# LAB SCHOOLS

## HAVE INNOVATION DOWN TO A SCIENCE

BY SHERRY POSNICK-GOODWIN

**IF YOU ARE A FAN** of the Emmy Award-winning show "Grey's Anatomy," you know it is set in a university "teaching hospital," which provides education and training to future and current doctors, while offering patients the latest cutting-edge treatments in life-and-death situations.

Serving a similar function for educators instead of doctors are "teaching schools" with university ties. They're facilities where all participants are lifelong learners, ranging from university professors and college students to pre-K–12 teachers and their pupils. Known as "lab schools" or "professional development schools," these campuses offer opportunities for:

- Future teachers who want to apply theory to real classrooms.
- CSU professors who want to keep up with what's happening in pre-K–12 schools to keep instruction relevant.
- College researchers who need a facility to observe students for studies about learning and behavior.
- K-12 teachers seeking new ideas from university professors and the next generation of teachers while sharing their own expertise.
- Children who benefit from *all of the above* in a dynamic, cutting-edge environment.

Many former lab schools stopped operating in this mode, trading innovation for pacing guides under NCLB. A few remain, and it is hoped more will flourish in this new era of local control as educators think outside the box and take advantage of an amazing resource — higher education — available in their own backyard. Here's a look at three lab schools that have innovation down to a science.

*Play teaches thinking skills, as Amelie Castro and Gus White discover (right). Meanwhile, Kate Ha and Siriana Thampi work together on indoor plants.*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT BUSCHMAN

Find "behind the scenes" photos from each of the lab schools at cta.org/educator.

# The CDES Lab School

**ASSOCIATIONS INVOLVED:**

UNITED FACULTY OF NORTH ORANGE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT
CALIFORNIA SCHOOL EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
CALIFORNIA FACULTY ASSOCIATION, CSU FULLERTON

## THE MISSION OF LAB SCHOOLS:

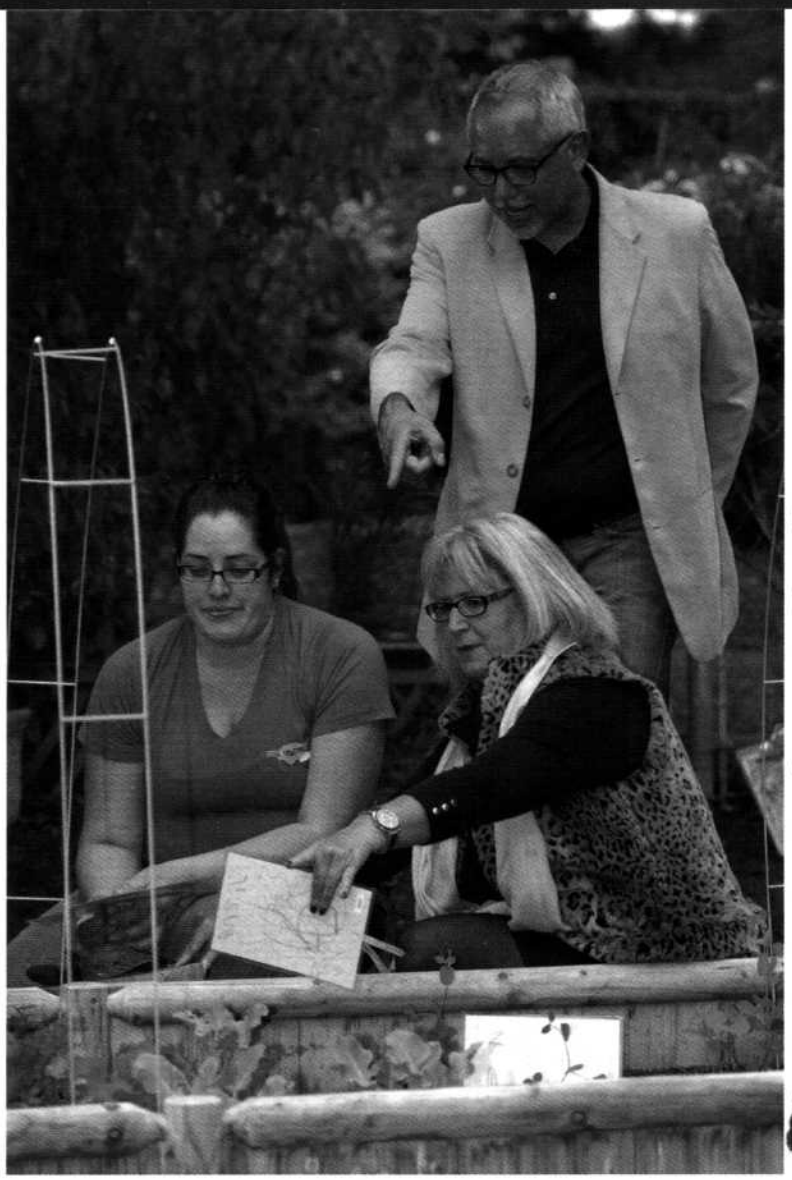
–Preparation of new teachers.
–Faculty development.
–Inquiry directed at the improvement of practice.
–Enhanced student achievement.

