

IMPORTANT DATES

Tuesday, February 22: Finance & Audit Committee

Monday, March 5: SHTA Executive Board Meeting @ Fernway.

Saturday, March 10: *A Night for the Red & White.*

Monday, March 12: SHTA Representative Council Meeting @ Shaker Middle School.

Thursday, March 15: State of the Schools Address, 9AM, @ SHHS Large Auditorium.

SHTA news

February 20, 2018

ISSUE NO. 6

Message From the President

It's easy to feel like we are on an island as members of the Shaker Heights Teachers' Association. We are independent. We are self-funded and governed. We have a 35-year history as an un-affiliated Association. We are, per our by-laws, relatively apolitical. We do have a Political Action Committee(1), and through it we can advocate for political issues (as we did with SB5). However, we do not endorse local, state, or national political candidates. That being said, it's time for us to once again become active, address a threat to our rights, and venture into advocacy.

Right-to-work is again rearing its ugly head in Ohio. Two state senators are submitting legislation to change the state constitution to strip unions of the right of their members to have dues deducted from their paychecks, remain an organization without yearly recertification, or establish a base pay among workers, among other damaging changes to our organizational rights (http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2018/01/right_to_work_could_be_on_the.html). Some of these changes do not appear to directly affect us. For example, we are not a "fair share" union. We depend on voluntary dues payments. Yet these changes would still impact our ability to have automatic dues deduction and it would force us to recertify every year, both considerable administrative costs that would eat into our budget. Likewise, a weaker backbone for our brothers and sisters in state and national affiliates would weaken our collective voices as Ohio teachers.

So, what should we do? We should continue to vote for political leaders who respect the sanctity of collective bargaining rights and our organizations. We must be attentive to our state and local elections to make sure these elected advocates represent us. We must elect a governor who will keep unions intact and respects both education and those who educate. We will continue to update you through our PAC, but in the mean time I encourage you to remain vigilant and aware of whom you are electing to office. Our collective voice makes a difference. Its incumbent upon all of us to maintain it's protection.

It's been a very busy month. The new contract was successfully ratified by 99% of the membership that voted. I addressed a staff safety concern at HS. I attended the Labor/Management meeting with Interim HR Director Dr. Lois Cavucci, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Steve Wilkins, and representatives from all the bargaining units in the district. I addressed temperature issues at Mercer with Representative Cathy Richards. I conferred on a maternity leave issue with PR&R Chair Mike Sears. I helped address an issue at the Middle School with Mike Sears and Middle School Head Representative John Koppitch. I addressed a transcript issue for staff member. I addressed reduced time issues. I addressed Support Teacher issues. I met

new IC Coordinator Dawn Sizemore. I communicated with Dr. Lois Cavucci. I communicated with Dr. Steve Wilkins about facility issues and committee appointees. I communicated with Superintendent Dr. Gregory Hutchings. I communicated with Peer Evaluation Coordinator Addie Tobey concerning evaluation. I communicated with High School Principal Jonathan Kuehnle about a building issue with the help of High School Head Representative James Schmidt. I attended The Shaker Union Summit on Friday, February 9th with other leaders from Shaker Heights City Schools bargaining units. Past SHTA Vice President Dollye Finney generously organized this event.

February feels like the longest, shortest month. But Spring is around the corner. I hope that we can weather this winter together and continue to support each other through Our Association. It's provided a solid foundation for my professional life as long as I have taught in Shaker. It is my hope that it offers the same support to you. As always, feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns at morris_j@shaker.org or at extension 6033.

*Respectfully submitted,
John Morris*

1. The funds for our Political Action Committee are separate from our General fund. They are generated by direct contributions from members. I urge you to contribute to our Political Action Committee so Our Association's voice can be heard. Send checks to Bill Scanlon at the High School payable to SHTA/PAC.

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



Reports from the Executive Board

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

A Night for the Red and White is quickly approaching. I hope you take the opportunity to attend this amazing event. *A Night for the Red and White* will be held on Saturday, March 10, 2018, 7:00 p.m., at the Hilton Cleveland Downtown located on Lakeside Avenue East next to the Convention Center. Discounted pricing is being offered to staff if you are interested in attending. The SHTA's donation to the silent auction this year is memberships to three museums in the University Circle area: The Cleveland Art Museum, the Cleveland Botanical Gardens, and the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. I want to thank all of you who have made contributions to the Silent Auction. Thank you to Darlene Garrison for organizing *A Night for the Red and White* drawing and congratulations to our drawing winners. SHTA members who donated to *A Night for the Red and White* Silent Auction will be entered in a drawing to win tickets to the event. The drawing will be held this week and winners will be notified by me.

