



## Berkeley Council of Classified Employees Organize Members to Win a Contract

The energy in the room during the general membership meeting on September 16, 2014 was electric. The district's last, best and final offer was unacceptable and members were ready to strike. As the meeting attendees shouted "NO!" it was clear that the district had a serious fight on their hands. Three years without a contract had only activated and strengthened Berkeley Council of Classified Employees' (BCCE) base. Over 250 members voted to reject the offer.

Each year, BCCE had become increasingly organized. They worked on communication with members, planned rallies, raised public awareness and received a Strategic Campaign Initiative (SCI) grant from CFT. "I am grateful for the SCI grant. The training, motivation and guidance from CFT



Ronesha Norwood-Coleman

BCCE members attend a lunch meeting to discuss contract negotiations. Strong member turnout at actions helped BCCE win their contract.

staff, Jessica Ulstad and Sandra Weese was invaluable," stated Paula Phillips, BCCE President. Ed Wang was key to our success as he worked with the organizers to keep them motivated. "The organizers were vital because they could focus where we could not. They helped to reach members and increase member participation," stated Paula Phillips.

Details to success included sharing bargaining updates regularly with the membership via e-mail blasts (to personal addresses), flyers, and phone blasts. BCCE also organized rallies and meetings, each with increasing member turnout; 165 participated in March while chanting "No contract, no peace!" during a board meeting; over 200 in June;

*"The Organizers were vital because they could focus on what we could not."*

-Paula A. Phillips, President, Berkeley Council of Classified Employees

230 in September and 266 in October. The local held multiple meetings and rally times, to the extent of scheduling four meetings in one day, in order to accommodate classified members who may work odd hours or have second jobs.

As the 2014 Bart Strike loomed in the collective memory of Bay Area residents, BCCE was aware that a strike may be a possibility. The local leafleted at Back-to-School Night to inform

See BCCE, page 4

## IBEW Training Center Instructors Negotiate a 28% Pay Increase



Theresa Laughlin

PFT President Shannon Lienhart, PFF Chief Negotiator Theresa Laughlin and IBEW Training Instructors celebrate a good contract.

**AFTER JUST FOUR NEGOTIATION SESSIONS** the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) training instructors were able to negotiate a full contract. "We won the instructors a 28% pay increase!" exclaimed Shannon Lienhart, Full-Time President of Palomar Faculty Federation. Additionally, every time the IBEW training instructors negotiate a pay increase, the training center teachers will automatically receive the same increase in salary. Instructors now have a formal grievance process that must be followed and they were also able to codify policies regarding safety, professional development, and travel reimbursement.

# Ecole Bilingue Federation of Teachers Launches into Contract Campaign Mode



Laura Watson

CFT Field Rep Ed Wang with EBFT Organizing Committee members.

In 1977, Ecole Bilingue de Berkeley was founded by parents and teachers together. The school's mission was to develop students into world citizens and effectively use diversity in bilingualism as a pedagogical tool. In May 2014, almost four decades after the founding of Ecole Bilingue, the teachers voted to form a union and to gain a voice in the decisions affecting their working conditions and the students' quality of education. These dedicated teachers, now the Ecole Bilingue Federation of Teachers (EBFT), collectively acted from their desire of restoring shared governance to the teachers and parents, taking their school back from the administration's strong grip, and returning it to the

founders' vision.

In early October 2014, the Ecole Bilingue Organizing Committee & Bargaining Committee, joined by union leaders from the French American International School, participated in their first strategic contract campaign training. The member leaders were trained on the components of bargaining, the profile of a successful negotiation, and most importantly, launching a contract campaign to build bargaining power!

CFT trainers led the leaders into planning and calendaring key dates and identifying opportunities for the newly formed union to build strength and power for their upcoming bargaining beginning in November 2014. In May, Ecole Bilingue administration

tried to appoint a board participant, leaving faculty without a voice. EBFT members, through actions including a petition, took back their right to nominate and vote for a faculty representative to serve on the school board. Coming out of this training, the leaders decided to identify a pro-union faculty member

to serve on the current board and recruited her by the end of the training. She subsequently won the election by an overwhelming majority – sending a strong message to the administration, that EBFT is organized and prepared to win a solid contract!

Ecole Bilingue Federation of Teachers' plan to build membership power doesn't stop there. They have collected contract surveys and scheduled a general membership meeting to communicate with members the work that the bargaining committee has done and will do in preparation before their first bargaining session.

This campaign will undoubtedly bring the teachers at Ecole Bilingue a fair contract that will create healthy working conditions and a better learning environment.



Wes Davis

Kassi Hawkins, Oxnard Federation of Teachers and School Employees SCI organizer, and her new baby Mira took a break from maternity leave to join fellow union members at the CFT Ventura office to prepare door hangers for election day.



