



Early Educator

CALIFORNIA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

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CFT and AFT participate prominently in the Water Cooler Conference

A broad coalition representing business, politics, labor, academia, high-tech and philanthropy convened in Sacramento on March 24 and 25 to brainstorm ideas on improving early care and education (ECE) for children from birth to five years of age.

The “Water Cooler Conference” was intended to bring the needs of California’s youngest children into the larger education conversation—focusing on common ground in pursuing strategies and policies to help our youngest children.

Sponsors of the two-day conference at the Sheraton Grand included the Advancement Project, the California Community Foundation, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, First 5 California, Preschool Cali-



Marty Hittelman, Betty Robinson-Harris, Melissa Peterson, Elaine Merriweather and Isabel Delgado enjoy the Water Cooler reception in Sacramento.

fornia and other groups including the California Federation of Teachers (CFT).

The conference included a series of speakers, panel discussions and workgroups focusing on how other states - and nations - are advancing early education. Marty Hittelman, president of the CFT, and Marci Young, deputy director in the Educational Issues Department of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and executive director of the Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW) both participated as panelists. In her comments, Young specifically addressed the workforce need issue with her three S’s approach:

Settings—A diverse delivery system exists in ECE and programs, teachers and staff in each setting should be valued for their important contribution to children and families.

Standards—Regardless of setting, there should be high standards including curriculum, child:adult ratios and qualified staff.



Marci Young, far left, participates in a panel on collaboration between early care and education and K-12.

Support—The workforce must have adequate supports to provide optimum early experiences for ALL children. Supports should include adequate education, training, compensation and professional development opportunities.

Also attending the conference were five CFT ECE committee members, Gary Ravani (the newly elected president of the CFT EC/K-12 Council) and several staff from the CFT Early Childhood Education Organizing Project.



Betty Robinson-Harris, Tracey Matheny-Thomas, and Elaine Merriweather with Karen Bass, Speaker of the Assembly.

State Assembly Member Paul Fong visits Community Preschool

Since winning their union election with a unanimous vote, Community Preschool (CP) staff have been involving parents, church members and local politicians in their contract campaign. Many groups support the program—some work there; some send their kids there; some want to make the church’s mission suc-

parent, Jenelle Cox, made heartfelt statements to encourage the church’s bargaining team to re-think spending thousands of preschool dollars on a lawyer and to bargain in good faith. At their second session, February 24, John Kessler, from State Assemblymember Paul Fong’s office, observed negotiations. Mr. Kessler was



CP union members, parents and church members getting ready for negotiations on February 4.



The Community Preschool negotiating team, Linda Medwin, Karen Golosman and Lucille Story updating Assemblymember Paul Fong and his District Coordinator, Jonathan Kessler, when they visited the preschool on Feb. 20.

As part of this effort, Sunnyvale’s own State Assemblymember, Paul Fong, toured Community Preschool on Friday, February 20. He was impressed by the spacious play areas, how long most teachers have been at Community Preschool and quickly recognized what an asset CP is in Sunnyvale. Assemblymember Fong was

also a fellow CFT union member and bargaining team member at Evergreen Community College. He was troubled to hear that the church chose the known anti-union legal corporation, Littler Mendelson, to represent them and Fong committed to support the union’s campaign for a fair contract.

cessful; and some see it as an asset to the community they live in. All want to make sure CP stays the best place for early care and education in Sunnyvale, as it has for decades.

They began their first bargaining session, February 4, with a successful unity action. CP Staff, church members and a CP parent came to negotiations and spoke in support of the union bargaining team and their proposals. Teacher Judy Hobart and

disturbed at the church’s desire to close negotiations and limit communication between the union’s bargaining team and co-workers, parents, church members and community at large. He made a statement at the end of that negotiations session informing the church’s team that this is and has been a community campaign. Staff, parents, church members, politicians and the media are all watching these negotiations.

Local 6361 members participate in Unite to Fight for America’s Future



United Child Care Educators, AFT Local 6361, members wore blue on Tuesday, February 10, as part of AFT’s national effort to support President Obama’s economic stimulus package.

ABC Local ECE activist begins outreach

Special report from Arlene Riddick, AFT Local 2317

Since beginning my work with the CFT Early Childhood Education Organizing Project (ECEOP), I have had many opportunities to meet early childhood educators in my area – some already in the workforce and some getting ready to join the workforce. I am an ECE teacher and member of

let folks know how they can become more active.

