

# THE ADVOCATE

## Reform: A dirty word or 'the change we need'?

It takes no more than a quick Google search to reveal the extent to which “education” and “reform” have become inextricably linked in public conversation. The sample sentence for “reform” in the online Cambridge dictionary is, “The education system in Britain was crying out for reform.” Run an Amazon search for “education” books, and three of the top five results pertain to education reform—including Diane Ravitch’s recently published *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*, a critique of No Child Left Behind that touches on our very own District’s revolving door of reform efforts.

### Reform: What and Why?

There are two questions that should be asked in any useful conversation about education reform—what is it, but equally important, *why* is it? The unspoken assumption underlying most reform conversation is that something is horribly wrong with our public schools. Discussions

*attack*. The replacement of public schools with their private counterparts would be an incredibly profitable venture. The shaping of our children’s futures represents to some a vast untapped marketplace—one presently monopolized by a thriving public

*that our schools, and the world in which they exist, are changing*. In a logical world, “reform” would be the creation and implementation of needed programmatic change in response to that changing environment. Necessary reforms would

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**A commitment to reform does not require a belief that schools are failing, but rather, a belief that our schools, and the world in which they exist, are changing.**

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sector which, while it has produced the likes of Steve Jobs and Hillary Clinton and Martin Luther King, Jr., does very little to line deep pockets. What better way to convince voters that public education is failing than to produce measurement tools designed intentionally to produce failing results? Those of us in the trenches feel this truth every time we open the newspaper or

be driven by those with a stake in the outcomes—parents and educators—with the sole and clear goal of benefitting our students. In our actual world, “reform” has evolved into a foul word. It is a sterile, studentless movement driven by those with a desire to dismantle public education to create a private market from which profit can be derived. The notion of reform has been hijacked from those of us with the greatest human stake in its outcomes, and unless we take it back, the future of public education looks dire indeed.

### Why Us? Why Now?

SDEA members have every right to be leery of conversations about reform, given our District’s embattled history. Yet ironically, we are uniquely positioned to provide a template for what no one else has been able to do: create and sustain an educator-driven reform model that protects and improves public education. With increasing frequency and focus over the past several years, SDEA members have stepped up to demonstrate and wield real power, both for ourselves and for our students. In an environment where education unions across the nation are under assault, SDEA continues to grow

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are devoted to what *type* are best—charters, vouchers, school closures, etc.—but rarely center on whether reform is actually necessary in the first place. The answer, we are to believe, is patently obvious: *of course* our schools are broken and must be fundamentally overhauled. Haven’t you seen the test scores? Our schools (and by the transitive property, our teachers) must be utterly failing.

Underlying these conversations is a rarely spoken truth: *The very institution of public education is under concerted*

watch a presidential debate. Yet when we articulate that truth, we are immediately assumed guilty of preventing schools from undergoing “the change we need” in order to protect our own selfish interests.

### Change Necessitates Change

Educators know that our schools are not perfect. The world is a far different place today than it was when our nation’s school systems were constructed, and change necessitates change. *A commitment to reform does not require a belief that schools are failing, but rather, a belief*

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*See REFORM, page 3*



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**SDEA Mission Statement**

The members of SDEA are dedicated to providing a quality public education. As a professional union advocating the interests of certificated staff, students and the community, SDEA/CTA/NEA will implement its membership commitment through involvement in politics, building coalitions, negotiations and grievance advocacy and educational programs.



# Letters in Solidarity

Camille Zombro  
SDEA President



Marc Capitelli  
SDEA Vice President

## Why union educators?

### The case for organizing charter schools

**SDEA Members—**

“Permanent pay cuts forced on teachers,” “One week ‘til we walk,” “Education budget cut, again...” These are the headlines we read in one form or another from Eureka to San Diego County. It is difficult to imagine from our vantage point what it would be like to stand alone to face these challenges. But that is exactly what most of the charter school educators across California, and right here in SDUSD, now face.

SDEA members believe that all educators deserve positive working conditions and the ability to face their employers as equals. If we believe this, though, then we must recognize that these rights should extend to charter employees, not just to our current bargaining unit. This recognition in turn necessitates action, and our action must first tackle our own internal barriers to engaging charter employees.

