

IMPORTANT DATES

Tuesday, November 19: Board of Education Work Session @ High School, 6 pm

Wednesday, November 27: Hanukkah Begins at Sunset

Wednesday, November 27 to Monday, December 2: Thanksgiving Recess

Wednesday, December 11: New Teacher Mentor Program

Tuesday, December 17: Board of Education Meeting @ High School, 5PM

Saturday, December 21 to Sunday, January 5, 2014: Winter Recess

Monday, January 13, 2014: SHTA Representatives Council @ Mercer, 4:30PM

SHTA news

November 18, 2013

ISSUE NO. 3

Message From the President

Transparency and clarity are key elements to the success of any organization. The SHTA is no different. As we continue to take part in the implementation of programs like MYP, OTEs, Peer Evaluation, the development of new SLOs and the continuing addition of elements to our educational alphabet soup, there will be rumors, allegations, misinterpretations and suspected conspiracies. I want our membership to know how to deal with these issues. In a few words: ask someone who represents the Association. This includes your building representatives, including and *especially* your head building representative. Ask your officers, including myself, and members of the Executive Board. We are here to help you find the truth, even if it's not easy.

As we approach a new levy and a new contract, we will be asking questions and clarifying issues in representative council meetings. When you read about these issues in our notes, never assume a final decision has been made until you hear it from the Association through direct communication, including the pages of this newsletter. Once again, if you need clarification, talk to SHTA representatives and members of SHTA leadership. Please try to come to us first before you go to colleagues, administrators, parents, or community members with information that has not been confirmed and that can be potentially damaging to our reputation as an Association. I know it's difficult and sometimes emotions run high, but we need to be foundations for one another and exemplars of what it means to be a professional educator in Shaker Heights City Schools. Finally, to re-iterate, you can always contact me directly at x6033 or at morris_j@shaker.org. It is my honor and privilege to help you in any way I can.

October has been an active month. I met with Dr. Hutchings and the other collective bargaining unit presidents to discuss new district security procedures. I corresponded with Bob Bognar and Matt Zucca concerning personnel issues at Woodbury. I have continued ongoing discussions about parity between administrative and peer evaluations with Dr. Stokes, Erin Herbruck, Andrew Glasier, Addie Tobey, and Lena Paskewitz. I am also continuing to work on evaluation issues at Onaway with the help of Past President Becky Thomas. I will meet with Dr. Hutchings, Marla Robinson, and Dr. Stokes this week to discuss the evaluation issue further. I attended the highly successful SHTA Happy Hour organized by our Social Chair Wendy Lewis. It was a great event and included over 50 members. Thank you, Wendy, for your great work! Finally, I will meet Cleveland Teachers' Union President David Quolke and North East Ohio Education Association's leader Bill Lavezzi on December 3rd to discuss how the Northeastern Ohio Union Summit can work together on issues pertinent to Ohio education and political policy in the upcoming year.

I know it's early, but I would also like to wish you Happy Holidays! The Association's Executive Board and Representative Council will not have a formal meeting in December and will reconvene in January. I hope that your holidays are peaceful and filled with good times with family and friends. It's a good time to decompress and reflect on the accomplishments of the past year and the challenges yet to come. I look forward to this time to recharge and I hope that it is rewarding and relaxing for you as well.

*Respectfully submitted,
John Morris, President*



Andrew Glasier, Tim Kalan, Mike Sears, Naomi Loges and SHTA President John Morris at the SHTA Happy Hour, Monday, November 4th @ Los Habaneros.

Reports from the Executive Board

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I would like to acknowledge the recipients of the 2013- 2014 Fellowship Grants. These members have been awarded \$100 that they can use to promote their professional development. These fellowships may be used for any of the following, but not exclusively for:

- Workshops
- Seminars
- Professional conferences
- Course work
- Membership fees for professional associations excluding the SHTA

These fellowships may not be used for classroom materials, supplies, or special projects.

The awards are intended to professionally benefit the recipients, and in turn, benefit students.

