

IMPORTANT DATES

Tuesday, April 28: BOE Work Session.

Friday, May 1: Teacher Peer-evaluations completed.

Monday, May 4: SHTA Executive Board Meeting @ Fernway, 4:15 pm.

Monday, May 11: SHTA Reps. Council Meeting @ Onaway, 4:15 pm.

Monday, May 11: Teacher administrative Evaluations completed.

SHTA news

April 20, 2015

ISSUE NO. 7

Message From the President

It has been a bittersweet month. On the sweet side, the SHTA Support Teachers (ELL, KRP, and building tutors) unanimously voted on March 17th to accept Our Association as their bargaining agents. On April 16th, SERB officially recognized them as a new bargaining unit under the SHTA umbrella. It is with great pleasure that I announce the arrival of the Shaker Heights Teachers' Association Support Teachers, hereafter to be known as SHTA ST. We will now begin the process of governance, leadership, negotiations, and long term planning with our newest Association members. It will take time and patience, but it is the right opportunity for this great new addition to Our Association. Support Teachers will not officially join the Association until this fall, after our Constitution and By-Laws have been amended and approved by the present membership, to accommodate this new bargaining unit. Please take the opportunity to join me in welcoming these rising new members when you can.

On the bitter side of the month came the news that we are losing one of our most beloved building principals in the district in the departure of Mike Griffith from the High School. While not a member, Mike has always worked side by side with SHTA Representatives and leadership at the High School to create the collaborative and professionally rewarding place to work that it has been for the past 15 years. Likewise, Mike's service to the students and parents of this district has been impeccable. Principals like Mike Griffith are exceedingly rare in the world of corporate-reform based education. Although I know Mike leaves a wonderful legacy at Shaker Heights High School and will make an incredible Headmaster at Ratner School, I hope and pray that his successor will maintain the environment of teacher empowerment, distributed leadership, mutual respect and holistic awareness of the entire school environment that Mike embodied. I can't fully express what a loss this is for the district and I hope that our administration and school board will do their best to find a principal that will continue the tradition of patience, responsiveness, reflection and connection that our outgoing principal was so capable in maintaining.

I would also be remiss in not mentioning the departure of our Communication Director, Peggy Caldwell. Peggy came to this Monday's Representative Council meeting and shared kind words about Our Association and expressed her deep respect for our membership. Peggy has been a strong ally for all for us in helping pass some eight levies during her tenure as director. Peggy's prodigious writing skills, consistent kindness, and sharp intellect will be missed in the Shaker Heights City Schools. It is my hope that we can find a new Director of Communications that supports teachers, students, and the community even half as well as Peggy has. I wish her and her family the best as she heads to Nashville. She will be sorely missed.

On the business side of my President's responsibilities, it has been another consistently busy month. I participated in the interviews for Communications Director. I reviewed and confirmed contract language with Susannah Muskovitz and the Negotiations Team. I reviewed and refined an upcoming Memorandum of Understanding concerning severance pay for retirees with Susannah Muskovitz, the Negotiations Team and administration. An informational meeting will take place on April 23rd. I signed contract copies with the Negotiations Team and Administration. I met with Cuyahoga County Educators' Union Summit on Tuesday, March 31st to work on mission and testing statements, which will be confirmed on April 29th. I met with Becky Thomas to work on Constitution and By-Law language for SHTA Support Teachers. I continue to update the SHTA and Cuyahoga County Educators Summit (CCES) Facebook pages. I dealt with personnel issues at Woodbury and the High School. I attended the High School listening tour on Wednesday April 8th. I attended the school board meeting on Tuesday April 13th.

On a final note, our Public Relations Chairperson Bob Bognar has done incredible work in designing and setting up an easy ordering procedure for our new SHTA short sleeve and long sleeve T-shirts. I applaud Bob's work in obtaining quality, union-made apparel to represent Our Association. I would love to view a sea of red SHTA shirts in the High School Auditorium at the next beginning of the school year convocation. Please make this wish a reality by ordering your own SHTA shirt by April 29th. They are beautiful, durable, union-made and they represent us! Don't miss this opportunity to show your solidarity with your fellow members of the SHTA!

*Respectfully submitted,
John Morris*



**SHTA President John Morris
speaks at the April
Representative Council
meeting @ Lomond School.**

Reports from the Executive Board

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I hope that everyone had a restful spring break. It is hard to believe that we only have two more months of school left. Last year it was a brutal winter that challenged us this year it seems like a never-ending barrage of testing that we and our children must endure. Again, we Shaker teachers are a special group of extraordinary people. We continue to push through the trending hurdles and obstacle to educate the young people of Shaker Heights. I am extremely proud to be part of this group.

