

A Message from the President of the SHTA

There has not been a more impactful local vote on the ballot in the past eleven years than the one for Issue 51, our operating levy. I know that this message may be to the choir, but I have to emphasize the impact that this vote will have on our association and colleagues. This 9.9 mil levy will allow us to sustain the staffing across our district that students and our colleagues need to pursue the excellence we aspire towards. We know that we may have differences of opinion on programmatic, curricular, or administrative policies, but that does not legitimize not voting to pass this levy. Voting no on issue 51 will make our already overextended academic coverage and student support infrastructure exponentially more difficult, if not impossible, for many programs.

For example, we know that we are staffed as thinly as I can recall during my 29 years in the district. We have eliminated departments. We have eliminated and reduced supplementals. We have collapsed two positions into one (coaches and coordinators). We have split positions like language, art, and even nursing across multiple buildings. We have not replaced positions due to attrition, and we have transferred veteran teachers to brand new assignments to cover subject area gaps. I have to say that administration positions have also been lost. The SHTA has lost thirteen positions and the administration has lost seventeen (without replacement). There have also been reductions in positions across clerical, custodial, paraprofessional, and security bargaining unit members. It's never a great idea to lead with fear to pass levies. We want to emphasize the good that can be done with these levy funds for our students and families. However, I know that if this levy does not pass, the cuts will be wide and deep.

"But what if the levy fails in November, and we pass it in May?" Great question. Simple answer: we lose twelve and a half million dollars we will never regain, even if the next levy eventually passes. Anyone involved in labor can tell you that when programs and positions go away after a levy failure, they do not come back. With a 12 and ½ million dollar deficit I would be hard pressed not to expect "rif" (reduction in force) measures across the district. We will lose good programs and people, many of whom will not return. Again, administrative and levy campaign members do not want to lead with "fear mongering" accusations, but this is the hard truth I can share.

"So what do we do?" We stop being lukewarm. If parents ask, tell them you support the levy and how important it is to your students and colleagues. If you are a member/resident, sign the endorsement (<https://www.forshakerschools.com/nov2025levy-endorsements>) and email me (morris_j@shaker.org) about how you can get yard signs. Please join me on Saturday, October 25th as the Levy Campaign shares voting materials across the district (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfquJmS-dH_GTuCdr41M6ETgsD5N06y_qDxN84dVfelnf-BQ/viewform). We would also love to see our PTO rejoin the effort to endorse and volunteer to support our school levies. Finally, and this should be universal, if you work in or support public schools do not vote for local, state, or federal candidates who continue to advocate for privatizing public education at the federal, state, and local levels. Part of the reason we are where we are right now is our

IMPORTANT DATES

Tuesday, **October 21**: Finance & Audit Committee, 6-7 PM

Tuesday, **October 28**: B.O.E. Work Session, 5-7 PM

Friday, **October 31**: Prek-12 Conferences

Monday, **November 3**: Prek-12 Conferences

Monday, **November 3**: SHTA Executive Council, Fernway

Tuesday, **November 4**: Election Day (Schools Closed)

Monday, **November 10**: SHTA Representative Council, Boulevard

rapidly dwindling resources due to these privatization-focused elected politicians. The time to be an active voice for public education, specifically in Shaker Heights City Schools and beyond, is now. It's been a busy month. I spoke with Dr. Glasner regularly. I communicated with HR Director Dr. Tiffany Joseph regularly. I updated the SHTA Facebook page with Publications Editor

Andrew Glasier. I met with the Legal Aide Committee with Legal Aide Chair James Schmidt on a funding request. I worked on arbitration plans with SHTA Lawyer, Brooks Boron. I communicated with PAC Co-chairs Jessica O'Brien and Nick LaPete on the SHTA Board Candidates Forum and levy support volunteer opportunities. I worked with an IC member and IC Head Representative Anne Scott on two grievances at the IC. I communicated with Special Education Chair Tito Vazquez concerning multiple building concerns. I worked with Mercer Head Representative Eileen Sweeney and Teacher Education Chair Wendy

Lewis on concerns at Mercer. I communicated with Building Safety and Sick Day Transfer Chair Matt Zucca concerning a Mercer issue. I communicated with SHTA Legal Consul Brooks Boron about the Mercer issue. I communicated with Assistant Superintendent of Business & Operations Jeff Grosse about facilities concerns at Mercer. I communicated with Secretary Lisa Hardiman about daily schedules and planning time concerns. I met with Negotiations Team members on planning time concerns. I met with Special Education Chair Tito Vazquez and Personnel Services Director Megan Shelby on Intervention Specialist concerns. I communicated with Personal Rights and Responsibilities Chair Mike Sears about medical and payroll issues

