Fighting for Resources:** Getting our students what they need. Doing so means

(continued on next page)
United Teacher • for the latest news: www.utla.net August 21, 2015

STRATEGIC PLAN
(continued from previous page)

taking on the billionaires.

Strengthening UTLA: Building a UTLA that can fight for our students and profession.

Those anchors inform the eight issue areas we must engage in through organizing with members and parents:

1. Contract Bargaining in LAUSD and Charter Schools

Priorities for contract negotiations at LAUSD and UTLA-represented charter schools include:

• Addressing class size, staffing, and educator development and support in LAUSD represented for 2015-16, including attention to special education, ELL services, and more.

• Securing further pay increases and improvements on class size and staffing in LAUSD.

• Achieving strong agreements in all UTLA-represented charter schools that are in bargaining.

UTLA STRATEGIC PLAN
Standing for Fairness
Fighting for Resources
Strengthening Our Union

• Preparing for the huge battle over LAUSD health benefits, and full contract renewal, in 2017. All signs point toward LAUSD and charter employers aggressively going after benefits in the coming years.

2. Shaping LAUSD’s and UTLA-Represented Charter’s LCAPs (Local Control Accountability Plans)

The LCAPs, which direct how state funding is spent, offer a major opportunity to inject into these plans Schools L.A. Students Deserve priorities, such as class-size reduction, health and human services and other staffing, student services, classes that make a well-rounded curriculum, and real educator development and support. UTLA will be organizing coalitions with educators, parents, and community to develop LCAPs in LAUSD and UTLA-represented charters for 2016-2019 around this goal. (For more on LCAPs, read an FAQ on page 6.)

3. Public School Accountability and Sustainability

This priority has two key elements:

• Fighting for basic accountability standards across all publicly funded schools—District and charter alike—on common-sense issues such as equity and access for all students, management by the public and not by corporatons, and financial transparency. If a school uses public money, it has to serve and be accountable to the public.

• Fighting for basic regulations that create an entire school system that works collaboratively, not competitively, to ensure that all students at all schools are served in a sustainable way.

4. Charter School Educator Organizing and Voice

UTLA will continue to support organizing more educators who currently do not have a union. Nationwide, more and more charter educators are unionizing to gain a voice in their workplaces for the benefit of their students and their profession.

5. Highlighting and Building Successful School Models

UTLA will give strength to educational best practices as we organize around curriculum, school climate, staffing (including health and human services), teaching not testing, adult and early education, and cultural relevance, including ethnic studies and visual and performing arts, in a full-union-contract environment.

6. School Site Empowerment, Contract Enforcement, Member Rights, and Working Conditions

Last year showed that school-site organizing gets results, and this site-driven work will continue on all the key issues and concerns: Local School Leadership Councils, budgets, Prop. 39 co-locations, class size, curriculum, bad principals, grievances, Breakfast in the Classroom, clean/safe schools, restorative justice, excessive testing, existing and new sections of contracts, and more.

7. Electoral Politics, Legislation, and Broader Social Issues

Our priorities include:

• Organizing for a state revenue initiative or legislation through the Make It Fair coalition.

• Organizing for LAUSD Board, state legislature, and charter management support of the Schools L.A. Students Deserve.

• Strengthening PACE, our political program, and our approach to social issues that affect our students.

8. Building a Stronger UTLA

This includes two key components:

• Restructuring UTLA dues to prepare us for the challenges ahead (read the summary on this page).

• Organizing agency fee payers to become members of UTLA in the contest of the anti-union Friedrichs v. CTA case. The suit seeks to eliminate the collection of “fair share” representation fees from individuals, which would create a class of “free riders” who benefit from union membership without paying dues.

Key part of the strategic plan: Restructuring our dues

Increasing our dues will build a stronger UTLA.

A key part of UTLA’s two-year strategic plan is a dues restructuring that would increase the regular full-time member rate by $19 a month, starting in 2016. UTLA members currently contribute the lowest membership dues of any local teachers’ union in the state (see comparison chart). When our affiliates decide, through their representative bodies, to raise dues to do the critical state and national work that they do, every other union “passes through” this increase to members. As it is now, any increase in state or national dues comes out of UTLA’s own budget, creating a huge structural deficit that is not sustainable. Our restructuring will include a “pass through” to fix this problem.

A $19 increase would still keep us below most other locals but would give us the resources we need to build a stronger UTLA for the challenges ahead and to fight for the Schools L.A. Students Deserve.

There is more about dues restructuring in this UNITED TEACHER, and UTLA members will be discussing this crucial issue with leadership and with colleagues in the months ahead. The dues increase would have to be approved by a vote of the UTLA membership.

With a dues increase, we gain the resources to take on an array of attacks, including:

• Threats to our healthcare in 2017, when LAUSD will likely go after our fully paid healthcare for active employees and fully paid retiree healthcare, as well unionized charter employers.

• Expansion of unregulated nonunion charter schools that drives down wages for educators and learning conditions for students.

• Inadequate school funding that amplifies the impact of income inequality.

• The outsized influence of unaccountable billionaires who are funding everything from School Board campaigns and the spread of unregulated nonunion charters to attacks on employee pensions and court cases targeting tenure, due process, and union rights.

As part of the dues restructuring, we would also gain:

• More resources to continue the crucial work of supporting school sites, including contract enforcement and protection of members’ rights.

• Increased support for parent and community organizing to build power for the Schools L.A. Students Deserve priorities.

Funds for an aggressive public relations campaign to counter the “bad teacher” and “failing schools” media spin that gives fuel to the corporate reformers.

• An expanded research department to dig deep into District finances in support of bargaining and to connect the dots between billionaire outsiders, local politicians, and LAUSD sweetheart contracts for corporations.

• “Two for one” affiliate membership. The dues restructuring involves fully merging our state and national affiliates at the local UTLA level. Instead of choosing either AFT/CFT or NEA/CTA, UTLA members would belong to both, getting “two for one” membership and access to all the benefits and privileges of all four associations at one dues rate. A full merger will also increase our influence in important bodies like the L.A. County Federation of Labor and in the state and national labor movement.

• Expanded legal coverage through Group Legal Services. The abuse of “teacher jail” has shown us that educators now more than ever need comprehensive legal assistance. A fully merged UTLA would give our members access to CTA Group Legal Services, which would greatly enhance the legal protections already provided by UTLA in crucial areas such as dismissals, suspensions, RIF layoff notices, and credentialing issues.

UTLA members pay much lower dues than other teachers’ union members

Teachers’ Union Monthly Dues 2015-16: a comparison

New York (UFT) $104
Pasadena $103
Centinela Valley $95
Lennox $94
Beverly Hills $94
Long Beach $94
AMU (Green Dot) $92
Glendale $91
San Diego $91
Redondo Beach $91
Santa Monica-Malibu $91
Manhattan Beach $90
Inglewood $89
Palos Verdes $88
Torrance $88
Hawthorne $88
Baldwin Park $88
El Segundo $88
Chicago Teachers Union $88
El Monte High Union $88
Burbank $87
Lawndale $87
Fresno $87
UTLA eff. Jan. 2016 $63
$ $20 $40 $60 $80 $100 $120
LCFF and LCAP: The basics

The state’s historic funding shift offers new opportunities to make sure spending meets our students’ needs.

As part of our new strategic plan, UTLA will be working with parents and community members to shape LAUSD’s and charter managers’ Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs) to best support our priorities in the schools L.A. Students Desire campaign and specifically through contract reopeners. Below are the basics behind the LCAPs and the legislation that gave life to them, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). UTLA will be holding trainings in the coming months for site leaders on organizing around the LCAPs.

What is the Local Control Funding Formula?
The Local Control Funding Formula, signed into law in 2013, was a historic shift in how state funding is provided to school districts and charter school governing boards. It is driven by equity, with funding determined by a district’s level of high-needs students. The LCFF allows flexibility to develop creative strategies that are relevant to a school district’s student population. It also demands accountability; School districts must have qualitative and quantitative goals, show how those goals will be met, and report on which ones were met.

How does the LCFF work?
LCFF eliminates revenue limits and almost all state categorical programs and duplicated pupils” above the 55% threshold. There are still pockets of money in the state funding for programs such as special education and early childhood education.

What are the Local Control Accountability Plans?
Under LCFF, all districts and charter organizations are required to have a Local Control and Accountability Plan that describes how they intend to meet annual goals for all students. The plan is determined by the school district or charter organization—not the school site. The LCAP must follow eight state priorities:

1. Basic services as defined by the Williams settlement (i.e., properly credentialed teachers, sufficient instructional materials, and facilities in good repair).
2. Common Core state standards implementation.
3. Parent involvement.
4. Student achievement as measured by statewide assessments, the Academic Performance Index, Advanced Placement examinations, the Early Assessment Placement, A-G or career technical education sequence course completion, and English learner reclassification rates.
5. Student engagement as measured by attendance rates, chronic absenteeism rates, middle school and high school dropout rates, and high student graduation rates.
6. School climate as measured by student suspension and expulsion rates, as well as other local measures.
7. Course access and enrollment in a broad course of studies.
8. Other student outcomes, if available, in a broad range of subject areas.

How do the LCAPs provide an organizing opportunity?
LCAPs provide opportunities to organize at multiple points: at the District level in the development of the plan and then, once it’s in place, at school sites to ensure that administrators are following it and implementing it appropriately.

During plan development, the law requires that school districts or charter organizations consult with teachers, principals, school personnel, pupils, and local unions, but frankly this does not mean that stakeholders will be engaged in a meaningful way unless we demand that they are.

In addition to the formal consultation role in plan development, LCAP presents an opportunity to ensure that the program and goals set out by the LCAP genuinely meet the needs of students and enables educators to lead the effort. Part of UTLA’s new strategic plan involves working with parents and community members to shape LAUSD’s and charter managers’ LCAPs to support our priorities in contract reopeners and the Schools L.A. Students Desire campaign, such as class-size reduction, health and human services and other staffing, classes that make a well-rounded curriculum, and real educator development and support.

Connecting with the community

Valley East holds special education workshop for parents.

