

# THE ADVOCATE

## Democracy

in action!



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photos by Rafal Dobrowolski and Morgan Thornberry

**Above: SDEA members gathered on Tuesday, Nov. 3 to brainstorm and prioritize a list of the issues in special education that most adversely impact educators and students. Cover: SDEA members cast their votes at the special education meeting. (See story, page 4.)**

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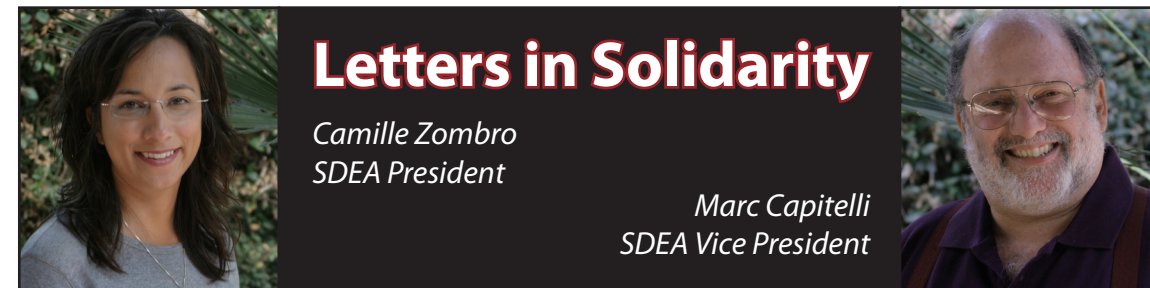
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#### SDEA Mission Statement

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

## Public education under attack (again)

SDEA Members—

After their families, no one cares more about America's children than their teachers. Everyone knows this. But in tough economic and political times, many seem to have forgotten that the working people who populate our schools chose their dedication to the next generation of Americans as a career. Caring about kids and doing our part to build the future is what we do for a living.

And the work we do is amazing. From the cafeteria to the classroom, from the front office to the football field, and from the counseling office to sixth grade camp, we are the guts and the essential organs of a system which provides a quality learning environment for every child. But we do all this while working in a system that is criminally under-funded and tragically disrespected.

Before our state's economic crisis began, Governor Schwarzenegger's own studies revealed that California's public schools are under-funded by as much as 40 percent. This was before we took an \$18 billion hit over the last two years. It's hard to wrap our minds around such staggering numbers, but the reality of these numbers is played out every day in our schools. The supplies we purchase, the extra work we do, the students we have no time to reach, and the frustrations we put up with are routine. We've gotten used to doing more with less in an increasingly unstable environment.

Outside the doors of our schools, parents are genuinely worried about their children's futures. In their panic, some are turning to divisive and destructive solutions like breaking up the District, changing their schools to independent charters, or dismantling the hard-fought gains of educators in the name of saving their children's future.

It's time for all of us, parents and educators, to stand up for our schools.

We cannot be the generation that oversees the dismantling of the free and quality public education system that is supposed to be the right of every child. Neither can we afford to be the generation that loses the union rights, decent wages, and the healthcare we and our families deserve.

The work ahead is daunting but it includes very necessary, practical and concrete steps. We must talk to each other and to the parents of our students. We must take time out of our busy schedules to make activism a critical part of our professional lives. We must decide to stand together and to lock arms around our schools.

This month's Advocate highlights the work being done by SDEA members to take ownership of the direction of the union and of public education. Our leaders and staff are restructuring how we spend our time and resources to maximize our collective engagement in the fights ahead. We are working smarter by partnering with San Diego county unions and organizing to ensure CTA is supportive of and accountable to SDEA.

We can and will get through the challenges ahead. We will win in the same way unions and parents have won every positive change to our public schools: by standing united for our students. Thank you for all you do and for all you will do to stand up for our schools!

In Solidarity,

*Camille Zombro*

Camille Zombro  
SDEA President

*Marc Capitelli*

Marc Capitelli  
SDEA Vice President

## Upcoming Budget Townhall Meetings

**Thursday, Nov. 19, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.**  
Serra HS (Media Center), Katherine Nakamura

**Thursday, Dec. 3, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.**  
San Diego HS — Arts (Theater), Richard Barrera

