



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

November 14, 2011

Dear Colleague,

Regarding agency fee payers - we sincerely hope that if you are an existing agency fee payer, you have sent in a request for your rebate. The deadline is tomorrow, November 15th. If you don't file by the end of the day tomorrow, you will not get your rebate this year. However, if you are a first time filer, you may resign from the union after the 15th. However, you will not get the full amount, but rather a prorated one, depending on how long after the 15th you file.

Recently, some parents in Los Angeles filed a lawsuit that will undoubtedly have ramifications all over the state and perhaps elsewhere. It seems that the "Stull" evaluations we have undergone in our teaching careers have been "incomplete." According to the Stull Act (Section 44660 of the state's education code, (<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=edc&group=44001-45000&file=44660-44665>), part of a teacher's evaluation is required to include a student achievement component, but this has not happened anywhere in the state. To learn more go here - <http://tinyurl.com/7sydgo7> and here - <http://toped.svefoundation.org/2011/11/02/new-life-for-old-law-on-evaluations/>

Do you think you are paid too much? A couple of researchers at the Heritage Foundation suggest that maybe you are. Their detailed study is definitely worth a read as they make their case quite rationally, which is more than we can say about some of the headlines and responses to it which have followed. To read the report, go to <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/10/Assessing-the-Compensation-of-Public-School-Teachers> The authors of the study summarized their findings in a Wall Street Journal op-ed - <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203687504576655352353046120.html> Not surprisingly, the Huffington Post has a different take, as expressed by Arne Duncan - http://www.huffingtonpost.com/arne-duncan/teacher-pay-study-asks-th_b_1084881.html

"Focus on standardized tests may be pushing some teachers to cheat" reads the headline in the November 7 *Los Angeles Times*. While nowhere near the epidemic proportions in Atlanta, it seems that some teachers have resorted to giving their students "too much help" on the standardized tests that all students in California are required to take every spring. To read the article, go to - <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/nov/07/local/la-me-teacher-cheating-20111107>

We think that *Edmodo* is a website that may be valuable for teachers. Their website explains, “Edmodo is a secure, social learning platform for teachers, students, schools and districts. We provide a safe and easy way for your class to connect and collaborate, share content and access homework, grades and school notices. Our goal is to help educators harness the power of social media to customize the classroom for each and every learner.” This website would seem to bypass some of the problems associated with other social networking websites. To learn more go to <http://www.edmodo.com/>

Mary Grabar, an English professor in Georgia, has recently started a terrific website which shares some of the same goals as CTEN. Aimed at academia, “Dissident Prof” connects the American citizenry to professors, scholars, and writers who dissent from the ideology of political correctness in our schools and college campuses. Through commentary, reports, books, and online discussions, Dissident Prof offers aid in the resistance to classroom indoctrination. Dissident Prof revives reasoned intellectual inquiry, the hallmark of Western Civilization and American traditions; it restores the long-standing intellectual heritage that is rooted in objective analysis, honest historical investigation, fair debate, and high ethical standards. Professors from various fields educate the public about educational corruption; we reveal the connections between the inner workings of academia with public policy and politics. Dissident Prof empowers students, parents, and taxpayers with the knowledge to join with educators and engage as activists in educational and political reform. To visit the website, go to www.dissidentprof.com For Mary’s other published writing, go to www.marygrabar.com

Regarding teacher layoffs – how bad was it this year? Nationally, not as bad as predicted. But here in California, we did take a hit. The National Council on Teacher Quality has the breakdown here - <http://www.nctq.org/p/tqb/viewStory.jsp?id=29008>

Celine Coggins, CEO of Teach Plus, has written a very interesting article about the possibility of teachers unions becoming more reform-minded - http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rick_hess_straight_up/2011/11/a_thought_experiment_for_union_leaders.html Teacher union watchdog Mike Antonucci has a contrarian view - <http://www.eiaonline.com/intercepts/2011/11/02/the-triple-option/>

CTEN received an email a few days ago from the University of Arkansas Dept. of Ed. Reform. They are looking for high quality students for their Ph.D. program in Education Policy. They say,

“This program prepares scholars for careers in academia, think tanks, and public service in the field of K-12 education policy. Our faculty members have secured significant research grants that provide unique research opportunities for graduate students. In addition, more than 80 percent of our graduate students receive fellowship awards of \$22,000 to \$32,000 per year for four years plus full tuition and a subsidized health insurance plan. All of our graduate students are engaged in substantial research and publication. We believe they will help shape the course of education policy in the coming decades.

“We are accepting applications until January 10, 2012 for our fall 2012 cohort. A link to our brochure with more information about the program is listed below. This is a wonderful opportunity for those individuals interested in education and education policy. More about

the program can be learned from our website, www.uaedreform.org.”

A brochure can be downloaded here - <http://www.uark.edu/ua/der/PhD/PhDBrochure.pdf> If you are interested in this program or know anyone who is, please contact Dirk van Raemdonck at dvanraem@uark.edu

There is a rather unusual story brewing in Los Angeles. In many elementary classes, ducks are hatched as part of the life sciences program. Unfortunately, after the lesson is over the ducks are being dumped in various places around LA County. Some animal rights activists are up in arms about this and would like to stop the district from hatching any more foul until a more humane policy is in place. If anyone of you has any experience with this issue, please contact me.

As always, we at CTEN want to thank you for your ongoing support. Please visit our website - www.ctenhome.org regularly. We do our best to keep it up-to-date. And if you need information and can't find it on the website, please send us an email – 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