1. The applicant must be a member of the Shaker Heights Teachers' Association and expect to continue teaching in the Shaker Heights City Schools.
2. The money may be used at the discretion of the recipient with the provision that the activities will benefit the professional growth of the teacher, and in turn, the students with which he/she works.
3. The entire fellowship money must be used within ten months, between November 18, 2013 and September 30, 2014.
4. In the event the recipient is unable to use the award within the ten- month period prescribed, no money will be issued.

I attended the November PTO Council meeting, at which the Council's annual campaign was discussed. I would like to remind you of the support the Association's members have historically given. I am asking that you consider making a contribution to the annual campaign if you have not yet done so. The PTO Council has partnered with the Association on many projects over the years. The Council is also responsible for the creation and distribution of the very useful school calendar. Please send these contributions through school mail to the Administration Building to The PTO Council Treasurer.

I attended the October 16th Investments Committee meeting. Under the direction of this committee the SHTA has grown their investments in a very responsible and safe manner. Our investments are an indication of the Association's strength.

I have also been working with the Shaker Schools Foundation as the Teacher Liaison for the *Night for the Red and White*. I would like to encourage each of you to make a donation to this year's Silent Auction. The items donated by Shaker staff have been the most sought after of all the auction offerings. Remember, the proceeds go back to our students. Please make your donation by **January 23, 2014**.

Again, this year, the staff will be offered a special discounted price of \$90 per ticket. Staff can purchase up to two tickets at this price. You will receive an invitation in your district mailbox in January with information on purchasing your tickets.

I want to thank Wendy Lewis for putting together a wonderful social event for the Association. It was very well attended and all had a good time.

I wish you all a happy, safe, and restful Thanksgiving!

Respectfully submitted,
Matthew Zucca

Fellows of the SHTA: 2013-2014

Tina McCauley	Boulevard	Aisha Mason	Woodburry
Alison Bradford	Boulevard	Lee Appel	Woodburry
Kevin Hill	Boulevard	Nancy Kippen	Woodburry
Tara Strachan	Boulevard	Daniel DeJohn	Woodburry
Megan Loomis	Boulevard	Carola Drosdeck	Woodburry
Robyn Feinstein	Mercer	Sagar Patel	High School
Karen Tritt	Mercer	Emily Shrestha	High School
Sara Yurman	Onaway	Sarah Manary	High School
Cissy Burns	Onaway	Robert Schneider	High School
Naomi Loges	Onaway	Valerie Doerson	High School
Martin McGuan	Onaway	David Klapholz	High School
Laura Robbins	Onaway	Carole Kovach	High School
Kristin Koenigsberger	Onaway	Bernadette Thoennes	High School
Pamela Luksenburg	Fernway	Bill Scanlon	High School
Michelle Berggrun	Fernway	Joseph Houser	High School
Andree Hassell	Fernway	Susan Isler	High School
Amy Hannah	Fernway	Tony Cuda	High School
Jean Reinhold	Fernway	James Schmidt	High School
Kristina Hayward	Woodburry	Christine McBurney	High School
Tom Deep	Woodburry	Karen Tuschman	High School

TREASURER'S REPORT

I have been in discussion with our accountants at Edward Hawkins & Co., LLC to comply with the By-Law-required audit of our books. The accountants should be finished and have an audit report out to the Association before the end of the calendar year.

The current financial report is on pages 5 & 6.

*Respectfully submitted,
Bill Scanlon, Treasurer*

*Bill Scanlon speaking at the November SHTA Representatives Council @
Boulevard School.*



FINANCIAL REPORT

7/1/13

11/13/13

COMPOSITE BALANCE

Balance 7/1/13	992,246.58
Receipts 7/1/13 to present	39,614.04
Change in Valuation 7/1/13 to present	<u>26,744.55</u>
	1,058,605.17
Expenditures 7/1/13 to present	-9,679.01
Expenditures charged to last fiscal year 2012-2013	<u>-1,493.42</u>
TOTAL	1,047,432.74

