



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.

August 18, 2021

Dear Colleague,

With schools getting ready to open, “Confusion over mask mandate for California schools sparks tension between districts and parents,” reports Diana Lambert in *EdSource*.

Shifting rules around mask mandates at schools are confusing and angering parents who are focusing their frustration on local school districts.

Adding to the confusion: Last week Gov. Gavin Newsom decided to let local school districts decide how to deal with students who refuse to follow the state’s mask mandate. Now, parents who don’t want their children to wear masks are showing up at school board meetings to demand their districts disregard the mandate.

“As the confusion increases, more parents are speaking out, and this is where the public pressure is going to mount on boards,” said Mike Walsh, president of the Butte County Office of Education and former president of the California School Boards Association.

Board meetings have become particularly challenging in rural areas that have low Covid-19 transmission rates and where schools were open most of last year.

“North state parents say they aren’t going to send their kids back to school if they have to wear masks,” said Richard DuVarney, Tehama County superintendent of schools. “They think the mental health risks outweigh the risk of their children contracting Covid.”

Some parents protesting masks at schools don’t see the state guidance as a mandate or don’t care if it is required. Some interpret the governor’s decision to let school districts decide how to enforce the mandate as license to make masks optional.

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

Some parents are so fed up with the mask mandates, they are suing.

Two parent groups filed a lawsuit against Governor Gavin Newsom and state health officials Thursday over rules requiring all California's school kids to wear face masks for protection against COVID-19 when they return to class in the fall term that begins next month.

The groups, Let Them Breathe and Reopen California Schools, filed the lawsuit in San Diego County Superior Court against Newsom, State Public Health Officer Dr. Tomas Aragon, Health and Human Services secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly and Dr. Naomi Bardach, an advisor to the state on school pandemic safety.

"A return to a normal school year is crucial to the mental and physical health recovery for student across California who have endured months of isolation," said Jonathan Zachreson, founder of Reopen California Schools, an advocacy organization of nearly 16,000 California public school parents.

At least one other lawsuit has been filed over mask requirements in school. The father of a rising senior at Palo Alto High School sued the school district this month after his son was denied entry to a summer history class for not wearing a mask.

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

Also, regarding Covid, the Ninth Circuit ruled that California violated the constitutional rights of parents whose children were at private schools when Gov. Newsom's administration forced those schools to shut down during the height of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.

The court's ruling:

"We reach a different conclusion, however, as to the State's interference in the in-person provision of private education to the children of five of the Plaintiffs in this case. California's forced closure of their private schools implicates a right that has long been considered fundamental under the applicable caselaw—the right of parents to control their children's education and to choose their children's educational forum."

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

It's not only masking and school closures that are of concern to parents in California. With a mandatory ethnic studies class for high schoolers on the horizon – the content of which will be determined by each school district – battles are underway all over the state. At a recent Orange County Board of Education forum on ethnic studies,

Members of "Truth in Education" on Tuesday said their group was formed to counter the Orange County school board's opposition to ethnic studies and critical race theory. They also said they will emphasize the importance of teaching ethnic studies, not just in Orange County but nationwide.

"The current system, our system, your children's system, is outdated. It teaches hate and rewards bigotry," said Ian Scruton, a student from Capistrano Unified School District who

gathered with some 20 fellow “Truth in Education” members outside Eastbluff Elementary School in Newport Beach.

But, elsewhere in Orange County, there is a different opinion.

Parents like Henny Abraham of Costa Mesa criticized proposals to introduce a curriculum that she said is divisive.

“I don’t know what my kids are going to be told when they walk into school as my 6-year old is about to enter first grade,” Abraham said. “Is he privileged because he’s half-white? Or is he a victim because he’s half Persian and a minority?”

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

With Governor Newsom facing a recall, the money has been flying into his campaign, and a lot is coming from the teachers unions.

A new CalMatters analysis of the donors to the main anti-recall committee found that organized labor threw Newsom the largest financial lifeline — roughly 45% of the total, including \$1.8 million from the teachers union and \$1.75 million from the prison guards this week.

...First, the California Correctional Peace Officers Association threw in \$1.75 million. Then came the California Teachers Association with \$1.8 million.

Just days after the check from the teachers landed in Newsom’s campaign account, he gave the closing keynote speech today at the union’s summer digital meeting. He applauded the union’s hard-fought legislative accomplishments, which, incidentally, served as a reminder to the teachers that the governor had helped secure them.

Though the teachers were the largest funder of Newsom’s 2018 campaign, that relationship got complicated last spring as Newsom and the union sparred first over when teachers would get vaccines, then how quickly schools should reopen.

But now, Newsom “is facing opponents who are funded by a network that wants to dismantle public education. The choice is stark and clear,” union president E. Toby Boyd said in a statement Wednesday.

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

Needless to say, Newsom’s opponents have very different views on, well, everything. In the education realm, they want to empower parents with school choice.

When the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered schools, the grades and mental health of millions of students declined. Several of the leading Republican challengers in the upcoming recall election of Gov. Gavin Newsom see this crisis as an opportunity.

Their solution: more school choice.

The candidates — CalMatters interviewed John Cox, Larry Elder, Kevin Kiley and Doug Ose for this article — want to “empower” parents by sending state dollars directly to the families rather than school districts. Parents can take that \$14,000 dollars of per-pupil spending from the state to any traditional public, charter or private school they like.

Turning parents into consumers, the candidates say, will cultivate competition between schools. Parents will “vote with their feet,” and if the state plunges the public school system into the free market, schools will finally have to provide a high-quality education to stay afloat.

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

“State finds LA public school district kept millions of federal funds from Catholic schools” read the scandalous headline in the July 29th *Washington Post*.

The state of California has found that the Los Angeles public school district violated federal law in the manner it slashed funding for low-income and disadvantaged students who attend Catholic schools. The decision will force the district to recalculate and likely reinstate millions of dollars to parochial schools run by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

The archdiocese filed a complaint against the district in September 2019, after only 17 schools were declared eligible for Title I funds, provided to help low-income students meet challenging state academic standards, according to a June 25 report. The previous school year, more than 100 schools were cleared to get money under the program.

Los Angeles Unified School District “has failed to provide equitable services to (archdiocesan) schools,” state officials said in the report, adding that the district “engaged in a pattern of arbitrary decisions” without consulting the archdiocese and in violation of federal and state law.

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

Due to union “opt-out windows,” which are very possibly illegal, this may be the time to quit if you are planning to do so. If you have any questions about the process, or have experienced any problems because of your decision to leave your union, please let us know and we will do our best to help you – possibly getting you legal assistance, if necessary. We will also be able to share your concerns with other teachers across the state. And talking about sharing, please pass this email along to your colleagues and encourage them to join us.

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