

CTA president tells Tahoe educators it's time to unify

By Kathryn Reed

When those in education take a stance against colleagues – as in administrators vs. unions, K-12 v. community colleges, classified vs. certificated – the message the public hears is disenfranchisement among the ranks.

“We are more defined by what separates us than what binds us,” Dean Vogel told a group of educators Monday night at Lake Tahoe Community College.

Vogel, who has been president of the California Teachers Association for nearly a year, was invited to speak by the college's Classified Employees Union and Faculty Association. The former just unionized and joined the CTA.



CTA President Dean Vogel speaks May 7 at Lake Tahoe Community College.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

“What we don't do enough of is coming together and talking in

groups like this," Vogel said.

An array of people was in the college theater – from K-12 teachers to LTCC's president to a college board member.

Vogel said it's time people in the profession start having conversations with parents and the community as a whole so they know what is going on, so they understand what is happening in the classroom, the impact of decisions by people who are far removed from the classroom, and what funding cuts mean.

"I've yet to meet a teacher who says all this testing stuff makes good sense," Vogel said.

But he says when he meets with Arne Duncan, U.S. secretary of Education, and others in Washington the talk is all about testing.

"They don't understand they have the capacity to stop this," Vogel said of the nonstop testing of students. "The argument always is you have to assess kids. They don't understand what that means."

Computer based assessment of students could be a federal mandate in 2015. But the technology is not there for everyone.

Vogel added that policymakers have talked about funding universities based on how students test out. He touched on how a degree from a CSU or UC used to be within reach for a middle class family. Now it can be \$35,000 – what Stanford used to cost.

Money and testing are the two words that permeate discussions about education. Students and learning seem to have been lost in the conversation.

That may not change as another election season gets under way.

Vogel said it's critical the education community tap into the

73 percent of voters who are happy with their schools. Vogel said it's important to look at people who have voted in the past five elections. Those are solid voters.

With Gov. Jerry Brown expected to release the May revised budget for 2012-13 next week, all eyes are on Sacramento. But already those in education know the coffers will be diminished if voters say nay to the governor's proposal on the November ballot. That is money to keep funding levels – not something to add to the bottom line.