I would like to congratulate Chamaine Abrams, Michelle Child, Adam Cohen, Valerie Crowley, Libby Dang, Deborah Deep, Raymond Durban, Karen Gainford, Nicole Patterson, Susanne Peterjohn, Debra Quarles, Kimberly Roberts, Tana Roberts, Windy Shiner, Catherine Szendrey, Holly Ushiroda, and Enid Vasquez for earning Continuing Contracts from the district.

I would like to again thank all of you who supported *the Night for the Red and White*. It continues to be an extraordinary event for the benefit of the young people of the Shaker schools.

Please continue to submit receipts for reimbursement of Teacher Fellowship Applications and please consider making a donation to the PTO Council.

Please continue to 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 at the April
Representative Council
meeting @ Lomond
School.**

TREASURER'S REPORT

On Monday, April 13th Mike Griffith stood in front of the High School faculty and let us know that he is leaving his position as the head of our building. Teachers were shocked to say the least. There was complete silence in the room because no one knew what to say.

On Tuesday, April 14th I attended the School Board Meeting where Mike Griffith's resignation was accepted by the Board. It was a tense meeting. Greg Hutchings said that he has known about Ratner's offer to Mike since November. Robin Eisen & Marisa Maury (High School PTO co-Presidents) asked Greg and the Board some pretty pointed questions. I don't want to misquote anyone, but the gist of at least one question was - if you've known for months, what have you done to try to keep Mike here?

I have worked with Mike for the past 15 years, and I will say things didn't always go smoothly. There were times I disagreed with things Mike said or decisions he made. There were times I was vocal with him about it. But I always knew that every decision he made was with the kids in mind. He cares about and wants the best for every Shaker student who walks through the front door, and it's hard to fault a man for that.

The Investments Committee (Todd Keitlen, Matt Zucca, Chante Thomas-Taylor, and myself) will meet with Brady Krebs, our Edward Jones financial advisor, the week of April 20th to look over our investments.

Next month's Representative Council meeting (May 11th) is when the Representative Council will be discussing the 2015-16 S.H.T.A. budget and sending it to the membership for approval. A preliminary budget was distributed to the Representatives at April's meeting to take back to their buildings for discussion. If you have any concerns please let your head building Representative know, so they can be communicated at May's Representative Council Meeting, or you are welcome to email/call me (ext.6296).

*Respectfully submitted,
Bill Scanlon*



SHTA Treasurer Bill Scanlon at the April Representative Council meeting @ Lomond School.

EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS

PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES REPORT

During the last month, I participated in the following meetings and activities:

- Collective bargaining agreement signing meeting with the IBB team
- Technology grievance timeline meeting with Director of Technology and Media Resources John Rizzo and Assistant Superintendent, Academic Support Services Bernice Stokes
- Correspondence with Human Resources Director Darlene Bushley and Benefits Specialist Sue Garber to help members with FMLA
- Meetings with individual teachers concerned about their evaluations
- Discussions with the Human Resources Department about how to proceed with grievances filed about substitutes and an individual evaluation

A few members contacted me in the last two months about serious medical problems that may cause them to run out of sick days. Most of these members are on continuing contracts and have worked in the school district for several years. Some of them asked me why we don't have a sick day bank. I believe in the concept of a sick day bank, and brought this idea to the bargaining table four years ago. Other labor contracts for teachers do include sick day banks, but they do have challenges. For example, do members have to donate sick days to the bank? Who gets to decide the criteria for being granted sick days? Would the district have to create a sick day bank committee? I think I have a simple solution, yet I know it would be an expense to the administration. For this reason, it would have to be negotiated in our next contract. But what if SHTA leaders could meet with central office administrators and agree on a side letter to create a sick day bank right now when a few members could really benefit from it? How would it work?

It would be similar to how our Legal Aid Committee operates. If a member needs individual legal assistance, they can come to SHTA for help. The committee meets to decide if SHTA should provide money and recommends an amount to the representative council. The council votes to give the money. With my proposal, a member suffering a serious illness who is close to running out of sick days would have a safety net similar to the Legal Aid Committee. The member could ask the entire SHTA membership for sick days by completing a Petition for Additional Sick Days form. The petition would have to include details about why the person needs more sick days at this time. It would be sent out to the membership as an e-mail attachment. Each individual member could decide on their own if they wanted to donate sick days to the individual named in the petition. Members willing to donate sick days would have five business days from the receipt of the petition to complete a Sick Day Transfer Request Form, which would be submitted to the Human Resources Department.

