



Early Educator

CALIFORNIA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

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Sunnyvale early childhood educators vote unanimously to join CFT

The California Federation of Teachers (CFT) announced November 7 that early care and education (ECE) workers at Community Preschool (CP) in Sunnyvale have won the right to be represented by the CFT in contract discussions.

Coming on the heels of a November 4 National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election win, Community Preschool staff reached out to CP management calling for mutual collaboration on contract discussions. "We

want to work together and engage in a constructive dialogue that we hope will

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New members of the CFT include (left to right) Diana Jones-Hill and Linda Medwin (holding the election results from the National Labor Relations Board), Patty Murphy, Sunita Rajesh, and Sujata Krishna.



Bargaining team (left to right): Sujata Krishna, Patty Murphy, Karen Golosman, Linda Medwin, Lucille Story and Diana Jones-Hill.

said Diana Jones-Hill, a preschool teacher at CP.

Welcoming the newly-organized CFT workers to the union, CFT President Marty Hittelman said: "We congratulate you on your organizing success and stand ready to assist you in any way we can."

Community Preschool is affiliated with Congregational Community Church in Sunnyvale and administers programs at one site in Santa Clara County. It employs approximately 35 people,

serving over 200 families on a budget in excess of \$1 million.

The workers at Community Preschool elected their bargaining team and are gearing up for first contract negotiations. The bargaining team has devoted time and effort to read worker surveys and formulate proposals that focus on CP's top priorities: transparency, fairness and respect at work. The first negotiations session is scheduled for February 4, 2009 at the school.

AFT booth and workshops big hits at Dallas NAEYC

Riding a wave of elation the day after the presidential election, more than 40 American Federation of Teachers (AFT) members, organizers and Texas staff worked an AFT booth in Dallas, at the largest annual meeting of early childhood educators, held by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

The California Federation of Teachers (CFT) contingent included Sandra Weese, CFT Early Childhood Education Organizing Project Director and CFT ECE

funnel more money into early childhood education programs such as Head Start, and to support career and wage ladder legislation to supplement the field's low wages and encourage workers to get additional education and training. The AFT also distributed free educational and professional development materials, such as the Transitioning to Kindergarten toolkit, and numerous AFT publications in English and Spanish.

Along with the booth, AFT members and staff led a number of NAEYC



Melissa Peterson, Sandra Weese, Joy Wi, and Susheela Narayanan staff the AFT booth at the NAEYC Conference in Dallas.

Local AFT leaders and staff participated in working the booth, which gave them a chance to talk to early childhood educators and encourage them to join their local Texas AFT affiliates. At a Texas-themed barbecue reception, Texas AFT president and AFT vice president, Linda Bridges spoke to more than 150 Texas-based early childhood educators about her union's work in the state. At the end of her comments, Bridges demonstrated the power of union solidarity by asking them to sign postcards telling Lone Star State legislators to support

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Elaine Francisco talks with ECE folks from around the country.

Committee members Elaine Francisco, Betty Robinson-Harris, Elaine Merriweather, Susheela Narayanan, Melissa Peterson, Arleen Rivera and Joy Wi. We were very pleased to also have with us Noushin Mofakham, the Executive Director at South of Market Child Care, Inc.

For the third year in a row, thousands of NAEYC attendees signed the AFT's Worthy Wage Day quilts, which are delivered to Capitol Hill on May 1 (Worthy Wage Day). The event is used to urge elected representatives to

workshops on topics ranging from helping children transition from preschool to kindergarten, to union-building. "Mini-workshops" were also held at the booth to walk attendees through the Colorín Colorado Web site, a resource sponsored by the AFT and WETA (the flagship public broadcasting station in our nation's capital) that is designed for parents and educators of English language learners. They also helped early childhood educators plan Worthy Wage Day events.



Betty Robinson-Harris and Elaine Merriweather facilitate a mini-workshop on the AFT's Transitioning to Kindergarten Toolkit, as Susheela Narayanan and Arleen Rivera help staff the AFT booth.

Members visit legislators—stress the importance of quality ECE

Access to high-quality education is the right of every student and the responsibility of us all!

“Right now we have far too many kids, particularly at risk, low-income kids, who can’t find quality preschool. We need to do the right thing and make those investments.” — Assemblymember Dave Jones, 2008

On January 13, 2009, California Federation of Teachers (CFT) members and staff visited state legislators and urged them to plan for tomorrow by investing in quality early childhood education (ECE) *today*. With California’s huge budget deficit, getting good value for state expenditures is an absolute necessity. Making significant targeted high-yield educational investments is key to our future prosperity and prioritizing quality preschool makes the most sense.

