



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 20, 2015

Dear Colleague,

We are again sending you this email twice – by the traditional route and also via MailChimp. Any feedback on which you prefer will be greatly appreciated.

In light of the *Vergara* ruling, legislators in Sacramento have been busy trying to get some replacement laws on the books, but the going hasn't been easy. Three Republican bills and one by a Democrat have been killed in the Assembly Education Committee where the California Teachers Association reigns. The bills dealt with tenure, seniority and teacher evaluations. None were particularly draconian, but with *Vergara* in the appeal stage, it seems that the unions are not yet willing to do any compromising. They have not yet taken a position, however, on SB 499 which would subject teacher evaluations to collective bargaining. To learn more about the legislative doings ...or lack thereof, go to <http://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article19903074.html> , <http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2015/apr/30/state-panel-blocks-teacher-evaluation-tenure-bills/> and <http://edsources.org/2015/teacher-evaluation-bills-face-stiff-resistance/78911#.VVOMIBvaA26>

At the same time it is fighting reforms to traditional public schools, CTA is sponsoring four bills that would make life more difficult for charter schools. *LA School Report* explains,

Four Democratic California lawmakers joined forces yesterday to promote new bills aimed at creating more stringent regulation of the state's charter schools.

If passed, the package of bills would bring big changes to the charter schools, including a requirement that they be run as non-profits, that charters be considered government entities and that all of their workers be public employees. One of them would also make it easier for charter school teachers to unionize.

To read more, go to <http://laschoolreport.com/state-lawmakers-call-for-deeper-regulation-of-charter-schools/> To read what the California Charter School Association thinks of the bills, go here - <http://www.calcharters.org/blog/2015/03/ccsa-issues-statement-on-california-teachers-association-anti-charter-legislation.html>

A recent report informs us that both graduation rates *and* dropout rates have inched up in the Golden State. How is that possible? According to the *San Jose Mercury News*,

California's high school graduation rate continued its steady climb last year -- but paradoxically, its dropout rate nudged up as well, according to figures released Tuesday by the state Department of Education.

About four out of five students who entered high school in fall 2010 graduated last June -- 80.8 percent, up from 80.4 percent for the previous class. But 11.6 percent of those destined for the class of 2014 dropped out, up from 11.4 percent for the previous year's class.

Both figures can rise because neither includes students who continue their education without graduating.

To continue reading, go to http://www.mercurynews.com/bay-area-news/ci_28006935/graduation-rates-rise-so-do-dropout-rates

Much has been written over the past few years about how teachers in the U.S. spend upwards of 50 percent more time in front of their students than educators in other countries. But according to a recent study by Samuel Abrams, director of the National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education at Columbia University Teachers College, it's not true.

In reality, U.S. primary teachers spend about 12 percent more time leading classes than their OECD counterparts, not 50 percent; U.S. lower -- secondary teachers spend about 14 percent more time, not 65 percent; and U.S. upper -- secondary teachers spend about 11 percent more time, not 73 percent.

Also, there are several interesting charts in the report, including one which shows a state-by-state comparison of daily teaching time, and California comes in at 5 hours and 59 minutes – one minute under the national average of exactly six hours. To read the report, go here - <http://cbcse.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/The-MismeasureofTeachingTime-SA-1.14.15.pdf>

“Shockingly Few Students Are Proficient In U.S. History” read the headline in a *Huffington Post* piece a few weeks ago. And if the latest NAEP history scores are any indication, the headline is accurate.

Which of these do the governments of Canada, France and Australia have in common: a) They are controlled by the military; b) They have constitutions that limit their power; c) They have leaders with absolute power; d) They discourage participation by citizens in public affairs?

If you chose b, you're smarter than more than 40 percent of America's eighth graders. But that's a stubbornly low bar, according to a report released Wednesday by the federal government's educational research arm.

To continue reading, go to http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/29/national-assessment-of-educational-progress-2015_n_7164984.html

Common Core still is getting a large share of the edu-headlines these days and the testing opt-out movement seems to be gaining strength on both the political right and left. Researcher and Professor Jay Greene gave a particularly articulate statement to the Arkansas Common Core Council a couple of weeks ago. In part, he said,

Standards are about what we value. They communicate what we think is important for our children to learn, when they should learn it, and ultimately what kinds of adults we hope they will grow up to be.

Because standards are about values, their content is not merely a technical issue that can be determined by scientific methods. There is no technically correct set of standards, just as there is no technically correct political party or religion. Reasonable people have legitimate differences of opinion about what they want their children taught. A fundamental problem with national standards efforts, like Common Core, is that they are attempting to impose a single vision of a proper education on a large and diverse country with differing views.

To read more of Greene's testimony, go to <http://jaypgreene.com/2015/05/04/testimony-to-the-arkansas-common-core-council/>

The "free community college" idea is still being bandied about. But is it really "free?" "No" says Heritage Foundation's Lindsey Burke. She points out that "Over the past several decades, college costs have risen at more than twice the rate of inflation, thanks in large part to federal subsidies." To read more, go here - <http://dailysignal.com/2015/01/09/free-community-college-anything-free/>

Barry Garelick, co-founder of the U.S. Coalition for World Class Math, which has provided extensive comments on the deficiencies of the Common Core standards for mathematics, has written *Teaching Math in the 21st Century*, an honest, critical and entertaining look at math education from the inside.

I am not an outright proponent of the philosophy that 'If you want something done right, you have to live in the past', but when it comes to how to teach math there are worse philosophies to embrace.

To learn more about the book, go here - <http://www.amazon.com/Teaching-Math-Century-Barry-Garelick/dp/1511632887>

And finally, this is your last chance to take advantage of the following:

This coming June and July, the Independent Institute is hosting "Challenge of Liberty," a free market seminar for students who are at least 18 years old.

*The five-day series of lectures, readings, films, multimedia presentations, and debates teach participants what economics is, how it affects their lives, and how understanding it can help them achieve better lives for themselves, their communities, and the world at large. **Challenge of Liberty** illuminates the intimate connection between principles of free market economics and public policy decisions. Informative, inspiring, and fun, **Challenge of Liberty** is an ideal way*

stay intellectually engaged over the summer while bolstering your personal network and building your skill set.

To learn more, go to <http://www.independent.org/students/seminars/>

CTEN has two Facebook pages. If you have a Facebook account, we urge you to join us and let us know your thoughts. Having a dialogue among teachers is an effective way to spread information, and to share experiences and ideas. Our original Facebook page can be found here <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/group.php?gid=125866159932&ref=ts>. A 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>

Also, please visit “Teachers for School Choice” here - <https://www.facebook.com/teachersforchoice>

As always, thanks for your continued interest and support of CTEN.

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President