

Partners in Advocacy

Graff takes 'extreme pride' in service

Over the last several months, from Los Angeles to Oakland, we have witnessed how effective we can be in order to effect tremendous change in public education when CSO staff and CTA members stand together as Partners in Advocacy.

This month we'd like to highlight another Partner in Advocacy, three-term State Council delegate Suzanne Graff.

Suzanne began teaching in Castaic Union School District 22 years ago and has been involved in her local, Castaic Teachers Association, in some capacity since she began her career.

At first, Suzanne attended union meetings as an interested member, actively listening to the concerns of members about issues within the District. Not long after, she was elected as a site rep. A few years later, Suzanne was elected co-President and within a year, was elected President – a role she has held for over 12 years.

As a delegate to State Council, Suzanne sits on the Representation Committee.

Suzanne credits her CSO Primary Contact Staff, Dave Aponik, for providing the advice and support necessary for her to effectively meet the needs of Castaic TA's membership as well as the students and communities for whom they advocate.

"David is my rock," she said. "He is there for me in the office as well as by text when I am at school teaching my littles. Working with my CSO staff, I take extreme pride in protecting my members and our students."

"I have worked with many other CSO staff members as well and they have been fabulous," she continued.



"They have all of our members' backs." Dave has similar praise for Suzanne. "She leads by example and stays abreast of the latest developments both in the field of education and union lead-

Graff "is dedicated to the advocacy of teachers, the teaching profession, and the mission of CTA"

ership," Aponik said. "She is dedicated to the advocacy of teachers, the teaching profession, and the mission of the California Teachers Association."

Suzanne's greatest achievement occurred five years ago when it was dis-

covered that financial mismanagement by district officials placed the district \$4,000,000 below a 0% reserve level. Massive expenditure reductions were mandated by the County and State, which included a RIF of more than 42 teachers.

"I worked directly with the County consultant assigned to the district to help understand the budget crisis and develop a crisis management plan" she recalled. "The consultant contacted me to get the truth and develop a plan to save the district from a state takeover. Throughout the entire process, I kept my members informed through newsletters, e-mail updates, phone calls, personal meetings, and multiple group meetings."

"I researched all neighboring school districts within 50 miles of my district to find out which were hiring teachers," she said. "Then I made arrangements for those districts to send representatives from their respective personnel departments to my district to interview and hire the laid off teachers. I am proud to say that all 42 laid off teachers obtained positions for the following school year."

Suzanne has been married for 28 years to her husband, Mitch. Together, they have two daughters, Kaitlyn, 25, who is a 2nd-year elementary school teacher, and Emma, 18, who is graduating from Valencia High School this weekend.

Suzanne understands that being a strong and effective advocate necessitates taking time for herself and her family. Her advice, although it is "imperative to work hard, you also have to take time for yourself. Try to do what makes you happy! I would say that's why I stay so involved in my union."

Advocacy Appeal

Summer 2019

INSIDE

- Member engagement...2
- Violence at work3
- Member profile4



A CSO publication



CSO members Beatrice Montenegro, Julián Quiñónez, and Alma Soto represent UESF members.

Just like UESF members, staff struggle to live in expensive Bay Area

(Some CTA members may not realize that not all "CTA Staff" are actually CTA employees — some are employed directly by the local CTA/NEA affiliate, as is the case in San Francisco. Just as CTA works to represent all groups of educational employees, CSO works to represent those affiliate staff. This is a bargaining report from one of those affiliates.)

United Educators of San Francisco (UESF) Local 61 and CSO are in the midst of bargaining.

This school year we fought vigorously to protect salary add-ons for UESF members to the tune of 7% on top of their contractual agreements. We helped to elect pro-public education candidates, who value the role of public education in our community and state. In every situation, we have risen to the occasion because every decision will impact the members we represent.

Similar to UESF members and working families throughout the Greater San Francisco Bay Area, we continue to wrestle with the cost of living. As a result, many CSO staff travel an average 50 miles a day and take on other associated costs to travel to-and-from work, as well as other sites throughout San Francisco. For this

reason, one of our main objectives in bargaining is to address wages. In addition, we want to improve the language and come to other agreements presented by management.

So far, UESF has had two officers participate in our sessions and up to three CSO members, as well as our Representative in two of our sessions. At this time, we have had three sessions and have two sessions planned in June.

At the moment, we have been able to tentatively agree on four articles related to:

- Compensatory time
- Training
- Respect clause
- Parking

In our next meeting, we expect to continue our dialogue and have time to review requests for information. We have made progress in our negotiations and we want to close out our negotiations so we can continue to successfully represent our members throughout San Francisco.

We are extremely grateful for our CSO Representative and the support of our brothers and sisters in CSO during this process.

In Solidarity
CSO Staff at UESF



Advocacy Appeal is produced by the California Staff Organization, the union for professional departmental and Regional UniServ Staff who work for the 320,000 members of the California Teachers Association. Comments or inquiries may be emailed to csocomcom@gmail.com. Find us online at www.calstaff.org.