Experience has taught us that when it comes to education, it pays to invest early. Experienced CFT early childhood educators have learned that 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.

What our families and communities receive in return on ECE investment far exceeds what we get on most private or public investments. Quality preschool helps families by enabling parents to work, attend school, or get job training, all of which can translate to

higher earning potential.

Early childhood 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. For example, with California’s high rate of preschool-age English language learners, investing to have linguistically competent teachers is essential to overall success.

The CFT has been making



Rosa Maria Garcia goes over CFT ECE materials, including the Packard funded RAND Preschool Studies booklet and fact sheet, with Senator Gloria Romero.



Pictured (left to right): Assemblymember Paul Fong with CFT members: Elaine Merriweather, Susan Westbrook, Melissa Peterson, Joy Wi, Betty Robinson-Harris and Rosa Maria Garcia.

the case around the state for effective preschool.

The RAND reports make clear that when it comes to enhancing the quality of preschool in California, there’s much to be done. CFT was proud to be an early supporter of SB 1629 and AB 2759, which, among other things, established the Early Learning Quality Improvement System Advisory

Committee (QISAC).

This 13 member advisory committee is to include representatives from the early care and education community that have experience with English learners, or who are local educational agency teachers who teach kindergarten. In addition, one slot is reserved for a program administrator of a child development program funded by the California Department of Education, and another for a caregiver for infants and toddlers.

This committee’s charge is to develop recommendations over the next year on how to evaluate and improve the quality of child development programs that provide services from birth to age five, including preschool.

CFT ECE members also asked legislators responsible for making appointments to the QISAC to consider seriously members of the CFT when making committee selections.

English language learners in ECE: Recruiting Immigrant Families

ELLs in Early Childhood Education Recruiting Immigrant Families, an article by Colorín Colorado is the first of a two-part series that details the importance of enrolling English language learners (ELL's) in preschool. The article also examines how preschools may better meet the needs of ELL students. The article can be found at www.colorincolorado.org/article/25820.



The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is proud of its contribution to the development of Colorín Colorado and continues to be a strong supporter of this free Web-

based service that provides information, activities and advice for educators and Spanish-speaking families of ELL's.

ECE Outreach Strategy Working-Packard Foundation Awards CFT New \$100,000 Grant

Educating our young children well is an essential investment in our future and the need for high-quality early childhood education today has never been greater. But with California facing tough economic times and record state budget deficits, maintaining early childhood education funding will be difficult.

Despite the challenges, the CFT has been working hard to get trade unionists to become advocates for high quality, universal, free-to-low-cost and readily-available preschool. Now it's fortunate to have just been awarded a \$100,000 grant from the David & Lucile Packard Foundation that will allow us to continue our work.

This significant financial assistance from the Packard Foundation will enable us to extend the work we have done over the past year using the results from RAND's multicomponent California

Preschool Study. Specifically, it will help us to develop, mentor and train individual champions for universal preschool around the state who can help lead the efforts in their communities. These union members will then deliver presentations to union audiences, seeking the commitment of people to participate as leaders in their locals and also willing to do follow-up preschool advocacy activities.

In all our efforts across the state, CFT will be making the case that effective early care and education programs not only help working families today, but also pay long-term dividends by helping California meet its future economic and workforce development needs.

We plan to work intensively with the United Child Care Educators of San Francisco (Local 6361), United Educators of San Francisco (Local 61), Jefferson Federation of Teachers (Local 3267),

and the ABC Federation of Teachers (Local 2317).

CFT Vice President and President of the ABC Federation of Teachers, Laura Rico, recently hosted a successful planning meeting at her local's main office. Attended by Sandra Weese, Director of the Early Childhood Education Organizing Project (ECEOP); AFT's Deputy Director for Organizing, Jessica Smith; AFT National Representative, Ramiro Hernandez; Marcy Young, Executive Director of AFT's Center for the Child Care Workforce; and others, the meeting outlined the exciting work for the coming months.

Among other things, this year's grant will help us make the case that the extent of preschool education's positive impact depends on both quality resources for students and the professional development of teachers, paraprofessionals and staff in early education centers.

"Our goal is to improve the

California Federation
of Teachers
AFT, AFL-CIO
A Union of Professionals



President
Martin Hittelman

Secretary Treasurer
Dennis Smith

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quality of early education programs and expand preschool availability, bringing us closer to ensuring that all of California's children have access to high-quality preschool that prepares them for success in school and in life," noted Elaine Merriweather. This is the fourth consecutive year CFT has received Packard Foundation support to further these goals.