

La Canada Teachers Association

HIGHLIGHTS

Volume 12, Issue 2
November/December 2005

**Letters and Articles are welcomed! Upcoming
HIGHLIGHTS deadlines:
January 16, February 13, March 13,
April 3, May 8, and June 12.**

Message From Mandy Redfern: PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I hope that you had a very nice holiday with family and friends! We are off to a great start in the year of 2006. We have plans to work together with the district in a variety of ways.

In the coming month we are going to be busy. On January 21st members of the leadership team will be having dinner with members of our School Board along with many other school board members from our surrounding school districts. This will be an opportunity for us to all share ideas and for the school board members to get to know more about the California Teachers Association. The guest speaker for the evening will be Barbara Kerr, CTA president.

As you know, we will be going back to the bargaining table this spring. The bargaining team will be meeting with the district's bargaining team to undergo training in Interest Based Bargaining. We will all be training together so that there is a common understanding of how to bargain effectively together. This training is being done by a CTA bargaining specialist. We are very lucky to have these resources available from CTA. In the coming months, you will be receiving a survey regarding what is most important to you about our contract. Please be thinking about this so that you can inform the bargaining team of your priorities. We will do the best that we can this spring as we work together with the district to do what is best for everyone.

There are also annual scholarships opportunities that CTA awards to members and their dependent children. They award five (5) \$2000 scholarships for members and twenty-five (25) scholarships for dependent children. They are accepting applications now and all applications must be postmarked by January 27th. You can find the applications on-line at

www.cta.org. The application is lengthy and requires my signature so, if you are applying, get the application to me as soon as possible.

Please remember that I am always available if you need anything at all. Do not hesitate to e-mail me at mandyemory@yahoo.com. Have a wonderful year in 2006!

Message from Mary Jane Hufstedler: BARGAINING CHAIR REPORT

The School Board finally approved the new contract last Tuesday (Nov. 15th). I asked Dr. Loose when we can expect the pay to appear in our paychecks and when the retro checks will be issued. It looks like will see the raise in our November checks and the retro check should be issued about December 5th. When the raise does come, please check that you are properly placed on the salary schedule. When you receive your retroactive check, be sure it reflects a 3% increase to your 2004-05 pay plus 3% for September and October of this year. For those teachers who worked 117% last year and/or this year, your checks should reflect 3% of that amount rather than 3% of your base pay. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Message from Richard Weld: POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE REPORT

Congratulations and thank you for all of your hard work defeating the initiatives on November 8. They were bad for students, teachers, and public schools. CTA helped lay the ground work with the television ads, but your efforts in talking to people and encouraging them to vote is what made the difference particularly on propositions 74 and 75. Thanks to the many members who phone banked at the Montrose Glendale/Burbank office. Special thanks go to Chris Edsey who spent many extra hours phone banking, and to Bob Huson who phone banked and walked precincts.

That's the good news. The bad news is that there are still anti-union forces out there with lots of money to put initiatives on the ballot next year. We are expecting an initiative in the June primary that would negatively impact our pensions, and more anti-union measures in the November general election. I am confident that with all of us working together along with CTA, we will be victorious again!

As you probably know by now, the local school board election was also held on November 8. Scott Tracy was reelected, and Susan Boyd and Joel Peterson were elected for the first time. While we may not agree on all of the issues, we are working to keep the lines of communication open with both the new and returning school board members.

Highlights of November 14 Rep Council minutes:

- Mandy reported on the results of the local school board election. Susan Boyd, Scott Tracy and Joel Peterson join Cindy Wilcox and Jinny Dalbeck to make up the new school board. LCTA will arrange to meet with all the board members to continue to work on open lines of communication.
- Scholarships are available from CTA for members who are pursuing continuing education. There are five available for \$2000 each. There are also twenty-five \$2000 scholarships available for member's dependents. Contact Mandy Redfern (mredfern@lcsd.net) or go to the CTA website at cta.org. Deadline for both is 1/27/06.
- The Cesar Chavez Memorial Education Awards Program offers prizes to students and their teachers for writing an essay on his life and legacy or for doing a visual (painting, drawing, collage or poster). Themes that might be addressed include non-violence, unions, social justice, safe food, environmentalism, teamwork and empowerment. There will be forty \$500 savings bonds given to winning students and their teachers. Contact Mandy Redfern (mredfern@lcsd.net) or go to the CTA website at cta.org. Deadline is 3/24/06.
- The CTA Good Teaching conference will be held March 10-12 at the Renaissance Hotel in Hollywood. Let Mandy know if you would be interested in attending.
- Mandy met with Anthony Portantino, the mayor of La Canada, who is a candidate for the seat on the State Assembly being vacated by Carol Liu. Carol Liu is supporting him for her seat, and he has been on committees with a number of teachers, and has always been supportive of education. He has asked for our endorsement and Rep Council voted to support him as long as we are not violating any guidelines established by Bay Valley and CTA.
- Mandy has also met with Jim Stratton and discussed concerns expressed by various sites about administrators not following the contract concerning parent contacts. Jim is working with the administrators and progress is being made. Any teacher who has an issue concerning administration and needs guidance and help should see his or her Rep Council rep or PR&R rep. Teachers do have a right to leave a conference if they feel uncomfortable with what is being said by a parent or an administrator, and should ask that the meeting be reconvened when the teacher can bring a representative.
- This brought up a discussion of **insubordination**. Insubordination is defined as not doing what an administrator asks you to do. Legally, an administrator cannot say no to the scenario above. However, if she or he does, then the teacher must stay—but need not respond. When the meeting is concluded, the teacher should immediately see her or his rep and file a grievance.

- Then, this brought up a discussion of what happens when a grievance is filed. The pattern includes a response, a meeting, and eventually arbitration if the problem is not resolved. The form for filing a grievance is Appendix L of the contract.
- And, for a fourth time, this brought up the issue of where a teacher can find the contract. The old contract should be located on the LCTA webpage. It was suggested that when the new contract is signed (hopefully on November 15 after the board meeting) that the new contract should be available through the district website as well.
- And, fifth, the question arose as to who were the PR&R reps. This is still being finalized and a roster will be published as soon as all positions are filled.
- Another question concerned the new contract and why the board had split it into two parts to discuss. Apparently this was done with the intention of speeding up the process for getting our additional monies to us. The salary and benefits portions were dealt with (first and second readings) in October. The rest of the contract was given a first reading at the beginning of November and its second reading on November 15.
- Richard reported that we still have some people who are not members but who are paying fees. Packets were given to reps to give to those teachers to remind them of the benefits of membership including a \$ 1 million liability policy.
- Mary Jane reports that we have returned to interest-based bargaining for negotiations which is more problem solving than the adversarial bargaining that we have been doing. CTA will train our negotiators and the district's. Jim Stratton would also like the board trained in this style of bargaining.
- Under new business it was suggested we negotiate that teachers of classes that contain considerable writing (AP classes, for example) be given extra pay under the **extra pay/extra duty** part of the contract.
- Under **school concerns** both **Paradise Canyon** and **Palm Crest** had questions about teachers who are hired for years as "temps" because of class size reduction at K-3. They never reach probation status. Does the state law allow this or is this a misuse of legislation? Mandy will continue to discuss this with both Jim Stratton and our CTA rep, Vern Gates, and this area will continue to be studied.
- **Paradise Canyon** would also like **Job Sharing** to be reviewed. It was not allowed under Sue Leabo, but maybe the policy could now be changed.
- **LCHS 7/8** had concerns about **grades on line** and the barrage of parent e-mails that this availability has caused for some teachers. The written agreement is that all teachers, beginning in the 2006-2007 school year, will use **Pinnacle** and will post grades at least once a quarter. That means that teachers do not need to post daily, weekly, or even monthly grades, but can wait and post grades only at the end of each quarter. If parental contacts are a concern, it is suggested that teachers use this once-a-quarter system, and let parents know about the procedures that will be followed.
- **LCHS 9-12** had a concern about teachers being asked to monitor a new teacher. As long as the monitoring is to help and support, there is no problem. Teachers should never be asked to report on other teachers to administrators. The teachers involved were also reminded that this should not become an onerous task. If it is

