



# 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.*

December 18, 2013

Dear Colleague,

There seems to be no let-up in the Common Core debate. As a way to help you decide on whether you think the new standards are a good idea, we have tried to present you with informative articles on both sides of the issue. In that vein, we are linking the December *Education Matters*, the newsletter of the American Association of Educators, which devotes the entire edition to this thorny issue. To read it, go to <http://www.aetteachers.org/images/em/2013decnews.pdf>

Another topic loaded with controversy is the recently released PISA scores. For the unaware, Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a collaborative effort among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries, and

*... assesses youth outcomes in three domains—reading literacy, mathematical literacy, and scientific literacy—through common international tests. The PISA assessment is intended to go beyond the testing of school-based curriculum in order to assess to what degree students approaching the end of their compulsory education have mastered the knowledge and skills in each of the literacy domains that are essential for full participation in society. More specifically PISA aims to answer the following questions:*

- *How well are young adults prepared to meet the challenges of the future?*
- *Are they able to analyze, reason and communicate their ideas effectively?*
- *Do they have the capacity to continue learning throughout life?*
- *Are some kinds of teaching and school organization more effective than others?*

There has been much written about the results, which reveal that the U.S. is not faring well. In a *Time Magazine* article, StudentsFirst's Michelle Rhee paints a gloomy picture - <http://ideas.time.com/2013/12/04/michelle-rhee-more-mediocrity-for-american-education/> - while over at *Education Week*, AEI's Rick Hess writes "7 Reasons I Don't Care About the PISA Results."

([http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rick\\_hess\\_straight\\_up/2013/12/7\\_reasons\\_i\\_dont\\_care\\_about\\_the\\_pisa\\_results.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rick_hess_straight_up/2013/12/7_reasons_i_dont_care_about_the_pisa_results.html))

*Politico's* Stephanie Simon has written a piece that has many people buzzing. "Teachers unions face moment of truth" (<http://www.politico.com/story/2013/12/education-teachers-unions-moment-of-truth-national-education-association-american-federation-of-teachers-100813.html>) claims that

*... teachers unions are facing tumultuous times. Long among the wealthiest and most powerful interest groups in American politics, the unions are grappling with financial, legal and public-relations challenges as they fight to retain their clout and build alliances with a public increasingly skeptical of big labor.*

Perhaps the unions really are feeling the heat. In an attempt to join the education reform party, NEA has just come out with a policy guide called “Excellent Teachers for Each and Every Child.” (<http://www.otlcampaign.org/sites/default/files/teaching-quality-policy-guide.pdf>). Not to be left in the dust, CTA has released a 34-page “Strategic Plan.” This attempt to affect policy is very broad in scope and will stretch on for years. If you are a CTA member and would like to have input, you can access the plan here - <http://www.cta.org/strategicplan>. If you would like to see the plan, but are not a CTA member, shoot me an email and I will send you an attachment.

The controversial “value added” technique of rating teachers is back in the news. Harvard professor Tom Kane has released a study in which he claims, “New Evidence Requires New Thinking.” His summation:

*Reasonable people can disagree on how to include achievement growth measures in teacher evaluations, such as whether the weight attached should be 20 percent or 50 percent, but it is no longer reasonable to question whether to include them. For a number of reasons—limited reliability, the potential for abuse, the recent evidence that teachers have effects on student earnings and college going which are largely not captured by test-based measures—it would not make sense to attach 100 percent of the weight to test-based measures (or any of the available measures, including classroom observations, for that matter). But, at the same time, given what we have learned about the causal impacts on students and the long-term impacts on earnings, it is increasingly hard to sustain the argument that test-based measures have no role to play, that the weight ought to be zero. Although that may have been a reasonable position five years ago, when so many questions about value-added remained unanswered, the evidence which has been released since then simply does not support that view.*

To read more, go to <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/brown-center-chalkboard/posts/2013/10/23-value-added-teacher-evaluation-debate-kane>

Also writing about teacher quality, *Education Week's* Stephen Sawchuk claims “Top Teachers Retained Effectiveness After Transfer, Study Shows”

*Top elementary teachers who transferred to low-performing schools under a bonus program boosted their students' learning significantly, according to a federally financed experiment whose results were unveiled yesterday.*

To continue reading, go to [http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2013/11/transferred\\_teachers\\_retained\\_.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2013/11/transferred_teachers_retained_.html)

Activist and former teacher Robert Pondiscio has written a thought-provoking op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal*. “The Hunger Games' Is a Civics Lesson - The best parable of totalitarianism since Orwell's 'Animal Farm.’” He ends the piece with the following