BANK AND BROKER RECONCILIATIONS

A. KEY BANK (11/10/13)

Certificates of deposit

29 mo. @ 0.149%-Matures on 2/6/14 21,248.66

Total Certificates of deposit 21,248.66

Business Money Market Account (0.35% APY) 81,649.12

Unposted deposits and transfers 0.00

102,897.78

Less outstanding checks -200.00

TOTAL KEY BANK 102,697.78

B. EDWARD JONES (11/10/13)

Regular Association Account 517,375.29

Advisory Solutions Account 427,359.67

944,734.96

TOTAL 1,047,432.74

Budgeted Accounts

<u>Account</u>	7/1/13					11/13/13
	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>Debits</u>	<u>Transfers out</u>	<u>Credits</u>	<u>Transfers in</u>	<u>Balance</u>
Accounting	5,000.00	2,483.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,516.25
Compensation for officers, representatives, et al.						
President	9,302.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	9,302.00
Vice President	5,581.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,581.00
Secretary	5,581.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,581.00
Treasurer	5,581.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,581.00
P.R. & R. Chairperson	5,581.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,581.00
Editor	4,653.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,653.00
Building reps. and alternates	10,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10,000.00
Conferences and meetings	2,500.00	825.98	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,674.02
Fellowships and Grants	3,500.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,500.00
Insurance	5,000.00	4,728.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	272.00
Legal	5,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,000.00
Negotiations	50,000.00	550.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	49,450.00
Executive Board expenses	500.00	266.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	233.23
Officers' expenses	500.00	217.51	0.00	0.00	0.00	282.49
Payroll taxes	975.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	975.00
Publications	200.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	200.00
Public Relations	4,000.00	396.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,604.00
Social	1,800.00	211.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,589.00
STRS(TPO contributions)	9,200.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	9,200.00
General Fund	0.00	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
TOTAL	134,454.00	9,679.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	124,774.99

PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

An investigation currently underway by Executive Board members related to the K-4 report cards may result in a grievance.

Be aware that a teacher with a long-term absence for a medical reason could exhaust their sick days and still receive health insurance benefits not to exceed twelve months. In this situation, a doctor's note is required and all FMLA paperwork must be completed. This may be preferable to a general leave of absence, which does not allow for health insurance benefits. From the contract:

24.05 Premium Payments

If a tenure teacher should exhaust his/her sick leave within the time specifications of this contract, the Board, for a period not to exceed twelve (12) months, shall continue to pay his/her premiums for the following fringe benefits:

- A. PPO/HMO*
- B. Prescription Drug*
- C. Life Insurance*
- D. Dental Insurance*

The payment of such premiums will cease if the employee retires, resigns, goes on disability retirement or his/her contract is terminated."

Questions about maternity leave, paternity leave, and adoptions were all addressed recently. For paternity leave, ten sick days may be used "at the time of confinement and delivery", which is defined as any time during the six weeks after the date of birth. These six weeks coincide with the standard maternity leave for public employees across the state of Ohio. From the contract:

"20.05 b. Pregnancy and Delivery Support Leave

An employee whose spouse or qualified domestic partner is pregnant may use available sick leave for up to two (2) weeks at the time of confinement and delivery."

An Insurance Committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for December. The January newsletter will include information from that meeting.

Remember to notify Sue Garber about changes in insurance this month during Open Enrollment and be sure to read e-mails from her regarding required paperwork and deadlines.

***Respectfully submitted,
Mike Sears, chairperson***

PAST PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This month, at the direction of President John Morris, I assisted with an evaluation concern at Onaway School. We discussed the situation and worked together to provide guidance and support for the teacher. One of the strengths of the SHTA leadership is the way they work together as a team. It allows for more input and perspective on issues. I know that the members of the SHTA benefit from the coordinated efforts of the officers and executive board.

As you know, I continue to attend the regular meetings of the Board of Education and I attend the work sessions whenever possible. I also try to attend the meetings of the Finance and Audit Committee. This is a challenge for me. The Finance and Audit Committee consists of Shaker residents with a specialization in business and finance and it includes two members of the Board of Education. District Treasurer Bryan Christman is also in attendance. In my experience, there are very few spectators and they do not generally contribute to the committee's discussion.

