



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

April 19, 2011

Dear Colleague,

Please note that in addition to the traditional emailing of the CTEN monthly newsletter, we will once again have it posted on the CTEN blog - <http://www.ctenteachers.blogspot.com/> Since there are several controversial issues covered in this letter, we think it would be a good time for people to share their opinions with other teachers.

In some circles, Salman Khan has become something of a legend. Born in New Orleans to immigrant parents, he set up Khan Academy where he has posted over 2,000 educational videos which are popular with students all over the world. The Harvard MBA and former hedge fund manager has an easy style and a gift for teaching that is matched by few. The idea is for students to learn from his videos and then have the classroom teacher help with any problems, reinforce what has been learned, etc. This type of “blended learning” enables students to learn at their own pace and relieves teachers of the duty of ensuring that everyone is at the same place at the same time. Additionally, taxpayers will be happy because fewer teachers will need to be on the payroll. To learn more about Khan and what he does, please read

<http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB10001424052748704101604576248713420747884,00.html> To see a video of Khan, Bill Gates’ favorite teacher, go to http://www.ted.com/talks/salman_khan_let_s_use_video_to_reinvent_education.html

In what would appear to be counterintuitive, Mike Petrilli, Fordham Institute’s Vice President for National Programs and Policy, reports that “Losing Their Rights Will Not Send Teachers to the Poorhouse.” He contends that teachers in non-collective bargaining districts actually make more money than those in districts with collective bargaining contracts. To read the article, go to <http://www.educationgadfly.net/flypaper/2011/03/losing-their-bargaining-rights-wont-send-teachers-to-the-poorhouse/>

On March 21, CTEN hosted an informational event at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles about California’s new Parent Trigger law -

<http://www.ctenhome.org/PDFdocs/PT%20Event%20Flyer.pdf> The modest but knowledgeable crowd included several reporters. Rachel Heller wrote about the event here - http://www.jewishjournal.com/education/article/lausd_schools_accountable_to_new_law_20110405/

In a New York post op-ed, Koret Task Force scholar Eric Hanushek discusses how best to deal with our fiscal budgetary woes in education. His essential point can be summed up in these two paragraphs, "...lay off the *least*-effective teachers in order to meet the budget shortfall. This policy would have enormous *beneficial* effects on achievement. By estimates I have done, eliminating the bottom 5 percent to 8 percent of teachers could move achievement of US students from below the average for developed countries to near the top.

"We all know a few teachers are just plain bad; students in those classes would be much better off learning from a competent or superior teacher in a slightly larger class -- and the students in that class would suffer little (if at all) from having one or two more classmates." To read the entire op-ed, go to http://www.nypost.com/p/news/opinion/opedcolumnists/saving_the_schools_T40VJwzgmWlQfKOBb1X4oN/1

The California Teachers Association is most definitely unhappy with the strong possibility of deep spending cuts to education and it will be putting its displeasure front and center for an entire week – May 9th-13th. Early last week, Mike Antonucci posted a couple of items about planned CTA activities which could be very disruptive to education and the state in general - <http://www.eiaonline.com/intercepts/2011/04/11/cta-declares-state-of-emergency-plans-occupation-of-state-capitol/> and <http://www.eiaonline.com/intercepts/2011/04/11/california-teachers-association-1-million-state-of-emergency-protests-may-include-road-closures-plus-labor-union-flavored-ice-cream/> However, after reconsidering, it seems that CTA has modified some of their activities - <http://www.eiaonline.com/intercepts/2011/04/14/the-power-of-ridicule-california-teachers-association-trims-80-protest-ideas/>

As of this writing, SB 48 very well may become law in California. According to the legislative analyst, this controversial bit of legislation "would require instruction in social sciences to also include a study of the role and contributions of Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, European Americans, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans, persons with disabilities, and other ethnic and cultural groups, to the development of California and the United States." To read the exact wording of the bill, go to http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/sen/sb_0001-0050/sb_48_bill_20110329_amended_sen_v98.pdf

In an exceptional blog post that every math teacher should read, Matthew Tabor writes about the type of question that every math teacher gets sooner or later. "Am I ever going to use this?" Or, "Why do we have to learn this?" Tabor answers these questions quite effectively. To read his post, go to <http://www.onlineschools.org/education-debate/will-you-ever-use-math-after-high-school/>

In late March, I had an article published in City Journal about the ACLU ruling in Los Angeles which clarified the state education code's seniority rules. Now children in some of the lowest performing schools in the state will be exempted from losing any teachers due to layoffs. But unfortunately, the remaining schools will proportionately lose more. To read the piece, go to <http://www.city-journal.org/2011/eon0322ls.html>

We have updated and cleaned up the blog area on our Resources page - <http://www.ctenhome.org/resources.htm> If you have any education blogs that you would like to see on that page, please let us know.

Please look for our Survey Monkey questionnaire as soon as all teachers have returned from Easter break - the first week in May.

In our last newsletter, some of you experienced formatting problems. We think the issue has been resolved, but if any of you still experience these issues, be sure to let us know.

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. If you would like to see us address certain issues, topics, etc. in these newsletters or on our website – <http://www.ctenhome.org> – we would greatly appreciate your letting us know. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Larry Sand
CTEN President