The SHTA Teacher Fellowships recipients are encouraged to submit receipt documentation to collect reimbursement. This money can be used to enhance your professional development.

This past month I have assisted with clarifying maternity questions related to our new contract. I am pleased with the gains we have made with maternity leave, but I do feel there is more work to be done. I have assisted with SHTA ST concerns about work load expectations and inequalities with current policy and practice. It is my hope that these concerns would be addressed and remedied in the upcoming negotiations.

Finally, a concern of the school nurses was brought to my attention regarding the eliminated position of the District Medical Director. This has been a position Shaker Heights Schools have filled for over 35 years. Eliminating this position places many of our underserved students at risk. Although this is not a contractual issue, it is one that the SHTA is concerned about and will continue to follow.

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

*Respectfully submitted,
Matthew Zucca*

**SHTA Vice
President Matt
Zucca at the
February
Representatives
meeting @ Shaker
Heights High
School.**



TREASURER'S REPORT

Andrew Glasier and I attended the Cuyahoga County Educators Summit where two State Board of Education members, Meryl Johnson & Lisa Woods, spoke. I also attended, along with the other officers, a Shaker Union Summit organized by former SHTA Past Vice President Dollye Finney. I attended the School Board meeting on Tuesday, February 13th where the Board ratified the new contract.

I have been communicating with our accountants at Edward Hawkins & Co. to finalize and submit our tax forms for the year. I paid bills and deposited money from *A Night for the Red & White* raffle in our account. I will be meeting with the Investments Committee in April to analyze our investments and discuss possible changes.

*Respectfully submitted,
Bill Scanlon*



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

SHTA Is now on  @SHTAssoc

FOLLOW US!

EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS

PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES REPORT

During the past month, I attended the school board meeting where the collective bargaining agreement was approved. I met with Middle School principals and Middle School building representative John Koppitch about a proposed grading policy change. The proposal was tabled until the 2018-19 school year. I answered questions from members about maternity leave, caregiver leave, paternity leave, and insurance. I spoke with Treasurer Bryan Christman about some of these issues. The March 1st paycheck will include the 2% raises from the 1/16, 2/1, and 2/16 pay periods. Therefore, it will be larger than the 3/16 paycheck.

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

EVALUATION COMMITTEE

Spring evaluations are underway across the district. Please remember that pre and post observation conferences and lesson observations should take place at mutually agreed upon times. Post observation conferences should take place within one week of the lesson. An informal observation (5-7 minute) also needs to be completed. The data should be included on the Performance Rubric.

Teachers on an Informal Evaluation cycle should have two 15-minute Informal Observations during the year. The Informal Observation form should be used for both observations. These forms should be uploaded to eTPES by May 1.

A clarification of the State's protocols has come to our attention. Our previous understanding was that if an educator's FINAL rating is Skilled or Accomplished, he or she can be on an Informal Cycle the following year. Unfortunately, it has been clarified that this is true ONLY if the SGM is Average or above. Educators with a SGM of ineffective or approaching average must remain on a Formal Cycle, regardless of their Performance rating.

Please continue to communicate with your building representative and/or members of the Evaluation Committee with questions and concerns regarding evaluation.

***Respectfully submitted,
Lena Paskewitz, chairperson***

PAST PRESIDENTS COMMITTEE

This month I attended the Finance and Audit Committee meeting and the February 13 Board of Education meeting. At F&A there was an update from the Equity Task Force and a presentation "Assessing Facility Needs Due to a Declining Enrollment." Planning for a future with fewer students and aging buildings will be necessary to maintain the educational excellence and financial security of the Shaker schools. Watch for opportunities to participate in this process.

The highlight of the Board of Education meeting was the approval of the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between the Shaker Heights Board of Education and the Shaker Heights Teachers' Association. President John Morris spoke about the IBB process and thanked the negotiating team members (most of whom were also at the meeting) for their efforts. Having worked on several contracts, I know the work, emotion, commitment, skill, and vision that it takes for negotiations. The Shaker CBA has always provided a solid foundation for teachers; John and his team have made it even stronger. Congratulations to

Matt Zucca, Darlene Garrison, Dave Klapholz, James Schmidt, Mike Sears, Wendy Lewis, Bill Scanlon, and John Morris, as well as attorney Susannah Muskovitz, for their determination on behalf of the SHTA.

