



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

June 16, 2009

Dear Colleague,

As we head toward summer, just about all of us are done for this school year, if not already on vacation. However, many teachers are looking ahead to the fall with great uncertainty. Some teachers will be out of work and some will have taken a pay cut so that others may work. If you have been RIF'ed, (or even if you haven't) perhaps seeking work in a private school might be worthwhile. In *Free to Teach: What America's Teachers Say about Teaching in Public and Private Schools*, we learn that in many ways private school teachers have much greater job satisfaction than their public school brethren. To read this research from the Friedman Foundation, please go to <http://www.friedmanfoundation.org/research/ShowResearchItem.do?id=10111>

Recently, the Los Angeles Times ran a front page story on the American Indian Public Charter School in Oakland. The school and its two siblings use techniques and methods that are most definitely not in vogue in public schools today. To read this fascinating story, and discover why even with their great academic success, these schools have many detractors, please click on <http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-charter31-2009may31,0,7064053.story>

Apparently, the economic situation in our state is not fazing the California Teachers Association one bit. CTA very possibly will be raising its dues by \$22 in 2009-2010. Hence, dues payers will be forking over another \$26 (NEA has raised their dues \$4) next year. Interestingly, teachers almost caught a break recently. In California, every dues paying member of CTA has \$36 of their yearly dues funneled into a fund that CTA uses for things like supporting Props 1A and 1B in the recent special election. Also, they used over \$1,250,000 from this fund in a failed attempt to fight Prop. 8 in the election last November. At the CTA State Council meeting in LA in May, there was a new business item, which if passed, would have allowed CTA members to opt out of this initiative fund. Unfortunately for teachers, the opt-out provision was voted down. Hence, the only way that you can keep your dues money out of that fund is to become an agency fee payer. In this scenario, you resign from the union and pay *only* about 70% (about \$700 per year) of what a full dues payer pays.

What about higher pay for better teachers? The always controversial merit pay argument seems to be popping up with amazing regularity these days. In NY, a charter school will be paying all its teachers \$125,000 a year - <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/05/education/05charter.html> And then, of course, there are those who think any kind of pay for performance is nothing short of abominable. One such person is the always controversial Wayne Johnson, who was President of the United Teachers of Los Angeles in the 1980s before assuming the same post with CTA in 1999. (Mike Antonucci catalogues some of his more *interesting* statements here – <http://www.eiaonline.com/archives/20030106.htm>) In any event, Mr. Johnson now has a blog -- <http://publiceducationtheinsidestory.blogspot.com/> -- in which he addresses the merit pay issue.

Another contentious issue, which we covered in the May letter, is the difficulty in getting rid of bad teachers. There have been three stories in the news recently that dealt with teachers and job loss – a teacher in Kansas who lost his job for what he says are his conservative views, a teacher in Ohio who lost his job for allegedly preaching in the classroom and a teacher in Florida who did **not** lose her job for trying to commit suicide in her classroom. These articles can be found at <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,526060,00.html> http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2009-06-11-school-christianity_N.htm <http://www.tampabay.com/news/education/teachers/article1009115.ece>

And finally a tip of the cap to a teacher in Massachusetts who has been going through some tough times because she is bucking the teachers' union there. <http://www.examiner.com/x-11053-Manchester-Faith--Culture-Examiner~y2009m6d10-Exclusive-Mass-teacher-takes-stand-against-union-Dems> CTEN has contacted the writer of this article who has promised to let the teacher know about the existence of our organization. Hopefully, she will contact us, as she would find much support in our community.

In any event, if you enjoy these letters, please pass them along to your colleagues. We know that there are many independent-minded teachers in California who are looking for alternative sources of information.

If you would like to see us address certain issues, topics, etc. in these newsletters or on our website – www.ctenhome.org - please let us know. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Larry Sand, President