



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 21, 2018

Dear Colleague,

“What should we do with teachers that no one wants but who are guaranteed a job by state law and union contracts?” Not at all an unusual question in the Golden State. Recently the Los Angeles Unified school board debated how best to deal with these “must-place” teachers Tuesday, while discussing strategies to improve chronically underperforming schools. Several ideas emerged:

“My response would be, get rid of them all,” said Board Vice President Nick Melvoin.

“Execution is not part of the deal,” Schmerelson shot back.

Smaller districts tend to buy these teachers out, Vladovic offered.

Board Member George McKenna bemoaned the union’s defense of ineffective teachers. “I have openly said to my friends in the union, as long as we have underperforming non-charter schools in this district, and you keep protecting the employees at the expense of the children, you are not helpful to this process,” he said.

To read more about this very sad state of affairs, go to <http://speakupparents.org/speakup-board-watch-take-action/2018/2/28/board-debates-what-to-do-with-teachers-no-one-wants>

At the same time the LA school district is trying to deal with its unwanted teachers, the children in the nation’s second largest school district are not faring well. Seth Litt, executive director of Parent Revolution, recently wrote about some very disturbing numbers revealed by the California School Dashboard:

- **40 percent** of all students are graduating college or career ready.
- **39 percent** of Latino students are graduating college or career ready.

- **30 percent** of African-American students are graduating college or career ready.
- **17 percent** of English learners are graduating college or career ready.
- **12 percent** of students with disabilities are graduating college or career ready.

To learn more, go to <http://laschoolreport.com/parent-revolutions-seth-litt-much-more-much-better-is-possible-right-now/>

After struggling for years with a big backlog of educator misconduct cases, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing reported in December that they have pretty much caught up. The CTC routinely processes about 5,400 misconduct cases annually, with about one-third third being for first-time alcohol infractions.

Although the commission has the authority to suspend or revoke teacher credentials as a result of criminal behavior, first-time alcohol offenses typically do not generate agency discipline. But, until the board made changes to the system, precious staff time had to be spent researching and analyzing each case.

Under existing rules, an applicant or holder who is convicted of one misdemeanor alcohol related offense shall not be submitted to the Committee of Credentials for review. Instead, staff will close the matter and note the offense in the agency's discipline database.

A big part of the backlog problem came as a result of hundreds of cases being sent from Los Angeles Unified. Officials at LAUSD became concerned about oversight of educator conduct after a former elementary school teacher was arrested on 23 charges of sexual abuse.

To learn more, go to <https://www.cabinetreport.com/human-resources/educator-misconduct-caseload-steadies>

Moving from misbehaving teachers to misbehaving students, we are now faced with SB 607, authored by Sen. Nancy Skinner, D-Berkeley. It represents the latest effort “by a broad coalition of civil rights organizations to cement gains they’ve made in recent years to significantly reduce suspensions and expulsions in schools statewide.” The current law on willful defiance, which went into effect in 2015, had the support of Gov. Jerry Brown, the California Teachers Association as well as associations representing administrators and school board members. That law limited the ban to just kindergarten through 3rd grade. But SB 607 wants to extend the law to include grades K-12.

Advocates have long sought to outlaw suspensions for behaviors that teachers and administrators deem “defiant” or “disruptive” because they are considered too subjective and disproportionately meted out to students of color.

“When we remove students from the classroom for low-level misbehavior that is part of youth development, we eliminate the opportunity for them to learn and to receive support that would address the root cause of their misbehavior,” said Angelica Salazar, director of education equity

for the Los Angeles-based Children's Defense Fund. "Study after study has shown that a reliance on suspensions to change student behavior doesn't work."

However, there are some who believe that we have become too lenient in meting out punishment and make a case that Parkland murderer Nikolas Cruz could have been stopped from committing his dastardly deed had there been consequences for some of his transgressions early on.

The Obama-era Departments of Education and Justice – under education secretary Arne Duncan and Attorney General Eric Holder – issued school guidelines in 2014 that claimed students of color are "disproportionately impacted" by suspensions and expulsions, a situation they said leads to a "school-to-prison pipeline" that discriminates against minority and low-income students.

