

Los Angeles Times

[OPINION](#)

Letters to the editor

Teachers and school reform in L.A.

March 7, 2010

Teachable moments

[Re "Learning a lesson," Editorial, March 3](#)

The Times writes: "If charter operators opt out [of Los Angeles Unified's Public School Choice initiative], the teachers will have no incentive to put forth their own plans, and the entire initiative fails."

NO. NO. NO. That is your mistaken view of LAUSD's challenge. Maybe UTLA doesn't, maybe the school board doesn't and maybe The Times doesn't, but teachers DO have student learning foremost in their minds and hearts. They are dedicated to the work, not to the politics. For us, this is not a spectator sport; it is our profession.

Fear not, our incentive remains. Offer us the schools and we will plan for them, bid for them, take them over and make them better. We want to help students learn -- that is the definition of teaching -- and it is sufficient incentive.

I urge the editorial board and the charters to read Tim Rutten's column, also in the March 3 paper. He presents a cautionary analytical insight: There is a "difference between standing on principle and standing on pique."

John Leonard
West Hollywood

What the pink slips say

[Re "The year of the pink slip," Opinion, March 2](#)

Bravo to Nicholas Melvoin for explaining the horrible situation in some of our worst inner-city schools. Children at risk seem to be especially susceptible to revolving-door teachers.

There is a better way to handle teacher layoffs. Courtesy of unions, teachers must be laid off by seniority. Because the newest teachers wind up at the worst schools, they are the

first to go, thus setting the revolving door in motion.

Wouldn't it be better to get rid of poor-performing teachers from the district, irrespective of seniority? By doing that, young, energetic and effective teachers like Melvoin could keep their jobs, benefiting both students and good teachers. The losers would be the teachers who shouldn't be in the classroom.

Larry Sand

Beverly Hills

The writer is president of the California Teachers Empowerment Network.

Thank you for running Melvoin's Op-Ed article, which gives a "boots on the ground" look at the deteriorating condition of California schools.

I hope one day we can live in a state, and country, that puts education above all else, including business, state parks and prisons. What kind of message does it send to kids (and good teachers) when, in tough economic times, education is among the first things we cut?

Ray Lancon

Los Angeles