I communicated with the Assistant Superintendent of Learning & Teaching Dr. Felecia Evans and Director of Curriculum & Instruction Dr. John Moore about staffing and curricular concerns. I worked with HS Head Rep Jessica O'Brien and PR&R Mike Sears on a parental leave issue. I spoke with our SHTA lawyer Brooks Boron on the parental leave issue. I communicated with SHTA Vice President Darlene Garrison about sending support to members on leave. I attended a pro-levy community discussion with School Board member Doug Wang.

Sometimes being an SHTA member means using your voice. We cannot be afraid to speak in times like these. I know it can be hard to stand up for yourselves and your profession, especially when it comes to funding. But keep in mind, we work to serve our students, families, and community. When we advocate for the levy, we advocate for everyone. As was once the broadly shared motto for Shaker Schools, "A Community Is Known by the School It Keeps". It is no less true today, and no less worth fighting for.

Respectfully Submitted,
John L. Morris

SHTA OFFICERS' REPORTS

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Fall is here and I am ready for boots, sweaters and joggers!! My favorite season, to witness all of the beautiful colors of the turning leaves. During the month of September, I processed and mailed checks to our winners of the Dr. Rebecca L. Thomas Fellowship Grant. For the 2024 - 2025 school year, we had a total of 52 fellowship recipients and 35 members submitted receipts for their \$100 reimbursement check. The new application for the 2025 - 2026 school year was shared with our membership on Friday, October 17th. If you are planning on submitting an application for the Dr. Rebecca L. Thomas Fellowship Grant, please submit your Google Form by Monday, November 3rd. All winners will be selected during a random drawing at our Rep. Council meeting on Monday, November 10th. Only members of the SHTA are eligible to participate in the drawing for the fellowship grant. All winners will be awarded a fellowship grant for up to \$100 each. Winners will be notified by the district email and all names will appear in the November Newsletter. The \$100 Dr. Rebecca L. Thomas Fellowship Grant can be used for but not limited to the following items listed below:

- Seminars
- Professional conferences
- Course work
- Membership fees for professional associations excluding the SHTA Membership Dues
- Professional development materials

I attended the SHTA Executive Board Meeting at Fernway on Monday, October 6th. On October 8th, I attended an Investment Committee meeting with Treasurer Bill Scanlon, Membership Chair Chante Thomas, Union Member Todd Keitlen and Financial Advisor Brady Krebs. I will be attending the second PTO Council meeting on Wednesday, October 22nd.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Enjoy your upcoming Parent Conferences and the beautiful fall weather!

Respectfully submitted
Darlene Garrison, Vice President

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Happy Autumn! As the leaves turn brilliant colors and the temperature drops, for me, this time of year usually prompts deep reflection. I think about the events of the summer that went by much too fast, and am always surprised, and a little annoyed, about how soon some people begin to talk about the holidays.

As Secretary of SHTA I attend and take notes at monthly Executive Board and Representative Council meetings. This month, we had the pleasure of hosting a candidates' forum. The forum was very well organized and facilitated by SHTA PAC co-chairs Jessica O'Brien and Nick LaPete. SHTA Representative Council and community members attended this event. Lora Cover, Kevin Dreyfuss-Wells, Ardelia Holmes, Kate Nielson, James Reed, and Jenny Steadman are candidates who will appear on the November ballot. All six were impressive and engaging.

There have been a few members at Mercer who have been physically injured by students this year. I have been discussing these unfortunate situations with members and how to best address them. I will be working with Mercer Head Representative Eileen Sweeney to find out if this may be a district-wide issue and how best to proceed.

As a result of some discussion and confusion about our new Collective Bargaining Agreement, this month I met with members of SHTA's negotiating team. When contract negotiations concluded last school year, SHTA team members came away from these meetings with the understanding that teacher planning time would be used for mandatory meetings twice per school week and the other three days would be uninterrupted, teacher discretion time. Although this has been followed to an extent, there have been times where the teacher discretion time has been used for IEP meetings, grade level team meetings, ETR meetings, etc. Further, in some instances these decisions about planning time seem to be based on documentation that was created for Spring of 2025 only. This document was created as a guideline for last spring in an effort to offer elementary teachers much needed additional planning time. This document was not a part of negotiations or our Agreement and should not be used as a reference now.