*Respectfully submitted,
Becky Thomas, chairperson*

POLICY COMMITTEE

This month's focus on our SHTA Constitution concerns a subsection of **Article I**, which describes who we are as an Association:

The SHTA and SHTA ST bargaining units shall negotiate separate Collective Bargaining Agreements.

The SHTA recently ratified a new contractual agreement with the board of education. However, this contract only applies to SHTA members, not the SHTA ST, which consists of many of our colleagues who are intervention specialists, KRP teachers, and ESL teachers, just to name a few. The SHTA ST will soon begin their own negotiations for a contract, and it is important to note that many of their members perform similar, if not identical tasks to SHTA members, though not for the same pay. Hopefully as we move forward, some of these inequities will be mitigated, and we can all be compensated as teachers.

*Respectfully submitted,
Tim Kalan, Chairperson*

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

President Trump's budget proposal for the next fiscal year has been released. In it, [education is cut \(again\) and access to school choice, meaning private schools, is increased.](#)

This is the first school year that the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has been implemented. The ESSA became law under the Obama administration, and it gives more rights to states than the No Child Left Behind law that it replaced. There are sure to be challenges to the details of the law, and one of those challenges has begun in Florida [where officials do not want to include the test results of minority students in school ratings.](#)

The National Education Association reports that [Idaho has completely removed climate change from its curriculum.](#)

Although education shows no sign of being ignored by our lawmakers, if you know of specific education issues that are in transition in the legislative world, please let the Legislative Committee of the SHTA know about them.

*Respectfully Submitted,
David Klapholz*

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Our annual District Recognition Reception will be held on Thursday, May 24th in the High School's Upper Cafeteria at 3:45 pm. This is a great opportunity to celebrate your accomplishments and those of your colleagues. Don't forget this is a catered event! We hope to see you there!

*Respectfully Submitted,
Selena Boyer*

MEMBERSHIP & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Payroll deduction for SHTA dues began with the October 1st paycheck - \$30 per pay for 10 pays. Most of our members' payment for dues will be complete after the February 16th paycheck deduction.

Special thanks to Dr. Becky Thomas who spent countless hours reviewing the membership directories and board notes to help us in the ongoing process of maintaining and updating the membership directory. **At this time, there are 464 members in the association. The building breakdown is:**

BO - 32
FE - 28
LO - 38
ON - 35
ME - 34
WO - 75
MS - 73
HS - 148
DIS - 1

I would also like to thank SHTA for granting an emergency fund request for the Woodbury Female Scholars. We were given a verbal commitment for funding and then were told the monies were not available. The SHTA took on an unexpected expense to help us motivate and celebrate the amazing sixty girls who make up the 2017-2018 Woodbury Female Scholars.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Chante Thomas-Taylor*

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

It is our solidarity that creates our strength as an Association! One simple yet effective way of broadcasting our collective might is through increased visibility! Buy a T-Shirt; broadcast your membership!

The public relations committee has been managing the SHTA T-shirt sale. Our final day to take orders will be Thursday February 22nd. Please complete the Google form to order a T-shirt <https://goo.gl/forms/wD1JNCypJpQKCsPP2>. We accept cash, check and credit card. If you select credit card or if you do not send your payment before March 17th you must pick up your shirts from Robert Bognar at Woodbury or Bill Scanlon at the High School. Please send all checks and cash to Woodbury in care of Robert Bognar. Please write your full name and school on your check or on a note in the envelope. Orders will be submitted Friday February 23rd and should take two weeks to be printed.

SHTA has also made an unexpected contribution to the Woodbury Female Scholars to help incentivize this group of young ladies.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Robert Bignar*

LEGAL AID COMMITTEE

I attended the Superintendents Brown Bag lunch. I was pleased to hear Superintendent Dr. Gregory Hutchings praise the work of the SHTA negotiations team. Thank to those who gave their time to help negotiate our new contract.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Cathy Grieshop*

SHTA ST COMMITTEE

There have been more reports from all over the District of SHTA Support Teachers, especially Intervention Specialists and English Language Support Teachers, doing exactly the same work with the same number and kind of responsibilities as regular SHTA members. This situation should be addressed in our upcoming negotiations.

Issues of scheduling and job descriptions with Innovative Center Support Teachers are being addressed.

