

## IMPORTANT DATES

**Friday, October 19<sup>th</sup>:** Wear your SHTA T-shirt day

**Monday, November 5<sup>th</sup>:** SHTA Executive Board meeting.

**Tuesday, November 6<sup>th</sup>:**  
**ELECTION DAY: Schools Closed**

**Monday, November 12<sup>th</sup>:** SHTA Representative Council meeting @ Boulevard School

# SHTA *news*

## OCTOBER 15, 2018

**ISSUE NO. 2**

## Message From the President

By the next time you read the SHTA Newsletter, we will have completed the mid-term elections. This includes the election of our next Ohio Governor. Although we do not endorse political candidates as part of our SHTA Constitution and By-Laws, I would still like to encourage you to vote with educational issues in mind. Which candidates will support full funding in education throughout Ohio and the nation, or at least get us closer? Which congressional candidates will push back against standardized tests and the funding of charter and private schools? Who will represent students, families and teachers best at the Statehouse and in Congress?

I know that we all have multi-dimensional lives. However, if being a teacher has not become part of your political and social awareness, I believe it may be time to realize this dimension of your personal and working lives. I implore you to research the candidates, find out where they stand on educational issues, and vote your conscience. Every two years we can shape our state and national policies and politicians. Voting this November 6<sup>th</sup> is the most important political act you can make in the coming weeks. I encourage you to join me and your fellow teachers at the polls.

It's been an eventful month. I attended the successful SHTA Happy Hour. I posted to the SHTA and Cuyahoga County Educators Summit (CCES) Facebook Pages. I worked on personnel issues at the high school. I discussed Fernway issues with Vice-President Matt Zucca. I asked High School Head Representative and Negotiations Team Member James Schmidt to Chair the Sick Day Transfer Committee. I worked with Special Education members on district concerns. I met and communicated with our lawyer, Susannah Muskovitz, on SHTA legal matters. I communicated regularly with Interim Superintendent Dr. Stephen Wilkins. I addressed member's contract day concerns at the middle school. I discussed a medical issue with Personal Rights and Responsibilities Chair Mike Sears. We will both attend the Insurance Committee meeting scheduled for October 11<sup>th</sup>. I met to discuss the Superintendent's Search and advocated for involvement from teachers at the elementary, Woodbury, middle school, and high school levels. I addressed a member's technology issue. I attended the District Strategic Planning meeting. I asked Treasurer Bill Scanlon to file State Employee Relations Board (SERB) certification paperwork. I worked with Matt Zucca on a Support Teacher parity issue at Fernway. I attended SHTA Support Teacher Arbitration on October 4<sup>th</sup> and October 5<sup>th</sup>. I will attend arbitration again on November 19<sup>th</sup>. I began work on the Calendar Committee. I filed a Class Action Grievance on behalf of the Support Teachers. I consulted on a facility issue at the high school. I consulted on an ongoing Supplemental Issue.

It continues to be both a pleasure and honor to serve as SHTA President. Regardless of the political outcome, we will continue to support one another and our students through these difficult times for American Education. I cannot imagine working with a finer group of educational professionals than the members of the SHTA. Please don't hesitate to email me (morris\_j@shaker.org) or call (x6033) with your concerns.

*Respectfully submitted,  
John Morris*



**CONGRATULATIONS**  
To high school special education teacher Stacey Steggert for being the winner of our "SHTA T-Shirt in the Summer" Contest!  
Stacey won a \$25 gift certificate to Mitchell's Ice Cream.