I serve on the Mercer's Building Committee. This committee, which meets in every school building, is an opportunity for SHTA members to discuss and have input into building issues that are not directly addressed in our teacher's contract. Please contact members of your committee with any questions.

Enjoy the fall colors and brisk weather. As always, if there are ever any concerns with which I can help, don't hesitate to contact me at extension #4867.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Hardiman, Secretary

TREASURER'S REPORT

By our next Representative Council meeting we will know who the new School Board members will be. With six people running (one incumbent and five new candidates), the incoming School Board is guaranteed to have two new members, possibly three. We will also know the fate of our workplace's operating levy. A lot is riding on November 4th. I hope you take the time to get out and make your voice heard. The future of our worklife depends on it.

At the beginning of October I paid \$1000 to the Levy Campaign coming from SHTA. I also paid \$150 to the Levy Campaign coming from PAC of SHTA. During October I coordinated with the members of the Investments Committee for our meeting with our Edward Jones advisor Brady Krebs and attended the subsequent meeting. A financial report will be forthcoming in the November newsletter but as always, if anyone has any questions, I'd be happy to answer them.

*Respectfully submitted,
Bill Scanlon, Treasurer*

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On Facebook**

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And

Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/shtassoc/>

EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS

PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES REPORT

In the past month month, I have:

- Met with the Supplemental Committee on September 18th, and reviewed the contracts approved at the October Board of Education meeting
- Assisted several members with questions about their supplemental contracts
- Worked with a member and Human Resources to resolve a question about steps
- Spoke with Treasurer Donte Hays on October 1st about several items related to payroll
- Met with High School Head Building Representative Jessica O'Brien and members to help them with questions about FMLA
- Had several phone calls with John Morris to discuss grievances at the IC, other potential grievances, changes to the language on supplemental contracts, payroll questions, and changes to prescription drug coverages from Express Scripts
- Spoke to members with questions about FMLA

- Attended a meeting with members of the recent collective bargaining team to discuss planning time. At this meeting, we:
 - Determined that teachers should keep track of their minutes for planning time to make sure building administrators are not scheduling too many meetings during planning time, and to make sure the minutes for individual planning time as outlined in the collective bargaining agreement are being provided by the administration; and we
 - Discussed appropriate steps for possible disciplinary action, including the need for a 24-hour notification before a meeting and the opportunity to include an SHTA representative at the meeting.

- Met with the Insurance Committee on October 15th, and reviewed recent data and changes to some prescription coverages from Express Scripts. Here is some important news from the Insurance Committee meeting:
 - For the 2025 calendar year, the school district is spending 92 % of its budget allotment for insurance expenses. This number decreased significantly from earlier this year, when it was over 100 %. Due to the volatility in health care prices, the district decided to increase our allotment for 2026 by 12 %. This is like an increase in premiums, but since we are self-insured we set our own budget based on trends and analytics provided by Gallagher Benefit Services and Medical Mutual.

- Our new dental plan with Delta Dental is not self-insured, and our premiums with them are locked in through 2026. Our costs for Eyemed vision insurance are also locked in through 2028.
- Members who received letters from Express Scripts about specific prescriptions no longer being covered should follow the instructions on the letters. Basically, doctors have to provide documentation about why that prescription is needed, and also consider generic alternatives. Once Express Scripts receives this information, the drug should be covered again.
- Open Enrollment starts November 3rd and continues until November 25th.

*Respectfully submitted,
Mike Sears, chairperson*

EVALUATION COMMITTEE

Greeting colleagues and friends! Thank you for the continued opportunity to serve the Association as the Evaluation Chair. In this position, I serve as co-facilitator of the Evaluation Committee with Human Resources Director, Tiffany Joseph. I also work with Andrew Glasier and Addie Tobey to coordinate the Peer Evaluation Program. All members of the committee and I are available to answer your evaluation questions and concerns. I will continue to communicate information about evaluation procedures throughout the year through this newsletter and during SHTA Representative Council Meetings.

