



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 18, 2018

Dear Colleague,

With much hoopla, the 2017 NAEP scores were released last week. The basic response thus far from educationists has been, "Meh." National averages were essentially unchanged since the test was last given in 2015.

In some ways, the flat trajectory nationwide provides relief for educators after the especially bitter NAEP news in 2015, when scores dropped for three out of four age/subject groupings. The development came as states were still rolling out testing regimes aligned with the Common Core, and the new standards were widely (and controversially) blamed for bringing down student performance.

Although scores for American students have gone through periods of sizable and consistent growth — most recently at the dawn of the modern era of academic standards and school accountability in the late 1990s and early 2000s — results over the past 10 years have left education reformers at a loss.

California did register a 4-point gain in 8th grade reading scores and 4th graders gained 3 points. The state's 1-point gain in math scores was not a significant change, according to a spokesman for the National Center for Education Statistics.

For more, go to <http://laschoolreport.com/california-makes-some-gains-in-reading-but-naep-scores-remain-flat-amid-signs-of-a-widening-gap-between-highest-and-lowest-performers/>

One California school did stand out recently. El Camino Real Charter High School in Woodland Hills won the California Academic Decathlon in Sacramento. The Los Angeles Unified high school will advance to the national competition this weekend in Texas.

In Academic Decathlon, nine-member teams of ninth- through 12th-grade students compete in academic contests in 10 categories — art, music, language and literature, social science, science, mathematics, economics, speech, interview and essay — plus the Super Quiz, a "Jeopardy!"-style question-and-answer session that draws from all subjects.

The theme of this year's competition is Africa.

Schools from LAUSD have won the national competition 18 times since 1987, and California has held the national title for the last 15 consecutive years.

To learn more, go here - <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-academic-decathlon-20180325-story.html>

Speaking of charters, there is a new study out that compares the cost-effectiveness of charters and traditional public schools. The findings include:

Education dollars go farther in charter schools than they do traditional public schools.

For every \$1,000 in per-pupil funding, students in charter schools earn 17.76 points on the reading portion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) compared to 13.42 points for students in traditional public schools. In math, students in the charter sector earn 19.21 NAEP points compared to 14.48 in traditional district schools.

Every dollar spent on students in traditional public schools results in \$4.67 in lifetime earnings for those in traditional schools, \$6.44 for those in charters, and \$5.40 for those who split their K-12 years between both.

To read more about this study, conducted by Patrick J. Wolf of the University of Arkansas, Corey DeAngelis of the Cato Institute, et al, go to <https://www.educationdive.com/news/study-compares-cost-effectiveness-of-charters-traditional-public-schools/517101/>

Those of us who believe that not every single student in the country needs to go to college are buoyed by a recent story about Fresno County, where nearly every school offers Career Technical Education courses.

From robotics, to culinary arts, to construction- these are just some of the career tech courses Fresno County students are learning in classrooms in school districts throughout the Central Valley.

"One of the things we try to do in career tech education and ROP particularly is have some consistency across districts in like subjects because our employers don't care what side of the district boundaries you come from they are looking for a core group of competencies," said Administrator Valerie Vuicich.

The skills students are mastering in class were put to the test at the annual career skills challenge.... 15 hundred students going up against each other in teams; competing against one another in their area of interest.

To read more about this important program, go here - <http://www.yourcentralvalley.com/news/education-matters-apprenticeship-career-skills/1060801150>

On the school choice front, there was an interesting piece written by American Enterprise's Rick Hess and Sofia Gallo, in which they claim that "School-Choice Supporters Should Drop the Overheated Rhetoric."

The school-choice movement features more than its share of alarmist rhetoric and extravagant boasts. U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has opined that school choice is necessary because millions of students "are trapped in schools that fail to meet their needs." Proponents boast that "like Uber disrupts the transportation industry, charter schools and private schools can and are disrupting the education industry."

Hess/Gallo claim that choicer verbiage is alienating too many parents. But researcher Greg Forster strenuously disagrees, positing that choice is:

...winning in statehouses, winning in governors' mansions, and winning in public opinion polls. No doubt that success will ebb and flow in the future, as it has in the past. But choice has better public perception today than at any time in its history.