- taking too much time, then an administrator needs to be told that additional support will need to be provided by administration.
- **LCHS 9-12** also had some concerns about communication. Apparently a couple of the candidates for the school board spoke out at a community forum in support of proposition 94. Should the teachers of LCTA be informed when this kind of thing happens? Other teachers had questions about what PAC is and what it does, and did not find the on-line HIGHLIGHTS a useful form of communication. Should HIGHLIGHTS be published and put in everyone's boxes as in the past (and with a cost of over \$500 per issue)?
 - **Reps were reminded to hold frequent LCTA meetings at each site so that communication can be improved.**

Highlights of November 14 Rep Council minutes:

- Richard reported that membership is larger than ever! Still a few people who need to join.
- Richard also distributed a draft of the by-laws for the PAC, which will be called the LCTA Committee for Quality Education. Reps are to share general information with members and to gauge support. Would we be committed to actively campaign for issues that impact us such as a parcel tax election, or a candidate we can support for school board? Fifty cents per month of our dues would go to this committee.
- Mary Jane suggests that those who earned 117% might want to check their retroactive checks—the figures may not be accurate.
- Paradise Canyon presented school concerns about special education coverage and case loads—Mandy will follow up with Jim Stratton—and being paid for already completed buy-back days for the 2005-2006 school year. The district office is saying that they don't know the specific amount yet for this year.
- LCMS 7/8 had concerns about trash left after lunch on the campus. It was suggested that PTA/PTSA get involved in this as well as Instructional Council. Should students be allowed to eat anywhere, or should there be designated places? Another suggestion was that the whole campus needs a thorough cleaning—contact Campus Pride?—because then students will keep it neater. There was also a concern about the contract wording defining who gets to teach summer school. There will be a chance in the spring when negotiations are re-opened for membership to give direction to the negotiators about concerns. Changes in the contract wording should be mentioned then. Another question arose as to who paid for liability insurance for 7/8 summer school employees. The answer is the Assistance League.
- There are still positions that need to be filled both for Rep Council and PR&R, but Nancy Padilla and Nic Larez were voted in as alternates to Rep Council for 9-12, Suzanne Healy was voted in as an alternate to Rep Council for 7-8, and Bob Huson was voted in as a 9-12 rep for PR&R.

COMMUNICATION**Mary Walsten**

Here we go again! Communication problems in LCUSD.

I am always surprised when we as a district have difficulty communicating because we seem so small in comparison to other districts. What on earth do those huge districts do? However, there are good and bad things to note about communication here in LCUSD.

Let's start with the good! I personally enjoy getting both the district newsletter and the PTSA newsletter on line. Since I'm "old school" and print-oriented, I always print out a copy of each to read later, but I appreciate the timeliness that on-line publication allows as well as the cost-saving factor! I appreciate the fact that Jim Stratton has created the district newsletter as a means of improving communication, and that he has made a sincere effort to get to the high school to observe and talk with teachers. He even joined some of us for lunch one Friday! He also is quick to respond to e-mails, and always follows up a classroom visit with a note, even when, as in my case (because of a change in my schedule) he arrived to "observe" my preparation period! I also know that he is VERY "hard-line" when it comes to parent concerns. When Jim was the principal here at LCHS, his secretary would call me and confirm that a parent had already spoken with me about an issue before Jim would talk to that parent. So, with a leader who is good about communicating and following the established guidelines for communication, how can we go wrong?

Well, the answer is we don't all follow his example. At our Rep Council meeting some schools had to admit that they were not doing a good job of orally communicating Rep Council issues to their constituencies. Hopefully, this will change.

