



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.

February 17, 2021

Dear Colleague,

Most schools in California are still closed due to Covid-19, and children are suffering. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 6 percent of U.S. children aged 6 through 17 are afflicted with autism, severe anxiety, depression, trauma-related mental health conditions, and other serious emotional or behavioral difficulties. Due to forced school lockdowns, many of these children who depend on schools for access to vital therapies are being deprived.

Therefore, it is not surprising that mental health problems account for a growing proportion of children's visits to hospital emergency rooms. In November, the CDC reported that from March 2020, when the pandemic was declared, to October 2020, the figure was up 31 percent for those 12 to 17 years old and 24 percent for children ages 5 to 11, compared with the same period in 2019. And when severe mental health problems exist, suicides escalate.

Additionally, the National Institutes of Health reports that – pre-lockdown – about 70 children in the U.S., ages 5-14 kill themselves every year. While there is no national data yet for 2020, that reported number is likely to skyrocket. In Nevada's Clark County alone, there were 18 youth suicides in the last 9 months of 2020.

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

Not surprisingly, several studies have shown that the teachers unions are the major factor in whether or not schools reopen. For example, researchers Corey DeAngelis and Christos Makridis have released the results of a study which finds that school districts in places with strong teachers' unions were much less likely to offer full-time, in-person instruction in the fall.

New data published at Education Week indicate that 78 percent of the nation's 50 largest public districts aren't planning to reopen with any in-person instruction.

Using data on the reopening decisions of 835 public districts covering about 38 percent of all students enrolled in K-12 public schools in the country, our study finds that school districts in

places with stronger teachers' unions are much less likely to offer full-time, in-person instruction this fall.

For example, our models indicate that school districts in states without right-to-work laws are 14 percentage points less likely to reopen in person than those in states with such laws, which prevent unions from requiring membership.

A 10 percent increase in union power is associated with a 1.3 percentage-point lower probability of reopening in person. In Florida, for example, 79 percent of 38 school districts in the Education Week dataset are planning to offer full-time in-person instruction to all students. However, in New York, a state with much stronger teachers' unions, none of the 21 school districts included in the dataset are planning to do the same.

...These results are remarkably consistent across various analytic models and even after controlling for differences in county demographics, including age, gender, marital status, race, population, education, political affiliation, household income and COVID-19 cases and deaths per capita.

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

As the lockdowns continue, many parents are getting fed up, and they're getting organized.

Citing campus closures' "devastating effect on students' learning, mental health, physical health and social and emotional well-being," a coalition of more than a dozen parent groups has launched a public campaign to pressure the state to reopen school campuses as soon as safely possible.

Open Schools California includes parent groups in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, Richmond and other cities who say that distance learning has been a disaster for most students, and the state needs to push harder for safety measures that would allow campuses to reopen for in-person instruction. The group announced its formation Monday.

"There were all these separate parent organizations, but we realized we'd have a much larger impact if we worked as a unified group and lobbied at a statewide level," said Megan Bacigalupi, an Oakland parent of two elementary school students and an organizer of the group.

Organizers decried what they said was a lack of input from parents on statewide reopening plans. School administrators, teachers' unions, state officials and public health authorities are providing the primary guidance, "but the parent voice is missing," Bacigalupi said.

"Since March (when campuses closed) we've been an integral part of our children's education, but right now we don't have a seat at the bargaining table," she said.

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

How will the lockdowns affect the school choice movement? In *Education Next*, Paul Peterson writes, “Covid-19 Could Be the Moment We Turn to School Choice as a Road to Equal Opportunity.”

Nothing in the historical record has disrupted American schools quite like Covid-19. Millions of students will lose more than a year of classroom instruction. Only the most hopeful think schools will return to normalcy before next September. An entire generation can expect a drop in lifetime earnings of 5% to 10%, economists tell us. Even worse, social and emotional development have been stunted. Schools no longer provide eye and ear exams, nurse office visits, and ready access to social services. Children from low-income backgrounds are suffering the most.

