



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

January 18, 2011

Dear Colleague,

When new (and former) Governor Jerry Brown released his new budget last week, the sighs of relief you may have heard came from teachers across the state. Mr. Brown made many cuts, but spared K-12 schools...for now. However, feelings of relief may be short lived. There will be some measures on the ballot in June in which voters will be asked to extend the current hikes in taxes on their purchases, incomes and vehicles for five years. If not passed, K-12 schools will take a hit in the 2011-2012 school year. For more information, please go to <http://tiny.cc/jbcnu>

Also newsworthy is Jerry Brown's new handpicked school board. The obvious change is that he got rid of anyone with a history of education reform, like the Parent Revolution's Ben Austin and Ted Mitchell, the president of NewSchools Venture Fund. His new members include CTA lobbyist Patricia Ann Rucker, a former California Teachers Association lobbyist, and James Ramos, Chairman of the San Manuel Band of Indians – both obvious political paybacks. He also appointed former Superintendent of Public Instruction Bill Honig, who resigned in disgrace in 1993, having been convicted of four felony conflict of interest counts. (After reports of his dubious past hit California's newspapers, Mr. Honig decided to decline the job.) To read more about Mr. Brown's choices, which seem to have been chosen as a sop to the California Teachers Association, please go to <http://articles.latimes.com/print/2011/jan/08/local/la-me-0108-brown-education-20110107>

The value added debate rages on. *Education Week* recently had pro and con pieces in a recent edition. To read these articles, please go to <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/12/15/15whitehurst.h30.html?qs=december+15+issue> and <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/12/15/15gabriel.h30.html?qs=december+15+issue> (If you cannot open these links, please let me know and I will send you a pasted in version.)

Seniority, another hot button education topic, is examined in a study by the Center for Education Data and Research at the University of Washington. Dan Goldhaber, lead author of the study and the center's director "projected that student achievement after seniority-based layoffs would drop by an estimated 2.5 to 3.5 months of learning per student, when compared to laying off the least effective teachers." Goldhaber then added, "If your bottom line is student achievement, then this is not the best system," To read more, go to <http://tiny.cc/31uvz>

Another important reform measure – performance pay – is examined in depth in a new report by the National Council on Teacher Quality. *Restructuring Teacher Pay To Reward Excellence* can be found here - http://www.nctq.org/tr3/docs/nctq_salary_combo.pdf

In yet another ominous study, our students are not faring well. Apparently, one in four applicants who try to enlist in the U.S. Army fails the academic part of the entrance exam. "Too many of our high school students are not graduating ready to begin college or a career — and many are not eligible to serve in our armed forces," U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan told the AP. "I am deeply troubled by the national security burden created by America's underperforming education system." To read more go to http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20101221/ap_on_re_us/us_military_exam

Lance Izumi, Vicki Murray, Evelyn Stacey, Rachel Chaney and Ian Randolph of the Pacific Research Institute have just released a book examining the problems facing online learning in California. In *SHORT-CIRCUITED: The Challenges Facing the Online Learning Revolution in California*, Izumi et al delve into some of the successes of online education as well as the resistance to change from all the usual suspects – the government, teachers unions, etc. This excellent book ends somewhat optimistically with conclusions and recommendations for how best to advance the online learning revolution in our state. You can read more about it here - <http://tiny.cc/s9etm> and here - <http://tiny.cc/5aw32>

Janine Walker Caffrey, who toils away in New York with the New York City Department of Education, has developed new programs to help parents get involved in their children's education and increase high school graduation rates. She has written yet another common sense blog post about how best to transform education and get around all the bureaucratic and union rules which serve to stifle innovation. Provocative and compelling, Dr. Caffrey is always worth reading. To read "Let the Transformation Begin," go to <http://tiny.cc/817ot>

Another stimulating piece caught our eye recently. California High School Teacher Michele Kerr wrote an op-ed for the *San Jose Mercury News* called "Opinion: Forcing Kids onto a College Track Can Hurt Their Chances." While not all of you will agree with this article (<http://tiny.cc/wb170>), Michele makes some powerful points.

If you are interested in learning more about the controversial notion of common core standards, two experts in the area -- Jay Greene and Mike Petrilli -- debate the idea in a brief video - <http://vimeo.com/18756810>

And finally, the long awaited School Choice Week is almost here. To learn more about events being planned around CA and the rest of the country, please visit their website --<http://schoolchoiceweek.com> (Personal note: On Jan. 25, after a showing of *The Lottery* in Los Angeles, I will participate in a panel discussion on the future of school choice, featuring Reason Foudation Director of Education Lisa Snell, Parent Revolutuion's Ben Austin, and Former Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan. For more information, go to <http://tiny.cc/2h4nx> On Jan. 29, after a showing of *The Cartel* in San Diego, I will be on a panel with the film's director Bob Bowdon. For more info, go to <http://tiny.cc/1192i> On Jan. 30, after a showing of *The Cartel* in San Mateo, I

will be on a panel with Bob Bowdon and Lance Izumi, Senior Director of Education Studies at Pacific Research Institute. For more info, go to <http://tiny.cc/gnt7f>)

As always, we at CTEN want to thank you for your ongoing support. Please visit our website – www.ctenhome.org regularly. If you need information and can't find it on the website, please send us an email to cteninfo@ctenhome.org or call us at 888-290-8471 and we will get back to you in short order.

Sincerely,

Larry Sand
CTEN President