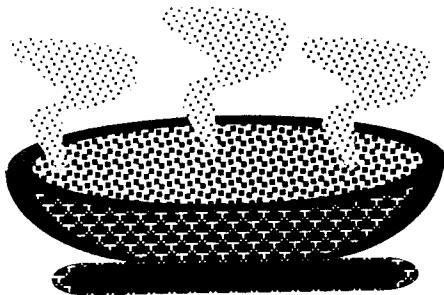


Stone Soup



BUDDHIST CHURCHES OF AMERICA
FEDERATION OF DHARMA SCHOOL TEACHERS' LEAGUES NEWSLETTER
Volume 37 Number 1 November 2025

Message from Ministerial Advisor Rev Kaz Nakata - Fresno



Princess Tamahi and Eshinni:
Sharing Shinran's Family
Story with Our Students

I have three daughters, and all of them are currently attending the Fresno Betsuin Dharma School. My eldest daughter, Kanon Nakata (17), who is a high school senior, graduated from the Hongwanji ministerial school and received her Tokudo ordination this summer. I feel deeply honored by her accomplishment as a Dharma School student and as the youngest reverend in the BCA.

As Dharma School teachers, many of us regularly tell stories about Shinran Shōnin—his childhood at Mt. Hiei, his meeting with Hōnen, and his life of walking among farmers and common people. But we do not always talk about the people who supported him most closely at home.

This article introduces one such figure: Princess Tamahi, a woman long connected to Shinran in Hongwanji tradition, and how her story stands alongside that of Eshinni, Shinran's well-known wife. It also explains why Fresno Betsuin is now including Princess Tamahi in our annual memorial service with Eshinni and Kakushinni.

You may find parts of this story helpful as you create lessons or share short Dharma Expressions with your students.

A Visit to Saigan-ji in Kyoto

Two years ago, I had the chance to walk through Kyoto with former bishop Rev. Kodo Umezawa. We visited Saigan-ji, a Jodo Shinshu temple located just south of Kyoto Station. There, Rev. Umezawa said something that surprised me:

In the past, within the Hongwanji, there was a custom of honoring a woman called Princess Tamahi as the wife of Shinran Shōnin.

Although I had studied Jodo Shinshu at the university level, I realized I had never heard this story. My curiosity was immediately awakened. At Saigan-ji, the resident minister, Rev. Yamashita, explained that:

- Saigan-ji is the family temple of Princess Tamahi and the noble Kujō family.
- The Kujō family is also known to us through Lady Takeko Kujō, the founder of the Buddhist Women's Association.
- Saigan-ji was established about 800 years ago as the mausoleum of Princess Tamahi.
- Outside the Hondo, there is a grave dedicated to her.

During a recent archaeological investigation, an urn was discovered in that grave. This finding has encouraged new research and raised the

possibility of firmer historical evidence of Princess Tamahi's life.

Standing there, I felt that the past was not simply "gone." Instead, it seemed to be quietly alive, waiting for us to listen.

Eshinni and Tamahi: Two Names, One Deep Respect

In our tradition, the wife of Shinran who is most clearly known from historical documents is Eshinni.

- In her letters, known as the Eshinni-shōsoku, she writes about life with Shinran.
- She describes raising six children and shares very human details—money worries, daily work, and her deep trust in the Nembutsu.

Because of these letters, and other documents, Hongwanji has long regarded Eshinni as Shinran's wife, from a careful, historical point of view.

At the same time, in later biographies and oral traditions, another name appears again and again: Princess Tamahi.

- She is described as a daughter of the noble Kanezane Kujō.
- In some traditions, she is remembered as Shinran's principal wife.
- In other records, Tamahi and Eshinni are treated as two different women; in still others, Tamahi is understood as another name for Eshinni.

Scholars such as Prof. Susumu Takeda (Ryukoku University) have pointed out this "dual transmission." For us as Dharma School teachers, the most important point is not to "solve" the historical puzzle, but to see what it tells us about the hearts of people in the past:

- Over centuries, people loved and respected Shinran's family.
- They tried to honor the woman (or women) who supported Shinran's life and teaching.
- The name Tamahi—which means something like "brilliant jewel"—came to express that deep appreciation.

Lady Yoshiko Ōtani, wife of 23rd Monshu, once wrote that:

- The beautiful name "Tamahi" can be seen as a symbolic title for Shinran's wife.
- In this way, Princess Tamahi and Eshinni can overlap in meaning.
- What remains constant is the heart of reverence and gratitude toward Shinran's wife.

In other words, whether we say "Eshinni," "Princess Tamahi," or both, we are pointing to the same deep respect for the person who supported Shinran's life of Nembutsu.

What This Means for Fresno Betsuin

At Fresno Betsuin, our Buddhist Women's Association (FBBWA) carefully reflected on this background.

- For many years, some members have quietly cherished the name Princess Tamahi.
- At the same time, we continue to honor Eshinni and Kakushinni (Shinran's daughter, who helped preserve his teaching and his mausoleum).

Out of gratitude for this whole tradition, FBBWA has decided:

- Beginning in October 2026, our annual memorial will be called the Princess Tamahi, Eshinni, and Kakushinni Memorial Service.