*Source: National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)*

**PRESCHOOLERS ARE SO USED TO** adults observing them that they hardly take notice of them at Fullerton College's Child Development and Educational Studies Lab School.

"Adults with clipboards taking notes become like furniture as the children go about their busy day," says Tom Chiaromonte, who jointly oversees the "demonstration" early childhood program with Patricia Green Pappas.

The early childhood education professors, members of United Faculty of North Orange County Community College District, hold lecture classes on site. For the "lab" part of their courses, college students walk down the hall to classrooms to observe children engaged in learning activities and play — and try out various teaching strategies, working under the supervision of college faculty and Lab School teachers.



*"It's a constant learning experience," says student Monessa Hernandez, here with* ***Tom Chiaromonte*** *and* ***Patricia Green****.*

The school's philosophy is based on the Reggio Emilia Approach developed in Italy, which promotes nature-based learning and a constructivist curriculum determined by children's interests.

"Nothing is prepackaged. We have evolving curriculum that changes regularly," says Chiaromonte of learning activities that include "art in the atelier," music, gardening, cooking, and construction in the building studio.

At one time there was a special room with a one-way mirror for adults to observe children, but that was turned into a room for children to experiment with light and shadow.

"The benefit to college students is that our lab is part of our department and a place where they can take what they learned from theory to application to practice," says Pappas. "It helps us turn out successful teachers. Some school districts have told us that we produce the most effective teachers they've had."

"I think it works out very well," says Monessa Hernandez, a Fullerton College student who plans on teaching preschool. "It's a constant learning experience."

Lab tech and California Mentor preschool teacher Karin Pavelek enjoys teaching both children and college students simultaneously. She doesn't mind explaining things as she goes along, because there is no better preparation for teaching preschool than hands-on practice, says the California School Employees Association member.

*"Without schools like these, it would be difficult for researchers to get our work done," says CSU professor* ***Kate Bono****.*

CSU Fullerton child studies associate professor Kate Bono received permission to observe children for a study on the role that language and speech play in a preschooler's "self-regulation," defined as the ability to control one's behavior or emotions in response to situational demands that influences academic success.

"They were very accommodating and supportive of the research I conducted here," says Bono, a California Faculty Association (CFA) member whose own children attended the Lab School. "Without schools like these, it would be difficult for researchers to get our work done."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT BUSCHMAN


*"Visual literacy" is modeled by CSU San Marcos literacy professor* ***Laurie Stowell*** *in the classroom of* ***Dayna Shanahan****.*

*Having college students as role models helps children see higher education as something that's important and obtainable, says* ***Laura Guyse****.*

**FOURTH-GRADERS MAKE ICE CREAM** in the school yard with the help of UC San Diego students. Furiously shaking plastic bags of milk, they discover salt lowers the melting rate of ice as their teacher, Erin McIlroy, watches.

Second-graders gather around iPads to see their school on Google Maps. As the view from above gets closer and closer, they understand the perspective of an astronaut or a bird looking down. The "visual literacy" lesson is modeled by CSU San Marcos literacy professor Laurie Stowell in the classroom of Dayna Shanahan.

Second- and third-graders play a theater game called Zip Zap, which helps them distinguish between fact and opinion, while CSU San Marcos arts professor Merryl Goldberg demonstrates a way to incorporate the arts into everyday curriculum for teacher Laura Guyse.

