

Important Dates

Tuesday, October 16th:

Shaker Schools Foundation "An Evening with Dr. Michael Roizen" HS, 7PM

Thursday October 18th

Master Teacher Cohort meeting, HS upper cafeteria, 4PM

Thursday, October 25th

Conference Day, K-8

Friday, October 26th

Conference Day, K-12

Monday, November 5th

SHTA Representatives Meeting @ Boulevard, 4:15PM

SHTA news

October 15, 2012

ISSUE NO. 2

Message From the President

I encourage all of you to vote on November 6th. It's been said before, and probably will be again, but education, health care, social services, the rights of public workers, employment law and human rights are all on the line in this national election. We have a clear choice of either taking a step forward or back. Neither candidate completely does service to public education in their platform, but I do value the words of a fellow union leader, OEA's Bill Lavezzi, who says, "Don't mistake a friend with whom you are disappointed with your sworn enemy." You have to vote. Too much is riding on this election.

And speaking of disappointment... Race To The Top is a nightmare. As we deal with the AYP scores that are being released related to individual teacher performance, we can see how little test scores have to do with actual teacher quality. When the day comes that we have no poverty, no learning disabilities (both diagnosed and undiagnosed), and more control over the lives of our students and their backgrounds, we might approach a measure that would somewhat approximate the elusive concepts of teacher impact and performance. Until then, these tests scores are as arbitrary as the clothes students were wearing on the day of the tests.

The recently developed plan for twice-yearly administrative evaluations is also a nightmare. In this instance it is probably more of a living nightmare for building administrators. At the High School alone, four administrators will be responsible for in-class observations of a staff of two hundred educators twice next year. While scheduling observations from a teacher perspective is always more difficult than imagined; the frequent need to reschedule even now can be disruptive to the educational process. I can't imagine how difficult this will be to feasibly accomplish. The State of Ohio obviously is not contributing valuable assessments for its teachers nor meaningful curriculum shaping work for its principals.

As an Association, and as a school district, we are in the position of primarily reacting to these changes. We can write letters. We can call our congress members. We can submit editorials. We can vote. As a collective, we can unite with the other Associations and Teachers' Unions who are fighting these laws across the state and across the country. Perhaps, when the time arrives, we will be involved in legal action, if these new systems prove to be detrimental. However, until then, we have to deal with these changes as they are rolled out in our district. We will protect our members in any instances in which they are treated unprofessionally or denied due process. That is what we will do, until this draconian new legislation is proven unsupportable and Race to the Top is sent to the dustbin of history. Or so we hope.

October is the month in which school finally feels in full gear. I met with the Performance Compensation Committee to discuss the ongoing development of our pilot plan. I worked on personnel issues throughout the district. I continued to discuss parking issues at the high school with a solution being reached through the establishment of staff parking along part of the oval. Finally, I had the pleasure of conducting meet and greets at Boulevard and Lomond with Vice-President Dollye Finney. I then conducted my own meet and greet at the High School with members there. These visits were both rewarding and informative. I look forward to conducting more this fall and winter.

*Respectfully submitted,
John Morris*

Reports from the Executive Board

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Happy fall! It is time again to apply for SHTA Fellowships. I hope that each of you has received an application from your building representatives. These awards are designed to promote professional development and can be used to attend workshops, for payment of dues to professional organizations (except the SHTA), journals or professional materials. The winners are selected via random drawing and the deadline for submission by noon Friday October 26, 2012. Send entries to Dollye Finney, Boulevard School. Multiple entries will be disqualified and only members of the Association are eligible for participation. Forty recipients will be chosen and awarded \$100 each. Winners will be notified by school mail and their names published in the November newsletter. If you need an application contact your building representatives or contact me at #4916.

If you have not already done so I would like to encourage each of you to contribute to the PTO Council Annual Drive. I will be sending envelopes to each of the building representatives in which we request you place your PTO contributions. I encourage you to use the envelopes provided to track teacher contributions. The Association has forged a close working relationship with PTO. The PTO annually sponsors teacher grants and participates in a number of teacher sponsored events.

I am currently working with the Night for The Red and White Committee. The event is scheduled for **Saturday, March 9, 2013 at 7:00 pm.** **The affair will be held at The Tudor Arms** hotel at 10660 Carnegie Avenue in University Circle. It is a historic building offering stylish and sophisticated accommodations in the heart of Cleveland's East Side Cultural District. The hotel is lovely and sleek and if you would like to stay for the weekend the hotel is offering a special rate to Red and White attendees. Please consider both making a contribution to the Silent Auction and attending this event. The ticket price remains \$90 to staff. I encourage any member of the Association that is interested in becoming a part of the teacher committee -please contact me.