To read the Hess/Gallo piece, go here - <https://www.nationalreview.com/2018/04/school-choice-debate-rhetoric-overheated/>
To read Forster's rejoinder, go to <https://jaypgreene.com/2018/04/04/hess-and-gallo-get-words-wrong-in-nro/>

In January, it was discovered that Californians David and Louise Turpin, who were homeschooling parents, had imprisoned their thirteen children for years in the most disgusting and degrading ways. Shortly thereafter, State Senator Susan Eggman, (D-Stockton) hatched AB 2926, a bill that would establish an advisory committee whose purpose is to make recommendations to the state board of education “on the appropriateness and feasibility” of imposing additional requirements on a home school. They would include, but are not limited to, health and safety inspections, specific curriculum standards, and certification or credentialing of teachers.

The teachers unions and other education establishmentarians are cheering this bill on, “Teachers of home instruction programs should meet California certification requirements. Additionally, there are certain guidelines educators believe should be followed. ... Permission granted by the local governing board shall be required annually,” CTA spokeswoman Claudia Briggs said.

But others are alarmed, insisting that the law is unnecessary and way too meddlesome. To learn more, go to <http://gvwire.com/2018/03/23/battle-isnt-over-for-homeschoolers-new-regulations-ahead/>

The unions have been very much in the news lately, initiating statewide strikes in West Virginia and Oklahoma. The *Washington Post*'s Valerie Strauss has a very sympathetic view, stating, “Teachers don't want to strike and they don't like to strike. But they will strike if you make it clear to them that you intend to do them harm, and that you won't listen to them any other way. If there are no not-unseemly options, unseemly is what you get.”

However, the Center for Education Reform has a very different take, blaming much of low teacher pay on escalating pension costs.

STRIKING FOR THE WRONG THING? The teacher unions won't tell them, but the teachers who are striking across the country aren't going to solve anything even if the legislatures give them an annual raise. Why such a strident statement? Consider the following number: \$1,000 PER PUPIL. That's the annual cost of employee pensions. Imagine a school of 600 students — that's \$600,000! Let's just say half those funds could go to teachers instead of the state pension coffers upfront. There are approximately 26 classroom teachers in a school that size, if we are talking a traditionally organized school. If you took just half of those funds and put them in teachers' salaries in that school, they'd be earning another \$11,000 a year each! Please note that these funds are above and beyond employee contributions, Social Security and taxes.

To read the Strauss piece, go here - https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2018/04/06/those-unseemly-teachers-strikes/?utm_term=.5b0143272b55 To get the opposing point of view, go to - <https://www.edreform.com/2018/04/newswire-april-03-2018/>

Last month, Florida Governor Rick Scott signed HB 7055, which includes a provision that would decertify any teacher's union that fails to get the approval of 50 percent of its workforce. Florida House Speaker Richard Corcoran said simply: “The reality is nobody should be forced to be led when the majority of the people you're leading don't want to be there.... It's un-American.”

Needless to say, the teachers unions and their friends don't agree with Mr. Corcoran, and instead have launched into sky-is-falling rhetoric. “It is a not-so disguised attempt to destroy public education in the state of Florida,” said Wendy Doromal, president of the Orange County teachers union. “It's a direct torpedo to the unions who come to the rescue of educators,” warned Florida State Rep. Kionne McGhee.

To learn more, go to <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/features/education/school-zone/os-vouchers-teachers-union-house-bill-20180205-story.html>

Washington State teacher Barb Amidon tells an interesting tale in a two-minute video that she made for Rebecca Friedrichs' new venture “For Kids and Country.” Amidon talks about how her forced union dues had gone to causes she disagreed with, which included a huge loan to a PAC which concerned itself with political

causes having nothing to do with education. Worse, the Washington Education Association subsequently forgave the loan. Amidon put out a newsletter to other teachers explaining what happened, but WEA took exception to that and wound up suing Amidon! Must See TV, the video can be found here – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1DnRZ70bT6E> To check out Friedrichs' new "For Kids and Country" website, go to <https://forkidsandcountry.org/>

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 to be informative, please pass them along to your colleagues and encourage them to join us.

Also, anyone wishing to donate to CTEN can do so very simply through check, money order or PayPal - <http://www.ctenhome.org/donate.html> As a non-profit, we exist only through the generosity of others. Thanks, as always.

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President