



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 16, 2015

Dear Colleague,

Now that President Obama has signed the latest version of No Child Left Behind – rechristened the “Every Student Succeeds Act” – we all need to know what comprises the law. *Education Week’s* Allyson Klein provides a good overall summary here - http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2015/11/esea_reauthorization_the_every.html At the same time, Mike Antonucci writes “I’m the Party Pooper” in which he expresses doubt that much good will come of it, and presents a “been there, done that” scenario. To read Antonucci’s take, go here - <http://www.eiaonline.com/intercepts/2015/12/03/im-the-party-pooper/>

In the myth-busting department, the American Enterprise Institute’s Nat Malkus takes issue with the much talked about “teacher shortage.” He writes that the national data tell a different story.

Last week, the National Center for Education Statistics released a [report](#) (which I authored when working for a prior employer) that shows the difficulty public schools have filling vacant teaching positions has dropped considerably over the past dozen years. The report uses data from the Schools and Staffing Surveys from 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012, which asked a national sample of principals about vacancies in their schools and the difficulty they faced filling them. The percentage of public schools with at least one difficult-to-staff position dropped by more than half between 2000 and 2012, from 36 to 15 percent.

To continue reading, go to <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/knowledge-bank/2015/11/25/the-teacher-shortage-crisis-is-overblown-but-challenges-remain>

“America has too much standardized testing” has been repeated so many times that it’s believed to be a fact. But is it? According to a recent Hechinger Report, it’s not – at least when compared to other countries. Andreas Schleicher, an international education expert based in Paris, has looked at data from over 70 countries and finds that “most nations give their students more standardized tests than the United States does. He notes that the Netherlands, Belgium and Asian countries — all high-performing education systems — administer a lot more. He adds that in many countries there is a test going on every month.”

He adds that annual tests are common the world over. “Roughly 97 percent of 15-year olds in the United States said they took a standardized test once or twice a year — about the same share as in Finland, a country that’s famous for not relying on standardized testing.”

To read more of this piece, go here - <http://hechingerreport.org/24830-2/>

A new study by researchers Michael Lovenheim and Alexander Willen reveals that the collective bargaining process for teachers leads to lower future earnings, occupational skill levels and hours worked for the students involved.

While they find no clear effects of collective bargaining laws on how much schooling students ultimately complete, their results do show that laws requiring school districts to engage in the process with teachers unions lead students to be less successful in later life. ‘Students who spent all 12 years of grade school in a state with a duty-to-bargain law earned an average of \$795 less per year and worked half an hour less per week as adults than students who were not exposed to collective-bargaining laws. They are 0.9 percentage points less likely to be employed and 0.8 percentage points less likely to be in the labor force. And those with jobs tend to work in lower-skilled occupations.’

To learn more, go to <http://educationnext.org/bad-bargain-teacher-collective-bargaining-employment-earnings/>

While collective bargaining may not be good for students, some union spending isn’t doing much for teachers. A new report claims that “Teachers Unions Spent Millions on Luxury Hotels, Overseas Travel, Car Services.” Investigators from The 74, a news site headed by former newswoman-turned-education-reformer Campbell Brown, dug up financial documents filed with the U.S. Labor Department by the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and United Federation of Teachers which reveal that the union elite “show a penchant for five-star business expenses that are far removed from the \$56,000-a-year average teacher’s salary in the U.S.” Between 2011 and 2014, the country’s largest teachers unions “spent more than \$5.7 million booking rooms at the world’s poshest hotels and resorts, scoring flights to exotic overseas destinations and traveling back and forth in limos....”

To read on, go here - <https://www.the74million.org/article/documents-show-teachers-unions-spent-millions-on-luxury-hotels-overseas-travel-car-services>

The latest NEA political spending numbers have been released and, not surprisingly, the amount is astronomical. RiShawn Biddle, using the yearly teacher union’s labor department report finds that,

The union spent \$131 million on lobbying and contributions to what are supposed to be like-minded organizations in 2014-2015, just slightly less than the \$132 million spent during the previous year. This doesn’t include the \$40 million it spends on so-called representational activities, which are often just as political in nature.

One of the big recipients this year: The Center for Popular Democracy, the progressive outfit which has become a key player in efforts by both NEA and the American Federation of Teachers to oppose the expansion of public charter schools. The outfit and its political action fund

collected \$570,900 from NEA last fiscal year, double the \$250,000 collected from the union in 2013-2014. This is certainly good news for AFT President Randi Weingarten, who sits on Popular Democracy's board and whose own union poured \$160,000 into the outfit and its political wing.

To continue reading, go to <http://dropoutnation.net/2015/11/26/neas-131-million-influence-buying-spree/>

Talking about unions, if you missed the special email we sent a few weeks ago, CTEN and the Association of American Educators hosted an event in September in which we examined the *Friedrichs* and *Bain* lawsuits and their possible ramifications for teachers and the general public. The panel discussion featured lawyers and plaintiffs from both cases, and was followed by a lively audience Q&A. A video of the event is now available and can be accessed here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-ybSkYsLBI>

Our friends at the National Council on Teacher Quality have just released the “2015 State Teacher Policy Yearbook.” It is their ninth annual report and is comprised of a National Summary and State-specific reports for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The 52 volume *Yearbook* “provides a 360-degree analysis of every state law, rule and regulation that shapes the teaching profession—from teacher preparation, licensing and evaluation to compensation, professional development and dismissal policy.”

Among the report's many findings is that “California gets ‘D’ in supporting teacher effectiveness.” To read more about California's troubles, go here - <http://laschoolreport.com/new-report-california-gets-d-supporting-teacher-effectiveness/> To access the NCTQ report, go to http://www.nctq.org/dmsStage/2015_State_Teacher_Policy_Yearbook_National_Summary_NCTQ_Report

History teachers, we have found a program that teaches traditional American values to high school students. It includes materials that explain the “principles and values of America's free-market/limited-government history and heritage. There is a series of nine resource packets delivered to each participating high school's Social Studies department on a one-per-month basis during the school year. Packets save teachers valuable lesson-plan preparation time and provide students multiple discussion/debate opportunities relating to major public policy issues. Also, there is coverage of all aspects of the Presidential election process beginning in January and continuing throughout 2016.”

If this sounds like something you can use, please visit their website - <http://teachingteenagersamericanism.us/blog/restoring-americas-promise/>

Anyone wishing to make a year-end donation to CTEN can do so very simply through a personal check or PayPal - <http://www.ctenhome.org/donate.html> As a non-profit, we exist and operate only through the generosity and support of people like you. (And to those of you who already regularly donate – our heartfelt thanks!)

It has been another exciting year for CTEN - www.ctenhome.org/ and we look forward to an even more vigorous 2016. We remain grateful for your interest and involvement, and wish you and your families the happiest of holidays. See you next year!

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President