I have also been attending Race to the Top meetings. The Shaker Heights City School District has been awarded a grant of approximately \$400,000 in total to be used over a period of four years. The leadership of the SHTA agreed to work on this committee and to support the district's efforts to seek and secure all possible funding sources. This agreement is based on our partnership with the schools to promote fiscal responsibility. These funds are administered by the Ohio Department of Education. The committee is comprised of teachers and administrators. Race to the Top supports activities that are designed to increase college attendance rates and reduce achievement gaps. There is a link to Race to The Top on the Shaker Heights Webpage follow the link to District's [Strategic Plan](#). I will be attending a meeting in Columbus in early November with Erin Herbruck to support our efforts. The funds are being used for activities that are closely coordinated with the District's [Strategic Plan](#), including:

- Alignment of the curriculum with new state standards
- Professional development
- Exploration of new ways to evaluate teachers' performance

I encourage you if you have questions to review this link and we will keep you apprised as to this committee's progress.

Thank you for your continued support of the Association and feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Respectfully submitted,
Dollye Finney



"It should be recognised that the proper status of teachers and due public regard for the profession of teaching are of major importance."
UNESCO (Art. 5 of 1996 Recommendation)

REMINDERS

Payroll deduction of SHTA Dues will begin with the October 16th paycheck.

Parent Teacher Organization forms will be coming from Vice President Dollye Finney. Please plan to make a donation.

MORE Important Dates:
Tuesday, November 6
Election Day
No School
Wednesday, November 7
Board of Education Meeting
Administration Building. 6 p.m.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Investments Committee (made up of Todd Keitlen, Matt Zucca, Chante Thomas-Taylor, Dollye Finney and myself) will be meeting on October 23rd with Brady Krebs, our Edward Jones advisor, to discuss our investments and whether any changes need to be made.

I am currently working with our accountants, Edward C. Hawkins & Co., Ltd., to complete the compilation of our 2012-13 financial statements.

Payroll deductions for dues (\$20 per pay), for those members who chose that option, begins with the October 16th paycheck. Anyone who prefers to pay her/his \$200 dues all at once can send a check to me at the High School or to Stacy Elgart at the Middle School.

Recently, members of our Association have been addressing some of the new evaluation procedures we will soon have to go through. These types of changes are a direct result of who gets elected to positions in our state government. I don't enjoy following the ups and downs of politics but I feel that I (and we) don't have a choice. We must be aware of the consequences of our votes next month.

*Respectfully submitted,
Bill Scanlon, Treasurer*

Shaker Heights High Biology teacher, Nathanael Hsu, and You Tube sensation

How do you reach students in the 21st Century? Biology teacher Nathanael Hsu has chosen music videos as just one way. Sampling from today's hit music, Hsu writes lyrics based on specific biological concepts such as cellular respiration and DNA replication. His latest hit, "Molecules Gone Wild (Bio Style)"_ based on K-Pop star Psy's hit "Gangnam Style" is a song about Macromolecules and Nutrition.

See for yourself at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nt9u7CfVoc4>



"Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation."

John F. Kennedy



“We have an obligation and a responsibility to be investing in our students and our schools. We must make sure that people who have the grades, the desire and the will, but not the money, can still get the best education possible.”

Barack Obama

PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Walgreens and Express Scripts agreed to do business together again. Some members mentioned receiving a phone call from Walgreen’s welcoming them back as customers. The Insurance Committee is meeting on October 15 to discuss Open Enrollment, which starts on November 1st, and other pressing matters. Look for a full report on that meeting in the November newsletter. Open Enrollment is also the time when a member may decide to participate in the Flexible Spending program. I found it to be a great benefit during this past year. When I had to pay over \$500 for a new crown, the money was on my Flex card. When my son needed glasses for \$200, the money was on my Flex card. I realized the money saved on taxes is just one benefit. The Flex plan serves as a medical savings account, and helps a family budget when there is an unexpected medical bill. Contact Sue Garber (after November 1) to sign up for Flex and to notify her of any changes in your family insurance situation from the previous year.