All buildings have had staff meetings to review evaluation basics. You can access the slides [here](#). These slides serve as a resource for both teachers and evaluators as they engage in the evaluation process. I will add or clarify information as needed, but will inform you of changes. Please note these changes if you opt to print a static copy. There are numerous links to videos, examples of forms, the High Quality Student Data menu, and Ohio Evaluation System (OES) support. The [Resource Packet](#) has also been updated. It contains a bit more elaboration on the elements of evaluation.

All teachers evaluated with the Ohio Evaluation System, OES, should have completed the Annual Professional Growth Plan (PGP) in OES by October 15th. The expectation is for two goals to be created this year. Teachers who have “Self-Directed” Professional Growth Plans or who are participating in the Peer Evaluation Program are not required to work with building administrators to create these plans, nor do they need to be approved by building administrators. Self-Directed goals are created and edited only by the educator. The OES indicates the educator's Professional Growth Plan status at the top of the PGP page. This plan should be discussed and reviewed throughout the year with your evaluator. Also, be sure to review the OES site and forms, as well as check your evaluation cycle and listed evaluator ASAP.

The effective use of High Quality Student Data (HQSD) is a part of the evaluation process. Teachers will need to:

- Choose two sources from the [HQSD Instrument Menu](#). The Evaluation Committee will approve additional instruments, as needed. Teachers who have Value-Added data must use it as ONE of their sources.
- Complete the HQSD Verification Form on OES. The HQSD form link is on the left under the Professional Growth Plan on each teacher's evaluation overview page. Teachers should add the two measures they will use as two separate entries.
- Familiarize themselves with the OTES Rubric, particularly the references to use of data. The rubric should be considered reflectively every year, especially when planning and implementing new curriculum assessments
- Conference with their evaluators about their use of data, HQSD and otherwise.

Your evaluator should be reaching out to you soon, if they haven't already done so. First observations for those on a Full Cycle should take place by the end of January. The first observation is a holistic look at planning and teaching practices, classroom environments, how data is used to make instructional decisions, and professional expectations. Evaluators are noted on OES. If you haven't heard from your evaluator by the end of October to schedule your observation, please reach out to them and/or your building representative or an evaluation committee member to support the process.

The Peer Evaluation Program has well over 100 educators, counselors, and nurses participating across the district. After over a decade, this program continues to thrive as a unique professional learning opportunity. Peer Evaluation participants have been coded in OES. Please double check that you have access to your partner's evaluation so that any errors can be corrected right away.

I am grateful for the continued support and recognition of this program as valuable professional learning work. Stacy Poole has been exceptionally supportive and collaborative with the implementation and organization work administratively. I also appreciate the time and support by the building administrators. I truly believe that this work brings us towards alignment with other highly professional fields. I also understand that administrators have a responsibility to be knowledgeable about evolving practices throughout the curriculum and in individual classrooms. While administrators may observe in classrooms outside of the evaluation process, the intentional reflection on the rubric elements during conference discussions offers a more complete picture of an educator's practices.

I have been participating in the Peer Evaluation program since its inception, working with five or six different colleagues over the years, growing my own practice and theirs in numerous ways. Fernway Principal Christopher Hayward spends time in my classroom observing parts of lessons and interacting with students about their learning. Over the years, we have collaborated to work through any complex or challenging issues in my classroom and we consistently have reflective and productive discussions around data, school procedures, teaching and learning practices and curriculum implementation. That being said, it may be reasonable for us to go through the evaluation process so that he has a clear and current understanding of my work and can more effectively offer support to me and my students. Length of continuous participation is one element of peer evaluation work we will be considered this year. I realize that there are many educators who do not have long-standing, collaborative relationships with their building administrators. Yet others may have had negative and/or stressful experiences with administrative evaluations, or simply haven't gained from the time invested. Effective leadership of real professional learning requires one to value and honor to reach understanding first. Evolving one's

practice requires genuine reflection and open-mindedness. It also requires more than “willingness” to change. It requires active effort. When a collaboration is grounded in knowledge, respect, and active engagement, space for growth is possible. In my opinion, this is the core of all teaching and learning relationships. If we are to promote professional learning and continuous improvement of teaching

practices as the goal of evaluative work, all of us need to actively honor the process and each other as professionals.

The Evaluation Committee will be looking at ways to improve the Peer Evaluation Program and evaluation practices in general. Participation in the program should not be an avoidance of administrative evaluation or done haphazardly. Nor should administrators see evaluative work as an opportunity to exert authority or something that can be easily postponed. Take a moment to reflect on how you might shift in order to make the most impact this year in whatever position you are in. I would be happy to hear feedback and suggestions about any element of evaluation practices in the district to bring to the committee for consideration during the decision making process.