The reality is that charter school employees are not our enemies. They, like us, sometimes work for hostile employers. They, like us, struggle to support

our students despite immeasurable challenges. But charter school employees are routinely fired without just cause, subjected to salary cuts or freezes with no power to fight back, have extended days imposed on them, and work without basic benefits to protect their families. Our shared enemy is the system that has stacked the deck against charter school employees in their ability to bargain with their employers.

SDEA leadership and staff are planning our initial steps toward organizing charter school employees within the boundaries of SDUSD so that they have the same rights that you do.

If we truly believe in the value of unions, then we should not be divided from our sisters and our brothers who are working in charter schools. It is not an issue of fairness. It is an issue of working for what is right and just.

**In Solidarity,**

Camille Zombro  
SDEA President

Marc Capitelli  
SDEA Vice President

## A new vision for SDEA's future

**SDEA Members—**

I thank you all for having the faith and confidence in me that you demonstrated in the recent election. I realize that I have a lot of work ahead of me. I also realize that we have serious problems confronting us in public education. I feel that we have allowed our political leaders to blame educators for their own inability to address the social issues of this country. As a result, public education is under attack as never before.

We now find ourselves struggling to respond to the top-down policies that our Washington leaders are placing on us. If we can't unite and get involved in educational decisions, we will witness the demise of public education as we know it. It will change in a way that will remove many of our rights as teachers, as well as eliminate much of the equality for our students.

My vision as your President is to ensure that each member realizes the importance of his or her voice in our united team. I want SDEA membership to understand that, united, we can improve education in this country by electing the right political leaders and holding them accountable to their promises.

My last concern is among the most important. The lack of professional treatment of educators by administrators in this district is inexcusable. We must understand that the power to stop this type of behavior lies at the school sites and in our ability to continue to organize. We can and will put a stop to this treatment.

I look forward to visiting as many school sites as I can and meeting as many members as possible.

**In Solidarity,**

Bill Freeman  
SDEA President-Elect

# Reform

*Continued from page 1*

increasingly strong and unified. The result is that when we have a seat at the table, we speak from a position of power. And at its core, what is a union but a collective voice? SDEA members have demonstrated that when we speak in chorus, we are compelling, and we achieve good things for our students and those who educate them.

We are also uniquely situated with respect to our School Board. SDEA members successfully worked to elect a Board majority with whom we at a minimum share a language, if we don't always say precisely the same things. We currently possess a level of positive influence with our Board and in our community that may allow us to engage in some real and constructive change in the structures of our schools and in the lives of our students. The reality is that conversations about reform are not going to vanish anytime soon. The education community has already ceded

precious ground on this issue. We must now turn the tide, or lose. SDEA members have not only a rare opportunity to engage in conversations surrounding meaningful, **educator-driven** change in our schools, but perhaps even an obligation to take a leadership role in doing so.

And yet past is always prologue. We know that misguided reform efforts have done far more to harm than help students. This means that our first task is to identify and reverse changes that are hurting our classrooms. Our recently won contract language protecting our workload is an excellent step in this direction; to use it as an effective tool, we must all commit to enforcing it. Second, we must begin to conceptualize what shape good reform might actually take. It seems intuitive that this sort of reform may look a lot like what we have always fought for as an educators' union: good working conditions lead to good learning conditions; when workers are respected and have a voice, good things happen for students; we need more adults supporting children, both in and out of the

classroom (i.e. protections for caseloads and class size); we need a strong, positive connection between home and school; we more time for preparation and collaboration to identify and meet our students' needs. Contrary to the message we hear again and again in debates surrounding education, teachers' unions are not the problem. Conversely, passionate and collectively organized educators may be only people who *can* initiate and implement the sorts of restructuring our students need to be successful in a 21<sup>st</sup> century society.

While the answers to these issues remain unclear, it seems apparent that SDEA may want to consider finding a way to participate in "reform" conversation that produces good results for children and those who educate them. The alternative—a continued onslaught of at best ill-designed and at worst ill-intentioned destabilizations—is unacceptable. What we are protecting here is not just our own working lives. We are protecting the very institution of public education, which truly is the cornerstone of democracy.

## A convergence of visions for change?

Euclid isn't a miracle. It still falls behind far wealthier schools where kids walk in already ahead.

