

ABCFT YOUnionews



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HOTLINKS- Contact ABCFT at ABC Federation of Teachers abcft@abcusd.us

- For confidential emails - use your non-work email to write to us at: abcft2317@gmail.com
- Find us on X @ #ABCTeachernews or [Facebook](#)
- [ABCFT 2023-2026 Strategic Plan Summary](#) **NEW!**
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[Click here to jump to the Halloween pictures at the bottom.](#)

KEEPING YOU INFORMED - Negotiations Update By Ruben Mancillas



Welcome to November!

I'm thinking about the calendar today, as we sent our calendar survey to members earlier this week. We have received suggestions about the feasibility of having a local holiday the day after Halloween. That sounds like a promising idea this afternoon, doesn't it? One of the challenges in putting together any calendar is to see how the proposed

holidays might fit together and literally count the days to get to the 184 days in our contract. For example, the fact that Halloween “floats” throughout the week makes November 1 a problematic day to schedule as a local holiday if it were to take place midweek.

The joke is that everyone would like the school year to start later, end earlier, and have more holidays, but it all needs to add up to 184. There is also an effort to make the calendar end “cleanly” if possible or not require students to return on one lone remaining day. The federal holidays are fixed within the calendar. But some of the variables include the timing of Spring Break and the local holiday we currently have in place on the second Monday in February. Spring Break has traditionally been the week after Easter, but there are options to link it to more of a fixed date as opposed to having it move throughout the calendar on any given year. Our local holiday on the Friday before Easter week will remain in place no matter when Spring Break is observed.

The survey includes templates for the next three years, which indicates that we are open to bargaining for a multi-year calendar. We will have to see if the district agrees with this idea, but we do acknowledge the value of being able to plan for multiple years.



Professional development is another variable to consider. The two PL days we have negotiated in recent years are technically not part of our 184 duty days because they are voluntary. Teachers and nurses can choose to attend or not as opposed to days that would be built within the school year calendar. Adding a PL day into the school year would mean an extra day to our contract, pushing it to 185 and requiring additional ongoing funding as a result.

We have received questions about the possibility of a “ski week.” That is, linking the federal holiday of the third week of February with another four days, making it a whole week off. This would require pushing the end date of the school year by a commensurate number of days. It may also prove disruptive to the community, as families would need to obtain child care for an entire week.

Thank you to everyone who has participated in the survey. Your constructive comments and suggestions will guide us when we go to the bargaining table.

Entertainment (the fifth pillar) update: last week was my opportunity to enjoy Halloween movies with a family night double feature of Longlegs and The First Omen. The novelty here was that I got out to watch two films released in 2024! Longlegs is a Silence of the Lambs type of procedural that featured some excellent sound editing (and plenty of T-Rex on the soundtrack, which is always a plus), as well as a dependably over-the-top performance from Long Beach’s own Nicolas Cage. This English teacher had a tough time getting past the logic that The First Omen was in fact a prequel to...the first Omen. This latest entry worked on its own creepy merits but made more sense if you had some context from the original film. My adult daughter enjoys the genre overall, but even she had an ick factor with some of the body horror elements. The moral of the story is that it's better to stick with 70s movies, right?

And for those enjoying today's parade, I can only quote Randy Newman: "I Love L.A.!"

In Unity,



COPE POLITICAL UPDATE

In compliance with legal guidelines, ABCFT does not use the ABCUSD server to host information concerning political actions. This is an informational item to inform our members where they can find political materials not hosted on the district servers. Reminder - Never use district technology or school sites to distribute, print, or campaign for political purposes.



[Click here for all political information on ABCFT's COPE Committee Webpage.](#)



[Click the Educators Choice Picture to go to the CFT website](#)

MEMBER-ONLY RESOURCES

The all-new AFT Share My Lesson [Welcome-to-Teaching Conversation Series](#), featuring AFT members, aims to address some of the challenges of entering the teaching profession by providing a platform where new teachers and experienced educators can have valuable conversations.



