



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

December 15, 2009

Dear Colleague,

Last year at this time, many of us were anxious about losing our jobs or salary cuts. We suggested that school districts trim bureaucracies to minimal levels and that the teachers' unions should lower their dues and refund all monies to teachers that are not spent on teachers' issues. To their credit, many school districts did their best to cut back. And the unions? Well, they raised their dues. The unions demand loyalty and unity from teachers, but this seems to be a one-way street.

To be sure, some districts have fared better than others. Not surprisingly, Los Angeles Unified was particularly hard hit. Teachers there are looking at a 12% pay cut along with a few furlough days. No telling how all this will actually play out – but all in all it is not a pretty scenario. It would behoove the currently unemployed and anyone who is considering teaching as a profession to pay close attention to demographic trends. The generic “We need more teachers!” mantra has gotten old in a hurry. Looking at population numbers along with the number of teachers and teachers' ages in any given part of the state will give you a much clearer idea of what the future might look like.

Teachers' unions have long been known to be heavy political spenders, but Mike Antonucci in his November 30 *Communique* gets specific, and the numbers are astounding. Referring to the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, he reveals that “...America's two teachers' unions outspent AT&T, Goldman Sachs, Wal-Mart, Microsoft, General Electric, Chevron, Pfizer, Morgan Stanley, Lockheed Martin, FedEx, Boeing, Merrill Lynch, Exxon Mobil, Lehman Brothers, and the Walt Disney Corporation, *combined*.” To read the rest of the article and newsletter, please go to <http://www.eiaonline.com/archives/20091130.htm> . The original source of the data is the Center for Responsive Politics, which is linked on our website - <http://www.ctenhome.org/links.htm> . We encourage you to regularly visit the frequently updated site. As you will see, there are separate links for AFT and NEA.

The always interesting National Council on Teacher Quality Bulletin -- <http://www.nctq.org/p/tqb/viewBulletin.jsp?BulletinId=0&volume=latest> -- has a very intriguing study cited in its current issue called *Unions May Not Yield Higher Teacher Salaries*. Researcher Michael Lovenheim claims that “...unionization had no discernible effects on average teacher pay or per-student district expenditures in **Iowa, Minnesota or Indiana**

from 1972 to 1991. He did find that unionization increased teacher employment by 5 percent, but because that increase was associated with increases in district enrollment, the number of teachers per student stayed about the same.” It will be very interesting to learn if these findings are the same in other states. If any of you know of any studies that corroborate or contradict Dr. Lovenheim’s conclusions, please pass them along to us.

As most of you know, CTEN has a Facebook page - <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=125866159932&ref=ts> . It’s a great way to meet other teachers and network. In that vein, I was recently introduced to Ed Amatetti, a teacher in Maryland who is involved with some badly needed curriculum reform. His mission statement gives you a good idea of what we have to look forward to:

We are dedicated to promoting integrity and rational thinking in K-12 and higher education, as well as enhancing teaching of America's cultural and Constitutional heritage, including the eminence of individual liberty, free enterprise, rule of law, and social virtues such as justice, hard work, and temperance.

Unfortunately, his *New Renaissance In Education* website is not quite up yet. We will let you know when that happens – probably late next month. If you have a Facebook account, you can visit the NRIE page - <http://www.facebook.com/pages/New-Renaissance-In-Education/149023754933?ref=ss> . If you would like to contact Ed directly, his email address is newrenaissanceineducation@comcast.net

And finally, I just received the good news that I have been chosen to participate in a debate in New York in March. The title of the Oxford style debate is *Don’t Blame Teachers Unions For Our Failing Schools*. I am very fortunate to have as my teammates Drs. Terry Moe and Rod Paige. The other side is made up of AFT president Randi Weingarten, with two other slots still to be filled. This debate is one of a series which is broadcast by NPR, televised by Bloomberg TV and covered in Newsweek. For more info, please go to <http://intelligencesquaredus.org/index.php/debates/dont-blame-teachers-unions-for-our-failing-schools/>.

It has been an exciting year for CTEN - <http://www.ctenhome.org/index.htm> - and we look forward to a vigorous 2010. We remain grateful for your support and wish you and your families the happiest of holidays. See you in January!

Sincerely,

Larry Sand
CTEN President