



# 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.*

September 16, 2015

Dear Colleague,

At 3pm on Sunday, September 27<sup>th</sup>, CTEN, along with the Association of American Educators, will be hosting an informational event in Long Beach. We will examine the *Friedrichs* and *Bain* lawsuits and their possible ramifications for teachers and the general public. I will moderate a panel discussion featuring lawyers and plaintiffs from both cases, and an audience Q&A will follow. The event and refreshments are free but seating is limited so we are asking people to sign up for the event. To do so, go here to [aaeteachers.org](http://aaeteachers.org)

Last week California's latest standardized test scores were released and, as expected, the results were not good. As the *Los Angeles Times* reported,

*Echoing a downward trend in test scores nationwide, most California students have fallen below grade level and are not ready for college, according to results from new, more rigorous standardized tests. The picture is worse in L.A. Unified, the nation's second-largest school system.*

*Across the state, 44% of students scored at grade level or better in English, while 34% did so in math. In L.A. Unified, the figures were 33% in English and 25% in math.*

*State and local officials said they were prepared for the low scores. The questions are more difficult than on the state's previous test and, for the first time, students took the exam on computers. The test is linked to a new set of learning standards, called Common Core, that have been adopted by 42 states.*

For more, go here - <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-new-test-results-20150908-story.html>

The news was better from charter schools, however:

- Charter schools have successfully outperformed the state average in English Language Arts by 4.9 scale score points.

- In Math, charter schools on average have exceeded the state average by 2.4 scale score points.
- Overall, California's charter schools have scored on average 3.6 scale score points higher than the statewide average on a combined measure of Math and English Language Arts.

To read the California Charter School Association press release, go to

<http://www.ccsa.org/blog/2015/09/charter-schools-performing-above-state-average-on-new-common-core-aligned-tests.html>

In the “questionable idea” category, a school in San Francisco has decided to go to “gender-neutral” bathrooms. And just to be clear, this is not about single-stall bathrooms but rather restrooms with multiple stalls.

*So far, the single-stall bathrooms for kindergartners and first graders—which are located within the classroom—are gender neutral. The school plans to phase in bathrooms used by older students over the next few years, including restrooms with multiple stalls.*

If this becomes the norm, possibly the next thing will be teachers’ bathrooms with multiple stalls. Are you okay with that? If not, I suggest you start to make some noise now. If you are a union member, maybe voice an objection there. For more on co-ed cans, go to

<http://news.yahoo.com/school-switching-gender-neutral-bathrooms-students-201124192.html>

Every few years, we are exposed to a new health fad. In the 1980s, it seems that every other person you met was diagnosed with hypoglycemia. Today – and for several years now – the rage is Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Now the CDC has entered the discussion and claims that one in five diagnoses of ADHD are wrong.

*In 18 percent of cases, the diagnosis was done solely on the basis of family members' reports, which is inconsistent with AAP recommendations that information be collected from individuals across multiple settings -- such as a teacher, piano instructor, or sports coach. Additionally, one out of every 10 children was diagnosed without the use of a behavior rating scale that is supposed to be administered.*

So while no one is denying its existence, parents and schools would be advised to be more prudent before labeling a child with the disorder. For more, go here -

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2015/09/03/one-in-five-kids-with-adhd-diagnosed-by-doctors-not-following-professional-guidelines/>

Much has been written about the benefits of a later school day start for kids. A recent report from researchers at Harvard and Oxford found that 10-year-olds should start school at 8 am, 16-year-olds should start between 10 and 10:30 am, and 18-year-olds should start between 11 and 11:30 a.m. Here's a sample of what they found across the U.S.:

- *In North Carolina, eighth-grade students who started class an hour later than their peers in the same district had higher test scores. The later start time seemed especially helpful for low-scoring students, and the effects persisted into high school.*
- *When the Minneapolis Public Schools moved their start time from 7:15 am to 8:40 am, students liked the change and reported that "attendance, achievement, behavior, and*

*mood improved." Parents were positive, too: 92 percent said they liked the shift, and parents reported that their kids were easier to live with when they weren't getting up so early.*

- *At the US Air Force Academy, where students were randomly assigned to classes with earlier and later start times, students who started earlier performed worse all day long on those days.*

To read more go to - <http://www.vox.com/2015/9/7/9271175/high-school-start-times>

Recently, school choice advocates have been taking it on the chin. First, in late August, the ACLU filed a lawsuit which aims to kill Nevada's new ESA program. Then on Sept. 4<sup>th</sup>, the Washington State Supreme Court declared the state's 2012 charter-school law unconstitutional. While the adults argue about details of state law, thousands of kids and their families' lives are on hold. For more on the two battles. go to

<http://dailysignal.com/2015/08/27/alcu-files-lawsuit-to-block-school-choice-for-nevada-children/> and <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/423683/charter-schools-washington-state-court>

In light of the *Friedrichs* case, the teachers unions are doing what they can to maintain membership, and in the following case, they are trying to stick it to the taxpayer.

*Efforts are underway to pass a "public employee orientation" mandate in which all newly hired public employees — including public-school employees and transit workers — must attend a program sponsored by the recognized local union. The "orientation" would take place during the workday. Employees would be required to show up in person. State taxpayers would pick up the costs.*

*Under proposed language, "The content of the recognized employee organization's presentation shall be determined solely by the employee organization and shall not be subject to negotiation." The unions are carving out a right to lobby new employees to join and pay dues.*

To read more, go here - <http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/2015/sep/07/orientation-bill-preparation-end-mandatory-dues/>

(Update: the mandate push was not successful. But it will, in all likelihood, be revived in the next legislative session. For more, go here - <http://www.eiaonline.com/intercepts/2015/09/11/ctas-mandatory-sales-pitch-bill-looks-dead/> )

And on the subject of unions, **now is the time for agency fee payers to claim their rebate. Or if you are a full-dues payer and want to withhold the political share of your union dues, now is the time to get busy.** For details, go here - <http://www.ctenhome.org/how-to-opt-out-teachers-union-nea-cta-aft-cft.html>

Errata: Writing about Barry Garelick's op-ed (<http://news.heartland.org/newspaper-article/2015/08/11/ pernicious-egalitarianism-shrinks-8th-grade-algebra-programs>) last month, I reported that 8th graders will no longer be taking algebra in California due to the Common Core State Standards. But Garelick actually wrote, "The San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) decided recently to eliminate first-year algebra for 8th graders." He adds that in other areas

“access is restricted by increasing the barriers via additional tests, etc. So algebra in 8th grade is still there, but for fewer students.”

If you are still using a school email to receive these newsletters, please consider sending us your personal email address. More and more school districts are blocking CTEN. In any event, if you enjoy these letters and find them informative, please pass them along to your colleagues and encourage them to join us.

And finally, if you would like to see us address certain issues, topics, etc. in these newsletters or on our website – <http://www.ctenhome.org> – please let us know. And please be sure to share our monthly letters with your coworkers. Thanks.

Sincerely,  
Larry Sand  
CTEN President