Someone recently said to me, "that's what happens when you get sick in America." But it doesn't have to be that way. We should have the right to provide for our fellow members during the times when they need us the most.

If you have any feedback about my proposal or other ideas about a sick day bank, please e-mail me. (sears_m@shaker.org.)

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

PUBLIC RELATIONS

The public relations committee is focused on increasing the visibility of the Shaker Heights Teachers' Association and continuing to build solidarity between the buildings. You can help by purchasing a Shaker Heights Teachers' Association T-shirt. T-shirts will be printed by a union printer on shirts manufactured in the United States! If you have any questions pertaining to the Shaker Heights Teachers' Association shirt order please contact me directly at bognar_r@shaker.org or 216.295.4973. All orders are due by April 30. Please send both the order form and check, payable to Shaker Heights Teachers Association, through interschool mail, in care of Robert Bognar at Woodbury Elementary School. The forthcoming teacher appreciation gift will also help promote visibility within the community.

*Respectfully submitted,
Bob Bognar, chairperson*

EVALUATION COMMITTEE

The Evaluation Committee met again this month to continue working to improve the rubric and the evaluation process. This work will continue through the spring and changes will be communicated before beginning the evaluation cycle in the fall.

The evaluation process is due to be completed by the beginning of May. The following notes outline what you can expect depending on your evaluation cycle.

Formal Evaluation Year (Teachers on limited contracts or were rated Developing or Ineffective as a final rating for the 2013-2014 school year.)

- The May Summative Teacher Performance rating will be combined with your Student Growth Measure rating to form your final rating for the year. The Teacher Performance rating should be reflective of all five areas on the rubric and evidence from pre and post observation conferences, observations, walkthroughs, and any additional evidence provided by the teacher.
- The Student Growth Measures are determined using SLO data depending on your grade level and subject. Specific information about how some ratings will be determined is yet to be clarified.
- Peer Evaluators will need to submit the May Summative Evaluation Form to building principals by May 1. Building principals will combine the Teacher Performance rating and SGM rating.
- Teachers will need to meet with building principals to review ratings on district forms and eTPES.
- Teachers on a limited contract and those with a final rating of Developing or Ineffective will continue with the Formal Evaluation cycle for the 2015-2016 school year.
- Teachers on a continuing contract with a final rating of Skilled will be on an Informal Evaluation cycle during the 2015-2016 school year.
- Teachers on a continuing contract with a final rating of Accomplished will be on an Informal Evaluation cycle during the next *two* school years. *In order to maintain this status, your student growth measure (SGM) for the 2015-2016 school year needs to be rated at **expected** or **above expected** growth.*

Informal Evaluation Year (Teachers on a continuing contract who were rated Skilled or Accomplished for the 2013-2014 school year.)

- Teachers in an Informal Evaluation year will not receive a Teacher Performance rating for this year.
- Teachers will need to meet with building principals to review SGM ratings for the year.
- Peer Evaluators need to submit observation dates to their designated coordinator ASAP, if they have not

yet done so. Coordinators will submit the names of those who have completed all work, including the two required walkthroughs, to Erin Herbruck for payment.

- Teachers who were rated Accomplished for the 2013-2014 school year AND have an SGM rated at or above expected growth for the 2014-2015 school year will continue on an Informal Evaluation cycle for the 2015-2016 school year.
- Teachers who were rated Skilled for the 2013-2014 school year will return to a Formal Evaluation cycle for the 2015-2016 school year.

