

California Students Rally Schools Statewide to Send 1 Million Postcards to Governor to say YES to EFTC

Students invite schools across California to unite behind historic statewide campaign to send 1 million postcards on World Teachers' Day.

PANORAMA CITY, CA, UNITED STATES, August 31, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- One million postcards. One decision. That is the ambitious new goal of [St. Genevieve Parish Schools](#) students who are taking their student-led "A Valiant Effort" campaign statewide, challenging schools throughout California to join them in urging Governor Gavin Newsom to say YES to the Education Freedom Tax Credit (EFTC).



CA Catholic Superintendents zooming with St. Gen's student leaders

The students plan to mobilize schools, educators, parents and families throughout California to send 1 million postcards to Governor Newsom on October 5 — World Teachers' Day.

The latest step in their campaign came when St. Genevieve students met by Zoom with California's Catholic school superintendents, gathered in Monterey for their two-day fall meeting.

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Samara Palko, Education Director, California Catholic Conference

The students, members of St. Genevieve's Leadership and Advocacy course offered in partnership with Seton Hill University in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, had sent each superintendent one of their purple campaign T-shirts bearing the message: "Governor Newsom — Say YES to the EFTC."

When the Zoom screen opened, the students were delighted to discover the superintendents wearing them.

The meeting gave students an opportunity to compare notes with education leaders from across California about what individual dioceses have been doing to advance the EFTC. But the students also came with a challenge of their own: take “A Valiant Effort” back to their dioceses. Encourage school leaders to get involved. Educate families. Start local campaigns. And help build a statewide movement large enough to be heard in Sacramento.

“They were awesome!” said Samara Palko, Director of Education for the California Catholic Conference, who attended the meeting. “They really sparked a fire in our group.”

That is precisely what the students hoped to accomplish.

As their campaign has expanded, students say they have made a surprising discovery: many of the political, education and community leaders they encounter are largely unaware of the EFTC and the magnitude of the funding opportunity it could represent for California families.

Among Californians who are familiar with the program, polling indicates substantial support for participation.

Students have also encountered a recurring concern — that the EFTC is primarily about private-school tuition or could somehow hurt public schools. They are quick to point out that the program can benefit students attending public, charter and private schools. Qualified educational expenses can include tutoring, after-school and summer programs, educational technology, services for students with disabilities and other educational needs.

They also emphasize a distinction that is often overlooked: while taxpayers cannot earmark their contributions for individual students, donors may designate a participating school or school district they wish their contributions to support.

For the students, that changes the conversation.

They argue that the question should not be public schools versus private schools. It should be whether California will participate in a federal program capable of bringing substantial new educational resources to California children — or allow those dollars to benefit children in other states.

The students’ campaign has grown considerably since it began at St. Genevieve.

In April, four students traveled to Sacramento for an in-person meeting with Brooks Allen, Education Advisor to Governor Newsom. Originally scheduled for 30 minutes, the conversation continued for more than an hour as Allen listened carefully to the students’ presentation, asked

questions and commended them for their preparation and advocacy.

When a student asked how they should respond to people who insist Governor Newsom will never say yes, Allen told them that no decision had been made. He explained that the administration was continuing to study the program as federal guidance developed and encouraged the students to keep campaigning.

They did.

Their growing coalition now includes education advocates from across the political and educational spectrum. Jorge Elorza, CEO of Democrats for Education Reform, has worked with the students and has become a strong advocate for governors to participate in the EFTC. Students have also extended an invitation to former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, who served in the Obama administration and has publicly supported Democratic governors opting into the program.

Just one day before addressing California's Catholic school superintendents, students hosted Neuriel Shore, Executive Director of Teach Coalition California and Nevada. Teach Coalition has been actively engaged in efforts surrounding EFTC participation, giving students another opportunity to learn how advocates can educate communities, build coalitions and move an issue forward.

For St. Genevieve students, these meetings are more than opportunities to hear from prominent education leaders. They are their classroom.

Through their Leadership and Advocacy course, students are learning civic engagement by actually practicing it — researching public policy, meeting decision-makers, building coalitions, communicating with the public and discovering firsthand how citizens can participate in the democratic process.

And now they are preparing for their most ambitious lesson yet.

In May, St. Genevieve students mailed 15,000 purple postcards to Governor Newsom asking him to opt California into the EFTC.

This time, they are thinking much bigger.

During their meeting with the superintendents, students asked each diocese to help spread the campaign from school to school: educate their communities, distribute postcards, encourage students and families to participate and invite other schools to join "A Valiant Effort."

Their thinking is simple:

One school mailed 15,000 postcards. Imagine what California can do together.

If one school community could generate 15,000 messages to Sacramento, the students believe schools throughout the state can generate a million — or more.

One Million Postcards. One Day. One Message.

Governor Newsom: Keep California's education dollars in California. Say YES to the EFTC.

What began as a group of students learning how advocacy works has taken them from their classroom to Sacramento, into an extended meeting with the Governor's education advisor, into conversations with leading education advocates and now before California's Catholic school superintendents.

Along the way, the students say they have learned one lesson that may matter more than any other: if Californians do not know this opportunity exists, they cannot make their voices heard about whether California should participate.

So the students intend to make sure they know. They aren't alone in seeing the choice as increasingly clear. Democratic Colorado Gov. Jared Polis, who opted his state into the program, has called participation a "no-brainer." Former Obama Education Secretary Arne Duncan and Democrats for Education Reform CEO Jorge Elorza have used the same words in urging Democratic governors to participate.

On October 5, California students, teachers and families — from public, charter and private schools alike — are being called to come together with one voice, one million postcards and one message: Governor Newsom, say YES to the EFTC.

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