# San Mateo Community College Federation of Teachers Participates in CFT Training

Our local, AFT 1493, received a Strategic Campaign Organizing grant for 2014-15 to help build our internal capability to organize and to grow our leadership. The CFT offered to help us learn new organizing skills, and to this end we invited Laura Kurre, CFT Training Director, to lead a workshop for our Executive Committee on October 1, 2014 at the College of San Mateo. Laura did an outstanding job of involving our local in every aspect of the training, working with our SCIO organizers, Katharine Harer and Michelle Kern, as well as with our local President, Teeka James, and Executive



Sandra Weese

As part of their Strategic Campaign Initiative (SCI) grant, the San Mateo College Federation of Teachers executive board members met with CFT staff Laura Kurre, Zev Kvitky and Sandra Weese for a training on October 1.

Secretary, Dan Kaplan, to develop an agenda that would match our needs.

The focus of the training was on outreach strategies and one-to-one communication, with the election offering a golden opportunity to practice these skills, while informing our members about issues such as Tom Torlaksen's campaign. We also talked about the importance of "bite-sized asks", working within the work-site structure (such as connecting to faculty within divisions and departments), putting on smaller social events that are actually fun - as opposed to simply inviting members to attend lengthy and sometimes esoteric business meetings - and the ever more important task of gathering non-work e-mail.

tion tabling at Skyline and CSM the week before the election and were able to get information out to students, staff and faculty colleagues. Katharine practiced "bite-sized asks" at Skyline by personally contacting a mix of EC members and union supporters and asking them to contribute small amounts of time at the AFT election table. In some cases, faculty members with no time to spare dropped down to chat for 5-10 minutes, helping to build union presence and camaraderie. Other faculty members stayed for thirty minutes to an hour or more and worked hard to get out the vote. Several of us also joined with the San Mateo Labor Council to carry out phone banking a few days before the election.

As a result of the training, Katharine and Michelle organized elec-



Clemence Demoncheaux

Clemence Demoncheaux and Fatima Fall show their support for the EBFT Bargaining Committee on their first day of negotiations. Faculty throughout both campuses wore stickers reading, "Our Students Deserve the Best" sending the message to administration, that members are organized for a fair contract. *More about EBFT on page 2.*



**AFT 1521A HELD A RETREAT** for the executive board in October where the leaders were trained in various aspects of their contract and internal organizing. A workshop was conducted by CFT’s Jessica Ulstad and Sandra Weese along with Suleman Ishaque, Political Coordinator of AFT 1521A (*pictured*) which focused on Political Action and internal organizing. AFT 1521A leaders were made aware of the SCI initiative and how CFT is structured to work for the locals.

There was also a breakout session in which all the chapters identified their greatest strength and the biggest challenge they were facing. This session illuminated how similar the challenges were across the 10 chapters of the local and how the SCI grant is working to help resolve these challenges.

Recognizing the challenges public education is facing today, AFT 1521A has responded to SCI work with renewed energy and action. The local intends to use the available resources to strengthen its members and focus its goals towards the dream of quality public education in the state of California and beyond.

**BCCE** continued from page 1

parents how they would be affected if a strike were to occur. BCCE’s tactic for maximum reach by focusing on the largest middle and high schools was so successful that the Superintendent, who had planned to visit all three middle schools, cancelled his visitation to the other two campuses after he was inundated with questions about negotiations from parents at Longfellow, stating in an e-mail: “We will not negotiate in public.” In July the district e-mailed a press release to parents, including details of the district’s offer, and blamed the BCCE leadership as the reason why an agreement had not been reached.

Despite the setbacks, all of the members’ hard work finally paid off, BCCE now has a contract. “The visible support of the members was key, and CFT’s SCI grant program

played a major role in our success” affirmed Ed Wang, CFT Field Rep. The Berkeley Side publicized BCCE’s campaign events making the community aware of the contract negotiations, which was paramount. Thanks to the efforts of Organizer Daria Wrubel, BCCE expanded

outreach to members and increased participation. Continuing with the success, in October BCCE phone banked to help elect a new member to the Berkeley Board of Education, Ty Alper, who was a challenger candidate.

Laura Watson



Faculty leaders at West Valley-Mission Community College are getting organized and are on their way to joining the CFT! This independent union has driven up member participation by forming an organizing committee, launching member petitions, hosting informational forums, coordinating member actions and participating in trainings. Stay tuned for the full story on their success in building a stronger union as the West Valley-Mission Community College and their affiliation with CFT.

The California Federation of Teachers is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO. The CFT represents faculty and classified workers in public and private schools and colleges, from early childhood through higher education. The CFT is committed to raising the standards of the profession and to securing the conditions essential to provide the best service to California’s students.

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