



# Early Educator

CALIFORNIA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

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## Community Preschool wins first contract

After over a year at the negotiations table, the Community Preschool (CP) union negotiations team was proud to present an agreement that was unanimously ratified by the general membership on March 24, 2010. Contract negotiations began in February of 2008 as a challenging but typical fight for a first union contract and ended as a fight to save Community Preschool.

*In March of 2008 Congregational Community Church of Sunnyvale announced that they were going to sell the preschool with no regard for the union or CP kids and families.*

In March of 2008 Congregational Community Church of Sunnyvale (CP's operator) announced that they were going to sell the preschool with no regard



Community Preschool staff with ECEOP staff member and lead negotiator Tanya Arnaiz.

for the union or CP kids and families. In response, the union built a strong coalition with CP families and local elected officials to fight back against the church's careless decision.

Over the last year and a half the union has organized: widespread political support at the state and local levels, letter/email writing campaigns, newspaper stories, site visits by legislators, parent petitions, staff petitions, t-shirt days, sticker days, parent/staff leafleting at Sunday church services and a successful rally that was covered by most major TV stations in the Bay Area. All the while the union negotiating team was holding strong

to proposals that ensured rights for CP workers and families at the table.

Because of the unity of CP staff and the passion

*Because of the unity of CP staff and the passion of parents and community members the church could not sell the preschool and shutdown the program mid-school year as they had hoped.*

of parents and community members the church could not sell the preschool and shutdown the program mid-school year as they had hoped. The union and parents were finally recognized as stakeholders and no longer ignored by church leadership. This agreement represents a real victory for all of the staff and families of Community Preschool despite the church's unyielding decision to sell or close the preschool.

### Agreement Highlights:

- Just cause and progressive discipline.
- Improved severance payment.
- Grievance procedure including binding arbitration.
- Layoffs and reductions in hours by seniority.
- If preschool is sold by end of the school year, all teachers will be offered positions with purchasing entity.
- Student/teacher Ratios will be maintained.
- Paid time off to apply and interview for new employment.

# First 5 California and Water Cooler Joint Conference

On March 9-10, First 5 California and the Water Cooler held a joint conference in Sacramento. The first day featured “Investments in Early Learning: Making an Impact.” The second day focused on “Expanding the Larger Education Conversation.”

Sponsors of the two-day conference at the Sheraton Grand included the Advancement Project, the California Community Foundation, First 5 California, Preschool California and other groups including the California Federation of Teachers (CFT). There was also a broad coalition of groups present representing business, politics, labor, academia, high-tech and philanthropy.

The first day included a plenary session by Dr. Alison Gopnik, Professor of Psychology at UC Berkeley, who detailed new scientific findings about how infants and toddlers learn.

Concurrent workshops

informed attendees about the Educare model, home visitation strategies, CA ELQIS, early learning and children’s health, workforce development, and family engagement.

The second day featured a “Breakfast of Champions,” moderated by Susie Buffett, Founder of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund. The panel included Lt. Governor of Colorado Barbara O’Brien and four corporate executives who understand the value of early learning for society, the workforce, and their employees.

Other major speakers were Dr. Joan Lombardi, deputy assistant secretary, policy and inter-departmental liaison for early childhood, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Jack O’Connell, California Superintendent of Public Instruction; Barbara Bowman, chief of the Office of Early Childhood Education with the Chicago Public Schools; Assembly-



*Jessica Smith, Deputy Director of Organization and Field Services of the American Federation of Teachers participated as a panelist and encouraged attendees to get active and participate in much needed ECE advocacy, like the upcoming Preschool California Early Learning Advocacy Day on June 15.*

There were two very interesting afternoon panels. The first - which included politicians, policy advisors, and advocates - discussed “Finding the Money: Will California Step Up?” The second - which included national-level funders and policy advocates - discussed “Finding the Money: Will the Federal Government Step Up?”

Jessica Smith, deputy director of organization and field services of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), participated as a panelist and encouraged attendees to get active in much needed ECE advocacy, such as the upcoming Preschool California Early Learning Advocacy Day on June 15.

Also attending the conference were CFT ECE committee members; Marty Hittelman, president of the CFT; Gary Ravani, president of the CFT EC/K-12 Council; and several staff from the CFT Early Childhood Education Organizing Project.



Jessica Smith and Elaine Merriweather.

man Tom Torlakson; and former school superintendent Larry Aceves, both of whom are SPI candidates in next November’s General Election.

