



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.

May 19, 2021

Dear Colleague,

EdSource reports that although 87 percent of California’s public schools have reopened for some form of in-person instruction, “fewer than half of students have returned either full time or part time in a hybrid model.”

A total of 55% of all public school students, including those in charter schools, were at home, in distance learning, as of April 30, according to an EdSource analysis of new data released by the state.

EdSource found that two-thirds of students in district schools with the largest proportions of low-income families were in distance learning, compared with only 43% of students in schools with the fewest low-income families — a disparity that may partly explain a widening learning gap between wealthy and poor students that researchers and teachers suspect the pandemic has enlarged.

Higher Covid rates in poor communities contributed to the disparity. Parents in highly infected areas have been reluctant to send their children back to school, and teachers in those areas resisted returning. Parents in low transmission areas, meanwhile, pressured school boards to reopen.

Only 13% of public school students and 12% of charter school students have resumed a normal five-day-a-week school schedule.

The Public Policy Institute of California is also reporting that “83 percent of public school parents think their children’s education has been compromised in the past year – 60 percent said their children have fallen behind by ‘a lot’ while the other 23 percent reported in at ‘a little.’”

Additionally, the amount of time teachers spent with their students varies greatly, depending on the school district. While students in Long Beach received 255 minutes of “synchronous” instruction each day, and those in San Diego got 240 minutes, kids in L.A. received just 114 minutes with their teacher.

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

Also, regarding the reopenings, a Freedom of Information Act document reveals that the American Federation of Teachers lobbied the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on, and even suggested language for, the agency's [school-reopening guidance released in February](#).

The documents show a flurry of activity between CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky, her top advisors and union officials — with Biden brass being looped in at the White House — in the days before the highly-anticipated Feb. 12 announcement on school-reopening guidelines.

“Thank you again for Friday’s rich discussion about forthcoming CDC guidance and for your openness to the suggestions made by our president, Randi Weingarten, and the AFT,” wrote AFT senior director for health issues Kelly Trautner in a Feb 1 email — which described the union as the CDC’s “thought partner.”

“We were able to review a copy of the draft guidance document over the weekend and were able to provide some initial feedback to several staff this morning about possible ways to strengthen the document,” Trautner continued. “... We believe our experiences on the ground can inform and enrich thinking around what is practicable and prudent in future guidance documents.”

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

As the teachers unions continue to restrict traditional education, school choice has been on the move. In *The Wall Street Journal*, Paul Peterson writes,

As Democrats took control of the federal government in January, teachers unions upped their antichoice rhetoric while calculating the best way to spend billions of new federal education dollars.

Three months later, school-choice advocates have scored big victories around the country. Indiana enlarged its voucher program. Montana lifted caps on charter schools. Arkansas now offers tax-credit scholarships to low-income students. West Virginia and Kentucky have funded savings accounts that help parents pay tuition at private schools. Florida, a movement leader, has enlarged its tax-credit scholarship programs. Even Rhode Island Gov. Dan McKee promises to veto a moratorium on new charter schools. As one voucher activist told me: “This feels like the most school choice legislative action in . . . years.”

The pandemic is the driving force. The failure of the public schools to educate children in the past year has angered parents and policy makers.

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

Also, on school choice, the Fordham Institute reports that a “New Study Shows That Charter Schools Do Not ‘Drain’ Funds From Traditional Public Classrooms. In Fact, in Many States, the Opposite Seems to Be True.”

The study uses enrollment and fiscal data reported by traditional school districts between 2000 and 2017 to analyze the relationship between the proportion of students attending charter schools not approved by the local school district and the finances of host school districts in twenty-one states, including the Golden State.

Perhaps surprisingly, the study finds that host districts' total revenues per pupil actually increased in most states as the percentage of local students who enrolled in charter schools rose. Certainly, that was the case in California, where a 10 percentage point increase in the percentage of students attending charter schools that were authorized by counties or the State Board of Education (after being rejected by the host district) was associated with a 5 percent increase in host districts' total revenue per pupil and a 4 percent increase in their instructional spending per pupil.

Importantly, these increases weren't caused by changes in the types of students host districts enrolled. For example, they weren't due to increases in the share of district students who were low income, eligible for Special Education, or classified as English language learners (Which are all designations associated with additional per pupil funding under state and federal law).

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

The “equity” train rolls merrily along in California. In Conejo Valley, just north of Los Angeles,

An emphasis on defining America's history in terms of “social justice,” and Critical Race Theory (CRT) in particular, is popping up in our local public schools. For instance, the capstone assignment in a current ninth-grade English course at Newbury Park High School is aimed squarely at “an in-depth exploration of a topic that has something to do with prejudice, intolerance, and injustice (just like the majority of the literature in this course).” The assignment, which requires a parent's signature of approval, guides students to explore a variety of “wrongdoing, attitudes of prejudice and intolerance” in America's history, through the study of groups including Black Lives Matter, criminals who received minimum sentences, women in science, LGBTQ and more. The assignment's goal is to give students a “perspective of dealing with wrongdoing and recognizing the need for lasting and comprehensive reconciliation” to “help students to develop a more mindful approach in a variety of real-world environments, including school, home, and community.”

These days, even William Shakespeare is not safe from cancelation.

In Michigan, some English literature teachers told the School Library Journal that the Bard of Avon has promoted “misogyny, racism, homophobia, classism, anti-Semitism, and misogynoir (discrimination against black women)” in his writing. Jeffrey Austin, head of a Michigan high school's English literature department, insists that teachers should “challenge the whiteness” of the assumption that Shakespeare's works are “universal.” Washington state public school teacher Claire Bruncke has banished the Bard from her classroom in order to “stray from centering the narrative of white, cisgender, heterosexual men.”

Math does not fare too well with those who support equity. In Oregon, those in charge with running public education have decided that focusing on finding the right answer in math “and showing your work” is a symbol of white supremacy. Teachers are also urged to adapt homework policies to fit the needs of students of color and “challenge the ways that math is used to uphold capitalist, imperialist, and racist views.”

In an eye-opening piece, Children’s Educational Opportunity Foundation president Lewis Andrews writes that “woke curricula involve much more than warped views of history, the scientific method, and social relations – they also employ instructional methods that have been shown to inflict serious psychological harm completely independent of what is being taught. These include the frequent use of shaming, forced public confessions of so-called ‘privilege,’ the acceptance of one’s socioeconomic background as an excuse for not achieving, and the promotion of ideological conformity as the best way to deal with social conflict.”

Quoting psychologist Anna Smith, Andrews adds that shame is the ultimate divider. “It’s a me versus them feeling. A deliberate act to cause one to feel like an outsider. As ‘a finger-pointing gesture,’ she says, it can easily induce the very reverse of what was intended.”

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

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