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United States  
14,497 feet

# The Inyo Insight

An Education Newsletter from the Inyo County Superintendent of Schools  
Volume 6, Issue 3 www.inyo.k12.ca.us November & December 2014

## Brief Summary of the Vergara Ruling on Teacher Tenure

By Terry McAteer

There has been a great deal of discussion about the Vergara ruling. What follows is a brief, non-biased summary of the recent decision regarding teacher tenure.

On August 27, 2014, the Los Angeles County Superior Court issued judgment in *Vergara v. California, et. Al.*, ruling that five education code statutes governing teacher tenure, dismissal, and seniority violate the California Constitution's guarantee of equal protection. Judge Treu found that the California Constitution guarantees a meaningful, basically equal educational opportunity to California students and that the challenged statutes "impose a real and appreciable impact on students' fundamental right to equality of education

and impose a disproportionate burden on poor and minority students."

The court's analysis stated that all sides agreed that competent teachers are a critical, if not the most important, component of success of a child's in-school educational experience, and that grossly ineffective teachers substantially undermine the ability of that child to succeed in school. In addition, it said that there was no dispute that a significant number of grossly ineffective teachers are currently active in California classrooms (1-3% of all California teachers, or between 2,750 - 8,250 teachers).

Applying strict scrutiny, the court concluded that California had failed to demonstrate that the laws were jus-

tified by a compelling state interest. Specifically, the court found:

1. The permanent employee statute, which requires school districts to decide whether to grant teacher tenure after less than two years, does not provide enough time for an informed decision to be made regarding tenure.
2. The teacher dismissal statutes are so complex, time consuming, and expensive that grossly ineffective teachers are being left in the classroom because school officials do not wish to go through the time and expense to investigate and prosecute these

cases.

3. The seniority statute, which requires the teachers with the least seniority are the first fired during lay-offs and contains no exception or waiver based on teacher effectiveness, harms students and disrupts classrooms.

The court found these statutes unconstitutional, but stayed enforcement of its decision pending appeal. The State of California, Superintendent of Public Instruction, State Board of Education, and California Teachers Association have appealed the judgment.

Because the trial court's decision is stayed pending appeal, the statutes will remain operative until all appeals are exhausted, which could take years.

## Summer Technology Camp: Save the Dates!

Ready to put all those new computers, iPods and iPads to work to engage students and help them learn important academic content? ICSOS has the solution for you - plan now to come to a learning-packed, hands-on Technology Camp for Teachers, June 8 - 10th, 2015. Since results of our professional development survey indicate that many of you have interest in growing your skills and using technology for instruction, we plan to offer a variety of half-day and

full-day workshops to meet a wide variety of needs and introduce teachers to engaging and useful tools teachers and students can use for learning.

Each workshop will provide hands-on training in the use of given technology tools, followed by time for teachers to create one or more lessons that incorporate the use of the tools. ICSOS will be offering stipends for teachers who participate.

During the planning process we will survey teachers

about their needs; a preliminary list of possible offerings include:

- Improving writing with digital tools
- Google Earth
- Engaging Students in Writing with Blogs
- Help your students become search wizards
- Information literacy
- Google apps and extensions
- Technology tools for collaborative reading
- Become a Gooru: cre-

ating engaging web-enhanced lessons students can navigate independently

- Using Google Forms
- Using Ubermix programs to create video and audio projects
- Create multimedia text sets with Google Docs
- Digital Storytelling
- Creating and Using Google Lit Trips
- Develop Engaging Performance Tasks with Technology Embedded

# Third Graders Explore a Natural Area on Tribal Lands

By Lo Lyness

For the last few years, third graders in some Inyo County schools have been learning about their environment by exploring a new Conservation Open Space Area (COSA) on the Bishop Tribe's property immediately behind Pine and Elm Street Schools in Bishop. The latest addition to Inyo County's field science programs for students began with the Tribe's receipt of a grant to restore the COSA, which now has two ponds and a half-mile of walking trails, for wildlife habitat. Working for the tribe through the AmeriCorps program, Hillary Behr collaborated with a variety of partners including the Eastern Sierra Audubon Society to establish the Ex-

ploring a Wetland program, bringing third grade classes to the COSA for a day of hands-on activities.

Hillary then piloted another successful program last year with two third grade classes of students who visited the COSA monthly for hour-and-a-half long lessons during which they were able to watch the COSA environment change through the seasons. Called "Taking Root", one of the goals of this program is to help students develop a relationship with the land and its plant and animal inhabitants. This year the program has expanded to include all Bishop third graders. As they observe the same places over time, the children not only

learn to see more of what's around them and understand the complex interactions within ecosystems, they also develop emotional ties to the place - a first step in learning to care about and care for the natural world and our environment.

The third grade program fills a gap in the sequence of field experiences that have been available to our students for the last several years: second graders study invertebrates at Fish Slough; fourth graders also visit Fish Slough, learning about pupfish and the cultural and archaeological history of

the area; fifth and sixth graders attend a week of Outdoor School; and sixth, seventh and eighth graders participate in the Eastern Sierra Watershed Project, going on field trips to streamsides each year and collecting a variety of monitoring data. With the addition of the Exploring a Wetland field trip, students from 2nd through 8th grade will have an opportunity each year to visit and learn in one of our many outdoor classrooms.



## Welcome Hillary Behr to ICSOS

The Inyo County Superintendent of Schools Office welcomes Hillary Behr to our Curriculum & Instruction department.



Hillary, who started work with ICSOS at the beginning of October, will have a variety of responsibilities, including expanding the use of the Sierra Adventure Center and developing programs for groups using the facility, coordination of the Taking Root program (see article in this issue) and administration of the Outdoor School program. Hillary has spent the last 2.5

years working with AmeriCorps, first with the Eastern Sierra Land Trust and then most recently with the Bishop Tribe where she worked on restoration and education projects. Hillary's academic background is in Environmental Conservation Studies, which she has put to use in many informal science education settings. We are pleased to have her on our team!

## Workshop Overview ELA/ELD Framework

Many of you expressed interest in learning more about the ELA/ELD Framework in our recent survey of teachers in the County. We are providing two opportunities for a guided tour of the ELA/ELD Framework:  
January 8, 2015: Independence ICSOS Munis Conference Room 3:45-7:00  
January 14, 2015: Bishop Lozito Conference Room 3:45-7:00  
Dinner will be provided. Invitations requesting RSVP will be coming via email.