**Wednesday, Dec. 9, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.**

Mission Bay HS (Auditorium), John de Beck

**Tuesday, Dec. 15, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.**  
Lincoln HS (Theater), Shelia Jackson

**Thursday, Dec. 9, 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.**  
Madison HS (Theater), John Lee Evans

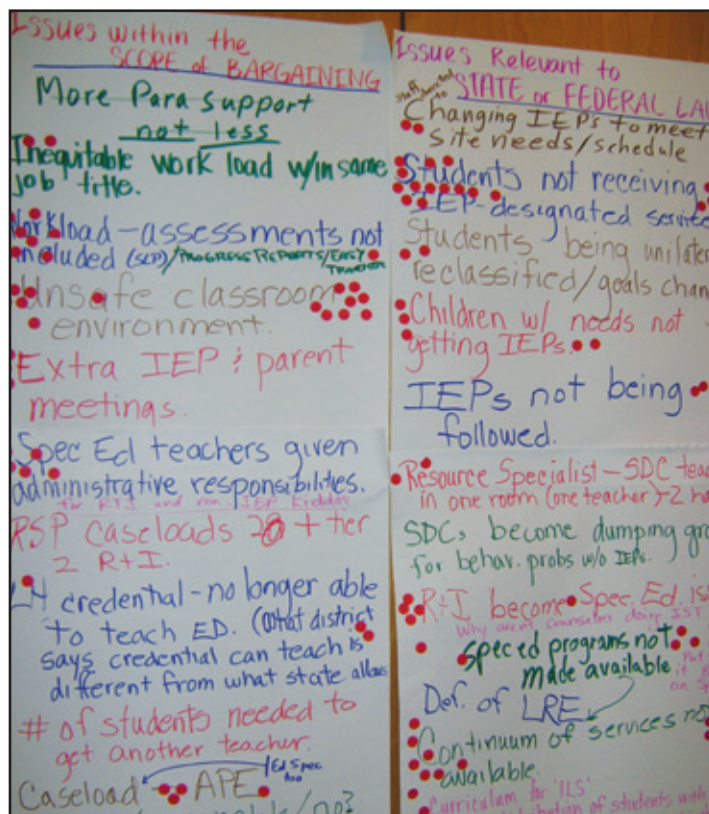
# Democractic unionism in action

## Members address special ed. quagmire

On Tuesday, Nov. 3 dozens of concerned SDEA members attended the Special Education Organizing Meeting called to address several of the most pressing special education issues facing all bargaining unit members. The District has recently implemented a variety of changes that impact special educators, general educators, parents, and our students. The goal of the meeting was to collect and prioritize issues members feel directly prevent them from meeting students' needs. SDEA in no way opposes inclusion—rather, our members are opposed to unilateral changes made to meet the needs of the District, not the child.

The recent changes in special education do not only affect special education teachers, they affect all teachers and community members. The move towards more inclusion and mainstreaming of special needs students into general education classrooms, particularly at a time when a familiar chorus has begun to sing the budget cuts tune, when support staff have been cut, when changes have been implemented without the commensurate and necessary training for all teachers and staff, puts the whole educational community in a bind. Many of these changes have been imposed unilaterally, without any input from the affected parties, including SDEA members and parents. This meeting aimed to address these very points, and also how we as a Union can begin address the paradigm shifts taking place in the world of special education.

There exist three main issue areas where SDEA members can influence and shape these special education changes. The first of these are issues within the scope of collective bargaining, as defined by the Educational Employees Relations Act, which can be bargained into a union contract. Resolution on these issues can be reached in various ways. Union members can file grievances to enforce current contract language surrounding special education. Members can utilize currently existing structures like the Joint Special Education Caseload Committee to create and enforce binding contractual concepts and changes in the special education arena. Additionally, SDEA members can propose and push for improved contract language during bargaining time. This takes



photos by Rafal Dobrowolski and Morgan Thornberry

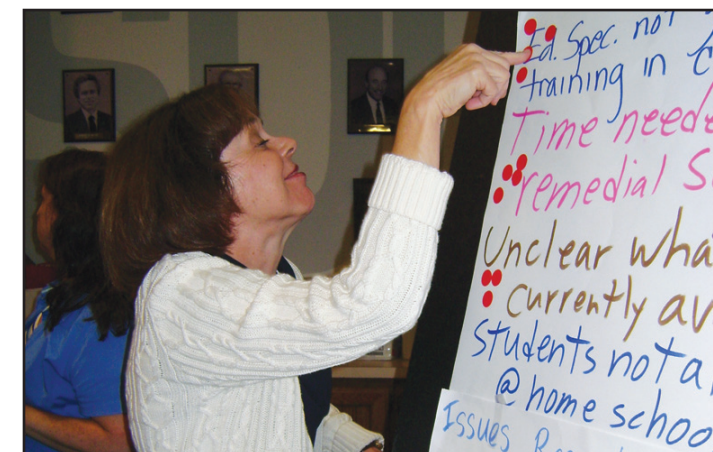
### Members generated and prioritized special education issues at a special meeting on Nov. 3.

significant amounts of education and outreach to members, followed up by organizing members to stand behind grievances and proposals.

Second, there are issues that are defined by state or federal law or by district policy which lay out what the delivery of services



High school teachers brainstorm and categorize special education concerns while SDEA Board Member Jetonne Jordan keeps record.



**Clockwise from upper left: 1. Debbie Williams (center) participates in a small-group brainstorming session with the high school group. 2. Elementary school teachers work together to identify how changes in special education have impacted their students. 3. Claudia Weimer casts her vote! 4. After generating and categorizing special education concerns, members participate in a prioritization exercise that will inform SDEA's work around these important issues in the coming year.**

looks like for special education students and teachers, and other regulations that directly affect these groups. Union members, individually or jointly, can file "uniform complaints" to the applicable agency or oversight bodies to challenge substantial violations of the law or laws. Or union members, acting collectively, can organize around particular issues at the site or district level to put pressure on administration to implement changes beneficial for students and teachers. Enforcing such changes takes due diligence and documentation, and organizing members to stand united behind these complaints and proposed changes.

Last, there are issues regarding how school administration chooses instructional and program models. Although selection of curricula falls within the purview of administrative rights, this does not mean that this process cannot be influenced by key stakeholders such as parents and teachers. Union members can organize around new models, ideas, programs and changes that the present to key decision-makers at the District and Board levels. Accountability is crucial. Decision-makers need to be held accountable to the impact of their decisions. Again, accountability takes organizing union members to educate parents, pressure the decision-makers and to stand strong and united for our students.

The Nov. 3 Special Education Organizing Meeting aimed to

clarify and prioritize SDEA members' special education issues, gauge members' commitment to organizing around these issues, and to establish a Special Education Committee that would be the Union's vanguard of change in the realm of special education.

The meeting began with a general introduction and presentation of where Special Education stands today and how we accomplish a resolution to the issues members have raised: working together and focusing on key issues. The meeting was structured to be an organizing meeting, not a gripe session. The emphasis was using democratic union procedures to identify the problem, develop an action plan to address the problem, and then act to change the problem.

