DCTA Lobby Day will be Wednesday, February 7. If you are passionate about educating Colorado legislators regarding students and teachers’ needs, join us as we talk with them in person. We will be lobbying to protect our retirement (PERA) and to demand Colorado invests more in our students! Click here to RSVP.

In the coming months, DCTA, along with CEA, and other coalition members, will be fighting to protect our retirement. Any changes to PERA have to be approved by the State Legislature during the 2018 spring session which commenced last week at the State Capitol. No PERA bills have been introduced yet and we don't expect any for awhile. Right now legislators are working behind the scenes deciding what approach they want to take. While they are working on their ideas we need to remind them how important PERA is to their constituents. Click here to send your own State Senator and Representative and email about how important PERA is to you.

Attend the DCTA Lobby Day on Wednesday, February 7 so you can talk with your elected officials in person!

Schedule New Compensation Presentation for your School
The ProComp Agreement now expires in 58 days, on March 14!

***Contact your UD Kate Martin, Alizay Furtado, or Brock Grosso to schedule a meeting to discuss a new teacher compensation system in DPS. Changes are being bargained now, and it is imperative that you know where we are headed on YOUR compensation system.*** The next Bargaining Session will be on Tuesday, January 30 from 5 pm to 9 pm at the Acoma Campus (1617 S. Acoma St). February and March session dates have been confirmed - Wednesday, February 7; Thursday, February 22; and Wednesday, March 14.
The best part of being a teacher, according to Westerly Creek Elementary first grade teacher Suzanne Hernandez, is when you know you are making a difference in a student’s life. Unfortunately, the opportunity to make those connections is increasingly difficult in today’s increasingly crowded and time-crunched classrooms.

“My favorite part of teaching is when I get to sit and talk with my students one on one,” Suzanne explained. “It’s very difficult when I have 27 students in each class and my schedule doesn’t allow for much personal interaction, but when I get a chance to ask them how their day is, listen to what’s going on in their lives or help them in some way outside of the classroom, then I know how important my job is.”

Suzanne began her educational career nearly 20 years ago working as a para within DPS. With three young children at the time, she relished the opportunity to shape young minds. Suzanne’s teacher colleagues recognized her talent in the classroom and encouraged her to pursue teaching as a profession. As a result, Suzanne joined the profession full time in 2008.

“I had always thought that the workload at that time was much more than I could handle,” she said. “Boy—little did I know!”

Now with nine years teaching under her belt, Suzanne continues to battle with the pressures that teachers throughout the district face every day: overcrowded classes, unrealistic demands on time, increasing responsibilities and a disconnect between administrators and the real-world burdens of teaching.

“I sometimes wonder how long (some administrators) would last as classroom teachers given the expectations that we must follow,” Suzanne said. “Not only do we have the responsibility to educate students and all the work that comes with teaching, but we have to prove constantly that we are professionals.”

In addition, teachers must accomplish all this while working for sub-standard compensation in many instances, Suzanne said. The inconsistent support schools receive across the district also contributes to teacher frustrations.

“Some schools are simply amazing and well-supported while others are struggling to provide materials for teachers and students,” Suzanne said.

Still, despite all of the challenges, Suzanne knows her teaching is making a difference in the lives of students. And that is what matters most. A story from her first year as a classroom teacher exemplifies this point.

“When I first began teaching first grade, we had finished up a unit with a few days (continued on page 5)
Classrooms Not Corporations: National Week of Action February 4-10

The Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools is coordinating a national week of action in February to help policy makers and the public understand the importance of divesting from corporations and investing in our students, schools and communities. This week in February will also mark the one-year anniversary of Betsy DeVos’s confirmation, bringing her voucher schemes and school privatization agenda to Washington.

It’s time to take a stand to make sure that all students, regardless of where they live, get support, tools and time to learn.

Call to Action:

1. CEA texted a survey last Friday to learn how much money Colorado educators are paying out of their own pockets for their students and classrooms. Complete this survey!

2. Participate in the DCTA Lobby Day on February 7. Click here to learn more and RSVP.

Did You Know? Over the past decade, our state and local governments have invested billions of dollars in corporate tax incentives. And during the same period, our policy makers have made decisions that resulted in a serious decline in school funding where the gap between Colorado’s per pupil average and the national average has grown from $500 to more than $2,000 per student.