Teachers participating in the Peer Evaluation program continue to give positive feedback about the experience. Teachers report a focus on growth and a high level of collaboration throughout the process. The Peer Evaluation Program will continue next year. Review the following points as you consider the option to participate:

- Teachers must apply to participate each year. Applications will be available soon.
- Principals will approve or deny participation.
- Coordinators are working with administration to develop criteria for approvals and denials, as well as specific procedures, to provide for more clarity and transparency in the process. I will communicate these procedures as soon as they are solidified.
- Teachers must take OTES training and pass the online test in order to participate.
 - As of April 13, trainings are available in Independence, Elyria, and Berea (as well as locations further from Cleveland) this summer. Log on to your SAFE account (or create one) to access STARS to register for training. Please register ASAP to secure a seat. If you need help with registration, please contact myself or Andrew Glasier.
 - Teachers who have completed training will receive a “re-calibration” email from NIET about two years after initial certification. The email will have the following text:
You have received an automated eTPES notification. Here are the details: Your Teacher evaluator credentials will expire in 60 days. Please visit <https://nietbestpractices.org/ohio> to complete the online modules and test for re-calibration. Make sure to attend to re-calibration as soon as you get the email.
 - The re-calibration process includes an online course and test. The process takes about two hours. Re-calibration is required every two years.
 - Please print your OTES training certificate or re-calibration certificate and send a copy to Kiki Stout. Please notify myself or Andrew Glasier when the process is complete.

I hope this information is clear and helpful! Do not hesitate to contact me, any member of the Evaluation Team, or your building representative, with any evaluation questions or concerns.

*Respectfully submitted,
Lena Paskewitz, chairperson*

PAST PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Finally, the huge snow mound from the plow is melted! It is a treat to go outside without boots and gloves and a snow shovel. I hope all of you had a relaxing spring break and have renewed energy for the rest of the school year. This month, I attended the regular meeting of the Board of Education and will attend the Finance and Audit Committee meeting. I also met with President John Morris to discuss the Support Teachers' progress toward union participation. And, at John's request, I met with a teacher regarding a medical issue.

At the April Board of Education meeting, questions were asked about the resignation of High School Principal Mike Griffith. I am personally saddened to see Mike leave. He has been a compassionate, caring colleague whose leadership was guided by his humanity and a genuine connection with the people he served. Another loss to the district is Communications Director Peggy Caldwell. It was a pleasure to work with Peggy. She often worked "behind the scenes" to present the positive activities of the Shaker Schools. Her talent for crafting the public information about our schools has contributed to the excellent reputation our schools have achieved. Thank you both for your service to all of us.

*Respectfully submitted,
Becky Thomas, chairperson*

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Our annual District Service Recognition Reception will take place on Thursday, May 21st in the Upper Cafeteria at the High School. It is important that you come to be recognized for your years of dedication to the district and/or support and celebrate your friends and colleagues. During these difficult days it's important to be there for each other! As always, the food will be awesome! This year I will be sending everyone an Evite to your school email. Please RSVP so that I can order an appropriate amount of food.

If you have any suggestions or comments please feel free to call my school extension (x6041) or email me (brown_se@shaker.org).

*Respectfully submitted,
Selena Brown, chairperson*

POLICY COMMITTEE

Although we have already highlighted Article XII of our constitution earlier this year, I believe current circumstance warrants our revisiting the amendment process in its entirety.

ARTICLE XII AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

A. Constitution

1. Any amendment to this Constitution may be initiated by the Executive Board, the Representative Council, or by petition signed by at least forty current members of the Association. Such proposed amendments must be filed in writing with the Secretary and the Secretary shall submit the said amendment in writing to all members of the Association within fifteen school days.
2. No Amendment shall be voted upon less than thirty days after its submission to the membership by the Secretary. The

Representative Council shall designate the time of voting upon said amendment.

3. The approval of three-fourths of the members of the Association shall be necessary for the adoption of any amendments to this Constitution.

B. By-Laws

Any amendment to the By-Laws may be initiated by the Executive Board, the Representative Council, or by petition signed by at least twenty current members of the Association. Such proposed amendment must be filed in writing with the Secretary, and the Secretary must submit said amendment to all members of the Association within fifteen school days. No amendment shall be voted upon less than fifteen days after its submission to the members by the Secretary. The Representative Council shall designate whether the proposed amendment shall be voted upon at a meeting of the Association or at separate meetings of the several building groups, and it shall designate the time of voting upon said amendment.

In the following months, the association will be presented with possible amendments to our constitution and by-laws in order to vote on these changes during a fall election. The changes fall under three general categories: removing references to tenure which are anachronistic and possibly counter-productive; including wording that recognizes new committees and responsibilities; adding wording that recognizes the new SHTA Support Teachers in our constitution, including their roles and responsibilities. Please ask your building representatives for more detailed information regarding these necessary changes.

