



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

August 22, 2012

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.

Dear Colleague,

Now that most districts in California begin the school year in August, many of you are back in class. The post Labor Day starts seem to be disappearing from the landscape. In any event, we hope that the beginning of your school year has been (and will continue to be) a good one.

In the July letter, we told you about SB 1530 -- a bill that, if passed, would have shortened the endless “dismissal procedures” and make it easier to get rid of a teacher who has abused children with drugs, sex and violence. The theme continued to stay in the limelight when former CNN and NBC news reporter Campbell Brown wrote in the Wall Street Journal that in New York, “Teachers Unions Go to Bat for Sexual Predators.” (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390443437504577547313612049308.html>)

Needless to say, AFT President Randi Weingarten couldn’t ignore Brown’s op-ed and the two of them wound up in something of a cat fight on Twitter. (http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2012/08/a_twitter_debate_on_teacher_se.html)

The National Council on Teacher Quality has a new newsletter, TR³ Trends, aimed at school officials, but we see no reason why the information it contains would not be of interest to teachers. Each month they use data from NCTQ's TR³ database to “highlight the latest trends in school district policies and collective bargaining agreements nationwide. TR³ contains teacher policies from 113 school districts, including the 50 largest districts, the largest district in each state, Broad Prize winners, Gates investment districts, and members of the Council of the Great City Schools.” For more information, go to <http://www.nctq.org/p/tqb/pdq.jsp?tag=TR3%20Trends>

The New Teacher Project, now known as TNTP, has come out with a new study which claims that urban schools are “systematically neglecting their best teachers, losing tens of thousands every year even as they keep many of their lowest-performing teachers indefinitely – with disastrous consequences for students, schools, and the teaching

profession. The study by TNTP documents the real teacher retention crisis in America's schools: not only a failure to retain enough teachers, but a failure to retain the right teachers." While TNTP has conducted similar studies with similar results in the past, this study should certainly not be ignored. For more, go to http://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_Irreplaceables_2012.pdf

On the same note we found an excellent op-ed in the New York Post recently, which describes a teacher's frustration with the New York City school district's ability to retain great teachers. The writer is leaving the teaching profession, and while describing New York, she undoubtedly speaks for many educators all over the country. The op-ed can be found here - <http://www.educators4excellence.org/news/2012-07-why-nyc-cant-keep-great-teachers>

We all know that data can be skewed to make a protagonist's argument. The following video makes this point graphically and purports to outline the real state of California K-12 schools. "The presentation shows that our state is not really making any real progress at improving actual student subject mastery. The analysis details the performance of some of the state's largest districts, as well as some of the author's local district's as a way to clarify important information." See if you agree with the video which can be found here - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hwru7faexew>

Another video worth watching, especially for those of you who are looking for an alternative to the teachers union, comes from our friends at the Association of American Educators which is the largest non-union, professional educators' organization in the country. They advance the profession by offering "a modern approach to teacher representation and educational advocacy, as well as promoting professionalism, collaboration and excellence without a partisan agenda." To watch the video, go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lC0ornsg_4&feature=player_embedded

Researcher Jay Greene has written an important blog post in which he proclaims that "Charter Benefits Are Proven by the Best Evidence." Referring to randomized control trials (RCT), he says, "Happily, we have four RCTs on the effects of charter schools that allow us to know something about the effects of charter schools with high confidence. Here is what we know: students in urban areas do significantly better in school if they attend a charter school than if they attend a traditional public school. These academic benefits of urban charter schools are quite large. In Boston, a team of researchers from MIT, Harvard, Duke, and the University of Michigan, conducted a RCT and found: 'The charter school effects reported here are therefore large enough to reduce the black-white reading gap in middle school by two-thirds.'" To read Greene's blog post, go to <http://jaypgreene.com/2012/05/07/charter-benefits-are-proven-by-the-best-evidence/>

For those of you who are interested in getting more info about charter schools or are possibly interested in working in one, the best place to start is the Center for Education Reform FAQ page - <http://www.edreform.com/2012/03/just-the-faqs-charter-schools/>

CTEN is in the process of setting up a YouTube network in which we will try to present various issues in a simple, easy-to-understand way. Topics will include agency fee status,

religious objector status, charter school basics, an explanation of vouchers, etc. We will have more information in the “official” welcome back newsletter in September.

Also, next month, we will have information about the steps needed to attain agency fee status. (If you are already an agency fee payer and plan to apply for your yearly rebate, make sure not to do so before September 1st.)

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

And finally, we still have a limited number of t-shirts available. They are navy blue with the CTEN logo on front and “A resource for all who care about education” printed on the back. They come preshrunk, in small, medium, large and extra large. If you would like one, all you have to do is make a \$15 donation to CTEN via PayPal - <http://www.ctenhome.org/donate.htm>) Then, please let us know what size and where to send it and we will get it out to you.

As always, we at CTEN want to thank you for your ongoing support. Please keep providing feedback so that we can continue to meet your needs by keeping you informed as well as provoking lively discussion. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Larry Sand
CTEN President