For years, many parents of children with special needs have been getting the short end of the stick, and unless they find an advocate to help them with the District bureaucracy, they struggle to get the services they require. Even our own UTLA members who are parents of children with special needs often have problems figuring out the LAUSD system.

To address this, UTLA Valley East held a Special Education Workshop last May for parents at Pacoima Community Center to inform them of their rights as parents of children with special needs and to empower them with knowledge on how to navigate the school district.

As a long-time Pacoima Neighborhood Council member, I partnered with Assemblymember Patty Lopez to organize the event. UTLA members Debbie Solis and Darrel Jones, who are on the CTA State Council Special Education Committee with me, led the presentations, with the support of two special education activists and translators, UTLA teacher Olivia Ledezma and special education paraprofessional Manny Solis. The team presented on an array of topics, including the IEP process, parent rights if they disagree with IEP goals, the future of special education, and the differences in special education services at independent charters and traditional public schools. Parents also received free resources from LAUSD’s Special Education office, El Nido Family Services, Patty Lopez’s office, School Board member Monica Ratliff’s office, UTLA, and the Pacoima Neighborhood Council.

Overall the event was a huge success, and the parents were very excited to be working with UTLA, because parents and educators want the same thing: for students to be successful. We are looking forward to holding another special education workshop and to continue to embrace ways to connect with parents and the community.

UTLA meeting board

Upcoming meetings

AUGUST 26 & SEPTEMBER 30
UTLA Area Meetings: See times and locations at utla.net.
Early Childhood Education Committee: 7 p.m., UTLA building.

SEPTEMBER 2
Elementary Committee: 4 p.m., UTLA building.
Secondary Committee: 4 p.m., UTLA building.
African-American Education Committee: 4 p.m., UTLA building.
Capably Disabled Teachers Committee: 4 p.m., UTLA building.
PACE Committee: 6:30 p.m., UTLA building.

SEPTEMBER 16
The following committees meet on the same day as the House of Representatives from 4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. (unless noted) in the UTLA building: Arts Education Committee, Asian-Pacific Education Committee, Chicano/Latino Education, Gay & Lesbian Issues, Health & Human Services, Human Rights, Inner City, Instructional Coaches, Kindergarten Education, Library Professionals (4:45-6 p.m.), Middle Schools, Multi-Task/Year-Round Schools, Non-Classroom/Non-School Site, Options Committee, Physical Education, Special Education, Substitutes, Violence Prevention & School Safety, Women’s Education.

Adult and Occupational Education: Check time and updated meeting info at www.utla.net.

The National Board Certified Teachers Standing Committee: For meeting dates please check calendar at www.utla.net.

By Michael Gonzales Parent/Community Organizing Committee (PCOC) Valley East Area

For years, many parents of children with special needs have been getting the short end of the stick, and unless they find an advocate to help them with the District bureaucracy, they struggle to get the services they require. Even our own UTLA members who are parents of children with special needs often have problems figuring out the LAUSD system.

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At a UTLA Valley East special education workshop for parents, UTLA member Debbie Solis details the process of requesting an IEP.
Unfair practice charges against Alliance go to next step

Management has to answer to charges that it illegally interfered with its educators’ right to unionize.

Alliance College-Ready Public Schools charter educators continue to organize their union with UTLA as their unfair labor practice complaints against Alliance management go to the next step on August 21, when the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) will hold an informal settlement conference regarding Alliance’s interference with educators’ right to unionize.

At the end of June, PERB issued two unfair practice complaints against Alliance educators filed charges in April. The complaints charge that Alliance violated state laws by, among other actions, blocking email from UTLA-affiliated Alliance Educators United to Alliance employees’ work email addresses, refusing access by UTLA organizers and members to Alliance schools, denying UTLA its right to represent employees, and instructing teachers that they could not distribute union-related flyers on campus.

The PERB charges confirm the unprecedented anti-union campaign by the Alliance against its own teachers and counselors who support organizing a union. The PERB complaint was welcomed by Alliance teachers, who are fighting for the right of teachers to organize without fear of reprisal.

“There is definitely an element of hope for me and other teachers as well that we can get a fair and neutral process so we can just have an open conversation,” Gertz-Ressler High School teacher Elana Goldbaum said.

If an agreement is not reached at the August 21 session, a formal hearing will be set before an administrative law judge. Six hundred Alliance educators continue their campaign for unionization at the 27-school chain for the 2015-2016 school year.

Nationwide more and more charter educators are unionizing as they seek a vehicle to have a voice in their workplace and advocate for what they need to educate their students.

III Charter school organizing in the news:

Read more about the rising trend of charter school educators organizing in “When Charters Go Union” at http://prospect.org/article/when-charters-go-union.

Accolades for educators

LAUSD honors Rookies of the Year.

A new award program called “Rookies of the Year” honored 23 first-year LAUSD teachers. Winners were selected from more than 900 teachers in the District who were new to the job in the 2014-2015 school year. The prize included a Dodgers baseball game in August, enjoyed from a private suite, as well as an appearance on the stadium’s jumbotron.

Winners were chosen by a committee that selected from a field of 87 nominated teachers. The award recognizes engaging teaching styles, effectiveness, and strong classroom routines, among other things. It’s supported by the California Credit Union, which created the Rookie of the Year program, and Security Benefit, a retirement savings company.

The full list of winners:

- Emily Agnon, second grade, West Athens Elementary School
- Rosalinda Aleman, fifth grade, Franklin Avenue Elementary School
- Jasmine Allen-Matora, special education, 24th Street Elementary School
- Edgar Avalos, special education, Middleton Street Elementary School
- Rachel Axelrad, first grade, Hillcrest Elementary School
- Sara Benyaminis, kindergarten, West Hollywood Elementary School
- Jessica Blake, third grade, Trinity Street Elementary School
- Rigoberto Cruz, sciences, Franklin High School
- Alexander Dinh, biology, Downtown Business Magnet School
- Cindy Flores, kindergarten, Van Nuys Elementary School
- Jessica Garcia, kindergarten, Wisdom Elementary School
- Teasha Gilliam, fifth grade, Dr. Owen Knox Elementary School
- Lorenzo Hidalgo, special education, Bridge Street Elementary School
- Maria Huerta, fourth grade, Saticoy Elementary School
- Melissa Ally Kim, first grade, Weigand Elementary School
- Aja Koester, English, Nava College Preparatory School
- Heidi Lopez, first grade, Queen Anne Elementary School
- Kelsey Meeks, biology, Washington Preparatory High School
- Jose Pillado, special education, Leichtman High School
- Julia Rosenmeyer, kindergarten, 96th Street Elementary
- Enrique Rodriguez, special education, Sheridan Elementary
- Robert Sears, special education, Cochrane Middle School
- Patrick Sherwood, math, Humanities & Arts Academy at Narbonne High School

Search for next superintendent begins

The LAUSD School Board initiated the search for the next superintendent last month by issuing a request for bids to firms that would help in the selection process. The action is the first step toward replacing current LAUSD Superintendent Ramon Cortines, who has said he would like to step down by December.

It is another superintendent—former LAUSD head John Deasy—who is casting the longest shadow over the hiring process. Deasy resigned under pressure last year, following the iPad scandal, which became the target of an FBI investigation, and the botched rollout of the MiSiS records system. UTLA played a key role in holding Deasy accountable for his failed leadership, and the union will help shape the debate during the search for his replacement.

UTLA is calling for an open, transparent interview process that is inclusive of educators, parents, and the community. Deasy, it must be noted, was promoted to superintendent without any public involvement or an open interview process. The next superintendent must be a collaborative leader, and our schools don’t need another graduate from the Broad Academy, the training ground for corporate “reformers” who push their educational agenda on schools while failing to give equitable resources and support to students.

LAUSD School Board President Steve Zimmer has said that there is not a deadline for filling the position, but that he would like to be at the final stage by 2016, with the new superintendent in place by the 2016-17 school year.
UTLA Leadership Conference 2015: Organizing for Power

Overflow crowd of site leaders gets ready to take on new school year.

UTLA’s annual Leadership Conference is a big part of how the union prepares for the new school year, and this year’s fully booked event was a compelling sign that our site leaders are ready to take the campaign for the Schools L.A. Students Deserve to the next level.

UTLA President Alex Caputo-Pearl’s Friday night State of the Union address (reprinted in this issue) framed the issues facing the union. After taking time to mark last year’s successes earned through collective action—including winning contract and health benefits agreement victories in the District and several UTLA-represented charter schools—Caputo-Pearl laid out a two-year strategic plan that is ambitious in its scope and honest about the challenges ahead.

“Last year, we did relatively well in a series of short-term battles, but it is a much longer-term war we are involved in,” Caputo-Pearl said. “Our adversaries in that war are some of the richest people on the planet Earth, and they are attempting to build new layers of segregation in schools, continue to defund public education, privatize public goods, destroy teachers’ unions, and roll back civil rights and the social safety net.”

The next morning at the conference, chapter chairs reviewed UTLA’s strategic plan by breakings into groups to talk about the plan’s goals, how they connect with their school-site experiences, and key action steps UTLA must take to accomplish them. The core training sessions that followed covered school-site issues that members can organize their school around, such as difficult principals, contract enforcement, and member rights. A campaign strategy chart was introduced as a tool to help chapter leaders and members develop and implement campaign plans that empower educators and our school communities.

The two days of trainings and workshops were punctuated by a series of special guest speakers and panel discussions that looked at a broad range of issues—from charter school organizing to the power of working with parents and the community.

A Saturday panel at the Leadership Conference looked at public school accountability and charter school organizing from different angles. Lorena Street teacher Adrian Tamayo (far right) discussed how co-location has divided families at his school. Pacoima Charter teacher Rosio Anaya (left) talked about how the teachers pushed back against an attempt to get rid of UTLA at the school. Alliance Gertz-Ressler High School art teacher Alisha Mernick (middle) discussed her priorities in joining colleagues to organize a union, which include having a greater voice in curriculum decisions.

Markham Middle School teacher and Central Area Board member Ayasha Brooks (in tan shorts) leads an introductory workshop on restorative justice circles and their potential to help stop the “school to prison” pipeline.

