

CODESP NEWS

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

CODESP staff will be hitting the road again in the next few months. Our first trip this month will take us up Highway 99 as we visit districts in the **Bakersfield, Fresno and Merced** areas **January 23 – 25th**. Two group meetings will be held. The first will be at the **Kings COE in Hanford, January 24th** from 1:00 — 3:00 p.m. The next meeting will be at the **Tulare COE in Visalia, January 25th** from 8:00—10:00 a.m. Please let us know if you can attend either meeting.

Visiting the districts that we service is very helpful, not only for our members, but for us. As we have traveled throughout the state we have become more familiar with the particular needs of each area. CODESP member districts range from extremely large unified districts, county offices of education, and community college districts to very small rural elementary and high school districts. Producing job related, customized tests to fit every member district's requirements is our primary goal at CODESP.

On **February 7th** CODESP will be traveling even farther north to the **Red Bluff** area at the **Tehama Department of Education** and on **February 8th** we will be at **Chico Unified School District**. A visit to districts in the **Sacramento** area may also be added to this trip.

In early April, we will be having a training meeting on *Recruitment Strategies* in the **San Bernardino** area. May will include a trip to the **San Francisco/San Jose/Bay Area** for training. Exact dates and topics will be released as soon as possible. Check the website under Meeting Schedules as we will post the information as we receive details.

If you are interested in hosting and/or attending any of these meetings or would like a personal visit regarding membership, please give us a call and we will be glad to visit with you.

March MTM

The **March 23rd** Membership Training Meeting will be held at the **Vista Unified School District** from 10:00 a.m.—12 noon. The speaker will be Mike Wheeler, who will be discussing *Improving Your Interview Reliability*. Interviews provide the best opportunity to evaluate candidates' human relation skills, but we must use them effectively for them to be reliable. CODESP staff will also be presenting new interviews that are available to members. Mike has been a frequent speaker at CODESP, WRIPAC and CSPCA meetings. He is a Personnel Research Analyst with the City of Los Angeles and teaches at local community colleges.

SUPPORT STAFF MEETING

Due to many requests from our members, we will be providing a support staff training session on *Hiring and Retaining Special Education Instructional Aides*. A similar program was held a few years ago and due to its success and continued interest we will be offering this training again.

The meeting will be on **March 2nd**, at the **Westminster School District** from 10:00 a.m. - 12 noon in the Board room.

The format of the meeting will be a panel discussion. Speakers will include aides, teachers, and administrators working in this area.

Participants are asked to bring concerns and suggestions regarding improving the recruitment and retention of these valuable employees.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The recent CSPCA conference sessions emphasized the importance of customer service. In public school districts we have several customers, including students, parents, applicants, co-workers, etc. One department that must provide high quality customer service is the human resource department. Angry customers can lead to security issues or legal complaints.

The demands put on human resource staffs can cause extreme stress. Trying to please administrators and dealing with applicants who constantly demand immediate services and information is often difficult to manage. Customers expect public employees to have the answer and although most work under clear rules, regulations and policies, they expect employees to be flexible to change when needed to meet their demands. According to Jim Wesson, from J.D. Wesson & Associates, the goal for delivering excellent service while dealing with difficult situations is, "Maintain control of the situation by controlling yourself." The goal in customer service is to understand our customers by committing ourselves to listening in a courteous and respectful manner to understand each customer's service needs. We need to take personal responsibility for making sure each customer is provided with the prompt and accurate service he or she deserves.

The most difficult situation is when a customer tries to lure an employee into a confrontation. Make sure to professionally acknowledge the person, focus on the issues and use professional power to control the person. Jim Wesson suggests using distraction techniques such as:

"I can see your point, however..."

"I appreciate your frustration, however..."

"I understand your concern, however..."

These phrases can keep employees focused on the issues. It helps to understand where the customer is coming from and to deliver information to them from their point of view. Always explain the reasons for decisions. For example, most employment related decisions are based on policies, procedures, and the law. When possible give them choices, no one likes to be forced into anything. Give them the chance to cooperate and if not take action.