To support this change:

- A new portrait of Princess Tamahi has been commissioned from a Buddhist artist in Kyoto who specializes in restoring temple paintings.
- The image is based on the statue of Princess Tamahi enshrined at Saigan-ji.
- Her portrait will be placed in our Hondo beside those of Eshinni and Kakushinni.

This is more than just "adding another picture to the wall."

It is a way of saying:

- We remember the women who supported Shinran's life and teaching.
- We are thankful for the generations of Hongwanji followers who kept their names

- alive.
- We want our children and youth to grow up knowing that the Nembutsu was sustained not only by great teachers, but also by families, by women, and by quiet acts of love and support.

How Dharma School Teachers Might Use This Story

Here are a few simple ways you might share this story at Dharma School:

For younger students (K-3):

- Tell a short story:
 - “Shinran had a wife named Eshinni, and in Japan there is also a tradition of calling her Tamahi, which means ‘beautiful jewel.’ She helped Shinran and cared for their family. Just like we remember Shinran, we also remember the people who helped him.”
 - Ask: “Who are the people who help you every day?”

For upper elementary and middle school:

- Introduce the idea that history sometimes has more than one version, and that both facts and feelings matter.
- Explain that people in the past used the name Tamahi to express gratitude and respect for Shinran’s wife.
- Connect this to how we remember our own ancestors with both facts and feelings.

For high school students:

- Talk about how traditions form: documents, oral stories, temple customs.
- Explore why it is important to honor women’s contributions in religious history.
- Discuss what it means that Fresno Betsuin is choosing to name and honor Princess Tamahi, Eshinni, and Kakushinni together.

In all cases, the main message for our students can be:

The Nembutsu did not come to us through Shinran alone.

It also came through the love, courage, and steady support of his family and of many people—especially women—whose names we sometimes forget.

As we share these stories, may we help our children see that the Dharma is carried forward not only by famous teachers, but also by families, caretakers, and communities—by people very much like the ones in their own lives today.

In Gassho,
Rev Kaz Nakata
FDSTL Ministerial Advisor

SAVE THE DATE! FDSTL 2026 Conference Making the Dharma Come Alive Hosted by the Central Cal District DSTL

The Central California District Dharma School Teachers League is hosting the annual FDSTL conference at the Fresno Betsuin on April 18-19, 2026. The conference will feature Rev Marvin Harada, BCA Bishop and Yasu Ishida, magician, storyteller, artist.

Details and registration instructions will be sent out soon.

BCA Music Committee Lyric Contest Announcement

BCA Music Committee is grateful to the FDSTL for sponsoring the youth gatha lyrics contest again for this Dharma School year. We encourage teachers to remind students that they may work on the lyrics individually or in pairs or small groups if not as a Dharma School class collaborative project. The submission instructions and entry form can be accessed off the BCA Music webpage:

<https://www.buddhistchurchesofamerica.org/music>

Deadline for submitted lyrics to be eligible for the popular vote at the BCA National Council

Meeting/Northwest District Convention is January 31, 2026. The final deadline for all lyric entries is May 1, 2026.

From the first BCA youth lyric contest, the winning lyrics created the new gathas "Storms and Peace" and "Light of Wisdom". The gatha videos produced are posted on BCA Music YouTube channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xdnvjp-jmyY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ClBSA7o7Sk>

In Gassho,
Kemi Nakabayashi & Donna Sasaki

The FDSTL Education Committee *Dedicated to providing you with teaching aids*

The central focus of the Buddhist Education Committee of the Federation of Dharma School Teachers Leagues is to improve the functioning of our Chapters. Last year, the Committee identified Teacher Training and Instructional Materials as the keys. This year we added the Teacher Survey to guide our future efforts

For Teacher Training, we sponsored two workshops this year via Zoom. First on September 20, 2025 we conducted the workshop "Reaching Out to the Next Generation of Dharma School Students" featuring Rev. Melissa Opel. This was followed by the workshop "Buddha in the Machine" on AI and its impact in the Dharma School classroom by Dr. Brant Horio of Ekoji Buddhist Temple. Both workshops were recorded and the materials and the recordings are available at our BCADharmaSchool.org website.

Direct links:

- Sep 20 workshop:
<https://sites.google.com/site/bcadharmaschool/home/news-events/september-20-2025-fdstl-workshop>
- Oct 4 workshop:
<https://sites.google.com/site/bcadharmaschool/home/news-events/october-4-2025-fdstl-workshop>

chool/home/news-events/october-4-2025-fdstl-workshop

Both workshops were very well received: Rev. Opel's talk with teachers who are interested in making the material more relevant to the contemporary student and Dr. Horio's talk regarding the use of AI which many of our students are using without understanding its limitations.

We continued to make incremental improvements to our Instructional Materials. We continue to add and improve lessons to our BCADharmaSchool.org site and completed our annual cleanup of the site including revision of the sidebar index. We are conducting a review of the FDSTL Curriculum workbooks to see what should be revised and placed at our BCADharmaSchool.org website. In addition, we are continuing to distribute the physical copies of the older FDSTL Curriculum Guides and Workbooks.

New this year is our attempt to find out what Dharma Schools and Teachers need though our Dharma School Teachers' Survey which is at: <https://forms.gle/VTqict5BGtWTeJpX7>

With this we hope to learn if our efforts are worthwhile and what are the areas that we need to work on that would help Dharma Schools and teachers. The deadline is November 15, 2025. The Committee will release a report to the FDSTL Board and hope to create an article in the spring Stone Soup.

