

PVFA ANNOUNCER

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Ms. Fay and class (Halloween 2011)



Cornerstone Happenings

Cornerstone Studies Mexico by River Fay

Hola! Each year our school picks a country to study. We learn about its geography, traditions and foods through assemblies and other special events organized by our parents. This year we are studying Mexico.

For Halloween this school year, some of our teachers even dressed up in traditional Mexican costumes! (See Ms. Fay in traditional clothing in picture above.) On November 1st, our students learned about Dia De Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) and sampled Pan de Muertos, a traditional food of the holiday. We had an assembly with the Ballet Folklorico de Mexico, which was great fun. We look forward to learning more about Mexico at *Cornerstone* this year. Adios!

*In February:
Three lost instructional days
with our students.*

From the President

Happy New Year! I hope that you all had time to enjoy family, friends and the foods of the holidays. I certainly did my best to enjoy all three!

As we look ahead at the remainder of the school year, we need to focus on a few issues. The number one most important PVFA issue is getting days back on the calendar for THIS school year. Thus, please refer to the February week off as "pay cut" week rather than a "ski week" vacation. The community needs to see that for PVFA, the three days off that week are actually *three lost instructional days with our students*. We teachers still feel a strong need to put them back on the calendar.

Next, the grading policy that was changed by the board this past summer is a very serious issue to be addressed. In brief, without any input from teachers the school board made June 30th the last day grades may be changed. Regardless of your thoughts on the specifics, this should be of concern to all members. Not only because of the change, but also the way the policy was put in place without input from the community.

Lastly, we are still working on negotiating a contract for this year and next. This includes a calendar with 180 days of instruction for our much deserving students. As you can see, the leadership of PVFA is very busy. As always, I am asking for your support. Plan to attend board meetings, organize a site meeting at your school, and most of all stay informed!
Sincerely, Kathy



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CALIFORNIA
EDUCATION
CODE

Last update: 2011-07-18

"Grade Change Policy"

--Jason Y Calizar

On Wednesday, October 26th a group of PVFA members, including President Kathy Santarosa, met with Superintendent Walker Williams and other District officials at *Ridgecrest Intermediate School* to discuss the current Board Policy that prohibits grade changes after June 30th of every school year. Our main issue with the policy is that it is in clear violation of **Ed. Code 49066** that gives the classroom teacher ownership of the grade s/he has determined for the student, which implies that we may also change a grade at anytime we deem necessary. The issue of classroom autonomy is under direct attack by the current Board Policy.

Our second issue with the policy comes in the manner in which it was developed. At the town hall meeting, Superintendent Williams acknowledged the fact that the policy was hastily written without any supporting data/information AND without any input from stakeholders (namely teachers). In addition, the Board acted on the matter during two "special" Board meetings both on a Monday morning in the middle of the summer (June 27th and July 11th) with only **three** of five Board members present and no discussion. The entire process lacked the basic transparency one would expect of elected officials.

Grade Change continued next column

Button On—Be at the Jan. 26th

PVPUSD Board Meeting- See Pg. 6

Grade Change continued.

The outcome of the October 26th meeting was positive in that we now have a timeline and a means in which to rescind the poorly crafted policy. However, we continue to demand that the policy be rescinded immediately as it is a detriment to our students.

CA Ed Code 49066

(a) When grades are given for any course of instruction taught in a school district, the grade given to each pupil **shall be the grade determined by the teacher** of the course and the determination of the pupil's grade by the teacher, in the absence of clerical or mechanical mistake, fraud, bad faith, or incompetency, **shall be final.**

(b) The governing board of the school district and the superintendent of such district shall not order a pupil's grade to be changed unless the teacher who determined such grade is, to the extent practicable, given an opportunity to state orally, in writing, or both, the reasons for which such grade was given and is, to the extent practicable, **included in all discussions relating to the changing of such grade.**

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Thinking about Money \$\$\$\$

A New Year: A Great Time to Consider Finances

As you begin the New Year looking at your finances, remember CTA has developed a website to provide valuable information and resources to help you with your financial and personal future: <http://www.CTAinvest.org> has numerous articles, videos, etc. to help with shopping for insurance, preparing your will, buying or refinancing your home, planning for your retirement, etc. The website is full of valuable and helpful information designed to help you become an educated consumer. What you won't find is advertisements.

