

# SRVEA SIGNAL

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## California Gold

By Laura Finco  
Signal Editor

As teachers in the 21st century, we are faced with diverse issues and situations no other generation of educators has had to deal with. E-technology has made us more accessible to students and parents, grades and assessments are available instantly rather than a few times throughout the grading period, and there is more of an expectation for standardization throughout not only a school or district, but statewide and nationwide.

Lily Eskelsen, NEA Vice President, spoke at the recent CTA Region One Leadership Conference about some of these very issues. She asked the audience if our passports were up-to-date because she wanted to take us on a trip—to Finland.

Finland is ranked as having the highest academic success internationally. While there are certain demographics that make this achievement possible (nationally speak one language, no real upper or lower socio-economic class, no real privatization of schools, etc.) there exists agreement that certain policies restrict other countries from following suit. Eskelsen noted that in Finland there is no standardized testing. There is no connection between educators' salaries and student achievement; no reward for doing well and no punishment for not doing as well as others. Teachers create the curriculum. Teachers determine the progress of success and mastery of skills and content. Teachers are even permitted to utilize the textbooks of their choice. Schools are individualized to serve the community. It appears that in Finland, politics is a subject learned in school and not something that rules the schools.



In California and the United States, it is not business as usual. Those of us who have been in the profession for 20 or 30 years or longer have seen the changes. There was a time when teachers were the masters of their classroom, the designers of their curriculum, and the ones who set the standard of success. It seems that there is less and less opportunity for individualized teaching and more expectation to align, almost page by page. The new NCLB program, "Race to the Top," calls for merit pay, vouchers, and more standardized testing. Instead of looking at programs that are at the top already, like Finland, America's race is moving into the very policies that have proven flawed.

California ranks 47th in per-pupil spending and we are the 8th largest economy in the world. We are failing our students. We are failing our students because we are failing to recognize the investment in our future. Students do not need more achievement tests to substantiate their educational value. Students do not need to be worried about what college they can afford or get into when they are 12 years old. Our students need to be able to learn. They need to be able to feed their creativity along with their intellect. They need teachers who are not worried about where the next ream of paper is going to come from, spending thousands of personal dollars on supplies so they can teach creatively and intelligently, or whether or not their family's healthcare will be provided for and wondering if they can pay the mortgage.

We are in times when being organized as a professional association in order to protect our programs and our students is more valuable than ever in recent history. It is not business as usual, and if we are to move forward, we must be united.

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## President's Message... Darren Day

Educators of California have seen an ever-increasing rise in their workload these past two years. With the collapse of the state's budget, the inaction of our legislators to correct the budgetary problems, and the ability of our school board and district administrators to see only dollar signs, and not teachers or students faces when making budgetary cuts, has created an increase in workload this year of 15-20% at some grade levels.

We have given a loud and clear message that the oppressive, ever-increasing workload is killing education and killing the passion teachers once felt for their noble profession.

This year, we have seen prep times cut by 60 minutes at the elementary level, class sizes increased in grades K-3 and some 9TH grade classes. High schools have seen an increase in their student class size ratio with the inclusion of ROP classes. Prep Specialists have been cut at the Elementary level causing an increase in lessons to be taught in a day with no additional time added for this new instruction. Our classrooms are dirtier, some of our special needs children are being seen less and all of these cut-backs have fallen on the classroom teacher because we are the ones who are the safety nets for all of the children that come through our doors.

Few district administrators seem to be taking notice. SRVEA members have done a great job of sharing our pain at the School Board meetings, yet I've not heard one administrator say, "I understand the pressure and workload you must be bearing during this difficult time. What can I do to remove some of this pressure?"

Frankly, I am tired of the disinterest being displayed in how our educators are fairing! If no one from administration is going to hear what we say and acknowledge our plight, we are led to believe that our best interest is of no concern to them, and only we can take care of ourselves.