Melissa Peterson, another ABC ECE member and CFT ECE committee member, and I participated in the Parent Leadership Academy in March. This conference highlights programs in the school district and we had a table to distribute our information to



Arlene Riddick shares information about the CFT Early Childhood Education Organizing Project and the RAND Preschool Studies with the staff at the Tracy Infant Center. This program is at Tracy High School in Cerritos and is open to students who are expecting a child and/or are already parenting.

ABC, AFT Local 2317, in Hawaiian Gardens where I have been doing outreach to the local schools in the district, specifically to child development centers, infant toddler programs, and early intervention classes. I visit the centers and make presentations to the teachers and staff about the Rand Preschool Studies, share information about the CFT ECEOP and

parents, teachers and local community leaders.

The teachers are eager to hear about the documented benefits of early childhood education and we have many other activities planned in the next few months, including presenting the Rand Preschool Studies at various community college child development classes.

CFT supports ECE workforce development

On Saturday, March 14, 2009 Elaine Francisco, California Federation of Teachers (CFT) Early Childhood Education Committee member, facilitated an early care and education (ECE) professional growth workshop *Getting to Know a Child with Autism*.

Francisco is an ECE special education teacher in the Jefferson Elementary School District and also an ECE professor at Skyline Community College in San Mateo.

The free workshop was held at Skyline Community College and specifically focused on addressing the needs of children in the autism spectrum. Participants in the workshop learned about the referral process of preschool children with suspected special needs and also were provided

valuable resources on intervention programs and early childhood classroom management. Over 110 ECE students and center staff turned out for the workshop.

The CFT Early Childhood Education Organizing Project (ECEOP) helped support the workshop by providing breakfast and lunch, making and copying materials, and ECEOP staff helped manage the workshop the day of the event. They also provided folders to participants with information about the CFT/AFT and its long standing commitment to getting ECE staff recognized as professionals in the field of teaching. Francisco also encouraged those working in centers without union representation to contact the ECEOP for more information.



*Elaine Francisco presents *Getting to Know a Child with Autism* to a packed room of focused participants.*

CFT ECE members figure prominently at Convention

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) Committee members had a high profile at this year's California Federation of Teachers (CFT) Convention. They hosted a workshop *Invest in California's Preschoolers* which focused on the Transitioning to Kindergarten toolkit and the RAND Preschool Studies; they proposed and passed a resolution to support quality preschool and invest in ECE workers; they held a very well attended ECE breakfast;

several ECE members were honored at the EC/K-12



Linda Medwin and Karen Golosman, our newly organized members from Community Preschool, join Melissa Peterson and Rosa Maria Garcia, ECE Committee members, for the workshop Invest in California's Preschoolers.

awards breakfast (Melissa Peterson, Laretta Sampson and Jennifer Turley); and they were successful in getting the support of the delegates at the convention to vote to oppose Proposition 1D, the ballot measure that would divert First 5 funds to help close the budget gap and would significantly damage ECE in California.

The CFT and other Water Cooler participants take the case for investing in Early Care and Education to Washington D.C.

As part of its ongoing legislative and advocacy efforts, the statewide coalition of early care and education (ECE) organizations—known as the Water Cooler—met with members of Congress in Washington, D.C., at the end of February. The meetings were mostly with the California Congressional delegation, but a couple of meetings were with Congress members from other states who are championing ECE issues in their legislation.

The California Federation of Teachers (CFT) joined the Advancement Project, Preschool California, Children Now, First 5 California and others to ensure

that our elected officials understand that California constituents are deeply supportive of ECE and that research demonstrates that



Sandra Weese, CFT; Giannina Perez, Children Now; Kris Perry, First 5 California; Jenny Paul-Rappaport, Advancement Project; and Ernesto Saldana, Preschool California, in front of the nation's Capitol, proudly displaying their open hands as a symbol of the importance of "First 5."

learning begins at birth.

The meetings were an invaluable opportunity to hear first hand about Congressional awareness of and interest in a range of ECE issues including: both access to services and quality, licensing standards, nutrition requirements, early learning grants, and how investing in Pre-K saves money. There was also particular interest in how ECE fared in our state budget.

The coalition provided each office with specific

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The *CFT Early Educator* is produced by union workers in the CFT Field Representatives Union and the Office and Professional Employees International Union.



data for their district on ECE services, offered themselves as a resource on ECE issues, and continued the dialogue at their California district offices during meetings in March.

If you would like more information on the Water Cooler please go to: www.advanceproj.org and click on the Water Cooler.