



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

August 17, 2022

Dear Colleague,

As schools get set to reopen, there is much talk of a teacher shortage. However, there are dissenting voices. Earlier this month, the Hechinger Report explained that the threat is exaggerated. Dan Goldhaber, a labor economist at the American Institutes for Research (AIR), asserts, “Attrition is definitely up, but it’s not a mass exodus of teachers,”

Goldhaber says that the number of teachers leaving the field is in line with historical patterns. The rate of teachers quitting and retiring from the profession, according to Goldhaber’s calculations in one state, Washington, was about 11 percent in 2020-21 – actually a smidge lower than it was in 2006-07, another year of high turnover when a strong job market lured educators away. Most departures were filled with new hires. Goldhaber estimates that in a school with 1,000 students, there was half an unfilled vacancy, on average, in the fall of 2021 – the most recent data he has analyzed.

Indeed, the U.S. Department of Education released a national survey of more than 800 schools on Aug. 4, 2022 and found that each school, on average, had about three unfilled teaching openings in June 2022. That’s a time of active hiring and those positions could still be filled before the 2022-23 school year starts.

“Among researchers, I think we’ve reached a consensus that there hasn’t been an exodus of teachers during the pandemic,” said Heather Schwartz, a researcher at RAND, a nonprofit research organization, which regularly surveys school districts around the country about their staffing. “I don’t see many district leaders saying we have a serious, severe shortage of teachers. I don’t see the crisis.”

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

At the same time, Thomas Peele writes, “California schools have seen huge enrollment declines. Where are all the students?”

Across California, the number of students enrolled in the public school system dropped below 6 million this year for the first time in two decades. As districts navigated the sudden shift to virtual learning amid the pandemic, declines steepened as many families faced extra barriers, considered alternatives to the public school system or chose to delay enrollment for their youngest learners.

The enrollment declines, both in California and nationally, are going to lead to fiscal impacts and school closures in the years ahead, said Daniel Domenech, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators.

"You're going to have to sell buildings when they become empty. You're going to have to exit staff because you won't need the number of teachers that you have," Domenech said. "Parents didn't want their children in school because they were afraid."

But, he added, the impact of the pandemic on students is profound.

"The whole virtual learning experience was a fiasco because school districts were not prepared for virtual learning," Domenech said. Nationally, there's "a pulling away of students from the public school system because of the impact of Covid." But he said it's unclear how many of the students will return.

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

The math wars go on unabated in California. As John Fensterwald writes in *EdSource*, the State Board of Education has pushed back the adoption of the [California Math Framework](#) to sometime in 2023, which indicates that it is taking hundreds of suggested changes and critiques very seriously.

At the heart of the issue is a disagreement over how best to motivate and raise the math success of underperforming students, including Black students, Latino students and English learners.

Similar to frameworks in English language arts and science, the math framework is intended to offer guidance on translating state standards — the Common Core — to the classroom. A framework is not a mandate; districts can pick or reject whatever suggested lessons, tactics or strategies work for them.

But it is important, not only to publishers, who will base textbooks on it, but also for teachers, superintendents and education advocates. California students lag behind the nation in math, scoring in the bottom fourth of states in fourth grade and bottom third in eighth grade [in the National Assessment of Educational Progress](#).

Only 34% of students overall, 18% of African American students and 20% of Latino students met or exceeded standards on the state's 2019 Smarter Balanced standardized test in math, the last time that all students took it until this past spring. Those results aren't out yet.

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

California could soon get a deeper understanding of how students at different stages of learning English are doing in school.

A bill currently in the Legislature, [Assembly Bill 1868](#), would require the California Department of Education to report standardized test scores in English language arts, math and science for

subgroups of English learners, including long-term English learners, those at risk of becoming long-term English learners, and students who have learned enough English to be reclassified as proficient.

Currently, the department collects and reports test scores for English learners as a whole, but not for specific subgroups.