[Episode 1: Classroom Management](#)

In this episode, you'll learn practical tips for new teachers on effective classroom management, emphasizing relationship-building, clear procedures and classroom mobility.

[Episode 2: Children's Well-Being](#)

In this episode, educators discuss trauma-informed practices and strategies for supporting student well-being.



HEALTH BENEFITS COMMITTEE UPDATE

By Megan Harding



Each month, representatives from our different labor groups in ABCUSD meet to discuss insurance issues and needs. The committee is made up of three members from ABCFT, two members from the management team (ABCMA), two members from CSEA, and two members from AFSCME. These individuals all have one vote when deciding committee actions. The chairperson of the committee rotates among its members.

The other committee members consist of members of our brokerage firm, Burnham, our district Chief Financial Officer, the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, and representatives from Fringe Benefits.

The goal of the benefits committee is to identify cost-effective benefits that best fit the needs of all employees. This is done by analyzing the current usage data and feedback from the different carriers regarding what is new and discussing best practices regarding communicating these benefits and how to utilize them to their fullest potential.

In addition, the committee looks at the rates offered by our current carriers and discusses options on how to best negotiate proposed rates. These can include possible changes to programs or even a change to a different carrier altogether. The committee meets monthly starting in December and typically ending in June, depending on the issues to be addressed.



ABCFT PRESIDENT'S REPORT - Ray Gaer



Consistent and regular communication is a union's most important tool for advocating for its members at the bargaining table. Every conversation with members is focused on the result of negotiating for the future prosperity and well-being of ALL ABCFT members. This weekly report informs members about issues impacting their working/learning conditions and mental well-being. Our work as a Union is a larger conversation and united, we make the YOUunion.

I wrote to a colleague, "October was like a rollercoaster where you get completely wet, and you didn't even know there was a splash section on the ride." - I think we all are looking forward to the time off in November.

Everything you do in life is negotiations. This includes debating if you should eat that leftover Halloween candy, what show you will binge-watch with your bestie, and what days school will start on the academic calendar. Every conversation is a narrative to drive and a negotiation to balance. I've been in education for thirty years and learned that the slow hour hands of the clockwork are even slower in educational change. ABC is not perfect, but I know we are attempting to speed up the processes of support and change to keep moving forward.

During the latest Tk/K "Empathy Interview," a statement was issued that the District and ABCFT have been slow to solve the ongoing challenges at these grade levels. On some level, this is a valid statement assuming that ABCFT and the District could have unlimited resources from the state, but unfortunately, that's not the case. Our educational system is dysfunctional because politicians have financially starved and mandated what few resources we have to use in a district. How does a district support new programs when the rules change without input (lowering the age level of students) or without funding (State TK funding was cut out of the last CA state budget)? One of my favorite sayings in these situations is that it's all a setup for failure.

In my opinion, the crisis in TK/K is a manufactured crisis of the state that will be used to allocate funds to state-supported TK classrooms and compulsory kindergarten. I've watched this crisis unfold and impact the working and learning conditions of our district's Infant Center teachers, State Pre-School Teachers, and Headstart teachers. The federal government lowered the age levels for Head Start across the county a decade ago. For the most part, those programs have adjusted, but not without disillusionment or teachers feeling like they weren't part of the process. For example, if you were a Head Start teacher, your hours were increased by the feds from six hours to eight hours without a thought of how this would impact teachers, their families, or how they would find time and coverage to have lunch (they have a "working lunch" with students). Students, teachers, and support staff pay the price when teachers are not part of the solution. Sure, in the long run, it is good for the program and suitable for kids, but it's a lousy way to facilitate change.