Those present were broken into elementary, middle, and high school grade level groupings, where members had small group discussions based on input from their sites. Those site issues were then prioritized, discussed, and brought back to the whole group level. Members committed to attend a subsequent organizing meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, Dec. 2, where a plan of action on the priorities will be developed. Additionally, members signed up for the new Special Education Steering Committee, and committed to turn out more members for a Special Education forum that will be hosted by the Union in the near future. ■

## Reps help craft workload remedies

The SDEA Board, officers and staff have restructured SDEA's monthly Representative Council in response to feedback obtained during the listening sessions held at the Fall Leadership Conference. The immediate result was to alter council meetings to include breakout sessions geared toward elementary, middle school and high school members. Breakout sessions may also be determined based on other types of groups and member interests. The smaller groups allow for more intimate conversation between members, leaders and staff. The different setting is intended to give members a voice in the direction of SDEA through new opportunities to speak and interact with each other.

At the Oct. 21 Rep. Council, we were able to have representatives provide opinions, responses and remedies for the Memorandum of Understanding on unit member workload that SDEA's bargaining team presented to the District. The District bargaining team had just submitted a counterproposal to SDEA, and we used the new Rep. Council setting to solicit immediate and meaningful advice from the Association Representatives. One of the directions given at the Fall Leadership was to provide opportunities for ARs to share strategies, ideas, problems and solutions with each other and the Bargaining Team. The new format for Rep. Council already makes a difference, which helps make SDEA a more effective and responsive organization.

Earlier in this year, the SDEA Board had already established alternative dates for additional Rep. Council meetings in case the need occurred. The District's recent decision to hold Town Hall Meetings on budget issues (beginning on Nov. 17) required SDEA to immediately act to plan for our response. Once again we were able to take advantage of the new Rep. Council structure to mobilize a response to the District's actions quickly and effectively. At the Nov. 4 special Rep. Council meeting, there were two breakout sessions based on sites' common issues. The goal was to try to develop and commit to strategies that would be more effective for ARs' self-identified site needs. The new format and the alternative dates have already helped SDEA become more responsive to member needs and to assist ARs with information and strategies to deal with District proposals and other actions. This new approach has allowed SDEA to prepare more effectively for the upcoming Town Hall meetings.

With the same kind of small group breakout in mind, SDEA conducted a successful and extremely well attended Special Education meeting on Nov. 3 to identify and prioritize issues important to special and general educators. The goal was to develop strategies to organize parents, educators and others in order to influence the Board on decisions which impact special education students and all educators. We were able to build from the new structures we have implemented to democratically involve members in crafting solutions' to problems in our District.

The change in Rep. Council is the beginning in seeking better information from our members. It is essential at the same time that the ARs and CRs meet on a regular basis with members at their sites to secure information and to act as a conduit between the members and the council. SDEA will continue to adjust Council meetings to take into account many of the ideas and comments provided at the Fall Leadership in October by members and ARs.



photos by Larry Moreno

**Top: Association Representatives from high schools quantify the workload impact of new technologies, assessments and other changes the District implemented unilaterally last year.**  
**Bottom: Elementary representatives work together to determine how SBRCs and other new programs hinder their ability to teach.**

## SDEA hosts County-wide bargaining meeting

Education unions across the country are facing unprecedented pressure. School districts are using the country's economic crisis to seek long-term concessions and to undo hard-fought gains, regardless of their relevance to education budgets. San Diego County is no different. The following is a partial list of examples of permanent changes being sought in the name of a temporary crisis:

- The administration in Sweetwater Union High School District sought a "management rights clause" which would limit the union's ability to advocate for members rights (SEA's recent settlement rejected this clause).
- Other unions in San Diego County conceded to permanent changes in their work year, which will continue long past the current budget.
- In one North County District, educators are now paying up to \$700 per month to maintain their family healthcare packages.
- The current County-wide average for salary settlements in the 2008-09 school year is minus 1 percent.
- And in Los Angeles, LAUSD is selling off up to 250 schools, permanently removing them from the District rather than dealing with their chronic inability to adequately support these schools.

What is at stake here and across the state is whether or not education unions will continue to set the standards for the middle class lifestyle. After all, our contracts define the basic things all working people should have: good wages and benefits, a decent retirement, and a safe and a secure work environment. The things districts across the state are seeking—two-tiered benefits structures, limited workplace rights for employees, merit or battle pay—are nothing new. *These are the same things employers have been seeking regardless of the state of the economy.* These are also the things which divide and destroy the solidarity and high

standards unions have fought so hard to achieve.

In response to this disturbing pattern of behavior on the part of districts across the County, and in keeping with CTA's "Stand Up for Schools" statewide organizing plan, SDEA has taken the initiative to bring together leaders and bargaining team members from across San Diego County to coordinate our bargaining efforts. The purpose of these bargaining discussion meetings (including leaders from up to 20 locals, plus CTA Board Members Jim Groth and Mike Stone) is to maintain and improve the conditions of our schools by focusing on what works. By building stronger contracts for all education employees in our region, we can begin to collectively respond—local by local—and to more effectively coordinate our efforts and resources in bargaining.

One particular element of CTA's plan, establishing bargaining goals and standards, is the current focus of the SDEA-hosted bargaining discussion meetings. At our October meeting, leaders from across our region agreed that they would meet with their local bargaining teams and executive boards to discuss the following possible initial goals/standards for the county for the next round of bargaining:

1. **No two-tier benefits or wages;**
2. **No merit pay or battle pay; and**
3. **Bargain workload protections and "Maintenance of Standards"/ "Maintenance of Workload" language.**

These are long-term goals, based on what we foresee as probable trends in the upcoming years. If approved, they will become the focal points for continued organizing and strategy discussions at our San Diego County bargaining discussion meetings.