Finally, this year, we were able to get a chapter to try out the suggestions in the Dharma School Quick Start Guide with San Luis Buddhist Church using the Guide to help them restart their Dharma School for the 2025-26 school year. The Education Committee met with them online and answered several questions. We hope to debrief their experience in December and at the end of the school year.

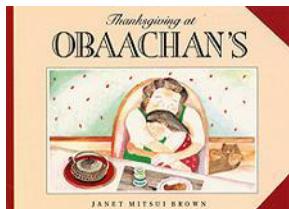
Other resources:

- FDSTL YouTube Channel
<https://www.youtube.com/@fdstl8980>
- FDSTL Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/FDSTL/>

If there are any questions or inquiries, please contact Mas Nishimura at nish221@gmail.com.

In Gassho,
Mas Nishimura
FDSTL Education Committee Chair

BCADharmaSchool.org Lesson Plan Spotlight



In every issue of the Stone Soup, we highlight several lessons in the BCADharmaSchool.org.

The first lesson that we present today is “Thanksgiving at Obaachan’s” by the OCBC Dharma School. This lesson starts with the reading of the book “Thanksgiving at Obaachan’s” by Janet Mitsui Brown.

This is followed by a class discussion of the student’s own family celebrations and events and an opportunity for the students to write and illustrate their own family’s celebration. The lesson is concluded with an opportunity for the students to share their writing and drawing.

Grades: 1, 2, 3
Lesson Plan:

<https://sites.google.com/site/bcadharmaschool/home/grades/2/thanksgiving-at-obaachans>



The second lesson is “Giving Compliments” by Debby Inenaga of Mountain View Buddhist Temple which she submitted on January 9, 2015. The objectives of the lesson are for students to: learn how to actively listen to others, how to give

a compliment, and experience how it feels to receive a compliment in preparation for Valentine’s Day.

First the students make Valentine’s Day cards for each student in class. Then distribute colored poster board to each student and ask the students to write their name in the center in large letters. Have the students sit in a circle with notepads and have the students come up with 5 questions that they want all students to answer. Now, go around the circle and have the students answer the questions. Each student should write down all the responses in their notepads. After everyone has answered all the questions, give each student a piece of candy to give to every other student. Ex. if there were 5 students in the class, give each student 4 pieces.



The teacher lays out all the colored poster boards on a table. The students look at their notes and writes a compliment to the student whose name was on the poster board and leave a piece of candy (on the poster board). Every student “rotates” clockwise until everyone is finished complimenting everyone else.

Grades: 5, 6

Lesson Plan:

<https://sites.google.com/site/bcadharmaschool/home/grades/5/giving-compliments>



The final lesson that we present today is “How Buddhist Women Pioneers Impact My Life” that came out of the FDSTL Conference on April 26, 2024 by a team of Rev. Kaz Nakata (Fresno), Darlene Bagshaw (Stockton), Camile Pating (San Francisco), Julie Watson (San Diego), Frank Yada (Orange County).

This multi-day lesson starts with a presentation(s) by the teacher of who Eshinni, Kakushinni, Lady Kujo, Kady Yoshiko Ohtani were and the time period that they lived in while the students journal the important facts. Then the students are asked to write about how each individual would act/be different if they lived today and what qualities the student finds admirable. After sharing, the students each (or in a group) decide on a woman to focus on for their final project.

The final presentation project could be anything such as: Community service project, poems or song lyrics, short form video, portrait or art depicting the woman, even a presentation to the Sangha. After completion, the student will present the project to the class. The lesson concludes with each student reflecting on their experience.



Grades: 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12

Lesson Plan:

<https://sites.google.com/site/bcadharmaschool/home/grades/7/eshinnikakushinnilady-kujolady-yoshiko-ohtani>

These are only a few of the lessons from over 80 lessons at the BCADharmaSchool.org site. We also continue to add to the list of resources and external links.

If you have a Lesson that works for you, please share. It does not need to be fleshed out; even an idea is fine. We will work with you to complete it. If you have any questions, please feel to contact Mas Nishimura at nish221@gmail.com.

Fred and Helen Nitta Scholarship



Attention High School Seniors: Nitta Scholarship 2026 Application Available Soon

In 1964, to commemorate their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, Fred and Helen Nitta of Watsonville, California, made a generous donation to the Buddhist Churches of America. Mr. Nitta was very active in Dharma School and what would later become the Federation of Dharma School Teachers' League (FDSTL). The Nitta's gift was always intended to honor and give recognition to an outstanding Jodo Shinshu Buddhist youth, and the FDSTL has been privileged to respect Fred and Helen Nitta's wish by choosing at least one worthy recipient each spring.

BCA high school seniors are invited to apply for the 2026 Nitta Scholarship by accessing information, the cover letter, and application on the [website: https://sites.google.com/view/nittascholarship/](https://sites.google.com/view/nittascholarship/). The scholarship award is \$1,000. The multiple-step application will be due on Monday, March 30, 2026. The scholarship recipient will be announced in April. Namo Amida Butsu.

