



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

May 18, 2022

Dear Colleague,

As we mentioned last month, California's schools are losing students at a fairly rapid clip, but as the *San Francisco Chronicle* reports, Bay Area schools have been especially hard hit.

Enrollment at San Francisco public schools [plummeted](#) this year, from almost 52,000 students in the 2020-21 school year to 49,000 in 2021-22. This follows a decline of over 1,000 students in the previous year, combining for a district-wide drop in enrollment of 7% since before the pandemic.

Enrollment loss, however, is not just a San Francisco problem. Public schools across the state lost 2% of students compared to 2019, and in the Bay Area, districts had a combined 6.5% enrollment decrease, with several seeing more dramatic declines than San Francisco Unified.

The Chronicle compared [enrollment data](#) for non-charter public schools at the 10 largest school districts in the nine-county Bay Area from 2019-20, the most recent school year unaffected by the pandemic, to 2021-2022, the current school year.

We found enrollment decreases at each of the 10 districts. San Jose Unified School District had the largest decline, at 11%, followed by 9% at Hayward Unified in Alameda County and 7% at West Contra Costa Unified. SFUSD had the fourth-highest proportional decrease but lost the largest number of students (around 3,600) over the two years.

Much of the enrollment decline was a result of fewer K-8 students. Across Bay Area public schools, K-8 enrollment fell by 9%, compared to just 3% among high school students.

Enrollment changes also differed by race and ethnicity. [Statewide enrollment](#) among white students fell the most, at 5%, compared with 3.6% for Blacks, 2% for Asian Americans and less than 1% among Hispanic students.

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

In Oakland the school district announced earlier this year that it plans to close, merge or reduce classes for 11 schools over the next two years. And recently, seven-and-a-half year Oakland Unified school board member Shanthi Gonzales, one of five board members who have been

lambasted for supporting controversial school closures earlier this year, announced her resignation in a letter critical of the district's teachers union and other board members.

“Most Oakland schools aren't “meeting students' academic needs” and that the failure to improve school quality has driven the district's significant enrollment loss over the last 20 years.

She criticized the school board as a whole for wasting too much meeting time on “issues that, while important, don't have much to do with how students are doing academically.”

“As long as we are struggling to ensure that students can read at grade level, it is a disservice to our students and families to spend so much time on issues that are not central to our core mission,” Gonzales said.

She also accused leaders of the district's teachers union, the Oakland Education Association, and their “allies” of “resisting efforts to address school quality” as well as trying to shut down debate on topics they don't agree with — sometimes “through acts of intimidation.” Her employer was contacted and asked that she be condemned for supporting school closures, she said.

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

Statewide, *The 74* reports that “California Voters More Dissatisfied With Local Schools after Pandemic than Voters in Other States, New Poll Finds.”

From their dislike of local teachers' unions to a lack of confidence in school administrators, California voters are more disillusioned with the state of education than voters nationally, a new poll has found.

Commissioned by the reform-oriented nonprofit, Murmuration, [likely California voters](#) who were also parents were much less satisfied with the performance of traditional neighborhood public schools during the pandemic than in every other state polled, including Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Missouri, Texas, New Jersey, Tennessee, and the District of Columbia.

“Many places in California struggled to get remote learning set up and make it effective. There were also fights with the unions when it came to school reopenings,” said Brian Reich, vice president of communications at Murmuration. “I think that over the course of the pandemic, issues just continued to compound themselves.”

In California, controversy over remote learning and how school reopenings were handled were particularly extreme, Reich said. In San Francisco for example, [three school board members were recalled](#) for the first time since 1983 because parents felt the board was prioritizing progressive politics over school reopenings, said Reich.

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

And then there are California school districts that grew during the pandemic and are feeling shortchanged.

While the vast majority of California's school districts [lost students](#) during most of this past decade, hundreds of districts — mostly small and rural — have grown, emerging from the height of the pandemic with higher enrollment.

Most districts would welcome an enrollment increase and the per-student state funding boost that usually comes with it. But these growing districts were shortchanged when the state implemented blanket COVID-19 policies protecting districts that lost enrollment during the pandemic.

“The decision to hold districts harmless for declining enrollment came from a well-intended solution,” said [Peter Birdsall](#), president of lobbying firm Education Advocates. “Even at the time, the concern was raised that some districts were growing. ‘Hold harmless’ actually hurt them.”