Some principals are having difficulty with knowing when and how to accept parent communications while staying true to the guidelines established. And e-mail does blur the lines here considerably. How can a principal avoid "listening" to e-mail? By the time he or she has realized that the teacher needs to be contacted, the message has already been read. Our contract specifies that e-mail be handled as a oral (as opposed to written) concern or complaint, but the principal still needs to remember that she or he CANNOT act on anything included in that verbal communication. The parent needs to be referred to the teacher, and that needs to be the end of it for the principal at that time.

I have heard concerns from some teachers that they feel "harassed" by the continuous observations and visits by their administrators. At least in the case of one teacher, these visits do not involve ANY communication—no pre-visit or post-visit discussion of what was seen, no follow-up note, nothing. That's not good communication! But I am also concerned that this has been going on with up to five teachers at my site and that I am unaware of it. How can I offer support or help if I don't know about the problem? So, we need to learn to communicate better with each other, too.

Rather than a problem with no communication after visits, I have a different problem. I would like to see more of my high school administrators in my classroom. I want to

commend Kevin Buchanan who presented a lesson to our juniors in the classrooms or junior/senior English teachers while someone else met with seniors. As Kevin is also the administrator who attends my department meetings, I am happy to say that I see him frequently. But I would like to see all administrators frequently. I would like to have them check in on me when the thermostat is not working, just so I know that they know and care. I would like to have speedy responses to my e-mails—and most administrators at my site are good about doing that. I would like to have administrators “around” to see what is going on in my classroom, to help move students to the football field during a surprise lunch fire drill, and to just make their presence known—and their awareness of me and my concerns. I would especially like to see Damon Dragos since he is the “new guy” to me, and I want a chance to get to know him and to have him get to know me. That’s a major part of communication, isn’t it?

Communication is also a part of grades and having students and parents have access to grades. I can certainly understand that parent contacts and student questions can get out of hand, but my experience is that after parents and students get used to the systems I use, the questions become less frequent. Rather than not posting my grades regularly, I try to post them at least once a week and I give all students a grade printout every two weeks that they must get signed and return. I believe that they need to know how their grade is adding up, and I want their parents to know, too. If a parent e-mailed me too frequently, I think I would ask that parent to set up a conference with me with the counselor or an administrator. Hopefully that would slow down the frequency of the contacts. But contact is important; it’s communication!

So, we need to communicate better with each other. We need to share concerns and offer support. We need to praise more as well as to explore problem areas. And we need to be visible and available—whether that is on-line or in our classrooms or at our sites. Thanks to those of you who are setting such good examples of how to communicate!

LCTA Representative Council Members 2003-2004

Executive Board:

President:	Mandy Redfern
Executive Vice President:	Mary Jane Hufstedler
Public Relations Vice President:	Mary Walsten
Treasurer:	Dana Leu
Secretary:	Mary Lou Langedyke
State Council representative:	Richard Weld

Representatives:

LCHS: 9-12

Rick Jordan
Edna Johnson
Bob Huson
Nic Larez (alternate)
Nancy Padilla (alternate)
Still need another representative!

La Canada Elementary:

Stephanie van Belle
Pat Harris
Jan Rappleye (alternate)

Paradise Canyon Elementary:

Jenny Hendler
Mike Upton
Marion Darling (alternate)

LCHS 7-8

Leslie Baldwin
Need another representative
Suzanne Healy (alternate)

Palm Crest Elementary:

Maggie Landau
Barbara Felsing
Sue Carr (alternate)

PR&R Committee:

LCHS: 9-12

Bob Huson
Mary Jane Hufstedler
Need two more representatives

LCHS 7-8

Barbara Leach
Need another representative

La Canada Elementary:

Judie Barrie
Pam Daniger

Palm Crest Elementary:

Maggie Landau
Liz Strand

Paradise Canyon Elementary:

Pam Watts
Marion Darling

**Future Rep Council Meeting Dates
2005-6**

January 9, 2006

March 27, 2006

February 6, 2006

May 1, 2006

June 16, 2006

March 6, 2006

June 5, 2006

**All LCTA members are welcome!
Meetings are held at 3:30 in the library at La Canada Elementary.
Refreshments will be served!**