A Saturday panel at the Leadership Conference looked at public school accountability and charter school organizing from different angles. Lorena Street teacher Adrian Tamayo (far right) discussed how co-location has divided families at his school. Pacoima Charter teacher Rosio Anaya (left) talked about how the teachers pushed back against an attempt to get rid of UTLA at the school. Alliance Gertz-Ressler High School art teacher Alisha Mernick (middle) discussed her priorities in joining colleagues to organize a union, which include having a greater voice in curriculum decisions.

Sunday’s panel on “The Power of Member, Community, and Political Organizing” brought educators and organizers from Chicago to talk about how they work together to fight school closures, privatization, and the failed education policies of Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel. From right to left: Jitu Brown, national director of Journey for Justice Alliance and a local organizer at Kenwood Oakland Community Organization; Jennifer Johnson, staff organizer with the Chicago Teachers Union; Susana Saldivar Carza, a Chicago teacher activist who is also a newly elected city council member; and panel moderator Colleen Schiavb, UTLA secondary vice president.

“Friedrichs is part of a broader attack on public sector unions,” Wong said. “Lower unionization rates mean lower wages, lower labor standards, but it also weakens labor influence in the public policy arena, leading to a widening divide between the 1% and the 99%.”

Darder urged the crowd to see the poverty that impacts so many of our communities as not an inevitable fact of life. “Poverty is a creation,” she said. “We are embroiled in a long-term struggle.” She also decried education policy that shuts the community out. “To create education solutions without teachers, students, and parents is nothing but a sham,” she said. “Education must be a humanizing process. It’s not about making a difference. It’s about facing the difference.”

Watch video highlights from the conference on UTLA’s YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/utlaNOW.

Deep thanks to the 2015 Leadership Conference Committee: Arlene Inouye (Chair), Cecily Myart-Cruz (Co-Chair), Rosa Beasley (Conference Secretaries), Vivian Vega (Conference Secretary), Jose Buenabad, Laura Carls, Susanna Casas, Carmen Esterman, Joe Esterman, Cami George, Ingrid Gannell, Donna Horowitz, Mel House, Stacey Michaels, Claudia Rodriguez, Ana “Marcy” Radio, Ellyn Scott, Loren Scott, Cory Vaughan, and Susan Wright.

Corrections

In the list in the July UT of members who volunteered for the 2015 School Board campaigns, the following individuals should have been listed:

Melodie Bitter
Victoria Casas
Evelyn Celic
Janis Lukstein
Scott Mandel
Bruce Newborn
Alex Orozco
Margaret Carol Sullivan
Bobby Vinas

Alert us to errors or omissions: Please send corrections to UNITED TEACHER by email to UTnewspaper@utla.net.
All children develop at their own pace, both physically and emotionally. But you can help give your children all they need to be their healthy best—including lots of playtime and plenty of affection.

**Celebrate childhood**

It’s never too soon to get started on a path to wellness. Introduce your kids to healthy habits early on, when they are more likely to stick.

**Take a tech break.**
Studies show that too much tech time for children is linked to struggles at school, attention problems, sleeping disorders, and obesity—so keep it in check.

**Build them up.**
Help boost your child’s self-esteem by focusing on his or her individual strengths. Just remember to stay flexible about your idea of success—not every child excels in the same way.

**Explore.**
Encourage exercise by doing it as a family. Take walks, ride bikes, or head to the beach, a lake, or a local swimming pool for a swim.

Visit [kp.org/children](http://kp.org/children) for more tips on giving your kids a great start.
Honoring our Unsung Heroes

UTLA celebrates members who power our union.

The backbone of UTLA is its members—especially those skillful, passionate individuals who, often without title or recognition, dedicate themselves to working for better schools and a stronger union. At the Leadership Conference, 13 of these Unsung Heroes received recognition for their accomplishments, whether it was fighting off a Parent Trigger campaign, uniting with parents against a lemon principal, or helping topple a School Board incumbent. On hand to give out the awards were two solid friends of UTLA—State Senator Tony Mendoza (former UTLA Board member) and Assemblymember Mike Gipson (former UTLA staff member).

Unsung Heroes are chosen by UTLA Area leaders and members, who had this to say about what makes each of them deserving.

Rosa Jimenez & Jenny Chomori

NORTH AREA

Teacher, mother, and community organizer Rosa Jimenez has been organizing for the Schools L.A. Students Deserve before the UTLA campaign even started. For years, she has been working tirelessly with the grassroots Schools L.A. Students Deserve coalition, and this year she stepped up as the North Area Parent and Community Outreach Committee Liaison. Rosa is an inspiration to her students and their families, her daughter, her coworkers, and North Area.

During Jenny Chomori’s epic career in LAUSD, she has raised awareness for workers’ rights, women’s rights, and the rights of the Asian community in Southern California. Through her work on the Asian Pacific Education Committee, she has taken hundreds of UTLA members to Manzanar and educated them about the Japanese-American internment. She walked the line in ’89, and to this day she continues to advocate for her sisters and brothers in UTLA—particularly in North Area. The North Area wishes her the best in her retirement and hopes that instead of losing a UTLA activist, we will be gaining a UTLA-R activist.

Laura Carls & Juan Catalan

SOUTH AREA

Laura Carls serves on the Leadership Conference Committee, the Elections Committee, and the South Area Steering Committee with dedication and commitment. As a South Area Steering Committee member, Laura has been instrumental in ensuring the success of our union campaigns. Through constant communication with our members and taking on tasks, Laura has remained involved and supportive during our organizing. Laura can be counted on to show up, volunteer, represent, and participate. The endless number of hours of personal time she has contributed to South Area does not go unnoticed.

Juan Catalan is the chapter chair at 75th Street Elementary School, and he inspires and embodies activism. He encourages South Area members in becoming active members of our union. He engages others in conversations dealing with education and also encourages others to educate themselves on issues that affect our profession and impact our students. Juan leads by example; when he commits to a task we can count on other members joining him in doing the much-needed work. Juan is determined, focused, and enthusiastic about the potential we have as an organized area.

Marcela Chagoya

EAST AREA

Marcela Chagoya is an incredible new leader bringing energy and passion to many aspects of our work in the East Area. Motivated by the excitement around our contract campaign, Marcie stepped up to become chapter vice chair at Stevenson Middle School, where she has worked with the chapter chair to build a vibrant and active chapter. As a brand-new UTLA activist, she also joined our Area Steering Committee, where she has played a critical role in helping us build an organizing culture.

But even that wasn’t enough for Marcie! As an Eastside resident and alumnus of Eastside schools, she was interested in building closer ties between the union and parents and community organizations. She volunteered to be East Area Parent/Community Outreach Coordinator (PCOC) and worked tirelessly to plan this important new work for UTLA. This included hosting a parent forum at her school, supporting Chapter Parent Action Liaisons (CPALs), participating in the class-size caravan, and building a relationship between UTLA and our local neighborhood council. Marcie brings new ideas, hard work, and boundless enthusiasm to our fight for the Schools L.A. Students Deserve.

Larry Shoham

WEST AREA

Larry Shoham is an amazing advocate for educators, students, and the communities we serve. His creative genius made him a great addition to the organizing team this past year, where he helped design the “All the Pieces Matter” campaign as well as the highly successful regional rally at his home school, Hamilton High. Larry has a can-do attitude and always volunteers to support the efforts both in West Area and citywide. His collaborative leadership at his school site has helped make Hamilton West Area’s home base and has increased union participation from the members there. Larry is also a phenomenal teacher and ignites a spark in his students, whether it be from using hip-hop skills to teach a lesson or integrating community activism to inspire the next generation.

Javier Cruz & Holly Jackson

CENTRAL AREA

Javier Cruz has been serving as chapter chair of 20th Street Elementary School for the past two years. This year Javier organized his chapter and was successful in both stopping the Parent Trigger and removing the lemon principal at his school site. Javier is a very humble teacher who is loved by his colleagues and students, and when he first became chapter chair, he was somewhat reluctant. He was not prepared to fight off an attempted hostile takeover of his school, but he stepped up to the challenge anyway. Javier organized a series of community forums, community walks around his school, and after-school leafleting to inform parents of what pulling the “parent tricker” would truly mean. He also organized his chapter to make sure they stayed unified throughout the campaign. Javier put in countless unpaid hours in planning and organizing to make sure 20th Street stayed a public school.

Since 2009 the lemon principal at Mack Elementary had been intimidating both parents and teachers at Mack Elementary School—that is, until she met her match in Holly Jackson this year. Holly led (continued on page 21)
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Taking action at the state, national, and international level.

By Cecily Myart-Cruz
UTLA/NEA Vice President

NEA’s message at the RA . . . Unite, Inspire, Lead!

The NEA’s Annual Representative Assembly (RA) was held in Orlando, Florida, from July 3 to 6. It is the world’s largest democratic assembly, where caucuses, committees, leadership groups, and delegates from state and local unions convene to set policy and chart the course for NEA for the upcoming year.

RA delegates dealt with complex issues with far-reaching implications for our profession, including testing, privatization, and equity and access in schools. It is not enough for educators to speak out about toxic testing; we must also partner with parents, community groups, and other education allies to share this work so that educational justice will be realized for every child.

Another new business item (NBI) that was passed addresses the issues of institutional racism. It calls for a coalition of partners to work collaboratively to eradicate policies that perpetuate institutional racism in education and expand educator-led professional development in the areas of cultural competence, diversity, and social justice.

NEA continued its stance around social justice by awarding UTLA Central Area Chair Jose Lara with the first NEA Social Justice Award for his work with the Ethnic Studies Now Coalition.

The award is given to an NEA member who demonstrates the ability to organize and engage educators, parents, and the community to advocate on social justice issues that impact the lives of students, fellow educators, and the communities they serve.

Lara has a long history of social justice activism, from helping to organize a bus caravan of students and educators to protesting an Arizona law that legalized racial profiling to speaking against local school closings and the distribution of pink slips. His most recent efforts led to making ethnic studies a graduation requirement in LAUSD, as covered in the December 2014 UNITED TEACHER.

In his remarks to the delegate assembly, Lara said, “Social justice is a verb. It is a sense of community and responsibility that goes beyond the classroom. It is fighting for the most vulnerable in our society. And today, it is precisely those students, the most vulnerable and historically oppressed, who are left out of our curriculum.”