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

# Reports from the Executive Board

## VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Happy fall! It is time again to apply for SHTA Fellowships. The Fellowship Grants are designed to promote professional development and can be used to attend workshops, for payment of dues to professional organizations (except the SHTA), journals or professional materials. The winners are selected via random drawing. Submission must be returned to me by November 2nd. Send entries to Matt Zucca, Woodbury Elementary. Multiple entries will be disqualified and only members of the Association are eligible for participation. Recipients will be chosen and awarded \$100 each. Winners will be notified by district e-mail and their names published in the November newsletter. Application can be found enclosed within this newsletter. This past month I have worked on several different Association issues. I met with Susannah Muskovitz, the Association's Lawyer to prepare for the SHTA ST contract negotiations. I attended the Finance and Audit Committee meeting with James Schmidt, and Past President Dr. Thomas. I attended the PTO council meeting on behalf of the Association. I am working to resolve a payment issues for Fernway teachers regarding class relocation and additional summer work outside of contract days with Dr. Breeden. I attended two Fernway rebuild meetings with other district representatives. I am looking into concerns regarding contract reclassification for an Association Member. Finally, I have been making disbursement out of the SHTA Fernway Fire Fund to members who continue to submit receipts. I would like to express my sincere and heartfelt thanks to all who have donated to this fund. Your generosity is overwhelming. Thank you for your continued support for your colleagues and the Association. Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Matthew Zucca*

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Boo! Halloween is coming up, a fun time for our students. I get a kick out of Halloween too, because I love seeing kids getting excited and having fun. I also enjoy seeing my colleagues laughing and having a good time. Recently I've seen some teachers at the High School, especially English Teacher Carole Kovach, doing things that are strictly focused on raising staff morale. I view this as important work and essential to the health of our district. Our support for each other is what enables this place to be transformational for our students.

On Wednesday, October 24<sup>th</sup> the Investments Committee (made up of myself, Matt Zucca, Chante Thomas-Taylor, and Todd Keitlen) will be meeting with Brady Krebs, our Edward Jones advisor. The Investments Committee meets a minimum of twice a year (once in the Fall and once in the Spring) to review our investments and decide on any changes.

A full financial report will be included in November's newsletter. If anyone has any questions about our Association's finances, please give me a call (ext6296).

*Respectfully submitted,  
Bill Scanlon*

Vote

*A Poem by Cathy Grieshop*

*Things have not gone my way*

*Janus case*

*Betsy DeVos*

*Kavanaugh*

*Our president*

*The firing of a Lomond custodian*

*I write letters*

*talk with others*

*attended events*

*post on FB*

*Didn't matter*

*My side lost*

*Those who are with me*

*Should we give in*

*Allow complacency*

*Absolutely not*

*What if I said*

*my vote*

*my voice*

*They don't matter*

*Never say that*

*Things aren't going my way today*

*But*

*I will keep trying*

*make a difference*

*write letters*

*share information*

*I will vote in every election*

*We all need to*

*Vote for children*

*Vote for public education*

*Vote for change*

*Vote for a strong future*

*To rise from this mess*

*Like a powerful phoenix*

*out of the ashes*

*We vote*

# ***EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS***

## **PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES REPORT**

During the past month, I have:

- Attended the Executive Board meetings in September and October.
- Attended the SHTA Happy Hour at Boss Dog.
- Consulted with John Morris about support teacher arbitration.
- Assisted members with maternity leave, caregiver leave, and FMLA.
- Met with the Middle School Administrative Leadership team to address teacher concerns related to special education students in regular education classes. The group plans to meet again in November.
- Received feedback from Human Resources about a possible Reduction in Force.
- Spoke to members about concerns with Medical Mutual not providing the same benefits as Anthem regarding both ER visits and co-pays.
- Shared these concerns with the Treasurer's office.

***If you receive a medical bill from an ER visit that costs more than the \$100 co-pay, please let me know right away.*** Also, if you receive other bills for procedures that seem higher than they did with Anthem, please let me know. The Insurance Committee met on October 11. Look for news about this meeting in my November report.

***Respectfully submitted,  
Mike Sears, Chairperson***

## **LEGISLATIVE REPORT**

There are only a few weeks until the election; there are real decisions that will be made with big effects on people in this country. In Ohio, we will choose our next governor, and that will surely affect educational policy in our state. In Wisconsin, the incumbent Governor, Republican Scott Walker who has cut the state education budget, is running against the former state superintendent of schools. According to [Education Week](#), over 100 teachers are running in elections this November.