One Colorado corporation alone received $1.9 million in tax subsidies in 2013. In 2015 that same company paid no income taxes despite making $283 million in profit that same year. These types of policies further erode our tax base, eliminating even more funding for our students and schools.

Learn more online about how corporations in your community are profiting off of taxpayers.

---

90 Minute Mindfulness Workshop this Thursday!

Learn the value of Mindfulness not only as a powerful self-care practice, but as a tool to engage your environment in the present moment and to live authentically. This 90 minute workshop offers insights and methods to blend mindfulness skills with your personal practice and explores the ever-expanding benefit mindfulness will bring to you, your classrooms, and your teams. We will cover real tools for stress management, distress tolerance, and classroom management. Start the new year ready to take care of you so that you can be ready for the challenges and open to the joys ahead! The Kaiser Permanente workshop, sponsored by DCTA’s Rise Up Committee, is on Thursday, January 18 at 4:15 pm at Lincoln Elementary (710 S Pennsylvania St). Please RSVP so we order enough Chinese food!
Have your voice heard!—TLCC Survey launches January 24

The Teaching & Learning Conditions Colorado (formerly TELL Colorado) is an anonymous and confidential survey for Colorado’s school-based staff to share perceptions of teaching and learning conditions. This year it has been reduced to only take about 15 minutes and can be completed in one or multiple sessions online, even from your mobile devices. TLCC is from the state and it’s the only data source Colorado has on school conditions. This is the one opportunity teachers have to join together and provide reliable data to our schools, districts, and state policymakers on our teaching and learning conditions. We want every teacher voice to be heard to let policymakers know what you need to do your job well. Learn more about TLCC online.

Rep Council is on Tuesday, January 23 at DCIS Baker from 4:30 pm—6 pm. Trainings will be on Budgeting and CSC, RiBs and Non-Renewals. All members are welcome to attend!

School Visits

Last Friday: We spent time at Asbury, Castro, DCIS Baker, Lake Middle School, Lincoln Elementary, Manual, and Stedman.

This week: We will be visiting Holm, Isabella Bird, North, Sandra Todd-Williams Academy, South, Teller, and Traylor.

Regional Open Houses

Drop in to an open house near you to receive current information about your new contract, upcoming ProComp negotiations, etcetera from a Uniserv Director. Have your voice heard and join the conversation for what matters most for our students.

GVR Beer Garden Open House
Wednesday, January 17, 4—6 pm
4995 Argonne St

'Bout Time Pub & Grub Open House
Wednesday, January 31, 4—6 pm
3392 W 38th Ave

Café Chihuahua Open House
Wednesday, January 24, 4—6 pm
2250 S Federal Blvd

Hill Middle School Open House
Wednesday, February 7—CANCELED
Go to the New Compensation Bargaining Session!

GVR Beer Garden Open House
Wednesday, February 14—CANCELED for Valentine’s Day
Women’s March on Colorado  
Saturday, January 20, 2018

March with your DCTA shirts on as you march in solidarity for social justice, human rights, and equality for all women and all marginalized people nationwide. Pre-Rally begins at 9:00 am, the March begins at 9:30 am and the Rally begins at 11:30 am at Civic Center Park.  
[Click here to read the March Guide.]

(Spotlight on Suzanne Hernandez continued from page 1) to spare,” she said. “I decided to teach my mostly Caucasian students about (Mexican artist) Frida Kahlo. In a few short days we learned about her life, her art, and we created our own self portraits just like Frida.”

The experience continues to pay dividends both for the teacher and her students.

“I’ve had many of those students, who are now teens, come back and tell me how much they enjoyed reading and writing about her,” Suzanne said.

Today, Suzanne’s three children are grown—and she has one “brilliant” three-year-old grandson to spoil. She lives in Denver’s Park Hill neighborhood with her Snowshoe Siamese cat, KittyCat– and enjoys Colorado’s great outdoors via hiking, camping, fishing as well as attending concerts and relaxing with a good book.

If you know of a DCTA teacher that should be featured here, please email their name and contact information to Amber Wilson - DCTA Secretary.

MLK Marade

Henry Roman, DCTA President, Christina Medina, DCTA Vice-President, and Dennis Daugherty, Executive Director of the Colorado AFL-CIO, chat before the start of the MLK Marade.
DCTA member Lynne Valencia-Hernandez with several students from Thomas Jefferson in City Park at yesterday’s MLK Marade.

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."
~ Martin Luther King Jr.
Union members braved the icy cold conditions yesterday to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.