Statewide: Lobbying for Ethnic Studies

On July 8, I flew to Sacramento to testify in front of the Senate Education Committee on behalf of AB 101, the Ethnic Studies bill authored by Assemblyman Luis Alejo. AB 101 passed the committee with bipartisan support on a 9-0 vote; the next stop is Senate Appropriations.

We must realize Ethnic Studies now for every California student. I’m proud of this work and that UTLA has been a vital part of the movement. The Ethnic Studies Now Coalition is an example of what we can do collectively! For more information, please visit www.ethnicstudiesnow.com.

At the NEA RA, UTLA Board member Ingrid Gunnell urges passage of a resolution in support of removing the Confederate flag from public spaces. “We, as a union, will be on the correct side of history,” Gunnell says.

UTLA members take a pause with former NEA President Reg Weaver. From left: Gloria Martinez (UTLA Board member), Marcela Chagoya, Adrian Tamayo (UTLA Board member), Weaver, and Yolanda Tamayo.

Noting that LAUSD has the largest number of charters in the nation, UTLA Board member Elgin Scott speaks in support of organizing charter educators.
all can have the schools our students deserve.

The social justice, progressive agenda discussed and debated at the World Congress doesn’t just begin with each country, state, and local—it begins with us individually, and we now have the responsibility to act. We must spread the news about what public education means for the youth (our future), and worldwide we must take back our profession because we are the education experts. We must realize the importance of communities working together to ensure the best public schools for every student. The other side uses poverty, ignorance, and fear to keep our students from aspiring to meet their dreams and goals. But education is what transforms children’s lives. I appreciate the work our affiliates do on our behalf and how they have embraced UTLA and created spaces where we can add our perspective to the work as well.

This year will be especially challenging for all of us. There are privatizers and corporatists looking to profit off public education, and in L.A., we are at ground zero. We are excited, energized, and ready to go forth, speaking truth to power and championing public education for every student because they deserve it.

**2015 UTLA NEA-RA delegates in attendance**

UTLA Central Area Chair Jose Lara, here with NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia, was given the NEA’s first-ever Social Justice Award for his work with the Ethnic Studies Now Coalition.

UTLA/NEA Vice President Cecily Myart-Cruz casts a vote at Education International’s Seventh World Congress for Quality Education. EI is the world’s largest federation of unions, representing 400 organizations in 170 countries worldwide.
From the secondary VP

Organizing for a stronger voice at school sites

Your dues fuel UTLA’s work with school communities to take on pressing issues, from reconstitution to school safety.

By Colleen Schwab
UTLA Secondary Vice President

Here we go again. Another school year is upon us, filled with classroom setup, lesson planning, and copying, along with the myriad of before-school events that educators throughout the District partake in prior to the first day of school. A counselor told me recently that she has already spent countless hours programming and balancing classes so that every student and teacher will have the best learning environment possible, even though the classes are still quite large. A nurse told me she spent her weekend reviewing student health records and reorganizing the health office to better accommodate students. Teachers from my former school tell me that they are working in their classrooms and attending professional development in anticipation of the challenges they know await them beginning August 18, when that first student walks in the room.

But why is this year unlike all other years? First, we start with an invigorated UTLA. Yes, the 10% salary increase, contract language on reassigned teachers and class size, and fully funded health benefits have contributed to the “invigoration,” but truly it is the UTLA professional membership of educators committed to their chosen careers who are making the difference across the District.

Let’s take a look at Barack Obama Global Preparatory Academy and the events of last spring. The District suddenly announces that the school would be reconstituted and L.A.’s Promise would manage the site. With the efforts of charter chair Cathy Proctor and co-chair Alan Newman, UTLA members in an intense and aggressive organizing campaign, which includes teachers, parents, and students signing petitions and holding a press conference to publicly object to the takeover of the school. The community expresses outrage that LAUSD officials were taking such a drastic and destabilizing step at a school the District had failed to support. Next thing we know, out goes L.A.’s Promise, but teachers still need to reapply for their positions. The interviews happen, and not all teachers are accepted back.

UTLA reminds the District that this is a Reed Investment school and the major goal of a Reed school is to stabilize the faculty of the school. This is followed by a series of meetings with the District and their lawyers while UTLA holds firm that the teachers who want to be at this hard-to-staff school should be allowed to stay.

Soon after, teachers who want to stay are invited to “instructional dialogues” with the area superintendent and the new principal. I was part of the process in support of our members, who were courageous and committed enough to subject themselves to another meeting. The results are worth the battle. Most of the educators who wanted to return to Obama were asked back.

Now we begin the task of serving this school. The excitement is there. The passion for the students of the neighborhood is there. In fact, I would be remiss if I did not mention that I am very encouraged by the efforts of the new principal. He has already worked with the local law enforcement agencies to ensure that students are able to walk to school in a safe neighborhood, and he reached out to make teachers feel welcome and part of the Obama team—an aspect that was missing for the past five years from this school. Imagine that: teachers as part of the team in building the school! Moreover, I will be visiting the school with the superintendent on a regular basis to offer support and have discussions about what is needed and I will work with the District to problem solve. There is an air of respect and cooperation between our teams that is refreshing.

Now take a look at Markham Middle School, which has a lot of safety issues and other concerns that teachers and students face on a daily basis. I arranged a meeting with Superintendent Ramon Cortines and members of the Markham staff. The meeting was scheduled for 45 minutes, but it lasted two hours! Thanks to the UTLA members at the site, we are on our way to reshaping how the school operates, opening up communication with the District, and involving educators in the running of Markham.

This year’s UTLA Leadership Conference core training focused on organizing at school sites—like the efforts at Obama and Markham—to create schools where UTLA members are part of the decision making and problem solving of the school. Education, as you well know, is not an ordinary punch-the-clock business. It is truly a family in a small community striving to overcome enormous obstacles while achieving exceptional results that are personalized to all students. And as if this is not enough, we are faced with the continued threats against public education and our union on a daily basis. That is why we have to organize our schools for power. We know what our schools and communities need. We know where we have to go for our students, but the road ahead is not smooth or even.

UTLA faces local and national challenges that will require money and effort to take on. The anti-public education politicians and wealthy businesspeople are coming at us fully funded and ready to spend millions to break our backs. We are strong and we have numbers, but we need to have more funds to fight off these attacks. That is one of the reasons for the UTLA dues restructuring that is part of our two-year strategic plan. Increasing our dues by $19 a month will enable UTLA to become financially stabilized and will signal to our foes that UTLA is on the move and will get the truth out through our new strategic plan and let’s beat the attacks on public education. We can do this! Si se puede!
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Merging for power

Fully merging UTLA will bring us a stronger voice, better benefits, and the enhanced protection of Group Legal Services.

As part of the strategic plan, members are being asked to endorse a dues increase and a full merger of our union, which would give us access to and the ability to pay for CTA’s Group Legal Services, among other benefits of merging. As the abuse of “teacher jail” has shown, educators now live in a climate where we could find ourselves unexpectedly in need of legal assistance. GLS would enhance the legal protections already provided by UTLA for members in crucial areas:

- General employment-related advice
- Dismissals or suspensions
- Reduction-in-force layoff dismissals
- Credential reviews
- Employment-related criminal matters
- STRS disability allowance appeals

Legal assistance subject to terms and conditions outlined at cta.org.

Fully merging UTLA will bring us a stronger voice, better benefits, and the enhanced protection of Group Legal Services. As a UTLA member, you belong to a community of colleagues working for the Schools L.A. Students Deserve. This community includes affiliation with state and national teachers’ unions. When you became a UTLA member, you made a choice to also join either the American Federation of Teachers (and its state affiliate, the California Federation of Teachers) or the National Education Association (and its state affiliate, the California Teachers Association).

As part of the goal to “Build a Stronger UTLA” in our two-year strategic plan, we are asking members to support a full merger of our union, so that all of us would stand together as members of CFT/AFT and CTA/NEA. A full merger would bring us a stronger voice, better individual member benefits, and enhanced legal protection.

**A stronger voice on the state and national level:** Through our affiliates, UTLA and our elected delegates and representatives have a voice in the democratic policy decisions and in the committees and taskforces that build programs at the national, state, and local levels (regular reports on affiliate actions appear in our UT columns). A full local merger—because all of our members would now belong to all of our affiliates—would give us a bigger voice on the state and national level, including with the AFT-affiliated L.A. County Federation of Labor and the California Labor Federation. Working together, we are stronger, louder, and more powerful in our fight to protect public education and improve our working conditions and our students’ learning conditions.

**Access to more individual member benefits:** Our affiliate unions each bring many additional benefits to members. Their large membership numbers give them the purchasing power to access a wide array of high-quality programs and services for our families and ourselves, including competitive prices on financial, insurance, and health products and discounts on shopping, travel, and entertainment.

Each school leader who attended the recent UTLA Leadership Conference should have picked up pamphlets to take back to school that outline your individual membership benefits: “Unlock All the Benefits of Your NEA Membership” and “AFT+ Member Benefits.” You can learn more about your benefits at www.neamb.com/ learnmore (phone 800-637-4636) or aftr.org/benefits (phone 800-238-1133). You must know your current affiliation to access these specific benefits, but with a completed UTLA merger, you would be able to access all of the advice, discounts, resources, and services that now are only available through your one affiliate membership. Truly two for the price of one!

**New comprehensive legal protection through Group Legal Services:** Employment-related legal services are also a major benefit offered through one of our affiliates. UTLA members were hard hit when former Superintendent John Deasy began sending hundreds of our members to “teacher jail.” The accusations have ranged from the absurd to the unsubstantiated but all, ALL, of our members deserve representation. UTLA spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in defense of our members—and it still was not enough. Deasy, and his billionaire backers like Eli Broad, knew our resources were limited, so they targeted our members in the hope of bankrupting our solidarity and our bank account.

CTA’s Group Legal Services program has a team of lawyers throughout California that provide expanded legal services and greater funding to affiliated members. A member may be referred by his or her local union for advice, consultation, and legal representation on dismissals, credentialing, and other legal issues. Having GLS protection is also part of a checks-and-balances system, making sure that District administrators think twice about pursuing frivolous or political dismissals.