There has not yet been any contact from the Administration about a meeting in advance of SHTA Representative Council sessions to address issues involving SHTA-ST members, so all of these issues are still being reported in the monthly newsletter.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Bonnie Gordon*

PAC of the SHTA

“Be the change you wish to see in the world.” Mahatma Ghandi.

As my heart aches for the people of Parkland, Florida, I wonder if I could be doing more to help battle gun violence in schools. The National Education Association’s Legislative Action Center web page makes it very easy to take action and let your legislators know how you feel about educational issues. Unfortunately, gun control has become an educational issue. Please take a look at their page to learn about current issues and to easily share your opinions. <http://edadvocacy.nea.org>

Closer to home, please make sure you are speaking up for yourself and you colleagues. There are big and little issues throughout the district. There will be no change if our concerns and needs aren’t respectfully brought up and discussed. We teachers need to have a strong voice so that various problems can be addressed and solved. If you are having concerns, please take the time to talk to your wonderful union representatives.

Be the change.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Cathy Grieshop*



MINUTES FOR THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING

FEBRUARY 12, 2018, SHAKER HEIGHTS HIGH SCHHOL

SHTA President, John Morris started the February 12th Rep. Council Meeting at 4:31PM. **Johnathan Kuehnle, Principal of Shaker Heights High** welcomed SHTA to the High School. He shared inspirational words with the membership. He shared that he was glad to have SHTA here today.

MINUTES from the January 16th, 2018 Rep. Council meeting Motion to accept made by James Schmidt and seconded by Bonnie Gordon.

Administration Report

Assistant Superintendent Curriculum & Instruction, Dr. Terri Breeden

- Dr. Hutchings will be joining us shortly.

Superintendent, Dr. Gregory Hutchings

- Three Central Office Jobs will be open and posted.
- Saturday, February 24th - Rotary Club Annual Pancake Breakfast- If you would like to attend free paid tickets are available. Will let John Morris decide who attends.
- Contract will be ratified tomorrow at the Board of Education meeting tomorrow-Congratulations.
- Our SHTA President is a friend - thank you for the collaboration and continues having relationships with your next Superintendent.
- District will work with ESC- they will provide interim candidates for Superintendent throughout Cuyahoga County.
 - Interim Superintendent will serve one year, which will provide time to search for a permanent Superintendent.
- State of the School Address will take place on Thursday, March 15th - New Structure.
 - Take place during the day, presenting to freshmen and sophomore students
 - History lesson over the last 5 years - passing the torch to the students. They are our future.

P.T.O. Report

- No representative present to give report

Officer's Report

President, John Morris

Busy Month

- The new contract was successfully ratified by 99%
- Addressed staff safety concern at HS
- Attended Labor/Management meeting with Dr. Lois Cavucci and Dr. Steve Wilkins
- Addressed temperature issue at Mercer with Cathy Richards
- Helped address an issue at the MS with Mike Sears and John Koppitch
- Addressed transcript issue for staff member
- Addressed reduced time issues
- Addressed Support Teacher issues
- Met new IC Coordinator Dawn Sizemore
- Communicated with Dr. Lois Cavucci
- Communicated with Dr. Steve Wilkins about facility issue and committee appointees
- Communicated with Dr. Gregory Hutchings
- Communicated with Addie Tobey concerning evaluation
- Communicated with Jonathan Kuehnle about a building issue with the help of James Schmidt
- Attended Shaker Union Summit, Friday, February 9th with other leaders from Shaker Heights City Schools bargaining units. Past SHTA VP Dollye Finney generously organized this event.

Vice President, Matt Zucca

- Worked on *A Night for the Red & White* logistics.
- Will hold a drawing for members who contribute to the Silent Auction for *A Night for the Red & White*.
- Worked with an issue involving maternity leave, resolved with help from Treasurer, Bryan Christman.
- Dealt with a SHTA ST issue; person doing work of an Intervention Specialist-no difference in the work being performed.
- When you have a concern or issue, please see your building rep. so that you are heard.
- There will no longer be a Medical Director, issues for nurses and standing orders.
 - Dr. Gregory Hutchings and Paula Klausner provided insight on the issue.