My challenge at these meetings is, until recently, no educators have been present. Superintendent Hutchings has begun attending the meetings, so there is now some educational presence; however, the committee often makes decisions based solely on numbers while dismissing the issues of diversity, educational programs, student achievement, employee compensation and many areas that concern those of us who work directly with students or who serve them in other capacities.

The members of the Finance and Audit Committee have focused on proposing a 6.9 mil levy for 2014. They were able to achieve this millage rate by directing Mr. Christman to adjust the 5-year forecast to reflect *no increases to any base salaries for any employees*. The Finance and Audit Committee will meet on November 21 at 7 p.m. in the Administration Building. And, the committee is scheduled to present at the December 17 meeting at 5 p.m. of the Board of Education in the Small Auditorium at the High School. You may be interested in attending either or both of these meetings.

What is especially troubling to me is that the Board of Education members and the Superintendent have expressed their desire to attract the “*crème de la crème*” of new hires to Shaker, with a particular emphasis on diversity. Yet our base salary falls further behind our neighbors in the county, often by thousands of dollars. Demographically, our students outperform others in the state. Shaker has a broader curriculum and more initiatives than most other districts. And there is the income gap, the many transient students, and numerous other challenges that employees face. Why would the “best and brightest” choose less money and more challenges?

Respectfully submitted,
Becky Thomas, chairperson

PUBLIC RELATIONS REPORT

The SHTA will recognize the thirty members of the Class of 2014 who have been honored by the National Merit, National Achievement, and National Hispanic Scholar programs in the January issue of *Shaker Life* magazine. Congratulations to the students and all of the teachers and staff who have worked with them!

Respectfully submitted,
Lena Paskewitz, chairperson

POLICY COMMITTEE

It is important during these tumultuous and mercurial educational times for teachers to be involved in current affairs. I believe as teachers we should play an active part in shaping our own future. For this month's constitutional snippet, I have chosen a portion of Article III in our By-Laws, specifically:

To promote and to protect professional welfare of members by achieving professional salary schedules, satisfactory tenure policies, sound retirement systems and such other improvements as will encourage professional growth, high morale and career security; To encourage teachers to exercise their rights and privileges as citizens and to accept, willingly, leadership in school affairs and in the civic affairs of their community; To promote democratic teacher participation in the formulations of educational policies; To be an active participant with other educational organizations as designated by the membership in the formation of educational policies.

SHTA members are our own best advocates. Please consider making your voice heard over the next few months concerning issues facing our profession - particularly at the next School board meeting on the 17th of December.

Respectfully submitted,
Tim Kalan, Chairperson

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

I would like to thank everyone who attended the SHTA happy hour at Las Habaneros. We had a great time and an awesome turnout. Until Next Time!

*Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Lewis, Chairperson*

MEMBERSHIP/ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Our Association has a total of **392** members. Here is the breakdown by building:

<u>Building</u>	<u>Members</u>
Boulevard	24
Fernway	22
Lomond	34
Mercer	26
Onaway	27
Woodbury	61
Middle School	70
High School	128

*Respectfully submitted,
Stacy Elgart, chairperson*

TEACHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Please remember that my role with the Association is not just to assist new teachers and their mentors. Please contact me to discuss any aspect of the evaluation process or any other area of your employment in Shaker Schools as you move towards tenure within our district. I can be reached through the district e-mail (smith_st@shaker.org) or at Lomond (#6385)

*Respectfully Submitted,
Steve Smith, Chairperson*

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

The November elections brought Shaker Heights few changes to city council and the school board of education. Results across the State of Ohio held promising trends. Two Thirds of the school levies on the ballot were passed. This demonstrates the support communities have for their local schools. We can only hope for the same support for our upcoming levy in 2014. Another interesting result from the election was that 80% of issues reducing pension benefits failed. Ohio remains one of the strongest pro-union/workers states. It will be left to see if Gov. Kasich will attempt to dismantle union through so-called *Right to Work* legislation.