## Local 1475 Executive board training

Early Childhood Federation, Local 1475 in Los Angeles has been reactivating its membership, has added upwards of 250 members in the last year and has recruited new Executive Board members. As a result of these positive developments, Local 1475 may soon be in a position to help with other organizing efforts in Southern California, including other unrepresented Head Starts under the Los Angeles County Office of Education.

On February 19 and 20, Local 1475 Executive Board members participated in a training designed to help them be effective leaders, make sure the local is in good standing and think about how to strategically organize new members.

Sessions were facilitated by a mix of CFT and AFT staff and officers and some of the topics covered during the two day



*Back Row: Dennis Smith, Marietta Calvo, Gisella Mora, Sharon Bruce, Arleen Rivera, Dan McNeil, Ramiro Hernandez, Miguel Arredondo; Front Row: Debbie Uribe, Jessica Smith, Ruth Molina, Alejandra Iskandr-Ciesnero, and Lisa Muhammad.*

training were: Local 1475, CFT, AFT and the AFL-CIO - Understanding Our Union Family; The World of Our Employers - What Do We Know, What Do We Need to Know?; Building a Strong Steward Structure and Activist Membership; Local Union Constitutions and the AFT; Local Union Governance; Head Start Reauthorization, Performance Standards and

Recompetition - What's Coming from Washington, DC?; and Organizing Other LA County Head Starts.

Executive Board members reported that they learned a lot of new information, that they found the training to be very helpful and that they would use their new knowledge and skills to continue to strengthen their union.

## LOCAL 1475 WON TWO AWARDS AT CONVENTION...



*Miguel Arredondo, Karen Wells, Sharon Bruce, Arleen Rivera, Ramiro Hernandez, and Ivan Brickman.*

*Early Childhood Federation, Local 1475, won two awards: Third place for percentage of growth, and third place for actual new members across the state.*

## Know Your RIGHTS ON THE JOB

*Workers at early care and education (ECE) centers have special rights. California Labor Law states:*

- You are protected by a special whistle blowing rule if you work at an ECE facility.
- You are protected against retaliation if you report a violation, or possible violation, of the day care licensing laws or regulations (you must notify your employer of the violations before you refuse to do work.)
- You are also protected if you report violations of other laws, including those concerning staff-child ratios, transportation of children and child abuse. You are protected if you testify, or are about to testify, at hearings and if you assist others in complaining to or providing information to enforcement agencies.
- Your employer cannot discharge, demote, or suspend you and you cannot be threatened, disciplined, or discriminated against in any way for exercising these legal rights.

## ECE workshop at CFT Convention

On Friday, March 19, the CFT ECE Committee hosted a well attended workshop at the CFT Convention, *The Future of Early Childhood Education - In California and at the National Level*.

Sandy Escobedo from the Los Angeles Pre-school Advocacy Initiative (LAPAI) shared the advocacy work the LAPAI has been doing to help underserved communities gain access to quality early care and education (ECE) and specifically how they have been engaging parents in the process. Preschool California is focusing on P-3 strategies and Ernesto Saldana shared his organization's work and how ECE providers can get involved.

They also provided a



*Ernesto Saldana and Sandy Escobedo answer questions from ECE workshop participants.*

national perspective on ECE and a report on the policy recommendations coming out of the Water Cooler meetings that the Advancement Project has been hosting for California

ECE stakeholders over the last two years, and they also gave an update on the Los Angeles Unified School District's new two-year kindergarten pilot program.

## March Forth – Day of ECE Action

On March 4, 2010 the American Federation of Teachers partnered with the National Women's Law Center and several other organizations in asking our members, friends, and colleagues to contact Congress and request that funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant, Head Start/Early Head Start and child nutrition be made priorities by their senators and Representatives. This year's action theme was "Families Earning, Children Learning," reminding Congress

of the importance of these programs for children, parents and our economic recovery.

Congress was at the beginning of the budget process and the president had already proposed increases for these key child care and early education programs, but it was up to Congress to make sure the final budget includes these increases. We needed to make sure Congress knew that their constituents strongly believe these increased investments were necessary.

Thousands of calls and emails went to members of Congress on March 4th by providers, parents and community members. They told Congress that early care and education, Head Start and child nutrition are essential programs for children and families and urged the senator/representative to support the increases for those programs proposed in the president's budget.

Thanks to those of you who let your voice be heard and for "marching forth" with us!

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AFT, AFL-CIO  
A Union of Professionals

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