



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

September 20, 2011

Please note that in addition to the traditional emailing of the CTEN monthly newsletter, we will once again post it on the CTEN blog- <http://www.ctenteachers.blogspot.com/> As usual, there are several controversial issues covered in this letter and we urge you to share your opinions with other teachers.

Dear Colleague,

Welcome back! By now all school districts in California are in session. We know that some teachers have taken a pay cut, and many will have to yet again make do with fewer materials in their classrooms. But it would appear that due to AB 114, no teachers have been laid off, at least for the time being. If you are not aware of AB 114, we did a complete story on it in our July newsletter - <http://www.ctenhome.org/PDFdocs/CTENLTL7-11.pdf>

While this is an election off-year, CTA is still very politically active. If your politics don't happen to jibe with CTA's, or you don't think that a teachers' union should be spending money on issues that have nothing to do with teaching or education, you might want to consider not giving them the 30% or so of your dues that go toward politics. If you'd like more information about your options, please go to <http://www.ctenhome.org/know.htm>

If you are making this move, it is a two step process. First, you resign from the union, thus becoming an agency fee payer, and then request that the political part of your dues be returned to you. Sample letters for both steps are available here - <http://www.ctenhome.org/knowMembership.htm#exoptions> If you already are an agency fee payer, you must request your rebate this year (and every year!) by November 15th. If you are as much as one day late, you will not get a penny. Also, because liability insurance is important for teachers, we suggest joining the Association of American Educators <http://www.aeteachers.org/> or Christian Educators Association <http://www.ceai.org/> Both AAE and CEAI are professional organizations, not unions, and are apolitical. (Also, teachers who mention CTEN when they sign up with AAE for the first time will get a \$30 discount off the regular \$180 first year membership.)

Speaking of resigning from your union, here is an inspiring story from an articulate teacher in Wisconsin who did just that - http://host.madison.com/ct/news/opinion/column/article_8333100d-c468-52bc-8fe2-9890e857274a.html?mode=story

Laurie Rogers is an education advocate who runs a provocative blog that we think is well worth checking out. "Betrayed is a forum on public education designed to inform the public about critical education issues affecting students, teachers, community members, and the country." It can be found here - <http://betrayed-whyeducationisfailing.blogspot.com/2011/09/politics-driving-math-classes-not.html>

She also posted the following on the CTEN Facebook page, "I'm seeking out education professionals who work for rigorous academics and an effective, efficient teaching approach. I think the public needs to hear about you. Perhaps others would be inspired. You can be anonymous, but I have to know who you are. There is so much in public education to be angry about, even frightened about ... But many professionals ARE aware and are working on behalf of the children. Let's celebrate the good." She can be reached at wlroge@comcast.net

For those of you who are reform-minded, there is an excellent new education news and opinion website started by Bob ("The Cartel") Bowdon. A one-stop shop for matters pertaining to education reform, one can find original stories, state-by-state happenings and listings of every reform conference, event, etc. in the country. Just unveiled yesterday, it's sure to be a well trafficked site - <http://ChoiceMedia.TV>

One of our subscribers, Rhory Lamboy, has been a special ed teacher for over 20 years. She is of the opinion that special ed teachers are inundated with paperwork and regulations, leaving them little time to teach. She would like to know if you have similar concerns. What are you dealing with in the area of special education? Are you feeling more like a lawyer, secretary, or educator? (General education teachers – feel free to respond also.) TheSchoolWorkGuru@gmail.com

Recently a teacher in Florida posted some anti-same sex marriage comments on his Facebook page - <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2011/08/19/florida-teacher-suspended-for-anti-gay-marriage-post-on-personal-facebook/#ixzz1VUbbIys1> He was suspended from teaching, but reinstated in short order. However you feel about this story, it does bring up some important questions about social media that all educators using Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, etc. should be aware of and concerned about. Here is what Missouri is doing on the subject - <http://hazelwood.patch.com/articles/mo-school-social-media-bill-compromise-at-core>

Whatever your feelings on value added measures, this way of measuring student achievement seems to be gaining traction. This article in the Wall Street Journal gives a good overview - <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424053111903895904576544523666669018.html>

A story definitely worth watching: termed out United Teachers of Los Angeles President A.J. Duffy, long known for his virulent stance against charter schools, has signed on to be the president of a charter school outfit that promises to open one or more schools by September of 2012. Equally shocking to friends and foes alike is his stance on tenure, which is considerably tougher than the one he held during his six years as UTLA chief. For more on this story, go to <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/sep/01/local/la-me-0901-duffy-20110901>

CTEN has two Facebook pages. If you have a Facebook account, we urge you to visit ours and let us know your thoughts. Having a dialogue amongst teachers is an effective way to spread information and experiences and share ideas. Our original Facebook page can be found here <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/group.php?gid=125866159932&ref=ts> Our second page, which deals with teacher evaluation and transparency, can be accessed here - <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/group.php?gid=126900987357825&ref=ts>

If you were away over the summer and did not read the July and August letters, we encourage you to get caught up. Please visit <http://www.ctenhome.org/newsletters.htm> to do so.

Finally, we hope that everyone has gotten off to a good start and that 2011-2012, despite the ongoing fiscal turmoil, will be a great one for you and your students. As always, sincere thanks for your continued interest and support.

Very best,

Larry Sand
CTEN President