

SRVEA SIGNAL

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Pearl of Wisdom

By Laura Finco
Signal Editor

A couple of years ago I experienced the shock of my academic career—I realized one morning as I was walking through the halls of my school, listening to the jazz band, hearing the calls of the PE class, and seeing the young sixth graders make their way to the lunch line, that I had become a “them.” I had no idea how it happened. One day I was a rookie newbie just learning what it meant to be a teacher, and now I was one of “them”— the veteran teacher. I grew up! Who knew!

During the years that it took for me to become a more experienced educator, I gathered little “pearls of wisdom;” lessons that helped me move through each year and reach all students as they came into and out of my classroom. These “pearls” changed depending upon what caught my attention or what was meaningful. Not too long ago, I adopted Ron Clark’s Essential 55— An Educator’s Guide to Finding Success in Every Student. Previously, I subscribed to the lessons from “The Winning Circle” and most recently, “Chicken Soup for the Teen-age Soul.” All of these ideologies helped shape how my students are met by me and my expectations; what I will tolerate or not. Using bits and pieces of each, I developed my own “essentials.”

Last year I started a new “rule” for my classroom where my students are asked to wait until I invite them into my classroom. I realized after visiting an elementary school that most of the time, the classroom is a respected space and students don’t just rush in. Students line up, usually in alphabetical order, and enter when the teacher opens the door. I am not sure that my 8th graders would tolerate using the alphabet to get into the classroom, but it was apparent that if I was ready and prepared for the students before they entered the room, the tone for the entire period was set. My thoughts were simple— if I expected my students to be ready when they sat in their seats, then I had to be ready for them as well.

Too often I found myself using the few minutes of passing period to finish up some grading, entering scores into the computer, or answering e-mail. My students would be walking in, wanting my attention, and I had to ask them to wait. When I adopted my new “rule” the whole tone of my day changed. When the students came into the classroom, I was present and ready. I was able to greet each student as they came in and I started the lesson as soon as the final bell rang. I didn’t feel scattered. I didn’t feel like I had to rush or ignore my students’ needs.

Each of us, as we develop in our vocation, will gather our own pearls that work for us. And who knows, maybe one day one of us will even put together our own book of essentials. Matthew Perry portrayed Ron Clark in a TV movie about his teaching and “The Essential 55.” I wonder who would portray any of us?



During this time of economic crisis, it is sometimes a bit difficult to stay focused and not be overwhelmed. It is my hope that each of us is able to hold onto some of our “pearls” during these difficult times and remember the gifts that we are blessed with daily. And throughout it all, remember that as part of the San Ramon Valley Education Association, you are not alone. Together we are working to stay whole and keep us all together.

President's Message... Darren Day

As we all know the state budget is going from bad to worse as the legislature remains locked in a partisan stare down. We hear every day on the news that it looks like the state will be out of money by the end of February. Yikes, isn't it February already? This only continues to ramp-up the anxiety level at all school sites with new teachers fearful for their jobs, close to retirement teachers fearful for their retirement benefits, and those between that will be left with jumbo class sizes.

This has forced school districts to plan for all kinds of scenarios on what might happen rather than what will happen. So far it looks like all options are bad but some will have grave long-lasting impacts on teachers and students who are not to blame for this financial mess.

This financial crisis needs to be placed at the feet of the legislature who continue to fail to act and continue to play partisan politics while our state's education system hangs in the balance.

SRVEA will resist any attempt to make teachers, librarians, counselors, Para-educators or other school personnel pay for the state budget mess and the legislature's lack of leadership.

At our last Executive Board meeting, we decided our mission statement for the next 2 years will be "Keep Our Members Whole." Educators have to work and fight for every pay increase, health benefit, and improved working conditions. To give those up blindly and without guarantees would be rash. I recommend that we not blindly give up what educators have struggled to achieve over the past years. The education community of the San Ramon Valley continues to do their part in providing an exceptional education to our students. We need to galvanize parents and other community members to get involved, to inform Sacramento of their desire to make education a top priority. Thank you to those of you who have already written letters to our legislators. SRVEA has mailed hundreds already and they continue to come in, so, thank you.



SRVEA continues to work on a plan called "Don't Mask the Problem." Our actions for the remainder of the school year will be geared to inform community members and ask them to send a loud and clear message to Sacramento that the children of this state are our greatest resource and we cannot hide this problem any longer. So SRVEA's hope is that we not punish teachers but work collectively with the District on making these hard decisions that impact the livelihood of our members.

SRVEA Scholarships



San Ramon Valley Education Association will offer \$500 scholarships to both SRVEA members, for the purpose of enhancing their craft, and to dependent children of SRVEA members. Applications are available now. See your site rep.

Application Deadline

March 6, 2009

Contact SRVEA Office

(925) 828-9341

VTRC@aol.com

EMERGENCY BUDGET UPDATES

It seems as though every time you open the newspaper or turn on the TV, there is a change in the California State Budget crisis. At the time of printing, the Legislature had not settled on a budget but in the Governor's proposal there was a direct attack on education— compromising Proposition 98, eliminating class size reduction, and cutting almost \$11 billion from public education funding. Our students did not create the mess in Sacramento and they should not be the ones who suffer any further detrimental cuts. It is time that Sacramento looks to revenue increases and focuses on securing California public schools. For updates and Calls to Action, go to the CTA website at www.cta.org or check in at the new SRVEA website at www.srvea.org. Be sure to be in touch with your legislative representatives and let Sacramento hear clearly from educators: **CUTS HURT!**



Union Code of Conduct— What does it mean to be “union?”

