



It was almost a year ago that the seeds of an idea were planted. The idea was that CAVA teachers could, and should, band together to work towards the betterment of our school. A small group of teachers in Northern California started reaching out to colleagues to see how they were feeling about their jobs. They found that other teachers across the state, across subjects and grade levels were feeling the same way they were - overworked, underappreciated, and underpaid.

This led to a signature drive and our union was born. In July of 2014 the Public Employee Relation Board (PERB) verified that we did have the majority of support of CAVA teachers to form the union. This decision was then turned over to CAVA to either recognize us, or fight the decision. Unfortunately, they chose the latter. CAVA and K12 have hired a notorious labor busting law firm to try and squash our efforts through legal delays, but we are determined to not let that happen. Our teachers and our students deserve better and we will persevere until we are given a voice in our school.

The legal process is a long and slow one so we are continuing to organize, both to push CAVA and K12 to do the right thing and recognize our union and to make improvements here at our school. Members of the union organizing committee have met with state legislators, leaders of CTA and NEA, reporters, superintendents of our chartering school districts and teachers from other charter schools to tell our story. We have worked to defend teachers against unfair treatment. We will continue with these efforts, and more, for as long as it takes.

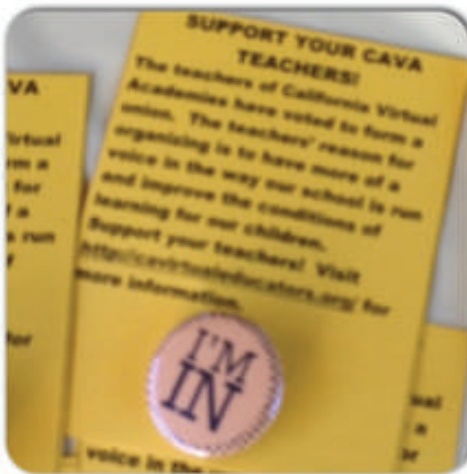
On March 2nd - 4th a hearing will be held at the PERB offices. We will have our day in court with CAVA and a chance to dispute their reasons for rejecting PERB's decision. We would love nothing more than for CAVA to stop fighting against us, and start working with us so that together we can unleash the potential of our school. If you would like to become more involved in the efforts to improve CAVA, we would love for you to join the Organizing Committee. Please send an e-mail to: cava.organizing.committee@gmail.com and someone will get in touch with you.

CAVA Parents Show Support for Their Teachers!

Upon learning that CAVA teachers decided to unionize but were being denied recognition by CAVA administration, a group of parents decided to show their support for the teachers and spread the word of the union's efforts. Last week, parents set up a table outside of the Redlands Community Day site to hand out union buttons, parent surveys and to answer questions and inform parents of the teachers' request for more of a voice in our school.

Parents working the table were met with a lot of positive feedback from the parents they spoke with as well as a deep appreciation from the teachers. The parents plan to continue their efforts in support of the teachers through their social media sites and at other CAVA events.

We are excited to work with CAVA parents to fix the many problems at CAVA. We know that teachers and families have the same interests. We look forward to collaborating with parents to make the changes needed here in California!



California CTA Members Support CAVA Teachers

On January 24th, CAVA teachers Jen Shilen and Sarah Vigrass were invited to address California Teachers Association (CTA) State Council about our efforts to fix CAVA. CTA State Council is made up of over 760 elected delegates that represent the 325,000 CTA educator members across California. It is with the support of our CTA colleagues that our CAVA organizing committee has been able to make the progress we have in our efforts to unionize.

While some have had the misperception that CTA opposes charter schools and therefore would not have an interest in helping us; that is clearly not the case. In fact, CTA's policy on Charter Schools identifies exactly

why it is important that CAVA teachers and parents play a bigger role in decisions at our school:

The purpose of charter schools is to create new professional opportunities for teachers to improve student learning while encouraging the use of different and innovative teaching methods. Inherent in the concept of charter schools is the belief that meaningful educational reform must be developed at the local site level and with the full participation of all "stakeholders" – teachers and other school employees, school board members and other elected officials, parents, guardians and other community residents.

When Jen and Sarah concluded speaking, they received a standing ovation from the delegates, guests, and CTA staff in the room. The strong show of support for the organizing committee, and ALL CAVA teachers, will extend to our upcoming struggle to get a strong union contract!

Check out the video of their terrific speech!

CalSTRs Update

Good News! CalSTRS has been in contact with CAVA's CalSTRS Payroll Administrator. In September, eight of your colleagues contacted both CalSTRS and CAVA with concerns regarding their retirement benefits and service credits. We are happy to report that after any/all issues with these accounts are resolved, CAVA's CalSTRS Payroll Administrator will be reviewing each teacher's account to ensure that all records are accurate and reflect the correct number of service credits.