Support for unions is high among voters. Voters in Missouri overturned a law that prohibited unions from collecting fees for negotiating contracts for non-members of public unions. On the other side, unions, especially unions of employees that work for public entities (schools, cities, states, ...) have been under attack by the federal government, most noticeably by the US Supreme Court ([see Janus case](#)). [Education Dive](#) reports that voters will be asked to decide school funding issues in many states this November.

Although the federal government has not budged on gun control, [CNN](#) reports that cities and states are moving to enact tougher laws.

The National Education Association has created "[Red for Ed](#)." It seeks to increase funding for education, and it seems to be targeting conservative states that have cut budgets and have eliminated public unions.

Through the summer, the students of Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida continued their March For Our Lives tour. Although the students want legislation to help minimize gun violence, their current focus is on getting out the vote.

If you know of an education issue that is in transition in the legislative world, please let the Legislative Committee of the SHTA know about it.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
*David Klapholz, Chairperson*

## EVALUATION COMMITTEE

Greetings everyone! As you know, this year we will continue with the same protocols for evaluation as last year. Hopefully, all teachers have uploaded their Annual Professional Growth Plans to eTPES and evaluators have communicated with the teacher(s) they are evaluating regarding this year's evaluation. If you haven't completed one of these steps in the process, please be sure to do so as soon as possible.

I encourage all teachers and evaluators to review the Teacher Evaluation Packet, as well as forms and resources on the Evaluation page of Shaker.org. The packet has timelines for both formal and informal evaluations and explains protocols in detail. I will continue to provide reminders and updates through the newsletter, but not to the detail that you can find in the packet.

As you look ahead to working with your evaluator, consider requesting that conferences take place in your teaching space, if they haven't been as of yet. The Evaluation Packet clearly states the following: "Teachers and evaluators should schedule the pre-observation conferences, observations, and post-observation conferences at mutually agreed upon dates and times. Conferences should take place in the teacher's classroom." As a peer evaluator, my partner and I are often referring to teaching materials and our classroom space to support our discussion, which leads to greater learning for both of us. I would love to hear feedback about the effect of this practice on the evaluation process.

Please remember that everyone (Formal and Informal Evaluation cycles) has an "informal observation" (think walkthrough) EACH semester. Formal Evaluation cycle informal observations should be 3-5 minutes in length and *do not require a separate form*. The observation notes should be added to the Performance Rubric and shared with the teacher. Informal Evaluation cycle observations should be 15 minutes in length and *do require the evaluator to complete the Informal Observation Form*. The form should be uploaded to eTPES as an observation.

Teachers in Formal Evaluation cycles will also need the full lesson observations 2 or 3 times during the school year, depending on your status of limited or continuing contract. Please refer to the packet for detailed formal observation information.

As always, the Evaluation Committee members are available to answer any questions you might have and assist you in addressing individual concerns, if needed. All teachers and administrators are expected to follow the committee agreed upon protocols for evaluation. Furthermore, the committee has expressed since its inception that the process should be focused first and foremost on learning and growth. It is my hope that each one of us can honor that goal.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
*Lena Paskewitz, Chairperson*

## PAST PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This month I attended the Representative Council meeting, the Finance and Audit Committee meeting as well as the regular meeting of the Board of Education. When you receive this Newsletter, I will have attended the Insurance Committee meeting.

After preliminary activities, the board opened the meeting to public comment. The first speakers reacted to the agenda item to terminate the contract of a non-teaching employee. They described their positive relationship with the employee and requested that the Board members reconsider the agenda item. Other public comment followed on other issues and during the meeting, the Board voted to terminate the contract (Board Member Cremer abstained; Board Member Clawson was not at the meeting).

The rebuilding of Fernway School was a primary focus at both the Finance and the Board meetings. While insurance coverage will rebuild and restore the original facility, there are discussions about making improvements to the former structure and to use this time as an opportunity to bring features to Fernway that are available at other K-4 buildings. For example, students at Fernway do not have access to a multi-purpose area for food service and must eat in their classrooms. This creates a messy, perhaps even unsanitary environment for learning. Fernway does not have a dedicated Library; classes visit the Library at the same time that other classes are using the computer lab that is located there. There are ADA compliance issues that need to be addressed and the addition of an elevator has been proposed. These additional improvements would cost beyond what would be covered by insurance. Several plans were presented with the additional cost ranging from one to five million dollars beyond the insurance coverage. The Board of Education delayed their decision about Fernway. The financial impact of their decision could impact the timing of the next operating levy.