Long-term English learners [are defined as](#) students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for six years or more and have not advanced on the English proficiency test in two or more years. Students defined as at risk of becoming long-term English learners are those who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for four or five years and are scoring at intermediate or below on the English proficiency test.

[More than 2 million](#) students in California public schools speak a language other than English at home. Half of them are now proficient in English. Of those still learning English, 1 in 3 are long-term English learners and 1 in 5 are at risk of becoming long-term English learners.

Proponents of the bill say that separating the data on subgroups of English learners would give the state and local school districts a better picture of how each group is doing, which would help them provide more targeted support.

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

Over at *Reason*, John Stossel posits that “COVID Taught More Than 1 Million Parents the Value of School Choice.” He writes that the pandemic had a silver lining; it taught parents that there are better alternatives to government schools.

When COVID hit, bureaucrats in control were eager to close schools. Many closed them if just one child tested positive, even though COVID is little threat to kids.

Union teachers seemed eager to be paid not to work. Los Angeles teachers secured a contract that said they will "not be required to teach classes using live video conferencing" and won't be required to "provide instruction more than four hours a day." Nice work if you can get it.

More than a million parents chose to leave the government system. They spent their own money to educate their children in private and religious schools.

Others tried [homeschooling](#).

Many had been skeptical but now discovered that their kids learned more, and their family life was enriched by teaching at home. The education establishment sneers at homeschooling, but homeschooled students, even though they are more likely to be poor, score 30 percent higher on SAT tests. They also do better in college, and they are less likely to drink or do drugs.

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

“Feds Call on States to Stop Shielding Teachers Accused of Sex Misconduct With Students,” read a recent headline in *U.S. News & World Report*. The article references a new report from the Education Department which concludes that states “must enact more stringent laws, regulations and policies to ensure schools are not helping teachers and other school staff known or believed to have engaged in sexual misconduct with a student to obtain employment in other schools.”

“While nearly all educators act with extraordinary care and professionalism, many state-level policies and practices can and must be strengthened to ensure greater protections for our young people,” Deputy Assistant Secretary Ruth Ryder said in a statement. “Gaps in many of these policies and variability in policies between states remain significant challenges.”

The Education Department has been under increasing pressure to release the report, which was started during the Trump administration, by congressional lawmakers on both sides of the aisle who see this as a growing problem.

There is no national database for this type of incident. According to estimates by some advocacy groups, 95% of educator sexual misconduct cases are handled internally and not reported to law enforcement or reported by the media. A [recent analysis](#) of all local news stories by Fox News found that at least 135 teachers and teachers’ aides have been arrested on child sex-related crimes in 41 states between Jan. 1 and May 13.

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

It has been a while since anyone has quantified the power of teachers unions in electing school boards. But now, the Fordham Institute reports that a new study by Michael Hartney of Boston College “offers new evidence about teachers union influence in school board elections.”

The analysis looks at results from 2,345 competitive races in California held between 1995 and 2020 and 361 races in Florida between 2010 and 2020. Union endorsements are difficult to track systematically, but he collects information from various sources to determine support (e.g., political action committee reports and media accounts). In some cases—mainly elections in small districts—he was unable to locate endorsements. That being said, the districts included in the analysis enroll the vast majority of students in each state (about 90 percent).

Analyses show that a large majority of union-backed school board candidates win. In California, union-endorsed candidates won 71 percent of their contests, while in Florida 63 percent won. As might be expected, union-backed incumbents prevailed even more frequently, winning a whopping 90 percent of their races in California and 80 percent in Florida during the period of study. In terms of trends, candidates with union support have consistently fared well in school board races over time with no substantial changes in their winning percentages. Perhaps more surprising, given unions’ traditional alignment with Democrats, union-backed candidates perform just as well in districts with more registered Republican voters.

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

Due to union “opt-out windows,” which are very possibly illegal, the time to quit if you are planning to do so, could be very soon. 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