



# Berkeley Federation of Teachers

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Dear BFT Member,

I want to welcome you to the 2014-2015 school year. I hope you had an energizing and restorative summer.

We head into this year very strong as a union. This past spring our members overwhelmingly ratified a contract that gave our members 6% in raises and 5.5% in bonuses from 2012 to 2015. We are confident this is one of the most competitive contracts in our county. This victory is due in large part to the high level of union and political and social justice activism on the part of our members.

In addition, last year we conducted dozens of community conversations regarding progressive education reform and a cohesive vision of achieving educational equity in Berkeley through our Quality Education Agenda initiative. We sponsored community events with Diane Ravitch and the movie "Inequality for All", and participated in community walks against gun violence. We organized a strong teacher voice in critical decisions about math CCSS implementation and in the district's three-year Local Control and Accountability Plan.

We have incredible opportunities this year to continue to be a strong professional voice for schools and students.

**This fall our top priority must be to re-elect Tom Torlakson as State Superintendent of Public Instruction.** Torlakson took on Arne Duncan to fight for a common sense approach to Common Core and statewide assessment implementation, and won! He believes that teachers are valued professionals, and supports increased funding for schools and due process for teachers. His opponent, Marshall Tuck, supports stripping teachers of seniority and due process rights, and is backed by millionaires and billionaires, including Eli Broad, who want to privatize public education.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the future of common sense education reform in California depends on the outcome of the Torlakson/Tuck race in November.

**In addition, we have an opportunity as teachers, and union and community members to help pass the first successful sugar-sweetened beverage tax in our country.** This is a chance to stand up to Big Soda and to raise revenue that can be used for children's health programs in Berkeley. As teachers it's important that we play

a big role in passing this measure! We know the critical role that health plays in student achievement.

With regard to the 2014 School Board election, BFT has endorsed Ty Alper, Josh Daniels, Karen Hemphill and Julie Sinai for Berkeley School Board in the November 2014 election. Berkeley voters have a wealth of qualified candidates to choose from.

Please look for a form coming soon with ways you can help to make history in this fall's election. Please plan to volunteer one hour of your time this fall.

Throughout the year we will need our members to continue to voice their ideas and opinions on Common Core implementation, and we will have a robust discussion about the new statewide assessments (SBAC). In March we will begin negotiations for a successor agreement and we will need our members' activism and involvement to achieve the best possible outcome at the bargaining table. We will need member input and engagement to continue a strong teacher voice in the use of new dollars coming in to our district to serve our target student populations (\$2.4 million in 14-15 and rising to an estimated \$3.5 million in 2015-2016).

Our successes this year, as in all years, will come from having an informed and active membership. Please be sure to read the monthly *BFT Action* and the periodic *Negotiations Updates*, and to turn to your Site Rep(s) for help with any questions or concerns. **An informed membership is a powerful membership.** With your activism and support we can continue to advocate for the teaching and learning conditions that will empower us to provide the best possible education to our students.

Wishing you an excellent 2014-2015 school year!

In Unity,

Cathy Campbell  
President, BFT

**P.S. I encourage you to read the enclosed flier for more information about the great things the Berkeley Public Schools Fund provides to our community, including the new Friends and Family crowdfunding grant site specifically for Berkeley teachers.**

**Please also take a look at the flier about the Berkeley Healthy Children's Initiative on the November ballot, and read about some of our key accomplishments of 2013-2014.**