*Respectfully submitted,
Tim Kalan, chairperson*

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

This week, the Ohio statehouse announced the introduction of charter school reform legislation, Senate Bill 148 and House Bill 2, which they claim will increase accountability and transparency for charter school sponsors and management companies in Ohio. “This bill takes a significant step towards charter school regulatory reform by closing loopholes, eliminating conflicts of interest, increasing charter school sponsorship standards, and most notably increasing charter school operator transparency,” said Senator Tom Sawyer (D-Akron).

The proposed laws aim to increase accountability of charter schools. Specifically it would require all new and renewed agreements between the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and a sponsor to contain specific language addressing the conditions under which ODE can intervene and revoke sponsorship authority, and permits modification of the agreement under circumstances of poor fiscal management and lack of academic progress. The legislation includes greater transparency measures as well.

The legislative chair is monitoring the progress in proposed legislation including, Senate bill 92 addressing bullying and safety, HB 7 addressing Safe Harbor, Senate Bill 3- testing limits and the bi-annual budget.

The Political Action Committee is working to develop a teacher survey to share with the Ohio Senate advisory committee on testing. It is important to have input on legislation that impacts the quality of education in our schools.

*Respectfully submitted,
Eileen Sweeney, chairperson*

**Think education needs a new direction?
Consider running for School Board!
The AFL-CIO is holding a
Candidate's training session.
Need more information:
contact: Eileen Sweeney
etselv@shcglobal.net**

MEMBERSHIP/ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Petitions for 2015-2017 Office are now available. They must be filed with me, at the Middle School, no later than 4pm Friday, April 24th. If you are interested in serving as a representative for your building for the 2015-2016 school year, please submit your name to your head rep by Friday, May 1st. Any member on tenure, who has been an active member for the three years immediately preceding the election, is eligible to be a building representative. We will elect officers and building representatives and vote on the proposed budget on Monday, May 18th.

*Respectfully submitted,
Stacy Elgart, chairperson*

TEACHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Board of Education held its April meeting recently, and accepted the recommendations for a continuing contract for the following teachers: Chamaine Abrams – Middle School, Michelle Child – High School, Adam Cohen – High School, Valerie Crowley – High School, Libby Dang – Woodbury, Deborah Deep – Boulevard, Raymond Durban – High School, Karen Gainford – Lomond, Nicole Patterson – Lomond, Susanne Peterjohn – Onaway, Debra Quarles – Middle School – Kimberly Roberts – High School, Tana Roberts – High School, Windy Shiner – High School, Catherine Szendrey – High School, Holly Ushiroda – High School, Enid Vasquez – High School. **Congratulations to all of you!**

Please plan to attend the celebration on Thursday, May 21st at the Shaker Heights High School Cafeteria. Many teachers, including our retirees, teachers with various years of service, and these four wonderful teachers, will be recognized at this celebration.

*Respectfully submitted,
Steve Smith, chairperson*

WANTED: SHTA PAC TREASURER

Seeking a politically minded Association dedicated person to oversee the duties of Treasurer.

DUTIES INCLUDE: Bi-Annual reporting to the B.O.E. & keeping abreast of state election laws. Time commitment is approximately a couple hours/month

**Interested? Contact Eileen Sweeney at:
pacshed@gmail.com**

WANTED: SHTA PAC MEMBERS

Seeking Association dedicated people to participate and represent the SHTA politically.

Committee members will develop political positions on issues impacting the SHTA and organize political actions. Time commitment is approximately a couple hours/month

**Interested? Contact Eileen Sweeney at:
pacshed@gmail.com**

MINUTES FOR THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING

April 13, 2015, Lomond School

SHTA President, John Morris started the April 13th Rep. Council Meeting at 4:30PM.

Carina Freeman, Principal of Lomond Elementary School welcomed SHTA membership to Lomond and shared her appreciation for the work that our teachers do for our students in Shaker Heights.

MINUTES from the March 09, 2015 Representative Council meeting were accepted and approved. Motion made by Bob Bognar and Seconded by Tod Torrence.

Administration Report

Dr. Hutchings and Peggy Caldwell were present from central office.

- Dr. Hutchings shared that Michael Griffith, Shaker Heights High School Principal has accepted a position of Head Master at Ratner School.
- Shaker Heights School District was able to keep Mike for 15 years. It is not uncommon to take on another position throughout your career.
- We are all so happy for Mike and we thank him for all he has contributed to Shaker Heights High School.
- There are huge transitions occurring in our district. A lot of retirements are taking place.
- Dr. Marla Robinson has been appointed as the new Chief of Staff. She went through the entire process just like everyone else and was chosen by the panel.
- Dr. Hutchings provided a thorough explanation of the roles at Central Office. The Chief of Staff, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Director of Curriculum were all explained. New positions with the same number of people in Central Office.
- Job Openings will be posted April 15th. We wanted the most accurate job openings posted.