Portions from CTA Representative Council Training

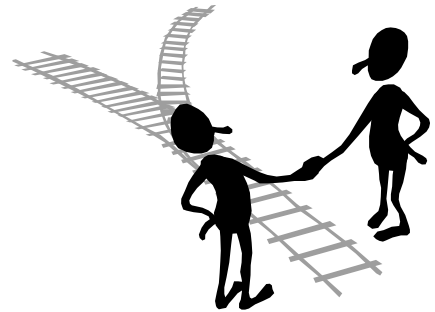
The San Ramon Valley Education Association (SRVEA) is part of the largest labor union in the State of California— the California State Teachers’ Association (CTA). Together we are part of 340,000 public school teachers, counselors, psychologists, librarians, other non-supervisory certificated personnel, and Education Support Professionals. There are more than 1,100 chapters or local associations associated with CTA. CTA exists to protect and promote the well being of its members; to improve the conditions of teaching and learning; to advance the cause of free, universal, and quality education; to ensure that human dignity and civil rights of all children and youth are protected; and to secure a more equitable and democratic society.

In these dire economic times, it is easy to become overwhelmed and anxious. CTA and SRVEA are dedicated to maintaining unity and strength of our association and the other labor unions associated with the San Ramon Valley Unified School District. The “union” motto is “An Injury to One is an Injury to All.” This is the basic premise of unionism. This means that the mistreatment of any individual worker creates the possibility of mistreatment for every worker. This requires that all members come to the support and defense of fellow members who are threatened, and we create a foundation of solidarity among all employees.

It is all too simple to “throw each other under the bus” as we brainstorm the budget crisis and what we can do without or what we are willing to give up. Throughout all of our conversations, however, we need to keep in mind that any cuts in programs is a cut in who we are. We are the program! Each and every program has personnel at its very foundation. SRVEA is committed to keeping us whole.

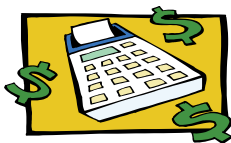
In light of the current times, consider the following— Union Code of Conduct:

- I will not criticize any union colleague except to the individual directly.
- If any union colleague is bring criticized in my presence, I will confront the criticism and ask that it stop.
- I will not participate in any conversations with management that criticize or negatively speculate about any union colleague.
- I will settle my differences with colleagues within my union.
- I will engage in debate, offer others opportunity for debate and respect minority viewpoints, but I will observe and support the majority mandate of my union.



SRVEA/CTA/NEA Professional Dues for 2008 Tax Year

Category 1	61-100% Assigned Position	\$919.82
Category 2A	34-50% Assigned Position	\$479.57
Category 2B	51-60% Assigned Position	\$616.93
Category 3A	21-25% Assigned Position	\$271.18
Category 3B	26-33% Assigned Position	\$307.08
(2007-08 monthly dues x 7 mos) + (2008-09 monthly dues x 4 mos)		



This information is to be used for tax purposes.
Check with your tax professional regarding professional dues deductions.

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Read Across America



Read Across America is a national day of celebrating reading. It is sponsored by the National Education Association and the California Teachers Association along with many of the country's leading literacy and youth groups to motivate children to read and generate a new enthusiasm for reading.

In California, Read Across America will be observed on Monday, March 2, 2009, in honor of Dr. Seuss' birthday. Mark your calendars to remember this special day of reading for students, family, and friends.

The theme for Read Across America 2009 is "Reading is Cool." Get chillin' and be part of this year's fun celebration!

You can receive a Read Across America packet from CTA by contacting Sheri Miyamoto at 562-478-1361; email: smiyamoto@cta.org or you can download information from the CTA website at <http://www.cta.org>

SRVEA HAS A WEBSITE

SRVEA has finally come into the technology of the 21st century through the creation of a new website. Visit the site often for updates that directly affect you, get information about current activities in the District, or check in on what is new and going on around our SRVEA Community.

<http://www.srvea.org>

SRVUSD Parcel Tax Update

The PTA, SRVUSD Board and Administration, SRVEA, and others collectively make up the team (Citizens for Quality Education) that is working to develop and support a new parcel tax for our schools. Ongoing state budget cuts to education escalates the need for locals to take care of their own.

Many of the certificated and classified staff of SRVUSD are members of the San Ramon Valley community. Our neighbors need to hear from us about this new parcel tax and why it should pass.

The parcel tax will keep approximately \$7 million per year in our budget. Please contact Political Action Chair, Ann Katzburg (akatbu@srvusd.net) or your Site Rep for more information on how you can get involved.

403bCompare.com

The California State Teachers' Retirement System launched a website that will allow you to compare approximately 90 vendors and 300 different 403(b) retirement investment products. Called 403bCompare, this website is a free retirement planning tool for all CTA members and school employees.

Help on Your 403(b) Plan

A very important decision you can make as a school employee is whether to participate in a 403(b) plan. These plans allow you to put aside funds (elective deferral limit for 2009 is \$16,500) on a tax-deferred basis that can supplement your CalSTRS retirement. And the earlier you invest the faster your investment dollars will grow.

The IRS has put into place new regulations pertaining to 403(b) plans that will substantially change the manner in which school districts offer these plans. The goal of the new regulations is to bring these plans into much closer alignment with other voluntary retirement savings plans. If you currently invest or plan to invest, these new regulations will impact you. CTA has released a newsletter called "The Advisor," summarizing the new IRS regulations and its impact on members. The newsletter is available on the CTA website at www.cta.org/forms/OrderForms.aspx

Do something interesting or exciting? Planning an incredible lesson or activity in your classroom? Share your experiences! Newsworthy items and articles are being accepted for future issues of the Signal. Simply send hard copy to Laura Finco at Stone Valley Middle School or email at lfinco@srvusd.net as an attachment.

For additional information regarding the Benefits of CTA Membership, go to <http://www.cta.org>