Andrew Glasier (High School), Addie Tobey (Woodbury and Middle School) and I (Elementary) will continue to serve as the Co-coordinators of the Peer Evaluation Program this year. We are happy to assist you in any way we can throughout the process. Compensation for completed evaluations will be disbursed in June 2026. Megan Dora (HS), Deanna Clemente-Milne (MS), and Tim Kalan (ON) also continue to serve on the district’s Evaluation Committee and can answer questions, take feedback and suggestions, and provide any support you may need. Thank you for reading and have a great Fall!

Respectfully submitted,
Lena Paskewitz, chairperson

SPECIAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Over the past month, I attended the Executive Board meeting. I spoke with the Director of Student Services Dr. Meghan Shelby, regarding concerns across the district. I discussed concerns with SHTA President Dr. John Morris. I have worked with Shaker Heights High School Head Rep. Jessica O’Brien regarding various staff concerns. I represented two members in Fact Finding Meetings. I discussed with the K-6 Special Education Supervisor Erin Dzolic concerning staff concerns. I facilitated a meeting with SHTA President Dr. John Morris and Director of Student Services Dr. Meghan Shelby to answer IEP participation and staff attendance expectations and contractual agreements for members. I supported a member with a classroom location and equipment concern. I met with Shaker Heights Middle School Principal Eric Foreman concerning various issues including staff safety, morale, expectations and needed support from administration. Mr. Forman followed up communication with me concerning progress on some of the concerns discussed. I advised a member to request a meeting with her supervisor to express her concerns and needs with their school administrators. I met with a member, her team and K-6 Special Education Supervisor Erin Dzolic about a student's safety plan to adequately meet the needs of the student and other students in the classroom. I believe that the meeting went well and a solid plan was put in place by Ms. Dzolic and the teaching team. I have communicated with Shaker Heights High School Principal Mr. Isaiah Wyatt and Associate Principal Liz Massey to solve staff concerns, support students, and seek clarification and guidance on various issues. I communicated with

Shaker Heights High School Exceptional Children Department Chairs Tana Thompson and Keesha Woodruff discussing concerns at the high school. I communicated with Shaker Middle School Department Chairs Marla Wheatley and Nicole Kerr to discuss issues and concerns expressed by the Exceptional Children Department staff. I spoke with SHTA executive Board member Eileen Sweeney about a potential Mercer concern that has arisen.

As always, I humbly support our members, which results in the absolute best interest and benefit of the students we educate.

Respectfully submitted,
Anastacio 'Tito' Vazquez, Jr. M.Ed. Chairperson

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

This month, I coordinated with Allison Colvin, Ludlow's SHTA Head Building Representative, to address several safety concerns at Ludlow Elementary School. These included both classroom conditions and outdoor safety issues as the district prepared for the opening day of pre-K students.

I also worked with a member regarding discrepancies in sick day deductions, ensuring that the time deducted accurately reflected the time taken off. In addition, I continue to monitor the Sick Day Transfer Program, collaborating with Payroll to process transfers for members enrolled in the program.

Lastly, I am currently assisting a member who did not accumulate sick days over the summer months, working to resolve the issue in coordination with district personnel.

If you have any questions about Building Safety or Sick Day Transfer, please feel free to contact me at (216) 295-4692 or at zucca_m@shaker.org.

Respectfully submitted,
Matt Zucca, Chairperson

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

The Association's first Happy Hour of the school year at Boss Dog Brewing Company was a great success!

Attending social events planned by your SHTA and school is extremely important! Here are some of the top reasons you should consider joining in the fun:

- **Reduced Stress and Burnout:** Sharing the workload, discussing challenges, and having a supportive network can make the job less stressful and help prevent burnout and turnover.
- **Increased Job Satisfaction:** A sense of belonging and support can lead to greater job satisfaction. This positive environment also encourages teachers to stay in their roles longer.

- **Positive School Climate:** When teachers have positive relationships, it helps create a more cohesive and welcoming atmosphere for everyone in the school, which benefits students as well.

Respectfully submitted,
Selena Boyer, Chairperson

POLICY COMMITTEE

ARTICLE III of our constitution lists the PURPOSES of our association. One purpose is:
To encourage members to exercise their rights and privileges as citizens and to accept, willingly, leadership in school affairs and in the civic affairs of their community. To promote democratic members participation in the formulations of educational policies.