The SHTA along with Ohio Federation of Teachers, the Ohio Educational Association and their community are gearing up for a December 9th National Day of Action to *Reclaim the Promise* of Public Education. In cities across the country, educators, parents, students, faith leaders, community activists and others will be coming together to push for reforms designed to reclaim the promise of public education as our nation's gateway to democracy and racial and economic justice. I encourage all SHTA members to participate in local activities to further our cause. Please watch for notices from the SHTA PAC for events in your email inbox.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Eileen Sweeney, Chairperson*

SALARY TENURE COMMITTEE

I am meeting with Dr. Hutchings and the School Board's legal consul, David Millstone, to discuss our contract extension Proposal on Tuesday, November 19th with our consul, Susannah Muskovitz. The outcome of this meeting will be shared with the membership.

*Respectfully Submitted,
John L. Morris, President*

SHTA Happy Hour at Los Habaneros November 4. 2013



MINUTES FOR THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING

BOULEVARD SCHOOL, November 11, 2013

SHTA President, John Morris started the November 11th Representatives Council Meeting at 4:30PM.

Colleen Longo, Principal of Boulevard Elementary School welcomed SHTA members to Boulevard. She shared with the membership that Boulevard had the largest population of international students in the district. Also, Boulevard is celebrating its 100th year anniversary.

MINUTES from the October Representatives Council meeting were accepted.

Administration Report

Peggy Caldwell and **Lisa Scott** from central office were present at the Representative Council Meeting. Peggy Caldwell gave the report for Administration

- Administration was pleased to see that Cleveland Heights passed a bond issue
- Board of Education will make a decision about an operating levy on the ballot for 2014
- There was a safety letter sent out to parents who have emails discussing safety issues and some changes that will occur at the high school. Please continue to give suggestions regarding safety in the schools.
- There will be unannounced lockdown drills. All lockdown drills should be taken seriously
- Shaker's Fall Athletics did well and we are proud of them: Field Hockey, Football, Crew Team and Soccer
- Dr. Hutchings created a 90-day plan and there has been a lot of progress made. Please go to Shaker.org to review this 90-day plan.
- Dr. Hutchings has already visited 150 classrooms for building scans NOT evaluations.
- Communication and Technology denial of service attack on the website, company recovery plan and everything was brought back up.
- Problems with SPAM. Members, please go to your home schools and reinforce not giving out passwords and usernames.
- Please review social media rules and regulations.
- Personnel should have current phone numbers with the weather getting bad. Every effort will be made that calls will be made by 6AM.

Becky Thomas, Past President asked Peggy to go back to Administration to discuss the proposed millage for the levy.

PTO Report - There were no PTO representatives present at the Rep. Council Meeting.

Officers' Report

President, John Morris

- Tutors will be coming to this meeting to discuss the possibility of tutors joining the union. Please be sure to ask questions when they come in, be supportive and open (See the Special Session under Building Reports for an account of the tutor presentation).
- Attended a security meeting with Dr. Hutchings discussed the possibility of drug sniffing dogs, see how community reacts.
- Dealing with an issue at Woodbury with Matt Zucca and Union lawyer.
- Talked with peer evaluation team, good input from Lena, Andrew and Addie. There will be a meeting to hash out differences of administrator and peer evaluators.
- Great Happy Hour at Los Habaneros. Thank you so much Wendy Lewis for a job well done.

- Union Summit meeting scheduled for December 3 to discuss where we are headed for 2014.

Vice President, Matt Zucca

- Attended PTO Council meeting discussion about the annual fund drive- they are very low. Teachers please continue to show your support and donate to the PTO. Place your contribution in an envelope and write on the envelope that you are a teacher.
- It took a little more time to disperse last year's fellowship grants.
- Attended the Finance Committee Meeting in October. Bill Scanlon will talk about that in his report.
- Dealing with a personnel issue at Woodbury - very important that we keep everything confidential.
- Working on an elementary school report card meeting.
- This year's fellowship-grant recipients will be announced in the newsletter.

Secretary, Darlene Garrison

- Please be sure to sign the attendance sheet going around on the legal paper.