I see this same scenario playing out for our TK/K teachers, and going back to that question about how the District and the Union are addressing the problem, I'd say we are being thoughtful and proactive. District and Union decision-makers are sitting with classroom teachers to listen to the reality they are facing in the classrooms. Not only do we want to know what skills the student is coming in with, but we also want to know the ground truth. I appreciate it when Dr. Castro opens our conversations with the statement that we could survey for answers, but what is lost are the nuances and the emotions of those situations. We are human beings, right? You are not a survey data point. ABCFT and ABCUSD are making a conscious effort to make short-term and long-term changes to support all teachers and administrators. We can't effectively do that with limited state support or resources unless we do this with those closest to the challenging situation. It's no different than asking a student to talk with you when you know they are struggling. You want to get to the heart of the issue.

I knew that talking to TK/K teachers would be a rollercoaster, and ABC would rally to improve this situation so that everyone impacted feels heard and supported, which is the goal. I didn't appreciate the realization that the state has created this mess, impacting all educators and students at this level; that's where I feel soaked from my hair to my shoes. Nobody likes a setup for failure. As a

Vice President for the California Federation of Teachers, I believe that the TK/K/Special Education situation is a top priority. I can confidently say that the district administration, which also speaks for ABC at the state level, will make these issues a personal priority. Together, we can advocate for reasonable support to create a setup for success for teachers and students.

In YOUnity,

Ray Gaer
President, ABCFT



*A Union of Educators
& Classified Professionals*

CALIFORNIA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

The latest CFT articles and news stories can be found here on the PreK12 news feed on the CFT.org website.

[View current issues here](#)



AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

[Find the latest AFT news here](#)

Follow AFT President Randi Weingarten: <http://twitter.com/rweingarten>



----- NEWS STORY HIGHLIGHT-----

ECHO Study Suggests COVID-19 Pandemic Contributed to Developmental Delays in Infants, Toddlers

In this study, up to 15% of infants and toddlers who were developmentally on track prior to the COVID-19 pandemic showed signs of developmental delays during the pandemic. Male children showed more delays than female children, and language was the most affected developmental area. Families from minority communities and those with lower socioeconomic status were more likely to experience pandemic-related hardships. However, financial and social pandemic-related hardships were not associated with the individual changes observed in children's developmental progress.

<https://echochildren.org/research-summaries/echo-study-suggests-covid-19-pandemic-contributed-to-developmental-delays-in-infants-toddlers/>

----- NATIONAL NEWS -----

Indigenous groups seek tangible steps after presidential apology

Native American leaders and boarding school survivors are calling for concrete actions from the Biden administration following the President's historic apology for the U.S. government's role in Indian boarding schools. Addressing survivors on the Gila River Reservation in Arizona, Biden acknowledged the government's "sin on our soul," while many Native advocates pressed for lasting change. The Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition has demanded passage of the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act, which would support language revitalization, public education on the boarding school system, and the release of withheld records. Survivors continue to struggle with intergenerational trauma linked to forced assimilation practices, which included psychological and physical abuses at government-funded, church-operated schools. Leaders stress that Biden's apology is a beginning but urge for actionable steps to address ongoing issues facing Native communities, including health disparities and access to quality education. In South Dakota, Indigenous groups commemorated their resilience, pledging to hold the U.S. accountable and continue advocating for systemic reform.

[The 74 \(Online\)](#)

How social debates are costing schools millions

Recent analysis reveals that American schools incurred over \$3bn in costs due to conflicts surrounding race, LGBTQ+ policies, and library book selections during the last academic year. The study, conducted by researchers including John Rogers from UCLA and Rachel White from UT Austin, surveyed 467 superintendents across 46 states. It found that two-thirds of superintendents reported "moderate" or "high" levels of conflict, with high-conflict districts averaging costs of about \$800,000. Legal expenses were a significant burden, often linked to lawsuits and public-records requests. The stress from these conflicts has also negatively impacted staff mental health, with 94% of superintendents in high-conflict areas noting adverse effects on staff well-being. One superintendent shared: "Our social media accounts were effectively bombed ... full of messages of hate," highlighting the intense pressure faced by school leaders and staff.