But it's clearly doing something right—and it's hard to pinpoint what at a glance. It doesn't have special programs or unusual freedoms. It hasn't been overhauled with new staff. And that defies the conventional wisdom about what school reform looks like.

School districts across California and the country are being forced to remake their worst schools through turn-arounds: dramatic changes such as firing teachers and principals or seceding from school districts to become charters.

Yet Euclid gradually pulled up its scores without those radical steps. It reversed the tide with a long list of seemingly small changes: It carved out uninterrupted blocks of teaching time. It gave teachers time to work together, diagnosing what kids needed. And it zeroed in on vocabulary for English learners. Small changes, stable staffing and a sense of trust—not a shakeup—helped it blossom over the past five years.

**"Small Changes Made a Big Difference at One School"** by Emily Alpert, *Voice of San Diego*, March 31, 2010

Putting faith in good management as the key to improving student outcomes, the corporate model seeks to reward schools and teachers whose students score well on standardized tests, and to punish schools and teachers whose students do not.

The competing vision for reform comes from what I would characterize as the community model. This vision sees change as fundamentally coming from those closest to kids—teachers, parents, principals, support staff at the school such as paraeducators, counselors, librarians and office staff, community volunteers and even students themselves. The community model puts its faith in strong relationships built between people within a school community.

Teachers in the community model cherish small class sizes, where they have an opportunity to really get to know their students and parents, and tailor their teaching to the individual learning styles of each student. Principals in the community model value stability over the next "big idea," striving to keep in place a staff that can work well as a team, and achieve consistent improvement over time.

**State of the District Address, Richard Barrera, March 24, 2010**

Community schools focus on creating the conditions for learning and support for teachers in preparing youth to graduate ready for college, career, and citizenship. They are built on five pillars: comprehensive services for students and their families, early childhood development opportunities, after school and extended learning opportunities, parent and community involvement, and an engaging, real world curriculum. One community school advocate, an Ohio teacher, notes the importance of this strategy. "The teachers are thankful that the services are in the building because their [students'] needs will be met. Those whose families don't have enough food over the weekend. Our school gives out bags of food. This not only meets a dire need, it also makes the student feel more secure, which leads to better behavior."

NEA President Dennis Van Roekel said, "We must harness the coordinated power of social services, parental engagement, service learning opportunities, extended learning and afterschool programs to ensure children's success." **"Nation's Largest Teacher Unions Unit to Support Community Schools"**, NEA/AFT, April 5, 2010



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Check your mail for more information coming soon, or visit Member Benefits at [www.cta.org](http://www.cta.org).

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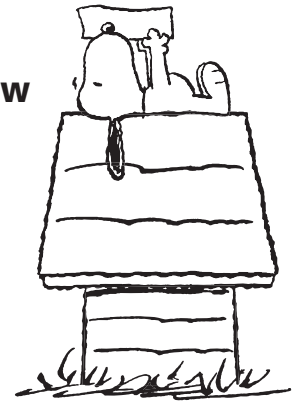


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## Comparing the Candidates for Superintendent of Public Instruction on the Issues that Matter Most to Educators

### EDUCATION ISSUES



**Tom Torlakson**

*"State government has starved our schools of the resources we need to provide a quality education," said Assemblyman Tom Torlakson, D-Antioch, in a statement about the Race to the Top rejection Thursday.*

*"Change for the sake of change without a real commitment to fully fund education—will not succeed."*

**San Francisco Chronicle, 3/3/10**



**Gloria Romero**

*"Failing kids get an 'F' on their report card, while failing adults get pay raises, lucrative contracts and good pensions."*

**Op-Ed, San Jose Mercury News, 12/19/09**

### KEY POSITIONS

- ✓ Supports adequate funding for public education to help all children succeed.
- ✓ Supports assistance rather than sanctions to help lower-performing schools. Sponsored the Quality Education Investment Act.
- ✓ Opposes take-over and charter school conversion as mandated sanctions based on test scores.
- ✓ Opposes paying teachers based on student test scores.
- ✓ Supports due process rights for teachers.
- ✓ Opposes second grade testing.
- ✓ Opposes Race to the Top.
- ✓ Supports accountability for all schools, including charter schools.
- ✓ Supports funding schools based on student outcomes.
- ✓ Supports penalizing lower-performing schools, rather than helping them improve.
- ✓ Supports takeover and charter school conversion as mandated sanctions based on test scores.
- ✓ Supports paying teachers based on student test scores.
- ✓ Opposes due process rights for teachers.
- ✓ Supports second grade testing.
- ✓ Supports Race to the Top.
- ✓ Opposes accountability for charter schools.