What these locals, including SDEA, have begun building is a foundation from which unions across the region can strategize, plan, and collectively organize to ensure that we continue to set *and raise* the standards for the middle class—contract by contract.

## Working It Out: SDEA grievance victory overview

Article 15.1 of the contract states that it is "the intention of both the District and the Association to develop a process that results in the resolution of grievances." The process includes three levels of grievances:

- Level One — An informal meeting at the site involving the Principal, impacted member and the member's SDEA representative (generally the site AR);
- Level Two — A formal meeting at the site, involving the Principal, member and SDEA representation (generally an SDEA staff member in addition to the AR); and
- Level Three — A formal meeting with District level administrators.

Once a grievance remedy is agreed to at a lower level, that generally indicates that the issue has been resolved, and that all parties will move forward acting in accordance with the mutually reached remedy. Grievances which fail to be resolved at any of the preceding levels may be moved to arbitration.

The SDEA members at one elementary school, however, recently experienced an odd deviation from that process. Members

identified a grievance regarding workload issues related to collecting "proof of residency" forms from students. The AR and CR met with the principal in a Level One informal grievance meeting to work out the issues. They worked out a written agreement, which all parties signed.

The following fall the Principal chose to ignore the agreement and indicated that the teachers didn't have the right to further grieve the issues. Much to members' amazement, the District's position at the Level Three grievance meeting had reverted back to the Principal's original position, disregarding the settlement that the Principal had agreed to at the Level One grievance meeting. *The District's position put into question the legitimacy of the grievance process!* Needless to say, SDEA filed for arbitration.

In a pre-arbitration conference, a settlement was reached. The District agreed to implement the prior agreement between the Principal and the staff. It was also agreed that the District and SDEA would develop an Information Circular to be distributed District-wide regarding the "dos and don'ts" of contract administration and grievances.

# Once more, with feeling...

As SDEA members are undoubtedly aware, the District has already begun to sing a familiar refrain: Due to the state budget, the District claims there are only two options — wrench concessions from educators, or cut programs precious to parents and children. Despite the fact that these assertions have been made for two years running and have ultimately proven untrue, the District is once again gearing up to attack our salaries and our healthcare.

On Wednesday, Nov. 4 SDEA held a Special Rep. Council meeting with the twin goals of helping reps organize at their sites and in their communities to proactively counter the District's still-flawed message, and to build a stronger union in the long run. Just as it has for the past two years, our ability to resist the onslaught of attacks against our livelihood lies in our solidarity.

*Letter from SDEA President Camille Zombro, as distributed at the Nov. 4 Special Rep. Council*

SDEA Members—

America's educators and parents are the only force that has protected public education since its beginning. Together we formed the foundation of the fight for free public schools, for desegregation, for special education, and for every positive change that has shaped our education system. We won these things in the same way every time: by standing together. But today, those hard-fought gains are under threat.

Only two months into this school year, and once again in the name of the budget crisis, SDUSD has already begun the march toward layoffs, attacks on employees, program cuts, class size increases, and the list goes on. We do not deny that the situation in California and in San Diego is grim. For us, this grim outlook has long been a day-to-day reality. We work in a system that is chronically under-funded, we deal with the impact of poverty in our classrooms, and we work hard to provide quality schools despite insurmountable odds.

But the response from SDUSD to this real and tangible crisis was **wrong in 2008** (when SDUSD pushed for over 900 unnecessary layoffs) and **wrong in 2009**

(with an erratic budget that fluctuated by over \$115 million within days of its passage). And it's shaping up to be the same old story in 2010, with continued threats to our already-low salaries, already scant support staff, and already-high class sizes. These proposed cuts are as unnecessary now as they have been every time they have been proposed. Our only certainty is that the District is wrong again.

In 2008 and 2009 SDEA members contested the District's version of reality, stood strong, and were vindicated. We cannot let 2010 be the year we let go of what took generations to build. We must lock arms around our schools because this is the year of the toughest fight. We will win and we will endure by standing in solidarity with parents and our community members who care about protecting public education.

*But this is not a spectator sport.* Last year our patience and our willingness to stand firm made us one of few urban districts in the state to survive the year with no layoffs, no salary cuts, no healthcare cuts, and no furlough days. This year we have to get engaged and we have to be willing to do some heavy lifting. If we are divided, if we get scared, if we stand back and just observe, or if we give in—we may never recover.

The work ahead is significant. Every SDEA member must commit to making time to *literally* save our schools. This means taking specific actions at your site with your own colleagues, the parents of your students, and your site's SDEA leadership team. In the days ahead your Association Representative at your site will provide more information about upcoming meetings and actions that will both build our union and protect our classrooms.

"Together we are Stronger" cannot just be our slogan. It must express our commitment to our students, to our communities, and to our own families to do what it takes to protect our schools. In solidarity,