During this crucial election, please consider taking time to help support the passage of our levy and helping school board candidates that would be good for our classrooms. The SHTA school board candidates forum can be viewed on our Facebook page. Feel free to contact me, or SHTA PAC for more information.

Respectfully submitted,
Tim Kalan, Chairperson

MEMBERSHIP/ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

At this time you should have noticed your first dues deduction if they are paid via payroll deduction. Members who select payroll deduction shall have ten (10) equal deductions (\$33.00) starting with the first pay in October of the current school year.

In order to have accurate and complete records, I am counting on you to alert me to changes in membership so that I can update our records. If you need a current copy of the building spreadsheet, please email me and I will send it to you.

Respectfully submitted,
Chante Thomas, Chairperson

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE

This year as the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion chairperson, we implemented a mission statement that allowed our membership to acknowledge that we stand as an Anti-Racist and Inclusive Union. Our mission statement, “A Culture of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: We support an inclusive environment that embraces, encourages and empowers the voices of our members. We are committed to celebrating, honouring and uplifting historically marginalized identities within our membership.” The goal continues to be learning to be uncomfortable but understanding that it is only when we travel outside our comfort zone, we become more open-minded and empathic.

I am currently reading *Black AF History: The Un-Whitewashed Story of America* by Michal Harriot.”In *Black AF History*, Michael Harriot presents a more accurate depiction of American history. Combining

unapologetically provocative storytelling with in-depth research based on primary sources as well as the work of Black historians, scholars, and journalists, Harriot removes the white sugarcoating from the American story, placing Black people squarely at the center. With incisive wit, he speaks truth to oppressive power, destroying conventional historical accounts with little-known stories about the experiences of Black Americans. From the African Americans who arrived before 1619 to the un-enslavable brigade who inspired America's first police force, this long overdue narrative provides a revealing look into our past that is as urgent as it is necessary." This book is a must read, it will deepen your knowledge of African Americans history, question textbook history and move you beyond the status quo of simply saying you are an Anti-Racist.

Respectfully submitted,
Angela Goodrum

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

This month I wanted to highlight a few items on the state and federal level regarding STRS, school levies, and discussion on declining test scores. Also, remember to **vote on Tuesday, November 4th!**

- **STRS Lawsuit:** Ohio's largest educator unions have filed a lawsuit against the state, claiming recent changes to the State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) board are unconstitutional and strip educators of their representation. A last-minute provision in the state budget reduced the number of elected teacher seats from seven to three, replacing them with political appointees. Union leaders argue this continues a broader pattern of attacks on educators' rights and undermines fairness in managing teacher pensions. State lawmakers defend the changes as necessary to ensure stable governance following ongoing controversy and corruption allegations within STRS leadership. These changes were temporarily restrained in Ohio's 10th District of Court of Appeals until at least mid-October. ([more info here](#))
- **Changes to School Levies:** Ohio Senate Republicans joined the House in overriding Gov. Mike DeWine's veto on a measure restricting the types of school levies allowed on future ballots. By the end of the year, districts will no longer be able to propose emergency or substitute levies or request levy increases, which Democrats warn will severely limit local school funding. GOP leaders argue the change is a first step toward property tax relief for homeowners. DeWine has formed a working group to explore other ways to reduce property taxes, though Democrats say the group's proposals offer little real relief. ([more info here](#))
- **Decline in K-12 test scores:** A U.S. Senate committee held a hearing in late September to address declining student performance in reading, math, and science since before the pandemic, as shown by new national test results. Lawmakers debated the causes and solutions, with Republicans emphasizing local control and efficient resource use, while Democrats highlighted poverty and living conditions as key factors affecting learning. Experts also pointed to smartphone use and social media as possible contributors to declining focus and reading habits. ([more info here](#))

Respectfully Submitted,
Matt Klodor

SHTA PAC COMMITTEE

It has been a busy month for the SHTA PAC as we lead up to the November School Board Election as well as the campaign to pass the 9.9 Mil Operating Levy. Co-Chairs Jessica O'Brien and Nick LaPete used September to put out our first Monthly PAC Flyer, we gathered questions from SHTA members for our October 13th School Board Candidate Forum hosted at Fernway, and curated them for an efficient, unbiased, and effective forum. We'd like to thank the Fernway family for hosting the event so wonderfully.

