



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.

July 15, 2020

Dear Colleague,

With many school districts set to reopen in late August, there is still much doubt as to what education will look like. As we mentioned last month, the California state guidelines on schooling in a coronavirus-affected environment were issued in early June, and there were 45 pages worth of suggestions. It is important to stress that the state guidelines are not mandates; it is up to each individual school district to handle matters as they see fit.

The new state budget in California provides \$70.5 billion in funding for K-12 schools and also sets fundamental accountability rules by requiring teachers to take online attendance and document student learning. As the *Los Angeles Times*' Howard Blume reports:

Whether schooling is online or in person, the rules reimpose the state's minimum daily instructional minutes requirement of 180 for kindergarten, 230 minutes for grades 1 through 3, and 240 minutes for grades 4 through 12. Distance learning can be documented with student work as well as time online.

Schools also must develop procedures for reengaging students absent from distance learning for more than three school days in a school week. Schools are allowed to develop alternate plans, with input from parents, for achieving these mandates when necessary.

To continue reading Blume's piece, go [here](#).

Those who insist that children should be back to school in a traditional setting got a boost from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The nation's pediatricians have come out with a strong statement in favor of bringing children back to the classroom this fall wherever and whenever they can do so safely. The American Academy of Pediatrics' guidance "strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school."

The guidance says "schools are fundamental to child and adolescent development and well-being."

The AAP cites "mounting evidence" that transmission of the coronavirus by young children is uncommon, partly because they are less likely to contract it in the first place.

On the other hand, the AAP argues that based on the nation's experience this spring, remote learning is likely to result in severe learning loss and increased social isolation.

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

In fact, according to a Gallup poll taken in late June, a majority of parents favor fulltime in-person learning in the fall.

Fifty-six percent of parents with children who attend a K-12 school prefer their children's instruction be fully in person this fall. Meanwhile, 37% prefer a hybrid program in which students attend school part time and do some distance learning, while 7% want full-time distance learning for their children.

... Concern about the coronavirus is a major predictor of what type of schooling parents prefer. Overall, 46% of parents say they are very or somewhat worried about their children getting the coronavirus. Among those parents, 71% prefer their children have part-time (59%) or full-time (12%) distance learning, with only 29% favoring full-time, in-person schooling.

In contrast, 79% of parents who are not worried about their children getting the coronavirus want them to attend full-time, in-person school this fall.

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

In all likelihood, distance learning will be a part of most school district reopening plans. To that end, the Center on Reinventing Public Education surveyed 82 districts that used some form of online instruction this past spring. CRPE maintains that, "After a slow start, districts have come a long way on remote learning."

On March 20, we reported that in the [first week of closures](#), the districts we reviewed were focused primarily on school meal distribution plans and student health and safety. About a third (15 of the 46 reviewed) were exploring device distribution, and about half (26 of 46) were sharing links to online general educational resources.

Two months later, 61 percent of a larger sample set of districts (50 of 82 districts reviewed) provide remote learning plans that include formal curriculum, instruction and progress monitoring, and 99 percent of districts we reviewed (81 of 82) are providing students access to a formal curriculum.

But, of course, there are still many challenges. According to the report:

- Students with special needs and English language learners are often left out.

- Device distribution and connectivity challenges limit access.
- Traditional student data tracking systems are largely absent.

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

In the *Wall Street Journal*, Manhattan Institute fellow, Daniel Di Salvo writes, “Will Unions Let Schools Reopen?”

The reopening of public schools poses an economic conundrum: If the schools aren't open, many parents will lack child care and be unable to return to work. If parents can't work, the economy can't recover. Teachers unions are thus in a position to hold the economy hostage.

The problem is that pension costs are assured to increase, even as revenue plunges. In the first quarter of this year, public pensions lost [up to \\$1 trillion](#) in market value. Teacher pension plans were in bad shape even before state and local tax revenues collapsed due to the economic shutdown.

As Jonathan Moody and Anthony Randazzo show in an Equable Institute [report](#), the share of education spending on pensions has nearly doubled, from 7.5% in 2001 to 14.4% in 2018. Even as states spend more, less money reaches the classroom. This trend is about to be magnified.

... School districts are also asking for more money and warning state governments that without it they will not be able to reopen. Recently, school superintendents from Los Angeles, San Diego, Long Beach, Oakland, Sacramento and San Francisco wrote to California's elected officials that any budget cuts will keep schools closed even after “clearance from public health officials is given.”

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

One result of the coronavirus is that school choice is ascending. As Libby Sobic, director and legal counsel for education policy at the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, writes in *Real Clear Education*:

“This pandemic has reawakened this movement of school choice,” said Calvin Lee of American Federation for Children at a roundtable discussion on school choice in Waukesha, Wisconsin this week. While COVID-19 has not been easy for many families as they have tried to balance work and educating their children at home, it has offered many parents a window into their child's learning that they never would have had. If nothing else positive comes of this change of lifestyle during the pandemic, parents exercising school choice will be a remarkable silver lining—but there is a lot of work to do before choice is available to all students across America.

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

Also, regarding school choice, the Supreme Court delivered a major victory on June 30th to parents seeking state aid for their children's religious school education.

The court's conservative majority ruled 5-4 that states offering scholarships to students in private schools cannot exclude religious schools from such programs. The decision was written by Chief Justice John Roberts, who has joined the liberal justices in three other major rulings this month.

The court stopped short of requiring states to fund religious education, ruling only that programs cannot differentiate between religious and secular private schools.

"A state need not subsidize private education. But once a state decides to do so, it cannot disqualify some private schools solely because they are religious," Roberts said.

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

If you have any valuable resources that you would like to share, or talk about what your school district is doing to deal with the “new normal,” please do so by emailing cteninfo@ctenhome.org or posting on Facebook if you prefer. The CTEN page can be accessed [here](#), and the CTEN group can be found [here](#).

Best of luck to all of you, your families and your students during these trying times.

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President