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

On the union front, Reps. Jim Banks (R-IN) and Scott Fitzgerald (R-WI) introduced legislation in April to repeal the National Education Association charter.

Banks, the Republican Study Committee (RSC) chairman, and Fitzgerald, an RSC member, introduced the National Educational Association Charter Repeal Act, which would end the federal charter granted to the NEA.

The RSC contends that the NEA has abandoned its core mission to “elevate the character and advance the interests of the profession of teaching; and to promote the cause of education in the United States.”

Banks said in a statement on Thursday:

I was happy to partner with Rep. Fitzgerald on this important piece of legislation. There is now no daylight between the NEA's agenda and the radical left's agenda. Worst of all, the NEA strongly supports teaching 5-year-old children about adult sexual behavior. Their mission used to be education, now it's indoctrination and pitting American children against their parents' values.

Congress represents all Americans, and this bill will end Congress's tacit support for an organization that now only represents narrow, partisan interests.

“The National Education Association has strayed far from its original mission. Rather than supporting students, the NEA consistently put the interests of progressive teachers' unions over the learning of students,” Fitzgerald explained in a statement. “It is time for Congress to say enough is enough and revoke the NEA's federal charter.”

The NEA has increasingly supported Democrat initiatives such as nationwide school lockdowns, abortion, critical race theory (CRT), gender ideology in curriculums, and open borders.

If passed, H.R. 7510 wouldn't directly affect the union's day-to-day operation, but it could serve to wake teachers up to the fact that their union is not all it pretends to be. So many teachers think that the bulk of their \$1,000 plus yearly dues payments go to their local union to fight for them – pay and working conditions, for example. But nothing could be further from the truth. Depending on the state, a good 80% of teachers' dues payments are funneled up to the state and national union affiliates where a great deal of the money goes into politics – almost exclusively in a leftward direction.

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

Mike Antonucci is reporting that as in-person instruction has been restored everywhere in the country, and the nation's schools are dealing with an upsurge in violence and threats against teachers.

The [American Psychological Association conducted a survey](#) that found one of every three teachers had experienced verbal harassment or threats of violence from students since the beginning of the COVID pandemic. Individual teacher responses were chilling.

“I have been physically assaulted multiple times by students in the building and they know that not only is there no one to stop them, but there will be no consequences either. I ended up in the hospital the last time it happened,” one teacher recounted.

A student in Clark County, Nevada, was [arrested for sexual assault and attempted murder](#) of a teacher in her classroom. The district has seen 1,300 incidents this school year where arrests were made or citations issued. Police have confiscated 28 guns on campus.

Teachers and their unions are demanding action, but the actions demanded vary widely in emphasis, degree and harmony with past demands.

In response, the Clark County school district [upgraded security cameras, provided teachers with wearable panic buttons, and increased police presence around schools.](#)

In Erie, Pennsylvania, a school shooting of one student by another led a labor relations specialist from the Pennsylvania State Education Association to [pen a letter to the district superintendent](#), demanding, among other things:

- *An increase in security and/or police presence in highly visible and well-trafficked areas.*
- *The installation of fully functioning metal detectors. Until that can be accomplished, all students shall be scanned with handheld electronic devices which detect weapons.*
- *Written instructions for student removal procedures, distributed to all staff.*
- *Fully functioning security cameras.*

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

Are letter grades on the way out at the University of California? According to *EdSource*, some departments are thinking about using alternatives.

Divisions like UC Berkeley's College of Chemistry and UC Davis's Department of Mathematics are deliberating whether to change how they grade students. In some cases, that means awarding students a pass or no-pass grade rather than a letter grade. Other times, it may mean allowing students to choose which assignments get the most weight in determining their grade.

At UC Irvine, Academic Senate leaders are currently evaluating long-term options around grading and have met with officials at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where students don't receive letter grades for their first semester, to learn about that university's approach.

Departments at other UC campuses are also experimenting with making changes to how they test students, putting less emphasis on high-stakes exams because some students aren't good test takers but can demonstrate their understanding of the material in other ways. Some departments have begun using two-stage exams. Students take a standard individual exam before also taking a group test where they work with other students.

The changes are especially being considered for first-year students to give them more time to get used to the rigors of college work and learn the material over the course of a semester rather than discourage them early on with low scores on tests and other assignments.

To read on, 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 the CTEN Facebook page, which 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/> As a non-profit, we exist only through the generosity of others. Thanks, as always.

Sincerely,
Larry Sand
CTEN President