Bryan Christman sent out an e-mail on October 1 about the spousal coverage audit. You should have received the audit letter/paperwork at your home address during the last two weeks. If your spouse is included on your family plan, this paperwork must be completed by October 30. Otherwise, your spouse’s coverage may be cancelled. If your spouse works full time and has the opportunity to purchase health insurance from their employer, then they have to use their employer’s insurance plan as their primary insurance. According to our contract (section 24.07, pages 33-34), spouses who work less than 30 hours a week and would have to pay 50 % of their premium are eligible to be a part of your family insurance plan here. The purpose of the audit is just to make sure every employee is being treated fairly and consistently.

A question recently came up about adult children who are working and could purchase health insurance from their employers. Are they allowed to stay on their parents’ plans? Yes, they are; up until the age of 26, because of the Affordable Care Act. Here is a link that explains this part of the law in more detail: <http://www.healthcare.gov/law/features/choices/young-adult-coverage/index.html>.

*Respectfully submitted,
Mike Sears, chairperson*

MEMBERSHIP/ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Payroll deduction for SHTA dues will begin with the October 16th paycheck - \$20 per pay for 10 pays. For those who paid by check, thank you for your payment. Or, if you have not yet done so, please submit your check for \$200 to your building representative. Membership cards will be distributed this week.

*Respectfully submitted,
Stacy Elgart, chairperson*

PAST PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This month I attended the Finance and Audit Committee meeting and the regular meeting of the Board of Education. Both meetings were informative with no surprises. You may be aware that the next levy has been extended until 2014. The contract is up in December 2013. This means that once again the Association will be negotiating *before* the next levy. It is a challenge to negotiate when the financial future is not clear. In the past, this has resulted in back-to-back negotiations, which are not only stressful but also bring additional costs for the Association. Trying to maintain a four-year levy cycle is advantageous given the current economic situation; however, it is problematic for the Association.

As President John Morris did in his report, I urge you to vote. Your vote is your voice—and this is the time to remember the efforts of lawmakers to enact SB5 and undermine our future. We need to select candidates who will support the best interests of our students and our profession—especially in their efforts for improved funding for schools, reduced emphasis on invalid assessments, and continuing our rights for collective bargaining.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Thomas, Chairperson

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

As you may know, the teacher evaluation system in Ohio is changing due to HB 153. The Evaluation Committee has been working to re-write our evaluation system to meet the criteria of HB 153 and Race to the Top. Over the next several months, I will be informing you about the elements of the new system in this newsletter. Information is also readily available at the Evaluation Committee link on the Shaker.org website, as well as on the ODE website.

<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEPrimary.aspx?Page=2&TopicID=521&TopicRelationID=521>

One of the main elements is that all teachers will be evaluated based on the Ohio Teaching Standards. Goal setting, pre and post conference preparation and discussions, observation evidence, and teacher performance ratings are all based on the standards. Copies of the standards can be found at the above link.

Respectfully submitted,
Lena Paskewitz, Chairperson

An Open Letter to the ODE from SMS Reading Teacher Sue Corbin

This newsletter is a publication of the Shaker Heights Teachers' Association, an independent organization of professional educators in the Shaker Heights City School District. Signed editorials represent the opinion of the author(s) and may or may not reflect the thinking of other officers or members of the Shaker Heights Teachers' Association. Members and friends of the Association are invited and encouraged to express their opinions or share information via this newsletter.

I'm writing to protest the latest so-called evaluations that were provided for all English, reading, math and special education teachers through the EVAAS system. Given the fact that the company will not reveal the formula that they use to arrive at their conclusions, I find their business highly suspect.

The system has deemed me "approaching average" based on my struggling readers' test scores. I have a master teacher designation in the state of Ohio, a Ph.D. in education, and I've been teaching in one capacity or another since 1973. I earned the degree and the level of master teacher after much hard work and a myriad of authentic evaluations that looked at all aspects of my content knowledge and pedagogical skills. To be termed "approaching average" based on one set of test scores for my 7th grade struggling readers is offensive, and I reject it. I will not consider myself to be that incapable in the work that I love. My students make progress every year, but not without a great deal of difficulty. I can show you evidence of their progress, but you are not interested in any of that. You want the quick fix, and it just doesn't work.

Our teacher morale today is the lowest I've seen it. Good teachers who have been in the system a long time are questioning how long they will want to remain in the classroom. They feel demoralized, unappreciated, underestimated, and wronged by a state department that should be supporting them. I can't imagine intelligent

young people wanting to get into the profession today. Who in their right mind would want to take a job in which their best is never considered good enough, and they are never able to prove their true worth with measures that actually mean something.

I'm appalled that this obsession with ineffective and inaccurate measurements has gone on for so long. I think we can all expect to see more teachers act on the anger and betrayal that they are feeling at this moment. I certainly hope they do.