The Board of Education meeting lasted over 3 hours, which would have made for a very long work day for SHTA officers. I hope my attending these meetings and reporting on them allows the SHTA leadership time with their families as well as time to focus on instructional preparation. I am happy to provide this support for President John Morris and the SHTA leadership.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
*Becky Thomas, Chairperson*

## POLICY COMMITTEE

Election day will be here soon - November 6th to be exact. It is imperative that teachers make their voices heard. Please vote to promote policies that support public education. Our constitution prohibits the direct funding of candidates running for office. However, By-Law VII, section D part 2 states:

*The Association will sponsor a Political Action Committee (a special committee appointed by the president) whose purpose will be to support political issues relevant to the Purposes of the Association. Representative Council may direct the building representatives to solicit voluntary monetary contributions from the membership for the PAC. All contributions will be sent to the Treasurer, who will deposit these funds into an account kept specifically for this purpose, and will then forward the funds according to the directive of the PAC. No funds from the PAC treasury shall be used directly for the purpose of donations to elected officials or candidates seeking office.*

If you feel compelled to donate to political causes through the SHTA, please consider making a donation to SHTA PAC. You can visit the [PAC of the Shaker Heights Teachers Association](#) on Facebook, or contact Cathy Grieshop for more information on how to take action!

*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. For those who paid by check, thank you for your payment. Or, if you have not yet done so, please submit your check for \$300 to your building representative.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Chante Thomas-Taylor, Chairperson*

## **SOCIAL COMMITTEE**

Thank you for attending our Back to School Happy Hour on September 14, 2018 at Boss Dog Brewery located in Cleveland Heights. More than 60 members attended! Your participation is always appreciated!

*Respectfully submitted,  
Selena Boyer, Chairperson*

## **SUPPORT TEACHERS COMMITTEE**

In our collective bargaining negotiations with the District, which were declared to be at an impasse last June, we have had three sessions with the federal arbitrator. Our next and hopefully final session is scheduled for November 19, during one of the pre-Thanksgiving professional days, so it's possibly that we won't have a recommendation from the arbitrator before the holidays. Because the recommendation will have to be voted on by both the membership and the School Board, we probably will not have a contract before the new year. Realistically, it's unlikely before February. The contract will be retroactive to July 1, 2018, whenever it is finalized.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Bonnie Gordon, Chairperson*

## **SHTA PAC**

I am attempting to organize a screening of the film *Backpack Full of Cash*. This is an award-winning documentary about how the privatization of schools is pulling apart public education. The website is a wonderful resource containing facts, resources and ways to take action around this issue. Takes some time to check it out: <https://www.backpackfullofcash.com/>

Election Day is around the corner. Encourage family and friends to make it to the polls. It is time to vote in candidates who support public education. This is a list from the OEA endorsed candidates: <https://www.ohea.org/cms/assets/uploads/2018/09/2018-Endorsed-Candidates-9.26.2018.pdf>

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Cathy Grieshop, Chair*

## **SALARY TENURE COMMITTEE**

We continue to attend fact-finding arbitration with the district in good faith. We hope to receive recommendations from the fact finder after our final meeting on November 19<sup>th</sup>. We can then vote on the acceptance of a contract for Support Teachers.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
John L. Morris, Chair*

# MINUTES FOR THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING

October 8, 2018, Woodbury School

SHTA President, John Morris started the October 08, 2018 Rep. Council Meeting at 4:34PM.

Chris Hayward, Principal of Fernway Elementary School welcomed SHTA membership to *Fernbury*. The school year is off to a great start. Mr. Hayward thanked the staff at Boulevard, Onaway and Woodbury for all the support. Still working through a few challenges but things are going well. The Fernway staff members have done a phenomenal job adjusting and thank you.

MINUTES from the September 11, 2018 Rep. Council meeting were approved. Motion to approve the minutes, Tim Kalan and seconded by Bill Scanlon.

