



**Message from  
Laura Williams,  
TANLA President**



Hello and *Happy New Year!*

I see that you are back to work and in the thick of the business of education. Thank you!

Well, at the time that this article was written, we did not have a budget from the state. So we are still in a state of limbo, waiting for the unknown. Luckily we have CTA and a good team campaigning for us and keeping us updated. It certainly has been frustrating to watch and follow the state budget negotiations over the last several months. I am concerned with the Governor and the legislators refusal to work together to find additional resources for our schools. The budget plan changes daily, with the latest cutting education another \$5.2 billion, shortening the school year by 5 days and reducing class-size funding. Until the state decides how they will spend the state budget and proceed, we will not have a firm understanding on the effect on education, our classrooms and the districts in California. Please read the Quality Counts 2009 Report to find out more about the Governor's Proposal on the CTA website [www.cta.org](http://www.cta.org). CTA is asking us to share our stories about the budget crisis with them. People need to hear our stories and the state of our education system.

While we are waiting for the budget crisis resolution, you can help by writing to your state representatives. To find out who your representative is, check the website of <http://www.legislature.ca.gov>. The legislators are to listen and act in the interest of their constituents. It is important to inform them of your opinion on how important

education is and to keep cuts away from education and the classroom. Remember to keep your communication short, constructive, and clear. Your message will be listened and attended to if it is short and informative with a personal side. Remember to state that you are a teacher.

It is time to turn in your NEA State Delegate Declaration of Candidacy form to CTA. The 2009 NEA Convention is in San Diego, California. This is an AWESOME event and I encourage you to run for this office. It will be well worth your time and energy to attend this convention. It is exciting, informational and entertaining. You meet teachers from across the country. The discussions and interactions from teacher-to-teacher to set policies and guidelines are important. If you do not want to be a State Delegate to the NEA you can attend as a local TANLA Delegate by completing an intent-to-run form. We have 8 TANLA delegate positions. Come on and join in the fun work in San Diego at the NEA Convention!!!

It's that time again for Teacher-of-the-Year nominations, so please help your TANLA rep. with the process. It is the duty of the TANLA rep. at each site to handle the process. If it is not done correctly, it must be redone. The committee will meet in March to decide the winner, based on interviews. The committee is made up of past teacher-of-the-year candidates.

I am available to all TANLA members to listen, discuss and help. I am trying to do my best to keep you informed and to be proactive in honoring our Master Agreement with the district. I now meet with our Superintendent every Tuesday to discuss business. I attend ALL School Board meetings and I am still trying to visit school sites weekly. The search for the NEW Superintendent application deadline is February 27, 2009. I will keep you updated.



**From the Desk of the  
Executive Director  
Mark A. Miller**



Just when you think that it cannot get much worse, the Governor calls for multiple **special sessions** of the legislature to consider proposals to revise the 2008-09 State Budget (mid-year cuts), including a huge cut to public education. Unfortunately, the bad news for public education does not stop there. The Governor, in his proposed 2009-10 budget, has also recommended **significant** cuts to public education as well.

Although the Office of the Legislative Analyst and the Governor vary in their calculations of how severe the budget shortfall will be, it is estimated that California is now facing a deficit in 2008/09 and 2009/10 of over \$41.6 billion. The Governor is proposing a combination of revenue enhancements, cuts in spending and increased flexibility for local districts to help shore up the widening budget deficit. Here are **just a few** of the significant highlights of the Governor's latest proposals for public education:

**Mid-Year Cuts to Education for 2008- 09**

- Eliminate the .68% COLA for K – 14.
- An additional cut of \$1.7 billion to the revenue limit.

**Governor's Proposal for 2009-10 Education Budget**

- No funding for statutory COLA.
- Further reduction of the revenue limit by \$1.1 billion. If adopted this proposal would eliminate 5 days of instruction from the school year. This would mean that the ADA funding provided to districts would be reduced by five days. If districts choose to keep the five days, or if the teachers association does not negotiate a decrease to the calendar, the **district** would have to fund the cost of the five days. The governor is also proposing flexibility in the expenditure of categorical funds, which could be used to help pay for the five day reduction.

As I had indicated at the start of this article, these are **just a few** of the highlights of the California State Budget fiasco. Certainly many unanswered questions remain; such as the impact of these proposed cuts at the local level, and what impact the final adopted budget plans will have on class size in general not to mention class size reduction. Make no mistake; the budget crisis is definitely a major issue, particularly for public education. All in the education community will be asked to work together to minimize, as much as possible, the impact of the final adopted budget on our public schools. It will not be enough to sit back and assume that CTA will be able to fix this mess. After all, you, the members, are CTA. It will take a strong coalition to meet these challenges. But meet them we will, as we continue to provide for the very best public education for the students, families, and our communities.