The PAC is only as strong as its volunteer members! With the approaching levy vote, there will be many opportunities to help canvas for *Stand up for 51* by either having conversations with your neighbors and friends who vote in Shaker, or by hanging door knockers around town.

If there is legislation coming out of or through Columbus that you would like the PAC to communicate to members, please email us and help us get the word out.

Honesty for Ohio Education serves as a resource for Ohioans to monitor legislation at the state level, **Writing and calling your representatives has never been more important.** Concerning legislation to free an unbiased public education is growing at alarming rates: ranging from School Boards being required to mandate the posting of historical documents, such as the Ten Commandments (SB 34), to School Board Candidates being required to declare a partisan party (SB107), to mandated immigration status checks for students (HB 42), to HB485 which mandates *AI created videos on fetal development to THIRD GRADERS* to serve as an anti-abortion deterrent. The time to act is now - your voice is so important. Use this link to track and learn more about the damaging legislation:
<https://www.honestyforohioeducation.org/legislation-tracker>

In our next newsletter, the election will be behind us. Above all, PLEASE VOTE. The dignity, resources, and protection of your colleagues, students, and neighbors depends on it.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nick LaPete & Jessica O'Brein, Co-Chairpersons

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

The Public Relations Committee continues to work toward promoting and celebrating the positive work of our Association and the accomplishments of our students throughout the district.

T-Shirt and Apparel Sale:

This year's SHTA T-Shirt Sale is currently in progress. The sale includes a range of apparel options for both staff and community supporters, emphasizing unity and pride within our association. I am coordinating with our vendor to ensure timely order fulfillment and accurate distribution once the sale concludes. Communication regarding ordering deadlines and delivery logistics has been shared with building representatives and will continue to be updated as needed.

Winter Advertisement Initiative:

In addition to the T-Shirt Sale, the committee is developing the SHTA Winter Advertisement. This year's feature will celebrate our district's students who have been recognized as **National Merit Scholarship Commended Students and Semifinalists**. This acknowledgment not only highlights individual student achievement but also reflects the dedication and excellence of our Shaker Heights teachers. The advertisement will be placed in a local publication later this season, timed to coincide with winter academic recognitions.

Ongoing Goals:

The Public Relations Committee remains committed to fostering a positive image of SHTA within the community by recognizing student and staff achievements, promoting the values of public education, and strengthening the visibility of our association's role in supporting excellence in Shaker Heights Schools.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Bob Bognar, Chairperson*

NEW TEACHER COMMITTEE

Hello everyone. I have some important deadlines and information to share with you. [SALARY RECLASSIFICATION](#) happens twice a year, in November and April. The due date for submissions is TWO WEEKS prior to that month's Board meeting. For [Salary Reclassification](#) as noted on the "Request for Salary Reclassification" Form: "Recommendations regarding salary class changes are presented to the Board of Education at the April and November meetings. Coursework should be completed and the official transcript and request for salary reclassification form must be received by the Human Resources office no later than two weeks prior to the April or the November Board of Education meeting date."

November submissions are due now, in time for the November 1st Board Meeting.

Along with the form, you will need to submit an **official transcript**. The district also offers tuition reimbursement. [TUITION REIMBURSEMENT](#) forms are due by December 1st. For [Tuition Reimbursement](#) as stated in the SHTA Collective Bargaining Agreement:

"25.03 All teachers completing graduate level work shall submit to the Director of Human Resources the necessary documentation demonstrating the successful completion of such coursework prior to December 1 of each calendar year." Along with the form, you will need a **receipt of payment**, which can be the original receipt or a credit card statement.

[OPEN ENROLLMENT](#) for our Medical Mutual Insurance is November 1-16th. Both forms are linked, but you can also find them by going to the Staff Intranet, going to the Human Resources & Benefits sections, and selecting Human Resources Forms. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have. For members that have questions about Continuing Contracts (Tenure), please see below. As per Ohio Revised Code 3319.08 the following is the eligibility requirements to be evaluated for a Continuing Contract.

For members that have questions regarding Continuing Contracts (Tenure) please see below.

