



Early Educator

CALIFORNIA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

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CFT ECE Members go to Washington, D.C. Participate in NAEYC and Visit Congressional Reps

Thousands of early care and education providers, many members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), converged in Washington, D.C. for the annual National Association for the Education of Young Children conference on November 16-21, 2009.

The AFT took advantage of this opportunity to highlight the success of

preschool programs in the nation's capital with AFT president Randi Weingarten visiting D.C. preschools with press in tow.

AFT ECE members visited their respective members of Congress to urge support for unprecedented ECE investments, such as the Early Learning Challenge Fund, proposed in the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility



CFT ECE members staff the AFT NAEYC booth.



CFT ECE members and staff visit Senator Barbara Boxer to urge her support for the Early Learning Challenge Fund.

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Act of 2009 (H.R. 3221). Many members hosted well attended workshops

designed to promote and distribute numerous ECE professional development materials, such as the Transitioning to Kindergarten toolkit, developed in partnership with the National Center for Learning Disabilities. Members also staffed the much visited AFT booth where we distributed our ECE professional development materials free to providers from around the country.

Local 6361 Contract Ratified

Anela Lee and Marlynne Hee vote yes to ratify Local 6361 contract. Despite substantial funding cuts to their program due to the state budget crisis, management and the union worked together to negotiate a fair agreement. The agreement includes combined annual program budget reviews and maintenance of current wages and benefits.



Teachers, Parents, Mayor and the Grinch Rally for the Kids of Community Preschool

On December 21, 2009 over one hundred parents, kids and teachers rallied to protest the Sunnyvale Congregational Community Church's decision to sell Community Preschool (CP) to buyers who had planned to gut the program in the middle of the school year.

CP workers voted unanimously to form their union in November of 2008. Since then the church has invested thousands of dollars in fighting them. This decision to sell to a buyer who had no concern for workers or the families that depended on Community Preschool for quality care and education was unacceptable. After two meetings, where the prospective buyers told parents that they would change CP from a preschool dedicated to 2-5 year olds to a facility for kids from 8 weeks old to fifth grade in early January, many parents and teachers were left in tears.

The union called all par-

ents and community supporters to action for a protest in front of the church. Sunnyvale Mayor, Tony Spitaleri, spoke in support of teachers and parents, and even the Grinch made a special appearance. The rally was the culminating effort of a coalition built between the union and parents dedicated to preserving CP. The rally made

the 5, 6 and 7 o'clock news programs on two major network television stations, as well as a story in the San Jose Mercury newspaper.

On Tuesday, January 12, church representatives announced that the sale had fallen through. They also stated that the program, including union jobs, will be maintained until the end of the school year and

that any new owner will have to offer employment to current CP staff.

This was a big victory for the staff and parents of Community Preschool

This was a big victory for staff and parents, and a demonstration of the power that even a relatively small group of workers and advocates can wield when they act collectively through their union.

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The Grinch listens to the Mayor of Sunnyvale speak in support of staff and families of Community Preschool at the 12/21 CP Parent Rally.



Linda Medwin's grandsons made their own picket signs to support their grandma! Linda is the CP Assistant Director and a union leader.



CP parents, kids and teachers stick their tongues out at the Grinch who threatened to steal their preschool.

First 5 California Commission Discusses Project Legacy

The First 5 California Commission at their October 21 meeting followed their staff's recommendation and approved the Program Concepts that resulted from the Project Legacy process.

Included in the Program Concepts is a recommendation that the Commission "develop and implement a professional development program that provides incentives for the early learning workforce to further their higher education and also provides stimulus for higher education systems change and builds on the First 5 CARES and AB 212" programs.

Many ECE advocates turned out to speak during the public comment portion of the meeting to encourage the First 5 commissioners to continue

their much needed support of the ECE workforce by approving the Program Concepts. Organizations represented at the meeting included

Preschool California, the Los Angeles Child Care Planning Council, the California Community Foundation and the Los Angeles County Office of Educa-

tion, to name just a few. Representing the California Federation of Teachers at the meeting were Arleen Rivera, president of Early Childhood Federation of Teachers, Local 1475, Betty Robinson-Harris, United Educators of San Francisco, Local 61, and Sandra Weese, Early Childhood Education Organizing Project director.