## Administration Report

Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction, Dr. Terri Breeden was present for the Rep. Council Meeting

- Shared appreciation for the support of Fernway and staff
- Thank you to the 45 participants who attended the IB Workshop this past weekend at Shaker Heights High School.
  - Shared comments from participants from other school districts
    - “Biggest private school I have ever seen.”
    - “These floors.”

P.T.O. Report – There were no PTO representatives present for meeting

## Officer’s Report

President, John Morris

- Attended successful SHTA Happy Hour
- Posted to the SHTA and CCES Facebook Page
- Worked on personnel issues at the HS
- Discussed Fernway issues with Matt Zucca
- Asked James Schmidt to Chair the Sick Day Transfer Committee
- Worked with special education members on district concerns
- Met and communicated with our lawyer, Susannah Muskovitz, on SHTA legal matters
- Communicated regularly with Superintendent Dr. Stephen Wilkins
- Discussed Fernway issues with Matt Zucca
- Addressed member’s contract day concern at the MS
- Discussed a medical issue with Mike Sears – Insurance Committee meeting scheduled for October 11th
- Met to discuss Superintendent’s Search – advocated for involvement from teachers at elementary, 5-6, middle school, and high school levels
- Addressed a member’s technology issue
- Attended District Strategic Planning meeting
- Asked Bill Scanlon to file SERB certification paperwork
- Worked with Matt Zucca on a Support Teacher parity issue at Fernway
- Attended SHTA Support Teacher Arbitration on October 4<sup>th</sup> and October 5<sup>th</sup>
- Will attend arbitration again on November 19th
- Filed a Class Action Grievance on behalf of the Support Teachers
- Consulted on a facility issue at the HS
- Consulted on an ongoing Supplemental Issue

### ***Vice President, Matt Zucca***

- Met with Susannah Muskovitz, the Association's Lawyer, to prepare for the ST contract negotiations
- Attended the Finance and Audit Committee meeting with James Schmidt, and Past President, Dr. Becky Thomas.
- Attended the PTO Council Meeting on behalf of the Association.
- Worked on payment issues for class relocation and additional summer work, might have to grieve this.
- Attended 2 Fernway rebuild meetings.
- Working on a contract reclassification concern with a member.
- Fellowship Grant payments.
- Fernway Fire Fund payments.

### ***Secretary, Darlene Garrison***

- Attended SHTA Happy Hour at Boss Dog. Thank you Selena Boyer for such a great event
- Continue to take notes, type and submit
- If you have an extended report, please send it electronically
- Be sure to sign the attendance form

### ***Treasurer, Bill Scanlon***

- Worked on the Fernway Fund with Matt Zucca
- Met with accountants to make sure the books were squared away
- Will be attending an Investment meeting with Brady Jones

### **Executive Board Reports**

#### ***Past President, Becky Thomas***

- Attended the Happy Hour at Boss Dog, very nice venue
- Consulted with the Support Teachers Arbitration
- Attended the Board of Education meeting
- Attended the Finance and Audit meeting

#### ***Teacher Education, Lisa Hardiman***

- No report

#### ***Membership/Elections, Chante Thomas-Taylor***

- Collected dues from members paying by cash or check
- Have been reaching out to new teachers to join the Union

#### ***Policy, Tim Kalan***

- Attended the Happy Hour at Boss Dog
- Helping members with a few minor issues

#### ***Public Relations, Bob Bognar(not present-report given by John Morris)***

- Nearly all t-shirts from previous order are sold
- Will be creating a new order

#### ***Legislative, Dave Klapholz***

- Tons of items will be on the voting ballot
- Please get out and vote during this election
- Over 100 educators on the ballot
- Gun control
- Governships

### ***Support Teachers, Bonnie Gordon***

- Attended two fact finder sessions
  - Scheduled a third session on November 19th
  - Earliest we will see a contract is January 2019

