



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.

October 15, 2014

Dear Colleague,

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce released a new report on K-12 educational effectiveness last month, and the results are not encouraging. It found that, through the eyes of business leaders, American schools are failing to create internationally competitive, college- and career-ready students. The report focused on eleven measures:

- academic achievement
- academic achievement for low-income and minority students
- return on investment
- the “truth in advertising” of each state’s student proficiency
- postsecondary and workforce readiness
- the quality of the teaching force
- parental options
- data quality
- access to technology
- international competitiveness
- fiscal responsibility

For highlights of the report, go to <http://educationblog.ncpa.org/u-s-chamber-report-shows-unprepared-students/> To read the report go here - <http://www.leadersandlaggards.org/sites/default/files/Leaders%20and%20Laggards%20A%20State-by-State%20Report%20Card%20on%20K-12%20Educational%20Effectiveness.pdf>

A draft of the new History/Social Science Frameworks has been posted online. The state board is accepting public comments through November 25th. This is a very good opportunity for teachers and all citizens to weigh in. To make your voice heard, go to <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/cf/>

While we don’t know the ultimate fate of the *Vergara* appeal, some folks are wisely trying to figure out what to do should Judge Rolf Treu’s decision stand. In that case, the tenure, seniority and dismissal statutes in our education code would have to be revised. With reform in mind, former Los Angeles mayor Antonio Villaraigosa got together with a couple of advocacy group

Teach Plus fellows and hashed things out. Regarding the tenure component, the recommendation included one short-term and three long-term solutions:

- Extend to four years the time for a teacher to gain “permanent status”; require three consecutive years of evaluations demonstrating effective teaching for a teacher to earn “permanent status.”
- Base tenure decisions solely on performance.
- Require schools to provide evidence of support for teachers who receive an unsatisfactory evaluation if those teachers continue their employment.

To read more about the Teach Plus policy recommendations, go to <http://laschoolreport.com/la-teachers-group-offers-solutions-for-a-post-vergara-world/>

The race for California state superintendent of public instruction is heating up. Interestingly, reformer Marshall Tuck is neck and neck with the CTA-backed incumbent Tom Torlakson in campaign contributions and in the polls. Also of note is that every major daily in the state has come out for Tuck. *The Sacramento Bee* had an especially forceful editorial which pointedly asserted,

The Sacramento Bee editorial board has endorsed Tuck because we believe that teachers unions have a chokehold on the state’s public education system and that’s been detrimental for everyone, including teachers.

To read the rest of the editorial go to <http://www.sacbee.com/2014/09/26/6736878/editorial-california-superintendent.html>

There is a situation brewing in Philadelphia that other school districts across the country are following with great interest. Last week, after 21 months of fruitless negotiations, the Philadelphia School Reform Commission cancelled its teachers' contract.

The district says it will not cut the wages of 15,000 teachers, counselors, nurses, secretaries, and other PFT members. But it plans to dismantle the long-standing Philadelphia Federation of Teachers Health and Welfare Fund, which is controlled by the union, and take over administering benefits.

The terms imposed Monday mean most PFT members will have to pay either 10 or 13 percent of the cost of their medical plan beginning Dec. 15, depending on their salaries. They now pay nothing if they opt for a basic plan. Officials said workers would pay between \$21 and \$200 per month, beginning Dec. 15.

The changes will save the cash-strapped district \$54 million this school year, officials said, and as much as \$70 million in subsequent years.

That money, SRC Chairman Bill Green said, will be invested directly in classrooms, with principals empowered to use the cash as they see fit - to hire a full-time counselor and nurse, perhaps, or to pay for more supplies or after-school programs.

Needless to say, the local teachers union is having fits, and its president is threatening everyone in sight. To read more, go to http://articles.philly.com/2014-10-08/news/54742453_1_philly-teachers-union-philadelphia-federation-jerry-jordan

In a post last week, teacher union watchdog Mike Antonucci informed us that “NEA Membership Numbers Accelerate Downward.”

Officers of the National Education Association expressed some optimism last July that the union’s falling membership numbers were finally reaching their nadir. Active membership losses totaling more than 9 percent since 2008-09 had slowed to a drop of about 17,000 by the end of the 2013-14 school year. While still a significant loss, surely the end of the lean years was in sight.

That is, until the first figures for the 2014-15 school year came in. NEA is down 37,000 active members from this time a year ago.

To read more of Antonucci’s post, go here - <http://www.eiaonline.com/2014/10/06/nea-membership-numbers-accelerate-downward/>

“School Choice Means Higher Teacher Pay” according to a new study from the Texas Public Policy Foundation. While the report is specific to Texas, the findings could be applied to other states as well. To read “Teachers Win: A Case for School Choice,” go to <http://www.texaspolicy.com/sites/default/files/documents/2014-09-PP35-TeachersWin-CEP-MichaelBarbaVanceGinn.pdf>

If you are a CTA/NEA agency fee payer, now is the time to submit your rebate request. **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 \$198 first year membership.) For more information, go to <http://www.ctenhome.org/how-to-opt-out-teachers-union-nea-cta-aft-cft.html>

And finally, in a world awash with data, CTEN has an easy-to-read cheat sheet on our website with a load of info - <http://www.ctenhome.org/cheatsheet.html> If you have any questions or would like us to add to it, please let us know. Also, if you enjoy these letters and find them informative, please pass them along to your colleagues and encourage them to join us.

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

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President