You like many educators may be concerned about providing for your comfortable retirement. Your defined benefit pension plan through CalSTRS is an excellent starting point, and CTA works on your behalf to protect and enhance your pension benefits.

Still, your CalSTRS pension may not provide enough retirement income to support the lifestyle you envision. Fortunately, you have another key advantage in your favor: the option to participate in a 403(b) or 457 defined contribution plan. By choosing to contribute to a 403(b) or 457 plan through your district, you have an opportunity to supplement your defined benefit pension. **Money Continued Page 5**

Meet Meade: Teacher Passes along Love for the Clay

James Meade, ceramics teacher at *Peninsula High*, grew up in Rancho Palos Verdes, the ninth child of twelve. He and six of his siblings all graduated from *Rolling Hills High School*, the three oldest from *P.V. High*, one brother attended special education schools in Torrance and the youngest graduated from *Peninsula High*. James was a student of David Bradbury, who retired after more than thirty years of teaching ceramics at the high school. Meade insists that David Bradbury's ceramics is what kept him attending school, and without it, he might not have finished high school. Meade graduated from U.C. Berkeley in 1994, and comes to the teaching profession replacing Bradbury, after working for years doing project management and facilities maintenance for the *University Student Cooperative Association* in Berkeley. Meade's own ceramic work centers on altering various pottery forms and finishing them in alternative firing processes. James Meade tries to maintain an effective balance between whole group and individualized instruction in the classroom, and feels it important to model the creative process and work ethic for his students by working along side them. Meade feels that there should be times when at first glance, walking into his classroom, one should not be able to tell the difference between the student and the teacher, but rather only view many people working with clay. James Meade recognizes that working with clay, not only allows a happy outlet for his creativity, but is a great method of releasing tension, and he passes along that wisdom and his love for the clay to his students. ++++++



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Money cont. from Pg. 4

CTA has developed the guide, *Closing the Gap Supplement Your Pension Benefits* with a 403(b) or 457 Plan to explain how 403(b) and 457 plans work, what they can do for you, and how you can best take advantage of them. The guide, *Selecting a 403(b)/457 Advisor & Understanding Plan Fees*, will help you identify strategies for making good choices for your plan, including choosing a financial advisor who puts your interests first. You can view these publications and order your free copies on our website, <http://www.cta.org>, Member Services/ CTA Member Benefits, Publications Order Form. A supply can also be ordered for other members in your chapter at no charge or order these publications at www.ctainvest.org.

Money cont. on Pg. 6



Are you interested in furthering your education? **Would you like to receive money to assist your son or daughter in college?** If so, please check out the scholarships offered through CTA! Please check with your site rep about an application or visit www.cta.org/About-CTA/CTA-Foundation/Scholarships for further information. Please respond soon....applications must be **postmarked by February 3rd**!

Be at the PVPUSD Board Meeting

January 26, 2012 with your button on.

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Money cont. from Pg. 5

The California Educators Investment and Retirement Guide website can be found at <http://www.ctainvest.org>. In addition to the valuable guides, extensive financial and investment information is provided for members without a log in -- you'll find:



On-line and easy-to-use calculators & Educational videos

Articles that cover the gamut of basics of investing, retirement planning, and 403(b) and 457 plans

CalSTRS and CalPERS information

Personalized Checklist - a list of financial planning duties to help you keep track of what you need to do to stay on course

Ask The Advisor – view answers to general questions about financial issues and post your own questions.

So start the New Year out right, with a little financial planning.

180 Button—Get It—Wear It—Share It

Q: What does the “180” mean?

- Simply put: Teachers believe that our students deserve to be at school in the classroom for a minimum of 180 days a year.

Q: Where will the money come from to fund these days of school?

- The budget the district proposed was based on cuts that did not happen; thus, the district currently has funds to restore the days without reserves.

Q: What about the looming state funding budget cuts? Don't we need to save for a rainy day?

- The reality is that the rain will never cease. Dealing with this “rainy day” scenario is the new “normal”. We need to spend the money we *currently* have – the money that our *current* parents & the community generously raised – on the kids who are *currently* in school NOW.
- Bottom Line: the district has 11% reserves in unrestricted funds that can be used for adding on additional instructional days THIS YEAR.



Stick on –

180 Button

&

Stick Together!

Wear your
button &
“Stick” with
fellow teachers
@ Board Meet-
ing, Jan. 26th.