Sue Corbin

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE OF SHTA

The teaching profession has undergone dramatic changes over the past ten years. Policies at the state and federal levels of government have demanded greater accountability from schools. Ohio has established a new teacher evaluation system to gain points on the state's applications for the Obama administration's Race to the Top grants. In order to receive a waiver from some of the No Child Left Behind law's requirements, the state has had to pursue certain policies, including basing teacher evaluations in part on student achievement.

Understanding the implication of these changes, each of us has a choice: To endure ineffective policy created by bureaucrats or engage in actions helping to shape strong education policy that is effective in supporting better schools and higher student achievement. Teachers know more about how to help our students than politicians. Each of us need to take action in this election to help elect officials that will support reasonable education policies rather than pursuing policies that punish and blame teachers for all of the woes in education.

To that end, consider some of the following as ways to engage:

- Work a phone bank in support of Issue 2. Issue 2 proposes a new redistricting process in Ohio through a nonpartisan committee.
- Participate in Get Out the Vote canvassing. America is stronger when all of us exercise our constitutional right to vote. Canvassing starts at 10:00 at the Shaker Square OFA office each Saturday until the election.
- Work a phone bank in support of the Cleveland Public School Levy. The Cleveland Teachers Union office is located in the old Halle building downtown.
- Volunteer on a campaign for a candidate you can support. The entire state house of representative is up for reelection this year.
- Go to a local candidate's night to learn the

platforms of officials up for election.

November is around the corner. Much is at stake. Find your way to help forge a stronger Ohio government for our future.

*Respectfully submitted,
Eileen Sweeney, Chairperson*

POLICY COMMITTEE

This month's 'Law-in-the-Limelight' is By-Law III Part C. of our By-Laws: Duties of the Vice President.

Here is the Article in full:

The Vice President:

1. Shall attend all meetings of the Executive Board and Representative Council and shall have the powers and duties of the President in case of the absence of the President.
2. Shall be authorized to sign checks in the absence of either the President or the Treasurer.
3. Shall perform such other duties as may be assigned to him or her by the President and/or the Executive Board.
4. Shall be an ex-officio member of each committee.
5. Shall attend P.T.O. Council meetings throughout the school year.

*Respectfully submitted,
David Klapholtz, Chairperson*

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

For the month of December, the Social Committee will try to schedule a Holiday Party for our staff. I am looking for venues that will not be too costly. Be on the lookout for more information.

*Respectfully submitted,
Darlene Garrison, Chairperson*

MINUTES FOR THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING

October 8, 2012

Fernway Elementary School

The President, John Morris, called the meeting to order at 4:25 p.m.

Chris Hayward, principal of Fernway Elementary School, greeted the SHTA Representative Council.

The minutes of the September meeting were unanimously approved.

ADMINISTRATION REPORT: Lisa Scott, Personnel Administrator, was unable to attend the meeting.

PTO REPORT: Lauren Bowen, PTO Council Co-president, stated the grant process would start soon.

OFFICERS' REPORTS

PRESIDENT

John Morris enjoyed the opportunity to meet with the teachers at Lomond, Boulevard, and the High School. He looks forward to meeting more teachers as he visits the other buildings. He stated that he has been working with Dollye Finney on IB planning times. He continues to work on parking concerns at the High School.

VICE-PRESIDENT

Dollye Finney discussed the SHTA fellowship application. She attended the kick off meeting for The Night for the Red and White. She will be attending a Race to the Top meeting in Columbus. She encouraged members to donate to the PTO's annual fund.

SECRETARY

Matt Zucca recorded attendance. He asked that if reports were long and detailed he could be given a written copy to ensure accuracy. He attended the kick off meeting for The Night for the Red and White.

TREASURER

Bill Scanlon discussed the current financial report. He plans to meet with the Investments Committee in October.

PAST PRESIDENT

Becky Thomas attended the last Finance and Audit Committee meeting at which the next two levy cycles were discussed. She will be attending the next Board meeting. She is working moving the Association's website to a new host server.

EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS

TEACHER EDUCATION

Steve Smith reported that after a busy September things have slowed down.

MEMBERSHIP AND ELECTIONS

Stacy Elgart distributed membership rosters to building representatives. Payroll deduction begins with the October 16th paycheck and continues for 10 pays. The current number of members is 392.

POLICY

Dave Klapholz had no report.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Eileen Sweeney discussed ways for members to get active politically and encouraged members to help others become more active.

LEGISLATIVE

Lena Paskewitz discussed the new evaluation procedure that will be in place for following school year.

