



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 22, 2014

Dear Colleague,

We recently sent you a brief (about 3 minutes of your time) Survey Monkey questionnaire which deals with the Common Core State Standards. If you are currently a K-12 teacher and haven't filled it out yet, please go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/VVFRHQC> and do so now. Thanks.

We would like to have an idea where our independent teachers come down on this very controversial issue. To see a reasonably balanced view on CCSS, please watch "Building the Machine."

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjxBClx01jc>)

The June 3rd primary is right around the corner, and among other things you have choice as to who to vote for in the race for Superintendent of Public Instruction. All three candidates' statements can be found here - <http://voterguide.sos.ca.gov/candidates/superintendent.htm> For more information, you can visit their websites, which are linked in the voter guide.

Happy with your salary? Do you think you are being paid fairly for the work that you do? The National Council on Teacher Quality doesn't answer those questions, but in a recent report examines teachers' salaries in other parts of the country. Additionally, the study looks at more than just a pure dollar amount.

Adding a bit more context to this discussion, we looked at housing affordability for teachers. After all, if a district is near the top of the list of highest paying districts and their teachers cannot afford housing in the area, that's indicative of unequal purchasing power between high and low cost-of-living districts.

In order to look at housing affordability, we created the "Teacher Housing Affordability Index." We used the American Community Survey's 5-year estimates for median housing values from 2008-2012 by school district geographic area to estimate housing prices. Dividing a teacher's annual salary by the median home value produced the affordability index. We've identified housing as "affordable" when the annual teacher's salary is greater than one-third of median home value.

To learn more, go to <http://www.nctq.org/commentary/viewStory.do?id=33847>

In the last month, there has been much news coming out of Modesto, where the local teachers union voted whether or not to disaffiliate from CTA/NEA and become a “local only” union.

(<http://www.modbee.com/2014/04/15/3294453/modesto-teachers-to-meet-as-vote.html>)

The MTA leadership proposed leaving its state affiliate after CTA found the local was out of compliance in spending a \$280,000 annual grant. The local has received the grant through the CTA for decades to pay for office staff: a full-time executive director and a secretary.

Here’s the hitch: The MTA does not directly employ its executive director. Instead, for 22 years, it has paid the Modesto district to keep a former teacher on its payroll. The arrangement has allowed the individual to continue to accrue retirement credit under the California State Teachers Retirement System, better known as CalSTRS. For 22 years, the local has thereby violated the conditions of the grant, according to the CTA.

Right before the election, the CTA board of directors decided that Modesto’s plan to abide by the will of the voting majority, instead of two-thirds of the entire bargaining unit, made the election “unlawful.”

They voted to place the local under state trusteeship, and sent two trustees after business hours to take control of its offices and bank accounts. (<http://www.eiaonline.com/intercepts/2014/05/05/breaking-california-teachers-association-seizes-modesto-local/>)

But the MTA officers were prepared and the police were called. In any event, the vote went forth and by a 58-40 margin, the MTA members decided to stay with CTA/NEA.

(<http://www.modbee.com/2014/05/07/3328610/modesto-teachers-association-nullifies.html>)

On a similar note, education writer RiShawn Biddle claims that “Teachers unions are getting desperate.”

(<http://rare.us/story/teachers-unions-are-getting-desperate/>) He writes that teachers

... are none too fond of the profligate spending by both unions on matters that have nothing to do with contract bargaining and addressing workplace grievances. Political spending and union overhead costs (including 369 employees earning six-figure sums) accounted for 64 percent of NEA’s \$343 million in spending in 2013. Just 13 percent of the union’s spending went to collective bargaining and other so-called representational activities.

Younger teachers, who now make up the majority of rank-and-file members, are unhappy that the NEA and AFT ignore their concerns, including its support of last hired-first fired layoff rules that put them on unemployment lines while keeping veteran teachers on payrolls. Their desire for professional associations that focus more on helping them improve the profession puts them in direct conflict with the industrial union model that the NEA and AFT have long embraced.

Between the defections and membership losses and decline in political clout, the question for the NEA and AFT is not if they will go out of business, but when.

And speaking of unions, George Parker, former president of the Washington (D.C.) Teachers Union has done a 180 and joined with Michelle Rhee’s StudentsFirst. I urge you to watch this brief video in which he details the reason for his rather dramatic “conversion.”

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUnjf0PikNs&feature=youtu.be>)

University of Arkansas researcher Patrick Wolf has come out with an in-depth study, the results of which show that charters are funded at much lower levels than traditional public schools across the country.

Since public charter schools are becoming increasingly politically popular and therefore common in the U.S., we might expect that they would be funded at levels comparable to traditional public schools. After all, they are public schools, too. We would be mistaken. The research team systematically collected and reviewed audited financial statements from the 2010-11 school year for the 30 states and the District of Columbia with substantial charter school populations. We carefully tracked all the revenues committed to public charter and traditional public schools from every source, public and private. We identified a funding gap of 28.4 percent, meaning that the average public charter school student in the U.S. is receiving \$3,814 less in funding than the average traditional public school student. Since the average charter school enrolls 400 students, the average public charter school in the U.S. received \$1,525,600 less in per-pupil funding in 2010-11 than it would have received if it had been a traditional public school. The gap is actually higher in focus areas within states where charter schools are more commonly found, such as major cities.

To download the report, go to <http://www.uaedreform.org/charter-funding-inequity-expands/> To see the data for California, go here - <http://www.uaedreform.org/wp-content/uploads/charter-funding-inequity-expands-ca.pdf>

On the subject of charters, CTA is up to its old tricks – trying to do them in. Their latest gambit is AB 1351 (http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB1531) which would “require that the initial chartering authority appoint a majority of the members of the board of directors” of a charter school. Lance Izumi, Director of Education Studies at the Pacific Research Institute, writes:

If charter-school organizers know that local school boards have the power to pass final judgment on who sits on their governing boards, they will be less likely to nominate people who possess talent, vision and commitment, but who are not likely to be confirmed by the local school board. Only people politically palatable to the school board will likely be nominated. There will be a chilling effect on the variety of people put forward to serve on charter-school governing boards, with the result that governing boards would end up becoming extensions of the school board.

In other words, charter schools would not be charter schools as we have known them. To read the rest of Izumi’s op-ed go to <http://www.flashreport.org/blog/2014/05/01/cta-attacking-charter-schools-again/>

As always, we at CTEN want to thank you for your ongoing support. Please visit us regularly at www.ctenhome.org We do our best to keep our website up-to-date, but if you need any information that you can’t find there, please send an email to cteninfo@ctenhome.org or call us at 888-290-8471 and we will get back to you in short order.

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President