Teachers, counselors, psychologists, nurses, librarians, speech pathologists, resource and SDC teachers, you will have to take control of your own workload. This doesn't seem to be an easy task in education since most of us came to education because we want to help children. But the ultimate responsibility to educate these children and provide the support necessary to create a successful learning environment falls on the district and not on your shoulders. If you were ultimately responsible then you would be given more control over making educational decisions.

If programs are cut then the program should cease to be provided, yet, in our district programs are cut but the expectation is that the teachers will provide the support during their own time and on their own dime. I say, "No!" If the program isn't good enough to keep when there is still money in surplus, then the teachers shouldn't be continuing to provide the program.



Members, you should not be working during your recess break or lunch time. You need the break and a moment to collect yourself before pushing onto another great lesson. You shouldn't be cleaning your own classroom. Those are jobs for our custodians, your priority is to educate children.

I am asking every one of you to evaluate where it is you can begin to take control over your workload.

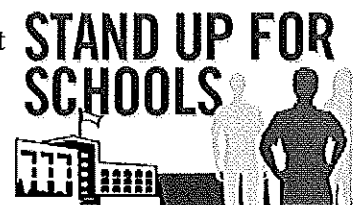
If we don't, the educational system in this state will not survive. Please learn to protect yourself and just say "No!"

### SRVEA STANDS UP FOR TEACHERS

For years, hundreds of SRVUSD certificated personnel have been incorrectly classified as "temporary." The reasons behind each of these individual classifications varied but the truth was very few of them were correctly "temporary." Teachers within the district who had been teaching up to six years were being retained as "temporary." SRVEA stood up for these teachers, challenged District policy and reason, and won probationary and permanent status for those who had been incorrectly classified. This was a direct result of SRVEA's push to protect all teachers!

### Continue to Stand Up for Schools

Join other CTA members at [www.standupforschools.com](http://www.standupforschools.com) to help bring awareness to what is really happening to public education in our state. California public schools and colleges have been cut by more than \$17 billion. These cuts will impact an entire generation of kids.



# MySpace, Facebook, and e-Tools

*By Laura Finco; CTA State Council Representative  
Professional Rights and Responsibilities Committee*

In the 21st century, e-tools are emerging as essential and expected systems in our personal lives as well as in our work as educators. Gradebooks are electronic and through School Loop are available online. It is the expectation of many parents (and some principals) that School Loop be updated weekly. E-mail has made teachers more accessible to students and parents. There is usually the expectation that e-mail be replied to within 24 hours and that because of the ease of the internet, that e-mail is read almost 24/7.

The Professional Rights and Responsibilities Committee of CTA has been reviewing the use of e-tools and creating policy to help bargaining units negotiate contract language that will minimize the impact that e-tools has on the teaching day. As part of this review, PRR and CTA have established recommendations for teachers that may be helpful.

- 1) Provide for yourself, your students, and your parents a professional policy for e-tools. Establish a system for when your grades are updated, what is posted on your website, and how and when it is best to contact you. Give a set time frame for when e-mail responses will be made. Make this information known to your students and parents.
- 2) Give yourself a break. You do not need to be online 24/7 simply because the internet is. Pick a time when you review e-mail and set a time limit. The prep period is not to be used 100% for responding to e-mail. You are not expected to answer e-mail at 10 pm or on weekends. Remember to have a personal life away from school, and this includes e-tools.
- 3) Make sure when writing an e-mail that you review what you have written and check who you are sending it to before hitting "send." Do not "Reply All" unless you really want everyone to see it. Remember, sometimes things look worse in writing and that anything written on a computer and/or sent through the internet is permanent. It all can be retrieved.
- 4) If you have a private blog, remember that anyone can read your blog and comments. Think about privacy settings on any blog that may be personal.
- 5) MySpace and Facebook accounts can be created by anyone. Students will look for you and they will find you. It is recommended that you keep a professional distance from your students. They are not your "friends." Check privacy settings so that only your "friends" will be able to view status posts and personal information.