In gassho,
Stacy Uyeda
FDSTL Fred and Helen Nitta Scholarship Chair

2025 Fred and Helen Nitta Scholarship Essays

This year we had two recipients of the Fred and Helen Nitta Scholarship. The awardees were Jacqueline Aochi of San Jose and Jeffrey Nishida of OCBC. While their essays have been published in the BCA Wheel of Dharma, we are including them here.

Jacqueline Aochi

The BCA theme and Rennyo Shonin's quote, "The Right Time is Now" resonates with me because, as a Buddhist, I strive to be mindful and present in each moment, which can be challenging. I often find myself reflecting on the past or worrying about the future, which can lead to me being more hesitant to take action or speak up when needed. Being mindful of the present and taking action are important to leading a meaningful life.

Last summer, I had the amazing opportunity to visit the Nishi Hongwanji in Kyoto and participate in the Hiroshima Peace Program, which is a 2-day international event that memorializes those who passed away from the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II. The Hiroshima Peace Program emphasizes the importance of world peace and humanity. During the program, I had the honor to meet and listen to the first-hand experiences of Mr. Mikio Saiki, a Hiroshima atomic bomb survivor. His words brought the true horrors of war and nuclear weapons into light. Mr. Saiki had kept his painful memories to himself for 79 years, but decided "the right time is now" to share his story after learning about Russia's threats to use nuclear weapons against Ukraine. Mr. Saiki has inspired me to be an active citizen in making the world a better place.

I am proud that I took action when I completed my Girl Scout Silver Award project. I am a 5th generation Japanese American and grew up knowing that my grandparents were incarcerated as children during World War II. In my history classes at school, I was surprised that not all of my classmates were aware of Executive Order #9066 and the wrongful incarceration of Japanese Americans. For the project, my Girl Scout sister and I created an educational Minecraft video that takes a narrated journey into the past, starting with the issuing of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order #9066 and showing the forced evacuation of Japanese Americans from the West Coast and the harsh

conditions in the incarceration camps. Additional teacher resources are posted on YouTube and Teachers Pay Teachers as a free resource for classrooms nationwide. In a feedback survey, many students expressed their astonishment and concern that these events happened. My Girl Scout Silver Award project reminded me that it is never too late to speak up against past injustices. When students become aware of these injustices, they can gain a deeper understanding and respect for all people, which will create a more peaceful society for everyone.

Recently I took action in my community when I wrote a letter to the City of Sunnyvale Council Members to express my support for the construction of a Sunnyvale memorial dedicated to the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. The city council had previously planned to create a Japanese American memorial, but it has been left to a vote for financial reasons. I hope that my voice, as well as others, will be heard in support of the memorial.

As I graduate from high school, I feel very grateful to the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin for the opportunities to learn about myself as a Buddhist and to build community. I would like to thank the San Jose Betsuin reverends, Dharma School teachers, Girl Scout leaders, Padma instructors, and Jr. YBA Advisors for always supporting me. I am also honored to have been chosen by the Federation of Buddhist Women's Association to attend the Fujinkai Youth Exchange program in Kyoto and Hiroshima last summer, which was an unforgettable experience that broadened my world view. With my Buddhist perspective, I know that things are always changing, but by keeping in mind Rennyo Shonin's quote, "the right time is now", I will have the confidence to embrace change, take action when needed, and be mindful and grateful for the present.

Jeffrey Nishida

"Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, and today is a gift... that's why it's called the present."
(Master Oogway, Kung Fu Panda, 2008)

While this insightful quote was spoken by a fictional Kung Fu master in one of the greatest movies of my childhood, it perfectly reflects one of my favorite Buddhist teachings: impermanence. Life is all about change. Right now, I am experiencing one of life's biggest transitions—moving from high school to college. As I write this essay and reflect on my experiences, I can't help but wish that childhood could last forever. However, that's not how life works. Nothing lasts forever.

Around the time I was born, my maternal grandfather sadly passed away. His brother, whom I refer to as my "Uncle", stepped into that role and played an instrumental part in my growth and development. My uncle was one of my biggest supporters of my passion to play basketball. When I was in elementary school, he would drive for hours to make it to my recreational league games. He would always talk to me after every game to give me advice about the sport and life in general, and even when I played horribly he would cheer me up. When I got to high school, he continued to show up and support me even when his physical health started to deteriorate.

At the end of my freshman season, I suffered a devastating injury. I had dislocated my shoulder and torn my labrum. I required surgery that would sideline me for most of my sophomore year. After months of rest and dozens of sessions of physical therapy, I was finally ready to have my breakout season as a junior.

Less than a month before the season started, I came home to heartbreak news: my uncle had passed away. I was in complete shock. Just a week earlier, we had been excitedly talking about my schedule and making plans for him to come to my games. I didn't know how to process my

emotions, and for the first time in my life, I lost my passion for basketball.

Instead of a funeral, my uncle had always wanted an informal celebration of life and due to the close relationship I had with my uncle, his kids wanted me to participate in the remembrance. Earlier that summer, I had attended the BCA Buddhist Youth Retreat, so in their words I was "the closest we had to a minister". The family asked me to give a Dharma message at the service. I had no idea what to say. How could I possibly give an insightful and positive message in times of such sorrow?

Then, I remembered a sermon about the Buddhist teaching of impermanence.

