



As the CAVA Union Organizing Committee, we want to wish you a wonderful holiday vacation and a great start to 2015! Though this has been a difficult year for many of us at CAVA, we head towards 2015 knowing we are working hard to not only educate our students, but also make our school a better place to learn and teach. As we enter into a new season and approach a new year, we would like to offer some words of inspiration. Words that embrace hope, and embody the goals we have for our school and ourselves.

"Let our New Year's resolution be this: we will be there for one another as fellow members of humanity, in the finest sense of the word."

-Goran Persson

"I hope that in this year to come, you make mistakes. Because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world. You're doing things you've never done before, and more importantly, you're doing something."

-Neil Gaiman

and finally...

"Cheers to a new year and another chance for us to get it right."

-Oprah Winfrey

A Big Step Forward for Educators and Students in Charter Schools in 2014

There are over 150 union charter schools throughout California. In all of these schools, charter educators just like us are working with parents, students and in many cases, administration, to make improvements for students and staff and make sure front line educators have a voice in decisions that impact their schools.

There are many different types of union charter schools throughout the state. They include small charters like Harriet Tubman Village Academy in San Diego, where teachers organized the union in 2010 and negotiated a terrific contract that includes just cause protections that enable teachers to advocate for students without fear of reprisal. Union teachers also work at large charter school chains, like Green Dot in Los Angeles, where educators from all 21 Green Dot Schools are part of a union affiliated with CTA.

Since 2013 alone, educators at Nea and Alameda Community Learning Center Schools in Alameda, Apple Academy Charter Public Schools in Los Angeles, Port of Los Angeles High School in San Pedro, Student Empowerment Academy in Los Angeles, Ivy Academia Schools in the San Fernando Valley, the Academy of Personalized Learning in Redding, and Ballington Academy of Arts and Sciences in El Centro have organized associations affiliated with CTA. Educators at each of these schools, just like our colleagues at CAVA, have decided to stand up for students and public education.

In 2015 we expect more charter school educators to join our family and work with us to improve conditions in their schools. We look forward to the next steps at CAVA and to following in the footsteps of many of these other union charter educators. Though we realize administration at CAVA does not like the fact that we have unionized, like administrators at many of these other union schools, they too will learn that it is better to work collaboratively with teachers as equals.

Changes to Our Employee Handbook

You should have received a copy of the new CAVA Employee Handbook on Tuesday, 12/16/2014.

As you may have noticed, there were some revisions made in the CAVA Employee Handbook from the April 2013 version to the December 2014 version. Most were minor changes, but there were a couple of major updates that you should be aware of. We have done our best to identify those changes. You can view the major changes we found on this Google Doc.

Looking at the table of contents, there were 4 sections added: Background Check, Certificated Staff, Residence, and Anti-Nepotism.

The major change from the April 2013 version to the December 2014 version deals with Paid Time Off (PTO) for certificated employees (teaching positions).

On page 8 of the Google Doc, you can see the side by side comparison. The Annual Hours of PTO accrued goes from 80 to 75, and the Maximum accrual Cap goes from 160 to 150. The Accrual Amount Per Pay Period also drops from .48 days per pay period to .455 days per pay period.

On page 9 of the Google Doc, there are also changes for the PTO for classified employees (non-teachers). There is an increase for these positions in the Annual Hours of PTO accrued from 80 hours to 120 hours, Annual Days of PTO accrued from 10 days to 15 days, and the Accrual Amount Per Pay Period increases from .417 days per pay period to .63 days per pay period.

As you know, the original "deadline" to sign and return this was Friday, 12/19/2014. After a few of our colleagues requested that we be given more time to review this document before we submitted our signatures, we were granted an extension until 1/9/2015.

A few teachers also asked for an itemized list of changes from the April 2013 handbook to the December 2014 handbook. Human Resources replied with "Pages 5, 10-11." After multiple requests to Human Resources, we still have not received an update.

As an organizing committee, we remain vigilant about changes to working conditions during our unionization process. We are reviewing our options, as we do not believe changes that negatively impact our colleagues should be unilaterally implemented by administration. Please let us know if you have any questions about the handbook, or are concerned about any other recent policy changes at CAVA.

A Few Helpful Apps

Many of our co-workers have found "Hours Keeper" to be a helpful app that works really well to keep track of your work hours. One of the challenges teaching at CAVA is that work tends to take over our lives, as work and home take place at the same location. Some of our colleagues who tried using this app seemed to be more productive, focused and calm during their workday. They were also able to spend more time with their family, something this job promotes when recruiting new teachers to join CAVA. Let us know if you find it helpful!

Another helpful free app is called "Track My Mileage." You can use it to track your mileage to the in-person meetings, trips to purchase office supplies, CAVA outings, etc. You can even print a report and send it to yourself if you need it for preparing your taxes.

Happy Holidays!

It's December – and during the season of giving, may your holidays be all wrapped up with cheer and filled with celebration for the New Year. Here's to peace, prosperity, good health and happiness to you and yours!

Contact Us

Please check our website www.cavirtualeducators.org for all the latest union news and feel free to contact any of the members of the CAVA Organizing Committee with any questions or concerns. We are here for you!