



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

October 18, 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.

Greetings,

I just returned from the Foundation for Excellence in Education conference in San Francisco. For education reformers, this was the certainly the place to be – teachers, think tankers, charter operators, legislators, etc. convened for a day and a half, compared notes and planned reform strategies. I'm not sure what the future of education will look like, but I can tell you with great certainty that the status quo will not continue to stand for long. The conference, which was streamed live, is available as a podcast - <http://wpc.230d.edgecastcdn.net/00230D/august2/fee/webcast/index.html>

Perhaps the greatest threat to business as usual is digital learning, which is already being utilized in some states on a limited basis. Perhaps the greatest boon to learning via computer came accidentally. Sal Khan, a former hedge fund analyst, made a couple of YouTube videos to help his younger cousins get through some troubling math areas. Soon Mr. Khan learned that it wasn't just his cousins that he was helping. He then made more videos on different subjects and people from all over the world began to watch and learn from them. Bill Gates became a supporter and Khan is now known to millions. To get the full story, I urge you to watch this video in which Mr. Khan gives an overview of what he has accomplished in a very brief time - http://www.ted.com/talks/salman_khan_let_s_use_video_to_reinvent_education.html His website, which now has over 2,600 videos, is a must visit - <http://www.khanacademy.org/>

No Child Left Behind has been in the news recently; due for yet another renewal, people from both sides of the aisle are fighting about the best course to take. The government, which wants to give waivers to states that are not going to be able to live up to the original dictates of the 2001 law, is supported by some. But others are just plain tired of the government's involvement in what they feel should be an issue left up to the states. The following articles sum up both sides of the discussion - http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/federal-takeover-of-education/2011/09/30/gIOAdKYBBL_story.html and <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/oct/03/opinion/la-ed-nclb-20111003>

Teacher preparation programs have been in the news lately and mercifully so. Too many of our schools of education do a horrible job of readying teachers for life in the classroom. The National Council on Teacher Quality reports that, "In response to growing demand from its state customers to offer a new elementary generalist licensing test, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) will be releasing a considerably improved alternative to the current Praxis II 'content knowledge' test now used by 25 states." The hope is that with a more rigorous assessment, the states will do a better job of teaching the next generation of teachers.

Additionally, President Obama has thrown himself into the ed school fray. "The Obama administration announced a new \$185 million competition Friday that would reward colleges for producing teachers whose students perform well on standardized tests."

This competition "would require states to provide data linking collegiate teaching programs inside their borders to the test scores of their graduates' students. Under the proposal, to be eligible for the money, states would have to ratchet up teacher-licensing exams and close persistently low-performing teacher-training programs." To continue reading this *Wall Street Journal* article, go to <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204138204576602992880869786.html>

And finally, there is a union angle to the ed school follies. While NEA President Dennis Van Roekel constantly complains about poor teacher preparation, NEA gave \$381,576 in 2009-2010 to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, which oversees teacher training programs. To read more about this double-dealing, please go here - <http://redcounty.com/content/tragedy-and-farce-american-schools-education>

On the subject of teacher quality and teacher pay, education researcher Marcus Winters claims that a compensation system "based on additional academic credit and experience makes sense only if those factors are actually related to classroom effectiveness. They aren't." This article, which explains that the way most teachers are paid is wrong, is a must read - <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/oct/02/opinion/la-oe-winters-teachers-pay-20111002>

Long time friend of CTEN, Palm Desert High School teacher Ossil Macavinta has suggested that if you are interested in starting a "No Cussing Club" at your school to let him know. He is very interested in expanding the clubs and would be willing to help you get one off the ground. More info can be found at <http://palmdesert.patch.com/articles/city-extends-influence-of-no-cussing-club> and <http://PDHSNoCussing.com> To contact Dr. Macavinta, you can email him at ossil.macavinta@dsusd.us or info@pdhsnocussing.com or call him at 760-333-2139.

Final 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> (As a first timer, you must take care of both steps by November 15 to get a full rebate.)

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.)

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