

Subject Line: The Power of Educators Committed to Education

Dear Clovis Colleagues:

We've now been back with our students for a couple of weeks and are facing some of the most challenging conditions since the start of the pandemic, over two years ago. Now more than ever we must work together, speak up, and support our students and each other. In that spirit, we want to share some timely information and updates.

**Masking, Isolation and Quarantine Regulations** – Trying to navigate through all the state regulations and competing claims can be confusing and daunting! While it won't answer every individual question, [please check out this state regulation “cheat sheet”](#)

### **Building a Strong Union for Educators – it Takes More than Hiring a Law Firm - by Laura Riley ACE Leader, Buchanan High School**

As a Buchanan High School teacher and a former labor law attorney who served as an attorney advisor to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in Washington, DC, I know that building an effective union is more than simply hiring a law firm. I wish to address whether ACE, which has CTA support, or other groups that would only have the support of a law firm, would be better positioned to build a strong educators' union that can empower educators to negotiate and enforce a meaningful Collective Bargaining Agreement with District Administration.

1. CTA empowers us as educators and then stands beside us with support. We are our own best advocates, know our work the best, and can accomplish the best for ourselves and each other when we make the decisions and do our own talking. CTA supports educators to effectively negotiate a strong Collective Bargaining Agreement as well as how to represent ourselves to make sure the contract is being followed.
2. Yes, CTA support includes experienced labor attorneys well versed in education labor issues, but they also include experts in issues such as school finance, health insurance, school safety, special education, and disability accommodations. CTA has expertise on a host of educational issues, which a law firm lacks. By the way, CTA has in-house attorneys to help us enforce labor law, ed code, and a union contract, but we will also have access to very experienced local labor attorneys when we need individual representation.

3. Since many CTA advisors are former or current teachers, they have a deep understanding of the education issues important to educators. These advisors have experience in bringing educators together, building coalitions, empowering educators' voices, and advocating for those issues educators and students deem vital. Attorneys, on the other hand, have no experience in the K-12 classroom and lack a deep understanding of important issues to educators (e.g., as a labor law attorney, I had no idea regarding the problems associated with shepherding a textbook through the approval process of a School Board until I became a teacher).
  
4. CTA is a state-wide network of more than 1,000 local unions in districts around the state that we are already connected with through ACE and who have already had the experience of successfully negotiating strong Collective Bargaining Agreements. A law firm does not have the same breadth or depth of such resources or experience.

I can faithfully attest from my own experience that Clovis educators are driving all of ACE's decisions and choices (we vote on every issue/decision), and CTA offers superior support, resources and expertise that a law firm simply cannot. As a teacher and a former labor attorney, I'm proud ACE has CTA support to establish a strong educators' union.

Together we can work as a true team to create positive change for our students and colleagues! ACE cares about all CUSD members and we're always open to honest discussion about our experiences over the past year. Please reach out to your local ACE leaders so you can make the best decision for you, your students and your colleagues (and you can always [contact us here too](#)). And keep an eye on our social media ([Facebook](#), [Insta](#), [Twitter](#) and [Tik Tok](#)) and like/comment/share!

You especially don't want to miss our [newest episode](#) of the ACEPod, featuring former Faculty Senator Jaime Arredondo!



Laura Riley ACE Leader, Buchanan High School

Sent by Teresa on behalf of ACE Organizing Committee