



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 19, 2015

Dear Colleague,

As 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.

CTEN is again participating in National Employee Freedom Week which began August 16th and runs through August 22nd. NEFW is a national campaign whose purpose is to let employees know that they have the freedom to opt out of their union and become agency-fee payers or religious/conscientious objectors. This year 99 organizations in 42 states are participating. An important objective is to reach the 39.2 percent of those in union households nationwide who are unaware they can opt-out of union membership without losing their job or any other penalty. For more information, please visit the NEFW website – <http://employeefreedomweek.com/> For info specific to teachers in California, go to <http://www.ctenhome.org/how-to-opt-out-teachers-union-nea-cta-aft-cft.html>

And talking about employee freedom, CTEN board member Rebecca Friedrichs had an interview on the subject with the Washington Post's Emma Brown. While the title of piece – “Two teachers explain why they want to take down their union” – is untruthful, the Q&A is worthwhile. (*Friedrichs et al v CTA* is not about destroying CTA, but rather an attempt to make dues-paying optional) In any event, near the end of the interview, Friedrichs was asked, “What’s the teachers’ lounge like for you these days? How are you treated?” Her response:

When I took this on I thought I would be shunned, but I knew I was doing the right thing and I have been pleasantly surprised that many, many teachers, they won't say it in public but they take me into a quiet room or they'll send me a quiet e-mail to my home, and they thank me and they hug me. I've had very little pushback.

To read the interview with Rebecca and Harlan Elrich, another plaintiff in the case, go here - <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2015/08/11/two-teachers-explain-why-they-want-to-take-down-their-union/>

Lest there be any confusion about the *Friedrichs* case and *Bain v CTA*, a related lawsuit, CTEN and the Association of American Educators are cosponsoring an informational event on

September 27th in Long Beach. There will be a panel discussion featuring a lawyer and plaintiff from each case. Details will be forthcoming.

From our friends at EdSource:

EdSource Today is looking for teachers who have signed up to receive ETS training to become Smarter Balanced test scorers for a story about the tests and how districts are using them. If you have received (or will receive) this training, please contact reporter Theresa Harrington in Northern California at 510-433-0421 ext. 142 or tharrington@edsource or reporter Sarah Tully in Southern California at stully@edsource.org

Have you ever felt that a professional development class you were taking was a waste of time? If you are like me, you have had many such experiences. And now TNTP has come out with a study that looked closely at teacher development in three large school districts and one charter school network. The results are not pretty; TNTP found that despite school systems making a massive and laudable investment in teacher improvement—far larger than most people realize,

- ... most teachers do not appear to improve substantially from year to year....
- ... no evidence that any particular kind or amount of professional development consistently helps teachers improve.
- School systems are failing to help teachers understand how to improve—or even that they have room to improve at all.

To learn more and read the TNTP report, go to <http://tntp.org/publications/view/the-mirage-confronting-the-truth-about-our-quest-for-teacher-development>

Math teacher and Common Core expert Barry Garelick has an interesting piece posted on the Heartland Institute website. “Pernicious Egalitarianism Shrinks 8th Grade Algebra Programs” delves into the fact that 8th graders will no longer be taking algebra in California due to the Common Core State Standards. Garelick states,

Algebra will now be offered only in high school. Of course, it is a mistake to allow students to take algebra if they are not prepared for it. To succeed in algebra, students must have already achieved mastery of fractions, percentages, decimals, ratios, and negative numbers and be able to solve a variety of word problems. But if a student is qualified to take algebra in 8th grade and would do well in it, why not give the child that opportunity?

Yes, why not? As one who taught algebra to 8th graders for several years, I think this is a serious mistake. To read more of Garelick’s piece, go to <http://news.heartland.org/newspaper-article/2015/08/11/pernicious-egalitarianism-shrinks-8th-grade-algebra-programs>

The New York Times’ Mokoto Rich recently penned “Teacher Shortages Spur a Nationwide Hiring Scramble (Credentials Optional)” the latest entry in the alleged teacher shortfall. While all the usual suspects repeat the shortage meme as gospel, there really is not much truth to it. As Mike Antonucci writes,

In the years leading up to the recession, reports of teacher shortages were constantly in the news. In response, America added 140,000 teachers to the workforce. The recession hit, and 63,000 of those teachers disappeared – either through direct layoffs, or attrition when veteran teachers retired.

How can there be a teacher shortage when 63,000 recently working teachers are still out there?

To read Antonucci's response to Rich's piece go here -

<http://www.eiaonline.com/intercepts/2015/08/10/shortage-term-memory/> To read what Antonucci has written on the subject over the years, go to <http://www.eiaonline.com/intercepts/?s=teacher+shortage> University of Washington Researcher Dan Goldhaber weighs in here -

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rick_hess_straight_up/2015/08/research_vs_conventional_wisdom_teacher_attrition.html To read Rich's piece, go here - <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/10/us/teacher-shortages-spur-a-nationwide-hiring-scramble-credentials-optional.html>

The National Council on Teacher Quality blows up another long-standing myth, that of the “5 year and out” teacher myth.

The Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study follows the same group of teachers for five years, regardless of where they live—even if they leave a state. The headline finding was that only 17 percent of new teachers leave after the first four years (the gray areas in the graph below). That's a far cry from the oft-repeated education myth that 50 percent of teachers leave within their first five years.

To read more of the NCTQ report, go to <http://www.nctq.org/commentary/tqb/tqb.do?id=11>

Former teacher and union leader Doug Tuthill has written an article in which he refutes the anti-choice union talking points and claims that “School choice is good for teachers, too.”

Florida also now has more than 40,000 teachers who do not work for school districts. Nearly 14,000 of them work in charter schools, which surpasses the public school teaching workforce in nine other states. At the nonprofit I lead, we routinely hear stories of teachers who migrate from district schools to private schools. They're choosing these options for the same reason parents are—because they offer a better fit for their individual needs.

To read Tuthill's piece go to <https://www.redefinedonline.org/2015/08/tuthill-school-choice-is-good-for-teachers-too/>

CTEN has three 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 to 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> Our newest page is

Teachers for School Choice and can be accessed here - <https://www.facebook.com/teachersforchoice?fref=ts>

In any event, if you enjoy these letters and find them informative, please pass them along to your colleagues. We know that there are many independent-minded teachers in California who are looking for alternative sources of information. Many thanks, as always, for your interest and support.

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President