



Virtual Educator –

We hope graduation season is going well for everyone. It is exciting to see our students take this important next step in their lives. As the school year concludes and we get ready for summer, we also want to take time to make sure everyone is up to date about our efforts to improve CAVA. In this week's newsletter, you will find updates about our unionization process, information about employment contracts, and the first in a series of profiles of CAVA teachers!

Remember to keep checking our website for timely and important updates!

Union Updates

According to California law, when teachers request union recognition, their school administration is supposed to post a specific notice in a public place that acknowledges the teachers' request. As of May 27, CAVA administration posted the appropriate document. Though the notice itself is not the most interesting reading material, we are pleased our school is following the law. If you are interested in checking it out for yourself, log into Edmodo, look in the staff lounge folders, go to the one titled "Human Resources: Docs", and it should be the one at the top. It is required to be posted until 6/16/14, so if you look for it after that you may need to ask a committee member for a copy.

Next steps in the process include the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) verifying our majority support for unionization, and an input process in which everyone will have an opportunity to identify the improvements that are most important for our school!

Our Employment Contracts

Some of our colleagues have asked whether we should still sign our employment contracts now that we are unionizing. The answer is yes, we should. Now that we have decided to unionize, we are preparing to begin the process of negotiating a union contract. However, that process will not start immediately. In the meantime, CAVA administration is obligated to proceed as per their normal procedures. That includes offering us yearly employment contracts. Once we have negotiated and then ratified our union contract, it will supersede our year-to-year contracts. If you have any questions about this part of the process, please feel free to contact an organizing committee member or email us at: cava.organizing.committee@gmail.com.

Voices from the Classroom

We're excited to regularly profile CAVA educators and hear about their visions for CAVA, their reasons for supporting the union, and other interesting news from the front lines of virtual education. Here's our first of many:

*Cara Bryant, Engagement Support Teacher/Science Teacher,
CAVA Union Organizing Committee Member*

"I have worked for CAVA for 8 years—since my oldest son was 9 months old. This job was a blessing to my family since it meant I could be home with my baby, rather than leave him all day in order to return to the classroom. At the same time it allowed me to continue in my career, which was something I valued as a professional but was also necessary in order to meet our financial needs.

For several years I recommended CAVA to homeschooling friends and colleagues with young children. I was able to make connections with my students, and I was able to get to know them. I could have picked all of my students out of a

class list without missing a single one. I loved my job and I felt great about what I was doing. It didn't bother me that I was paid less than I had been in the classroom because I felt the tradeoffs were worth it. Then things began to change.

As I have spoken to people about this I have often used the frog in the pot of boiling water analogy. The changes happened gradually at first, but each year the workload increased while the salary remained the same.

When I started with CAVA I could work a full day and feel accomplished and caught up. Never done, of course, because a teacher's job is never really done, but there was a sense that I was making progress and I felt satisfied.

Suddenly I was finding myself working into the evening, working weekends, and still feeling like I was barely keeping my head above water. Students would call and I would not know which section (or even which course) they were in unless they told me.

There were too many of them, and too many separate tasks, to focus on the personal connections anymore.

It became harder to recommend CAVA to colleagues and homeschoolers. I spoke to a lot of other teachers who were struggling too. I started to wonder if the benefits still outweighed the costs. Then one day this past fall, my 4 year-old overheard me talking to another parent. The parent had asked me what I do for work. I told her I was a teacher. My 4 year-old laughed and said, 'Mom, you don't teach. DAD teaches!'

Of course he was right. He saw what I did all day, and it didn't involve very much quality interaction with students. I realized that the day had come when the benefits no longer outweighed the costs. I was working long days, every day, and still feeling like I needed evenings or weekends more often than not. I was ignoring or shushing my children all day.



I thought about how I would feel about this part of my life in 5 or 10 years and I had a sense of dread that I would regret this job and my inability to be 'present' with my family. Not to mention how it has impacted how I feel about myself as a teacher—I can no longer support my students in a way that makes me feel effective. I struggle to find a sense of balance, and since my work is at home I feel an obligation to always be doing 'something.'

I have eight years of my career invested in CAVA, and I work with wonderful colleagues and families for whom this program can be truly beneficial if we return to a student-focused program. I am an idealist by nature, so rather than give up I believe we can give our staff an opportunity to make changes that will benefit teachers and students alike. I

believe we can do that by organizing the union.

Since beginning this process I have felt a sense of community I have never experienced at CAVA before. We have all worked very hard over the past several months talking to fellow CAVA staff and listening to their ideas and frustrations. It has been difficult to take even more time away from my family, but I do so with an eye on the future and the knowledge that we can make a difference. I am thrilled that so many of my colleagues agree with me, and I am excited to work collaboratively with our administration to find common ground."

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