



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.

February 17, 2016

Dear Colleague,

In December's letter we posted a link to an article which took exception to the oft-repeated assertion that we are in the midst of a teacher shortage. True or not, the California legislature is busy doing what it can to attract more teachers. There are three bills in the hopper that our lawmakers think will alleviate the problem. Perhaps the most intriguing is from State Sen. Ben Allen who wants to "fund residency programs for new teachers to apprentice alongside a mentor in a classroom of low-income students while they are getting their credentials." If your ed school experience was like mine, anything that would cut out a lot of useless classes would be most welcome. Instead, teachers would get on-the-job training from a master teacher. To read more about the proposed legislation, go here - <http://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article57993603.html>

And talking about ed schools, the National Council on Teacher Quality released a study last month that looked at a representative sample of textbooks used in programs that train elementary and secondary teachers. And the results are not pretty.

Not one of the textbooks selected by programs for assignment in educational psychology or methods coursework—where teacher candidates typically learn about learning—provided even minimal coverage of the small set of research-based instructional strategies most likely to be effective in any kind of classroom, no matter the age or subject.

At best, the textbooks reference a fraction of what would benefit teachers. To learn more about NCTQ's findings, go to <http://us1.campaign-archive2.com/?u=c9b11da2ceffae94e1dc196f6&id=5c95021e76&e=20e292f39f>

In a field where fads and "new ideas" are an everyday event, one of the more controversial is restorative justice. While the new way to deal with student miscreants has resulted in fewer suspensions and expulsions, has it led to better behavior by the offending student or resulted in improved classroom life for teachers and good students? Well, according to a recent article from EAG News, in Los Angeles, the answer is a resounding NO.

Suspensions in the district dropped from eight percent in 2007-08 to less than one percent in 2014-15, the Los Angeles Times reported. Schools days lost to suspensions fell from 75,000 in 2007-08 to 5,024 last year.

But many teachers in the Los Angeles district report that the new system has resulted in a state of chaos in many schools, because students realize there are no serious consequences for their actions.

“My teachers are at their breaking point,” Art Lopez, the Los Angeles Academy Middle School’s union representative, wrote in a letter that was quoted last year by the Los Angeles Times.

“Everyone working here is highly aware of how the lack of consequences has affected the site. Teachers with a high number of students with discipline issues are walking a fine line between extreme stress and an emotional meltdown.”

To read more, go to <http://eagnews.org/restorative-justice-discipline-policies-push-l-a-teacher-to-their-breaking-point/> However, there is a new report out that looks at three schools in Denver that have successfully implemented restorative justice practices. To read about it, go here - http://b.3cdn.net/advancement/213db9b237a868a182_jfm6ii7yo.pdf

West Virginia has just become the 26th right-to-work state. The bill passed in the legislature, but the governor vetoed it. However, since the bill wasn’t related to the budget, or any other appropriation, Republicans just needed a simple majority to override a veto from Democratic Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin. To read more, go here - <http://dailycaller.com/2016/02/12/west-virginia-is-now-the-26th-right-to-work-state/>

And on the right-to-work subject, the Concerned Educators Against Forced Unionism is holding its yearly conference online Saturday, February 27th at 9am (PST). As always, admission is free. To watch a one-minute promo video, go here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=louQjCRBd5E> At the end of the video, you will be able to register for the conference by clicking on the video link.

Any of you teach students the importance of entrepreneurship? If so, you can apply for a \$5,000 scholarship from the National Federation of Independent Business. (The scholarship is open to all K-12 teachers.)

Applicants are asked to submit a short video describing the best practices he or she uses to teach entrepreneurship and what the outcome has been. The winner of the award will be granted a \$5,000 scholarship that can be used for educational resources pertaining to entrepreneurship. Applications and videos must be submitted by March 31, 2016. The winner will be invited to attend the NFIB Young Entrepreneur of the Year Luncheon in Washington, D.C. this July where his or her video will be presented.