[Education Week News](#)

----- STATE NEWS -----

Parents' rights movement faces challenges

In California, the parents' rights movement has gained traction, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, with groups like Moms for Liberty emerging. Activists argue that school staff are hiding information about gender identity from parents. Erin Friday, a key figure in the movement, said: "There's a silent majority who are against this." However, despite some local successes, the movement has faced significant setbacks,

including the California Legislature's ban on parental notification policies. The movement's future remains uncertain, as activists aim to influence school boards and potentially higher offices. Jonathan Zachreson, a school board member, noted, "But locally, we can go far." The divide over transgender rights in schools reflects broader societal tensions, with a Public Policy Institute of California survey revealing that 51% of public school parents oppose allowing children to choose their pronouns.

[The Sacramento Bee](#)

California schools embrace open enrollment

California has made significant strides in education with the permanent establishment of its cross-district open enrollment policy, thanks to Governor Gavin Newsom signing Senate Bill 897. This law allows public school students to transfer to districts outside their assigned ones, benefiting nearly 8,000 students during the 2022-23 school year. Notably, 37% of participants came from low-income families, and 79% were non-white. Despite this progress, the Reason Foundation's report grades California's open enrollment laws a "D-," highlighting the need for improvement in participation and transparency. Currently, less than 5% of school districts engage in the District of Choice program, which mandates acceptance of transfer applicants if space is available.

[Pasadena Star-News](#) [Redlands Daily Facts](#)

Empowering youth for civic engagement

As California prepares for elections that could significantly impact young people's lives, a coalition of foundations has established the California Thriving Youth Initiative. This multiyear project aims to enhance civic leadership and democratic participation among adolescents, particularly students of color. Kathryn Bradley, director of the Purpose of Education Fund at the Stuart Foundation, emphasized the need for students to "practice democracy right now." With an initial investment of \$30m, the initiative seeks to create opportunities for civic engagement within public schools. Recent data shows a rise in youth voting, with 47% of 18- to 24-year-olds participating in the 2020 elections, up from just 18% a decade earlier. The initiative also promotes the State Seal of Civic Engagement, which recognizes students' civic education efforts. Despite progress, disparities remain, particularly among Latino students. The initiative aims to bridge these gaps and foster a culture of civic involvement in California schools.

[EdSource](#)

California assessment results show mixed progress

The California Department of Education has released the 2023-24 assessment results, revealing mixed outcomes in English/language arts and math. Statewide, 47% of students achieved proficient or advanced levels in English/language arts, a slight increase from 46.7% in 2022-23. Math scores also improved, with 35.6% meeting standards compared to 34.6% the previous year. However, Kern County saw declines, with only 28.5% in English/language arts and 13.96% in math meeting standards. Dr. April Moore, Superintendent of **Sierra Sands Unified School District**, expressed satisfaction with their scores, stating, "We are pleased to highlight that our math and English/language arts scores continue to exceed the Kern County average." Meanwhile, Don Beene, Superintendent of REALMS, emphasized the importance of standardized tests in tracking student growth, particularly for those affected by online learning during COVID.

[EdSource](#) [The Daily Independent](#)

----- **DISTRICTS** -----

Moreno Valley School District settles lawsuit

The **Moreno Valley USD** has agreed to a settlement exceeding \$1.7m in a lawsuit concerning the sexual assault of an autistic high school student on a school bus in 2019. The incident involved another student known for violent behavior, raising serious concerns about the district's failure to protect vulnerable students. The attorney for the plaintiff stated: "This case was an example of how students with special needs are particularly vulnerable to abuse." The lawsuit was filed by **Kabateck LLP** and another law firm in June 2020, highlighting the need for better safeguards in schools.