Suddenly, everything clicked. I realized why my uncle didn't want his life to be mourned, but rather celebrated. It was a gift to have experienced those moments with him. During my message, I read *White Ashes* and for the first time, I could personally relate. It is beautiful to have loved someone so much that their absence leaves such a void. Nothing lasts forever, and that's exactly why we must cherish every moment and truly live in the present.

So while the quote I opened with may have been from a children's movie, it has such a deeper Buddhist meaning to me. Through my experiences, I have come to understand the true meaning of impermanence. Buddhism teaches that clinging to the past or fearing change only leads to suffering, but by embracing the present moment, we can find peace and gratitude. My uncle's passing was a painful reminder that nothing lasts forever, but it also taught me to appreciate the beauty in change and the importance of every fleeting moment. As I step into this next chapter of my life, I will strive to live fully in the present and welcome change with an open heart.

DS Superintendent List Updates

If you have changed your DS superintendent or if your contact information has changed, then please update their contact information on the form at:

<https://forms.gle/LqHSbkwx9eKMZhJV6>

Dharma Forward Education Pillar

The Dharma Forward campaign has met its goal of \$15 Million. While half of the funds will be going to IBS to fund professorial chairs, the rest will be earmarked for BCA projects that are divided into four areas designated as pillars. The four pillars are Education, Outreach and Technology, Ministerial Support and Scholarships, Facilities and Operations.

Dharma Forward funds under the education pillar were recently allocated to the following:

- Providing travel subsidies for minister assistants to attend training at the Jodo Shinshu Cetner.
- Providing funds to encourage districts to host the BCA 125-year show performed by the Grateful Crane Ensemble.
- Providing funds for a 5-year project to significantly increase the number of Jodo Shinshu audio books.
- Providing funds for the BCA Music Committee to complete the Kangie Short Film Project.

The DF Education Pillar welcomes ideas and projects that are in need of funding. Please contact Carl Yanari if you have questions or have ideas at yanari@aol.com

Help Wanted

Can you type? Can you copy and paste? Are you breathing? The FDSTL is looking for you. We are seeking someone to take over as the Stone Soup editor.

Any questions can be directed to the current FDSTL Stone Soup editor, Carl Yanari, at yanari@aol.com or 408-781-5937.

FDSTL BCA 125th Anniversary Monto Shikisho



We still have many in children size "ITADAKIMASU" MONTO SHIKISHO created by the FDSTL last year. The unique and cute pattern – vegetables, rice, fish and cow - represents all the gratitude we have for daily life. Great for HATSUMAIRI or any other occasion as gifts too. \$35 /EA plus shipping. Please contact Yuko Suruki at San Mateo Buddhist Temple at 415.377.6959 or ysuruki@yahoo.com

Three Funds for Educations and Projects

The FDSTL administers three education funds from which Jodo Shinshu education projects can be funded. The three funds are the Bishop's Project Foundation Fund, the FDSTL education fund, and the "My Offering" fund.

The Bishop's Project Foundation Fund is so named for Bishop Shinsho Hanayama who had a concern for the proper religious training for our youth. The fund awards projects that will contribute to the advancement of teaching Buddhism in the Dharma Schools. This fund is funded by private donations and the Dana collected from the FDSTL Dharma Schools on the second Sunday in October.

The FDSTL Education Fund was established for the purpose of propagating Jodo Shinshu Teachings. The fund awards projects and publications that are primarily for the education of Dharma School teachers. This fund is funded by an annual donation from the Federation of Buddhist Women's Association (FBWA).

The "My Offering" fund is used in support of efforts to conduct research in teaching aids and new materials for Dharma Schools, purchase and distribute new materials for Dharma School students and teachers and provide resource speakers to various district conferences. The fund is funded through donations from Dharma School parents and students in the "My Offering" envelopes distributed to the Dharma Schools. In addition, donations to the My Offering Fund will be used to help replenish the BCA Koromo Fund. The Koromo fund provides new BCA ministers subsidies so that they may be able to purchase their required robes, some of which are thousands of dollars.

In recent years the FDSTL has expanded the scope of these funds to better serve the Dharma School community. If you have an event or project that needs funds, contact Darlene Bagshaw or Koichi Sayano and we will find a fund that can possibly help defray some of the costs.

Application forms for the funds are provided in the pages following. If you have a project that supports Buddhist/Jodo Shinshu education and in need of funds, the FDSTL encourages you to apply to one of these funds.

FDSTL Meeting Highlights April 26, 2025 - Gardena

President's Report

- Darlene Bagshaw lists goals for the upcoming years including:
 - Transfer the Mr. and Mrs. Fred Nitta Scholarship to Stacy Uyeda
 - Work with Brent Izutsu on the DS Website

- Support Mas Nishimura with the Buddhist Education
- Support Central Cal Dharma School Teacher League
- Support the CBE with Judy Kono
- Work with Seigi Steinmetz to re-develop the Dharma School Workbook

VP Education Report

- \$500 from the Lesson plan has been transferred to the Book Distribution Fund
- FDSTL presented a DS Workshop over Zoom. The topics were: Teacher Training Workshops, Dana Projects, Bishop's Project, and Dharma School Quick Start Guide.
- The dharmaschool.org on the BCA Website has over 150 clip art and it is updated annually.
- Upcoming projects for 2025-2026 are: sharing the Quick Start Guides to Texas and Las Vegas, developing a survey in Fall 2025, Book Distribution, and refreshing the Dharma School Curriculum Guide.

