



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

December 20, 2011

Dear Colleague,

Did you know that American students rank 25th out of 34 industrialized countries in mathematics achievement? This unfortunate fact and a lot more can be learned by visiting The Global Report Card. Jay Greene and Josh McGee, as part of the George W. Bush Institute's Education Reform Initiative, have developed a database which enables anyone to learn how their school district shapes up next to not only others in the state and country, but to other countries also. To learn more and explore this terrific new website, go to <http://globalreportcard.org/>

While on the subject of Jay Greene, there is an excellent back and forth between Dr. Greene and Richard Kahlenberg in the current issue of *Education Next*. "*Unions and the Public Interest - Is collective bargaining for teachers good for students?*" is highly recommended! To read it, go to - <http://educationnext.org/unions-and-the-public-interest/>

Dropout Nation's RiShawn Biddle wrote about the recent release of the National Education Association's 2010-2011 LM-2 filing, a required Department of Labor annual report revealing recent political expenditures. We learn, not surprisingly, of the vast amount the NEA spends on politics. For this 12 month period they took in \$399 million – mostly from teachers in the form of dues - and spent \$133 million on “lobbying and contributions to groups whose agendas (in theory) dovetail with its own.” To learn more, go to these two articles written by Biddle --

<http://dropoutnation.net/2011/11/30/the-neas-full-disclosure-133-million-to-preserve-its-influence/> and
<http://dropoutnation.net/2011/12/02/more-on-how-the-nea-spends-133-million-to-preserve-influence/>

To see the actual union filing, go to http://rishawnbiddle.org/outsidereports/nea_dol_filing_2011.pdf
For future reference we have the current LM-2s for both the NEA and AFT on CTEN's Links page which can be accessed here - <http://www.ctenhome.org/links.htm>

Biddle, who has written frequently about union issues, wrote an article in *Real Clear Politics* about \$227,000 in missing NEA funds – an explanation for which the union is stonewalling. To learn more, go to
http://www.realclearpolitics.com/printpage/?url=http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2011/1/21/teacher_unions_missing_funds_a_pattern_of_stonewalling-full.html

In a recent USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences/Los Angeles Times poll, we learned that 61 percent of the populace is in favor of raising taxes for education. When I read about polls like this, I can't help but wonder what the respondents really know about education funding. For example, do they know that over 50 percent of the state's general fund spending already goes to education? Do they know how much is wasted on an excessive number of administrators and useless bureaucrats? Do they know the average teacher's salary and how much more they get in additional healthcare and pension compensation? Do they know that practically every teacher contract in the state has a provision whereby teachers who are union representatives get paid classroom time off each month to do union business while the taxpayers foot the bill for the rep's substitute teacher? In any event, if you'd like to read more about the poll, please go to <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-poll-schools-20111120,0,1767352,print.story> To see the poll itself, go to - http://gqrr.com/articles/2683/6898_110911%20USC%20LA%20Times%20fq%20SATURDAY.pdf

Janine Caffrey, whose writing we have featured before, is now the new Perth Amboy, NJ schools superintendent. Recently, she wrote a guest op-ed for the Star Ledger in which she makes a passionate plea for eliminating teacher tenure laws. To read her piece, go to http://blog.nj.com/njv_guest_blog/2011/11/perth_amboy_superintendent_ten.html

Last month we told you about the Stull lawsuit in Los Angeles (<http://www.ctenhome.org/PDFdocs/CTENLTL11-11.pdf>), where some parents are suing the district over the fact that a law which has been on the books for 40 years has been ignored. The Stull Act became law in 1971 and stipulates that a teacher's evaluation should be in part based on student performance. The case has ramifications for the rest of the state because the law isn't being followed anywhere. Last month, it was decided that the case will not be heard until June. Hence, it will be a while before any legal judgment is rendered.

Also in Los Angeles, there has been an interesting district-union contract agreement. In exchange for fewer charter start-ups, the union has agreed to give schools more autonomy. According to Howard Blume (<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-1130-laUSD-teachers-20111130,0,1644115.story>) in the Los Angeles Times,

“Schools would be able to choose their own teaching materials, schedules and campus rules. They could hire teachers and other staff of their choice. If they wanted to diverge from policies of L.A. Unified, officials could not say no, provided that all laws and legal requirements are honored.

“But this local control also would limit union authority. If staffers at a school wanted to void portions of the thick union contract, United Teachers Los Angeles could not stop them.”

To read the memorandum of understanding, go to http://www.utla.net/system/files/PSC_TA.pdf How all this will play out is anyone's guess. Stay tuned.

Last year, National School Choice Week shined a bright light on the subject of choice, rallying reformers, politicians, the media, etc. in an effort to build support for a parent's right to choose the best school for their children. This year's version will take place the week of January 22-28. To learn more about how you can become involved, please visit www.schoolchoiceweek.com If you would like to hold an event, there is step-by-step support for doing so. Please contact me if you have any questions.

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 preprinted ones 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 - www.ctenhome.org/ and we look forward to an even more vigorous 2012. 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