CSO New Staff Committee

New staff support is important work

Every union has a responsibility to support new members – especially when they have a choice whether those new members will support the union.

New California Staff Organization members come from many different places – the classroom, classified work sites, other unions, and many others. When they are hired, they all get support from CSO’s New Staff Committee.

“We want to make sure each and every new CSO employee is successful in their job,” said Angela Marese Boyle, who co-chairs the committee with Mark York.

CSO prides itself on being a tight-knit group, where members support others and everyone takes responsibility for the success of all. To help make that happen, Marese Boyle said, the commit-



Veteran and newer CSO staff prepare for the “fun run” and the 2019 Annual Meeting

tion.

One new support for the CSO Buddy is an information sheet that allows the experienced staff to gather information about the new staff person to be shared at a CSO caucus meeting to help get to know people.

“We want our CSO Brothers and Sisters to feel included and supported by one another,” Marese Boyle said.

The CSO “Cheat Sheet”: Recently the New Staff Committee created a “cheat sheet” – actually a trifold – of the issues that could trip up new staff members. The committee wants to help new members develop their skills, she said, but it also wants to be sure members take advantage of benefits they are entitled to under the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

The New Staff Training: This year’s New Staff Training was April 11, the day before the CSO Annual Meeting. Marese Boyle said the training was packed with helpful information, even though some of the “new staff” had been

working for months by the time they got to the training. The training included a panel discussion with staff from various positions and levels of experience and a frank discussion of CTA/CSO culture.

Marese Boyle said she was most pleased by what 16 new members did on their own when they broke for lunch.

“They immediately started networking, sharing phone numbers and emails,” she said. “It was like they were creating their own support group. We were just elated that this was going on.”

In addition to Marese Boyle and Mark York, the committee includes Dan Bartlett, Karen Bost, Christopher Prunette, Carolyn Govea, Jamye Merritt, Susan Midori-Jones, Carol Reichert, Ed Sibby, Kei Swenson, and Nate Williams.

“This committee was very involved this year – they created a number of new documents in a short period of time,” Marese Boyle said. That’s important because, as more experienced staff retire, CSO needs to preserve its knowledge base and its working culture.

“We don’t want this person out there alone, not knowing anybody”

tee provides a number of different supports.

The CSO Buddy Program: When a new CSO member is hired, “buddy assigners” in all four regions find an experienced staff member to contact the new staff, check in periodically, and generally be available for support. Generally, the committee tries to match new members with others who have similar jobs. “It doesn’t always work that way,” she said, “but we take that into considera-

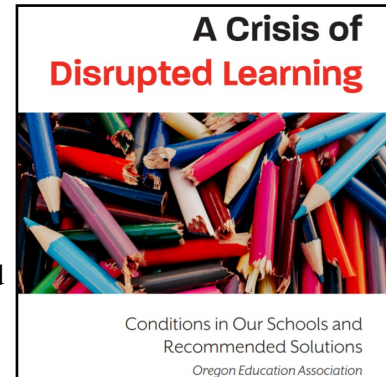
— Partners in Advocacy —
CTA staff and members working for California’s students

Bruised by a broken system

Members, staff seek options to stop injuries from violent students

Assaults on educators are on the rise as students come to us with more varied and difficult needs.

Associations are struggling with how to deal with this increase – Should we file a safety grievance? If so, what is the remedy? What if the violent behavior is a manifestation of an identified disability? What if there is no other classroom to put the student? If the principal was on campus more, would we be having these issues?



Find this report at:
www.oregoned.org/whats-new/a-crisis-of-disrupted-learning

These are questions that local leaders and CTA staff are grappling with on a daily basis around the state, yet the answers are fleeting.

The problem has gotten so big in Oregon that the Oregon Education Association (OEA) conducted a study on the rise and how to deal with it. In the report titled “A Crisis of Disrupted Learning” they make several conclusions and recommendations. It is well worth the read. You will probably empathize with most of the report.

Leaders and CTA staff have been doing the following in order to get districts to help provide more consistent and clear support of educators facing violent students-

- 1) educating members about Ed Code 48910- a teacher’s right to suspend from his/her classroom for the remainder of the current day and all of the next day;
- 2) demanding de-escalation/restraint training;
- 3) demanding training for all staff on student behavior modification techniques;
- 4) seeking ways of keeping administration on campus and not at the D.O.;
- 5) negotiating reduced class sizes;
- 6) seeking greater visibility of administration on campus;
- 7) increasing communication between general education



and special education;

- 8) demanding clear guidelines from admin for when a student is violent;
- 9) demanding that grading/attendance systems notify a teacher when a student with a criminal record comes into his/her room (Ed Code 49079);
- 10) increasing support for students who have the greatest need.

Finding the balance of providing a safe and supportive learning environment for all students and staff has been a struggle, but working together as partners with leadership and CTA staff, many have been able to make some gains around the state.