**TOGETHER WE HAVE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!**

## *CTA Ethnic Minority Reception and Training*

The Ethnic Minority Reception was held at the La Mirada Holiday Inn on Thursday, December 11 to encourage ethnic and minority members to join CTA leadership. TANLA was well represented with members enjoying great food, great company, and partaking in dialog regarding educational issues, especially 2009 California educational budget cuts. "I had a great time tonight. I am looking forward to attending the Ethnic Minority Leadership Development Training on Saturday, February 7. The event is free and is an investment in strengthening TANLA," commented Nuffer teacher Franco Laguna. The training is open to all members. To attend the Ethnic Minority Leadership Development Training, contact Tina Martinez-Najera at (562) 478-1377 by January 30 or drop by the CTA Santa Fe Springs office.



### *The Giving Spirit*

Smiles and gratitude were in plentiful supply in December when TANLA and DEA delivered Christmas to our 2 'adopted' families. Association members donated over \$2,000 which was used to purchase toys, clothes and needed household items for these families. Office staff members wrapped and delivered the gifts before Christmas break. "The family was extremely appreciative and the children were so excited to receive our gifts," said Associate Staff member Terri Van Deusen. "It made me proud to know that even in these tough times, our Association members opened their hearts to those less fortunate."



### *TANLA/Special Education Forum*

**Attention** special Education teachers. If you have not yet spent the **\$400 materials money**, you still can! The freeze on spending has not reached Special Ed yet. The last date for out-of-state purchases is March 13th and for in-state purchases it's April 13th. You are encouraged to make your purchases as soon as possible. You never know when the next purchasing freeze will take place.

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## *CalSTRS Benefits are Protected by Law!*

In today's tough economic times everyone is worried about their financial future. Recently CTA interviewed CalSTRS Chief Investment Officer Christopher Ailman to help answer the many questions teachers across California have on their mind.

### **Are the funds in CalSTRS stable since the economic downturn?**

The benefits our members receive do not depend on the size of the CalSTRS investment portfolio. However, the portfolio has more than enough assets to weather today's turbulent market. Also, CalSTRS' 88 percent funding status is well above the 80 percent average considered healthy for a public pension fund.

### **What investment strategies does CalSTRS have in place to safeguard against turbulent markets?**

CalSTRS' main investment strategy for protection from market turmoil is threefold. First, our diversification spreads the risk. Our asset classes are U.S. stocks, international stocks, bonds and other fixed-income securities, real estate, and private equity. Secondly, we are a patient, long-term investor, which has been the most reliable model for investment growth over time. Thirdly, our highly skilled professional staff works with the best asset managers in the world.

### **Can you explain how the funds are protected by law?**

CalSTRS benefits are a contractual right protected not only by the California Constitution but also by the U.S. Constitution. Article 1 Section 9 of the California Constitution and U.S. Constitution Article 1 Section 10 both hold the state to its contractual obligations.

### **Pensions tend to use a system which includes actuarial smoothing. Can you explain what actuarial smoothing is and**

### **how it results in predictable performance over the life of a CalSTRS pension?**

To understand how smoothing affects the CalSTRS fund, you have to keep in mind that the fund makes money in two ways: through contributions by members, school districts and the state of California, and through investment income. So double-digit investment returns the past three years will help cushion us during lean years such as 2007-08. That means CalSTRS doesn't have to ask the Legislature to raise contribution rates because of one bad year.

### **Can you provide any current educational information (online or otherwise) that can assure members of CalSTRS' financial stability?**

Your best bet is to look at the following webpage:

[http://www.calstrs.com/Newsroom/What's%20New/market\\_fluctuations.aspx](http://www.calstrs.com/Newsroom/What's%20New/market_fluctuations.aspx). There you will see that our size, diversification and legal guarantees mean that our members' benefits will be paid out and that the fund will weather this financial turmoil.

### **Anything else you would like us to include in this brief Q&A for our members?**

Since its founding 95 years ago, CalSTRS has grown and evolved into a sophisticated, well-managed and well-diversified financial institution. CalSTRS is not only built to withstand the difficulties of a struggling economy, but is poised to take full advantage of the coming financial recovery. CalSTRS is dedicated to fulfilling its mission of sustaining the financial security of California's educators today and far beyond the next 95 years.