Secretary, Darlene Garrison

- *A Night for the Red & White* raffle is complete.
- A total of \$558.00 was collected from the sale of raffle tickets.
 - Boulevard 0 tickets
 - Fernway 32 ticket
 - Lomond 47 tickets
 - Mercer 21 tickets
 - Onaway 23 tickets
 - Woodbury 25 tickets
 - Middle School 45 tickets
 - High School 86 tickets
- Two winners were selected, each will receive two tickets to *A Night for the Red & White* event.
- Winners: James Schmidt from the High School and Kathleen Mohny from Fernway.
- Attended Union Summit meeting on Friday, February 9th.
- Please be sure to sign the attendance sheet.

Treasurer, Bill Scanlon

- Has been busy paying bills for Our Association.
- Financial reports are passed out every other meeting.
- Attended Union Summit meeting of Friday, February 9th.
- Attended the NEAOA meeting.
- Edward Jones Investments are \$1,170,000

Executive Board Reports

Past President, Becky Thomas

- Attended the January BOE meeting.
 - 3 Resignations
- Attended the Finance and Audit meeting
 - Equity Task Force
 - Declining enrollment
- Will be attending the BOE meeting tomorrow.

Teacher Education, Lisa Hardiman

- No Report

Membership/Elections, Chante Thomas-Taylor (Report given by John Morris)

- No Report

Policy, Tim Kalan

- Participated in the Sustainability Fair
- Film, *Resilience* at Case Western Reserve on Wednesday

Evaluation, Lena Paskewitz

- Working with an issue- final rating skilled or accomplished and following year was formal instead of informal.
 - SGM 60% or lower than average, you will be on a formal year

Legislative, Dave Klapholz

- First year that Every Student Succeeds Act is in full effect
- John Morris - Thank you Dave for your commitment to Legislative.

Publications, Andrew Glasier(Report Given by John Morris)

- Submissions for newsletter are due Wednesday, February 14th at midnight. Please respond “No Report” if you do not have one.

Social, Selena Brown

- Annual Recognition Ceremony is scheduled for Thursday, May 24th.
- Will continue to work with Heinen’s catering.

Legal Aid, Cathy Grieshop

- No Report

Public Relations, Bob Bognar

- Well over 100 shirts ordered by 58 staff members.
- Orders in by next Thursday.
- Credit card square readers are available from Bognar or Scanlon.

Professional Rights and Responsibilities, Mike Sears

- Worked on a salary schedule issue.
- Caregiver leave concern.
- Worked on a maternity leave issue.
- March 01st check will include raises from new contract.
- March 16th check will be your correct amount.

SHTA ST, Bonnie Gordon

- Issue at Fernway and other schools - No difference with a Support Teacher job duties and Teacher.
- Worked with Dr. John Morris on an issue with IC.
- Waiting for administrator to set-up regular scheduled meeting times, still waiting.

Salary Tenure, John Morris

- 99% Approval of the Contract

Building Representative Reports

Boulevard, Angela Anderson

- Restroom issues - 3 of the 4 restrooms are taken care of, action plan for the 4th restroom for this Friday.
- Kindergarten Colleagues are expressing the need for full time support-behavior issues, which causes instruction to stop.
- Co-teaching model an idea with certified assistant in classroom.

Fernway, Andee Hassell

- Six teachers and one nurse- no coverage for subs and it is interrupting specials
- Art Teacher has to assess PreK students 2 times a year. This is 32 more assessments a year-large workload.

Lomond, Steve Smith

- No Report

Mercer, Cathy Richards

- Concern about classroom temperatures throughout the building. The district had contractors out the next day.
- Appreciated how quickly they began working on the problem.

Onaway, Paula Klausner

- No Report

Woodbury, Angela Goodrum

- No Report

Middle School, John Koppitch

- We worked with administration on creating an adequate working space for three members of the world language dept. They now have; a location to lock up valuables and tests, a personal work area, and one working computer (administration is working with the Help Desk to obtain more working computers).
- There were staff concerns over the implementation of a new grading policy at our school. Teachers did not feel that they were involved with the collaborative process in creating the new policy without any notice. Mike Sears and I met with the administrative team and they agreed to repeal and delay any policy changes until next year. They also agreed to work with teachers and collaborate on any changes to our grading policy at the Middle School.
- There are staff concerns about the discipline procedures regarding students with whom the MIT program (restorative practices) doesn't seem to be working.

High School, James Schmidt

- No Report

Old Business – None

New Business - None

Good of the Order

- Thank you so much Aimee Grey for a delicious soup and salad meal. Thank you for hosting our February meeting.

Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn meeting made by Tim Kalan and seconded by Nicole Cicconetti.
- Meeting adjourned at 5:48PM.

Respectfully submitted,

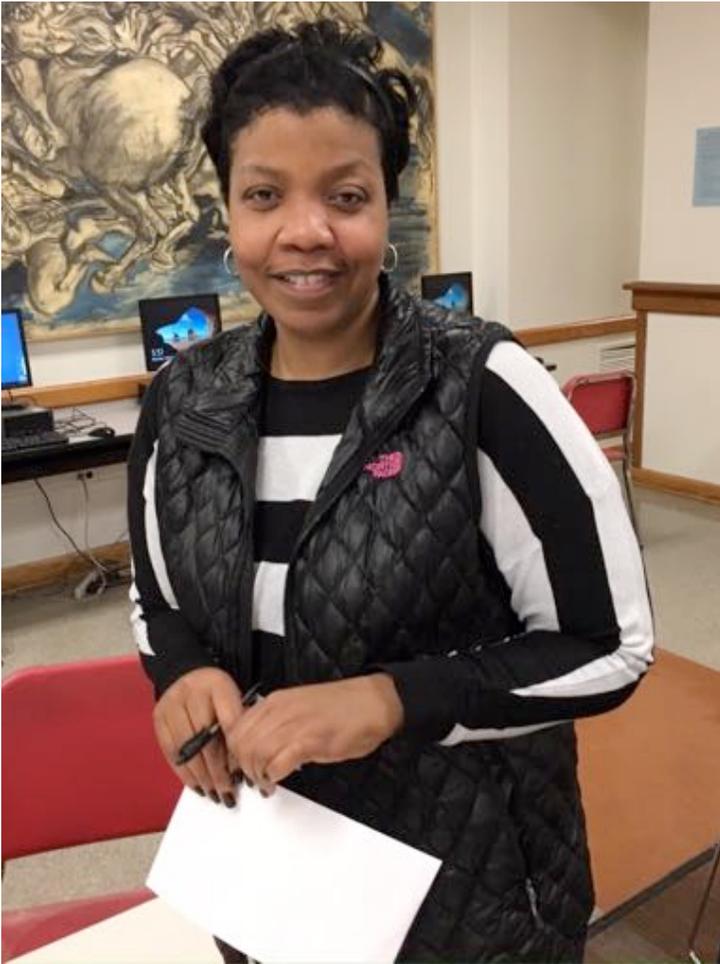
Darlene Garrison

The SHTA is on



us @

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Shaker-Heights-Teachers-Association>



**The February SHTA
Representatives Council
meeting @ Shaker Heights
High School.**

**Special thanks to SHHS
Representative Aimee Grey
for hosting the meeting**

AN OPEN LETTER TO EVERY POLITICIAN WHO REPRESENTS ME

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.

We hear about the major school shootings. Columbine. Sandy Hook. Parkland. However, there are more weapons confiscated in schools every day than the public could possibly imagine. There is a very good chance that if your child attends school, he or she has been in a building with a potentially deadly weapon. If your husband or wife is a teacher, janitor, secretary, psychologist, or cafeteria worker, there is a very good chance that he or she has gone to work in a building with a potentially deadly weapon. During the 2014-2015 school year, New York City school officials reported 2,485 separate instances of weapons confiscated in city schools (New York Post, <https://nypost.com/2016/09/11/city-schools-confiscating-more-weapons-than-police-data-says/>, retrieved 02/17/2018).

Every school in the United States should be required to install metal detectors, and every person entering a school building should be required to pass through them. Every building. Every child and adult. Every day.

A moderately priced metal detector costs approximately \$5,000.00. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there were approximately 90,000 public school buildings in the United States during the 2013-2014 school year. Providing one metal detector for each public school building represents a cost of \$450 million. The budget for the Federal Department of Education for the 2017 fiscal year was approximately \$69.4 billion. The cost of providing a metal detector to every public school building in the United States represents 0.64% of the budget for the Federal Department of Education, less than one percent. The United States Department of Education could provide a metal detector to every public school building in the country for a cost equal to less than one percent of its budget.

A measure such as this eliminates the possibility that a school in an economically distressed area might not be able to afford this protection for its students and staff. This eliminates the possibility that a school district might not believe such protections are needed until after a tragedy has already taken place. A measure such as this provides some additional protection for students that do not require any politician to take a particular position on gun control.