[Inland Valley Daily Bulletin](#)

San Francisco schools face funding crisis

San Francisco's public-school district is urging voters to pass Proposition A, which could allow the district to borrow up to \$790m for essential repairs and upgrades to aging facilities. Cris Garza, policy director for United Educators of San Francisco, emphasized the importance of the measure: "If we care about protecting students and staff from earthquakes... Prop. A needs to pass." However, the district's troubled history with previous bond measures raises concerns about voter confidence. Critics question the effectiveness of past spending, and key opponents argue that the measure will increase taxes for property owners. Despite these challenges, supporters believe that without Prop A, the district will struggle to maintain safe and functional learning environments. The bond is crucial for addressing urgent infrastructure needs, as many schools are over a century old and in dire condition

[San Francisco Examiner](#)

----- TECHNOLOGY -----

AI revolutionizes education in California

Nathan Lim, a Cal Poly San Luis Obispo student, is developing an AI tool to assess senior project ideas for ethical implications. As California colleges expand AI programs, Governor Gavin Newsom announced a partnership with Nvidia to enhance AI curriculum in community colleges. Lim, who studies music and computer science, believes AI can democratize music education, claiming: "What if there was an AI private teacher to answer questions and provide feedback on playing?" The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects 12.9% growth in computer and mathematical jobs, driven by AI demand. Angel Fuentes, dean at Evergreen Valley College, emphasizes the importance of AI literacy across disciplines. The partnership with Nvidia aims to create AI resources for community colleges, with a focus on reskilling workers. As AI becomes integral to various fields, educators stress the need for ethical understanding and responsible use of technology.

[Press Democrat](#)

AI feedback: helpful or harmful?

In a thought-provoking editorial, Adam Patric Miller, a high school teacher with 25 years of experience, critiques the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in education. He argues that while AI can provide instant feedback, it lacks the emotional depth and understanding that human teachers bring to the classroom. Miller reflects on his own experiences with dedicated educators who have shaped his life: "Teaching is an art. And art requires the pain of living, endurance, and love and loss." He expresses concern that relying on AI could undermine the learning process and diminish the personal connections that are vital in education. Miller emphasizes that teaching is not just about efficiency; it is about nurturing students' growth and understanding their unique backgrounds.

[Merced Sun Star](#)

ChatGPT: A learning crutch?

The Hechinger Report's recent study reveals that high school students using ChatGPT as a study aid performed worse on math tests compared to their peers who did not use the AI tool. Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania found that while students with ChatGPT solved 48% more practice problems correctly, they scored 17% lower on tests. A modified version of ChatGPT, designed to act as a tutor, improved practice problem performance by 127%, yet did not enhance test scores. The researchers concluded that reliance on ChatGPT can "substantially inhibit learning," as students often sought direct answers rather than developing problem-solving skills. The study involved nearly 1,000 students and highlights the potential pitfalls of over-reliance on AI in education.

[Keys News](#)

----- WORKFORCE -----

Teachers' job satisfaction under scrutiny

Recent findings from a College Board survey of 17,000 high school teachers reveal that only 39% are "very satisfied" with their jobs. The survey highlights that teachers' perceptions of their colleagues' mental health significantly influence their own job satisfaction. Amanda Jacklin, a College Board researcher, noted, "We wanted to take a little bit of a different position here and ask about the mental health of the teachers at their school overall." The study indicates that addressing factors like low student motivation and lack of administrative support could improve satisfaction levels. Katie Fletcher, another researcher, emphasized that improving perceptions of mental health among colleagues can double the likelihood of teachers feeling satisfied with their jobs. Incremental changes, rather than sweeping reforms, may be key to enhancing teacher morale.

[Education Week News](#)

----- ELECTIONS -----

Union endorsements: The secret weapon in school board election

Research from Ohio State University and Boston College indicates that local teachers' union endorsements give school board candidates a significant advantage, particularly among Democrats and union supporters. The study, shared by Brown University's Annenberg Institute, reveals a potential 20-percentage-point boost for union-endorsed candidates, with minimal negative reactions from any group, including Republicans. Analysts found that the endorsement effect rivals that of party affiliation, showing a unique public trust in teachers and their unions. This endorsement effect has even grown over the past decade, despite increasing political polarization and controversies surrounding unions. Teachers' unions appear to benefit from a "halo effect," similar to the public trust historically seen in the American Medical Association, as communities view union-backed candidates as more likely to improve school conditions, raise teacher salaries, and address student needs effectively.