## January Health Tip - Make Exercise a Habit Not A Chore

### How much exercise do I need?

Talk to your doctor about how much exercise is right for you. A good goal for many people is to work up to exercising 4 to 6 times a week for 30 to 60 minutes at a time. Remember, though, that exercise has so many health benefits that any amount is better than none.

### How do I get started?

Start by talking with your doctor. This is especially important if you haven't been active, if you have any health problems or if you're pregnant or elderly. Start out slowly.

Begin with a 10-minute period of light exercise or a brisk walk every day and gradually increase how hard you exercise and for how long.

### Sneak exercise into your day

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Go for a walk during your coffee or lunch break.
- Walk all or part of the way to work.
- Do housework at a fast pace.
- Rake leaves or do other yard work.

### Here are some tips that will help you start and stick with an exercise program:

**Choose something you like to do.** Make sure it suits you physically, too. For instance, swimming is easier on arthritic joints.

**Get a partner.** Exercising with a friend can make it more fun.

**Vary your routine.** You may be less likely to get bored or injured if you change your exercise routine. Walk one day. Bicycle the next.

Consider activities like dancing and racquet sports, and even chores like vacuuming or mowing the lawn.

**Choose a comfortable time of day.** Don't work out too soon after eating or when it's too hot or cold outside. Wait until later in the day if you're too stiff in the morning.

**Don't get discouraged.** It can take weeks or months before you notice some of the changes from exercise, such as weight loss.

**Forget "no pain, no gain."** While a little soreness is normal after you first start exercising, pain isn't. Take a break if you hurt or if you are injured.

**Make exercise fun.** Read, listen to music or watch TV while riding a stationary bicycle, for example. Find fun things to do, like taking a walk through the zoo. Go dancing. Learn how to play a sport you enjoy.

### Making exercise a habit

- Stick to a regular time every day.
- Sign a contract committing yourself to exercise.
- Put "exercise appointments" on your calendar.
- Check your progress. Can you walk a certain distance faster now than when you began exercising? Or is your heart rate slower now?
- Ask your doctor to write a prescription for your exercise program, such as what type of exercise to do, how often to exercise and for how long.

## Classroom Idea

Are your students working on letter writing, or will your class be making Valentine Cards? Keep our soldiers in mind. You can send letters and/or cards to a recovering Soldier. All letters and cards are appreciated!

**A Recovering American Soldier**  
c/o Walter Reed Army Medical Center  
6900 Georgia Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20307-5001

## Professional Work Deserves Respect! Display Credentials

From Tom Walters, a Jericho, Vermont teacher

"Lawyers do it. Doctors do it. Educators should do it! No, I'm not talking about making a lot of money! I'm talking about prominently displaying educational degrees and professional certificates. Displaying one's credentials will help you appear professional and legitimate. It's very impressive and reinforces the amount of effort it takes to become a teacher and to maintain certification."

## Need A Grant?

Apply for the NEA Foundation Grant. There are two types of grants offered: Students Achievement Grants and Learning and Leadership Grants.

Students Achievement Grants are \$5,000 awards that promote classroom innovation to engage students in critical thinking and deepen their knowledge of standards based subject matter.

Learning and Leadership Grants up to \$5,000 can be for a group or individuals that support professional development opportunities, such as summer conferences, research, lesson study and mentoring.

Apply at [www.neafoundation.org](http://www.neafoundation.org) by February 1, 2009

## And The Winner Is...

Nominate an Outstanding Earth Science Teacher Sponsored by the National Association of Geoscience Teachers (NAGT), these awards are given for exceptional contributions to the stimulation of interest in the Earth Sciences at the secondary level. Devised to honor pre-college teachers of earth science.

Middle- and high-school teachers are eligible to apply. Individuals may apply on their own behalf or nominate a colleague. Award winners receive monetary funds for classroom use and travel to a conference, professional journal subscriptions as well as other items.

Nominations are accepted year round, but most regional sections need information by **February 1** to consider the applicant for the current year. For more information visit [www.nagt.org/nagt/programs/oest.html](http://www.nagt.org/nagt/programs/oest.html)

## Read Across America



NEA's Read Across America Day is on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Free downloadable materials reading tips and ideas are available at [www.nea.org/readacross](http://www.nea.org/readacross) "Reading is Cool" is the California theme for this year's event. The theme goes with this year's spotlighted book *Snowpeople*, by Rick and Ryan Zeeb, which teaches students that "Different is brilliant. It's what makes you, you". In addition to the NEA website teachers can find resources at [www.cta.org/community/read+across+america](http://www.cta.org/community/read+across+america).

Please keep TANLA informed about your sites plans for Read Across America.

