



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

October 19, 2010

Dear Colleague,

Janine Walker Caffrey currently works with the Board of Education in New York City and has worn many other hats - teacher, writer, consultant, etc. She recently wrote a blog piece - *Stop the Blame!* - in which she says that real reform will begin only when all the various factions - teachers, media, schools, etc. stop blaming each other for the problem and step back and rationally analyze what needs to be done. "It is time that we all become educated consumers of education." A breath of fresh air, to say the least. To read the article, please go to <http://www.janinewalkercaffrey.com/1/post/2010/09/stop-the-blame.html>

Earlier this year, without much fanfare, a new law went into effect in CA. The "Parent Trigger" could have major ramifications for teachers, parents and students. Under this law, if 50.1 percent of parents at a school sign a petition, the school must initiate one of four turnaround options as prescribed by the federal government. To learn more, go to http://parentrevolution.org/?page_id=7 . Also, the Heartland Institute has put out a policy brief explaining the promise and possible pitfalls of the Parent Trigger - http://www.heartland.org/custom/semod_policybot/pdf/28202.pdf Additionally, Heartland puts out an excellent monthly newspaper, called *School Reform News*, which is a great one-stop shop to find out what's happening in the very busy world of education reform. In the October issue, accessible online, there is an article about Lydia Grant, who is the first parent to try out the new Parent Trigger law in California. To read it, go to page 7 of http://www.heartland.org/custom/semod_policybot/pdf/28506.pdf

Another issue that will certainly leave its mark on education is Common Core Standards or National Standards – courtesy of the President Obama's Race to the Top program. (More info here - <http://www.commoncore.org/index.php>) The idea to further nationalize education has drawn fire from most education reformers, but states are still signing on to it in the hope of receiving more federal dollars. Here are 3 articles – against, for and middling –

<http://jaypgreene.com/2010/03/10/national-standards-nonsense/>

<http://educationnext.org/answering-jay-greenes-questions-about-national-standards/>

<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2016708,00.html#ixzz0z9LwyW2V>

Due to tight budgets, the class size debate is with us again. Conventional wisdom says that smaller classes are better for students and most teachers like them because they frequently are easier to manage. But in a provocative article in the Washington Post, we get to see another side to this issue - <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/answer-sheet/guest-bloggers/why-we-cant-afford-small-class.html> This piece makes some of the same points that I did in an article recently published in the Orange County Register - <http://www.ocregister.com/articles/teachers-262070-class-percent.html>

I sent the following out last week, but if you missed it, [here it is](#) -

I am attaching the responses to our "not really a poll - just a couple of questions" email concerning district and/or union politicking. Seems that many of you have had similar experiences.

A few words about the attached-

1- The responses are posted in order received.

2 - I have removed all names.

3 - I also removed any mention of school or name of local union. For the latter, I substituted "my local." Other than that, there has been no editing.

Last month we told you about *National School Choice Week* coming this January. There is a new website for the event. To learn more and get involved, go to <http://schoolchoiceweek.com/>

Reminder: If you are considering becoming an agency fee payer, 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 even one day late, you will not get a penny back. Also, because liability insurance is very important for teachers, we suggest joining the Association of American Educators <http://www.aaeteachers.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.)

We have received more emails this year than any preceding year with complaints and questions regarding teachers' attempts to gain agency fee status. If you are in any way unsure of the information given to you by a local or state union, please don't hesitate to run it by us.

And finally, there is a teacher in the southern part near San Diego who can use some help.

I am now 61 years old (yes, I embarked on a new career in my 50s), and whether we want to admit it or not, there IS age discrimination in teaching, just as in other sectors of the job market. I have redone my resume and have gotten a couple of interviews, but as soon as they see me, there is an automatic and palpable turn-off. I am not imagining this. It is becoming painfully clear to me that I will never work in the profession that I love and for which I put my family in debt. I still owe \$15,000 in student loans and have no reliable income to help me pay it back. This means that I am tapping what little retirement savings I have just to survive and to pay off my student loan before I am eligible for Social Security and Medicare.

My primary source of job openings is EDJOIN, although I have sent my resume to private schools in the area. Any other suggestions?

She did work for a while as an algebra teacher before getting laid off. If you have any ideas for her, please get back to me and I will get the info to her. Thanks.

In any event, if you enjoy these letters and find them informative, 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 – <http://www.ctenhome.org> - please let us know.

As always, we at CTEN want to thank you for your ongoing support and feedback.

Larry Sand
CTEN President