*Camille Zombro*  
Camille Zombro  
SDEA President

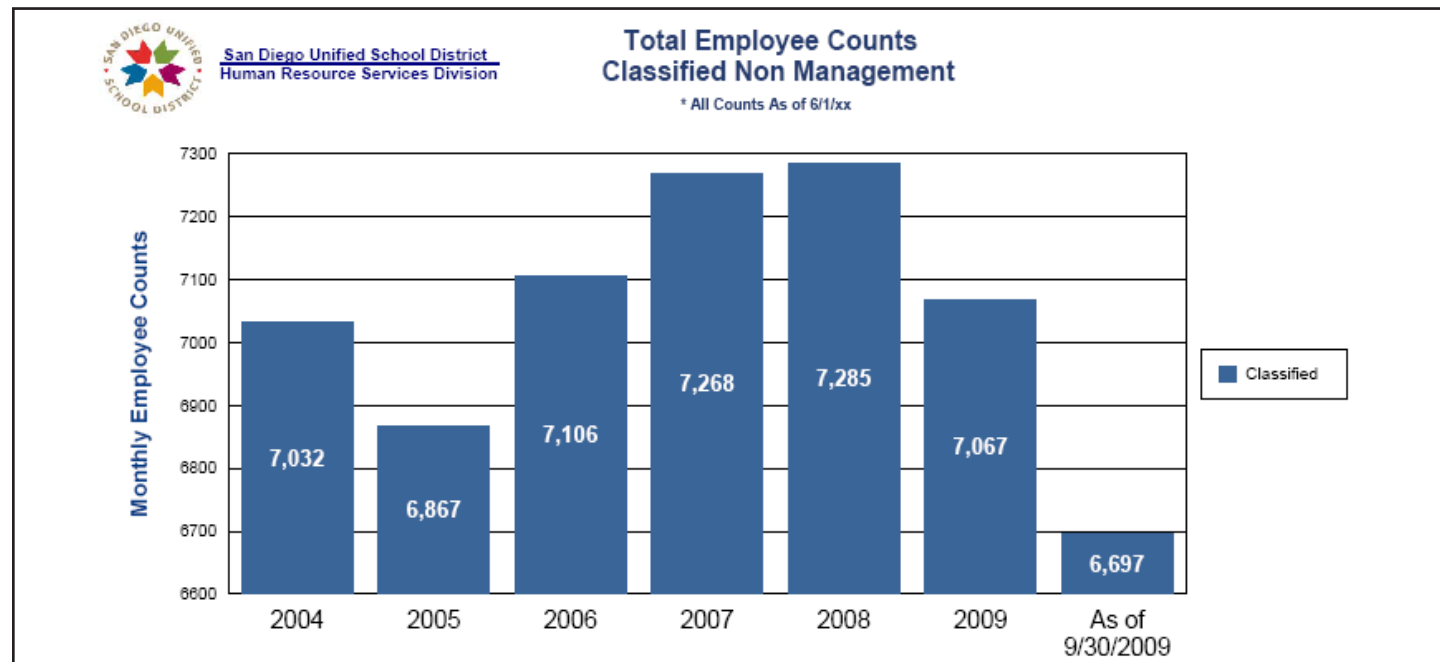
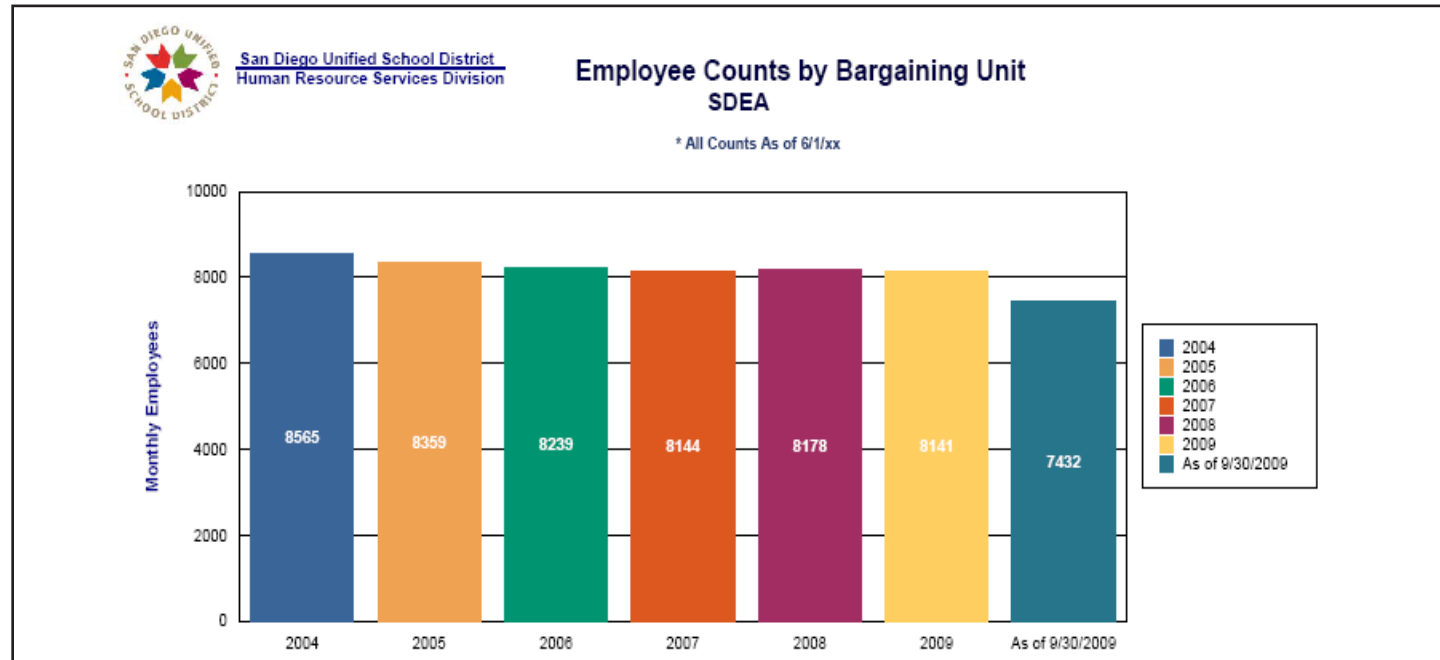


photos by Erin Clark and Rafal Dobrowolski

**At the Nov. 4 Special Rep. Council, ARs were broken into two targeted groups. Newer reps had the chance to sign up to meet with a Field Organizer. More experienced reps such as Barry Dancher from Mission Bay HS (upper left), Candy Schauer from Madison HS (top) and Raul Mora from Baker Elementary (center right) committed to turning out members and parents at a budgetary town hall meeting.**



# Lying with Numbers 101



Source: SDUSD Budget Workshop — Board Report, Oct. 20, 2009

These two charts were presented by District staff to the School Board as part of a “sky is falling” budget PowerPoint on Oct. 20. The top chart represents an 8.7 percent decrease in the number of SDEA members from last year to this year (709 out of 8,141 employees). The bottom chart represents a 5.2 percent decrease in the number of classified staff from last year to this year (370 out of 7,067 employees). So why does the bottom chart contain a visually massive drop, seeming to imply that classified staffing took a much greater hit than teaching staff this past year (which is clearly not true)?

