

David A. Sanchez June 2011 State Council. Final Address

This is it!

This is my last State Council address as your CTA President. I have to say, the past four years have been some of the most rewarding in my life.

It has been an honor to serve as your president, to lead with you, and to further the proud mission of the California Teachers Association.

And while it has been a thrilling four years, it's also been an extremely challenging four years, not just for me, not just for CTA, but for our members, for public education, and for California students.

Fortunately all of you have been up to those challenges.

TERM RETROSPECTIVE

I started my presidency with some important goals—to protect Proposition 98, to show that educator-led-reform improves student achievement, and to build organizational capacity.

As I developed those goals four years ago no one had any idea that we would soon be facing the worst economic downturn since the great depression.

But I didn't put an asterisk next to those goals when I wrote them, so I am proud to stand before you today saying that our schools and colleges are still funded through the minimum school funding guarantee, with a constitutional requirement that past monies must be repaid.

We protected funding for QEIA and demonstrated it's success.

And I believe the State of Emergency miracle we all pulled off between last council and this one proves our organizational capacity is strong and is only getting stronger.

The attacks on school funding have been relentless since I took office and I want to thank all of you for standing in solidarity against those attacks.

Yes, our schools and colleges have faced devastating cuts and thousands of our members have lost their jobs, but without you standing up to the enemies of public education, believe me it would have been much, much worse.

You've also stood up against attacks on our profession.

As our schools had their resources slashed, their class sizes swell, and their instructional year shortened, some people thought scapegoating teachers would take the public's mind off of what was really harming our schools.

We saw attacks on a fair layoff system, attacks on due process rights, merit pay proposals, and attacks on a secure retirement.

And we saw top-down education reform attempts that do nothing to help students or

schools.

Time and again, when we've faced attacks, we've come together and fought them off...and we've showed how reform can work when educators are involved.

First, we stopped a harmful ESEA reauthorization authored by Congressman George Miller, and then we proved with the initial success of QEIA why teacher-led reform that is built on the expertise of educators improves student learning.

In the last election, we showed the strength of CTA members and proved to the nation that California marches to the beat of a different drum.

We defeated the special interest money of so-called education reformers and sent Gloria Romero and her teacher-blaming views packing during primary election for Superintendent of Public Instruction.

We then elected a real educator to that position – Tom Torlakson.

We elected a governor who has already made a difference for public education by putting educators back on the State Board of Education, has made schools and colleges a priority and has already fought with us against the bad ideas coming from the U.S. Department of Education.

Governor Brown has also launched his own campaign against standardized testing and the use of high-stakes student data to drive all education decisions.

The forces that attacked us over the last four years would probably be chagrined to know they actually helped us build our organizational capacity.

Because nothing brings us together like a crisis.

Another way we built that capacity was by using new communication tools to engage our members.

Social media has become an important part of this organization— we've used Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, texting, and even dedicated websites for Pink Friday and State of Emergency, to rally the troops and to create a statewide network for members to talk to us and to each other.

Social media played a huge role in last month's State of Emergency actions.

There's an old song that claims "the revolution will not be televised"— well, these days, I can tell you, it's certainly is being tweeted.

Four years have gone by so fast.

It's hard to believe so much has actually happened and this organization has done so much.

One of the ways we fought to protect Proposition 98, school funding, and educator jobs was to keep those issues in the public eye.

As schools began to get hit with the reality of the economic downturn, one of the first things we organized was the Cuts Hurt Bus Tour.

Dean, Dan Vaughn, Carolyn and I rode that un-air conditioned school bus all over this state, and believe me, I have a renewed respect for what students and our drivers go through every day. That bus tour got a ton of press coverage and it had a role in mitigating some of the proposed budget cuts for that year.

Unfortunately pink slips became an annual ritual for our members—so the following year we organized Pink Friday—with statewide protests and rallies, we even used colored spotlights to turn the capitol building pink.

I don't think there was anyone in the state who wasn't aware that public education was taking devastating cuts and that thousands of educators were losing their jobs.

Fighting for our members and for public education was the right thing to do.

It always is.

And, sometimes standing by our values and doing what's right isn't always what's popular.

CTA took some heat for its stance on Proposition 8.

I know I got a "just a few" angry phone calls, letters and emails.

But let me say unequivocally, opposing discrimination in any form **is the right thing to do.**

I would do it again, and I know you would too.

State of Emergency

Just two months ago this council took another strong stand.

You charted a course of action that became the State of Emergency campaign.

Never have I been so proud of the speed and skill CTA showed in organizing and mobilizing so quickly and effectively.

