



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.

November 19, 2014

Dear Colleague,

Election Day has come and gone and while there is little to report in California, there were major ramifications for educators throughout much of the country. Reform-minded governors prevailed in Wisconsin, Michigan and Florida, and the old guard was voted out in Massachusetts, Illinois and Maryland. The day was especially bad for the teachers unions; they spent millions and lost just about every race they were involved with. Their only victories were the ouster of Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett and Tom Torlakson's narrow victory over challenger Marshall Tuck in the race for California Superintendent of Public Instruction. Here are a couple of interesting takes on the day that NEA president said gave her a "heavy heart" - <http://dropoutnation.net/2014/11/05/the-neas-and-afts-awful-election-day/> and <http://edexcellence.net/articles/ten-things-to-know-about-the-2014-elections> Kevin Chavous, executive counsel for the American Federation for Children and board chair emeritus for Democrats for Education Reform, suggests that "Democrats should beware of being on the wrong side of the school choice issue in 2016. To read his *USA Today* op-ed, go here - <http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2014/11/10/education-teachers-unions-politics-choice-column/18643307/> For an interesting take on Tuck's defeat go here - <http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2014/nov/05/teacher-union-ground-game-stops-reformer/>

Speaking of the election, Kara Kerwin, president of the Center for Education Reform, writes "Newly Elected Leaders Must Separate Fact from Fiction on Charter Schools." Good idea. There is much misinformation about charters that their foes – either through ignorance or malice – like to perpetuate. To read Kerwin's piece, go to <http://www.chattanooga.com/2014/11/8/288116/Newly-Elected-Leaders-Must-Separate.aspx>

The teachers unions were also in the news recently for having taken offense to the cover of the November 3rd edition of *Time Magazine*, which shows a photo of a judge's gavel about to pound an apple.



The story, “The War on Teacher Tenure,” is mostly about the *Vergara* decision – in which a judge found that the tenure, seniority and dismissal statutes in the California education code are unconstitutional. The article focuses on Vergara’s guiding light – David Welch, a tech titan who has found a second career as an education reformer. It’s a fair piece, and one worthy of discussion. But the national unions just focused on the cover and organized protests, demanding that *Time* apologize. *Time* did not apologize, but instead gave various disgruntled parties a chance to respond to the cover and article, which can be accessed here - <http://time.com/3533556/the-war-on-teacher-tenure/>

As one who follows education reform issues, I am always looking for outside-the-box ideas. Here’s one that certainly qualifies: “An Employee Stock Ownership Plan—for America’s Public Schools.” Benjamin Scafidi, senior fellow with the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice and a professor of economics, writes,

Public school teachers and leaders typically don’t place much value in private school choice’s worth. However, that education policy could raise their own stock considerably—and literally. As school choice grows, a teacher investment proposal introduced long ago deserves revisiting.

In Can Teachers Own Their Own Schools?, noted economic historian Richard Vedder makes the case for turning over ownership of public schools to public school employees through an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP), which began in America’s private sector during the 1970s.

To continue reading about Scafidi’s plan, which is based on a book by Vedder, go to <http://www.edchoice.org/Blog/October/An-Employee-Stock-Ownership-Plan-for-America-s-Pub>

On another futuristic note, lifelong educator and former union president Doug Tuthill writes, in “The End of ‘School Choice,’”

The annual American Federation for Children conference is one of the country’s largest gatherings of school choice advocates. So it was notable, during the most recent conference in Orlando, that speakers regularly used the terms “parental choice” and “educational choice,” but not “school choice.”

This shift in semantics reflects an emerging trend that’s a game changer – the expansion of choice in publicly-funded education is increasingly including learning options beyond schools.

Florida’s new Personal Learning Scholarship Account program, for students with special needs such as autism and Down syndrome, is a good example. In the PLSA program, public funds go into a bank account that parents can use for numerous state-approved educational options, including private school

tuition, a suite of different therapies, curriculum materials, instructional technology, and postsecondary education and training.

To continue reading, go to <http://www.redefinedonline.org/2014/11/end-school-choice/>

The ongoing “value-added” debate has a new contribution. Thomas Kane, researcher at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, has written “Do Value-Added Estimates Identify Causal Effects of Teachers and Schools?” in which he concludes,

... there is now substantial evidence that value-added estimates capture important information about the causal effects of teachers and schools. Rarely in social science have we seen such a large number of replications in such a short period of time. Even more rarely have we seen such convergence in the findings. The application of statistical controls using longitudinal data systems often provide meaningful information regarding program impacts even without random assignment.

He does issue two caveats however. To read this balanced piece, go to <http://educationnext.org/value-added-estimates-identify-causal-effects-teachers-schools/>

The National Council on Teacher Quality has come out with a second edition of its comprehensive *Teacher Prep Review*, and again the news is not good.

Using evidence from more than 500 higher education institutions that turn out nearly half of the nation’s new teachers each year, we find that in a majority of institutions (58 percent), grading standards for teacher candidates are much lower than for students in other majors on the same campus.

To read the report and learn where the good and not-so-good schools of education are, go here - <http://www.nctq.org/teacherPrep/review2014.do>

For CTA agency fee payers, the November 15th deadline has passed, so we hope you have already submitted your 2014 rebate form. However, if you are a first time filer, you may resign from the union after the 15th. You will not get the full amount, but rather a prorated one depending on how long after the 15th you file. For more information, please visit <http://www.ctenhome.org/know.htm>

As always, we at CTEN want to thank you for your ongoing support and invite you to visit us regularly at www.ctenhome.org If you need any information that you can’t find there, just 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.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President