



# 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 18, 2017

Dear Colleague,

As many of you know, teachers throughout most of the country are paid by the step-and-column method, whereby salaries are based on the number of years on the job. Teachers can also increase their salaries by taking “professional development” classes, despite conclusive research that these classes have little if any effect on student learning.

When teacher salary schedules first came to be about 100 years ago, they were designed to eliminate discrimination due to race, ethnicity and gender. With such discrimination illegal today, is there really any need for them?

Not according to the Brookings Institution, which has come out with a report that shows the detrimental effects of the step-and-column pay regimen.

*The evidence presented here demonstrates a strong association between inequalities across teacher compensation, school funding, and pension benefits that we believe warrants greater attention. In light of an aging workforce creating a growing number of teacher vacancies, and a new generation of increasingly mobile millennial teachers, these findings have important implications about how public resources are allocated across teachers and students.*

To read more of this provocative report, go to <https://www.brookings.edu/research/scrutinizing-equal-pay-for-equal-work-among-teachers/>

Using data from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights, a study released in September by the Fordham Institute delves into the depths of the teacher absentee problem. On average, teachers miss about eight school days a year due to sick and personal leave, while the average U.S. worker takes only about three-and-a-half sick days per annum. The study shows that 28.3 percent of teachers in traditional public schools are chronically absent, which is defined as missing 11 or more days of school per year due to illness or personal reasons. Interestingly, in charter schools – most of which are not unionized – the corresponding number is just 10.3 percent.

Even within charter schools, the study reveals a glaring disparity. Teachers in unionized charters are almost twice as likely to be chronically absent as their colleagues in non-unionized charters – 17.9 percent to 9.1 percent.

The study's author, David Griffith, stresses that there's a direct link between teacher attendance and student achievement. He writes,

*There are roughly 100,000 public schools in the United States, with over 3 million public school teachers and at least 50 million students. So every year, at least 800,000 teachers in the U.S. are chronically absent, meaning they miss about 9 million days of school between them, resulting in roughly 1 billion instances in which a kid comes to class to find that his or her time is, more often than not, being wasted....*

To read more of this eye-opening report, go here - <https://edexcellence.net/publications/teacher-absenteeism>

While this year's Smarter Balanced test scores are nothing to rave about in California, there is one bright spot as *EdSource's* Carolyn Jones points out: 3<sup>rd</sup> graders' math scores. She writes,

*Nearly 47 percent of 3<sup>rd</sup>-graders met or exceeded the math standards, the highest number of any grade level. By comparison, only 32.14 percent of 11<sup>th</sup>-graders — who spent most of their school years studying the old standards — met or exceeded standards.*

To read more about the math scores go here <https://edsources.org/2017/signs-of-hope-amid-smarter-balanced-math-scores/588427> To see all the results go to <http://caaspp.edsources.org/>

Over half of California students are not meeting English standards on the test, and perhaps we need to try a different approach. To that end, early literacy specialist Patrick Herrera has some ideas. He writes that *all* teachers are language teachers, and when teaching vocabulary, definitions are not enough. He writes,

*Learning objectives include a purpose, an instructional plan and assessment. A common vocabulary assignment is a list of words and definitions to memorize for a quiz. This includes science, history, etc.*

*Memorized information will be quickly forgotten. Also, you want to insure that the lesson becomes part of their speaking and writing communications.*

***Let's review the complete process:***

- *Assign vocabulary with definitions and sentences that reflect the definitions.*
- *Review in class, and ask for volunteers to create another sentence using the word. Students add the sentence to their assignment.*
- *Quiz: Provide sentences from the original assignment (not the definitions) with the vocabulary word missing. They supply the missing word.*

*Vocabulary is more than words and definitions; vocabulary needs context. Context helps you think. You can't think without vocabulary.*

To learn more, visit Herrera's website – [www.phonicstoliteracy.com](http://www.phonicstoliteracy.com)

On the school choice front, there is good news coming from Florida, where a recent study conducted by the Urban Institute shows favorable long-term outcomes for students who enroll in the state's Tax Credit Scholarship Program – the largest private school choice program in the country. As the American Federation for Children reports:

- *If a student stays in a private school via the FTC for **two years**, **college enrollment increases by 9-14 percent** compared to public school students.*
- *If a student stays in a private school via the FTC for **three years**, **college enrollment increases by 19-25 percent** compared to public school students.*
- *If a student stays in a private school via the FTC for **four years or more**, **college enrollment increases by 37-43 percent** compared to public school students.*

To read more, go to <https://www.federationforchildren.org/release-groundbreaking-new-school-choice-research/>  
To see the report, go here - <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/effects-statewide-private-school-choice-college-enrollment-and-graduation>

The big union news over the past month is the announcement of the Supreme Court's willingness to hear the *Janus v AFSCME* case. Mark Janus, a child support specialist who works for the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, is compelled to send part of his paycheck to the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. Janus, who is being represented by the Liberty Justice Center and National Right to Work Foundation, says, "When I was hired by the state of Illinois, no one asked if I wanted a union to represent me. I only found out the union was involved when money for the union started coming out of my paychecks."

The lawsuit is a sequel to *Friedrichs v CTA*, which was headed to a SCOTUS victory last year until Antonin Scalia's death short-circuited the case. But right-to-work proponents are optimistic that Scalia's replacement, Neil Gorsuch, will come down as the fifth vote on the side of employee freedom. As things stand now, public employees in 22 states are forced to pay dues to a union as a condition of employment.

To stay up-to-date on the Janus case, go here - <http://www.scotusblog.com/case-files/cases/janus-v-american-federation-state-county-municipal-employees-council-31/>

Many teachers unions are preparing for the worst, and some state affiliates are going to rather drastic lengths to protect their turf. Anticipating an unfavorable *Janus* decision, Education Minnesota, the National Education Association affiliate in the Gopher State, has come up with a new form that includes the following wording:

*I agree to submit dues to Education Minnesota and hereby request and voluntarily authorize my employer to deduct from my wages an amount equal to the regular monthly dues uniformly applicable to members of Education Minnesota or monthly service fee, and further that such amount so deducted be sent to such local union for and on my behalf. **This authorization shall***

*remain in effect and shall be automatically renewed from year to year, irrespective of my membership in the union, unless I revoke it by submitting written notice to both my employer and the local union during the seven-day period that begins on September 24 and ends on September 30.* (Emphasis added.)

To read more about Education Minnesota's chicanery, go to <https://www.americanexperiment.org/2017/08/education-mn-braces-loss-thousands-members-millions-dollars/>

The new American Federation of Teachers U.S. Department of Labor report has been disclosed. As RiShawn Biddle writes,

*The nation's second-largest teachers' union spent \$44.1 million in 2016-2017 on political lobbying activities and contributions to what should be like-minded groups. This is a 29.6 percent increase over the same period a year ago. This, by the way, doesn't include politically-driven spending that can often find its way under so-called "representational activities."*

Interestingly, the union gave a whopping \$1.2 million to the *Atlantic Monthly*, double the amount it gave to the magazine the prior year. Biddle comments:

*You have to wonder if Weingarten and her mandarins are kicking themselves for not offering to buy a stake in the Atlantic, which will soon be controlled by Laurene Powell Jobs' reform-minded Emerson Collective, which has become a landing spot for U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and his former honcho on civil rights enforcement, Russlyn Ali.*

To read more about AFT largess, go to <http://dropoutnation.net/2017/10/03/afts-44-million-spend/> To get Mike Antonucci's take on the DOL report and the *Atlantic* spend, go here - <http://www.eiaonline.com/intercepts/2017/10/03/afts-disclosure-report-stirs-things-up/>

And on the subject of unions, a reminder: **now is the time for agency fee payers to claim their rebate.** Or, if you are a full-dues payer but want to withhold the political share of your union dues, now is the time to get busy. Existing CTA fee payers have until November 15<sup>th</sup> to request a refund. For details, go here - <http://www.ctenhome.org/how-to-opt-out-teachers-union-nea-cta-aft-cft.html>

And finally, as you well know, information is frequently used to score political points and make cases for various causes. To that end, CTEN has a "cheat sheet," which has been updated on our website – all with original sources. To see it, go to <http://www.ctenhome.org/cheatsheet.html>

If you have information that counters what's there or would like to see something added, please let us know. As always, thanks for your continuing interest and support.

Sincerely,  
Larry Sand  
CTEN President