

IMPORTANT DATES

Friday, February 21: Conference Day (No classes K-12)

Friday, February 21: B.O.E. Special Meeting-Exec. Session

Monday, March 3: SHTA Executive Board Meeting, Woodbury

Monday, March 10: SHTA Representatives' Meeting, Shaker Middle School

SHTA *news*

February 18, 2014

ISSUE NO. 5

Message From the President

On a snowy January 23rd evening, I had the opportunity to see New York University educator and sociologist Dr. Pedro Noguera speak at Cleveland State University. Dr. Noguera shared his ideas with members of the Cleveland Teachers' Union, The Cuyahoga County Educator Summit and the general public. Dr. Noguera spoke on many issues facing public education, including high stakes testing, schools, Race to the Top, and the ideological debate in Washington D.C. and beyond concerning the direction of education policy. What Dr. Noguera had to say to teachers unions was the most salient to much of the audience and me.

In essence, Pedro Noguera said that it is time for teachers unions to stand up and speak up. It's too late to be solely reactionary. In his words, charter schools, accountability, and high stakes testing are not going anywhere. They are entrenched. If teacher unions are to stay relevant they must stand up and make their voices heard about the correct and incorrect uses of these educational realities. We have to fund research. We have to publish articles. We have to create advocacy groups to express what is best for our students and ourselves. The time has come. We can no longer wait and see. The Michelle Rhee and Walton Foundations are acting. It is time for us to take a page from their playbook and act for ourselves. Noguera's speech provided powerful food for thought.

Overall, January and February have been frosty and eventful months. I attended the Calendar Committee meeting January 22nd. We discussed the impact of upcoming tests, professional development, timing for beginning the school year, and a possible semester change at the High School. As discussed, I attended Pedro Noguera's Speech at Cleveland State on Thursday, January 23rd. I resolved a supplemental issue at the High School. I addressed evaluation concerns at Mercer and Lomond, and a lesson plan concern at Lomond as well. I verified with Lisa Scott that all personal and sick days were reinstated for January and February snow days. I also met with Dr. Hutchings and other Union Presidents from 3:00 to 4:00 on Wed. Feb. 5th. I attended the Insurance Committee Meeting on Wed. February 5th. I also attended the State of the Schools Meeting on Monday, February 10th.

This month I would like to ask you to provide input on an important issue. As you may recall, we are considering adding the tutors to our bargaining unit. This action would need to be approved by the membership and negotiated for in contract negotiations. What I need from you are questions you may have on adding this group to our organization. This is your Association and you should have as much information as possible before you make this decision in May. Please send your questions relating to adding the tutors to me this month via email at morris_j@shaker.org. I will present these questions anonymously to the tutors so they can respond via the newsletter in March. Once again,

what makes our Association vital and responsive is our ability to respond to major issues facing our membership. I look forward to your questions. Members, representatives, executive board members, and officers may ask questions. Every member and every voice counts!

*Respectfully submitted,
John Morris, President*



SHTA President John Morris @ Shaker Heights High School conducting the February SHTA Representatives meeting.

Reports from the Executive Board

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I hate to say it but Punxsutawney Phil may have been correct with his winter prediction. The cold weather continues to challenge us while we try to maintain our energy and keep our students' routines as normal as possible. There is hope for us; there is a reprieve from the bitter cold; a weather oasis; and it is the *Night for the Red and White*. I hope you take the opportunity to attend this amazing event. The *Night for the Red and White* will be held on Saturday, March 8, 2014, 7:00 p.m., at the Tudor Arms Hotel. If you were not one of the lucky members to be chosen from our drawing please remember that the Committee is again offering a special staff ticket price of \$90. The SHTA's donation to the silent auction this year will be two tickets to a performance at the Cleveland Play House and a gift certificate to Edwin's Restaurant on Shaker Square. I want to thank all of you who have made contributions to the Silent Auction. Thank you so much for your support.

The SHTA Teacher Fellowships recipients are encouraged to submit receipt documentation to collect reimbursement. This money can be used to enhance your professional development. I look forward to hearing from the Fellows.

