



# California Teachers Empowerment Network

*Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues*

November 20, 2013

Dear Colleague,

Regarding California's new "bathroom law," which we reported on in June and August, there is an update. The organization that is trying to stall the bill's implementation would appear to have enough signatures to qualify the issue for an initiative. "Privacy For All Students" needed 505,000 endorsers and managed to get over 600,000, so now the vetting process begins. If enough valid signatures have been secured, the law will not become effective on Jan. 1, 2014 as planned, but would go before the voters a year from now.

The law can be accessed here -

[http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201320140AB1266](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB1266). The "Privacy For All Students" website is here - <http://privacyforallstudents.com/home-2>

Common Core will affect just about every public school teacher in California. While there is no shortage of articles on the national standards – pro and con – we found this one to be especially poignant. Koret Task Force scholar Eric Hanushek views it as a distraction. In *US News & World Report*, he writes,

*Policymakers and reform advocates alike have rallied around introducing a set of national content standards, suggesting that this will jump-start the stagnating achievement of U.S. students. As history clearly indicates, simply calling for students to know more is not the same as ensuring they will learn more. Discussions of the Common Core standards are actually sucking all of the air out of the room, distracting attention from any serious efforts to reform our schools.*

*... We currently have very different standards across states, and experience from the states provides little support for the argument that simply declaring more clearly what we want children to learn will have much impact. Proponents of national standards point to Massachusetts: strong standards and top results. But California, a second state noted for its high learning standards, balances Massachusetts: strong standards and bottom results. In other words, what really matters is what is actually taught in the classroom. Just setting a different goal – even if backed by intensive professional development, new textbooks, etc. – has not historically had much influence as we look across state outcomes.*

To read the rest of Hanushek's piece, go to <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2013/10/28/common-core-standards-distract-from-real-educational-reform>

Because our state legislature can't seem to come up with a bill that would get rid of pedophiles and other undesirables from the classroom, a law firm has decided to bypass Sacramento and take it directly to the voters. Bell, McAndrews & Hiltachk submitted a proposed ballot measure they are calling the "Stop Child Molesters, Sexual Abusers and Drug Dealers from Working in California Schools Act." (<http://laschoolreport.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/STOP-CHILD-MOLESTERS-SEXUAL-ABUSERS-DRUG-DEALERS-FROM-WORKING-IN-CA-SCHOOLS-ACT.pdf>)

Should the initiative become law, the California Education Code would be amended. The essence of the proposal:

*Current law includes loopholes for school employees perpetrating egregious misconduct to remain on the public payroll and earn continuing retirement credit for excessive time after having been charged in writing with committing egregious misconduct and being notified of a decision to terminate employment thereby increasing the dismissal costs to school districts and draining resources from schools and the children they serve.*

*School employees perpetrating egregious misconduct in California have exploited loopholes to delay and conceal dismissal proceedings manipulating school districts to pay-off, reassign, enter into agreements to expunge evidence of egregious misconduct from district personnel files, and approve secret settlement agreements enabling the school employee to continue to perpetrate offenses in other schools and school districts, thereby infringing on the inalienable right of students and staff to attend public primary, elementary, junior high, and senior high school campuses which are safe, secure and peaceful as guaranteed by the Constitution of the State of California.*

*Accordingly, the People of the State of California declare that to secure the constitutional guarantee of students and staff to be safe and secure in their persons at public primary, elementary, junior high and senior high school campuses, school districts must have the appropriate statutory authority to expeditiously remove and permanently dismiss perpetrators of egregious misconduct without facing lengthy and costly litigation or creating incentives to transfer the school employee to another assignment, school or school district.*

According to *LA School Report's* Vanessa Romo, the Attorney General's office has until December 23<sup>rd</sup> to title and summarize the initiative. After that, proponents have 150 days to circulate a petition throughout the state and collect 504,760 signatures. (<http://laschoolreport.com/ca-ballot-initiative-would-target-child-abusers-drug-dealers/>)

Learning by rote memory has gotten a bad rap of late, but is there a place for it? New York teacher and writer David Bonagura certainly thinks there is. In "What's 12 x 11? Um, Let Me Google That," he makes a strong case.

*Of course, all good teachers want their students to acquire not just basic knowledge, but a deeper, conceptual understanding that is manifested through critical thinking and analysis—skills that educational fads and initiatives rightly extol. But such thinking is impossible without first acquiring rock-solid knowledge of the foundational elements upon which the pyramid of cognition rests.*

*Memorization is the most effective means to build that foundation. Yet drilling multiplication tables, learning to spell, and reciting formulas and rules are almost nowhere to be found in today's classrooms, tarred as antithetical to true learning and even harmful for students.*

To read this important article, go to

<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303471004579165310256329006>

George Leef, Director of Research of the John W. Pope Center for Higher Education Policy, has written a provocative piece which claims that American schools of education are “A Key Reason Why American Students Do Poorly.” Much has been written about our education schools of late, but if the product of these schools is so poor, why isn’t there pressure for serious change?

*The answer is that they are protected by state licensing laws that make it very hard for public school officials to hire anyone who doesn’t have the obligatory credentials. In short, the ed schools have a guaranteed market and are shielded from competition. The professors and administrators are happy with the way things are, and often express resentment at anyone who suggests that their courses and philosophy do not lead to competent teachers.*

To continue reading go here - <http://www.forbes.com/sites/georgeleef/2013/10/24/a-key-reason-why-american-students-do-poorly/>

A companion piece in the *Wall Street Journal* makes pretty much the same case. “Why Teacher Colleges Get a Flunking Grade” can be found here -

<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304864504579143902608329802>

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 November 15<sup>th</sup> deadline has passed. If you haven't filed by now, you will not get your rebate this year. However, if you are a first time filer, you may resign from the union after the 15<sup>th</sup>. However, you will not get the full amount, but rather a prorated one, depending on how long after the 15<sup>th</sup> you file. For more information, please visit <http://www.ctenhome.org/know.htm>

And finally, has the Affordable Care Act affected any of you in any way? If so, please let me know. If there are any horror stories, we can share them and hopefully do some helpful networking.

If you are interested in giving CTEN brochures to colleagues, you can print them right from the home page - <http://www.ctenhome.org/index.htm>. Or, if you prefer, we will be happy to send you as many preprinted ones as you need. Also, anyone wishing to donate to CTEN can do so very simply through PayPal - <http://www.ctenhome.org/donate.htm>. As a non-profit, we exist only through the generosity of others.

Sincerely,  
Larry Sand  
CTEN President