Peggy Caldwell, Director of Communication was present to say goodbye. This is her last week with the district, she will be retiring. She thanked the teachers of Shaker Heights for all of their hard work.

P.T.O. Report – No Representative was available to give a P.T.O. Report. John Morris suggested that members donate to our P.T.O. Please use the Payforit.com site to donate \$25.00.

Officer's Report

President, John Morris

- Participated in the interview for Communications Director.
- Reviewed and confirmed contract language with Susannah Muskovitz and the Negotiations Team.
- Reviewed and refined upcoming MOU for retirees with Susannah Muskovitz, the Negotiations Team and admin. Meeting to occur on April 23rd.
- Signed contract copies with the Negotiations Team and Admin.
- Met with Cuyahoga County Educators' Union Summit on Tuesday, March 31st to work on mission and testing statements.
- Met with Becky Thomas to work on by-law language for SHTA Support Teachers.
- On Tuesday, March 17th the SERB vote took place for SHTA Support Teachers to be recognized as a separate bargaining unit under the SHTA umbrella. The vote was unanimous.
- He will meet with SHTA Support Teachers this month, April 22nd, to discuss governance, leadership, dues, and negotiations planning. This will be a process that will take time, support, and changes to our by-laws.
- Continues to update the SHTA and CCES Facebook pages.
- He will meet again with the CCES on April 29th to confirm our mission and testing statements.
- Dealt with a personnel issue at the High School.

- Attended the SHHS listening tour on Wed. 4/8.

Vice President, Matt Zucca

- Took part of the interviewing process at Central Office.
- Will attend the Investment Committee meeting next week.
- Signed contract copies with the Negotiations Team and Admin.
- Will attend meeting for *the Night for the Red and White* to find out final numbers.
- Next week, will be attending a P.T.O. council meeting.
- Working on Fellowship Grant Reimbursements.

Secretary, Darlene Garrison

- Participated on the interviewing panel for the Chief of Staff position at Central Office.
- Participated on a panel for the Educational Visioning Services at Central Office.
- If you have a lengthy report, can you please send me a copy via email.
- Please be sure to sign the attendance sheet before you leave each meeting.

Treasurer, Bill Scanlon

- Financial report was distributed.
- Will be attending an Investment Committee meeting next week.
- Attended the Listening Tour at the High School.
- Attended the High School meeting today, April 13th with the announcement of Mike Griffith leaving the High School.
- May meeting, we will approve a budget to be voted on. Please share the preview budget with members.

Executive Board Reports

Past President, Becky Thomas

- Worked with John Morris on by-law language for SHTA Support Teachers.
- Will be attending a Board of Education meeting tomorrow, April 14th.
- Will be attending a Finance and Audit meeting on April 23rd.

Teacher Education, Steve Smith

- Seventeen teachers will be given a continuing contract and I will be sending them congratulatory letters.

Membership/Elections, Stacy Elgart

- Petitions are available if you are interested in running for an Office. Petitions are due to me by April 24th. The four present officers have submitted petitions to run for office to serve 2015-2017.
- Elections will take place on Monday, May 18th.
- We now have 403 the members.
- Building Representative sheets are being passed out to Head Building Representatives. If you are interested in running for building representative, please place your name on the sheet.

Policy, Tim Kalan

- Working on language for the Constitution and By-laws.
- Active participant in the Listening Tour.

Public Relations, Bob Bognar

- Members will be receiving an email with information about purchasing a SHTA Shirt. The order form and payment will be due by April 30th. We encourage all members to purchase a shirt to promote solidarity.
- Working on putting together the teacher appreciation gifts.

Evaluation, Lena Paskewitz

- Worked on individual issues dealing with evaluations.
- Had to give a few protocol reminders.

Legislative, Eileen Sweeney

- Attended the signing of the new contract at the administration building.
- Monitoring the following proposed laws:

HB 2- charter schools accountability

Senate bill 92- bullying and safety

HB 7- Safe Harbor

Senate Bill 3- testing limits

- Working to develop a teacher survey to share with the Ohio Senate advisory committee on testing.

