



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 18, 2019

Dear Colleague,

On September 9th, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed SB 419 into law, which extends the current K-3 ban on suspensions for “defiant and disruptive” behavior in California to grades 4-8. The law suggests that “restorative justice practices, trauma-informed practices, social and emotional learning, and schoolwide positive behavior interventions and support, may be used to help pupils gain critical social and emotional skills” as a way to right the wayward student. It’s important to note that the statute doesn’t pertain to violence, robbery and other more serious offenses.

The impetus behind the bill appears to be race-based. While black students made up 5.6 percent of the total enrollment in California for academic year 2017-18, they accounted for 15.6 percent of total suspensions for willful defiance, according to the state education department. Of course, it goes unmentioned that black kids actually commit a disproportionate amount of the suspension-worthy offenses. Black teachers understand this. A recent Fordham Institute teacher survey showed that they, more than white teachers, feel suspensions aren’t used enough.

To see the text of the new bill, go [here](#). To read a contrarian view, go [here](#).

On the school choice front, *Education Post* CEO Chris Stewart has written a powerful piece about “The Three R’s of Parents Who Want to Raise Free Children.”

One of my favorite Gandhi quotes is, “There is no school equal to a decent home and no teacher equal to a virtuous parent.” I’ve never found a person who disagrees, even among the most ardent believers in the transformative power of public schools. Parents matter most.

Yet, if we believe parents and guardians are the first and most important teachers in the lives of children, why do we allow the various authorities to limit their options and usurp their desires?

Because, of course, while we say we believe in parents, trust them, and respect them, in truth, there is a collective suspicion about “bad” parents who deserve none of the trust and respect.

But, if our goal is to find solutions to the educational failure that compounds year by year, all logical roads lead back to parents or guardians and their ability to access educational opportunities.

That means school choice (and even the right to choose no school at all), and that scares people to death.

To continue reading, go [here](#).

The California State Senate has passed AB 1505 and is one step closer to Gov. Newsom's desk for his signature. The original bill would have been a death knell for the state's charter schools, but after negotiations with all interested parties, a compromise was reached. The California Charter School Association is upbeat, assuring parents "that the most critical protections were maintained and that new provisions would be focused on our values of equity, quality, predictability and co-existence within our public education system."

AB 1505 ensures that:

- *Charter schools that are closing the achievement gap are granted a streamlined renewal, with the ability to now be renewed up to seven years.*
- *There is restoration of an appeals path to counties and the State Board of Education when a new or renewing charter school petition has been denied.*
- *Any consideration of the fiscal impact of a new charter school petition **must** be balanced with the academic needs of the students who are going to be served.*
- *A five-year transition exists for non-core charter school teachers to secure appropriate certification.*

To learn more, go [here](#). To see the bill's history, go [here](#).

Regarding teacher pay, Newark, NJ did something interesting in 2012. With the help of Facebook honcho Mark Zuckerberg, Newark teachers signed off on a contract that linked pay to student achievement. It was an interesting plan that gave teachers a choice. According to Chalkbeat, "About a third of Newark teachers took advantage of an option that let them remain on the traditional pay scale. And fewer than 200 teachers per year – about 7% of the current teaching force – received the 'highly effective' bonuses, while a similar number of low-rated teachers were prevented from earning raises, according to union and former district officials."

The plan worked. Newark retained almost all of its top-rated teachers: In the 2016-17 school year, 97 percent of teachers who were rated "highly effective" the previous year stayed in the district, but 54 percent of teachers rated "ineffective" were gone.

Now, with the Zuckerberg money drying up, a new contract has been signed, and sadly PFP has been eliminated. Local teacher union president John Abeigon pulled no punches in a [note to his members](#), "This contract removes the last vestiges of corporate reform from the district," and is a "message to our enemies that your evil is not welcome in Newark or any other public schools."

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

In the “better late than never” department, Mary Grabar has written a book excoriating “A People’s History of the United States.” Howard Zinn’s book, which was first published in 1980 and has sold some 2.6 million copies, is aimed at high school and college students. In a review, *Federalist* executive editor Joy Pullmann writes that Zinn’s book is “concentrated poison.”

Using a careful review of his source materials and claims, as evidenced by her nearly 1,000 footnotes, Grabar documents quite clearly and conclusively that Zinn is not only a plagiarist but a liar. His presentation of key events and figures of American history, such as Christopher Columbus, slavery, the NAACP, World War II, and the civil rights movement, also straight-up regurgitates Communist propaganda.

Here’s just one example, from page 222 and 223 in Grabar’s book. She shows how Zinn selectively quoted from American documents to make it look like the United States was interested in getting Vietnam’s natural resources, not in defending it from a communism our nation understood to be evil and dangerous. The very same documents Zinn quotes actually prove the opposite of the points he makes with them when one reads the material he left out.

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

Earlier this month, Mike Antonucci posted a most interesting document: “The California Teachers Association 2019-20 Membership Handbook.” This 46-page “guide to membership processing” is loaded with minutia, some of which may affect you. For example, it mentions “Commitment Cards.”

By signing a Commitment Card, a member agrees to the Maintenance of Dues provision, where a member may revoke their annual dues obligation during an annual 30-day window period, which is not less than 30 days and not more than 60 days before the anniversary date of signing the Commitment Card.

Local chapters can use the Commitment Card as part of its member engagement efforts when having one-on-one conversations with a member about the local chapter’s successes, what is planned next, and how the member’s involvement and support strengthens their union’s efforts. Locals that are successful in getting members to commit can be more confident in having the support of its active members for each year, and in return better plan the budget and activities to support those members.

To see the entire document, go [here](#).

A recent piece in *The Wall Street Journal* also concerned itself with union membership. Authored by Mark Janus’ lawyer, Bill Messenger and National Right to Work Foundation president Mark Mix, the op-ed claims that a specific aspect of the *Janus* decision has been overshadowed. The authors claim that while the ruling affirmed that state and local workers have the legal right to stop such payments, the decision also requires that the government “obtain

proof that workers voluntarily, knowingly and intelligently waived their First Amendment rights not to subsidize union speech before deducting union dues or fees from their paychecks.”

“To be effective, the waiver must be freely given and shown by ‘clear and compelling’ evidence,” Justice Samuel Alito wrote. “Unless employees clearly and affirmatively consent before any money is taken from them, this standard cannot be met.”

Yet the federal government and many states and localities continue to deduct union dues without evidence that workers waived their speech rights, usually based on pre-Janus authorization forms that come nowhere close to demonstrating a waiver. Labor Department figures suggest unconstitutional deductions could be coming out of the paychecks of as many as 7.2 million government employees nationwide. The fix is simple: Governments must cease transferring wages to unions until they amend their dues-deduction policies to comply with Janus.

To read the op-ed, go [here](#).

On that note, 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 – possibly getting you legal assistance, if necessary. We will also be able to share your concerns with other teachers across the state. And talking about 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. Thanks, as always.

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President