Math teachers will be quick to notice that the range on the certificated chart is from zero to 10,000, while the range on the classified chart is from 6,600 to 7,300 — a cheap mathematical manipulation designed to make the classified “sacrifice” look massive compared to what SDEA members have “given up.” This cynical attempt to misrepresent the reduction in certificated staff is not only intellectually dishonest, but represents a conscientious attempt to pit SDEA and CSEA members against each other.

# Now is the time for meaningful healthcare reform

by LORENA GONZALEZ  
Labor Council Secretary-Treasurer

Led by President Obama, Congress is on the verge of passing landmark legislation that will make health care affordable and available to all Americans.

Corporate interests have put together a professional campaign to silence and intimidate those who want to fix our broken health care system.

This health care reform is worth fighting for. President Obama’s health care reform plan:

- Puts you and your doctor—not the insurance companies—in charge of your health care.
- Gets a grip on health care costs that are crushing us which will help our contract negotiations.
- Will improve health care quality by curbing insurance company abuses, rewarding doctors for improving the quality instead of quantity of care and forcing insurers to compete with a quality public health insurance plan.
- Will help employers by making it easier to provide and pay for health benefits.

- Has a strong public plan option to keep insurance companies honest and drive out waste.
- Means health care will be there for you, no matter what. You can’t fall through the cracks.
- Finally, non-union companies will have to pay their fair share instead of dumping their health care costs on the rest of us. As a union member, contact your Member of Congress and remind them that our broken health care system needs to be fixed, so that all Americans have access to the health care they deserve.



Congressman Bob Filner, (619) 422-5963  
Congresswoman Susan Davis, (619) 280-5353  
Congressman Brian Bilbray, (858) 350-1150  
Congressman Duncan D. Hunter, (619) 448-5201  
Congressman Darrell Issa, (760) 599-5000

## SDEA President and Field Organizer Site Visits — September/October

Working directly with SDEA members and sites is the most important work of SDEA staff and leadership. Each month we will include a list of the schools visited by SDEA President Camille Zombro and/or SDEA’s UniServ Field Organizers. The list below includes membership meetings at sites attended by SDEA leadership or staff. It also includes organization planning meetings held between Organizers and Association Representatives both out at sites and at the SDEA office.

<b>Camille Zombro</b> SDEA President	<b>Craig Leedham</b> Field Organizer	<b>Jonathon Mello</b> Field Organizer	<b>Morgan Thornberry</b> Field Organizer	<b>Abdul Sayid</b> Field Organizer
Central Office Resource Teachers Counseling Department Roosevelt MS Lewis MS Harriet Tubman Village Charter School Golden Hill El. Foster El. La Jolla El. Point Loma HS Marshall MS Lindbergh/Schweitzer El. Clairemont HS	Burbank Elementary Central Office Resource Teachers Correia MS Florence Elementary Garfield HS Golden Hill El. Grant El. Kimbrough El. La Jolla HS Logan Acad El. Memorial Prep Perkins El. Point Loma HS Rodriguez El. Roosevelt MS Sherman El. Sunset View El. Washington El.	Chollas Meade El. Chavez El. Normal Heights El. Knox El. Audubon El. Penn El. Bell MS Lincoln HS Hoover HS	Crawford HS Dingeman El. Foster El. Lewis MS Lindbergh/Schweitzer El. Marshall MS Harriet Tubman Village Charter School	Ross El. Miller El. Tierrasanta El. Marston MS Clairemont HS Serra HS La Jolla El. Los Altos CDC Montgomery MS Bay View Terrace El. Longfellow School Farb MS Carson El. Correia MS Mission Bay HS

Association Representatives are encouraged to contact their assigned Field Organizer or SDEA President Camille Zombro to schedule a site visit. For contact information a list of which organizers are assigned to which sites, visit the SDEA website at [www.sdea.net](http://www.sdea.net).

April 2009

# Association Rights

## Know Your Rights!

by Morgan Thornberry

### I'm an Association Representative (AR). What special rights do I have?

#### Speak and Act as Equals with the Boss

When you are acting in your role as AR, the law says that you have the right to speak to administrators as equals – even if this means raising your voice, disagreeing, or showing strong emotion.

#### Develop a Plan to Make Your Life as AR Easier

You have the right to meet with the site administrator annually to mutually develop a plan to support your AR responsibilities related to enforcing our union contract (Section 5.6.4). Insist on holding this meeting each year and come prepared!

#### Union Meetings at Work

You have the right to hold union meetings at work, both outside and inside of the 8-hour workday. Meetings inside the 8-hour workday should be held during non-instructional time. See Section 5.8 of the contract for the full scoop!

