



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 16, 2020

Dear Colleague,

With schools back in session, we will soon know how many parents have decided to stick with their local district school. According to a recent Civis poll, about 40 percent of parents of k-12 students nationwide say that they have “[disenrolled their children](#) from the school they were originally supposed to attend this year, in response to school reopening plans.” And of those who have removed their kids, 20 percent have signed them up at a private school.

Here in southern California, school districts are taking a hit, though primarily in lower grades. As reported by the *Los Angeles Times* Howard Blume, kindergarten enrollment in LAUSD is [down 14 percent](#) from last year.

A principal in southwest L.A. said her enrollment drop is related to serving a low-income minority community slammed by COVID-19.

“It doesn’t surprise me that parents are unwilling to take the risk of putting a 5-year-old on a campus and also are not comfortable with a 5-year-old sitting in front of a computer for a half or a full day,” said the principal, who requested anonymity because she was not authorized to speak.

“Honestly, I probably wouldn’t enroll my children in kindergarten right now,” she said. “Or, if I had to work, I would look at private options.” She added that L.A. Unified is treating kindergartners too much like 12th-graders in terms of time spent online.

In addition to the drop in kindergarten, some principals are reporting declines in enrollment — and in meaningful student participation — in transitional kindergarten and first grade.

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

So where will students go to be educated if not in a traditional public school? As Lance Izumi, senior director of the Center for Education at the Pacific Research Institute, writes, many will homeschool or enroll their kids in a charter or private school.

...many charter schools are reopening faster than regular public schools and parents have rushed to enroll their children in these charters.

“I have never seen this type of interest in the 10 years that I’ve been involved with charter schools,” [says](#) California charter school director Kathy Grbac.

Also, interest and enrollment in private schools from New York to Minnesota to other states is increasing.

Adam Baber, a private school principal in New York, [says](#) that admission inquiries have increased “partly due to our intention to reopen our campus safely and fully with regular in-person attendance. We know many families are looking for that.”

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

As we mentioned last month, one new school choice wrinkle that is picking up steam and has received much media attention is the “pandemic pod” phenomenon. As described by The Heritage Foundation’s Lindsey Burke,

Families work together to recruit teachers that they pay out-of-pocket to teach small groups—“pods”—of children. It’s a way for clusters of students to receive professional instruction for several hours each day.

Some parents are using their pod arrangements to hire teachers who will supplement the online classes being provided by their school districts.

...As one mother named J Li wrote in a [viral Facebook post](#) last week, thousands of parents are “scrambling” to form pods through “an absolute explosion of Facebook groups, matchups, spreadsheets, etc.”

J Li describes the pod phenomenon as “clusters of three to six families with similar aged (and sometimes same-school) children co-quarantined with each other, who hire one tutor for in-person support for their kids.” The tutor may serve as a full-time teacher for the pod of students, or may only teach on a part-time basis or outdoor classes.

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

It’s hardly a secret that the teacher unions are the driving force to keep schools shuttered. Not only have they been insisting that the federal government needs to vastly increase school funding before teachers go back to work, they have been making other demands. As American Enterprise Institute education policy expert Rick Hess explains, unions in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Oakland have joined up with the Democratic Socialists of America in a [coalition](#) “calling for a moratorium on charter schools and standardized testing, new taxes on the wealthy, police-free schools, a halt to home foreclosures, and much more.”

Also, the American Federation of Teachers, which supports “safety strikes” for teachers because “[dead teachers can’t teach](#)” and “dead kids can’t learn,” launched a [\\$500,000 ad buy](#) in August, in which the union accused Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of “stonewalling funds to help schools to reopen safely.” The union claims that billions are needed for comprehensive contact tracing, mandatory masking, and updating ventilation systems. Yet, the same union managed to [join up with Al Sharpton’s National Day of Action](#) in Washington, D.C. on August 28th, where [social distancing was not practiced](#), and those who wore masks were not overly concerned about a proper fit. AFT president Randi Weingarten, who has solemnly reported that teachers are so scared of going back to work that they’re, “writing their wills,” had no compunction about speaking at the rally, without a mask.

It's important to note, that Sweden’s decision to keep schools open during the pandemic resulted in no higher rate of infection among its schoolchildren than in Finland, where schools did temporarily close. Additionally, the risk of teachers catching the disease from children is very low.

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

Also, on the union front, Joe Biden claims that if he is elected, he will try to “[ban state laws prohibiting unions from collecting dues](#) or comparable payments from all workers who benefit from union representation that unions are legally obligated to provide.” This position is most interesting because he would have to overturn the Supreme Court’s [Janus](#) decision, the 2018 ruling which stipulated that teachers and other public employees did not have to pay a union as a condition of employment. As for Biden’s “...legally obligated to provide” comment, perhaps he doesn’t know that the unions [insist on exclusivity](#); it is not foisted on them.

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

Something I’m sure that many of you have noticed is the increasing politicization of our schools. The most recent development in this ongoing saga is the new law that requires students to take an ethnic studies class in order to graduate from high school. Interestingly though, not all the details of AB 331 have been finalized. The law’s primary author, Assemblyman Jose Medina, D-Riverside, proposed one amendment and accepted several others.

One amendment would push back the start date to the graduating class of 2029-30; districts would have to begin offering a course in the 2025-26 school year. Medina said the new schedule would give schools and districts “plenty of time to prepare for a smooth implementation” and give the state time to provide funding for the new courses, which would be considered a state mandate.

Another amendment would allow a school district’s or charter school’s governing board to adopt a “locally developed” ethnic studies course instead of a statewide model ethnic studies curriculum that is being developed.

In early 2021, the State Board of Education is required to adopt the model curriculum, which has been the subject of intense debate and criticism and is now in its second revision. Since the

model curriculum is intended to serve as a guide, not a mandated curriculum, the bill would give districts and schools flexibility to decide what would be taught.

For more details, go [here](#).

And finally, CTEN board member Rebecca Friedrichs is promoting a way to get the word out about the teacher union agenda. She calls it “Adopt a Teacher” and on her website, she writes,

Teachers are the key to bringing safety and healing to our schools and country because state and national teachers’ unions use millions in teacher dues (behind teachers’ backs and against their wills) to push SeXXX ed curriculums, and divisive social and political agendas that are against the values treasured by the great majority of America’s families and teachers. But most teachers have no idea their dues are being spent on these things because state and national unions won’t tell teachers how their dues are spent, so we must educate them. You can begin helping teachers to see the truth about state and national unions by sharing our stories and videos, and we’ll add more content regularly, so please visit often.

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

If you have other valuable resources that you would like to share, or report on what your school district is doing – good, bad or indifferent – 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](#).

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