



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

November 17, 2009

Dear Colleague,

A recent post on Jay Greene's blog, *The Destruction of a Profession* -- <http://tiny.cc/rPTY6> -- is a must read for anyone who has an interest in public education. The post references a new study, *Teaching for a Living: How Teachers See the Profession Today*, which claims that 40% of public school teachers are "disheartened." The reasons for this are many. To read the full report, please go to <http://tiny.cc/uO31g>. Also, worth stressing that this survey only deals with public school teachers. Private school teachers typically don't share the same level of unhappiness as public school teachers.

One way teachers and the general public can have a positive effect on education is to work to ensure that they have a responsive and responsible school board. Too often, school boards are politically driven, and the interests of teachers and students are secondary. A dedicated group of activists in Pittsburgh decided to take on this issue. They act as watchdogs - going to board meetings, taking notes, and then issuing grades to its members. This kind of transparency and accountability should be replicated across the country. To read the *Education Week* article, please go to <http://tiny.cc/eaHy9>. To visit the watchdogs' website, go to <http://www.aplusschools.org/>

Also, for teachers who are unhappy in the traditional public school setting -- why not consider working at a charter school? The charter school movement has picked up a lot of steam lately, at least in part to strong backing from the Obama administration. In this Wall Street Journal editorial, we learn that not only do charters help narrow the learning gap between poor urban and affluent suburban students, but that in areas where charters have been instituted, traditional public schools have improved. In other words, in education as elsewhere, competition works. To read the editorial, go to <http://tiny.cc/LVO2Q>.

There has been much written lately about Saul Alinsky and his effect on the teachers' unions. While this is not news to many teachers, we are glad that the information is being disseminated to a wider audience. Alinsky, a radical street organizer, was very influential in the rise of the NEA as a powerful union. While the NEA is enamored of Mr. Alinsky - <http://www.nea.org/tools/17231.htm>, others have a different opinion - http://teachersunionexposed.com/nea_philosophy.cfm. Better yet, if you would like to hear Alinsky's tactics come to life, you can listen here - <http://www.mackinac.org/article.aspx?ID=9405>

And speaking about the unions - pending signatures, there will be an initiative on the ballot in November 2010, which if passed, could have a positive effect on your wallet. To learn more about the initiative, please go to <http://unplugthepoliticalmachine.org/> To read the actual initiative, go to <http://tiny.cc/TxZD1>

In an article that has ramifications for English language learners and society at large, Anna Gorman in the LA Times reports that *Many L.A. Students Not Moving Out of English Language Classes*. The first sentence of her article sets the tone. “Nearly 30% of Los Angeles Unified School District students placed in English language learning classes in early primary grades were still in the program when they started high school, increasing their chances of dropping out, according to a new study released Wednesday.” To read the rest of this disturbing piece, please go to <http://tiny.cc/eQs3V>

In a RAND Corporation study, conducted in New York City, we learn that ending social promotion is indeed beneficial for students. The old self-esteem bugaboo is acknowledged in two short sentences. “The responses to student surveys indicated that retention did not have negative effects on students' sense of school belonging or confidence in mathematics and reading, even three years after being retained in grade. While this is counterintuitive, it is consistent with some prior studies.” To read more, please go to <http://tiny.cc/faVL0>

For existing agency fee payers – we hope you have already filed for a rebate as the deadline has passed. However, if you plan to become an agency fee payer, you can resign from the union at any time. For more information, please go to <http://www.ctenhome.org/knowMembership.htm#exoptions>

CTEN has an online community where you can find kindred souls to chat with about whatever tickles your fancy. To join the conversation, please visit the California Teachers Online Community at <http://www.ctenhome.org/forums.htm>

Our Donors Choose project will be ending soon. We will be sending out another reminder in the near future for those who have not yet signed up. Please watch for it.

As always, we appreciate your support and urge you to visit our website frequently - www.ctenhome.org . Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Larry Sand