



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.

October 16, 2013

Dear Colleague,

As widely reported, AB 375, California's latest attempt to simplify the teacher dismissal statutes, was fast-tracked through the state legislature in September. The bill was excoriated by various reformers, including EdVoice's Bill Lucia and former state senator Gloria Romero. Additionally, the California School Board Association lobbied heavily to kill the bill. The two major proponents of the legislation were the California Teachers Association and the California Federation of Teachers. Governor Jerry Brown, however, vetoed the bill last Thursday. To read more about the bill, go to <http://www.city-journal.org/2013/cjc1010ls.html>

But AB 484, which suspends standardized school testing for a year, had a different fate. This time the governor signed off on the legislation. To read more, go to <http://laschoolreport.com/brown-signs-ab-484-ending-old-standardized-tests-california/>

Christina Hoff Sommers has written "How to Make School Better for Boys," a very provocative piece for *The Atlantic*. The subhead reads, "Start by acknowledging that boys are languishing while girls are succeeding." She claims that,

As the United States moves toward a knowledge-based economy, school achievement has become the cornerstone of lifelong success. Women are adapting; men are not. Yet the education establishment and federal government are, with some notable exceptions, looking the other way.

To continue reading, go to <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/09/how-to-make-school-better-for-boys/279635/>

In something of a companion piece, also in *The Atlantic*, Sommers writes "The Bizarre, Misguided Campaign to Get Rid of Single-Sex Classrooms." She takes the ACLU and like-minded groups to task for comparing single sex classrooms to racially segregated classes.

Race and sex are different, as the Supreme Court has emphasized and as most everyone recognizes. Mandatory racial separatism demeans human beings and forecloses life prospects. Single-sex education is freely chosen and has helped millions of pupils flourish intellectually and socially. It's preposterous to think of Wellesley College, the Girl Scouts or the Barack Obama

Male Leadership Academy as oppressive institutions comparable to segregated schools in the Jim Crow South.

For more, go to <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/10/the-bizarre-misguided-campaign-to-get-rid-of-single-sex-classrooms/280262/>

Are you a tough teacher? Do you call your kids “idiots” when they screw up? My guess that you don’t and that a vast majority would find this abusive. But writer Joanne Lipman has another take. In *The Wall Street Journal*, she makes a compelling case for the opposite in “Why Tough Teachers Get Good Results.”

I had a teacher once who called his students "idiots" when they screwed up. He was our orchestra conductor, a fierce Ukrainian immigrant named Jerry Kupchynsky, and when someone played out of tune, he would stop the entire group to yell, "Who eez deaf in first violins!?" He made us rehearse until our fingers almost bled. He corrected our wayward hands and arms by poking at us with a pencil.

Today, he'd be fired. But when he died a few years ago, he was celebrated: Forty years' worth of former students and colleagues flew back to my New Jersey hometown from every corner of the country, old instruments in tow, to play a concert in his memory. I was among them, toting my long-neglected viola. When the curtain rose on our concert that day, we had formed a symphony orchestra the size of the New York Philharmonic.

I was stunned by the outpouring for the gruff old teacher we knew as Mr. K. But I was equally struck by the success of his former students. Some were musicians, but most had distinguished themselves in other fields, like law, academia and medicine. Research tells us that there is a positive correlation between music education and academic achievement. But that alone didn't explain the belated surge of gratitude for a teacher who basically tortured us through adolescence.

To continue reading this thoughtful and controversial piece, please go to <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304213904579095303368899132.html>

As some of you may know, the Los Angeles Unified School District is attempting to get an iPad into the hands of every one of its 650,000 or so students. Unfortunately, the roll-out has been nothing short of disastrous. Many have been lost and hacked, and there seems to be no policy which addresses these and other issues. If nothing else, this should be a cautionary tale for other districts about what *not* to do. To learn more about this messy situation, go to <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2013/1001/1-billion-iPad-giveaway-at-L.A.-schools-Bad-idea-or-poor-execution-video>

According to a recent study, Teach For America’s secondary math teachers have been proven to be more effective than traditionally trained math teachers “working in the same schools, no matter how much experience the TFA teachers had.” To read more about the study, go here - <http://www.nctq.org/commentary/viewStory.do?id=33737>

While the program has been quite successful, TFA is still attacked in some quarters. In a recent, article in *The Atlantic*, "I Quit Teach for America," a TFA alum writes about her experiences. After reading this piece, another TFA grad responded with "Remember the 'I Quit Teach for America' essay? Here's the counterpoint. 'I stayed.'" To read the pro and con pieces go to <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/09/i-quit-teach-for-america/279724/> and <http://www.ajc.com/weblogs/get-schooled/2013/oct/03/remember-i-quit-teach-america-heres-counterpoint-i/>

The following is a copy and paste from last month's letter. It is a reminder that if you are an agency fee payer and requesting a rebate or are planning to become one and want to get a full rebate, **the time to do so is now.**

If your politics don't happen to jibe with CTA's, or you don't think that a teachers union should be spending money on issues that have nothing to do with teaching or education, you might want to consider not giving them the 30+ percent of your dues that go toward politics. If you'd like more information about your options, please go to <http://www.ctenhome.org/know.htm>

If you do decide to make this move, it is a two-step process. First, you must 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 as much as one day late, you will not get a penny. Also, because liability insurance is important for teachers, we suggest joining the Association of American Educators <http://www.aateachers.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.)

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 information and can't find it there, 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