You developed the plan and **you** and our staff made it happen.

I have to say thank you to CTA staff for all of their hard work.

The takeover of the capitol was amazing.

We were there every day in lawmakers faces and on their own turf—the people's turf, I might add.

Nearly 500 CTA member volunteers went to Sacramento and I was honored to be part of that group.

We held press conferences, teach-ins and grade-ins.

We met with legislators and testified before the Senate Education Committee where we killed three destructive bills, including a bill that would have gutted seniority rights.

We leafletted in the streets, we placed 400 empty chairs at the capitol steps, each one representing 100 educators laid off in the past three years, and we rallied in the rotunda.

As you probably heard, some of us engaged in a little civil disobedience.

Some of us on Monday, and some of us on Thursday.

I was part of the Thursday group.

After the Republicans released a smoke and mirrors budget claiming to protect public education funding but instead actually gutted programs like QEIA, we went to see Senate Republican leader Bob Dutton and Assembly Republican leader Connie Conway.

We went to tell them that their plan was no good and we weren't going to stand for it.

In fact, we stood firmly against it.

When the time came for the Capitol to close, 28 of us refused to leave.

It was a tense and emotional moment for all of us—we really weren't completely sure what would happen but we knew the time had come to take even bolder action.

So we stood our ground and each of us was arrested in peaceful protest.

We spent the night in jail.

Maybe I've seen *The Shawshank Redemption* too many times because around 3:00 a.m. I started estimating how long it would take to dig through that cell wall with a spoon.

But seriously, the action these members took on behalf of students and educators was brave and I thank all of them.

Sacramento was obviously a hotbed of activity, but that wasn't the only place.

All across the state there were local protests,
grade-ins,
and teach-ins,
there were community and parent outreach events
and of course the five simultaneous rallies Friday afternoon in
San Diego,
San Bernardino,
San Francisco, Sacramento, and
Los Angeles.

More than 25,000 people attended those rallies across the state.

Facebook, Twitter and the State of Emergency webpage were also constantly changing through the week thanks to you all posting about your local activities.

It was like I had a front row seat to the State of Emergency.

What an amazing job you did—we did.

CTA and educators dominated the news. More than 1200 articles ran in California newspapers, we were on TV every day.

We even made the national news that included NPR, MSNBC, CNN, and the CBS evening news with Katie Couric.

State Budget

Since the week of action we've seen increased support for protecting education funding and passing the tax extensions.

We still need four Republican lawmakers—
two in the senate
and two in the assembly-- to do the right thing and save our schools and communities from even deeper cuts.

While the Governor's
May revision does propose \$3 billion more toward education than he proposed in January, that money really only offsets a planned deferral.

And without those tax extensions we are still looking at another devastating \$5 billion in cuts.

That's nearly
\$850 per student.

Obviously that means more layoffs, more class size increases, and less instruction days.

That is why we can't stop urging our lawmakers—
especially our targeted Republican lawmakers—
to pass temporary tax extensions.

STILL WORK TO BE DONE: post cards.....

In the good news category for the state budget, the governor has built a plan that starts repaying the money owed to public education.

It just feels good to say:

We have a governor who recognizes the money owed to schools and is committed to paying it.

I'm not sure

Meg Whitman would have recognized it.

Schwarzenegger sure didn't.

This again is a testament to our influence and power when advocating for our students.

Conclusion

Let me say from the bottom of my heart it has been a privilege and an honor to serve you.

It's easier to lead when you know the people behind you have your back, and I could not have done it without your commitment and support.

I have made so many wonderful friends through my work with CTA and I treasure you all.

I'd like to say thank you to some people who've supported me and made the past four years possible:

THANK YOU:

Joe Nunez....

the one who helped me start this incredible journey.

All the support from my past officers

(Wayne and BK)

past board members

(Paul and Renee..Lloyd Porter...Dan Vaughn)

Current board members...

Gail....

Dean....

Carolyn...and the most incredible staff!

My family....

(Mom, brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces....good friends..Jess Durfee)

Last but not least....

have to thank Keith...

9 years later!

I am also extremely optimistic about the future of this organization.

I have worked with Dean, Eric, and Mikki much longer than the past four years and I know CTA is in excellent hands.

As you all know Cesar Chavez was and remains a personal hero of mine. He once said something that gets to the heart of why all of us are in this room today.

Cesar said, "Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore. We have seen the future, and the future is ours."

He was right.

The future IS yours.

Go out there and continue the work of making it great.

Thank you all.