Publications, Andrew Glasier

- Had to deal with an issue of an assistant principal not announcing himself and while doing a walkthrough.
- Will be attending an evaluation committee meeting tomorrow, April 14th to work on improving the rubric.
- Peer evaluation coordinators will have a quick meeting coming soon.
- A notice will be going out to peer evaluators to make sure that they want to continue peer evaluating next year.
- At the beginning of June, there will be another training session for peer evaluation.
- Please remember that submissions are due Wednesday at midnight.

Social, Selena Brown

- Working on finding a caterer for the May 21st Recognition Reception.
- Passing out flyers to be posted throughout the buildings for the reception.
- Will be doing an *Evite* this year with a RSVP including.

Legal Aid, Chante Thomas-Taylor

- No Report

Professional Rights and Responsibilities, Mike Sears

- Signed contract copies with the Negotiations Team and Administration.
- Two grievances were filed and not much progress has been made so far.
- Attended the Listening Tour at the High School. Comment made at the tour- Better system for substitute teachers is needed.
- OTEs rubrics are open to interpretation. You have to have a right to protest it if you don't like something in your evaluation. As an association, that is something we need to talk about.
- With the technology grievance, Rizzo and Stokes had a plan to address the issues. Rizzo went back and added dates to the plan.
- The new filter is blocking NetFlix and people upset about this. Central Office is aware of this and we need to continue monitoring the issue.
- Technology issues have improved because the calls to the HelpDesk have decreased each month.
- The idea of a Sick Day Bank has come up again. Two teachers will be on an extended medical leave. This issue is very complicated and it is something that would need to be bargained.

Building Representative Reports

Boulevard, Jennifer Goulden

- A member was concerned with the fact that the Recognition Reception started at 3:45. The ceremony doesn't start until 4:30.

- Substitute problems still exist in our building.

Fernway, Annie Haney

- No Report

Lomond, Donita Townsend

- No Report

Mercer, Lisa Hardiman

- Asked to find books and many sites on the internet are blocked like Barnes & Noble and Amazon. Email the HelpDesk to unblock the site.

Onaway, Paula Klausner

- No Report

Woodbury, Amy Santos

- No Report

Middle School, Paul Repasy

- Had to deal with OTES personnel issue, thank you Lena Paskewitz with your help
- The library is being used for standardized testing. There is too much going on in the library for students to actually have a quiet space to complete the assessment.
- Issues with SLOs-the timeliness of submission from administrators from other buildings.
- Concern with the Physical Education department going from eight teachers to four teachers.
- Human Resource would not clear a teacher to return to work on crutches but his physician did clear his return. Teacher had to use more sick days and would like to get some of those sick days back.

High School, James Schmidt

- The High School is now a ship without a captain
- No Report

Old Business

- None

New Business

- None

Good of the Order

- None

Motion for Adjournment

- Motion made by Darlene Garrison

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



Special thanks to SHTA Lomond School Representative Donita Townsend and Kevin Wagner for hosting the April SHTA Representative Council meeting at Lomond School and saving the cupcakes after a minor table malfunction.

UNIONS MAKE US BETTER!

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.

In the past few months, some political pundits have begun to reexamine the role of unions in our economy in a more positive light. Nicholas Kristof of the *New York Times* in his editorial [“The Cost of a Decline in Unions”](#) speaks of the realization that Unions support a middle-class lifestyle and work-place protection that stabilizes the economy. For decades, the decline of powerful unions was viewed as a necessary step towards greater efficiency. People complained that Unions protected poor workers, spent members' funds on too many political candidates, and slowed or even stopped changes in work place procedures that could increase value. Many of these arguments were viable and hinted at a union leadership that feared change in many cases. Unions by their very nature were a reactionary group, acting in the best interest of their members. However, the decline of Unions has led to the increase in economic inequality and terrible abuses by corporate management. Unions provide “checks” on management and hold all parties responsible for their actions.

Yet so few learn about Labor Union's history as it has been white washed from the textbooks we provide for our students. A recent study by the Albert Shanker Institute entitled [”American labor and the U.S. History textbooks: How Labor's Story is Distorted in High School History Textbooks – And What We Lose By It”](#) finds that textbooks provide “spotty, inadequate, and slanted coverage” of the Labor movement and all that it provided the American people. Instead they often focused on the strikes and

violence of the late 19th and early 20th centuries while neglecting Labor's role in creating the middle class.