Treasurer, Bill Scanlon

- Current financial reports were passed out.
- Investment Committee Meeting in October: we have 2 meetings a year, one in the fall and one in the spring. Sometimes we have to make minor adjustments.
- There is a new policy as a result of the audit - everyone who gets paid by the SHTA needs to fill out a W-9 form. If there was an issue, it is easier to gather information about the person.

Executive Board Reports

Past President, Becky Thomas

- Attended the Board of Education meeting
- Finance and Audit meeting next week
- 6.9 mil levy being proposed. Shaker has done a 9.9 mil levy in past years
- Helping out with a teacher in one of the elementary school

Teacher Education, Steve Smith - Attended the Happy Hour at Los Habaneros and had a great time.

Membership/Elections, Stacy Elgart - not in attendance for meeting, Andrew Glasier gave report.

- We now have 392 members and building lists were passed out to head reps.
- Middle School might lose a representative. They need 2 more members to secure all of their building representatives.

Policy, Tim Kalan - No report

Public Relations, Lena Paskewitz

- There will be a SHTA ad placed in the Shaker Life Magazine.

Legislative, Eileen Sweeney

- It was good to see that 2/3 of the school levies on the ballot passed.
- December 9th is a day of action, collaboration trying to get public education more unified.

Publications, Andrew Glasier

- "Just let me teach" wristbands will be available soon.
- Evaluation Committee will not be meeting again until February.
- Working on a balance of the committee with administrators.

Legal Aid, Chante Thomas - Attended Happy Hour at Los Habaneros and had a great time.

Social, Wendy Lewis - The Happy Hour was a success. Looking forward to planning another event.

Professional Rights and Responsibilities, Mike Sears

- Working with different members about leave.
- Talking to members about report card issues.
- Insurance Committee meeting will be in December.
- MYP Meeting scheduled for November 19th.

Salary Tenure, John Morris

- Hopefully soon, we will get information on a one-year extension to the contract.

Building Reports

Boulevard - Informal staff survey calculating the average hours spent on initiatives outside of contract hours

Fernway - No Report

Lomond- Building level meeting calculating hours spent outside of the contract day, will submit to Darlene

Mercer - No Report

Onaway - Having staff issues regarding OTEs

Woodbury - letter from Dr. Randy Yates concerning staff homework assignment became an issue. Randy did adjust the assignment to end the problem with staff members.

Middle School- Last Monday, open forum paper survey to staff about time spent outside of contract hours will submit to Darlene Garrison.

High School - Personnel issue hopefully resolved tomorrow 10AM.

Special Session - Elementary School tutors, discussion as to why they want to become a part of an organized union

- Explained teaching experiences
- Excluded from SHTA Recognition clause
- Separate salary schedule from teachers
- 5-years teaching experience and is only on step 2
- They want to be recognized as teachers
- They want to be a part of the bargaining unit
- Would like to have continuing contracts
- There are between 25-30 tutors
- 18 are interested in being members of SHTA
- Currently they have no voice

- All tutors have to be a certified teachers
- Keep dialogue open in the newsletter, have a section titled ask a tutor a question

President, John Morris thanked the tutors for coming and sharing.

Old Business - None

New Business - Shared with staff that *your evaluation is your evaluation*, please don't share.

Good of the order - Gary Raymont is having knee replacement surgery tomorrow; please keep him your thoughts & prayers.

No meeting in December

Meeting was adjourned at 5:50PM

Respectfully submitted,
Darlene Garrison, Secretary



**Special Thanks
To Boulevard
School
Representatives
Naomi Loges and
Tina McCauley**



Is 6.9 Mills 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.

It was one of the most interesting things I have ever seen at an SHTA Representative Council Meeting. Communications Director Peggy Caldwell presented Dr. Hutchings' administrative report to the council. She spoke about the probability of a school levy being on the ballot this spring. She talked about how she looked forward to teachers helping with the campaign by volunteering their time and donating money. I found myself nodding my head. Why not? In the past three levy campaigns, I've made phone calls, donated money, and canvassed door-to-door. SHTA Past President Becky Thomas raised her hand to speak, and eloquently stated that she would have a difficult time supporting a levy that was smaller than in the past and that did not include enough new money for salary increases for teachers. I started to wonder if I, too, should consider not helping with the upcoming levy campaign. It is a personal decision we will all have to make sometime in 2014. A survey last year showed that one-third of our members live in Shaker Heights. An increase in property taxes puts these members in a particularly tough position, especially if they have to continue to work with a salary freeze that amounts to a reduction in pay.