### ***Publications, Andrew Glasier***

- Wednesday at midnight all submissions are due for the newsletter.
- Worked on Facebook and Twitter Pages
- Updated the SHTAweb page
- Would like for other schools besides the high school to write editorials
- Winner of the summer pictures - Widest variety wearing SHTA t-shirt goes to...Stacey Steggert

### ***Social, Selena Brown***

- Thank you for attending the SHTA Happy Hour
- Working on the Holiday Party for December 01st (possible date)
- Suggestion to check out possible venue at the new Van Aken District

### ***Legal Aid, Cathy Grieshop(Not present for meeting)***

- Check Facebook for update

### ***Professional Rights and Responsibilities, Mike Sears***

- Attended two Executive Board Meetings
- Attended the Happy Hour at Boss Dog
- Discussed maternity leave and caregiver leave with members
- Working on an insurance issue with Bryan Christman
  - We should have the same coverage as Anthem
- Dealing with issue concerning special education students in regular classroom- making sure that they have the correct and needed support

### ***Evaluation, Lena Paskewitz***

- Want to make sure that members and the Human Resource department understand the expectations dealing with the evaluation process
- Want to encourage everyone to know their evaluation cycle

### ***Building Representative Reports***

#### ***Boulevard, Angela Anderson***

- No Report

#### ***Fernway, Victoria Goldfarb***

- Staff members are still receiving furniture
- We have keys for access to our classrooms

#### ***Lomond, Steve Smith***

- No Report

#### ***Mercer, Nicole Cicconetti***

- Issue with door duty by door "G" - parents are not abiding by safety concerns. Parents are not go to office to check in, walking their child in the building.
  - Principal, has been very helpful and supportive
    - Provided teachers with walkie talkies.

***Onaway, Paula Klausner***

- Heat issues
  - Can windows on the top floors be left open at night?

***Woodbury, Angela Goodrum***

- No report

***Middle School, John Koppitch***

- Individuals and Societies teachers are still concerned about the placement of certain special education students in general education classes, they feel that the students are not receiving the appropriate support that they need. Administration has offered CILC compensation to a few teachers to write differentiated curriculum for these teachers in response to these concerns.
- Many teachers believe that the new grading policy will not be beneficial for students as they prepare for high school. The high school does not have a school-wide policy on re-takes, and teachers do not agree with having to accept the highest grade during the re-take process.
- There have been instances when teachers have not felt supported during IEP meetings (in which parents were present) by Special Ed. Administration.
- Teachers are concerned with the new health care insurance and visits to the emergency room, they have been receiving large bills for ER visits.

***High School, James Schmidt***

- Assisted teacher with the tuition reimbursement process

***Old Business***

- None

***New Business***

- None

***Good of the Order***

- Thank you Victoria Goldfarb and the Fernway Reps. for a wonderful meal
- Thank you Selena Boyer for a fabulous Happy Hour

Motion to adjourn meeting made by James Schmidt, seconded by Paula Klausner  
Meeting adjourned at 5:19PM

***Respectfully submitted,  
Darlene Garrison, Secretary***



# Reduction in Force Hurts Students

*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.*

My first job teaching middle school social studies was in a community in Indiana, about an hour northeast of Indianapolis. I had three preps (Eastern Hemisphere Geography, American History, and Exploratory German), coached soccer and basketball, advised student council, took students to Indiana History Day, and chaperoned the 8<sup>th</sup> grade trip to D.C. The principal who hired me helped get my career off to a good start. She told me to never let more than one student leave the classroom at a time. She told me to make sure I reached for the highest levels of Bloom's taxonomy in every lesson. She also left us postcards in our mailboxes after observing something positive in our classrooms. (E-mail was still relatively new at the time.) One winter day in 1999, she stopped by my classroom with a concerned look on her face. She explained to me that the school district wouldn't be able to offer me a job for the next year because of a reduction in force. I was both devastated and confused. She told me that a high school librarian position was being cut, but I wondered how that could possibly affect me. It turned out that the person in that position held a 5-12 social studies teaching license, giving her the right to my job. I went through the process of appealing the school board's decision with the support of the local chapter of the Indiana State Teachers Association, and I had a hearing in front of the Board of Education. The school board members told me they wish they didn't have to do this to me. They thanked me for my service. They said it was just about the budget.