#### Release Time for Grievances

You have the right to release time to prepare and process a grievance. If you need to interview a grievant, research a grievance or otherwise process a grievance, SDUSD must allow you release time in which to do it. (Section 15.8.8)

#### Make Union Announcements at Staff Meetings

You have the right to make union announcements or pass out union literature at the end of every staff meeting. (Section 5.13)

### What are some ways my co-workers and I can use the contract and the law to strengthen our union at my site?

Review Article 5 of the union contract on Association Rights, especially sections on meeting time, AR rights, and union use of SDUSD facilities. ARs and CRs can talk to an SDEA Contract Specialist to make a plan for using Article 5 to negotiate union time at your site. Having more time and support to enforce our contract will make our union stronger!

Sources: *Collective Negotiations Contract, July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2008; Educational Employment Relations Act (1978).*

SAN DIEGO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

www.sdea.net

(619) 283-4411



CHECK IT OUT!



This is an important right!

Developing a strong plan can make your life easier – and make you a stronger AR! For example, you may arrange with the administrator for an extra “free” period in which to perform union duties. The union team at Marston Middle School won this, so think big!

## LULU, PEFW and how to move a 500-pound gorilla

by CAMILLE ZOMBRO  
SDEA President

The California Teachers Association (CTA) has been called a “relentless political machine” and a “500-pound gorilla.” Both monikers imply size, inertia and power—though not necessarily in that order. With over 340,000 members working throughout the pre-K through university systems, CTA is a big family. And SDEA is the second-biggest member of that family.

A few years back, leaders from the largest locals in the state (e.g. LA, San Francisco, Oakland, Richmond) began meeting regularly to discuss the direction of CTA. We found common interests in reframing CTA’s move toward “alternative compensation,” in pushing for

more proactive organizing and policies, and in redefining the work of CTA in our locals—not just in Sacramento.

Initially calling ourselves Large Urban Local Unions (LULU) presidents and local CTA State Council delegates began meeting regularly at CTA and NEA events in 2007 to organize for the changes in CTA. Since then we’ve attracted the attention of several rural and suburban locals, and have renamed ourselves Local Union Leaders United (keeping the name LULU).

LULU is a discussion group, gathering to work through upcoming policy and actions taking place across CTA. Rather than just reacting to each year’s crisis, LULU leaders are pushing for a long-

term strategy to adequately fund our schools. Through LULU, we successfully worked to create a workgroup within CTA charged with working toward long term tax and fiscal policy changes needed to adequately fund public education.

That work group, the Public Education Funding Workgroup (PEFW), has been meeting since early 2008. Members include presidents of the top five CTA locals (including SDEA), along with higher education, rural and suburban locals. The PEFW was instrumental in reshaping the last two CTA State Council meetings to include time for delegates to learn about and discuss possible tax and fiscal reforms (such as eliminating corporate tax loopholes,

changing the way the state budget is passed, and reforming basic tax laws).

Since the last meeting of the PEFW, CTA has filed an initiative to repeal the corporate tax loopholes which were part of the last state budget. This initiative is just the start of a series of proactive measures CTA will pursue in order to improve funding for public schools.

But filing initiatives are not how we, along with all our sisters and brothers in CTA, will save California’s public schools. In the upcoming months, through LULU, State Council, the PEFW, and the involvement of SDEA members on statewide issues, we will continue to work to ensure that SDEA’s voice is heard in CTA.

## SDEA’s new staff structure helps build site strength ARs and CRs report results from new organizing plan

In response to members’ feedback, SDEA’s elected leaders implemented a new staff structure that will provide ARs and CRs with the support and resources needed to build strong and active sites. We know that the 2009-10 school year will bring with it many challenges, but that there are also real opportunities to build our union. By spending more time offering trainings and organizing our sites, we will be able to strengthen our voice at work and build the capacity we need to settle and enforce a strong contract.

Building strong sites takes real work, and that work is happening at sites throughout SDEA. One example is Lincoln High School, where Association Representative Liz Gekakis reports, “We still have work to do as we build our union at Lincoln High. Some recent victories have given members extra confidence knowing that when we are united and act like a union we can get things done. At the end of the day we are SDEA and if we are going to have a real voice in the work we do, our union must be strong from the ground up.”

At a Special Rep. Council meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 4, ARs and CRs from schools District-wide signed up to hold an organizing or site team meeting over the coming weeks (see list).

**Association Representatives are encouraged to contact their assigned Field Organizer to schedule a site visit. For contact information a list of which organizers are assigned to which sites, visit the SDEA website at [www.sdea.net](http://www.sdea.net).**

### Sites that are ready to grow!

Audubon El.	Lincoln HS
Barnard El.	Marshall MS
Bethune El.	Marston MS
Bethune El.	Memorial Charter School
Bird Rock El.	Mira Mesa HS
Carver El.	Miramar Ranch
Clairemont HS	Muirlands MS
Crawford HS	Oak Park El.
Curie El.	Ocean Beach El.
Dana MS	Pershing MS
Encanto El.	Point Loma HS
Farb MS	Rolando Park El.
Garfield HS	Rosa Park MS
Green El.	Rowan El.
Hearst El.	Vista Grande El.
Jefferson El.	

# CTA rolls out organizing plan

United Farm Workers founder Cesar Chavez once said about people in the labor movement, "We are organizers at heart." CTA is once again reaching out to reconnect with our members through the new CTA Organizing Plan. We are going back to our roots.

The organizing goals established by the CTA Board include the following:

- We must protect the well-being of CTA members and promote quality public education.
- We must increase our capacity to achieve adequate and stable funding for all schools.
- We must re-energize the organizing culture within CTA. The plan includes the following short-term objectives:
- Outreach to other labor groups, education coalitions and community-based organizations;
- Listening to, educating, training and exciting our members through increased member involvement and

the opportunity for members to express their concerns while identifying desired outcomes; and

- Power-building by identifying primary power players and electing endorsed candidates who commit to promoting and protecting quality public education.