As you decide what to do, I encourage you to read the highlights of the Five-Year Financial Forecast presented by Treasurer Bryan Christman to the School Board on October 8. These highlights are available to the public on the shaker.org web site under the Board Minutes for October 8. An argument is made that \$1 million in savings from reduced health insurance costs and higher than expected property tax collections allows for a 6.9 mill levy instead of the 9.9 mill levy that was originally projected for

the spring of 2014. Yet, in another section of the report the \$63.4 million reduction in assessed residential real estate value from the 2012 county reappraisals is mentioned. For Shaker, this reduction in assessed value is approximately \$1.4 million. Another section mentions \$1.7 million in actual capital outlay expenses for 2013, which were significantly higher than in 2011 or 2012. The board decided not to put a bond issue on the ballot over the past several years, so they could focus on levy campaigns. Money from the last bond issue has been spent, so repairs to our buildings have to come from the operating budget. The forecast does mention a 2 % budgeted increase per year for salaries for all employees which would only cover annual experience steps, not increases to the base. However, it also mentions a significant decrease in commercial real estate property taxes while many businesses at the Van Aken/Warrensville Center intersection are closed for a large construction project. Perhaps SHTA should hire an independent consultant to look at the finances.

Of course, there are other things to consider regarding the 6.9 mill levy compared to the 9.9 mill levy. Education is not cheap, and is getting more expensive. Substitute administrators are being paid to cover for administrators who have to finish their OTEs evaluations. Teachers are being paid to cover classes while their colleagues attend professional development meetings. More support staff are needed to meet the needs of our growing population of students with special needs. Peer evaluation costs additional money for evaluators and coordinators. If we really are going to end social promotion, we will need to hire more teachers and possibly purchase buildings like the former Realty One building at the corner of Shaker and Warrensville. The district's investment in the International Baccalaureate Organization is well-documented. We are one of only eight school districts in the country implementing the PYP, MYP, and DP programs in all of our schools. In order for the programs to thrive, we need more training and full time coordinators. Those resources cost money.

We have already been doing more with less. Unfortunately, we have lost some outstanding colleagues in the process. Some left for other school districts, while others found better paying jobs outside of education. Anyone who has sat in on interview committees the last few years knows we are no longer attracting top talent. One way to attract top talent is to offer unbeatable compensation packages. We used to say, "No one says no to Shaker." Unfortunately, the best evidence for this is the record number of new hires

over the last three years who are no longer teaching in the district because they were not able to handle the challenges and pressures that come with teaching here. If I were a resident of Shaker Heights, I would want kids to get the same outstanding education Shaker students currently receive for years to come. I would demand that the school board approve a 9.9 mill levy.

I am also interested in hearing from you either in an e-mail, voice mail, or by submitting a letter to the editor for the January newsletter. What do you think? Would you sit on the sidelines as a neutral party? Maybe Becky Thomas and I are wrong here to question the amount of the levy. Maybe we should accept the board's decision and support this levy like we have in the past. Should the SHTA poll our members or take a vote of the membership about how to proceed? Please let us know your ideas about this important topic. My e-mail is sears_m@shaker.org and my phone number is 295-4770.

Mike Sears

WE WERE FINLAND

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.

At the October SHTA Representatives meeting, Dr. Gregory Hutchings spoke to members about books he was reading concerning education, including *Finnish Lessons* by Pasi Sahlberg (<http://pasisahlberg.com/finnish-lessons/about-finnish-lessons/>). *Finnish Lessons* describes how Finland has turned around its educational system to become a top performer on international tests. Dr. Hutchings then stated that their model could never happen in the United States, because of our size and diversity. I quickly disagreed with him. While Finland is no larger than Minnesota, the lessons they learned and implemented actually came originally from the United States. More importantly, when I began my career in the Shaker Heights City School District in 1999, we had the Finnish model in this district. Over time, we have lost that model, and since then have lost the focus on crucial part of an excellent education system; teacher professionalism.