Why am I telling this story now? I encourage you to review the Board Notes from June 12, 2018 <https://www.boarddocs.com/oh/shaker/Board.nsf/Public>. During this meeting, the Board voted to eliminate 10.8 teaching positions through attrition for the 2018-19 school year. The original proposal eliminated only 5.8 positions through attrition, but the Board decided to almost double the number of jobs eliminated. Two of the options in the original proposal include a reduction in force in either 2019 or 2020. It seems likely that the Board plans to follow through on one of those options based on their 4-1 vote to eliminate 10.8 teaching positions on June 12. Lisa Cremer was the only Board member to vote against the cuts. As my story above indicates, a reduction in force often leads to the unintended consequence of placing teachers in positions that are not the "best fit". When changes are made like this, students suffer.

Article XIII of our collective bargaining agreement states, "A human resources department's effectiveness is directly related to its ability to implement the principle of "best fit." To the degree that a human resources department is able to match applicants to positions requiring the abilities and characteristics possessed by these applicants, will the department and thus the schools be functioning most effectively. The matching of individual's competencies with specific position demands, not of individuals with schools, is a primary personnel function." Was the principle of "best fit" used in the cuts passed on June 12? Did the cuts made through attrition (no reduction in force has happened yet) impact students? How much?

One world language teacher was transferred from the Middle School to the High School, which might have been a smooth transition. However, a world language teacher at the Middle School now has three classes with 30 or more students. As Woodbury teachers who retired were not replaced, teams had to be re-structured. Teachers who had no previous experience teaching enriched language arts and math were assigned those classes. The elimination of a Language and Literature teaching position at the high school created such large classes that a part time teacher had to be hired in August. Even so, many classes have close to 30 students. Intervention specialist positions were eliminated at the Middle School and the High School. There have been concerns in both buildings about how student needs will be met without additional staff.

If the Board of Education approves the reduction in force proposal in 2019, 14 more teaching positions will be cut. Students are already suffering because of the cuts made on June 12. How could the Board think even more drastic cuts won't have a negative impact on the Shaker experience for students? The proposal lists

the elimination of 4.0 Middle School teachers. The enrollment figures show 404 students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade in 2018-19, which makes it a larger class than either of the two at the Middle School right now. Getting rid of a team at the Middle School has been mentioned. If that happens, there will be many classes with close to 30 students. In addition, one team will have to be a split team teaching both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. I was on a split team once (before I got RIFed), and it presents a lot of challenges. It would be nearly impossible to collaborate on IB unit planners for two grade levels while teaching full time all day. There wouldn't be enough common planning time, and students on the split team wouldn't get the same quality of instruction. The proposal suggests eliminating 6.0 elementary teachers. It's not clear if this includes Woodbury or just the K-4 buildings. Either way, at least one position per building would be eliminated. Is enrollment really declining that much?

After reviewing the enrollment data from the June 12 Board Docs, enrollment starts to shrink more in the early elementary years, but not in every grade level and not in every K-4 building. For example, some classes at Lomond still have over 80 students. Others are in the 70's, and some are in the 60's. In the projections, eliminating a teacher often increases class sizes from 20 to 25 or 18 to 24. While these higher numbers may seem manageable, lower class sizes should be a top priority during the K-4 years. The 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading guarantee, intensive progress monitoring, and the successful completion of an IB exhibition project all depend on a lower student to teacher ratio. Given the support the community gives to this school district, and the district vision statement that, "Every Student Must Succeed", it seems short-sighted for the Board of Education to proceed with either proposal that includes a reduction in force in 2019 or 2020.