VP Administration Report

- Avis contacted 57 out of a total of 65 churches and temples, which is 88%.
- There are 272 Dharma School Teachers and 858 Dharma School Students for the 2024-2025 term.
- There are 25 churches and temples with no Dharma School.

Bishop's Project

- Mas Nishimura, Jennifer Toguri, Imogene Imada, Stacy Ueda, and Judy Yuki are on the Bishop's Project committee. Judy was renominated.

Youth Lyric Contest

- Skylar Lam won 2024's BCA Youth Lyric Contest. The Runner-up went to the high school class of the Seattle Betsuin Dharma School.

2025 Fred and Helen Nitta Scholarship

- Awarded to Jacqueline Aochi of the San Jose Betsuin and Jeffrey Nishida of

Orange County Buddhist Church. They both will receive a \$750 scholarship.

FDSTL 2026 Conf Report

- The theme is “*Be Mindful and Active with the Dharma.*”

District Reports

- Bay District
 - Bay District DSTL will have a beach clean up followed by a picnic lunch on May 3.
 - Sold BDDSTL T-Shirts and hoodies designed by Molly Maseba.
 - Berkeley
 - Bake sale to help Pasadena fire victims
 - Author-artist visit, Sophie Dipti Sarkar, book entitled Mixed Rice
 - Field trip to UC Berkeley
 - Oakland
 - Hosted meeting with Rev Yoshii, focus on interfaith perspective in Wadi Fukin, Palestine.
 - Habitat restoration in Alameda.
 - Palo Alto
 - Author-artist visit, Sophie Dipti Sarkar, book entitled Mixed Rice
 - Will have 101st anniversary reunion for PABT Dharma School on June 14.
 - San Mateo
 - Bake sale to raise funds for families in Pasadena.
 - SACBC
 - Students illustrating and narrating a portion of the life of Sakyamuni Buddha to be compiled into video.
- Central Cal District
 - Active Dharma schools include Fresno, Fowler, and Reedley. Fowler and Reedley meet once a month.
 - Chris Lavagnino new president.
 - Working on getting ready for the 2026 FDSTL Conference.
- Eastern District
 - Ekoji
 - DS meeting twice a month.
 - Advanced and intermediate students planning and executing a class for

elementary/preschool students.

- Did a scavenger hunt based on Siddartha’s life. Events listed on index cards in areas of the temple that were associated with the event, e.g. Lumibini’s Garden hidden in Ekoji’s Garden.
- Midwest
 - Emily Harada of TaikoArts Midwest visited and talked about Jodo Shinshu and the JA experience.
 - Led a service focussed on kindness and empathy. Used the book World of Wonder by Valerie Kaur as the Dharma message.
 - Two students were able to attend the Coast District Youth Conference in San Jose.
- Southern
 - Plans in place to host the 2025 FDSTL Conference including the workshops.
- Next FDSTL meeting will be at the FDSTL conference in Gardena on Sat Sep 27.

FDSTL Meeting Highlights September 27, 2025 - Virtual

President's report

- Recognizes efforts from Mas Nishimura and the Education Committee
- Thanks Koichi Sayano and Rev. Melissa Opal for organizing a webinar earlier this year
- Addresses the concerns about AI in education spaces. Mentions an upcoming workshop organized by Mas Nishimura, Dr. Brant Horio, and Rev. Harry Bridge

VP Education Report

- Quick Start program is being implemented in SLO
- Committee offered webinars are being scheduled. Latest was Oct 4th 2025.

Director of Media Communication

- New graphics have been added to the FDSTL page and a new form has been added for submissions of graphics.

Bishop's Project

- Mas Nishimura and Jennifer Toguri have been nominated to the board

Education Committee Workshop

- Theme proposed: “Making the Dharma Come Alive”
- Wishes to create more hands-on workshops to encourage engagement. Proposed event set to occur April 18th 2026 in Fresno

BCA Music Committee

- “Music History Project” for students is being founded by Kemi Nakabayashi.
- Project aims to: Archive gathas, Create a list of songs chronologically,
- Link to the project so far:
<https://www.youtube.com/@buddhistchurchesofamerica9267/videos>

2025 FDSTL Conference Report

- 86 in-person participants and 30 virtual participants. Total of 116 participants

2026 FDSTL Conference Report

- Projected to be an in-person event in Sacramento or Stockton
- Music Department may be putting together an interactive event
- Will be addressing AI usage

Stone Soup

- Looking for editors

Southern District Wildfire Relief

- Campaign ran from January 2025 to September 2025
- As of Sept 27th, there was \$80,000 raised

Dharma Forward Funding

- Campaign ends Dec 31, 2025. Still needs \$1 million to reach its goal
- Currently (as of Sept 27th) was 87% to its goal
- “Value Books” Project is in its recruiting phase. Currently seeking writers and illustrators to make children’s books about Jodo Shinshu beliefs.

Seattle Dharma School Reopening

- Requests financial support, currently has no younger classes.

Fred and Helen Nitta Scholarship

- Slight changes approved
- \$1000 amount now awarded

- Weight of Scholastic Achievement and Temple have been adjusted to 25% and 30% respectively

Youth Lyric Contest

- Announcements may start earlier this year to push the deadline up
- Proposed online voting system to judge applicants.