Finnish reporter Anu Partanen often writes about the secret of Finnish success. She claims that Finland has ranked so well on international tests because of several factors. The most important is teacher education. Finnish teachers rank in the top 10% of their graduation class and must have a Master's degree. Their education system is decentralized, which allows for school independence to deal with their specific issues. Tutoring is done in-school by certified teachers and is integrated into the curriculum to provide extra help, so there is no grade repetition. Teachers teach fewer classes allowing for more collaboration and preparation. This is what our district looked like when I first started!

The school district was centered on recruiting excellent teachers and allowing them to control the educational environment, while providing support for them to do so. If new programs were suggested, it was taken seriously by administration and often implemented. At the high school, new classes were designed and added to the schedule based on student and teacher enthusiasm. Curriculum was guided by groups of teachers but emphasized teacher independence. Class sizes were kept reasonable. New approaches to education were examined. When I read about the Finnish educational system, I think of what we lost.

When I was hired, my cohort group was quickly indoctrinated to the Shaker way. A strong group of both seasoned professionals and new teachers, personnel director Bill Trost, took us on a tour of the city, promoted moving to Shaker Heights and took us to Superintendent Dr. Mark Freeman's house for lunch. We were given monies for supplies and asked to attend professional conferences. We had a person

dedicated to making copies for us. While we had a curriculum, we were free to spend time in depth to cover topics that engaged students. In my American History course, because of student interest in late 19th century Native American genocide, our class spent several weeks examining primary sources and then examining current Native American reservations issues. While I spent less time on railroad construction, I gained more animated lessons.

There, of course, were issues at the time, the achievement gap being a major one. Yet, there was discussion and teacher effort to address these issues in a thoughtful manner. I felt part of a team, working to deal with the issues of our students.

The question to Dr. Hutchings is do you have the political will to return us to the Finnish model? The superintendent of Shaker Heights City Schools is a well-respected administrator in the field. Is he willing to make the changes and have discussions with politicians to bring us to where we used to be?

AG

Update from the Evaluation Committee

The district Evaluation Committee met on October 29th. Two principals, Carina Robinson (Lomond) & Coleen Longo (Boulevard) attended as observers. The following items were stated & agreed upon:

STATEMENTS:

- the role of Principals is changing because of the time commitment of the evaluations.
- the fidelity of the process needs to be constantly talked about among evaluators. Our goal is to have a certain degree of consistency and an objective process.
- some in the meeting shared concerns about teachers sharing their evaluations with others.

AGREED UPON:

- Decision Making Process of the committee between meetings:
- Principals should inform teachers of upcoming Pre-Observation Conference ASAP, in order for teachers to prepare.
- If teacher have questions regarding the procedures a principal or peer evaluator is using, speak with your principal or peer evaluator regarding the issue initially.
- **January Formative Evaluation meetings should occur between December 1-Jan. 14.**
- The teacher evaluation team will meet again February 6th from 4-7 p.m.
- Principals, Assistant Principals and Peer Evaluators will meet with Fran Prolman on February 13th from 4:30-6:30 p.m. in the HS Upper Cafeteria, to discuss consistency and fidelity of the evaluation process.

TO BE DISCUSSED IN THE SPRING:

- Criteria/enough time to prepare for pre observation meeting. One week?? How far out should teacher be notified about observation?
- Pre-Observation form: is it mandatory or not?
- Post-Observation form: more reflection on lesson questions, less professionalism question or they are moved to pre-conference form
- Professional Growth Plan: turn in date?
- Walk-Throughs: timing of first?, 2 is the minimum, what is the maximum?
- Mentors in first Observation?
- Does the ODE require 3 observations for limited contract teachers? If NO, do we need 3?
- Collecting Exemplars of forms.

Andrew Glasier, Co-Facilitator of the Evaluation Committee