



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

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.

January 22, 2014

Dear Colleague,

We have mentioned the Students Matter lawsuit (*Vergara v. California*) in previous letters. The trial, which is open to the public, is set to begin in Los Angeles this Monday January 27th and could stretch on for four weeks. Every public school teacher in California could be affected by the judge's ruling, as tenure, seniority and the state's dismissal statutes in their current state could conceivably be eliminated. For more on the case, go to <http://studentsmatter.org/>

Last month we reported that CTA released a 34-page "Strategic Plan," which only CTA members could access. However, we have obtained a copy and it is now linked on the CTEN website. So, if you belong to another union or are an agency fee payer, you can view it here - <http://www.ctenhome.org/PDFdocs/strategic.pdf>

AB 1266, also known as the bathroom bill, which Governor Jerry Brown signed into law in August, is still on hold as signatures are verified for an initiative that will give citizens a chance to weigh in. The controversial legislation can be summed up in its final 37 words: "A pupil shall be permitted to participate in sex-segregated school programs and activities, including athletic teams and competitions, and use facilities consistent with his or her gender identity, irrespective of the gender listed on the pupil's records." Pending the signature count, the bill could wind up on the ballot in November. For more on the bill, go to http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB1266 - and <http://www.city-journal.org/2013/cjc1126ls.html>

Our legislature in Sacramento is trying to get a Transitional Kindergarten (TK) bill into law, which would cover every four year-old in the state. Unfortunately, there have been no studies done on TK and those done on Head Start – a similar program – show that any benefits gained disappear by grade 3. Importantly, Governor Jerry Brown is not convinced that universal TK is a good idea, so its future in California is up in the air. In 2006, voters trounced Prop. 82– a bill that would have "created a free, voluntary, half-day public preschool program available to all 4-year olds" –by more than a 3-2 margin. To pay for the program, California would have imposed a new tax on high-income individuals. To read more about the current TK bill, go to <http://edsources.org/today/2014/transitional-kindergarten-expansion-early-education-not-included-in-governors-budget-proposal/56029#.UtgfRhBQybR>

California math teacher Barry Garelick has written an important book about his experiences in ed school and as an student teacher. As a former math teacher who'd also suffered through ed school, the book really resonated with me. In fact, it's an important read for all teachers. To learn more about the book and see my review, go to http://www.amazon.com/Letters-John-Dewey-Huck-Finn/dp/149440947X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1389895705&sr=1-1

The National Council on Teacher Quality has a new study which examines “the extent to which America's traditional teacher preparation programs offer future teachers research-based strategies to help them better manage their classroom from the start of their teaching career. These strategies are so strongly supported by research that we refer to them as the Big Five.” The five are: establishing rules, building routines, reinforcing good behavior with praise, addressing misbehavior and maintaining engagement. NCTQ has determined that our ed schools are not doing a good job in preparing teachers to successfully manage their students. They explain,

The disconnect between classroom management instruction and practice may be clearest when teacher candidates are placed in PK-12 classrooms for a semester of student teaching. NCTQ has created a chart that shows the rarity of instances when a strategy was addressed in a lecture, an assignment, and also a feedback indicator on the program's student teaching evaluation/observation forms.

Regrettably, we could not identify a single program in the sample that did well addressing all research-based strategies, identifying classroom management as a priority, strategically determining how it should be taught and practiced, and employing feedback accordingly. However, some programs are paying more attention to research and to the alignment of instruction and practice: St. Mary's College of Maryland, the University of Virginia and the University of Washington-Seattle are notable for aligning instruction and practice with research-based strategies.

To read more about the NCTQ study, go to <http://www.nctq.org/teacherPrep/futureTeachers/classroomManagement.jsp>

National School Choice Week will be celebrated Jan.26th-Feb.1st this year and on January 30th I will be taking part in a panel in San Jose. For those of you who are interested, please see the flyer that I have pasted in at the end of this letter. To sign up for the event, go to here - <http://www.eventbrite.com/e/school-choice-better-education-at-lower-cost-tickets-9902213788> If you do attend, please make sure to introduce yourself to me. For more information on National School Choice week, go to <http://schoolchoiceweek.com/>

Of interest to all teachers is their pension. And those pensions are at this time at risk. Over the past few weeks, there has been a number of pieces written about their unsustainability. American Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten weighed in on the subject in a video that can be seen here - <http://www.foxbusiness.com/live-coverage/pension-crisis> However, *City Journal's* Steve Malanga destroys her flawed reasoning and half-truths,

... around the 12 minute and 30 second mark, is her contention that various conservative groups are using a call for better actuarial standards in pension accounting as a way to cut government

worker pensions (as opposed to say, bringing more transparency to this murky field.) She specifically names ALEC (the [American Legislative Exchange Council](#), a coalition of conservative legislators) as a perpetrator of this effort to diminish government worker pensions. It's an odd remark considering that interviewer Adam Shapiro introduces the issue by quoting from a Morningstar report that's highly critical of current actuarial standards. Is she saying the investment adviser and the many other critics of current actuarial assumptions are part of the ALEC plot? Beats me.

She also claims somewhere around minute 8 that average government pensions are very modest, just \$23,000 annually. I can't tell if she's talking about all government workers or just teachers, but this is the kind of statistic that needs to be taken with a grain of salt.

To continue reading Malanga's response to Weingarten, go to <http://www.publicsectorinc.org/2013/12/afts-weingarten-call-for-better-actuarials-a-guise-to-lower-pensions/>

On the same subject and certainly worth reading is "The California Teachers Association: A Failure of Leadership" by Marcia Fritz, president of the California Foundation for Fiscal Responsibility who states,

California's no stranger to municipal bankruptcy or powerful unions unable to face facts. In California, nowhere is the abrogation of union leadership more evident than with the California Teachers Association. CalSTRS, California's teacher retirement system, is massively underfunded, and will soon need increased contributions and/or benefit reductions to keep its promises. And yet, not only has the CTA not been forthcoming with their own reform proposals, they have actively opposed other plans, such as Mayor Chuck Reed's "Pension Reform Act of 2014," that would lead to a more affordable and thus sustainable public pension system.

To read more, go to <http://www.publicsectorinc.org/2014/01/the-california-teachers-association-a-failure-of-leadership/>

Teacher union watchdog Mike Antonucci weighs in on the topic with "California Will Be Next Pension Battleground" and can be accessed here - <http://www.eiaonline.com/2014/01/13/california-will-be-next-pension-battleground/>

For those of you who have been inquiring – yes, the CTEN website is being renovated as we speak. Over the years, we have piled loads of information and it is past time to neaten things up. We hope to have all the work completed by the end of this month.

As always, we at CTEN want to thank you for your ongoing support. Please visit us regularly at www.ctenhome.org. We do our best to keep our website up-to-date, but if you need any information that you can't find, please send us an email at 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



Join us to celebrate:
“School Choice: Better Education at Lower Cost”

Thursday, 30 Jan. 2014 | 6:30 pm–9:00 pm
WestGate Church, 1735 Saratoga Ave.(Between Lawrence Expy.& Prospect Rd.) San Jose, CA 95129

The state of education in America is not good. Taxes are rising to meet the perceived need. But test scores and other meaningful measures of quality are not improving. What is to be done? School Choice holds great promise to improve education and lower the costs of education. But just what is school choice? How can it promise higher quality AND lower costs?

This unique program will answer these and other questions you have. Our Forum and Break-out sessions will bring together top experts in School Choice to provide a path forward for the education of our children and common sense economics. **Our experts are:**

Williamson M. Evers, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and a member of the Koret Task Force on K–12 Education, specializes in research on education policy especially as it pertains to curriculum, teaching, testing, accountability, and school finance from kindergarten through high school.

Larry Sand taught elementary and middle school for over 28 years in NY and CA. Now retired, he is president of the non-profit California Teachers Empowerment Network - a non-partisan, non-political group dedicated to providing teachers with reliable and balanced information about professional affiliations and positions on educational issues.

Lisa Snellis the director of education and child welfare at Reason Foundation, a nonprofit think tank advancing free minds and free markets. She has frequently testified before the CA State Legislature and numerous other state legislatures and government agencies. She has written on school finance, universal preschool, charter schools, and other related topics.

Ana Rita Guzman is the founder and coordinator for the Mid-Peninsula Homeschoolers group in Palo Alto, CA. She has overseen the education of her three children, homeschooling them since birth, then transitioning to more traditional institutions when appropriate. She is a strong spokesperson for homeschooling.

The program will include an opening panel, in-depth break-out sessions and then a final concluding summary and way-forward session covering:

- history & relevance of school funding, competition and choice
- charter schools - in CA and nationwide, their origin, growth and promise
- vouchers, credits, rebates, and private scholarships
- homeschooling alternatives
- competition, creativity and costs vs. monopoly

Join us to better understand the promises and excitement of what real school choice can mean for the improvement of your family, school, community and country. This event is free of charge, but seating is limited. Please RSVP at: **<http://SchoolChoiceSJ.eventbrite.com>**

**Co-Sponsors: Silicon Valley Freedom Project, Discovery Charter School,
California Teachers Empowerment Network and the Reason Foundation**

For more information about National School Choice Week, please visit: www.SchoolChoiceWeek.com, or for more information about this event, contact us at: patrickpeterson@yahoo.com or Ph: 408-261-1913