



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.

March 20, 2019

Dear Colleague,

According to new report by the National Council on Teacher Quality, astonishingly high numbers of elementary teacher candidates fail their professional licensing tests each year. The report also reveals that teacher preparation programs give scant attention to the content knowledge candidates need.

The new report builds off NCTQ's previous work. Relying on undergraduate course requirements at 817 institutions, NCTQ found that just 3 percent of programs required courses that ensure that candidates have foundational knowledge in science. Meanwhile, 27 percent of programs required sufficient coursework in elementary mathematics and 59 percent of programs had aligned courses in history, according to the report.

In an interview, NCTQ President Kate Walsh said, "It's kind of shocking that institutions do not feel the necessity of getting these candidates to succeed on the licensing tests. They take their money and they take their time — their college careers — and say, 'You know, it's a crapshoot whether you're going to make it or not.' Well, you just don't see that in other professions."

To read more about Walsh's take on the report, go [here](#). To access the report, go [here](#).

When it comes to American history knowledge, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation finds only one state (Vermont) can pass a U.S. citizenship exam.

The survey found only 15 percent of American adults could correctly note the year the U.S. Constitution was written and only 25 percent knew how many amendments there are to the U.S. Constitution. Further, 25 percent did not know that freedom of speech was guaranteed under the First Amendment, and 57 percent did not know that Woodrow Wilson was the commander in chief during World War I.

Woodrow Wilson Foundation President Arthur Levine said,

American history education is not working, as students are asked to memorize dates, events and leaders, which the poll results shows are not retained in adulthood. Based on our research, this is not an issue of whether high school history teachers are adequately prepared or whether kids study American history in school. The answer to both questions is yes. This is an issue of how we teach American history. Now it is too often made boring and robbed of its capacity to make sense of a chaotic present and inchoate future. Instead, knowledge of American history must serve as an anchor in a time when change assails us, a laboratory for studying the changes that are occurring and a vehicle for establishing a common bond when social divisions are deep. This requires a fundamental change in how American history is taught and learned to make it relevant to our students lives, captivating and inclusive to all.

To learn more about the report, go [here](#).

Earlier this month the feds rolled out a national school choice plan, which would provide up to \$5 billion annually for K-12 scholarships. Donors could get federal tax credits for donations to state scholarship-granting organizations. Both Ted Cruz and Betsy DeVos have had to defend the proposal from criticism by conservatives who think the federal role in K-12 is inappropriate, and from the left whose objection is that it will take money from public education.

American Federation of Children President John Schilling defended the plan, saying,

True school choice means giving parents the full range of K–12 options for their children, including private school, the most maligned of those options among opponents of choice, despite years of research showing that it works for students. The Urban Institute recently released a second study of the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program, which serves more than 100,000 lower-income students, 68 percent of whom are African American or Hispanic. According to the study, students in the program are far more likely to enroll in and persevere through college than their public-school peers. Depending on their length of time in the program, scholarship students are up to 99 percent more likely to enroll in college, and up to 56 percent more likely to attain a bachelor’s degree.

However, Lindsey Burke, director of the Center for Education Policy at the Heritage Foundation, stated “School choice for the most part is just not a federal issue. It is not an enumerated power of the federal government.” Cato Institute’s policy analyst Corey DeAngelis notes that a federal program would have a heavy regulatory footprint.

To read more go [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

Also on the choice front, charter schools in California are under the gun. As EdSource’s John Fensterwald writes,

AB 1505...would give districts where a charter school would be located the sole authority for approval or denial. The 1992 charter school law gave charter schools the right to appeal a denial to a county board of education. The 1998 amended law clarified the criteria for hearing appeals and created a second layer of appeal, to the State Board of Education.

AB 1506...would remove the current, liberal allowance for the growth of charter schools. Instead the number of charters now operating, currently 1,323, would become the new cap and new schools would open as other charter schools close....

To learn more about all the legislation on charters, go [here](#).

Know any kids who are being cyberbullied? For a way to help, go [here](#).

The American Federation of Teachers has rolled out a new six-figure advertising campaign in which it bemoans the fact that – per its own study – 25 states “spend less on K-12 education than before the Great Recession” and that there are “massive shortfalls in education.”

AFT claims that 90 events have been scheduled, including “informational pickets, town hall meetings, forums, marches, protests and lobby days all over the country.” The union has a town hall planned for Los Angeles despite the fact that, according to their report, California is one of the states whose spending has *risen* since the recession. But the union claims that the Golden State doesn’t have enough nurses, librarians and counselors. So even though California is one of the states that is investing more in education, it, too, is being targeted.

Additionally, AFT President Randi Weingarten appeared before the House Committee on Education and Labor last month and made a plea for more education spending. She insisted that teachers aren’t paid enough, and stressed the importance of finding “real, sustainable solutions to the disinvestment in public education and services.”

For more info go [here](#) and [here](#).

Special-needs teacher Bethany Mendez has joined four other public school educators in filing a federal class-action lawsuit against the California Teachers Association to stop the forced collection of union dues. The teachers have quit their unions, but are still dinged for union dues.

“This is a financial issue for many people as well as a personal choice,” Ms. Mendez said at a press conference in San Francisco. “It is unfathomable to me that after even receiving a revocation of consent, and the passing of Janus, that the local and state unions would continue to assert this mandatory deduction from our paychecks.”

The lawsuit, brought by San Francisco lawyer Harmeet K. Dhillon and the Freedom Foundation, comes with unions scrambling to retain members after the 5-4 Janus ruling. The court said that requiring public-sector employees to pay union fees violates their First Amendment rights.

“Unions are unjustly enriched and benefit themselves at the expense of plaintiffs by retaining the dues over the objections and without the consent of the plaintiffs,” said Ms. Dhillon, a Republican National Committee member from California.

To read more, go [here](#).

TeacherFreedom.org is a great one-stop shop to learn what your rights are concerning union membership. They have released a series of videos by teachers and for teachers, addressing the most common misconceptions educators have about exercising their association freedoms. “Will I lose my seniority or tenure if I leave the union?” or “Does leaving the teachers union affect my compensation or health insurance?” or “Can I get liability insurance if I leave the teachers union?” The very brief videos that answer these questions can be accessed [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). More videos will be available soon.

To visit the TeacherFreedom.org website, go [here](#).

CTEN will continue to keep up with post-*Janus* doings in addition to any other issues pertinent to education and teachers, and keep you informed as they develop. If you have any questions, or have experienced any problems because of your decision to leave your union, please let us know, and we will do our best to help you in a timely manner. We will also be able to share your concerns with other teachers across the state. And speaking of sharing, please pass this email along to your colleagues and encourage them to join us.

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.

As always, thanks for your continuing interest and support.

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President