Teacher jail continues to be a problem. We’ve made progress on the number of people housed, and our contract agreement has important new language on procedures, but we recognize that as teachers we now live in a climate where we could be accused of anything for any reason and find ourselves in need of legal assistance. With a complete merger of all UTLA members into each affiliate, members would have access to the expanded legal coverage under Group Legal Services and a new tool for fighting billionaire attacks on our educators.

As part of UTLA’s strategic plan, members are being asked to endorse a dues increase and a full merger of our union, which would give us access to and the ability to pay for CTA’s Group Legal Services, among other benefits of merging. As the abuse of “teacher jail” has shown, educators now live in a climate where we could find ourselves unexpectedly in need of legal assistance. GLS would enhance the legal protections already provided by UTLA for members in crucial areas:

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- STRS disability allowance appeals

Legal assistance subject to terms and conditions outlined at cta.org.

**Group Legal Services: Comprehensive support for members**

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The lowdown on UTLA's low dues

Our outdated dues structure and no “pass through” impede our building a stronger UTLA.

By Arlene Inouye
UTLA Treasurer

Since the January 2012 issue of the UNITED TEACHER, six months into my first term as UTLA treasurer, I have been writing about UTLA’s structural dues problem. During the past three and a half years, in forums ranging from school site visits to House of Representatives meetings, we have discussed why UTLA’s membership dues are structure is unsustainable.

The 2015 Leadership Conference launched UTLA’s 2015-17 strategic plan, which stands for fairness, an ongoing fight for resources, and strengthening our union. This plan includes investing in our union so that we can effectively counter the corporate attack on public education and continue to fight for the Schools L.A. Students Deserve. Here are some facts about our dues and what we need to do to strengthen our union.

How are UTLA dues determined?

The UTLA Constitution was written in 1970. It established membership dues as 1.5% of a beginning teachers’ salary, and it requires a full membership vote for an increase. Other teachers’ unions have updated their dues structure in the face of the current attacks on health benefits and defined benefit pensions systems, the privatizing of our schools, and more. UTLA has not.

How do our dues compare to other locals?

UTLA members pay the lowest membership dues of any local teachers’ union in the state of California (see chart on page 5). Teachers’ unions close to our size pay far higher dues: In New York, United Federation of Teachers members contribute $104, and Chicago Teachers Union members pay $88. UTLA members, part of the second-largest teachers’ union in the country, will only pay $63.33 after the January salary increase.

We pay far less in dues despite being ground zero for attacks on public education and the teaching profession. Here are just some of the battles we have faced in L.A. over the past few years: the abuse of teacher jail, Public School Choice giveaway (now thankfully ended), divisive Parent Revolution campaigns, the unregulated growth of charters, and billionaire-funded lawsuits like Doe v. Deasy on linking test scores to evaluations and the Vergara case attack on tenure and due process. The bottom line is that UTLA’s resources under our current dues structure aren’t enough now, and won’t be for the future.

What is a “pass through” and why doesn’t UTLA have one?

When UTLA members sign the membership card, we are given the choice of belonging to the American Federation of Teachers (and its state affiliate, the California Federation of Teachers) or the National Education Association (and its state affiliate, the California Teachers Association).

UTLA dues are separated into money that goes to these national affiliates, state affiliates, and to UTLA. UTLA members elect representatives to go to the affiliates’ governing bodies, where we have a voice in state and national issues (for an example, see the report from the NEA Representative Assembly on page 12). This is where decisions about state and national dues are determined. When our affiliates decide through their representative bodies to raise their dues to do the critical state and national work that they do, every other local union “passes through” this increase to members. Lacking a “pass through,” UTLA has always had to take money out of our operating budget to pay for any increases.

Do you remember in 2005 when then-governor Schwarzenegger tried to take away due process, seniority rights, and school funding through a series of ballot measures? Our state affiliates had to right-fully raise dues to win that fight, and win that fight we did. But because UTLA does not have a dues pass-through, the affiliate dues increase had a devastating effect on our budget. It took $6 million from our operating fund, increasing the structural deficit that we have today.

Our affiliates have stepped up with UTLA in state and national fights against corporate reform, toxic testing, and all the other concerns that bring public school educators together. If it wasn’t for CFT and CTA, we wouldn’t have been successful with Proposition 30, which brought in millions of dollars for school funding at a time when every other state in the nation was cutting school funds.

During these fights, though, unlike every other local union in California, we have had to send out more money than our current dues bring in because we lack the “pass through.” This is the underlying reason we have a structural deficit that is unsustainable for UTLA.

Why can’t we just keep on doing what we are doing?

You might be thinking that we did pretty well last year: We secured a great contract, with a 10% salary increase and unprecedented new language on class size, counselors, and other issues. That contract was supported by more than 95% of our members. After a year of accomplishments achieved without a dues increase, why do we need to change our dues structure now?

We were able to achieve those victories—and begin building our power as a true organizing union—through one-time money moved from our strike fund and unprecedented financial support from our affiliates, the CFT, CTA, AFT, and NEA. Neither of these is sustainable.

Today we must address our structural dues problem so that we can be strong for the future. We are a stronger union today, but the challenges we face tomorrow are greater than they were yesterday.

As I said before, Los Angeles is ground zero for the attacks on public education, and we are positioned to make a difference for our students, for our members, and for our profession and even to influence what happens nationally.

You can read more about our strategic plan on page 4 and throughout this issue. We look forward to seeing you at school site and department visits that we will be making in the new school year.

Contact UTLA Treasurer Arlene Inouye at ainouye@utla.net.
“Two for the price of one” union membership

Completing a full merger will give UTLA educators membership in both the NEA and the AFT.

By Daniel Barnhart
UTLA Secretary

From time to time, as part of the job of helping to maintain the records of the union, I am asked to look at the UTLA Constitution. As odd as it may sound, I’ve come to appreciate the document and all of its many appendices (it can be found online at utla.net/constitution). While references to “notifying members of the Board by telegram” or bargaining for a top teacher salary of $20,000 can make the document seem dated, and even anachronistic, I am often struck by how well our union’s founding members understood and anticipated the hopes and aspirations of our membership.

Take a look at “Appendix A” to the Merger Agreement of 1970. Some of the “UTLA Negotiating Goals” sound just as applicable in 2015 as they were in 1970: Teachable Class Size ... Fully integrated curriculum [with] racially and ethnically mixed illustrations and treatment ... Firm duty-free conference period for ALL teachers. The teachers of 1970—who did not have a collective bargaining agreement with LAUSD, nor a union that was recognized to negotiate one, and were subject to all manner of disparate treatment—wanted the same kinds of things that we want today: things that are good for kids, good for teaching, and good for our families as well as those we serve. Our founding documents set forth a policy of the organization as to the “Dedication to the abolition of racism or any and all types of discriminatory treatment of children and teachers.” I find this evidence of forward-thinking vision and commitment on the part of our founders reassuring as we struggle to figure out how to support movements for educational justice in concrete ways, while making concrete improvements in the lives of our members. These documents challenge me to be a better union leader.

This document was written to emphasize unity and to be a model of governance structure would not change, our constitution came up short, and we are left with a “partial merger” where some of our members are part of one affiliate, and others are part of the other. Member surveys, discussions, and site meetings tell us that the majority of our members not only don’t see a big difference between the two affiliates, but can’t tell which side of the pre-1970 divide in our union they belong to.

Our members are confused and disappointed when they find one affiliate program that they like and can’t be a part of, and don’t get it when we have to explain that we really aren’t as united as we say. Completing a full merger in our local, like our brothers and sisters in San Francisco and many other places have done, would mean that our members would belong to both the NEA/CTA and the AFT/CFT and get “two for the price of one” when it comes to union membership.

As part of the goal to “Build a Stronger UTLA” in our two-year strategic plan, we are asking members to endorse a full merger of UTLA, so that we all would belong to both of our affiliates. Our local governance structure would not change, but a full merger would give us a much stronger voice on the state and national level—including with the AFT-affiliated L.A. County Fed—and give members access to comprehensive legal coverage through CTA’s Group Legal Services (read more on page 16).

I know our union brothers and sisters who have gone before us wanted us to be together then, and would want that for us now. I can tell this, not because of a hidden message buried in old records, but because of the name they gave us as a union, “UNITED Teachers Los Angeles.” I hope to join you sometime soon in voting to complete the vision of our founders and complete the full merger of UTLA.
School-site organizing gets results

A stronger UTLA will help us build on successes from last school year.

By Juan Ramirez
UTLA Elementary Vice President

A few months before the end of the past school year, I joined the parents and teachers at Mack Elementary school for an after-school demonstration against their administrator. They were picketing outside the school in advance of a meeting with District leadership. Parents had demanded that meeting because they felt that for too many years, their concerns with the principal’s retaliatory and intimidating management style had not been addressed. After an exciting demonstration where parents, children, and teachers chanted their demands with a unified voice, we walked into a crowded multipurpose room for the meeting. Soon after it began, the parents and teachers walked out. They felt that once again, the District had disrespected them by not coming ready to listen to their issues but rather giving them the usual presentation. Clearly the parents were not willing to back down in their fight to get rid of a problem principal, and they continued organizing, holding news conferences and a three-day boycott of the school. This month, it was announced that the administrator would not be returning for the new school year.

Organizing like this occurred in other schools as well last year. It took these types of actions, as well as having UTLA leadership meet with District leadership, to come to some agreement about how to solve serious concerns at school sites. In several cases, administrators were removed, and parents and teachers were given the relief they demanded.

This past year we had great success in many areas, including working more closely with parents, which has been driven by our UTLA Parent/Community Outreach Committee (PCOC) and the chapter parent action liaisons (CPALs) at many of our sites. Our campaign for the Schools L.A. Students Deserve in LAUSD brought many community members and educators together in demanding a quality education for all of our students. That cannot happen if we don’t have the resources and school leadership we need.

Issues and concerns do not get resolved by themselves; neither can they be fixed by a simple call to the District. The lessons learned this past year are that it takes time and work to come together with the community and parents to be able to bring about these changes. For too long LAUSD leadership has not been willing to listen to either teachers or parents, but with the power and unity UTLA built last year, we are seeing signs that LAUSD is more willing to address local issues by working with the stakeholders at these sites.