If we as a society really believe that all children have the right to learn in an environment free from the threat of being harmed by a potentially deadly weapon while they study, we should demand that every politician, at every level, in every community makes the promise to sponsor and pass legislation that will require every school building in the United States to install metal detectors; to require every person who enters a school building to pass through a metal detector; and to demand that the Federal Department of Education funds this. If the Federal Department of Education is serious about ensuring the safety of students, teachers, and school staff, the Department won't wait for politicians and their constituents to demand such action, but will take this action immediately.

Sincerely,

Stacey L. Steggert, Ph.D.

Special Education Department Chair

Shaker Heights High School

LETS MOVE FORWARD ERIC GORDON

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

I think the pendulum is finally swinging back to sound teaching. It's been over fifteen years since the slow, steady de-professionalization and corporate takeover of education began. For decades, we have been told how testing, charter schools, and massive data collection will help students succeed. For years we have seen the opposite, as charter schools have failed children and over testing has disengaged students and teachers. Finally, the discussion at the Ohio School Board has centered around reducing testing and reformulating teacher evaluations to lessen the impact of testing on how teachers are graded. They have made recommendations to reduce students standardized tests and the Ohio Department of Education has begun "checking" on online schools for false reporting. Hopefully the momentum at the state level will continue and allow teachers to once again teach.

Late last year, State Senator Peggy Lehner introduced Senate Bill 240, which would leave much of the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System in place, except the much hated 35 to 50% rating based on student test scores. Instead state test scores would ["use measures of student progress to guide teacher development instead of judging them."](#) (O'Donnell). While it does not get rid of the testing, and does not exclude it from teacher evaluation, it is a step in the right direction; away from punitive results to a tool for teacher reflection, even if it is completely ineffectual tool.

The State mandated tests, often administered in March, even if they are supposed to cover the entire school year, are reported back to teachers in June, when the same students have left our classrooms. The tests in United States History and United States Government, the one that is linked to my evaluation, are so poorly designed and written by the American Institute of Research (AIR) that I am flabbergasted when new test questions are released. I once asked an Ohio school board member why we continue to pay for sub-standard tests and her reply was "follow the money." The calculation on how my scores are made, called a Value Added rating, are a proprietary, secretive method owned by the SAS Institute. I have no idea how these important numbers are created. I was told once that they are based on how my student did on a Science End-of-Course Exam?!? On top of all this, the calculation that the Ohio Department of Education has created to calculate how the score a teacher gets is weighed more than 50% towards the tests scores, breaking Ohio Revised Code as set by the state legislatures for them to count no more than 50%. While all this may seem much like an episode of famed television show *The Twilight Zone* this is what teachers have been living with for years. Reality now seems stranger than fiction.

So, it was with cautious hope that we see some movement from both the Ohio State School Board and the Ohio General Assembly that would begin to reduce testing and make teacher evaluations based more on teacher performance. It was then that the [Cleveland Schools CEO Eric Gordon](#) made his improbable comment that he wished to continue using test scores as a gauge of teachers. Our colleagues in Cleveland Public Schools have taken on unparalleled hardships. They work for in an undemocratic system, in which the mayor appoints a C.E.O. who is beholden not to the voters but the mayor. The title C.E.O alone is an affront to the very notion of what public education is for and provides. We are not in a business; we educate future citizens. Cleveland teachers often do not know which school they will be teaching in until August, scrambling to gather their supplies and set-up their whole new classroom in brand new buildings. Pressure is made to increase test scores, even though research has shown that establishing relationships and building trust are a key component of

successful learning. In a district that has an exceptionally high poverty rate, teachers are on the front line of building the truest vision of America as a place of equal opportunity. Eric Gordon sees only test scores and datasets, while teachers see the smiling faces of our future.

It is time for the false hopes of these so-called education reforms based on large collection of student data to end. My students who are struggling readers are forced to take the same End of Course exams as my students who are taking five Advanced Placement tests in the Spring. The struggling student is then forced to retake the test and retake the test, hoping to get a better score and graduate. Each of these students comes to my class with vastly different needs and backgrounds, yet they are all tested the same, an idea based on no discernable evidence in educational improvements that I have read. It turns school for some of my most struggling students into torture. While a few persevere, many more give up. When they come to my class as juniors to learn about our government, their hatred towards the very organization they are being forced to learn about is intense. I tell them they can't change the government if they do not understand how it works. For many of my students, their response is unprintable.

AG