Finally, as I sat and listened to Dr. Hutchings during the State of the Schools address I could not help but feel so proud of being a teacher in Shaker, a member of a highly skilled and accomplished group of educators. We have always risen to meet the many challenges of being a teacher in Shaker to help produce well-educated students. I am overwhelmed and extremely proud of the work we do here.

I continue to ask that you help and support each other. If you have any questions for me feel free to contact me at 295-4692

Respectfully submitted,
Matthew Zucca

SHTA Vice-President Matt Zucca presenting at the SHTA Representatives meeting @ Shaker Heights High School.



TREASURER'S REPORT

I hope everyone's year is going well and that your evaluations are progressing as planned. I continuously am amazed at the dedication and passion for inspiring children I hear from all over the district. I am proud to be a member of the Shaker Heights Teaching Staff and equally proud to be a member of the Shaker Heights Teachers' Association. We not only work tirelessly for the kids but we also keep an eye on each other and help our colleagues become better teachers. I feel blessed that my own children are being taken care of by such professionals. Thank you for the work you all do.

I am meeting with some people at Key Bank the week of February 17th to investigate further investment possibilities, which will be decided upon by the Investment Committee.

*Respectfully submitted,
Bill Scanlon, Treasurer*

Bill Scanlon at the February SHTA Representatives Council @ Shaker Heights High School.



EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS

PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES REPORT

All three recent grievance hearings have been completed with appropriate responses from the administration. One grievance was about the K-4 report card. The grievant argued that the process for completing the K-4 report card could take up to one hour per student or twenty-five hours for a class of twenty-five. This amount of clerical work violates **section 18.10** of the contract, which states “**Every effort will be made at all levels of the system to reduce the clerical responsibilities of the members.**” The response from the administration included a list of actions they would take to reduce clerical responsibilities. Some of these involve the Director of Technology working with Progress Book to improve the technical side of completing report cards. Another step is for the Director of Elementary Education to reconvene the report card committee to see if they can draft a shorter document with less narrative required. If the document were simpler, report cards could fit into a mailing machine and be sent out from the administration building. The current system involves each teacher stuffing the report cards into envelopes, which adds to their clerical responsibilities. If you teach in a K-4 building and have concerns about this issue, I encourage you to speak with your building principal. Maybe your name can be added to the K-4 report card committee. I also encourage you to write an editorial in our newsletter so we can have an open and honest dialogue about this issue.

If any member is adopting a child, please contact me about adoption leave. It is different than maternity leave, so be prepared to use more unpaid caregiver leave and fewer sick days. Our current contract only speaks about adoption leave in the unpaid caregiver leave section. However, it is possible to use some sick days to care for your new baby. Adding more specific language about adoption leave could be a priority in our next negotiations. If this issue is important to you, you can write about it when you receive your negotiations survey in the spring.

The Insurance Committee met on February 5th, but the Wellness presentation was postponed due to the weather. We did review claims from the past year, which helped us understand the 2014 amounts (premiums) paid into our self-insurance fund. We also discussed same sex marriage. If a member marries a spouse of the same sex, is that member’s spouse eligible for spousal coverage? Our current contract does not define the word “spouse”. This issue could come up if a member brought a marriage certificate from another state and applied for spousal coverage. If the administration denied coverage, the member would have to file a grievance in order for us to take action. The federal government recently announced that all federal employees who are part of a same sex marriage should be treated the same way employees who are part of a heterosexual marriage are treated. This decision reminds me of Harry Truman’s decision in 1948 to desegregate the armed forces. The federal government in these two examples is simply confirming an American ideal, “equal opportunity for all” and enforcing the 14th amendment’s Equal Protection clause about “equal treatment under the law”. The school district should follow the lead of the federal government on this issue, just like it did on desegregation many years ago.