We have a long way to go, and we cannot stop now. We have a somewhat friendly School Board, we have a chance to influence the hiring of a new collaborative superintendent, and most important of all we have UTLA members stepping up to help organize their school sites. This is good; however, the assaults on our profession continue to grow. We are facing court challenges, funded by outside interests, that attack due process, union membership, and more. We have billionaires like Eli Broad who have openly challenged the institution of public education by starting a drive to send half the student population in LAUSD to unregulated nonunion charter schools. Clearly these wealthy corporate types have no idea of what it takes to educate a student, but they are willing to invest millions of dollars for their cause.

We don’t have the billions that some of our opponents have, but we do have the power of our membership and the power of our collective dues. Those dues fund our fight-back. As part of UTLA’s two-year strategic plan, we are asking members to support a dues increase of $19 a month so we can build power for the challenges ahead. The resources generated by a dues increase will allow us to provide greater support at sites dealing with serious issues, like the problem principal at Mack Elementary, as well as expanding our parent and community organizing, and building an expanded public relations campaign.

We had a successful year, but we need to keep working together if we want to save our profession and public education. We cannot engage in this fight alone; we need each other in the coming years. Remember, teachers united will never be defeated.
Changed status? What you need to know about your UTLA membership

UTLA bargaining unit members can have a change in membership status for a number of reasons, such as switching from full-time to part-time status or being hired as an administrator. Your membership—and any deductions you may have signed up for—can be affected when you change status.

Full-time employees switching to part-time: If you move from full-time status to part-time status, consider the UTLA Membership Department so that we can adjust your dues accordingly. LAUSD does not provide UTLA with this information.

Not currently working: If you are on disability or have retired, please call the UTLA Membership Department and let us know. LAUSD does not provide us with that information. If you have insurance premiums taken out each month, you need to contact the insurance company and pay them directly or notify them if you want to terminate the policy.

Inactive status: Our membership system automatically moves you to inactive status whenever you owe dues for more than one month. Consequently, you will stop receiving the UNITED TEACHER for that month (although it can be accessed for free at utla.net) and you will not be able to vote in a UTLA election. Lapses in membership must be addressed within 90 days to maintain continuous UTLA membership.

Associate membership: A member who takes a job in the AALA bargaining unit (principal or assistant principal) may apply for associate member status to keep any active insurance policy already in place by payroll deduction. This can be done by writing a letter to the UTLA Secretary, who will then present it for approval to the Board of Directors. Once it is approved, the Membership Department will make the necessary adjustments.

Welcome back! AALA members rejoining UTLA: If you were an AALA member and you are now in the UTLA bargaining unit, you need to rejoin UTLA, even if you were a member before. The system will register you as a “fee payer” until you complete a membership application.

Changes to your address or contact info: If you move or change your phone number or email address, please contact the UTLA Membership Department so that we can make the changes. This will ensure that you continue to receive the UNITED TEACHER and other mailings. LAUSD does not provide us with these changes. Updates can be emailed to membership@utla.net, and the changes will be verified.

Retired teachers: To stay active in UTLA, retired teachers are encouraged to join UT- LA-Retired. Membership in UTLA-R brings you continuation of the UNITED TEACHER newspaper, continued benefits from your UTLA Membership Card, representation on the UTLA Board of Directors and the UTLA House of Representatives, participation in UTLA-R elections and activities, and additional benefits. Call the Membership Department to sign up or go to www.utla.net/retired. Dues are a little more than $2 a month, deducted from your STRS pension.

Any other change in status: The above examples are the most common change in status an employee might experience. If you experience a change in status not outlined above, please notify UTLA of the change as soon as possible.

To contact the UTLA Membership Department: Please call (213) 487-5560 and ask for Membership. You will be connected with the first available Membership Specialist. You may also email the department at membership@utla.net.
CTA State Council Unexpired Term election notice

Are you interested in representing UTLA/NEA members at the state level? CTA (California Teachers Association) State Council, a policy-making body that meets quarterly, has openings for representatives to fill unexpired terms. If you wish to run for one of these positions, complete and return the self-nomination form by U.S. mail to UTLA/NEA VP Cecily Myart-Cruz at UTLA. The form must be received by 5:00 p.m. on August 31, 2015. The election will be held at the September 30, 2015, Area meetings. For those members who cannot vote at their Area meetings, voting will also be held at the UTLA building from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on September 30, 2015.

Self-Nomination Form

Name

Employee number

Address

City

Zip

Home phone

Non-LAUSD email address

School

School Phone

UTLA area (Circle one) N S E W C VE VW H

Absentee ballot requested for:

☐ CTA State Council

☐ September 30

☐ November 4

Check one: ☐ CTA/NEA Board member

☐ Formal LAUSD leave

I hereby declare that the above information is accurate.

Signature __________________________ Date __________ (Required)

Return this request to UTLA/NEA VP Cecily Myart-Cruz by 5:00 p.m., August 31, 2015, via U.S. mail to UTLA, 3303 Wilshire Blvd., 10th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90010. Forms may also be dropped off at UTLA headquarters on the 10th floor (attention: Cecily Myart-Cruz, UTLA/NEA VP) during regular business hours from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

CTA State Council

Unexpired Term election timeline

July 17, August 21: Nomination forms, timeline, absentee ballot request forms in UNITED TEACHER.

August 31: Self-nomination forms and absentee ballot requests due to UTLA building by 5 p.m. by U.S. mail (no faxes or emails). Forms may also be dropped off at UTLA headquarters on the 10th floor during regular business hours from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

September 1: Letters sent out acknowledging receipt of nomination forms.

September 18: Absentee ballots sent out.

September 30: Elections at all UTLA Area meetings and at UTLA headquarters from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

September 30: Absentee ballots due back to UTLA building by 5 p.m. by U.S. mail only (no faxes or emails).

October 2: Area and absentee ballots counted; 9 a.m. Letters sent to winners and results will be posted at www.utla.net by the end of the next business day.

October 12: Deadline to submit election challenge in writing to Cecily Myart-Cruz, UTLA/NEA Vice President, provided additional runoff election is not required. Please contact Vivian Vega for appropriate form at (213) 368-6259.

October 19: Absentee ballot for runoff sent.

November 4: Runoff election, if needed, at Area meetings and at UTLA headquarters from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

November 4: Deadline for absentee ballots to be received back by U.S. mail (no faxes or emails).

November 6: Election Committee meets at 9 a.m. to count all ballots. Letters sent to winners and results will be posted at www.utla.net by the end of the next business day. Those who are not elected delegates will become alternates.

November 16: Final date for challenges to be submitted in writing to Cecily Myart-Cruz, UTLA/NEA Vice President, provided additional runoff election is not required. Please contact Vivian Vega for appropriate form at (213) 368-6259.
United Teachers Los Angeles
3303 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90010
(Validated parking in rear of building, off Berendo Street)

Please sign up by going to www.thesupporunet.org and filling out the online survey or by registering through The Learning Zone. You will receive an instant confirmation once you’ve submitted the survey. Signing up by phone will not be accepted. Walk-ins and latecomers will not be admitted. RSVP will only be accepted up to 48 hours prior to an orientation. 

Please encourage your colleagues to attend a meeting.

TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE SUPPORT NETWORK, CANDIDATES MUST ATTEND AN ENTIRE ORIENTATION MEETING.

All information is tentative and subject to change.

Salary points can be earned for The Support Network program.

NBPTS info: www.nbpts.org or call 1-800-22-TEACH
TSN info: www.thesupporunet.org or call 213-251-1444
Michael de la Torre, NBCT, Coordinator, The Support Network

Growing Great Schools One Teacher at a Time

Get Ready for Back-to-School with a Fixed-Rate Platinum Visa!

School is starting back up and there is a lot of preparation to be done! Our fixed-rate Platinum Visa is the easy and secure way to purchase back-to-school essentials.

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- And Much More!

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Call: (800) 537-8491 • Click: www.ffcu.org
Visit: Our Los Angeles branch at 5115 Wilshire Boulevard (or your nearest branch)
the information, and use a credit card to pay the registration fee, or send a check made out to Luminis Day Community Foundation, Inc., and mail to Luminis Day Community Foundation, P.O. Box 50543, Los Angeles, CA 90050. Registration limited to 20 participants. Contact Carmela Gomes at gomescarma16@gmail.com or (818) 429-8755.

California Subject Matter Project

Seminars for teachers of world languages

L.A. STARS, a regional center of the California World Language Project, has announced its professional development seminars for the 2015-2016 school year. Programs for teachers of ELD, foreign languages, Spanish for Spanish speakers and AP language, literature and culture will take place on the campus of Occidental College on Saturdays. All programs will highlight the Common Core Standards and 21st-century skills. For additional information, please contact us at (323) 259-2949, via email at ocflp@oxy.edu, or visit www.la-stars.net, where you can download information and applications.

Salary point class on learning about Islam

The LAUSD salary point class “Learning About Islam and the Arab World” will take place on two Saturdays, October 17 and 24, 2015, at UTLA’s Bernstein Professional Development Center (3303 Wilshire Blvd., 8th floor). The course meets LAUSD’s multicultural requirements for teachers and health and human services professionals. With a series of expert presenters, the class will address many aspects of the Arab World and Islam, including ethnic and religious diversity, history, cultural stereotypes, current political issues, and relations with the U.S. Information on teaching resources and strategies, plus guidelines on meeting California and Common Core standards, will be provided. The class will meet from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. both days and includes Middle Eastern lunch. Cost is $35. To register, go to www.FellowshipofReconciliationLA.org. Print the tear-off form and follow the mailing instructions with your check. Questions or late registration: email Jeff Cooper (1thucydictes@att.net) or call Rosa Melendez (818-748-7085).

