



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

December 14, 2010

Dear Colleague,

As many of you will be off next week, our letter is coming to you a week early this month.

We think all teachers should check out the series by *The Hechinger Report*, a nonprofit news organization that is focused on producing in-depth education journalism; it has partnered with the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* to produce an eight-part series that examines the teaching profession. Thus far, *Building a Better Teacher* has five installments posted, including examinations of merit pay and teacher evaluation. Please go to http://hechingerreport.org/category/special_reports/building_a_better_teacher/ for the articles.

Last week, the Los Angeles Times published its second blockbuster education story in four months. In August, the Times published its “value added” rankings for 6,000 teachers in Los Angeles. The new story delves into the current seniority system where performance cannot be used as a factor when staffing decisions are made. If teachers need to be let go – a common occurrence in fiscally tight times – the layoffs are done strictly by seniority, and some of the great younger teachers are given pink slips. For more, go to <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/dec/04/local/la-me-1205-teachers-seniority-20101204>

The results of yet another international test have been released and while again the U.S. did not fare very well, Shanghai had stunning results. To learn more and see where we finished, please go to http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/07/education/07education.html?_r=1

For those of you who wondered what Michelle Rhee’s next move would be, wonder no more. The former chancellor of D.C. public schools who stepped down after Mayor Adrian Fenty, the man who hired her, lost a primary challenge has started a national advocacy group called Students First - <http://www.studentsfirst.org/> Considering her success in Washington, it doesn’t appear that she will have trouble raising funds for her new venture. I think it’s safe to say that you will be hearing a lot about Ms. Rhee in the future.

Another new reform-minded venture well worth checking out is the Education Breakthrough Network. As the website says, “EBN is made up of organizations and individuals with a single-minded focus on creating excellent education choices and universal access to these great schools.” Run by Lisa Graham Keegan, a former Arizona

Superintendent of Public Instruction, we think her new innovative venture is something all teachers should explore. For more information, go to - <http://www.edbreakthrough.org/>

In last week's *Communiqué*, Mike Antonucci had some numbers that will be of interest to anyone who wants to know how much CTA collects in dues and where their dues money is spent. It seems that while membership is down over the past two years, *they are actually taking in more dues money*. To get the dollar and cents breakdown, please go to <http://www.eiaonline.com/archives/20101206.htm>

For those of you who have a Facebook account, you might want to visit the California Teachers Association page and weigh in on Antonucci's piece or anything else that grabs your fancy. It can be accessed at <http://www.facebook.com/californiateachersassociation?ref=ts> There is another CTA on Facebook of a slightly different political stripe. The Conservative Teachers of America is a haven for teachers on the right side of the political spectrum. This group can be found at <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=42826589380>

If any of you have any recent information about European teachers unions, please let us know about it. We have found a very interesting article on the subject from 2008 - <http://www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2008/feb/01/speakout-american-teachers-unions-the-fatal-flaw/> While the European unions are very powerful, they seem to be unlike the American unions in several ways.

CTEN now has a "Studies" area on our Resources page - <http://www.ctenhome.org/resources.htm> If any of you know of any studies you would like to see here, please let us know.

A reminder – anyone interested in school choice should visit the National School Choice Week site. January 23rd-29th is devoted to building support for school choice. To learn more, go to <http://schoolchoiceweek.com/>

If you are interested in giving CTEN brochures to colleagues, you can print them right from the home page - <http://www.ctenhome.org/index.htm> Or, if you prefer, we will be happy to send you as many as you need. Also, anyone wishing to donate to CTEN can do so very simply through PayPal - <http://www.ctenhome.org/donate.htm> As a non-profit, we exist only through the generosity of others.

It has been another exciting year for CTEN - <http://www.ctenhome.org/> - and we look forward to an even more vigorous 2011. We remain grateful for your support and wish you and your families the happiest of holidays. See you in January!

Sincerely,

Larry Sand
CTEN President