



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.

May 15, 2012

Dear Colleague,

As the year winds down, it is a time of great anxiety for some teachers as the “final” layoff notices are due shortly. Of course even if a teacher does get bad news, depending on the yet to be determined final budget, many of these teachers will get their jobs back in the fall. Things unfold this way because the final budget isn’t due until July 1st. To state the obvious, the layoff scenario needs to get in sync with the state budget cycle. The state Legislative Analyst Office has issued a prescriptive report which we wrote about in the April letter. In case you missed it, you can access the report here - <http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2012/edu/teacher-layoffs/teacher-layoffs-032212.pdf> The Los Angeles Times Steve Lopez recently wrote about the situation in a piece called “LA Unified’s Annual Dance of Death.” (<http://articles.latimes.com/2012/may/08/local/la-me-lopez-laUSD-20120509>)

Los Angeles is not the only big city school district going through bad times. In Philadelphia, the city’s school district is being dissolved. Here are a few essential details -

Forty schools would close next year, and six additional schools would be closed every year thereafter until 2017. Closing just eight schools this year prompted an uproar.

Anyhow, the remaining schools would get chopped up into “achievement networks” where public or private groups compete to manage about 25 schools, and the central office would be chopped down to a skeleton crew of about 200. District HQ has already eliminated about half of the 1,100-plus positions that existed in 2010.

This is all aimed at closing a \$218 million deficit for the coming year, part of a \$1.1 billion cumulative deficit by 2017. Charter schools will teach an estimated 40 percent of students by 2017.

To learn more go to <http://www.citypaper.net/blogs/nakedcity/Philadelphia-School-District-announces-its-dissolution-.html>

The National Education Association celebrated “Stand Up To Bullying Day” on May 4th. Its website is full of advice about how to deal with what it calls “everyone’s problem.” But the union talks only about children bullying other children; there is nothing about adults bullying other adults, which is the subject of a report, “Bullying Teachers: How Teachers Unions Secretly Push Teachers and Competitors Around” by Joy Pullmann, managing editor of *School Reform News*. The report is summarized as “When Bullies Grow Up, They Can Always Run Teachers Unions,” an op-ed in the *Washington Examiner*. She explains that teacher union bullying is rampant and can come either directly from the unions or as a result of fear of them. For example,

Many superintendents and principals in Kansas will not even let Garry Sigle give teachers information about his nonunion teacher organization. One superintendent told Sigle, “Why would I want to [let you talk to teachers in my district] if I knew that would create an issue between me and a union I have to negotiate with?”

At a new teacher orientation in Jacksonville, Fla., a union representative heard a presentation by a nonunion group. She walked onto the stage before 600 teachers, accused the presenter of being “a desperate former teacher” and stalked about the room ripping up the competition’s fliers, said Tim Farmer, membership director for the Professional Association of Colorado Educators.

As sickening as these examples are, Pullmann goes on to say that they are not isolated incidents. “Teachers unions engage in repeated, unashamed aggression against dissenting teachers and competitor organizations.”

To read Pullman’s op-ed, go to – <http://washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/op-eds/2012/04/when-bullies-grow-they-can-always-run-teachers-unions/538746> To read the full report go to - <http://heartland.org/sites/default/files/bullyingteachers.pdf>

Here’s something for any teacher who might not like sitting down and grading several hundred essays. How about automated essay scoring? Seriously. For more, please read “Contrasting State-of-the-Art Automated Scoring of Essays: Analysis.” (http://dl.dropbox.com/u/44416236/NCME%202012%20Paper3_29_12.pdf)

It’s not news that school choice is in short supply in California. But what you may not know is that there is an “Open Enrollment Act” which has been on the books for a couple of years now. OEA lets parents whose children attend the lowest-performing 1,000 schools in California opt out and send their kids to a higher-performing, non-charter public school anywhere in the state. For more on this law you probably have never heard of, go to <http://www.city-journal.org/2012/cjc0508ls.html>

In honor of National Charter Schools Week, Professor Jay Greene has posted a piece in which he makes the compelling claim that “Charter Benefits Are Proven by the Best Evidence” and that “opponents of charter schools have no equally rigorous evidence on their side.” To read more, go to <http://jaygreene.com/2012/05/07/charter-benefits-are-proven-by-the-best-evidence/>

Dr. Greene also has another interesting post in which he extols the virtues of decentralizing education. While he is not necessarily enamored with local school districts, he prefers them to “central planning fantasies.” To read more, go to <http://jaypgreene.com/2012/05/08/why-i-favor-decentralized-governance-of-education/>

A few weeks ago there was an online learning conference at Cal State Fullerton. While only thirty people attended, the information disseminated reached a lot more people thanks to Hailey Moran who wrote about the conference in the *Daily Titan*, the school newspaper. What ever you may think of technology in the classroom, it’s undeniable that in some form, it will be a force in the future. To read more about what was discussed at the conference, please go to <http://www.dailytitan.com/2012/04/online-learning-now-essential-speakers-say/>

And finally, Katy Grimes at Cal Watchdog tells us that due to legislation, the state’s GATE program will be subject to quotas if a bill proposed by Assemblyman Bob Blumenfeld becomes law. Blumenfeld claims that “‘children of color’ are not fairly represented in GATE programs across the state.” To read more, go to <http://www.calwatchdog.com/2012/05/04/affirmative-action-attacks-gate-school-program/>

CTEN has two 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 experiences and share ideas. Our original Facebook page can be found here - <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/group.php?gid=125866159932&ref=ts>
Our second page, which deals with teacher evaluation and transparency, can be accessed here - <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/group.php?gid=126900987357825&ref=ts>

As always, we at CTEN want to sincerely thank you for your ongoing support and feedback, which in turn helps us to keep you informed, provoke discussion and address the needs of all CA teachers.

Larry Sand
CTEN President