District Reports

- Bay District
 - All chapters that have Dharma Schools have started up again.
 - Alameda
 - Elder Sangha members meeting with students once a month so the students can hear their history.
 - Talked about ikebana and its role in Onaijin.
 - Berkeley
 - Hosted the fall service ice breaker with carnival games and bags of popcorn.
 - Theme this year is “Family and Generations”.
 - Palo Alto
 - Focusing on interconnectedness and form bonds with general Sangha and Dharma School students.
 - Oakland
 - DS had an excursion to SFMOMA to view the Ruth Asawa exhibit. BTOA minister, Rev Fujimoto, accompanied the students as he worked with Ms Asawa.
 - BCO board approved DS renewal to display a “Ceasefire” banner in solidarity with several other Bay Area religious institutions.
 - San Mateo
 - Planning a trip to Asian Art Museum on 9/27.
 - Parents stepping up to help plan the activities.
- Coast District
 - Mountain View
 - Will hold a Sangha Day picnic on Sep 27 at MVBT.

- Will participate in the Coast District Nembutsu Conference in Salinas in October.
- San Jose
 - Began DS year on Sep 7 by holding an open house where various temple associated organizations were invited to table.
 - Rinban Sakamoto will have a retirement party on Nov 1.
- Monterey
 - Meets once a month.
- San Luis Obispo
 - DS is restarting with two teachers and several students ranging in age from 8 to 15.
- Eastern District
 - Ekoji
 - Created and recorded a 3-part series on “What we teach in Dharma School” to help recruit potential Dharma School teachers.
 - Continuing to clean Tsuji Center.
 - Midwest
 - DS to begin on 10/5. Meet on first and third Sundays of the month.
 - Plans were made for the school year.
 - Seabrook
 - Plan to have DS when supervising minister, Rev Kurt Rye, is in Seabrook. Will expand to more frequent with the help of minister assistants.
- Northern Cal District
 - Every temple is experiencing decreased attendance but still early in the year so registration forms are coming in. Most temples are having Dharma School every other Sunday because of scheduling, but Stockton is able to maintain classes every Sunday.
 - For the 2025-2026 school year the theme for Stockton will be “Speak from the Heart” They had their year-end Luncheon hosted by Dharma School to acknowledge the ministers, minister assistants, office staff, Dharma School teachers, organ and piano players, audio technical crew (hybrid services), coffee/friendship hour coordinators, kitchen helpers and Dharma Friends Taiko instructors for all their help during the school year.
 - Sacramento will be online registration for classes Pre-K, K, 1st-3rd, 4th- 5th, 6th, 7th-8th, 9th-12th. Had their Dharma School Teacher Appreciation Dinner at Fuji Sacramento restaurant. Attendees included Rimban Sugahara and guest Dr Ken Tanaka and Dr. Carrie Tanaka.
 - Lodi has a few students and Hannah Egi makes sure to keep them involved with seasonal crafts, journalling and she will go above and beyond and drop off class information to students at their homes.
 - Florin is sharing Rev. Imada so we have classes every 2nd and 4th Sundays. Our theme this year will be focusing on traditional Japanese events. On Sunday September 14 we folding cranes and during Rev. Imada’s cooking class the students were able to experience catching somen from bamboo water chutes and eating somen. They really enjoyed it but we did have some casualties even with forks
 - Southern
 - Venice
 - DS entertained at the Shinnenkai by singing a VHBT version of “Under the Sea” during the entertainment portion.
 - First Kid’s Club event featured crafts centered on the year of the snake.
 - Second Kid’s Club event held in April. Decorated bookmarks and pens and helped to adorn the Hanamido for Hanamatsuri Service.
 - Held a “Women in Buddhism” Dharma School Class in May.
 - Pasadena
 - Much of the activities for the Spring were cancelled due to the Eaton fire.
 - Set up DS under a tree in Sep as the classrooms not available. Worked on temple’s message with the theme of

“Hope”.

- For fall Ohigan, the students held hands under the tree and recited the Golden Chain. Then they reflected on what Ohigan meant to them.
- San Diego
 - Theme “Gratitude to our past, present, and future”.
 - DS is collecting new stuffed animals for the Ronald McDonald House Charities and UCSD Health.
 - Will be volunteering at Feeding San Diego in October.
- Los Angeles
 - Students collected gift cards for Pasadena in Jan.
 - Two students were part of YBICSE
 - Hosted FDSTL webinar with Rev Mellisa Opel (San Francisco).
- OCBC
 - Created a DS interest flyer with QR

code with follow-up info and distributed it during Obon.

- DS sent letters to LABCC campers.
- Did electronic DS registration this year using JotForm.
- Gardena
 - DS teachers led the public Obon Dancing in the street.
 - Began classes on Sept 7

FDSTL Mission Statement

The mission of the FDSTL is to support the Dharma School Teachers of the Buddhist Churches of America by providing and developing materials, facilitating educational gatherings, and creating opportunities to share lessons, ideas, and methods.