[The 74 \(Online\)](#)

----- FINANCE -----

Pensions squeeze school budgets nationwide

A new EdWeek Research Center report highlights the growing financial strain that rising pension costs place on U.S. school districts, revealing that many administrators lack a full understanding of how these complex systems operate. The report, commissioned by the Equable Institute, shows that school districts now allocate over \$60bn annually to educator pensions—triple the amount from three decades ago—compelling schools to cut back on investments in facilities, staffing, and student resources to balance budgets. With pension obligations largely fixed, school leaders are struggling to keep up with the costs, particularly as federal COVID relief funding phases out. Survey responses from over 1,100 district officials reveal widespread confusion: more than half were unaware of their state's current pension contributions, and nearly 60% lacked clarity on their own district's pension obligations. In states where districts bear some pension costs directly, many have canceled pay raises, postponed construction, or cut extracurriculars. As funding pressures grow, one in five respondents expects further budget cuts or postponed initiatives in the next five years.

[Education Week News](#)

----- HIGHER EDUCATION -----

College application deadlines are near. What you need to know

College applications are open for the fall 2025 term, and deadlines are looming.

California's two public university systems — the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) — provide the state's students with 32 campuses to choose from.

That's on top of more than a hundred community colleges that can provide pathways to transfer to other campuses and associate degrees. [Some also offer bachelor's degrees.](#)

Here are the basics of how and when to apply.

When are college applications due?

It depends on the college or university. The UC and CSU deadline for fall 2025 admissions to all undergraduate campuses is Dec. 2, 2024.

Community college admissions do not have a specific deadline, but it's generally better to apply early. Private colleges and universities have their own deadlines, with most in mid-January.





Ross Middle School



Cerritos High School



Carmenita Middle School animal theme!

Willow Elementary



Elliott Elementary



Cerritos Elementary



Kennedy Elementary!

A large group of people, mostly children and a few adults, are posing for a group photo outdoors on a paved area. They are wearing a variety of large, inflatable costumes. From left to right, the costumes include: a brown bear, a giraffe, an orange cat, a yellow Pikachu, a pink unicorn, a brown sloth, a pink dragon, a white unicorn, a yellow and black striped bee, a pink pig, a green dinosaur, a brown monkey, a red dinosaur, and a white unicorn. Some people are sitting on the ground in front of the group, while others are standing. The background shows a clear blue sky and some trees. The text "Kennedy Elementary!" is overlaid at the top of the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

Gahr High School

A large group of approximately 25 people, including students and staff, are posing for a group photo in front of a wall featuring four large arched murals. The murals are labeled 'FORTITUDO', 'GAHR HIGH SCHOOL', 'VENERATIO', and 'CLASS OF MMV'. The group is dressed in a variety of costumes and casual attire, including a person in a black suit and top hat, a person in a white shirt and green pants, a person in a yellow and black cheerleader outfit, a person in a red and white striped shirt, a person in a black jacket and hat, a person in a red hoodie, a person in a black and white patterned dress, a person in a pink jumpsuit, a person in a purple jumpsuit, a person in a black and white plaid shirt, a person in an orange hoodie with a pumpkin face, and a person in a black dress and hat. The background is a clear blue sky.



Wittmann Elementary





Carver Elementary!