## What has TANLA done for you?

Everyday and in many ways TANLA is working hard for all of its members. This month get to know two of our TANLA board members and what makes them proud to be members of TANLA as they reflect on current and past TANLA achievements.



Bonnie James, Nuffer  
Elementary School Director

I am an Elementary Board of Director for TANLA. I started teaching in 1986. Before I even got my first check TANLA had negotiated a raise for that school year. The starting salary then was \$22,950. Now through hard negotiations a teachers starting salary is \$44,764.

When I started teaching, we were required to do lunch or recess duty. There were fancy schedules and time lines that had to be assigned each month. Most of the time, using the restroom was only possible if you depended on the generosity of others. TANLA negotiated duty free lunch and breaks for teachers. Teachers were also required to do bus duty. I recall being out waiting for the bus 30 minutes before school started and at the end of the school day for another 30 minutes. Now bus duty is an extra pay assignment, thanks to TANLA.

One innovation that TANLA negotiated, is for the teacher Wednesdays. That has been beneficial to my teaching. It is incredible to have the uninterrupted planning time twice a month to be able to work with my team or individually complete work that I otherwise would have to take home. This is a benefit that we need to keep fighting for or the time may be chipped away to meet District needs.

I teach special ed. When I started there was no relationship between the Special Ed. Dept and TANLA members. TANLA negotiated language in the Contract to form a task force that watches class sizes and makes recommendations. In effect this has helped to maintain class sizes at a more equitable level for Special Ed. teachers. There are still large classes, but every month TANLA and the Special Ed. administration discuss the status of classes. TANLA also provides a forum for Special Ed. teachers to meet with the Special Ed. Administration. Again, not every problem is solved at the meetings, but your voice can be heard.

There are so many other small changes that when put together have improved the working conditions for teachers. Without a strong union I would probably be doing recess duty right now or waiting for that last bus to pick up students. Take time to think back through your career and remember the small changes that have made a big difference in your career. If you are new, look forward to working with TANLA to improve your lot in life.

### Mark Your Social Calendar

Listed below are upcoming events we being planned by the Social Committee. Dates are tentative, but you will receive more information as each event approaches.

- January 22 Family Pizza Night
- February 27- Happy Hour
- March 31- Taco Tuesday
- April - Theater Trip to *Ave Q* at the OC Performing Arts Center
- May - Stateline Turn Around Trip
- June 12- Angel Baseball Game (tentative date)



Laura Williams  
TANLA President

I started my involvement in TANLA as the faculty representative at Waite Elementary School. We had bus duty, recess duty and lunch duty. TANLA negotiated all of that away for us. I had class sizes up to 38 students in the primary grades and now it is a 20 to 1 ratio. I love it!

I increased my level of interest becoming an Elementary Director and found that if we all work and stick together we are stronger. We receive raises and have competitive salaries because of TANLA. Today in these tough economic times our health benefits are pretty nice.

#### **We are a strong presence in our school district.**

TANLA has a full time release president, which allows me to work hard for our members.

TANLA is STRONG on the Grading Committee and the NEW Report Card Committee.

TANLA is working on changing school board policies that have not changed since the 1960's and 1980's.

TANLA has a strong voice on the Superintendent's Cabinet. TANLA has worked hard to avoid permanent teachers being cut last year.

TANLA is working with district leadership and conducted a survey on principals. This year we will add assistant principals to the survey.

TANLA strives to preserve the integrity of Shared Decision Making and School Site Councils.

TANLA ensures safe working conditions for our members.

TANLA works behind the scenes to make us collaborative and professional in our school district.

## Spotlighting Talented Teachers

### *The Akidemix Live Performance*

Exciting rhythms and sounds were heard on the Los Alisos campus, in December when the all-teacher band *Akidemix* performed for students. Made up of teachers from Los Alisos and La Mirada High School, band members include **Paula Briones, guitar/vocals, Sarah Yarbrough, vocals/percussion, John Fields, percussion, Manny Ortiz, percussion, Geena Biondi, saxophone/flute, Meli Maytorena, drums, Lou Perciach, bass and Alyline Amirayan, vocals/guitar.** These talented teachers performed tunes with an educational message. The students enjoyed the performance and were in awe and excited to witness their teachers awesome talents.

### *Arts out of the Past.*

Victorian Ribbon Embroidery is being taught by **Linda Gibbs** at La Mirada Adult School. Students are being taught how to easily create elegant three dimensional flowers by weaving and twisting various widths and colors of ribbon. Linda is an artist and designer who strives to keep the "lost arts" alive.