*Respectfully submitted,
Mike Sears, chairperson*

PAST PRESIDENT’S REPORT

So, you think I am retired? This month it did not feel like it! I attended (or will attend) my usual meetings—Board of Education, Finance and Audit, and SHTA Executive Board and Representative Council. I also attended the Insurance Committee meeting where topics included the potential impact of the Affordable Care Act, the Wellness program, and the Claims Reports (which track the monthly usage of insurance benefits). We also talked about the 125 Plan and the flexible account (Article 24.06).

As a retiree, I do not have the opportunity to set aside pre-tax dollars for my health care expenses. You do. Look at your use of your group insurances for the past few years. If you regularly meet the deductible and spend additional monies in this area, then you might want to establish a flexible spending account. Money in this account may also be applied toward dependent care expenses. You should know, however, that there are annual limits to the amount you may place in this account and that the money must be used within the calendar year. For more information, contact the District Treasurer's office. I suggest you email Bryan Christman, Treasurer for the Shaker Schools, and ask him to direct your inquiry to the appropriate person in his office. This is a negotiated benefit that you must establish for you and your family. It is only a benefit to you if you make to effort to create an account that meets your specific needs.

*Respectfully submitted,
Becky Thomas, chairperson*

PUBLIC RELATIONS

The SHTA donated \$400 to the Woodbury Art Department to help purchase a new ceramics slab roller. This equipment will support the mug project happening later this year. Students and families can create and purchase mugs to benefit local charities, as well as far reaching humanitarian efforts. Ceramics projects such as this will take place every two years, and the equipment will be used for many years to come. Thank you to Bob Bognar and Deanna Clemente-Milne for heading up these incredible action projects! Be on the look-out for information about how you can take part!

Public Relations ads will continue in *Shaker Life* and *The Shakerite*, as well as in this year's *Gristmill*.

*Respectfully submitted,
Lena Paskewitz, chairperson*

POLICY COMMITTEE

The policy focus of this month's newsletter concerns the standing committees of our executive council. Standing committees fulfill their respective responsibilities according to By-Law V of our constitution. The duties of these committees as outlined in Section A of this By-Law are as follows:

- 1. Standing committees shall meet at the call of their respective Chairs.**
- 2. Chairs of standing committees will be appointed by the President, shall be members of the Executive Board, and shall attend all meetings of that group.**
- 3. Chairs shall report to the Representative Council as required.**

Current standing committees as outlined in Section B are:

1. Standing committees are designated as: Legislative, Social, Membership/Elections, Publications, Legal Aid, Public Relations, Salary-Tenure, Teacher Education, Professional Rights and Responsibilities, and Policy.

*Respectfully submitted,
Tim Kalan, Chairperson*

MEMBERSHIP/ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Payroll deduction for SHTA dues began with the October 1st paycheck - \$30 per pay for 10 pays. Payment for dues will be complete after the Feb 16th paycheck deduction. Thank you!

Our Association now has a total of **395** members. Here is the breakdown by building:

<u>Building</u>	<u>Members</u>
Boulevard	24
Fernway	22
Lomond	34
Mercer	27
Onaway	29
Woodbury	61
Middle School	69
High School	129

*Respectfully submitted,
Stacy Elgart, chairperson*

The SHTA is on   us @ <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Shaker-Heights-Teachers-Association>

MINUTES FOR THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING

SHTA President, John Morris started the February 10th Rep. Council Meeting at 4:30PM. Michael Griffith, Principal of Shaker Heights High was not available to greet membership at the start of the meeting.

MINUTES from the January Rep. Council meeting were accepted.

Administration Report

Bernice Stokes and Lisa Scott from central office were present at the Rep. Council Meeting- Bernice Stokes gave the report for Administration.

- Dr. Hutchings was not available for Rep. Council meeting; he was preparing for the State of the Schools meeting starting at 6:00PM.
- Not much to report, majority of the information will be shared at the State of the Schools meeting.
- The review of the Strategic Plan will be discussed.

P.T.O. Report – There was no representative from the P.T.O. present at the meeting.