Salary point class on peak performance practices

“Peak Performance Practices for the Classroom and Sports” is based on a holistic systems practice for strengthening the body, training the mind, opening to the inherent esprit, and leading a happier life. Your 30 hours outside class will be in applying this class experience for your teaching/coaching. $20 materials fee. One salary point available. Learn brain energizers, whole brain learning modalities, concentration techniques, whole-body fitness practices, stress reducers, and so much more for the K-12 classroom and/or for the sporting arena and your personal life. Where: Five Wednesdays, September 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30, from 4 to 7 p.m. Where: Van Nuys Middle School, 5435 Vesper Ave., Sherman Oaks, CA 91411. Instructor: Kurt Krueger, NBCT, founder of Success Systems International and the Institute of Sports Psychology 1981. Call, text, or email for more info and to sign up: (818) 399-0771 or successsystemsinternational@gmail.com.

School field trip opportunities at Caltech

The California Institute of Technology (Caltech) is offering school field trip opportunities. Join Caltech graduate students as they explore the wonder and mystery of science through STEM-related movies and interactive discussions and demonstrations. School-day programs in the performing arts are also available. For more information, contact May Herrera at mhh@caltech.edu or (626) 395-6059.

Salary point class on ukulele

Musicians and nonmusicians are welcome at “Ukulele for Teachers,” Bartt Warburton’s workshop taught at the Coffee Gallery Backstage in Altadena. The class is a fun, basic introduction to ukulele, geared toward teachers and taught by LAUSD Teacher of the Year and ukulele virtuoso Bartt Warburton. You’ll learn a few songs within minutes. Learn to use ukulele in Common Core lessons, for every grade level and every content area. The class meets on three Saturdays, September 5, 12, and 19, from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Ukuleles can be provided, with prior arrangements. The class fee is $99. Bartt provides lessons: beginner chord/song charts, booklets, instruments (with prior arrangements), video lessons, a Facebook page to share ideas, and lots of support. There will be time to make lesson plans during class too. For more info, go to Bartt.net, or email Bartt at Bartt@bartt.net. You can also call or text Bartt at (818) 568-3955.

Poetry workshop for teachers

Suzanne Luminis, Los Angeles poet, co-founder of L.A. Poetry Festival, and UCLA Extension Writers’ Workshop instructor, will be conducting the workshop “Poetry: The Word Written, Read, and Imagined” on using poetry to sharpen writing skills and inspire creativity. The workshop, designed for grades 6 through 12 teachers, is approved by LAUSD for three hours of professional development. Luminis will lead discussions to encourage developing a group of strategies for each participant’s particular classroom assignment and field of study. The workshop is on Saturday, September 26, 2015, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Arroyo Seco Regional Library Community Room, 6145 N. Figueroa St., Los Angeles, 90042. Fee: $45 per registrant. Registration due by September 15, 2015. Online registration will be available prior to the program. For more information, contact May Herrera at mhh@caltech.edu or (626) 395-6059.

Bilingual education issues

Game changer for EL instruction.

Many teachers and coordinators have received training on new rules and regulations for the instruction of English learners. The training was presented by the Multilingual Multicultural Education Department of the District. Rules for the 2015-2016 year are:

• ELD portfolios are gone. A new system of recording ELD progress is in the developing stages, but not currently ready for release. There will be new report cards too, but keep using the old ones until midyear because they’re still working on the new ones.

• CELDT is gone, but we will keep giving it until the new test, ELPAC, is rolled out (interestingly, no one at the training could remember what ELPAC stood for). The ELPAC will be aligned with Common Core standards, as opposed to CELDT, which is aligned with California state standards. The CELDT will still be used to trigger identification and assignment of students, along with current ELD levels and some teacher input. The teacher input piece is not clear to me, but I will continue to enquire.

• ELD levels 1-5 are gone. Students will be designated as emerging, expanding, and bridging. These are not to be considered as equivalent to ELD levels because of the difference in alignment with the new standards.

• Treasures will no longer be used as primary curriculum, but individual units may continue in use at the teacher’s discretion.

• As teaching strategies, SDAIE will be known as Integrated ELD; that is, wrapped into core subjects. ELD will be known as Dedicated ELD, 4 specifically taught English language skills.

I did like the approach for opening-of-year lessons called Start Smart, which is very language experience-oriented. Old strategies have returned. The entire ELD process will be more “conversation”-oriented as opposed to “vocabulary”-oriented.

For 2015-16, class organization will remain as determined by now-obsolete ELD levels, including not having more than two consecutive levels if possible unless you have a waiver. Starting in 2016-17, the same theory will apply, but with overall CELDT score used as organizing criteria.

Teachers will be “given the opportunity to create their own materials,” since much of it will not be provided by the District. This could be good—it allows for creativity. But I would not like to return to the days of teachers having to make all their own materials. I knew teachers years ago who were translating whole textbooks because the District did not provide them in Spanish.

We are seeing more allowances for teacher creativity alongside of more tightly controlled lessons. How are these two approaches reconcilable? Our dear, Send.

Multilingual education: The Multilingual Education for a Global Economy bill will appear on the 2016 ballot. This calls for a parent option for multilingual education for children throughout the state. Programs would be offered to both English learners and English speakers. Classes would be taught in English and a target language that would be determined by parental request in each community. Currently the bill is known as SB 1174.

Our students need your brains and your energy to organize for the passage of the Multilingual Bill. The Bilingual Education Committee will meet on September 16, 2015, in Room 826 at 4:30 p.m.

—Cheryl Ortega

Director for Bilingual Education
cortega@utla.net
That needs to stop. As we highlight UTLA members like Katie Rainge-Briggs, Jorge Lopez, and Kelly Barany, we are building community-school models, and as we organize across schools to give strength to true best practices, we build better schools and give lie to the claim that teacher union contracts stand in the way of school success.

Sixth, we need to focus on school site empowerment, contract enforcement, member rights, and working conditions. Whether it is preparing our members and parents to organize around school site budget priorities, taking on a bad principal, enforcing the new class size MOU, fighting against too much testing, organizing for a healthy, clean, and instructionally sound alternative to Breakfast in the Classroom, building a truly functioning restorative justice program, or challenging the principal through the power of our new grievance language, this school-site-driven work is essential. We have been thrilled that the core trainings in the Leadership Conference put forward a tool for organizing that will help build exactly this kind of school-site work across the city.

Seventh, we need to continue engaging in electoral politics and legislation. This year brings us the opportunity to organize the new LAUSD School Board around the Schools L.A. Students Deserve priorities. It brings us the opportunity to organize for more school-site wins by expanding UTLA’s role in the Make It Fair coalition that seeks to ensure that billionaire commercial property owners pay their fair share of taxes.

This year also brings threats: a well-funded initiative that will attack educator pensions and a possible Supreme Court decision in the billionaire-backed Friedrichs v. CTA case that would make it legal for employers to stop paying benefits of the union without contributing their fair share of dues. We need to expand our engagement in the political arena.

While all of this is a lot, it all comes back to our three strategic anchors: Standing for Fairness, Fighting for Resources, and Strengthening Our Union.

Our strategic plan is aggressive because it has to be, it is honest because it never helps to falsely diminish challenges in front of us, and it calls on all of us to be long-distance runners because it is over a two-year span.

Antiquated dues structure holds us back

Sisters and brothers, it is because of the challenges we face, and because we need to be long-distance runners, that we, together, need to be the UTLA leadership—our core leaders, activist Board of Directors, officers, staff, everyone in this room—that bites the bullet, takes responsibility for the organization, and does something that hasn’t been done before.

Our dues structure hasn’t been changed in more than four decades and is severely antiquated. UTLA members contribute the lowest membership dues of any local teachers union in the State of California. We range from paying $32 less per month per member than educators in the tiny Lennox district right next to us, to paying $41 less per month per member than huge New York City across this country.

Just as important, when our affiliate partners in CFT, AFT, CTA, and NEA decide through their representative bodies to raise their dues to do the critical state and national work that they do, virtually every other union in the state of California passes that cost through to members.

UTLA has not done this for 45 years, which has led to a structural deficit that, if left unaddressed, will leave us either bankrupt or dramatically weakened within the next few years.

Resources-wise, we were able to achieve our victories last year because the House of Representatives drew from the Strike Fund and because the affiliates gave UTLA support far beyond what is typical. Neither of these is sustainable.

We, as UTLA, need to take care of our own house. After much research, and without being frightened by expanding UTLA’s role in the Make It Fair coalition that seeks to ensure that billionaire commercial property owners pay their fair share of taxes.

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UTLA has not done this for 45 years, which has led to a structural deficit that, if left unaddressed, will leave us either bankrupt or dramatically weakened within the next few years.

Resources-wise, we were able to achieve our victories last year because the House of Representatives drew from the Strike Fund and because the affiliates gave UTLA support far beyond what is typical. Neither of these is sustainable.

We, as UTLA, need to take care of our own house. After much research, and without being frightened by expanding UTLA’s role in the Make It Fair coalition that seeks to ensure that billionaire commercial property owners pay their fair share of taxes.
If you’re a LAUSD teacher in search of a career challenge beyond simply working in education, why not lead the transformation in education?

Every year, the Graduate School of Education at California Lutheran University prepares the next generation of teachers to move into the upper echelon of educational leaders for the future. Right from our Woodland Hills Center.

Earn your Master’s degree in Teacher Leadership, Counseling or other specialized credential programs, with support of an inspired and nurturing faculty.

Don’t just teach. Lead.

CTA/NEA professional growth opportunities

Free conferences for the 2015-16 school year.

• Are you a member of the California Teachers Association (CTA)?
• Are you new to the educational profession—five years or less?
• Are you interested in professional development?
• Are you interested in networking with other educational professionals across the state?
• Are you interested in what CTA does for you?

If so, you are eligible to enter your name in a drawing to be held at UTLA headquarters on October 19, 2015, to attend any one of the outstanding CTA/NEA conferences for the 2015-16 school year.

To enter, please complete and return the coupon below via U.S. mail to UTLA/NEA Vice President Cecily Myart-Cruz, UTLA, 3303 Wilshire Blvd., 10th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90010, no later than October 9, 2015.

CTA/NEA Professional Growth Opportunities

Print Name ________________________________
Employee # ________________________________
Home Address ________________________________
City ___________________________ Zip Code___________
Home Phone ________________________________
School/Organization ________________________________
Gender: ___Female ___Male
Ethnicity (optional): ___African American ___Asian Pacific Islander ___Caucasian ___Hispanic ___Native American ___Other: ________________
I have been a UTLA/CTA/NEA member for ______months/years.
I have been in the educational profession for ______months/years.