Parents desperately search for alternatives. In affluent communities, neighbors have formed learning pods, with tutors and fellow parents sharing the instructional burden. Home schooling is on the rise. Families are shifting their children to private and charter schools. Entrepreneurial high school seniors are taking dual enrollment courses, hoping to finish high school and begin college at the same time. But too many children are occupying their time in other ways, with ever more high school students simply dropping out. Enrollment at public schools is falling by 5% or more. The opportunity gap is almost certainly widening between rich and poor children.

But what happens after the vaccine arrives and the virus has been cornered? Will parents return to the status quo? Or are they going to demand more choices and greater control over their child’s education? Before Covid-19, nearly a third of all students attended a school of choice, including district-operated magnet schools (7%) other district options such as vocational and exam schools (6%), charters (6%), home schooling (3%), and private schools (8% using family and other private funds and 1% with school vouchers or tax-credit scholarships).

If parents have any say, the demand for choice is almost certain to increase. During the pandemic itself, parents reported teachers at charter and private schools were more likely to provide direct instruction. Loss of learning occurred everywhere, but it was less, parents said, at these schools of choice.

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

In fact, some states are already taking action to help parents.

[Sixteen states](#)—Arizona, Kentucky, Georgia, Virginia, Washington, New Hampshire, Oregon, Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, North Dakota, Kansas, Oklahoma, Indiana, [Utah](#), and [Illinois](#)—have introduced proposals that empower parents and provide alternative education options for children, such as [education savings accounts](#), [private school scholarships](#), or [tax credit scholarships](#).

New Hampshire policymakers, for instance, introduced a proposal that would provide eligible children with [Education Freedom Accounts](#), which are parent-controlled education savings accounts.

These especially versatile accounts can be used to purchase a variety of education expenses, such as private school tuition, tutoring, books, uniforms, or specialized education programs, to name a few.

K-12 students currently enrolled in the Granite State's public schools [are eligible](#) for an account if their school is currently operating under either a hybrid or remote model. New Hampshire students enrolled in a school whose academic achievement outcomes are below 40% are also eligible for an account.

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

While the *Janus* decision freed teachers from paying dues to a union, it did not free them from being part of the collective bargaining process. Jade Thompson, a teacher in Ohio, doesn't want to be "compelled to let a labor union speak for her."

The Buckeye Institute said it filed a petition Friday with the nation's highest court on behalf of Jade Thompson, a Spanish teacher at Marietta High School. The case revolves around the concept that collective-bargaining units, in this case the Marietta Education Association, speak on behalf of all members.

"In this instance, Ohio law recognizes a labor union as representing and speaking on behalf of Ms. Thompson, despite her vehement opposition to its positions and advocacy on issues ranging from fiscal policy to school administration," the Buckeye Institute's president and CEO, Robert Alt, wrote in the petition to the high court.

...Thompson's problems with the labor union peaked in 2010, when her husband, former state representative Andy Thompson, was in the midst of his campaign. When the Ohio Education Association campaigned against Andy Thompson, the president of the Marietta Education Association emailed teachers at the high school pushing them to vote against him, according to court documents.

"Ms. Thompson's agency fees fund the activities of the Union, the National Education Association and the Ohio Education Association," her complaint stated.

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

While Miguel Cardona, President Biden's pick for Education Secretary, seems to be a non-controversial choice, his pick for Deputy Secretary of Education, San Diego Unified School District superintendent Cindy Marten, comes with some baggage.

She has aligned herself with the California Teachers Association in trying to halt the growth of charter schools. Additionally, the San Diego branch of the NAACP released a statement referring to Marten as an "ineffective leader when it comes to the academic advancement of African American children in San Diego public schools." Marten also has promoted the concept that schools "spirit murder" black children and that white teachers should undergo "antiracist therapy."

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

If you have valuable resources that you would like to share, or you'd like to 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, if you prefer, posting on Facebook. 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.

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President