

NATION *Labor*

COLORADO:

Labor Unites

Showing strength and unity for the common good, differences were put aside as the Change to Win Federation and the AFL-CIO joined together for the first time since 2005 at a Denver rally in support of Barack Obama. As a healing gesture, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney introduced Change to Win President Anna Burger who indicated to reporters that the federations will work together when possible. NEA President Reg Weaver said organized labor will fight for health care for all Americans, retirement security, and to prevent union busting. (Workers Independent News)

CALIFORNIA:

Union Membership On The Rise

Unionization rates rose to 12.6 percent of all US civilian workers in 2008, an increase of half a percentage point over 2007. From 2006-2007, there was an increase of .1 of a percentage point. Previously, the last rise in unionization rates was in 1979. According to "The State of the Unions in 2008: A Profile of Union Membership in Los Angeles, California and the Nation", the number of US workers in labor unions in the first half of 2008 increased by 583,300 compared to the 2007 average. The national increase has been boosted by growth in California, which has the highest union rates of any state. (UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment)

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA:

Labor Likes Biden

Both the AFL-CIO and Change to Win Presidents issued statements expressing their support of Barack Obama's choice of Joe Biden for VP. AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said, "Biden is an eloquent defender of working families and opponent of the Bush Administration's war on workers." Change to Win President Anna Burger said "Biden has been a friend to working Americans throughout his public life." (Workers Independent News)

NEW HAMPSHIRE:

Wage Increase

New Hampshire minimum wage workers saw an increase in their wages to \$7.25 an hour. The federal rate is \$6.55 per hour. Gov. John Lynch signed the increase into law in 2007, effective on Labor Day 2008. (Workers Independent News)

— COMPILED BY
CHRISTINE ALTMAN

If you've recently moved or changed position, let us know. Contact the CSA Membership Department at (718) 852-3000, x 285.



YURIDIA PEÑA

■ ETM Teaching Artist Gwendolyn Dorell leads a kindergarten music class at PS 102, D-4, in East Harlem.

An Innovative Program Offers Music Enrichment

BY YURIDIA PEÑA

Education Through Music is a not-for-profit organization that develops long-term partnerships with elementary schools without a music program in underserved communities. The program helps schools incorporate music into their academic programs. In doing so, ETM has helped schools achieve academically.

This year, ETM is offering its enrichment program at eight NYC public schools. ETM hires teaching artists to give all the students in a school weekly music classes all year long.

On the first day of ETM's music class at PS 102, D-4, in East Harlem, first-graders playfully rattled maracas, beat drums, jingled bells, and shook tambourines as they danced around the classroom singing, "Round and round when I come to you, tell me your name and the beat goes on."

This is the fifth year of PS 102's relationship with ETM. In 2003, Principal Sandra Gittens was offered a long-term partnership with ETM and jumped at the opportunity. Said ETM Executive Director Katherine Damkohler: "I don't come in as a music person. I sit down with the Principal, [and] design and manage music education for every single child in the school." According to Ms. Damkohler, ETM merges music education into all subject areas in a way that it becomes part of



■ Katherine Damkohler

the school's curriculum and academic achievement improves; in fact, several partner schools – failing prior to ETM's involvement – have recently received national recognition.

The mission of ETM is twofold: 1) To provide schools with the proper funding and resources necessary to offer a well-balanced music program, and 2) to teach them how to sustain their new music programs by finding longterm funding streams. ETM provides thousands of dollars worth of help, so they carefully screen schools to make sure the programs will survive on their own. Part of the screening process is to make sure that the administration is onboard with their mission: "Principals are savvy and dynamic people. They hold you accountable for everything; it becomes a real partnership," said Ms. Damkohler.

ETM schools serve at-risk populations. Eighty percent of students at ETM schools are eligible for free lunch or reduced-price lunches; 90 percent of ETM students are minorities. (Ms. Damkohler added that schools ineligible

to receive resources often hire ETM as consultants.) ETM's support includes professional development and concerts, private lessons and summer camp scholarships. ETM also provides music therapists at schools with a large population of special education students.

Ruth Thomas, a first-grade teacher at PS 102, says the program helps students develop social, emotional, and listening skills. She has also noticed a change in students who tend to be introverted in the classroom come out of their shells

The language of rhythm and notes tied to academics.

during music class.

Through ETM, Ms. Gittens has found other partnerships. "(ETM is) very instrumental in bringing different types of music in schools such as operas, operettas, and Rosie's For All Kids Foundation." (This foundation, founded by Rosie O'Donnell, gives grants for music programs.)

In the Bronx, Alan D. Cohen, Principal of PS 69, D8, has partnered with ETM for four years. According to Mr. Cohen, the program has improved student academic performance. "I attribute our substantial increase in student achievement to the fine music program which helped us to integrate music and creativity into the regular curriculum for our students," he said.

"When you walk into PS 69, you hear children singing, playing both violin and keyboard. There's no doubt that our rise in math scores can be attributed to their exposure to the 'mathematics' of music," he added.

ETM has expanded nationally and offers its services to schools around the US, including an affiliate office in Los Angeles, CA. For more information, visit ETM's website at www.etmonline.org.



YURIDIA PEÑA

■ Some of the keyboards ETM provided to PS 102, D-4, Manhattan. During the course of the school year, students will learn how to read music and play it.