2026 Federation of Dharma School Teachers League Conference
Hosted by Central California District

MAKING THE DHARMA COME ALIVE

April 18-19, 2026

FEATURING



Yasu Ishida
magician, storyteller, artist



**Rev. Marvin
Harada**
bishop of BCA



**Fresno Betsuin
Buddhist Temple**
2690 E Alluvial Avenue
Fresno, CA 93720

BISHOPS' PROJECT FOUNDATION FUND APPLICATION FORM

NAME _____ EMAIL _____

ADDRESS

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

— INDIVIDUAL — ORGANIZATION —

AMOUNT REQUESTED _____

PURPOSE OF PROJECT _____

PROPOSED BUDGET

PROPOSED DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS PRODUCED, IF ANY.

SUBMIT APPLICATION TO:

Judy Yuki
26 Starlit Circle
Sacramento, CA 95831
jhmyuki@gmail.com

DATE SUBMITTED:

DATE APPROVED / DISAPPROVED

FDSTL EDUCATION FUND APPLICATION FORM

NAME _____ EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

— INDIVIDUAL — ORGANIZATION —

AMOUNT REQUESTED _____

PURPOSE OF PROJECT _____

PROPOSED BUDGET _____

PROPOSED DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS PRODUCED, IF ANY.

SUBMIT APPLICATION TO:

Darlene Bagshaw
1083 Eleanor Lane
Manteca, CA 95337
dbagshaw@bcahq.org

DATE SUBMITTED:

DATE APPROVED / DISAPPROVED

"MY OFFERING" FUND APPLICATION FORM

NAME _____ EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

— INDIVIDUAL — ORGANIZATION —

AMOUNT REQUESTED

PURPOSE OF PROJECT

PROPOSED BUDGET _____

PROPOSED DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS PRODUCED, IF ANY.

SUBMIT APPLICATION TO:

Darlene Bagshaw
1083 Eleanor Lane
Manteca, CA 95337
dbagshaw@bcahq.org

DATE SUBMITTED:

DATE APPROVED / DISAPPROVED

DHARMA SCHOOL MATERIALS

(FEDERATION OF DHARMA SCHOOL TEACHERS LEAGUES (FDSTL))

TITLE	UNIT	QTY
JISHIN KYO NINSHIN SERIES	pages	
Pre School Teacher's Guide	(8"x11")	266
Pre School Workbook	(8"x11")	62
Kindergarten Teacher's Guide	(8"x11")	273
Kindergarten Workbook	(8"x11")	66
Primary: Grades 1,2,3 Teacher's Guide.....	(8"x11")	111
Primary 1,2,3 Workbook.....	(8"x11")	45
Intermediate: Grades 4,5,6 Teacher's Guide	(8"x11")	98
Intermediate 4,5,6 Workbook	(8"x11")	43
Advanced: Grades 7, 8 Teacher's Guide	(8"x11")	73
CHILDRENS BOOKS		
Iron Chain to Golden Chain-Grade 9-12	(6"x9")	228
JUNIRAI Translation & Pictures	(6"x9")	28
ACTIVITY BOOKS		
Stupa To Pagoda: Activity Book - Grade 6	(8"x11")	18
SHEETS, LARGE		
Logo Sheet – Dharmacakra, Wisteria	(11"x16")	1
CERTIFICATES		
Hatsu Mairi Infant Presentation Certificate.....	(8"x11")	1 ea.
In Memory – Memorial Service Certificate	(5"x8")	
MAPS		
Buddhist India Map	(8"x11")	4
Buddhist Sunday Schools	(8"x11")	6
JAPAN – Following the Footsteps of Shinran	(8"x11")	4

**The FDSTL is offering Dharma School Materials to
Teachers and Dharma Schools for FREE.**

NO CHARGE FOR MATERIALS.

NO CHARGE FOR SHIPPING AND HANDLING!

Mail orders to: FDSTL
c/o Tad Shibata
8425 Norfolk Way
Stockton, CA 95209

E-Mail: ttshibata@aol.com

FROM: Name: _____

Temple: _____

Address: _____

_____ (city)

_____ (state)

_____ (zip)

Phone: _____

Email: _____

=====

**BUDDHIST CHURCHES OF AMERICA
FEDERATION OF DHARMA SCHOOL TEACHERS LEAGUES**

Perfect attendance pins for Dharma School Students are available through the FDSTL.
Order by completing this form.

Indicate how many of each year you would like. (cost is \$3.75 each)

Year 1	_____ each	Year 9	_____ each
Year 2	_____ each	Year 10	_____ each
Year 3	_____ each	Year 11	_____ each
Year 4	_____ each	Year 12	_____ each
Year 5	_____ each	Year 13	_____ each
Year 6	_____ each	Year 14	_____ each
Year 7	_____ each	Year 15	_____ each
Year 8	_____ each		

CERTIFICATES OF ATTENDANCE are also available. Cost is 50 cents each.

No. of certificates desired: _____.

PLEASE DO NOT SEND MONEY AT THIS TIME AS MAILING COST MUST BE ADDED. YOU WILL BE BILLED WHEN YOUR PINS ARE MAILED.

TEMPLE: _____

NAME OF PERSON ORDERING: _____ PHONE # _____

ADDRESS: _____ EMAIL _____

Date Needed: _____

Mail your order to: **Rick Oishi
4664 Portofino Circle
Cypress, CA 90630**

Orders may also be placed via e-mail to: ricksoishi@gmail.com