According to another speaker, communication's consultant Nicole Reynolds, by using conflict resolution skills, public employees will respond, rather than react, to situations; listen rather than defend; discuss rather than debate; include other viewpoints in generating options rather than demand; collaborate rather than compete; empathize rather than criticize; solve problems rather than argue; be more adaptable and flexible; use words to redirect negative communication of others; praise in a way that reinforces behavior; criticize in a way that people are motivated to change and yet still feel like valued human beings; motivate disagreeable people to voluntary compliance; talk with people so that neither of you loses face; and do not take insults personally or react in anger.

The key to good customer service is professionalism at all times and maintaining control. Learning how to recognize when we are losing control and then regaining it is important. It is necessary to remember that any time a customer comes in contact with any aspect of an organization he or she can use that opportunity to judge the quality of service the organization is providing. How do you want your organization to be judged?

WELCOME NEW CODESP MEMBERS!

Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District—Dr. Bob Howell/Carol Waggoner
Glendale Community College District—Diane Fiero/Leticia Estrada
Santa Clara County Office of Education—Philip Gordillo/Teri Compian
Tehama Department of Education—Allen Eggleston/Jenny Clausen

AWARD WINNERS!

At the recent California School Personnel Commissioner's Association state conference in Orange, two CODESP member district's directors received important awards.

Chuck Acrie, director at the Vista Unified School District, won the award for Director of the Year. Chuck has always been a great supporter of CODESP and we congratulate him on this much deserved award.

The Dr. Schuyler C. Joyner Award is given for the most distinguished merit system personnel project, activity or service. This year's recipient was Dale Hanson, director at Long Beach Community College District. This is a very prestigious award and we applaud his hard work and dedication to fair employment selection practices.

Special Education Aide Videos

CODESP has obtained additional copies of the video, *So You Want to be a Special Education Substitute* which was developed by the Orange County Department of Education.

The video shows a prospective Special Education Substitute Instructional Aide on a tour of various classrooms. A district employee explains the types of students the Aide might work with as they visit each classroom and they watch the children interact with employees. The prospective employee asks many questions related to the duties and expectations of an Aide working with various types of Special Education students.

Many districts have found it to be a valuable video to show during the selection process for Instructional Aides as a realistic preview of what this demanding job requires. It could save your district time and money in screening out people who do not want to perform the requirements of these positions. Copies are available at no cost to members. If you do not already have a copy, give us a call.

NEW TEST ITEMS

In our continued effort to develop new test items to include in C-CIB (CODESP Computerized Item Bank), we have recently added new items to the following test banks: Personnel; Data Processing; Word Processing; Printing; Accounting; Science; Library; and Math.

Increasing our written test item bank and developing other selection materials such as interview questions, performance examinations, situational interviews, supplemental application forms, etc. is a priority project at CODESP. If you have subject matter experts available or have access to materials you would like test questions developed from, please contact us.

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CSPCA MERIT ACADEMY

The California School Personnel Commissioner's Association has announced the establishment of the Merit Academy which is designed for new and aspiring merit system directors. Training programs such as this are necessary to assist in the development of new human resource analysts and directors.

The training will consist of 5 Saturday sessions, from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. The cost for the sessions is \$500.00 per student, which includes tuition, books and materials.

Faculty will consist of experienced practitioners, merit system directors and attorneys. Locations will be determined by student enrollment. It is anticipated that classes will start no later than March, 2001.

The curriculum includes: History of the Merit System; Education Code; Board/Commission Functions; Role of the Director; Relationships (Board/Personnel Commission/Superintendent/Personnel Director); Commissioner Selection/Retention; Commission Budget Process; Brown Act; Recruitment/Selection; Classification/Compensation; Personnel Policies/Commission Rules; Workers Compensation; Discrimination Law; Fair Labor Standard Act Issues; EEOC Guidelines; Internet Resources; Networking in the Profession; Collective Bargaining Issues with Merit Systems; Litigation in Merit Districts; and Disciplinary Actions.

If you are interested, e-mail Richard Ide at Ride@HUSD.k12.ca.us or call 510-794-2600.

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