



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.

March 19, 2013

Dear Colleague,

Last Thursday, we sent out the 2013 CTEN Survey Monkey poll. If you haven't done so yet, we urge you to participate. You will have until this Thursday, (March 21st) 5pm to do so. It will only take you about 10 minutes to fill out and all responses are absolutely confidential. Also, please do not circulate the questionnaire. We are only interested in the responses of current and former teachers who are signed up with CTEN. To take the survey, go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RYKBDWT>

The always interesting *Education Matters*, a publication of the Association of American Educators, has a very interesting cover story in its March 2013 issue. "International Case Study: Real Lessons from Finland" by Fordham Institute scholar Kathleen Porter-Magee examines how Finland developed a world-class education system.

In the 1960s, Finland's education system looked far different than it does today. Achievement was much more uneven and not all students had equal access to quality schooling. In 1968, as part of a nationwide focus on better preparing students to compete in the knowledge economy, the Finnish Parliament enacted legislation to create a new basic education system that was built around the development of a common "comprehensive" school for grades 1 through 9—a system that spread to every municipality in the nation by 1977. Three things characterized the new Finnish standard:

- 1. The development and adoption of a mandatory national curriculum that ensured all students were held to the same rigorous standards.*
- 2. Dramatic changes in teacher preparation and certification requirements.*
- 3. A central state inspectorate that evaluated school-level teaching and learning.*

Can we replicate Finland, using their methods as a roadmap? Maybe. Maybe not. To find out more, go to <http://www.aeteachers.org/images/em/2013marchnews.pdf> and see what you think.

On February 27th, United Way sponsored a major reform event in Los Angeles. The "Mayor's Panel" wrapped up the six hour event. Three education activist mayors – Los Angeles's Antonio

Villaraigosa, Chicago's Rahm Emanuel and Newark's Cory Booker had a conversation about what is going on in their cities. Whether you agree with mayoral control or not, it is becoming a trend and needs to be examined. To watch the panel event, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hdr2avJk9Bc>

On March 5th, I participated in a panel discussion in Mountain View, the video of which is now available. Stanford professor Terry Moe, former state senator Gloria Romero, CTA president Dean Vogel and I each gave a 10 minute opening talk. Then, before the Q&A, we were each given 5 minutes to expand on what we said in our opening or to rebut what another panelist had said their opening. Unfortunately, the format did not allow for any direct engagement. I say "unfortunately" because I had about 500 or so questions that I would have loved to pose to Mr. Vogel. In any event, if you are interested in watching a part of this, I suggest going directly to the secondary comments which begin at 12:00 of the second tape. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4ARL1hESEE&list=PL0z6BttMYc9yMcV0trLegP0qE57xc8ow>)

In the "hubris" department, Mexico has (had?) a union boss who perhaps went a "bit" too far. A few weeks ago, Elba Esther Gordillo, 68, leader of the powerful, 1.5 million-member National Union of Education Workers, was arrested at the Toluca airport near Mexico City and charged with embezzling 2 billion pesos (about \$160 million) from union funds.

Prosecutors said they had detected nearly \$3 million in purchases at Neiman Marcus using union funds, as well as \$17,000 in U.S. plastic surgery bills and the purchase of a million-dollar home in San Diego.

...Gordillo displayed her opulence openly with designer clothes and bags, bodyguards, expensive cars and properties including a penthouse apartment in Mexico City's exclusive Polanco neighborhood. She has been widely lampooned for her many plastic surgeries and depicted in political cartoons as ghoulish. Meanwhile, Mexico's teachers are poorly paid and public education has long been considered sub-par.

To read more, go to <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/02/27/authorities-jail-head-mexico-powerful-teachers-union-on-embezzlement-charges/>

According to a new study, students in KIPP charter schools experience significantly greater learning gains in math, reading, science, and social studies than do their peers in traditional public schools.

