



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.

October 20, 2021

Dear Colleague,

On October 1, Governor Newsom announced plans to add the COVID-19 vaccine to the list of vaccinations required to attend school in-person when the vaccine receives full approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for middle and high school grades, making California the first state in the nation to announce such a measure. Following the other [first-in-the-nation school masking and staff vaccination measures](#), Governor Newsom announced,

“The state already requires that students are vaccinated against viruses that cause measles, mumps, and rubella – there’s no reason why we wouldn’t do the same for COVID-19. Today’s measure, just like our first-in-the-nation school masking and staff vaccination requirements, is about protecting our children and school staff, and keeping them in the classroom,” said Governor Newsom. “Vaccines work. It’s why California leads the country in preventing school closures and has the lowest case rates. We encourage other states to follow our lead to keep our kids safe and prevent the spread of COVID-19.”

But there is indeed a difference between the traditional vaccines and the Covid vax. While children are directly impacted by mumps, etc., they do not have a significant risk from Covid, nor are they “super spreaders.” Teachers are far more likely to catch the disease in the teachers’ lounge than in the classroom.

As Dr. Scott Atlas explains,

...it’s unconscionable that a society uses its children as shields for adults. The children do not have significant risk from this illness.” He adds, “My role as a parent is to protect my children. My role is not, and I will never use my children as shields to somehow protect me. And that’s really just a heinous violation of all moral principles in my view.

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

It was announced at the end of September that enrollment in the Los Angeles Unified School District “dropped by more than 27,000 students since last year, a decline of close to 6% — a much steeper slide than in any recent year.”

Last year's enrollment total for pre-school through 12th grade was 466,229. This year's figure for that same date is 439,013, according to data provided by L.A. Unified that will be presented to the school board Tuesday.

Other data released by L.A. Unified indicates other potential concerns. The district estimates that between 70% and 80% of the school staff are on target to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by the district's deadline of Oct. 15, indicating that thousands of employees face termination, which would exacerbate another problem: more than 2,000 unfilled jobs.

"We're still seeing the impact of COVID," said Veronica Arreguin, the district's chief strategy officer, about the enrollment decline. Arreguin also noted that much of the decline was expected, in line with many years of dropping enrollment related to lower birth rates, families moving to more affordable areas and other factors.

Even so, the shortfall is about twice what planners in the nation's second-largest school district predicted. The district plans to act aggressively to understand what is happening and what to do about it.

On a similar note, it had been reported in April that California's public schools lost more than 160,000 students or 2.6% during the 2020-2021 school year, the largest enrollment drop in two decades, which could lead to “serious educational and financial challenges.”

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

Anticipating an increase in student misbehavior, California has released new discipline guidelines.

Schools should offer more counseling, suspend fewer students and address the underlying mental health challenges of students who misbehave in class, according to the state's new school discipline guidelines.

The guidelines, released last month by the California Department of Education, are intended to help schools navigate an anticipated uptick in student misbehavior following more than a year of remote learning, said department spokesperson Scott Roark.

Educators expect more disruption and difficulties from some students due to the pandemic.

“Students in in-person attendance may exhibit disruptive behaviors due to increased anxiety and depression. Students in independent study may not complete assignments due to mental health barriers,” Roark said. “A focus on social-emotional learning is more important in addressing behavioral health.”

The guidelines wrap up reforms of laws and policies related to suspensions, expulsions and other forms of discipline in K-12 schools over the past several years. They were drawn up with input from Public Counsel, a public interest law firm, and CADRE, a nonprofit focused on racial disparities in south Los Angeles schools.

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

On October 8, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed AB 101 into law, requiring California high school students to take an ethnic studies class to graduate, starting with the class of 2029-2030.

“The inclusion of ethnic studies in the high school curriculum is long overdue,” said Assemblymember Jose Medina, a Democrat from Riverside who authored AB 101. “Students cannot have a full understanding of the history of our state and nation without the inclusion of the contributions and struggles of Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans.”

But not everyone is happy with the new law. In the lead-up to Newsom’s signature, Holocaust survivors and their descendants urged the governor to veto the bill.

“We are 74 organizational supporters of the California Jewish community, who are deeply concerned about the ethnic studies requirement bill, AB 101, and the enormously harmful impact we believe it will have on Jewish students and the Jewish community if it becomes law. We strongly urge you to veto this bill,” wrote the groups in their letter to Newsom today.

The organizations are alarmed because, although AB 101 was amended to include language expressing the Legislature’s intent that local educational agencies (LEAs) “not use the portions of the draft model curriculum that were not adopted by the Instructional Quality Commission due to concerns related to bias, bigotry, and discrimination,” the bill does not, and by law cannot, prevent an LEA from adopting any part of the overtly antisemitic first draft of the ESMC. The first draft was opposed by 20,000 Californians, virtually every Jewish organization in the state, and the Legislative Jewish Caucus, whose members rightly warned that such a curriculum would “marginalize Jewish students and fuel hatred and discrimination against the Jewish community.”

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

On the school choice front, a lot is happening nationally due to mask mandates and Critical Race Theory, among other issues.

In the first half of 2021, seven states—including Oklahoma neighbors Arkansas and Missouri—enacted new school-choice programs. Five of these were ESAs, which give parents an account they can use to pay for educational expenses like private-school tuition or tutoring services. The other two were tax-credit scholarships, which give donors a tax credit for contributing to scholarship funds that help students attend private schools.

That's far from all. Fourteen states expanded 21 existing school choice programs in the first half of 2021. Oklahoma was one of these states, expanding the cap on its tax-credit scholarship program from \$3.5 million to \$25 million. Neighboring Arkansas and Kansas expanded student eligibility in their school-choice programs, allowing more students to access choice.

In all, 18 states enacted or expanded 30 school-choice programs. There are now 76 total school-choice programs—and counting!—in 32 states plus D.C. and Puerto Rico. These programs serve over 600,000 students

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

A proposed 2022 California ballot initiative will try to define “high-quality” education. Its backers hope to make it easier to challenge teacher tenure and other laws that they claim harm students.

The Silicon Valley entrepreneur who unsuccessfully took on teacher tenure in court is now supporting a constitutional amendment aimed at requiring California to provide “high-quality” public education for all students.

The effort expressly takes aim at state laws, policies and regulations that “interfere with a right to a high-quality education.” It also says that the proposed remedies “shall not include new mandates for taxes or spending,” a strategy that some say will limit the options to provide a “high-quality” education, should voters support the amendment in November 2022.

David Welch, who underwrote the Vergara v. the State of California and the California Teachers Association litigation in 2012, is among those proposing the Constitutional Right to a High Quality Public Education Act, which they submitted on Thursday to the California attorney general.

...The current wording of the Constitution guarantees Californians only a “free public education.” The Legislature and the courts would have to define what constitutes “high quality.” But adding that phrase as a constitutional right would “finally empower public school parents with a seat at the table” to advocate for students, the proponents said in a statement preceding the amendment.

The new wording would assert that any law, regulation, policy or official action that “does not put the interests of students first” shall be deemed to interfere with a right to a high-quality education.

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

If you have any 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](#).

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