For more info, go to <http://www.nfib.com/foundations/yef/>

Whatever your take on school choice, the best way to become informed is to check out “The ABCs of School Choice” from the Friedman Foundation. It’s a comprehensive guide to every

private school choice program in America. Out in late January, the latest edition defines each of the four types of school choice: education savings accounts, vouchers, tax-credit scholarships, and individual tax credits and deductions. It also features a spread for each school choice program including the most recent participation, funding, and eligibility data as well as information on the program's rules, regulations and legal history. To access the report go to <http://www.edchoice.org/research/the-abcs-of-school-choice/>

A provocative headline in *Education Week*, reads “School Superintendents Think Parents Just Don't Understand, Gallup Poll Finds.”

A nationwide Gallup poll found that less than a third of K-12 superintendents surveyed believe that parents in their school district have a solid understanding of the district's academic model and curriculum.

And just 16 percent of the superintendents surveyed think that parents understand how the state accountability system evaluates their schools.

Roughly 70 percent of superintendents say parents need more information to understand how states assess school performance.

Has this been your experience with parents? To read more, go to http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/District_Dossier/2016/01/gallup_poll_parents_just_dont_.html

Another eye-catcher: this one from *The Washington Post*: “Teacher race affects black students’ odds of being labeled gifted”

Black students are half as likely as white students to be assigned to gifted programs, even when they have comparably high test scores. But the racial gap in “giftedness” largely evaporates when a black student is taught by a black teacher, according to new research published this week.

Black students taught by black teachers are assigned to gifted programs at almost the same rate as white students, and three times more often than black students with similar academic ability and family background who are taught by teachers of other races, according to the study by Vanderbilt researchers Jason A. Grissom and Christopher Redding. The race of a black child’s teacher made a particular difference in whether he or she was identified as gifted in reading.

To read more, go here - <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2016/01/21/teacher-race-affects-black-students-odds-of-being-labeled-gifted/>

And finally, a sad note. Director at Cato Institute’s Center for Educational Freedom Andrew Coulson, 48, died of brain cancer on February 7th. He was a brilliant thinker, extraordinarily kind and had a terrific sense of humor. His colleagues described him as “almost impossibly sunny.”

Coming from a computer engineering background, Andrew seized on education reform—and the need for educational freedom—not because he had spent a career in education, but because he saw a system that was illogical, that was hurting society and children, and that needed to be

fixed.

To read more of Coulson's legacy, go to <http://www.cato.org/blog/andrew-coulson-memoriam> In an article posted on the CTEN website Coulson contends that the unions effects on collective bargaining are trivial. He claims that their key success has been their effective lobbying to maintain the educational status quo. To read this scholarly piece, go here <http://www.ctenhome.org/PDFdocs/CoulsonCato%20Journal.pdf>

There was a second death of note last week. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia passed away Saturday. The *Friedrichs* decision, which presumably would have favored the plaintiffs 5-4, is now on hold. In all likelihood, a vote on the case, which could kill mandatory union dues, hasn't yet been taken and the result of the remaining Justices' vote will probably be 4-4, leaving the current *Abood* decision in place. The plaintiffs' best hope is that the case gets held until a new Justice is appointed – and that the appointee is not named by either the current president, Hillary Clinton or Bernie Sanders. For more info on the replacement procedure, go here - <http://www.scotusblog.com/2016/02/tie-votes-will-lead-to-reargument-not-affirmance/>

If you are still using a school email to receive these newsletters, please consider sending us your personal email address. More and more school districts are blocking CTEN. In any event, if you enjoy these letters and find them informative, please pass them along to your colleagues and encourage them to join us.

And finally, if you would like to see us address certain issues, topics, etc. in these newsletters or on our website – <http://www.ctenhome.org> – please let us know. And again, please share our monthly letters with your coworkers. Thanks.

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President