It is recommended that you do not use your District-provided e-mail address for personal e-mail. Anything and everything that comes and goes through the District server is retrievable and not covered by 1st Amendment or privacy rights. There are plenty of free e-mail account providers such as gMail, AOL, Hotmail, and Yahoo! All you need is internet browser access. And if you use a school-provided computer, everything that is on the hard drive will remain on the hard drive. Unless you physically take the hard drive out, anything written can be retrieved. It is suggested that all personal correspondence, work, internet shopping, financials, etc., be done on your personal home computer and not a laptop or netbook provided by the District or school. This is also a recommendation for access to the internet. Personal work and browsing should be done at home and not accessed through the District server.

E-tools and the internet have made significant changes on how we communicate, relate, and live. We need to be sure that these tools of progress do not overburden or put us at risk. Protect yourself and "surf" smart!

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### Hours of Employment



**Contract Tip** The length of the workday for employees including lunch, brunch, preparation time, recess, passing time, travel time between assignments, and time required before and after school shall not exceed seven (7) hours (Article XI.A). Staff and department meetings, child study team meetings... may be called as needed except that staff meetings shall not exceed one (1) hour per week...attendance beyond one (1) hour will be on a voluntary basis (Article XI.B.2). Elementary school, middle school, and alternative education employees shall be present at the school site at least 15 minutes prior to the beginning of the instructional day and remain 15 minutes at the end of the day. High school bargaining unit members may adjust the 15 minutes before and after school requirement to fulfill the contracted seven-hour work day and accommodate the "A" period and mandatory six-period day for all students (Article XI.C). *Note: Teachers should keep track of minutes spent in meetings each week so as not to exceed 6 hours per month.*

### SRVEA/CTA/NEA DUES STRUCTURE FOR 2009-2010

|   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Category 1</b></p> <p>For those faculty whose teaching assignment is <u>more than 60%</u> of a normal assignment</p>                            | <p>NEA Dues<br/>State Dues<br/>Chapter Dues</p> <p>* NEA/FCPE</p> | <p>162.00<br/>621.00<br/>152.00<br/><br/>20.00</p> | <p>(\$935.00/11 mos)</p> <p>\$85.00/<br/>month</p> |
| <p><b>Category 2A</b></p> <p>For those faculty whose teaching assignment is <u>greater than 1/3 but not more than 50%</u> of a normal assignment.</p> | <p>NEA Dues<br/>State Dues<br/>Chapter Dues</p> <p>* NEA/FCPE</p> | <p>86.00<br/>320.50<br/>87.00<br/><br/>20.00</p>   | <p>(\$493.50/11 mos)</p> <p>\$44.86/<br/>month</p> |
| <p><b>Category 2B</b></p> <p>For those faculty whose teaching assignment is <u>greater than 50% but not more than 60%</u> of a normal assignment.</p> | <p>NEA Dues<br/>State Dues<br/>Chapter Dues</p> <p>* NEA/FCPE</p> | <p>162.00<br/>320.50<br/>152.00<br/><br/>20.00</p> | <p>(\$634.50/11 mos)</p> <p>\$57.68/<br/>month</p> |
| <p><b>Category 3A</b></p> <p>For those faculty whose teaching assignment is <u>25% or less</u> than a normal assignment.</p>                          | <p>NEA Dues<br/>State Dues<br/>Chapter Dues</p> <p>* NEA/FCPE</p> | <p>48.25<br/>170.25<br/>66.00<br/><br/>20.00</p>   | <p>(\$284.50/11 mos)</p> <p>\$25.86/<br/>month</p> |
| <p><b>Category 3B</b></p> <p>For those faculty whose teaching assignment is <u>greater than 25% but not more than 1/3</u> of a normal assignment.</p> | <p>NEA Dues<br/>State Dues<br/>Chapter Dues</p> <p>* NEA/FCPE</p> | <p>86.00<br/>170.25<br/>41.25<br/><br/>20.00</p>   | <p>(\$297.50/11 mos)</p> <p>\$27.05/<br/>month</p> |