Officer's Report

President, John Morris

- Attended a calendar meeting on January 22nd. Discussed pre- and post-assessments, beginning the school year earlier and a semester change at the high school.
- Attended an insurance meeting on February 5th.
- Will be attending the State of the Schools meeting tonight at 6:00PM.
- Helped resolve a supplemental issue at the high school. Supplementals need to be revised and revisited as part of negotiations.
- Dealing with issues concerning evaluations administration evaluations and peer evaluations. More consistency is needed across the board.
- Talked to Lisa Scott to make sure all sick days and personal days used were cleared and cancelled for the snow days.
- Meeting with Dr. Hutchings on February 5th.
- Meeting with Bernice Stokes and Marla Robinson on February 6th to discuss evaluations.

Vice President, Matt Zucca

- Attended calendar meeting on January 22nd.
- Working with fellowship grants. Receipts are due to Matt Zucca so that reimbursements can be made.
- Please contribute to the P.T.O. annual fund, it is just good PR.
- SHTA silent auction items for the *Night for the Red & White* are: Gift Certificate to Edwin's Restaurant at Shaker Square and a gift certificate to a performance at Cleveland Playhouse.
- There is still time to make donations to the silent auction; it just will not be listed in the catalog.

Secretary, Darlene Garrison

- We will extend the raffle ticket sells for the *Night for the Red & White* until Friday, February 14th.
- Tickets and money will be picked up on Tuesday, February 18th. John Morris will pick from all the tickets for two winners on Wednesday, February 19th.
- Please remember to sign the February 10th attendance sheet.

Treasurer, Bill Scanlon

- Has been busy paying bills for the Association.
- Edward Jones account almost reached \$1 million. The account was at \$967,000.

Michael Griffith, Principal at Shaker Heights High School welcomed SHTA Members to the high school. The kids and staff are fabulous this year and the school year is going very well. He stated that everything we do plants seeds in students

and it is greatly appreciated and thank you.

Executive Board Reports

Past President, Becky Thomas

- Attended the Insurance Committee meeting.
- Attended the Finance and Audit meeting.
- Working on finishing the contract to post on the website.
- Assisted with an evaluation situation.
- Tax issues from Office Max are coming to a settlement. The district treasurer will be discussing the settlement. Shaker is going to receive about 1.4 million dollars from the tax settlement.

Teacher Education, Steve Smith – No Report

Membership/Elections, Stacy Elgart

- 395 SHTA members
- Two resignations, one from the high school and one from the middle school
- New membership lists were passed out

Policy, Tim Kalan – No Report

Public Relations, Lena Paskewitz

- There was a \$400 contribution made to the Woodbury Art Department for a slab roller.
- Shaker Life magazine ad
- Replacing ad in the Gristmill
- Thursday, February 13th meeting about peer and administration evaluators. There needs to be more consistency.
- On behalf of the SHTA, Mike Sears made a contribution to the celebration of 100 years at Boulevard Elementary. He presented Colleen Longo with a hand drawn picture of Boulevard. A student designed the picture.

Legislative, Eileen Sweeney

- Teacher Evaluation making some changes to the process. Accomplished or skilled rating will possibly be on every 3 years, evaluation.
- A change from 50 to 35 percent for student growth.
- Placing order for “Just Let Me Teach” bands.

Publications, Andrew Glasier

- Wednesday at midnight all submissions are due.

Social, Wendy Lewis – No Report

Legal Aid, Chante Thomas-Taylor – No Report

Professional Rights and Responsibilities, Mike Sears

- Working on adoption leave with a member.
- Helped a member from the middle school with the process for resignation.
- Attended a grievance hearing meeting
- Attended the Insurance Committee Meeting

Salary Tenure, John Morris – No Report

Building Reports

Boulevard – Colleen Longo was touched by the SHTA gift from Mike Sears.

Fernway – No Report

Lomond – No Report

Mercer – No Report

Onaway – No Report

Woodbury – No Report

Middle School – Dealing with staff members and evaluations

High School – Dealing with evaluations and equity

Old Business – None

New Business – None

Good of the Order

- Gary Raymont said hello and is getting along okay using a cane.

Next SHTA Rep. Council Meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 10th at Shaker Heights Middle School.



Darlene Garrison presents her report @ the SHTA Representatives Council meeting.



