



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 20, 2015

Dear Colleague,

While the *Vergara* case is being appealed by the state and CTA, activists are busy trying to figure out what will replace the laws that Judge Rolf Treu said “shock the conscience.” The Students Matter team has come up with a plan it feels will make education more child-friendly in California. Regarding tenure, they write:

Increasing the length of the probationary period alone will not address the core problem of ineffective teachers obtaining tenure and retaining employment despite poor job performance. In addition to extending the minimum length of the probationary period, Students Matter recommends basing the tenure decision on demonstrated quality of teaching, instead of on time in the classroom. Students Matter believes teachers should earn a designated number of effective or highly effective ratings on annual performance evaluations in order to receive tenure; that a teacher’s permanent status should be portable between school districts; and that permanent status should be able to be rescinded if a teacher receives multiple evaluations showing an ineffective rating.

To read the rest of their recommendations, go here - <http://studentsmatter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Teacher-Employment-Policy-Pillars.pdf>

Also Teach Plus, whose mission is to “to improve outcomes for urban children by ensuring that a greater proportion of students have access to effective, experienced teachers,” has come out with a survey which finds that teachers are amenable to change the way California does tenure, seniority and dismissals. Among the findings:

- 69 percent (of teachers) said tenure protected an ineffective colleague who should have been dismissed but wasn’t.
- 71 percent said layoff decisions should be based partly or entirely on classroom performance.

- 74 percent said it should take no more than two years for dismissal after a teacher receiving help was still determined to be ineffective.

What, if anything, the unions will do with the results of this poll is anyone's guess. For more information and access to the survey, go to <http://edsources.org/2015/teacher-survey-change-tenure-layoff-laws/72779#.VLgAUnt2CVN>

While many teachers and parents favor small class-size, the evidence that students are really helped by it is scant. As Hoover Institution senior fellow and economist Eric Hanushek recently wrote in the *New York Daily News*,

Nobody has shown that the substantial class-size reductions of the past 15 years have paid off in terms of student achievement. Instead, the two main effects of past class-size reduction have been more teachers and more expensive schools.

Education research is essentially unanimous: The effectiveness of the teacher in the classroom is far, far more important than how many students are in the classroom. But this is not the message that the union wants to hear, because it would involve evaluating teachers and making personnel decisions based on the quality of the work they do.

To read "The UFT's wasteful class-size push," go to <http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/eric-hanushek-uft-wasteful-class-size-push-article-1.2043575>

In another piece that defies conventional thought, the Independent Institute's Vicki Alger penned an op-ed for the *Wall Street Journal*, "Education's No Dollar Left Behind Competition," in which she claims,

States that spent less per pupil tended to have better educational outcomes. More than 45% of low-income students in Idaho—with its relatively puny \$4,100 per pupil spending—tested proficient in reading and math. Low-income students in stingy Arizona, which spent \$4,200 per pupil on instruction, had 51% proficiency rates in both subjects. And students in penny-pinching Oklahoma, which spent around \$4,300 per pupil, achieved a 53% proficiency rate in reading and 52% in math.

To read more of this provocative piece, go to <http://www.wsj.com/articles/vicki-alger-educations-no-dollar-left-behind-competition-1421017161>

Last month, the National Education Association posted their ideas about "2014's Best and Worst Players in Public Education." The usual bogeymen – the Koch brothers and new villainess Campbell Brown – are of course trotted out. But also prominently bashed is Democrats for Education Reform, which advocates for sensible education policy changes. But according to NEA, the reforms suggested by DFER (and many other groups) have "acquired a bit of a stench over the last few years, as the ideas with which it is most closely associated – high stakes accountability, vouchers, merit pay, charter schools, not to mention teacher bashing – have not worn well with much of the public." (Actually, polls show that the general public is now at odds with the teachers unions, not the reformers.) To see the entire NEA list, go to <http://neatoday.org/2014/12/09/2014s-best-and-worst-players-in-public-education/>

And talking about unions, there is a bill that has been kicking around Congress since late 2013 called the “Employee Rights Act.” Its goal is to “provide protections for workers with respect to their right to select or refrain from selecting representation by a labor organization.” The hope is that with the recent political shift in Washington, the legislation can be moved along at a speedier clip. To read more about the multifaceted bill, go to <http://employeerightsact.com/>

January 25-31 is National School Choice Week, a time dedicated to shining a positive spotlight “on the need for effective education options for all children.” Last year there were over 5,500 events across the country and this year I will be participating in two of them. For more information about the events in Los Angeles and Orange County, please contact stephanie@parentsadvocateleague.org.

Over the last several years, one needs more than an abacus to keep up with the bevy of school choice lawsuits and countersuits that are jamming courtrooms all over the country. But thankfully, the good folks over at Watchdog.org have spelled out many of them in bite-sized pieces. To learn more, go to <http://watchdog.org/189775/school-lawsuits-2014/>

Also regarding vouchers, according to a 17-year study in New York City, *Education Next* reports “Minority students who received a school voucher to attend private elementary schools in 1997 were, as of 2013, 10 percent more likely to enroll in college and 35 percent more likely than their peers in public school to obtain a bachelor’s degree.” To read more about the study, go to <http://educationnext.org/school-vouchers-help-low-income-minority-students-earn-college-degree/>

CTEN has two Facebook pages. If you have a Facebook account, we urge you to join them and let us know your thoughts. Having a dialogue among teachers is an effective way to spread information and share experiences and 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>

Also, you can access “Teachers for School Choice here - <https://www.facebook.com/teachersforchoice>

As always, thanks for your continued interest and support of CTEN.

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President