At Foothill Oak Elementary School, learning has become fun again, thanks to partnerships with local universities. Vista Teachers Association members say the collabo-

## Foothill Oak Elementary School

**ASSOCIATIONS INVOLVED:**

VISTA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
CALIFORNIA FACULTY ASSOCIATION, CSU SAN MARCOS

*Youngsters like Renee Williams and Emily Hilarios perform hands-on experiments observed by college students, who work under the supervision of CSU professors.*

ration with CFA members and UC professors has infused the campus with new vitality and creativity and provided strategies for transitioning to the Common Core.

The transformation coincided with the arrival of Principal Erin English. She came to Foothill Oak, which has mostly English learners, after years of working in a wealthier district. She saw wonderful teachers at her new school, but little in the way of resources to help them grow as professionals. So she decided to take advantage of "free" professional development by partnering with local colleges. At first staff were skeptical, but most have embraced the change.

The school has several programs with universities: UC San Diego's environmental engineer program called Global Ties, where university students work with fourth-graders on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics); the CSU San Marcos DREAM Project, which pairs arts professors with teachers; a PE program run by a professor in the CSUSM kinesiology department; and a CSUSM program where future teachers mentor and tutor migrant students. The school had its highest number of "proficient" and "advanced" third-graders since 2004 due to college mentorships.

"My kids are engaged," says McIlroy, whose students are part of the STEM program. "They are working with future scientists who are smart and amazing. I'm by no means an expert in science and engineering, so I'm learning right along with them."

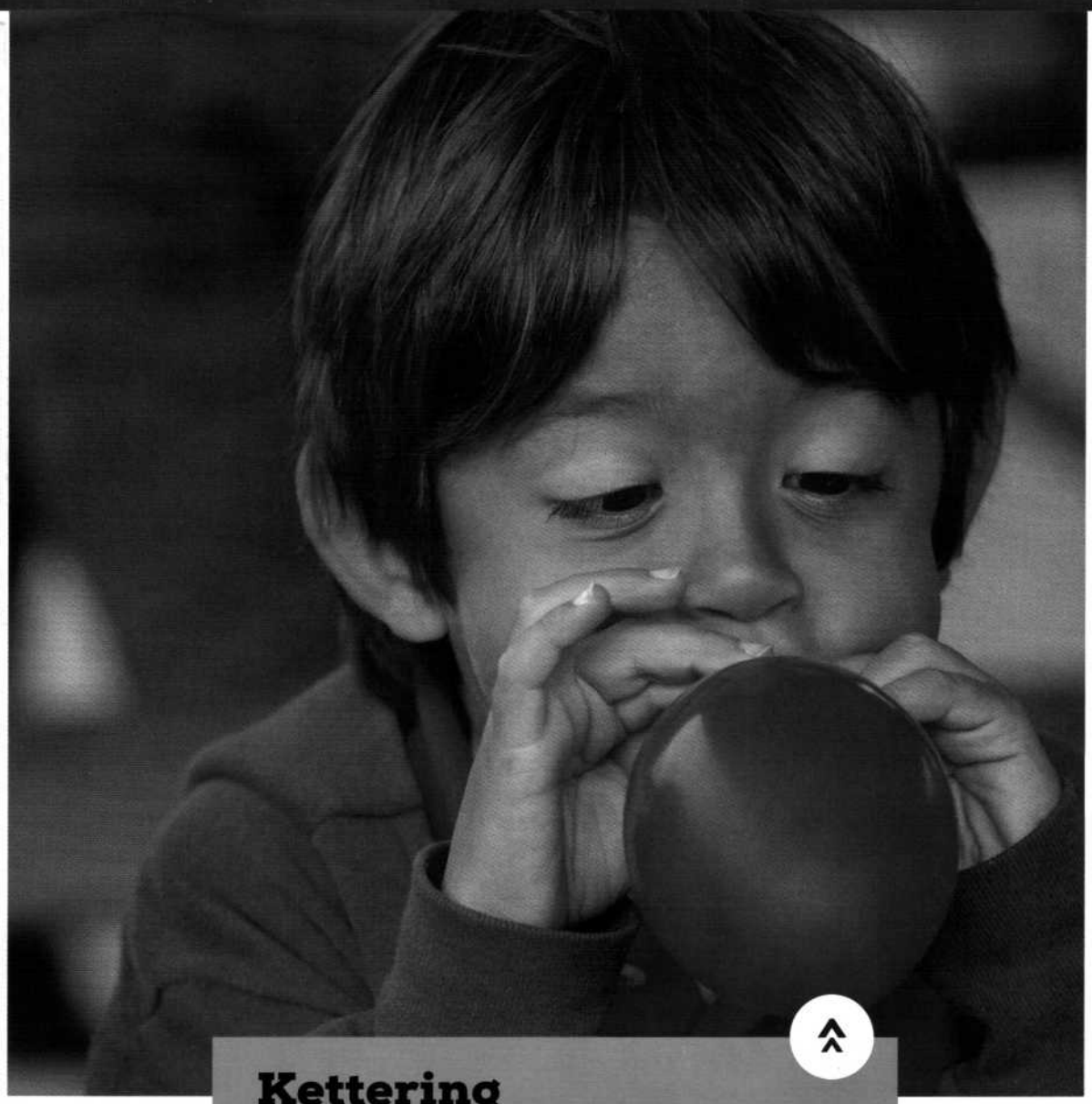
"I love having Cal State professors share the knowledge and research of what they know," says Shanahan. "Sometimes we get a little overwhelmed and a fresh perspective is helpful."