*"The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants," according to Katniss—no, wait, that was Thomas Jefferson. But "The Hunger Games" has its own tree that comes to symbolize freedom: At a pivotal moment in "Catching Fire," when lightning strikes the tree, the supercharge travels down a wire to an arrow that Katniss sends skyward—a move that sparks the fictional revolution that every kid in America is talking about.*

To read more, go to <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303670804579234451362849142>

Additionally, Pondiscio runs an entity called CitizenshipFirst whose aim is to

*become the country's most creative driver of civic-education innovation. Housed at Harlem-based Democracy Prep Public Schools, the organization began in 2011 with the publication of *Teaching America: The Case for Civic Education*, edited by David Feith. Through creative advocacy, in-school programs, research and reports,*

*CitizenshipFirst aims to remind educators, policymakers and all Americans that the founding purpose of education was to prepare our nation's young people for self-government—and that restoring the civic mission of education must be an urgent national priority.*

To learn more about this worthy organization, go to <http://citizenshipfirst.us/>

National School Choice Week will be upon us soon. January 26 – February 1 is being set aside to shine a positive spotlight on the need for effective education options for all children.

*Independently planned by a diverse and growing coalition of individuals, schools, and organizations, National School Choice Week features thousands of unique events and activities across the country. The Week allows participants to advance their own messages of educational opportunity, while uniting with like-minded groups and individuals across the country.*

*Participants in National School Choice believe that parents should be empowered to choose the best educational environments for their children. Supporters plan events that highlight a variety of school choice options — from traditional public schools to public charter schools, magnet schools, private schools, online learning, and homeschooling.*

*National School Choice Week is a nonpartisan, nonpolitical public awareness effort. We welcome all Americans to get involved and have their voices heard!*

If you are interested in learning more and possibly planning an event, please let me know or get directly in touch with National School Choice Week at <http://schoolchoiceweek.com/>

If you are a charter school teacher or know of one, please read the following:

***New Charter School Teacher Advocacy Fellowship Launches – Apply today!***

*The California Charter Schools Association (CCSA) has launched an exciting new Teacher Advocacy Fellowship, open to charter school teachers in Los Angeles and Sacramento. This ten-month, cohort-based program is designed to empower charter school teachers to step forward as leaders in their community and advocates for their students. This program will not only help you connect your classroom experience to the policies being made in Sacramento and in your local district, but it will empower you with the knowledge and skills to become a true teacher leader, representing your school and charter teachers across the state.*

*Applications for the fellowship are due by February 2, 2014. Apply for the fellowship or refer a teacher at [www.calcharters.org/fellowship](http://www.calcharters.org/fellowship).*

The following is a job offer from Pearson. (CTEN has no information or any input to share here. We are simply letting you know about an employment opportunity.)

***Teacher Educators and Accomplished Teachers.***

*Pearson is in need of **Teacher Educators and Accomplished Teachers** to score edTPA!*

*edTPA is designed for the profession by the profession, edTPA was developed by teachers and teacher educators from across the nation, in collaboration with faculty and staff from Stanford University, to support candidate learning and preparation program growth and renewal. Aligned with the Common Core State Standards and InTASC Standards, edTPA assesses teaching that promotes student learning in diverse contexts.*

*edTPA is a **subject-specific assessment of pedagogy**, available in 27 teaching fields, that requires pre-service candidates*

*to document and demonstrate that they can plan, teach, and assess major learning outcomes within their field of expertise.*

*Pearson is hiring teacher educators and accomplished teachers to score edTPA from a secure, private location such as home or office. Qualified candidates will complete training, pass a qualification and then score edTPA assessments.*

*Scoring training includes about 20 hours of self-paced online modules and interactive web-based sessions, once qualified, scoring will begin. The system is available for online-training and scoring 6am - 11:59pm CST seven days a week.*

*The position requires a part-time commitment, in addition to the following:*

- Expertise in the subject matter or developmental level of the teaching field (degree and/or professional experience)*
- Teaching experience in that field (or teaching methods or supervising student teachers in that field)*
- Experience mentoring or supervising beginning teachers*

*Scoring is currently underway and we would greatly appreciate your time to submit an application to participate.*

*Please [click here](#) to apply. Or copy/paste the following URL <https://sites.google.com/a/pearson.com/score-edtpa/apply-here>*

As we mentioned in our email last week, anyone wishing to donate to CTEN can do so very simply through a personal check or PayPal - <http://www.ctenhome.org/donate.htm>. As a non-profit, we exist only through the generosity and support of others.

It has been another exciting year for CTEN -[www.ctenhome.org/](http://www.ctenhome.org/) and we look forward to an even more vigorous 2014. We remain grateful for your interest and involvement, and wish you and your families the happiest of holidays. See you in 2014!

Sincerely,  
Larry Sand  
CTEN President