Please enter my name in the October 19, 2015, drawing to be eligible to attend any one of the CTA/NEA conferences for the 2015-16 school year. Rooms based on double occupancy.

Please indicate your preference(s) below.

___February 26-28 Good Teaching Conference, Garden Grove
___March 4-6 Equity and Human Rights Conference, Torrance
___March 11-13 Region III Leadership Conference, Woodland Hills

Please return this coupon via U.S. mail to Cecily Myart-Cruz, UTLA/NEA Affiliate President, c/o UTLA, 3303 Wilshire Blvd., 10th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90010, no later than October 9, 2015.

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Practical matters: Career increments
Qualifying for career increments on the salary schedule.

By Judith Bruner
Compensation and Benefits Specialist

So now you have reached the last column and step of your salary table and are ready for bigger and better things—namely, your first career increment. Career increments are pay increases that LAUSD employees earn for longevity of service.

Employees are eligible for four career increments, each of which requires five years of service. Beginning in 1998, UTLA negotiated a partial distribution of the first career increment. Once you have been negotiated a partial distribution of the first years of service. Beginning in 1998, UTLA increments, each of which requires five years of service.

When the BTS payroll system was implemented, the stub design changed. The designation for the salary table is in the top banner of the stub under “PS Area.” “UT” means that you are a UTLA-represented employee paid on the “T” salary table for those with regular credentials. “UL” means you are a UTLA-represented employee paid on the “L” salary table for those with emergency credentials (such as an emergency credential teacher or District intern).

Check out the Grapevine page:
Workshops, exhibits, and more

ENROLLMENT OPPORTUNITY

Announcing the UTLA Sponsored Group Long Term Care Insurance Plan

As an Active Employee of LAUSD and a Member of UTLA, you have the opportunity to enroll in the Group Long Term Care program. Current UTLA Employees/Members, Spouses, Retirees and Family Members are also eligible for these group rates; however, ALL must complete a health application and are subject to Medical Underwriting.

New members of UTLA and within 30 days* of being hired as a NEW EMPLOYEE of LAUSD, you have the opportunity to enroll in this plan on a Guaranteed Issue basis (immediate acceptance with No Health Questions asked).

To receive your free, no obligation UTLA Approved Group Long Term Care Informational Packet with Rates or, if you have questions, please call:

1-(800) 764-6585

Web Site: www.siltc.com/utla
Email: info@siltc.com
Fax: (530) 887-0109

* Limited Time Only, please respond.
CA License #0795155
Health benefits update: The District is in Round 10 of its dependent audit, and so far the number of dependents who have been found to not qualify is about 7% of those claimed. Other organizations have rates that vary between 3% and 8%. This will help the District in that the cost savings for not insuring these dependents will be about $12 million. Due to the low rate of inflation and the cost savings from the Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare), this past year has seen one of the lowest rates of inflation for health care in the past quarter century. The rate increases for our programs are following suit, and the increases for next year’s premiums will be some of the lowest in the history of LAUSD.

The District is gearing up for a lot of phone calls from our members who are not in Kaiser due to the implementation of what’s called an Employer Group Waiver Plan (EGWP) program that will save money, without any loss of benefits. Those not in Kaiser will be receiving a number of letters noting the change, which your insurance companies are required to send. The most obvious change will be a new pharmacy card from CVS that will be called “Silver Script.” This is still CVS, and you still will have your same prescription drug plan.

Continued attacks on Social Security and Medicare: Republican presidential candidates Jeb Bush and Chris Christie have both proposed to reduce Social Security benefits and raise the retirement age. Bush even went so far as to say he would eliminate Medicare. Studies have shown that raising the retirement age does not save Social Security any real money; all it will do is make people work longer. Jeb Bush went so far as to say Americans don’t work long enough as it is! Remember that Medicare reduces greatly the cost of our medical care to the District. The most expensive members to insure are retirees who are younger than age 65 and then active employees. Least expensive are those of us over 65 who are on Medicare.

How are some seniors like recent college graduates? Student loan debt is at $1.2 trillion, and 43 million Americans carry student loan debts. That is higher than credit card debt. In most economically advanced countries higher education is free, and in those countries that have some form of student loan debt, it is minor compared to what our country has put upon our children and grandchildren. Now, here is the kicker. When Social Security became the law in 1935, it was illegal to garnish Social Security pensions for any reason. But as part of the 1996 bankruptcy law that says that student debt cannot be abolished by bankruptcy, it also says that as much as 15% of a Social Security pension can be garnished to pay off a student loan. Currently, 706,000 households headed by someone 65 or older are still paying off student loans; 191,000 of them are in default, and a number of them have had their Social Security pensions garnished.

A little of this, a little of that: In recent CBS poll a strong majority of Americans say income inequality is a problem. Nearly 6 in 10 say the government must deal with this problem, and nearly half of Republicans and two-thirds of independents say it is a problem that must be addressed. Half of higher income Americans said it was a problem, and across all political lines people said the chance to get ahead is limited to those who are already wealthy. A study of executive salaries by the AFL-CIO showed that in 2014 the ratio between a CEO’s salary and the company’s average salary had jumped to 374 to 1. In 1980, the ratio was 42 to 1.

Donations to PACE, UTLA’s political action fund, should be sent to UTLA-R VP Cecelia Boksin at 3547 Federal Ave., LA, 90066. Perez can be reached at vpapabear46@aol.com.

EDUCATORS……
KNOW YOUR BENEFITS……

Are you new, in the middle or towards the end of your career in Education?

This conference is for you!!!!!

Learn about ……..
• CALSTRS Benefits……
• Social Security Windfall and Offset Acts
• LAUSD Health Benefits
• 403b and 457 Retirement Benefits

Please bring your most recent CalSTRS Retirement Progress Report

UTLA Pre-Retirement Conference

Saturday, October 10, 2015
8:00 AM – 1:00 PM

United Teachers Los Angeles (Auditorium)
3303 Wilshire Blvd., 2nd Floor, Los Angeles
Directions: 2 blocks west of Vermont at Berendo.

*Free Parking Available*
*UTLA Parking Structure located off Berendo.

Registration at the door - $8.00 per person
Open to all UTLA Members
Conference is limited to the first 300 attendees

* Access for the disabled is available through the elevators in the UTLA basement.

Moving? Changing addresses?
Keep UTLA updated by sending your new information to the Membership Department by email to MPalomo@utla.net or by fax to (213) 368-6231.
UTLA members who qualify for dependent health care coverage under the contract are asked to provide Social Security numbers (SSNs) to LAUSD Benefits when adding dependents to their health care. In cases where the SSN is not readily available, dependent health benefits can begin without an SSN on file, as stated in our contract.

Recently, many health insurers have been sending letters to request SSNs from UTLA members if the dependent’s SSN is not on file. Failure to reply or respond should not affect a dependent’s continued right to health coverage, under our union contract.

Health insurers are required, under the provisions of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), to make an effort to gather such information to assist the Internal Revenue Service in verifying that each eligible taxpayer has Minimum Essential Coverage (MEC) health insurance. Taxpayers are liable to pay a penalty if they cannot show that they have such coverage, and making sure these bureaucracies have SSNs on file helps make the IRS’s job easier.

If you have concerns about dependent care coverage, tax implications, and SSNs, UTLA members can contact UTLA staff member Judith Bruner at (213) 368-6280.

For more information, contact: Bruce Loria, Dir. of Advertising
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(818) 884-8966, ext. 107
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Ad may also be dropped off at this address.
A MAE mixer on September 16

The East L.A. Chapter of the Association of Mexican-American Educators (A MAE) invites teachers to its first event for the 2015-2016 school year on Wednesday, September 16, 2015, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The “Grito Social” will be held at Cities Restaurant, 4512 E. Cesar E. Chavez Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90022. For more info, contact Victoria Castro at castro-victoria@sbcglobal.net or (626) 289-7705.

Free LA Opera open house for teachers

LA Opera is holding a free open house for teachers on Saturday, September 26, at 1:30 p.m. Teachers can learn about the opera company and what it has to offer them and their students, watch the production stage manager “call” part of a performance, take a backstage tour, hear a live opera recital, meet opera stars and opera company and what it has to offer them and their students, watch the production stage manager “call” part of a performance, take a backstage tour, hear a live opera recital, meet opera stars and

Dance performances for schools

The TuTu Foundation, now in its fourth year of providing school performances, or email educom@laopera.org.

Free admission and bus transportation for registered school groups. In a guided presentation, students appreciate dance and learn about cultural diversity. Now taking applications for fifth- to 12th-grade Title I school groups. Special needs students are particularly welcome. Email to apply: info@tutudance.org.

Salary point workshops at Inner City Arts

Inner City Arts is holding its Fall 2015 “Creativity in the Classroom” workshop series for K-12 classroom teachers and teaching artists. Earn two LAUSD salary points. Hands-on classes will cover visual arts, ceramics, music, dance, drama, poetry, and playmaking. Sessions run on Saturdays, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., on September 26, October 3, October 24, November 14, and December 5. Space limited to 30 participants. Registration due by September 15. Fee: $175 (including materials). Registration forms at www.inner-cityarts.org. Work-study scholarships available. For more information, email PD6inner-cityarts.org or call (213) 627-9621, ext. 113.

Essay contest for Grades 3-8

FOCAL, Friends of Children and Literature, of the Children’s Literature Department of Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL), is sponsoring its annual writing contest. Teachers in grades 3 through 8 may contact the Children’s Literature Department on a first-come, first-served basis for a complimentary copy of the award-winning book, Separate Is Never Equal, by Duncan Tonatiuh. The non-fiction, illustrated book tells about the Mendez family from Orange County and their successful case for desegregating public schools in California when Earl Warren was governor in 1947. Teachers can share the book with students and encourage them to write about why they liked the book and what it means to them. Three winners will share their essays at the award luncheon, where they will meet the author and receive an autographed copy of the book. For more information visit www.focalcentral.org. Teachers may call ahead to reserve a complimentary copy of this book before they are gone. Children’s Literature Department of LAPL’s Central Library can be reached at (213) 228-7250, and you may request the book be sent to your local branch library.

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