Hasn't reduction in force changed since 1999? Yes, but now the Ohio state legislature has added a new provision. In 2013, Ohio Revised Code 3319.17 Reduction in Number of Teachers and Restoration was amended to say,

*"(C) In making any such reduction, any city, exempted village, local, or joint vocational school board shall proceed to suspend contracts in accordance with the recommendation of the superintendent of schools who shall, within each teaching field affected, give preference to teachers on continuing contracts. The board shall not give preference to any teacher based on seniority, except when making a decision between teachers who have comparable evaluations."*

Since seniority can no longer be used to determine who gets RIFed, OTES must be used first. For example, a limited contract teacher without seniority could keep their job if they have an Accomplished rating and someone with more seniority has a Skilled rating. There are several problems with this system. The OTES rubric can be interpreted and used in a subjective way. Student growth measures are not equitable. Some teachers are measured on state tests, while others are measured on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade MAP reading tests. Unfortunately, this is the law in the state of Ohio. The only way to change it is to write to legislators in Columbus. We have updated our collective bargaining agreement to comply with this 2013 amendment. It now reads, "Comparable evaluations will be based upon a rolling average of the final summative ratings up to three years as available." Article XXII, Reduction in Staff, is on pages 29-31 of our contract, which can be found on [shtaweb.org](http://shtaweb.org), if you want to read more details about how it works.

District leaders have sometimes framed discussions about reduction in force by discussing specific buildings, but that is not how the process works. For example, if a decision is made to cut a middle school social studies teacher, that most likely will have a ripple effect across a few buildings. If the person being cut at the middle school has a 4-9 license, they could "bump" a limited contract teacher at Woodbury out of a job if they either have a higher average summative rating on OTES or seniority (in case the average ratings are equal). The person being bumped at Woodbury could "bump" a K-4 teacher if they have a K-8 or a 1-8 license. The same situation could affect the high school if the person whose job is cut has a 7-12 license. With a proposal to cut 14 positions, it seems highly likely that after all the cuts are made the number of teachers working in positions that aren't a "best fit" for their skill sets would also be in double digits. To use a sports analogy, putting that many teachers out of position hurts students. Would the Board be willing to do that? They already have shown that they are willing to do that. Instead of hiring a theater teacher at the high school, they added theater classes to the schedules of two English teachers and one gym teacher. None of these teachers have theater on their license; none of them has any experience teaching theater.

If this Board continues to pass resolutions that follow the proposals from June 12, it could have a lasting negative effect on the students in our district. They need to take a more serious look at these proposals, updated enrollment numbers, and create a more thoughtful proposal than the “14 cuts a year” strategy. These cuts don’t align with the other decisions the Board has made in recent years regarding the IB program, the strategic plan, the creation of a Professional Learning department, the opening of the IC, etc. It makes it appear that the only part of the strategic plan that really matters is the fiscal responsibility part. It’s not about the students. It’s just about the budget.

Most districts that engage in reduction in force on a large scale either have serious financial problems, or their enrollment is declining at such an accelerated pace that they have to close school buildings. I’ve experienced this as a parent of three children in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights schools. One elementary school and one middle school have closed in the last ten years. Even districts that don’t plan a reduction in force usually have a RIF list prepared just in case.

The Human Resources department recently told me they have no information about a RIF list, and they have no new information about the proposals. The only information they have is what I read about from the June 12 Board Notes. With the number of limited contract teachers in our district, the variety of licenses held, the need to have an average final summative rating from the last three years, and the need to have an accurate accounting of when each of the limited contract teachers was hired and when they had their first day on the job, I was surprised to hear this. Our members need to find out if they will have a job next year in February or March, so they can start a job search. That is the only professional way to conduct a reduction in force. If anything is done incorrectly, members will have the right to take legal challenges to the Board and fight to keep their jobs. A reduction in force is a serious matter, not a phrase that should be thrown around and listed on proposals that haven’t been studied carefully with due diligence.

If anyone does get RIFed, there is a recall procedure and the district is required to keep an accurate recall list. This is also explained in Article XXII of our contract. I was recalled to take my job back in Indiana. The former high school librarian quit in the middle of the school year. I guess teaching middle school social studies is not for everyone. I briefly considered going back to Indiana, but I couldn’t. They fired me. Plus, I had done a national job search with 3-4 job offers. I chose Shaker Heights because it’s a great place to teach. Almost twenty years later, it’s still a great place to teach. Let’s keep it that way.

*Mike Sears*  
*Social Studies Teacher*  
*Shaker Middle School*

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