More information about the Signature Programs developed from the Program Concepts will be shared at the proposed January 27, 2010 Commission meeting in Sacramento.

To read the staff recommendations in full, go to the First 5 California website and download the meeting handout for "Item 10 - Project Legacy," <http://www.cfc.ca.gov/commission/meetinghandouts.asp>.



Betty Robinson-Harris, Sandra Weese and Arleen Rivera at the California First 5 Commission meeting.

LACOE Hosts Head Start Learning and Resource Fair

The Los Angeles County Office of Education Head Start-State Preschool hosted a free Learning and Resource Fair for families with children birth to 5 years old on Saturday, October 10 at the Los Angeles Expo Center.

The event included fun and educational activities for kids ages birth-5, family entertainment, child safety tips, health screenings and free flu shots provided by the Los Angeles County

Department of Public Health.

Isabel Delgadillo, long time Head Start preschool teacher and member of ABC Federation of Teachers, Local 2317, presented two workshops on science activities for parents and children. She was joined by Maria Lizardo-Gomez also from ABC; Sue Bixler, lead teacher; and AprilMarie Bixler, data assessment evaluator, from First 5 Norwalk LaMirada District.



Sue Bixler, Isabel Delgadillo and AprilMarie Bixler prepare a presentation for the LACOE Head Start Fair.

CFT ECE Members Talk with Legislators

The early years of a child's life are key to healthy development and future productivity. High-quality early childhood education (ECE) programs have positive impacts on young children's learning and long-term life outcomes and can help make a difference in our state's future economic competitiveness. They are a valuable investment. That's the message CFT ECE members delivered to state legislators on January 26, 2010.

They urged legislators to make sure that sweeping cuts to ECE were avoided. In May 2009, California voters defeated the proposal to transfer funds from the California Children and Families Commission Fund (First 5), but the governor's budget proposal again includes massive cuts of \$550 million to this fund.

The message was that we can't let budget difficulties take us backwards. California's multi-billion dollar budget deficit threatens many ECE investments. As the state prepares to cut ECE programs, ECE members urged legislators to do everything they can to obtain and use funds, like the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Early Learning Challenge Grants, and the Child Care and Development Block Grant, to partially offset these reductions to preschool education. These budget realities necessitate prioritization of

policies that can be implemented with few additional resources:

- Prioritization of eligibility and allocation of publicly-funded preschool slots to those children who can benefit the most;
- Modification of the state's preschool contract and reimbursement system to increase efficiency;
- Increased regulation and inspection of preschools, and development of a quality rating and incentive system; and
- Improvement of the ECE workforce development system to better prepare preschool teachers to deliver high-quality programming and support ongoing professional development.

Experienced EC educators let the legislators know that when it comes to education, it pays to invest early because effective preschool is one of the smartest ways to improve literacy and school readiness; give kids in low-performing schools a more even start; prepare English language learners for kindergarten; and save K-12 dollars through reduced need for special education and grade retention.

They also reminded the legislators that EC educators are key to boosting preschool quality. Research shows that there is a critical link between the quality of early learning experiences for young children and the job quality of those responsible for their care and education. Investing to

ensure that early childhood educators are well-educated, more highly compensated, and have a voice in their workplace will help preschool programs attract and retain a qualified workforce. This will lead to improved care and education for children. Up-front and ongoing teacher training will ensure teachers are able to meet the needs of all of their students. One example: with California's high rate of preschool-age English language learners, investing to have linguistically competent teachers is essential to overall success.

Finally, CFT ECE members informed the legislators that CFT was proud to be an early supporter of SB 1629 and AB 2759, which established the Early Learning Quality Improvement System Advisory Committee. This 13 member Advisory Committee recently released its Interim Report. While the CFT strongly supports and applauds many of the initial recommendations put forth in the report, CFT is also concerned that the committee is slighting several issues that are vital to any quality improvement effort. Of particular concern are compensation, working conditions and workforce development. ECE members asked the legislators to strongly encourage the Advisory Committee to more fully address these issues in their next round of deliberations.

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