High School principal Mike Griffith greets SHTA Representatives.



Special Thanks to SHHS SHTA Representatives James Schmidt, Aimee Grey, Amanda Ahrens, Brian Berger and Jessica O'Brien (Not Shown) for hosting the February Representatives meeting.

No Time to Teach

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.

Let me start by stating I am not generally against the Common Core standards. Let me also state that our students need a very rigorous curriculum to become good citizens. Let me also state that standardized testing can be useful tools to help students, teachers, parents, and administrators improve their practice-

What is a travesty for students, teachers and public education in general is the inept implementation of what could be a valuable tool for all involved. As usual, the Common Core initiative, like most government mandates, is underfunded. It relies on excessive testing done on computers and the results from this testing is not designed to identify student needs; instead the results will be used to punish school districts and teachers. The new PARCC tests for Literacy and Mathematics in grades 3 through 12 will *INCREASE* state mandated-testing by *46 hours and 50 minutes*. 4th graders alone will have an added 4 hours and 20 minutes of state mandated testing. For 9th graders the increase is 5 hours and 50 minutes of state mandated testing. The total time for PARCC testing in grades 3 through 11 will equal 84 hours and 20 minutes. This is just the PARCC testing. I have yet to add new high school end-of-year exams, which in reality are two online tests administered in American History and Government courses as well as some science courses. The Ohio Department of Education has not announced the replacement for the Ohio Graduation Test yet, either. As I talk to colleagues in the lower grades, I hear of more to come, including an 80-minute online kindergarten test! Now mind you,

all of this is to be done on computer, taxing the districts' limited resources and putting smiles on the faces of CEO's of technology firms in Silicon Valley and Seattle.

So what is the goal of all the testing? I am told they are designed to measure student performance on the State standards. The truth is murkier. If they were to help students' performance, why evaluate teachers, schools and districts using them? The facts are the data from these tests measures short-term gains and are used to punish schools that have diversity and poverty. The incentive for districts and teachers is to narrow curriculum, teach to the test and allocate monies to students' on the "testing bubble" to get them to pass. I have been screaming about these atrocities for years. A recent report from authors Andy Hargreaves and Harry Braun entitled "Data-Driven Improvement and Accountability" came up with the same findings (<http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/data-driven-improvement-accountability>).

That all these tests are soon to be on-line means that districts will be forced to purchase thousands of computers, install miles of new internet connections and hire enough Information Technology folks to keep the whole thing running, a terrible waste of funding. No matter what you think about technology in the classroom, the fact is the top performers on the international PISA test use little or no technology. I saw this personally when I visited a private, language immersion school in the Republic of Korea in 2010. Although a country that is far advanced in mobile technology and the most connected country in the World, the classrooms had wooden desks, a chalkboard (a handful had whiteboards) and lectern in the front and yet the students performed above their country's average and way above the United States. This is true in Finland, Poland, Singapore, Shanghai and other education "superpowers." Funneling vast education monies to technology and away from teachers is antithetical to all good education models. It is no coincidence that the Common Core Inc. received a massive grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, whose money is dependent upon a technology corporation (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/11/24/following-the-common-core-money-where-are-millions-of-dollars-going/>).

I believe in rigorous curriculum, taught by highly educated and motivated teachers with standardized testing used every few years to show students how much they have learned and assist teachers in addressing students' issues. I believe that we need to use monies to help students with academic deficiencies as identified by highly qualified teachers. I believe legislatures need to address the madness that is our school funding blueprint. I do *NOT* believe that massive online-state mandated, underfunded testing will lead to improved education for our students. In fact, I predict greater disengagement, less money for teachers and greater disparity between districts.

We, the professionals, need to speak up. Call your member of the Ohio House of Representative and Senate. Email your federal Congressperson and Senators. Let President Obama know that this has gone too far! They must hear our voices.

AG

CONTACT INFORMATION

OHIO LEGISLATURE:

<http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/>

House of Representatives: <http://www.house.gov/>

Senate: <https://www.senate.gov/>

President Obama:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact>