



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.

August 20, 2014

Dear Colleague,

Most of you are back to work now. We sincerely hope that you had an enjoyable summer, and that the always busy start of a new school year has been smooth sailing.

Perhaps the most jaw dropping story of this – or any – month is the internal CTA document that Mike Antonucci unearthed and posted a couple of weeks ago. “Not if, but when: Living in a world without Fair Share...” is a brief PDF in which the largest state teachers union in the country envisions the future. Apparently, CTA is resigned to the fact that forced union dues – the so-called “fair share” – sooner or later will go the way of the dodo bird. I would urge you all to read this revealing document. (<http://www.eiaonline.com/FairShare.pdf>)

In a similar vein, last week CTEN participated in National Employee Freedom Week (<http://employeefreedomweek.com/>) which is a national effort to inform union employees about the freedom they have to opt out of union membership. Alternatives include becoming an agency fee payer or identifying as a religious/conscientious objector. To support NEFW, CTEN board member Rebecca Friedrichs wrote an op-ed for the *Orange County Register* (<http://www.ctenhome.org/PDFdocs/Rebecca%20-%20OCR%20op-ed%20-%20Feb%2016.%202014.pdf>) and participated in a panel discussion at the Heritage foundation (<http://www.c-span.org/video/?320959-1/discussion-union-membership>). Additionally, I had an op-ed posted by *Investor's Business Daily* (<http://www.ctenhome.org/PDFdocs/NEFW%20-%20op-ed%20-%20IBD%20-%202014.pdf>) and recorded a 30 second radio spot which ran on KABC in Los Angeles last week. (<http://www.ctenhome.org/PDFdocs/Larry%20KABC%20radio%20ad%20-%20NEFW%20-%202014.mp3>).

In teacher union news in other states, now that Michigan is a right-to-work state, the Michigan Education Association is doing everything it can to prevent teachers from leaving. MEA has been anything but forthright in its dealings with teachers who are no longer interested in being in the union. A typical story is Rob Wiersema's who was also a panelist in the Heritage Foundation event linked above.

In December 2012, Michigan passed a Right to Work law, which allowed teachers and other workers to keep their jobs without belonging to the union. Until then, union membership was all but a requirement for employment.

“I thought, great, I’m out,” Wiersema said. “As soon as I heard you could leave, I thought, great. My contract is up in 2013. I sent letters to the MEA and the local association to say I quit, but it obviously didn’t work.”

He called the union and sent letters asking how to leave, but he got no reply. In June, he sent a “quit letter” to the state and local branches and the school. In July, union dues showed up on his credit card.

“I disputed the charge and said I wasn’t going to pay it,” he said. “Then I heard the MEA was going to go after people who didn’t pay it and have their credit reports take a hit.”

To read more about Wiersema’s (and others) trials and tribulations go to <http://watchdog.org/161766/michigan-union-tricks-teachers-prolonging-membership/>

And in Wisconsin, Act 10 – which gives teachers the right to not pay union dues and limits collective bargaining – has survived yet another challenge. On July 31st, the Wisconsin Supreme Court ended a three-year battle over Gov. Scott Walker’s signature legislation delivering a 5-2 decision in the law’s favor. To read more, go to <http://hotair.com/archives/2014/07/31/wisconsin-supreme-court-upholds-gov-scott-walkers-signature-act-10-in-its-entirety/>

Back in the Golden State ... things are heating up in Los Angeles. New UTLA president Alex Caputo-Pearl is talking tough – saying outright that if teachers aren’t offered a generous pay hike, there will be a strike. Not one to be easily cowed, LAUSD superintendent John Deasy had a few choice comments for the union. To read both sides go here - <http://laschoolreport.com/utlas-utlas-caputo-pearl-our-goal-is-to-win-a-good-contractcaputo-pearl-our-goal-is-to-win-a-good-contractcaputo-pearl-teachers-view-from-new-union-president-laUSD/> and here - <http://laschoolreport.com/deasy-on-utla-talk-of-strike-breathhtakingly-irresponsible-laUSD/>

In other news, researcher Collin Hitt reports on a Mathematica study which dispels some of the oft-repeated myths about charter schools, in this case the KIPP franchise.

KIPP schools demand a certain kind of student – a student who is willing to put in long hours and put up with very strict rules. KIPP has been shown to substantially increase student test scores. But critics argue that the culture at KIPP has major effects on recruitment and retainment. KIPP schools attract better students and are more likely to weed out low performing students, the argument goes. If this is true, KIPP students who persist in school are more likely to have a high-achieving peer group – and the effects of simply being in a peer group are really what explain any positive effects at school. A new study from Mathematica destroys this critique.

To continue reading, go to <http://jaypgreene.com/2014/08/08/work-hard-do-your-research-does-kipp-steal-the-best-students/>

As the Common Core battle rages, Pacific Research Institute's Lance Izumi takes a refreshing view. While Common Core critics typically use the federalist argument or simply trash the quality of the standards, Izumi looks at the standards' implementation. It's not a pretty picture.

Bryce is a sixth grader at a public school in Northern California. He is a very bright student, achieving several perfect scores on the state's math exam and consistently receiving A+ grades in math. Yet, Core Connections has had a discernible negative impact on Bryce.

Under Core Connections, Bryce and his fellow students are organized into teams of three to four students. Bryce says that there is unequal participation among team members, with more advanced students being more involved and carrying more of the work.

Further, not all the groups finish at the same time. Those that finish early can't go on to harder problems, but have to wait until other teams finish. Oddly, Bryce says that his teacher doesn't want early finishers to read because that's English language arts, and not math.

Since the teamwork method started, the class usually doesn't finish math lessons in time, and sometime it cuts into their science time or the math is simply not completed. Bryce emphasized that this situation happens a lot. When asked if the class starts the next day where they left off the day before, he answers "no," saying that the class simply goes on to the next new concept.

To continue reading, go to <http://www.flashreport.org/blog/2014/07/31/the-reality-of-common-core-in-the-classroom/>

In late July, Ray Fisman, an education economist from Columbia University, wrote an article for e-magazine *Slate* claiming that Sweden's universal school choice program has caused a decline in student achievement. However, several other researchers found Fisman's contentions to be way off the mark. To read the original piece and the blowback, go here - http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/the_dismal_science/2014/07/sweden_school_choice_the_country_s_disastrous_experiment_with_milton_friedman.html

CTEN sent out an email last week with agency fee payer information. In case you missed it, here is the text of that email:

If you are a member of CTA and considering becoming an agency fee payer, it's a two-step process and now is the time to get started. To get a full rebate, you must have your resignation form in the mail by August 31st. (If you resign after Aug. 31 you will get a prorated rebate.) Then between September 1st and November 15th, you must submit a request to receive your full rebate. For more info and form letters, please go to <http://www.ctenhome.org/optout.html>

(Also, teachers who mention CTEN when they sign up with the Association of American Educators for the first time will get a \$30 discount off the regular \$198 first year membership.)

If you were a member of CTA and have already become an agency fee payer, you must apply for your yearly rebate between September 1st and November 15th. For more info and form letters, go to <http://www.ctenhome.org/optout.html>

If you are a member of AFT/CFT or UTLA, please call 888-290-8471 or email cteninfo@ctenhome.org for more information.)

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

Also, anyone wishing to donate to CTEN can do so very simply through check, money order or PayPal - <http://www.ctenhome.org/donate.html> As a non-profit, we exist only through the generosity of others. Thanks.

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President