This is a time consuming process, so please try to be patient. In the meantime, if you check your account at my.calstrs.com, and notice any glaring issues, please email screen shots to cava.organizing.committee@gmail.com, with CalSTRS in the subject line.

Special Education Department Hires Data Clerks

One of the longstanding issues that CAVA educators have been organizing around has been the excessive amounts of time that we spend doing data entry — tasks that do not require a teaching credential to perform like copying information between the myriad databases and spreadsheets CAVA uses. This year several new systems were introduced, requiring over a month of training. In addition, Homeroom duties were added to Special Education Teachers already over packed days, requiring extensive training and interfering with their ability to carry out their legally mandated responsibilities around IEPs.

The High School Special Education Teachers have been organizing within their department around these issues, starting with sending a letter to the administration at the start of Fall semester about Homeroom duties and issues around high caseloads and workloads. The Special Education Teachers also started a Skype group to discuss teacher concerns. We also worked closely with our union as they drafted a letter to the CAVA administration about the excessive and burdensome administrative responsibilities, a letter that was signed by over 100 CAVA teachers. We have also continued to voice our concerns about the amount of teacher time wasted on administrative tasks to the administration.

The Special Education department has been relatively non-responsive to these complaints. For most of the Fall semester, they did not even hold staff meetings. When we sent out a letter about our concerns, some of us got individual calls from our Program Specialists (equivalent to RPCs) expressing a desire to talk about our

concerns, but there was never any response to the group of teachers from the administration. Last week, however, the SPED department announced that they were hiring two data clerks to help enter student data into the databases after IEP meetings. In doing so, they acknowledged that many of our data entry tasks do not require teaching credentials and that our time would be better spent focusing on those tasks in which we need credentialed teachers to perform.

Everything you ever wanted to know about WASC, but didn't think to ask!

In a new series called The Wonderful World of ACS WASC, we will attempt to share an overview of what WASC is, why it is important, how a school prepares, and what to expect when CAVA is visited in February 2015.

Part 1: An Overview of WASC

How does one know that a K-12 school - public, private, religious, independent, or other have a commitment to high quality teaching and learning? They are accredited by ACS WASC.

According to Susie Chow, the Former WASC Commissioner, California Federation of Teachers, "The greatest value of the WASC protocol is that it ensures equity and fairness to all students in all schools. Parents, teachers, staff members and students participate in a process that enables them to critically self-examine their school plan, set their own goals, and assess if their goals are reached for continuous improvement."

In the K-12 school system, the Accredited Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges or ACS WASC is the body which is responsible for the accreditation process. Up to 32 people who are nominated from many constituencies within the K-12 environment make up the Commission and hold the responsibility to:

- Establish bylaws for the governance of the Commission
- Establish criteria for accreditation
- Grant accreditation
- Maintain adequate financial resources
- Maintain complete and accurate of accreditation reviews and actions
- Perform other functions consistent with the bylaws and operational guidelines
- Participate in accreditation visits
- ACS WASC's philosophy centers upon three beliefs:
 - A school's goal is successful student learning
 - Each school has a clear purpose and school wide student goals; and,
 - A school engages in external and internal evaluations as part of ongoing school improvement to support high-quality student learning.
- Volunteer educators and administrators who apply to be a part of a K-12 Visitation Team use the ACS WASC
- Criteria and Protocols, the school's Self-Study Report, and their visit observations to determine a level of accreditation.

K-12 schools are accredited based on a six-year cycle of continuous improvement and quality education and learning. If a school has "findings" leading to "compelling evidence" of deviation of WASC Criteria or in need of additional support in strengthening areas such as student achievement or other critical areas of the accreditation process, the visiting team can recommend one of the following:

- A mid-cycle progress report at the 3-year mark,
- A mid-cycle review with one- or two-day visit at the 3-year mark,
- A probationary accreditation status with an in-depth progress report and two-day visit at the one- or two-year mark, or
- Accreditation status withheld.

While a K-12 Commission, it is at the high school level when a non-accreditation becomes of concern. Most high schools will only accept credits with transfers from other accredited schools. This allows for maintenance of quality among the high school programs. Colleges and universities depend on the ACS WASC program in order to grant acceptance to programs based on the A-G requirements. Elementary and middle schools may be accredited, but transferring among them is generally not problematic when not accredited.

Resources for more information:

- ACS WASC Overview: http://www.acswasc.org/about_overview.htm
- Accreditation Status Recommendations: http://www.acswasc.org/pdf_general/WASC_AccreditationStatus-Explanation.pdf
- ACS WASC Criteria: http://www.acswasc.org/about_criteria.htm

Questions or concerns, let us know! Contact us at cava.organizing.committee@gmail.com or visit us at cavirtualeducators.org