"Broward County was the first to have the goal of lowering suspensions, lowering expulsions, lowering arrests," explains (Manhattan Institute senior fellow Max) Eden. "And, so, they decided to reduce police involvement by not bringing in cops to arrest kids for a whole range of serious offenses, and then, as you would expect, the arrests go down when you stop arresting. That was taken to be a sign of success, based on that metric alone."

To learn more about AB 607 go to <https://edsources.org/2018/youth-advocates-pushing-to-expand-californias-ban-on-willful-defiance-suspensions/593754> To read about how lenient measures may have led to the Parkland massacre, go here - <http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2018/02/26/broward-county-likely-inspiration-for-obama-school-discipline-policy-to-report-fewer-arrests-suspensions/>

In light of the recent school shooting, the subject of teachers carrying guns has been in the news lately. AFT President Randi Weingarten said, "I am sickened by those doing the bidding of the gun lobby, and those like President Trump and (Education Secretary) Betsy DeVos who want an arms race and to turn schools into militarized fortresses by arming teachers. Anyone who wants guns in schools has no understanding of what goes on inside them -- or worse, doesn't care."

I have very different thoughts on the subject, however, which I wrote about in the *Orange County Register* and several other So Cal dailies.

To learn more about Weingarten's views, go here - <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/21/us/trump-armed-teachers-school-staff/index.html> To read my op-ed, go to <https://www.ocregister.com/2018/03/10/its-time-to-arm-teachers-to-better-protect-students/>

The *Janus* oral arguments before the Supreme Court took place as scheduled on Feb. 26th. A decision probably won't be handed down until June, and *Janus* supporters are optimistic. Known as the Court's swing vote, Anthony Kennedy destroyed union arguments at every turn, using phrases like, "...your argument doesn't have much weight." Also, after the union attorney admitted that ending forced union dues would diminish the political power of unions, Kennedy responded, "Isn't that the end of this case?"

To read the transcript of the hearings, go to https://www.supremecourt.gov/oral_arguments/argument_transcripts/2017/16-1466_gebh.pdf

Also, even if *Janus* is successful, that is not the end of it. Ryan Yohn a 13-year veteran middle school history teacher in Westminster, CA and seven other teachers are litigants in a case that raises a second issue. These teachers argue that the current opt-out process for those who don't want to pay dues is "overly burdensome and also violates the Constitution. Instead, they maintain, educators who want to join should have to affirmatively opt into the union." Terry Pell, president of the Center for Individual Rights, which is bringing Yohn's case says, "Teachers who don't know about, or can't follow, the opt-out process are also being forced to subsidize speech they don't support."

For more on the *Yohn* case, go here - <https://www.the74million.org/article/after-janus-another-key-lawsuit-targeting-unions-how-californias-yohn-case-targets-opt-out-rules/> For an excellent brief video by Choice Media on the lawsuit, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyTPvSsHmWE>

Barry Garelick's talk on "Math Education in the US" chronicles the reform/progressivist-minded ideals that have shaped how math is taught in K-12. Garelick recently retired from the federal government and is on a second career as a math teacher, currently working at a middle school in California. In the talk he describes his initial discovery – via his daughter's second grade teacher – that math wasn't being taught as it should. He also links the reform/progressivist philosophy to how Common Core standards are being interpreted.

To watch the video, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTtdBkRh46E&feature=youtu.be>

CTEN has three Facebook pages. If you have a Facebook account, we urge you to visit ours and let us know your thoughts. Having a dialogue among teachers is an effective way to spread information and share our experiences and ideas. Our original Facebook page can be found here <https://www.facebook.com/groups/125866159932/> Our second page, which deals with teacher evaluation and transparency, can be accessed here - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/126900987357825/> Our newest page is *Teachers for School Choice* and can be reached at <https://www.facebook.com/teachersforchoice?fref=ts>

In any event, if you enjoy these letters and find them informative, please pass them along to your colleagues. We know that there are many independent-minded teachers in California who are looking for alternative sources of information. Many thanks, as always, for your interest and support.

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President