



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.

November 20, 2019

Dear Colleague,

California is frequently the first state to pass some kind of legislation which may or may not be beneficial. The newest such effort is a law that mandates later school start times.

“The science shows that teenage students who start their day later increase their academic performance, attendance, and overall health,” Newsom said in a statement. “Importantly, the law allows three years for schools and school districts to plan and implement these changes.”

The law will take effect over a phased-in period, ultimately requiring public middle schools to begin classes at 8 a.m. or later while high schools will start no earlier than 8:30 a.m. The law does not apply to optional early classes, known as “zero periods,” or to schools in some of the state’s rural districts.

The new start times will be implemented by the beginning of the 2022-23 school year or when a school’s three-year collective bargaining agreement with its employees comes to an end, whichever is later. Schools that have recently negotiated agreements or are in the midst of negotiating new agreements with teachers have the option of adjusting to the later times when their contracts end.

Interestingly, CTA called Newsom’s decision to sign the bill “unfortunate,” saying it creates significant challenges that will ultimately affect students.

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

A report released earlier this month by the U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center on “targeted school violence” doesn’t add much to what we already knew. Nearly every attacker “experienced negative home life factors.” Most were victims of bullying and had a history of school disciplinary actions. The perpetrators typically had a grievance and a plan, that usually involved the use of a gun. But ultimately the report finds, “There is no profile of a student attacker, nor is there a profile for the type of school that has been targeted.”

As Stephen Sawchuk writes in *Education Week*, the analysis generally confirms the conclusion of the agency’s 2002 publication on school safety that “checklists of characteristics supposedly common to school shooters were not helpful in preventing violence.”

About a month before the report was released, Florida became the latest state to allow teachers who pass psychological and drug screening, and complete at least 144 hours of training to carry guns at school. The volunteers receive a stipend of \$500 for participating.

While American Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten insists that teacher carry makes our children’s classrooms less safe, John Lott, founder of the Crime Prevention Research Center, disagrees. In a report released in April, he concludes, “Since at least as far back as January 2000, not a single shooting-related death or injury has occurred during or anywhere near class hours on the property of a school that allows teachers to carry.” He adds, “There are currently 20 states that allow teachers and staff to carry guns to varying degrees on school property.”

To read the report, go [here](#). To learn more about Lott’s findings, go [here](#). To read Weingarten’s thoughts, go [here](#).

The NAEP scores were released a few weeks ago and the results were not pretty, especially here in California. As *EdSource* reports,

In 2017, California education leaders heralded the significant increase in the state’s 8th-grade reading scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress as a sign that the state’s investment in education and its adoption of the Common Core standards had taken hold.

Curb that enthusiasm. In 2019, California’s 8th-graders gave back the gain, as did much of the nation, underscoring that progress on state and national standardized tests is best measured over a decade, not in single years.

In math, both California’s and the nation’s 8th-grade scores fell less than 1 point. The nation’s 4th-grade math score rose 1 point and California’s rose 3 points — though it was not considered statistically significant because of the sample size.

The biggest change was in reading and the news was not good. Joining 30 states whose 8th-grade reading scores also fell, California’s decline of 3 points, the same as the nation, about matched its point gain in 2017.

In 4th-grade reading, the national score fell 2 points, which was considered significant, while California’s 1-point rise was not. Only one state, low-scoring Mississippi, saw a gain in 4th-grade reading.

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

While California's students struggle, at least one teacher union leader's thoughts and efforts would seem to be elsewhere. In a recent post on the California Federation of Teachers website, new president Jeff Freitas talked about his union's priorities.

When I was elected CFT President in March, I said in my speech to Convention delegates: "I believe that when we fight for education, we also fight for social justice, racial justice, gender equality, LGBTQ rights, and climate justice."

To be a social justice union, we must not only consider the complex lives of our members and the challenges they face, but look beyond the doors of the schoolhouse to consider the ways our campus communities intersect with our larger communities. When we fight for labor, we must fight for our communities, too.

To read more on Freitas' thoughts, go [here](#).

The leftist agenda in education stretches far beyond the teachers unions, however. In a revealing piece in *Real Clear Investigations*, John Murawski writes, "Woke History Is Making Big Inroads in America's High Schools."

Like growing numbers of public high school students across the country, many California kids are receiving classroom instruction in how race, class, gender, sexuality and citizenship status are tools of oppression, power and privilege. They are taught about colonialism, state violence, racism, intergenerational trauma, heteropatriarchy and the common thread that links them: "whiteness." Students are then graded on how well they apply these concepts in writing assignments, performances and community organizing projects.

Students at Environmental Charter High School in Lawndale are assigned to write a "breakup letter with a form of oppression," such as toxic masculinity, heteronormativity, the Eurocentric curriculum or the Dakota Access Pipeline. Students are asked to "persuade their audience of the dehumanizing and damaging effects of their chosen topic."

Students at schools in Anaheim, San Jose, Oakland, and San Francisco are taught how to write a manifesto to school administrators listing "demands" for reforms.

To learn more about "woke history," go [here](#).

As NAEP scores decline and politics in the classroom ascend, Carl Cannon at *Real Clear Politics* writes, "K-12 Education Falls Short, and Hope for Gains Lags."

A majority of registered voters are dissatisfied with the performance of the elementary and secondary education system in this country, according to a detailed new survey. Moreover, Americans have little confidence that public schools will improve any time soon.

"Looking ahead on education, few people are optimistic about the future," said John Della Volpe, who designed and directed the poll. "Only about one in 10 voters believe America's K-12 education will be a model of excellence by 2040."

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

Not surprisingly, as confidence in traditional public schools declines, school choice is ascendant. Chapel Hill-based education writer Kristen Blair reports:

A new federal report, School Choice in the United States 2019, provides long-term proof on enrollment claims. Culling years of data, the report shows choice has been a major engine of enrollment growth nationwide, fueling maverick models of schooling. Public charter growth is the stuff of reformers' dreams, skyrocketing 571% between 2000 and 2016. Homeschool enrollment nearly doubled. Most students, 47 million, still attend traditional public schools, but enrollment has increased just 1%. Private school enrollment decreased 4% during similar timeframes.

Voters' attitudes defy partisan pigeonholing. A new poll from Education Reform Now of likely 2020 voters show 57% want "new ideas" and "real changes" in how public schools operate, in addition to more funding. Eight in 10 Democratic primary voters and nearly nine in 10 black Democratic primary voters want expanded access to choices and options in public education, including charter schools.

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

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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