### SUPPORTERS

- California School Employees Association
- California Federation of Teachers
- California Professional Firefighters
- Peace Officers Research Association of California
- United Food and Commercial Workers
- Former State Superintendent Delaine Eastin
- EdVoice
- Eli Broad
- Education Management LLC
- Former Los Angeles Mayor, Richard Riordan
- California Charter School Association

**Romero is Trouble. VOTE for Tom Torlakson**

# Online Special Edition: Advocate Columnists

## SDEA-R: An excellent forum for new retirees

It seems hard to believe that a year has almost passed since the District offered the early retirement incentive program in which over 600 employees participated. However, the end of the school year is near and there may be some who are retiring. I would like to encourage you to become a member of SDEA/CTA/NEA-R, where your voice will continue to be heard.

CTA/NEA-Retired is the state's most active and influential lobby for education issues, including retirement and health concerns. Over the last several years, CTA advocates have successfully lobbied to increase CALSTRS benefits for current members. These funds have been used to increase the buying power of retirees, teacher retention and enhanced pension benefits. CTA/NEA-Retired monitors all CALSTRS meetings, presenting the views of its members to the CALSTRS Board of Directors. Working with NEA, CTA/NEA-Retired maintains a constant vigil on federal legislation that may affect retirement benefits. Retired members are kept informed through the Retiree Advocate and website focusing on retiree needs and interests. SDEA-R is the local advocate for retiree concerns.

SDEA and SDEA-R will be holding its annual Joint Retiree Reception on June 7, 2010, in the SDEA auditorium. This event is for those planning to retire at the end of this school year and those already retired. Come and socialize with other retirees and also find out about membership options and how being a visiting teacher and being retired works.

SDEA Council Reps will have a form to sign up for the reception or you can also find it on line at [sdea.net](http://sdea.net) at the end of the Advocate. Those already retired can access it on line with the Advocate or a hard copy will be included in the mailed Advocate.

For all active and retired teachers, our health benefits and pension are our future, so be alert to any and all attempts to change them. There are those out there who are trying to do just that.



**Norma Heeter**  
SDEA-R President

### ATTENTION ALL SDEA MEMBERS RETIRING THIS YEAR:

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND THE **ANNUAL JOINT SDEA/SDEA-R PRE-RETIREE/RETIREE RECEPTION ON JUNE 7, 2010 FROM 4:00-6:00 P.M. AT THE SDEA AUDITORIUM.**

COME ENJOY FOOD, PRIZES, AND CAMARADERIE WITH CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE RETIREES. FIND OUT ABOUT MEMBERSHIP IN SDEA/CTA/NEA-RETIRED. OUR SDEA-R MOTTO IS "**LIFELONG PROFESSIONALS... LIFELONG LEARNERS.**" WE HOPE YOU WILL CONTINUE MEMBERSHIP IN OUR PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION.

**COMPLETE THE FORM BELOW AND SEND TO SDEA OR CALL SDEA AT 619-283-4411 TO CONFIRM YOUR ATTENDANCE.**

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#### **SDEA-R AND SDEA JOINT PRE-RETIRES AND RETIREES RECEPTION**

***JUNE 7, 2010 - 4:00-6:00 P.M.***

***SDEA AUDITORIUM***

**10393 San Diego Mission Road, Suite 100**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Retired                      Year Retired \_\_\_\_\_                      Last Site \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Pre-Retired                      Retirement Date \_\_\_\_\_                      Site \_\_\_\_\_

Send tear off to **SDEA-R at SDEA, 10393 San Diego Mission Road, Suite 100, San Diego, CA 92108** If you have questions, contact Ellie Cole @858-273-2500 or [ecole4280@yahoo.com](mailto:ecole4280@yahoo.com). **PLEASE RESERVE EARLY FOR PLANNING PURPOSES!**