At the October CTA State Council, listening sessions were held in all committees to provide feedback as we all begin our journey of growing an even more member-centered union. I hope that you will share your thoughts and ideas by emailing me. Happy Thanksgiving and thanks for all you do!!

*Jim Groth may be contacted via email at jgroth@cta.org.*



**Jim Groth**  
CTA Director, District P

## Race to the Top leading anywhere but

We struggled with No Child Left Behind and thought nothing could be worse, but it looks like public education is taking a turn in the wrong direction. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) hasn't really come up. Healthcare reform, the economy and the war in Afghanistan are consuming the national news. Many of my colleagues are used to the way it is and assume nothing will change. They couldn't be more wrong.

As well intentioned as Secretary of Education Arne Duncan comes across, he is about to cause us some real problems. Race to the Top (RTTT) is the current reform plan. Modeled after some of the changes made by Duncan while he was the superintendent in Chicago's public schools, RTTT makes No Child Left Behind look benign. What is really scary is that it is racing toward implementation without any laws being changed. With no real

hearings, Race to the Top may come to pass. Forty-seven states, including California, are working toward common international standards and RTTT will fund, at most, 10 states. Yet, at least 40 states are enacting new laws to enable them to compete for the RTTT dollars. At least 30 states will have made changes with no money to support those changes.

What's scary is that Arne Duncan continues to appear around the country, honing his message, appearing to hear our concerns

*See NEA, page 15*



**Elizabeth Ahlgren**  
NEA Director, District 10

## Important information on retiree benefits

As president of SDEA-Retired, I have the privilege of writing an article for the Advocate each month. I try to include information that I think is of interest and pertinent to both active and retired teachers whenever I can.

Of prime importance to all of us, both active and retired, is the status of our pension plan. I checked the CTA website just prior to the deadline for this article and found the following information on our pensions: "CTA interviewed CalSTRS and CalPERS executives regarding the current health of the respective pension plans. Even in these rocky economic times, both investment systems appear to be in very good shape." For those anticipating retirement in the next few years, CalPERS offers a list of Retirement Fairs via the Education Center on the CalPERS website.

By the time you receive this Advocate, the annual Health and Benefits Seminar sponsored jointly by SDEA and SDEA-R will have come and gone and both actives and retirees should have received their health benefits packages from the school district. A lot of good information for actives, pre-retirees and retirees were

shared by NEA Member Benefits, LTC Financial Partners, the district benefits office, HICAP and Kaiser Senior Advantage. For those of you who were unable to attend or have an interest, I have included several phone numbers on pertinent information.

Are you providing care for an elderly relative? Are you a San Diego senior in need of legal services? Have you been a victim of financial senior fraud and abuse? Are you or a loved one in a nursing home? Then, you can call 858-565-1392 for information on programs addressing these issues. Are you a Medicare beneficiary? Then, you can get free and objective help from HICAP (Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program) by calling 1-800-434-0222 or 1-858-565-8772 for an appointment. Additional contacts are Medicare (1-800-633-4227) and CALSTRS Medicare (1-800-228-5453).



**Norma Heeter**  
SDEA-R President

## NEA

*Continued from page 14*

but without making any substantive changes to his initial proposal. Linking individual student performance to the teacher of record and to the principal through the state data system is at the heart of the proposal. What data do we collect in California? Test Scores! Can merit pay be far behind? There won't be formal hearings for the reauthorization of ESEA. RTTT will become the new regulations for the federal education funding. The funding for RTTT was secured when the stimulus package was approved last winter.

What can you do about this? Contact your representative in Congress and tell him/her that this is unacceptable. SDEA President Camille Zombro and I met with Susan Davis on Sep. 1, and I spoke with Congressman Duncan Hunter in September and with staff members in Congressman Bob Filner's and Congressman Brian Bilbray's offices last September. I will follow up with more conversations on Dec. 10. I need you and all your colleagues to call your members of Congress. Fifty calls can and will make a difference. Let your member know you will vote your profession. If you don't call, who will? It's time to take a stand that enough is enough.

Here are the phone numbers you need: Brian Bilbray, (202)225-0508, Susan Davis, (202)225-2040, Bob Filner, (202)225-9073, Duncan Hunter, (202)225-5672 and Darrell Issa, (202)225-3906.

*Elizabeth Ahlgren may be contacted via email at elizahlgren@yahoo.com.*

## What will you leave undone?

At any moment, you could need Disability and Life Insurance. That's why it's so important to make sure you have CTA-endorsed coverage from The Standard. After all, your family and your salary are two of your most important assets. Visit MyCTA at [www.cta.org](http://www.cta.org) or call us at 800.522.0406 (TTY), 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Pacific Time, to find out how The Standard can help protect what's important to you.



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# Upcoming Member Training

*Topic: Student Discipline*

This training will focus on the teacher's right to suspend a student, including "best practices" in exercising your right and addressing violations of your right. The training will also cover how union members can use the School Site Discipline Plan to make administration accountable on issues of student discipline. **This Member Training is open to all SDEA members and is especially recommended for Association Representatives. It's a good idea for your school to send at least one delegate!**

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup>**

**4 PM – 5 PM**

*or*

**5:30 – 6:30 PM**

**SDEA AUDITORIUM**

**10393 SAN DIEGO MISSION RD., SUITE 100, SAN DIEGO**

**ARs:** Please download and post the sign-up sheet on the SDEA bulletin board or in another easily accessible common area. Please fax completed sign-up sheets to the SDEA office at (619) 282-7659 by the end of the day on Friday, Dec. 4.

**Members:** To sign up for this training, please contact your site AR.