



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.

April 17, 2012

Dear Colleague,

The current rage in reform circles is to come up with an equitable way to evaluate a teacher's performance. But few talk about how to measure a principal's performance. Surely if teachers are going to be held accountable for their students' gains, certainly principals should be accountable for their teachers' success or lack thereof. In the current *National Council on Teacher Quality* bulletin, there is a proposal set forth by Educators 4 Excellence as well as report by the Rand Corporation that deals with this issue. To read more, go to <http://www.nctq.org/p/tqb/viewStory.jsp?id=31371>

Last November, we told you that some parents in Los Angeles filed a lawsuit that will undoubtedly have ramifications all over the state and perhaps elsewhere. It seems that the "Stull" evaluations we have undergone in our teaching careers have been "incomplete." According to the Stull Act (Section 44660 of the state's education code, (<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=edc&group=44001-45000&file=44660-44665>), part of a teacher's evaluation is required to include a student achievement component. This has not happened anywhere in the state, hence the lawsuit. To learn more go here - <http://tinyurl.com/7sydgo7> and here - <http://toped.svefoundation.org/2011/11/02/new-life-for-old-law-on-evaluations/> The case is going forward, the next hearing being June 1st. Two briefs were filed in the case recently, including one by LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. The briefs can be found here <http://www.scribd.com/doc/71444873/Doe-v-Deasy-StullAct-LAUDS-suit110211-1> and <http://toped.svefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Eval-EdVoiceSuit-MayorBrief040412.pdf>

New York has already implemented a new evaluation system that includes student performance as part of the process. Not surprisingly, there is controversy. Here is a teacher's opinion in the NY Daily News - http://articles.nydailynews.com/2012-02-19/news/31078238_1_value-added-data-teacher-evaluation-student-gains Marcus Winters at *City Journal* weighs in here - <http://www.city-journal.org/2012/eon0229mw.html>

Closer to home, a report by the non-partisan Legislative Analyst Office tackles the teacher layoff process in California. March Reduction In Force notices, seniority,

bureaucratic bloat, etc. are all dealt with in a fair and unbiased way. The proposed fixes could affect all teachers in the state. To read this brief document, go to <http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2012/edu/teacher-layoffs/teacher-layoffs-032212.pdf>

Much has been written about Finland and its world class education system. Now there is a book which tries to get to the crux of the reasons for the Finns' success. *Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland* By Pasi Sahlberg. Sandra Stotsky, Professor of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas, has a report about the book here -

<http://xa.yimg.com/kq/groups/7641490/538623379/name/Finnish%20Lessons%20PI%20policy%20brief.pdf>

and a shorter review can found on page 18 of the current *School Reform News* -

http://heartland.org/sites/default/files/newspaper-issues/pdfs/april_12_srn_web.pdf

Atlanta has been the focal point for cheating on standardized tests. A few weeks ago, however, the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* came out with a report which claims that Atlanta is just the tip of the iceberg – that cheating is rampant in other places too, including Los Angeles and many other large school districts. To read this report, go to <http://www.ajc.com/news/cheating-our-children-suspicious-1397022.html> For a commentary on the subject by CalWatchdog's John Seiler, go to - <http://www.calwatchdog.com/2012/03/25/paper-massive-cheating-in-l-a-other-schools-districts-across-america/>

We have mentioned the inevitability of traditional public schools using online books in the near future, but in "Electronic textbooks: What's the Rush?," a couple of researchers suggest that maybe we are moving too quickly toward that end. To read more, go to <http://www.danielwillingham.com/1/post/2012/04/no-title.html>

Founded in 1990 by Princeton graduate Wendy Kopp, Teach For America chooses the best and the brightest – only one in eight are accepted into the program – and trains them to work in the nation's worst schools. These committed and enthusiastic college graduates get five weeks of teacher training, ongoing support once in the classroom, and must commit to teach for two years. The teachers unions, which see TFA as a threat, do what they can to discredit the organization. In Washington State recently, the Seattle Education Association went one step further and tried to cancel a three year contract that the school district had with TFA. Though the school board voted (by a one-vote margin) to keep the TFA teachers for the time being, TFA teachers are on notice that they are not welcome in the profession by the teachers union in Seattle. For more, go to <http://unionwatch.org/seattle-teachers-union-seeks-to-ban-teach-for-america/>

And Gwen Samuel found out just what the local teachers union in Connecticut thinks of her. She had a part time job with New Haven's Head Start program and was also founder and president of Connecticut Parent's Union. It was in the latter role that she asked Michelle Rhee to come to speak at a rally on March 14th, after which she was relieved of her job, very possibly as a result of teacher union pressure. Ms. Samuel has filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education and asked the state Department of Education to "audit the Head Start program to explain why she was fired." Stay tuned.

For more, go to <http://www.mcall.com/news/education/hc-gwen-samuel-fired-0405-20120404.0.2138438.story>

On the subject of teachers unions, Terry Moe appeared on Martha Montelongo's internet radio show last week. Dr. Moe explained the nature of the unions and why he thinks they will be marginalized in the years to come. To hear the interview, go to <http://gadflyradio.com/podcasts/>

On April 20th, schools all over the country will celebrate the annual "Day of Silence" - <http://blog.glsen.org/category/day-of-silence/> - which is a "National youth-run effort using silence to protest the actual silencing of LGBT people due to harassment, bias and abuse in schools." We at CTEN would like to know if you think having a day of silence is a good idea, how your school acknowledges this day, etc. Please post any comments on the CTEN blog - <http://www.ctenteachers.blogspot.com> - or send them to me directly. As always, confidentiality will be respected.

If you are interested in giving CTEN brochures to colleagues, you can print them right from the home page - <http://www.ctenhome.org/index.htm> Or, if you prefer, we will be happy to send you as many preprinted ones as you need. Also, anyone wishing to donate to CTEN can do so very simply through PayPal - <http://www.ctenhome.org/donate.htm> As a non-profit, we exist only through the generosity of others.

As always, we at CTEN want to thank you for your ongoing support. Please continue to provide feedback so that we can continue to keep you informed, provoke discussion and meet your needs. Thank you very much.

Larry Sand
CTEN President