Education unions alone have created policies that have greatly expanded education in America. Union contracts that provide safe and healthy work environments, which of course, provides safe and healthy classrooms for our students. Union contracts provide lower class sizes, which allows teachers to make personal connections with students, making them feel value and encouraged. Union contracts creates tenure, which allows teachers to speak their minds about what is best for students, even if it costs the district additional monies. What teachers' unions want are better working conditions at fair pay and benefits so that they can focus on their students.

In our district, there are a few teachers who refuse to join the Association. They fail to pay the \$300 dues, which funds a plethora of services. These services have been on major display this school year as the leadership of the Association has had to deal with a myriad of issues stemming from the [“corporate reform”](#) mindset of our school board and upper administration. From the half-truths, the out-right attacks, the reduction of teacher power and poor treatment of members and their allies, our district leadership has been heading in the wrong direction based on their “corporate reform” ideas that research has plainly shown to not work. Yet they cling to their out dated ideas and use intimidation to impose them. Our Association leadership has been a beacon of light, the force of reason and true defenders of our students. From technology issues to substitutes to collapsing roofs to fighting against unfair discipline issues, it is the Association that protects adults and students. It is the Association that is working to protect our students from over testing, poor planning and the lack of introspection and reflection of district leadership. While most teachers choose to become members, all benefit from the Association.

Which brings us to a conundrum. When individuals use a service without paying for it, he or she in economic terms are called “freeriders.” People who listen to National Public Radio everyday but do not donate to the stations are freeriders, for instance. Our colleagues who choose not to join the Association but receive the benefits are also. In the State of Ohio, Unions have the right to force non-Union colleagues to pay a percentage of membership to help pay for

negotiations, called Fair Share, which all benefit from. Our Association has chosen not to change our Constitution to do so. But with the longer times between school levies, we have been forced to negotiate twice in two years and have spent over \$50,000 on those proceedings this school year. Is it time for the freeriders to contribute?

AG

Open Letter to My Colleagues

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Throughout the course of this school year, I have found myself engaged in numerous conversations about the state mandated testing program. Most of these conversations were grounded in a professional concern about the direction public education has taken, about how the cloud of assessment for assessment sake is casting a long and dark shadow in every classroom across America.

I see the need for and the value of proper assessment that supports and guides instruction. Nor do I shy away from the need to hold school staff, students and their families accountable for daily demands of education. The lives of our children are all too precious not to. Absolutely all should be held accountable. But not in this way. Not by these tests. I object to this current climate in which testing has transplanted the goal of education. We are now being asked to serve the test not the child. Columns of numbers, some aggregated, others to be found statistically significant, now dictate the daily course of OUR instruction. We have allowed education to become a very sad case of the tail wagging the dog. Assessments should exist to support education not to distract from the relationship between student and teacher. These past few weeks of PARCC, AIR, MAP, NEAP and AASCD have been some of the saddest days in my teaching career. (I have five dollars for the first person who correctly translates these acronyms without needing to look them up). We have lost our way. Something is not right.

Perhaps, now is the time to stop and fight for what is right. Maybe now is the time to be heard. Not to save our jobs, not to fight in fear of accountability, but to fight for our students, to stand up and demand a realignment of priorities. Maybe it is time to stand up for this profession of teaching. Teaching is a profession -- it is not a product, it is not a widget to be counted, it is not a business. It is a dynamic relationship of love that believes in the potential of every child. Teaching is a dance, not a score gleaned from a computer screen. We need to begin to find a way to make our voices heard, here in Shaker Heights, in Columbus and in Washington. I believe that this season of testing is proving to be the watershed point. I am convinced that people...parents, administrators, and those making the legislative decisions...are ready to hear a different message than the one pounded out by the drums of "No Child Left Behind". The tide is shifting.

Towards that end, I would like to share this link to an announcement by State Senator and Senate Education Chair Peggy Lehner (R-Kettering) regarding the formation of a [Senate Advisory Committee](#) on Testing. Something is being questioned by someone. Maybe we need to find a way to voice a question or two of our own. Just a late night thought.

**John Sweeney Teacher,
Mercer Elementary School
April 2015**

We Are Shaker!

District Service Recognition Reception

Thursday, May 21, 2015

3:45 p.m.

High School Upper Cafeteria

Shaker teachers...

show tolerance and respect for everyone

are committed to their profession

inspire students

are reflective about their practice

are excellent communicators

collaborate with each other



and SUPPORT and CELEBRATE their colleagues!

This event is sponsored by the Shaker Heights Teacher's Association and the Shaker Heights School District.