Having college students as role models helps children see higher education as something that's important and obtainable in their future, adds Guyse.


*"My kids are engaged," says **Erin McIlroy**, here with CSU students Vinay Venkatesh, Ambuj Punn, Victoria Jann and Tu Lan. "They are working with future scientists who are smart and amazing."*

From a college instructor's point of view, Foothill Oak is also a gold mine.

"It grounds me in the reality of what's going on in schools, because otherwise we're a bit removed from it," says Goldberg. "It provides me a chance to see what teachers are thinking about and how they are implementing the Common Core. It's important to understand what's happening today, as we train teachers for the future."



*While children blow up balloons, like Connor Aguirre is doing, theory becomes a reality they can see and touch and understand.*

# Kettering Elementary School

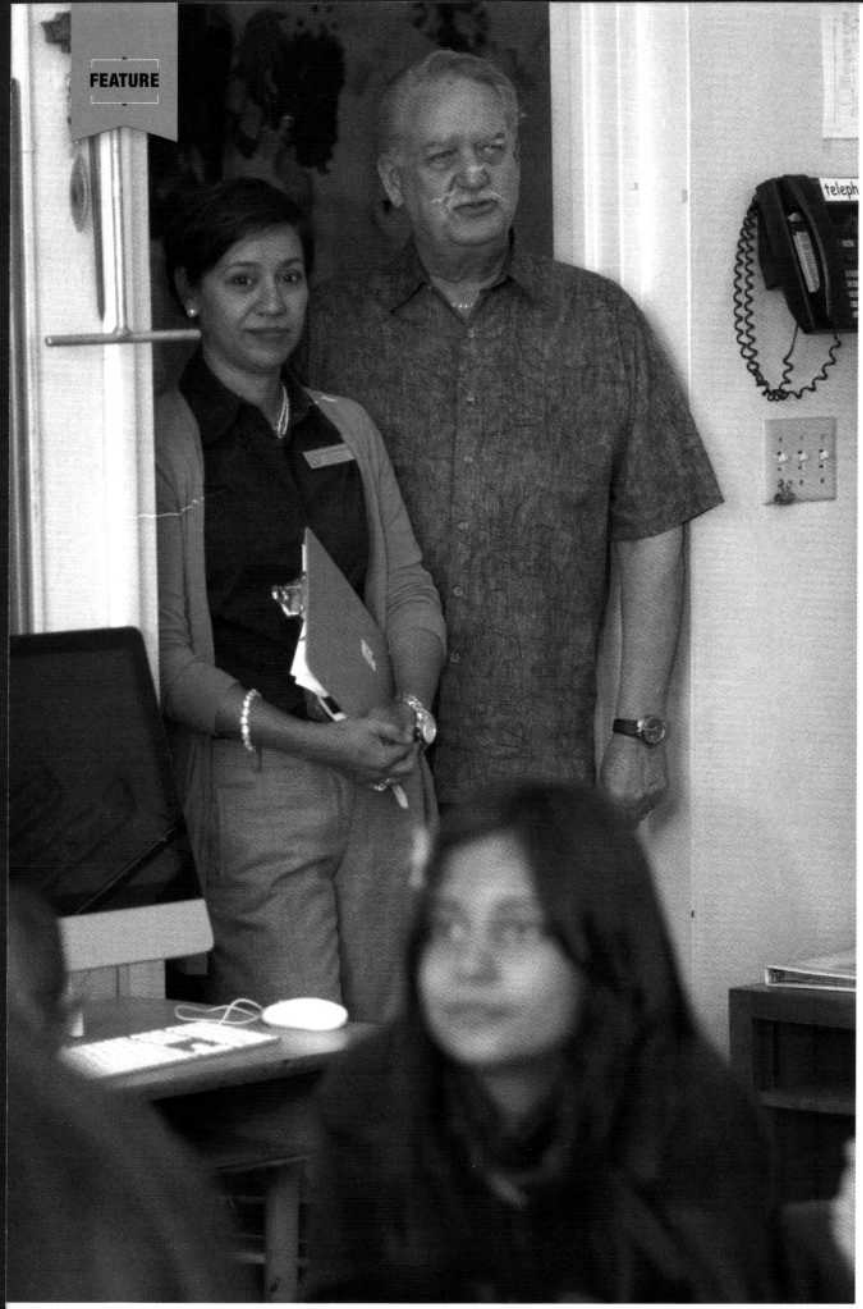
**ASSOCIATIONS INVOLVED:**

TEACHERS ASSOCIATION OF LONG BEACH
CALIFORNIA FACULTY ASSOCIATION, CSU LONG BEACH

**UNDERGRADS FROM CSU LONG BEACH** hope the second time is the charm when it comes to teaching science lessons to elementary students. They presented original lessons to Kettering students a few months ago in small groups, and discovered (surprise, surprise!) that things don't always go as planned. So now they are back, with modified lessons, to try again with a different group of students.

Some college students teach youngsters the difference between solids, liquids and gas. Others teach about electricity. All incorporate state science standards for each grade, says CSU Long Beach science coordinator Tim Williamson, CFA.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT BUSCHMAN



*"My students now understand that for children and teaching, there's a fine line between cognitive understanding and being entertained," says* ***Susan Gomez-Zwiep****, here observing students with* ***Tim Williamson****.*

Amy Valinsky Fillipow

The future teachers then go in the library to "debrief" about what went right or wrong. Some admit that they were thrown by the inclusion of students with special needs, but were able to scaffold instruction and switch gears.

"It was a great experience," says Hai Bui. "I can't wait to have my own classroom. It really boosted my confidence."

Having the opportunity to try out theory in an actual classroom is priceless, say professors.

"You can't teach this stuff," says Susan Gomez-Zwiep, a professor at the university's Science Department of Education and CFA member. "My students now understand that for children and teaching, there's a fine line between cognitive understanding and being entertained."

Youngsters perform hands-on experiments under the supervision of college students, who work under the supervision of CSU professors while Teachers Association of Long Beach (TALB) members look on and offer advice and encouragement as needed.

While children pour water into containers, blow up balloons and watch lightbulbs turn on after hooking wires to batteries, theory becomes a reality they can see and touch and understand. Researchers might describe what's taking place as a series of experiments resulting in positive outcomes shown by students' skyrocketing science scores.