The study, which analyzed data from 43 middle schools run by KIPP, officially known as the Knowledge Is Power Program, was conducted by [Mathematica Policy Research](#), a research center based in Princeton, N.J. It concludes that students in the charter program, over a three-year period, gained an additional 11 months of learning in math, eight additional months in reading, 14 additional months of learning in science, and 11 additional months of learning in social studies when compared to students in comparable traditional public schools.

To read more about the study's findings, go to http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/charterschoice/2013/02/kipp_schools_boost_academic_performance_study_finds.html

The “value added” debate continues. In a recent National Council on Teacher Quality blog, Hannah Putman reports on researcher Dan Goldhaber’s study on whether or not the “one score fits all subjects’ assumption holds for elementary teachers, who often teach multiple subjects. Is an elementary teacher who teaches math effectively also an effective reading teacher, and vice versa?” She goes on to say that the findings suggest

...that while teachers' efficacy is largely consistent, it is not exactly the same across all subjects. Applying a VAM score from one subject to encompass a teacher's overall ability may be right most of the time, but stronger policies will recognize that this supposed VAM mirror image has some imperfections.

To read the rest of Putman’s post and access Goldhaber’s study, go to <http://www.nctq.org/p/tqb/viewStory.jsp?id=33584>

The recent school board election in Los Angeles received much media attention, in part due to the fact the vote was seen as something of a referendum on Superintendent John Deasy’s reform measures. But perhaps the bigger issue – for some, including the teachers unions – was the fact that “outside money” was given to the reform candidates, most notably a \$1 million contribution from New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg. To read a balanced view of the outside money v. inside money debate, former Los Angeles school board members Marlene Canter and Yolie Flores wrote a very even-handed op-ed – http://www.dailynews.com/news/ci_22701724/marlene-canter-and-yolie-flores-laUSD-board-race

Early childhood education continues to be a hot topic, with various pundits and politicians claiming that money spent on pre-school will reap benefits far exceeding the costs of such an endeavor. President Obama weighed in, using his State of the Union address to try to sell the country on his new plan which is based upon “successes” in Georgia and Oklahoma. However, there is another side to this story, as Reason Foundation’s Lisa Snell and Shikha Dalmi basically debunk his assertions in the *Wall Street Journal*:

Oklahoma implemented its program in 1998 and is the pet of universal preschool activists because it’s a red state that has diligently applied their playbook. It spends about \$8,000 per preschooler, about the same as on K-12. Its teachers are credentialed, well-paid, abundant (one per 10 children) and use a professionally designed curriculum. Georgia expanded a pre-K program for high-risk children to all 4-year-olds in 1995.

Both programs are voluntary and involve the private sector. Oklahoma pays churches and other community providers for the children they enroll. Georgia effectively hands parents a \$4,500 voucher for a qualified preschool. Both states have participation rates well above the 47% national preschool average, and Oklahoma’s 75% enrollment rate is the highest in the country.

Yet neither state program has demonstrated major social benefits. The first batch of children who attended preschool in Georgia, in 1995, are now turning 22, so Mr. Obama’s claim that they are better at “holding jobs” and “forming stable families” can’t be true.

But what about, say, teenage girls staying out of trouble? Teen birth rates have declined in the past 10 years in Georgia and Oklahoma (as they have nationwide), but both states remain far

above the national average. In 2005, Georgia had the eighth-highest teen-birth rate and Oklahoma the seventh-highest, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Now Georgia has the 13th-highest, Oklahoma the fifth-highest. Many states without universal preschool have a far better record.

To read the rest of the op-ed, go to

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324662404578329873460933586.html>

And finally, we still have a limited number of t-shirts available. They are navy blue with the CTEN logo on front and “A resource for all who care about education” printed on the back. They come preshrunk, in small, medium, large and extra large. If you would like one, all you have to do is make a \$15 donation to CTEN via PayPal - <http://www.ctenhome.org/donate.htm> - and let us know what size and where to send it and we will get it out to you promptly.

As always, thanks for your continued interest and support of CTEN.

Sincerely,

Larry Sand
CTEN President