PUBLICATIONS

Andrew Glasier asked that articles for the SHTA Newsletter be submitted to him by email at glasier_a@shaker.org. The deadline for submissions to the newsletter is the Wednesday after each representative council meeting.

LEGAL AID

Wendy Lewis had no report.

SOCIAL

Darlene Garrison was unable to attend the meeting. Her report was given by John Morris, who stated the Darlene is working on a Winter Party for the Association.

PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Mike Sears has been working with Association members regarding paternity and maternity leave. He has been dealing with pay equity issues regarding supplemental football contracts at the Middle School. He was asked about spousal and dependants insurance coverage.

BUILDING REPORTS

The following reps asked questions, expressed concerns, or made statements on behalf of the membership in their buildings:

Boulevard stated that the meeting with President John Morris was very good. They have a concern about release time needed for developing and reworking IB Plans/Units.

Lomond had positive comments about their meeting with President John Morris. They expressed a concern about the use of their professional development time to meet with students and parents prior to the start of school this year.

The **Middle School** reported that the air conditioning unit has been installed in the teachers' lounge. The leak in the auditorium roof seems to be repaired. They also reported the harassment by a parent towards a teacher has stopped. The Middle School coaches are concerned about stating practices before school starts without compensation.

The **High School** stated that the delayed start has created a student tardy issue. They also mentioned that there are some personnel concerns being worked on.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER: Dolye Finney thanked Selena Brown and Fernway for hosting the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2012 AT BOULEVARD SCHOOL.

*Respectfully submitted,
Matt Zucca, Secretary*

Enough is Enough

This newsletter is a publication of the Shaker Heights Teachers' Association, an independent organization of professional educators in the Shaker Heights City School District. Signed editorials represent the opinion of the author(s) and may or may not reflect the thinking of other officers or members of the Shaker Heights Teachers' Association. Members and friends of the Association are invited and encouraged to express their opinions or share information via this newsletter.

Enough is enough. This was my first reaction when I saw a document from the ODE last week that labeled some of my colleagues with pejoratives like “Least Effective” and “Approaching Average”. Such titles would be offensive enough if they were based on a thorough evaluation process that included several observations, portfolios, time for reflection and improvement, discussions about best practices, etc. In this case, these ratings were determined by students’ test scores, (OAA) on one day out of the 185 days worked. Even worse, a teacher could have had 90 % of their students pass the OAA, but still earn a Least Effective rating. How could this happen? The ODE has a secret formula for measuring expected student growth and comparing it to real student growth (value added). Again, they are comparing scores from two different tests (6th grade versus 7th grade, for example). To measure value like this is disrespectful to the teaching and learning process. All of the qualitative data about how a student grows academically over the course of a school year is tossed aside, but two numbers from two days out of 370 spent in school carry all the weight.

This is just the latest example of the “War on Teachers”. What can we do about this? We can write to the ODE. We can write to our state senators and representatives. We can write to our members of Congress and our Senators in Washington, D.C. We can point out a few things in our letters, such as the many variables that determine how a student scores on a standardized test. Did the student come into class reading at grade level? Did the student’s

parent sit down and complete homework with them each night in elementary school? Does the student have a desire to learn? Are they motivated to do their best on a test that may not mean that much to them? The assumption that everything wrong in a school is a teacher’s fault must be changed. Our teachers work hard and our students make gains every year. For a teacher to be labeled ineffective by some bureaucrat in Columbus is wrong.

We have five or six committees working on improving teaching right now. Some of these are required by the state, but some are not. Do we really believe that the teachers are the problem?

One of the last conversations I had with Ron Ferguson, the Harvard researcher who worked on the Tripod project, was enlightening. His research showed that students liked their teachers and knew their teachers were trying to help them, but the work was just too hard for some of the students. He said they didn’t bring the skills to school that were needed to be successful. We try to teach those skills every day because that’s why we went into teaching. We want to prepare our students for their future as the next generation to step up and lead our community. This can be a long process and a huge challenge, especially for students who have fallen behind.

My son and I had a unique opportunity recently to see *Brooklyn Castle* at the Chagrin Falls film festival. It’s an inspiring true story about a group of chess players from IS #318, a middle school in Brooklyn, New York. We got to meet one of the students after the film and play chess with him. I told him I was really impressed with the dedication and the maturity the chess team demonstrated in the movie. He said it was all because of his teachers. They made it happen. We make it happen every day in our classrooms. Maybe the politicians need to visit us and see it.

Mike Sears