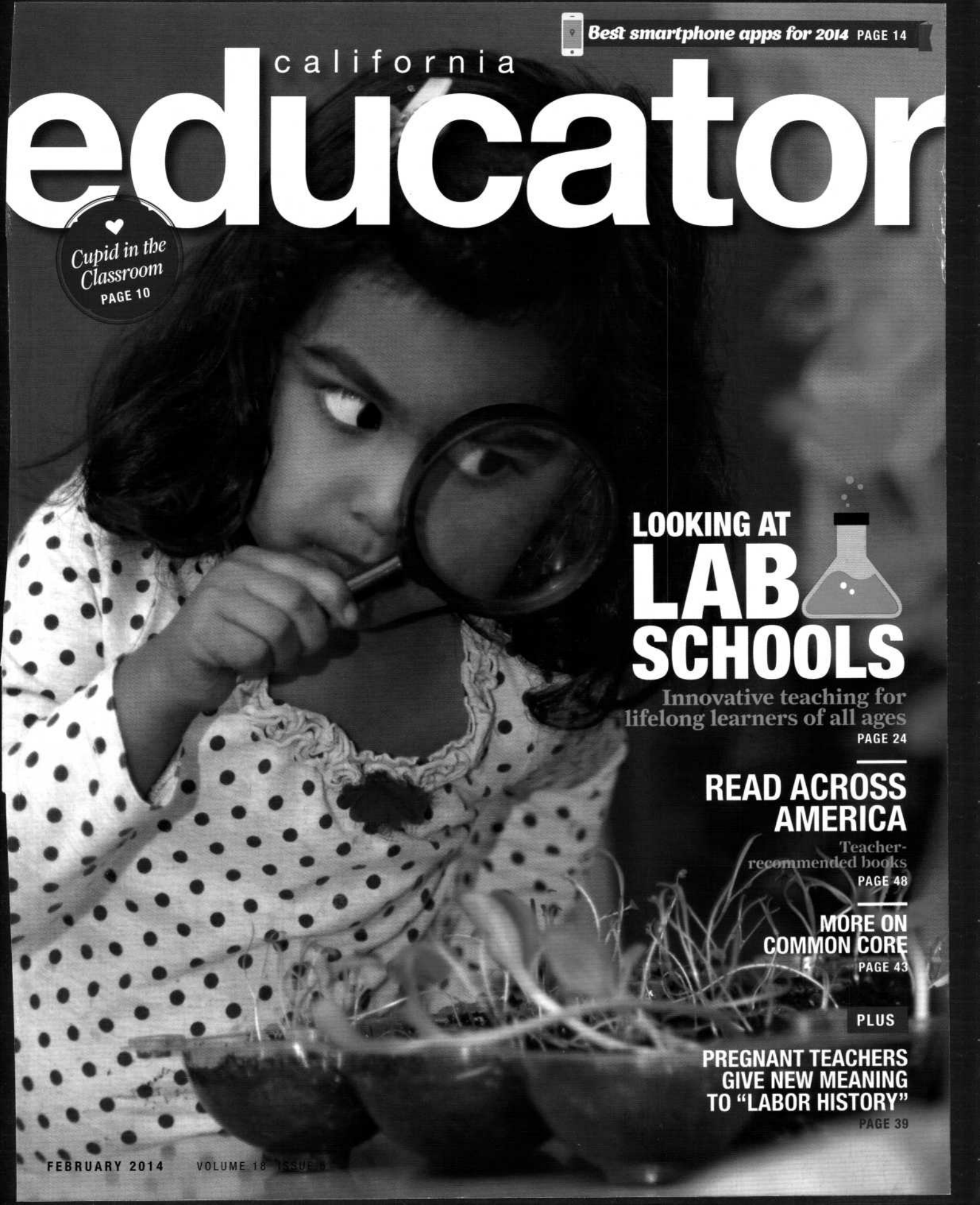
Kim Watten, Kettering teacher and TALB member, loves having university visitors. "We see creative things that we might want to try. Sometimes I'll think, 'Wow, I never thought about teaching it that way.'"

Amy Valinsky-Fillipow of Kettering believes the program helps TALB members stay fresh, especially since funds for teacher training have evaporated.

"Just because I've been teaching for 16 years doesn't mean I can't learn something from these young people," she says. "When someone fresh comes in who is excited and motivated, it's the perfect opportunity for me to get new ideas and use that as a springboard to grow."

Williamson says the program provides "tons of reflection" at all levels of the teaching profession.

"You might say our partnership is a win-win situation for everyone."


Best smartphone apps for 2014 PAGE 14
california
educator
Cupid in the Classroom
PAGE 10
LOOKING AT
LAB
SCHOOLS
Innovative teaching for lifelong learners of all ages
PAGE 24
READ ACROSS AMERICA
Teacher-recommended books
PAGE 48
MORE ON COMMON CORE
PAGE 43
PLUS
PREGNANT TEACHERS GIVE NEW MEANING TO "LABOR HISTORY"
PAGE 39
FEBRUARY 2014
VOLUME 18 ISSUE 6