



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

May 17, 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.

I would like to start by thanking all the teachers who participated in our Survey Monkey poll. The results will be sent out in a separate mailing in the near future.

Perhaps the biggest education story of the month in California is the ongoing funding battle being waged in Sacramento. Deep cuts to the K-12 education budget could mean widespread teacher layoffs as early as next month. Last week we got a heavy dose of union demands to raise taxes as CTA led statewide protests, proclaiming that CA is in a “state of emergency.” The hope is that this week, Governor Brown will be able to forge a deal with the legislature. Clearly the state is in dire straits fiscally, but are increased taxes the only way to deal with it? Maybe not. I offer some different ideas in an article published by *City Journal* - <http://www.city-journal.org/2011/cjc0510ls.html>

One way to save some money would be for schools to go to a four day work week. This is a controversial idea that has worked in other states. This editorial in the Los Angeles Times seems to think that it might be worth trying here in CA - <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/opinionla/la-ed-week-20110508.0.1663767.story>

There is a major scandal brewing in Sacramento regarding the CA Commission on Teacher Credentialing. According to the *Sacramento Bee*, “State Auditor Elaine Howle appeared at the hearing Tuesday to present her office's findings of flaws in how the commission launches investigations, updates files, gathers facts, tracks cases and revokes credentials. Auditors also found that in August 2009 there was a three-year backlog of 12,600 arrest or prosecution reports to be entered into commission records.” For more, go to <http://blogs.sacbee.com/capitolalertlatest/2011/05/ricardo-lara-teacher-credentialing.html>

In a very interesting story in Time Magazine a few weeks ago, Andrew Rotherham wrote an article called “Better Teachers: More Questions Than Answers” in which teacher

effectiveness is examined. As you can tell by the title of the article, there are no easy answers, at least not at this time. To read the article, go to <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2066577,00.html>

Speaking of teacher quality, the National Council on Teacher Quality and U.S. News and World Report are partnering to “build better teachers.” As such, they are launching a website to learn which schools of education are “graduating teachers who are 'student ready'--and which are not.” Considering what passes for rigor in many of our ed schools, I think this is an idea whose time has most certainly come. For more info, go to <http://www.nctq.org/transparency.do>

The national standards argument goes on... and on and on. The anti-common core folks have ramped up their efforts. Recently a manifesto was issued to combat the federal government’s plan for a nationwide curriculum. To read the manifesto, go to http://www.k12innovation.com/Manifesto/_V2_Home.html

As reported by *Education Next*, a recent Harvard study came up with some findings that run counter to current orthodoxy. “Harvard Study Shows that Lecture-Style Presentations Lead to Higher Student Achievement” makes the claim that “8th grade students in the U.S. score higher on standardized tests in math and science when their teachers allocate greater amounts of class time to lecture-style presentations than to group problem-solving activities.” To read more about the study, go to <http://educationnext.org/harvard-study-shows-that-lecture-style-presentations-lead-to-higher-student-achievement/>

As I think is obvious, education will remain a very hot topic in the media in the foreseeable future, as we try to figure out what works, what doesn’t and what the cost of it all should be. One of the problems becomes how to figure out whether or not what you’re reading is true. The Media Bullpen is a new website that addresses this issue. They say, “Each day nearly 500 stories—and sometimes many more—are produced in the media about education, but they often lack the context for the public to get engaged. The Bullpen will empower the public to put in context what they see and hear. The problem is not that education is under-reported; the larger issue is that all too often, it is misreported. Balance, context, sound data, and an institutional knowledge of the many issues are often missing.” To learn more about this novel website, go to <http://mediabullpen.com/>

If you know anyone who doubts the vast power and influence of the National Education Association, a look at a post by Mike Antonucci will probably change their mind. In “The National Education Association and State Affiliates: A \$1.5 Billion Annual Enterprise,” he lists the NEA and state affiliate revenues for 2008-2009. Eye-opening to say the least. To read the post, go to <http://www.eiaonline.com/archives/20110425.htm>

Talking about the power of the unions, Terry Moe has an excellent new book, “Special Interest: Teachers Unions and America’s Schools.” The American Enterprise Institute’s Rick Hess very accurately describes the book when he says, “An exquisitely researched, compellingly reasoned treatise on the role of teachers unions and their impact on America's schools. Terry Moe has read everything, collected mountains of data, and thought more deeply on this topic than anyone in America. Special Interest immediately

becomes essential reading for policymakers, would-be reformers, and anyone concerned about the future of American education."

In March, CTEN cosponsored an informational event about the Parent Trigger. The panel discussion with four experts on the topic is now available on video. To see it, go to <http://www.vimeo.com/22185926>

If you are interested in giving CTEN brochures to colleagues, you can print them right from our home page - <http://www.ctenhome.org/index.htm> Or, if you prefer, we will be happy to send you as many 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 like-minded educators and supporters.

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> - please let us know. Thanks.

Sincerely,

Larry Sand
CTEN President