Juarez Staff- zoo animals and PA is the zoo keeper



Wittmann Elementary





Gonsalves Elementary



Gonsalves Elementary

Happy Halloween 🎃



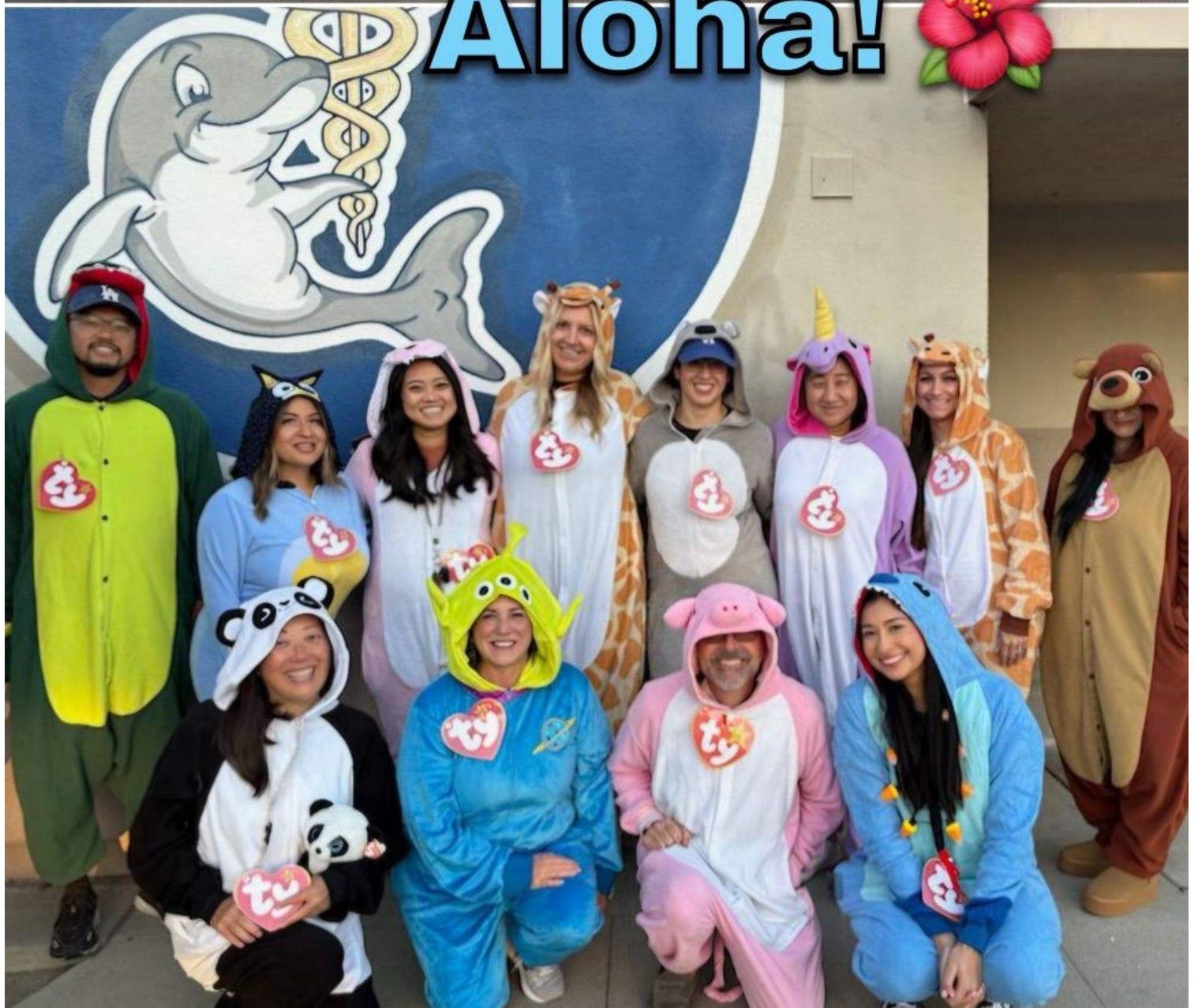
Palms Elementary!



**Ross
Principal
taking
FLIGHT**



**Aloha from
Aloha!** 





Gahr High School