As per Ohio Revised Code 3319.08, the following is the eligibility requirements to be evaluated for a Continuing Contract (Tenure)

CONTINUING CONTRACT GUIDELINES for ELIGIBILITY ORC- 3319.08

MUST HAVE 5 YEAR LICENSE Received Educator License **Prior to** January 1, 2011

- Work in Shaker 3 of last 5 years
- MA at time of ODE License - needs 6 additional hours
- BA at time of ODE License - needs 30 additional hours

MUST HAVE 5 YEAR LICENSE Received Educator License **After** January 1, 2011

- Work in Shaker 3 of last 5 years
- Must have Educator License for 7 years
- MA at time of ODE License - needs 6 additional hours
- BA at time of ODE License - needs 30 additional hours

MUST HAVE 5 YEAR LICENSE

****IF NEW HIRE HAD CC IN ANOTHER OHIO DISTRICT**

- **MUST WORK IN SHAKER FOR 2 YEARS**

This month I attended a clarification meeting with the Negotiating Team in regards to elementary planning time. As stated in the Contract, “Each principal shall provide the elementary teacher a **single planning period of at least 45 minutes per normal school** day to complete classroom responsibilities. Under some conditions this daily period may be waived; however, the total planning time shall average 225 minutes per full school week. **The planning period must constitute a break in pupil contact time.**” We encourage you to document your time in case scheduling issues arise.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Gwendolyn “Wendy” Lewis, Chairperson*

LEGAL AID COMMITTEE

No report.

*Respectfully submitted,
James Schmidt, Chairperson*

MINUTES FOR THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING

This meeting was an abbreviated SHTA Representative Council Meeting due to the Shaker Heights Board of Education Candidates Forum which began at 5:00 and ended at 6:30.

SHTA President, Dr. John Morris started the October 13, 2025 Representative Council Meeting at 4:30 PM. **The meeting took place at Fernway Elementary School.** Dr. Morris introduced **Fernway Principal, Mr. Christopher Hayward** to the Representative Council.

Fernway Principal, Mr. Christopher Hayward welcomed the SHTA Representative council to Fernway Elementary School's gymnasium. He thanked the council for all they do for kids. He said that we are on the verge of another school levy. It is because of the work that we do each and everyday that he believes the levy will pass. A 9.9 mil levy is coming soon. President Dr. John Morris encouraged Mr Hayward to endorse the levy and to get his colleagues to do the same. He stated that he already is endorsing it and is having conversations with others.

A motion for approval of the MINUTES from the September 8, 2025 Representative Council meeting was made by Bob Bognar and seconded by Lee Appel.

Administration Report

Director of Human Resources, Dr. Tiffany Joseph was present for the SHTA Representative Council Meeting and said it was good to see everyone. She introduced Emily Rucker to the Representative Council and said that Ms. Rucker would be here just in case she is out. Dr. Joseph reminded everyone that there will be a virtual meeting tomorrow at 4:00. Salary Reclassification forms are due to Stacey Poole two weeks before the November board meeting. If teachers are planning to retire this year and would **not** like to take part in OTES evaluations this year, that needs to be stated two weeks before the December school board meeting. Lastly, Dr. Joseph reminded the council that tuition reimbursement forms are due to Stacey Poole by December 1st.

P.T.O. Report

PTO President Ms. Christina Gopal was present for the SHTA Representative Council meeting. She shared that Shaker had a successful 5K run with 700 participants and they are looking forward to next year! Ms. Gopal thanked Sara Chengelis for her help with this event as well as SHTA. PTO is in the process of setting up meetings with the Ludlow principal. They are also planning the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. celebration and would like for it to be a service project. She asked if there are needs for a possible service project in Shaker to please share.

Building Representative Reports

Boulevard-Cathy Grieshop, Heather Pincoe

- We are thankful to have started the year off with enough paraprofessionals to service our students. When we have enough people in the right places it makes things run so much more smoothly. It was nice to start the year with enough.
- Teachers are stressed. There is so much curriculum that we are expected to cover. Teaching it all with fidelity is impossible. There is not enough time in the day.
- Many teachers feel that the weekly pacing map check-ins are insulting and a waste of time, especially when time is so scarce. We don't feel like we are being treated as adult professionals. Teachers are working over an hour each day beyond contract time. On the weekends, we are working 8 to 10 hours to prepare for the week ahead. Wit and Wisdom takes an enormous amount of time to read through and prepare for each lesson. For example: The first 82 pages of the teachers manual covered lessons 1-6 for first grade. We understand that next year will be slightly easier but we should not have to put in this amount of time.
- We use our time wisely. Why are we spending time learning about Magic School AI to write lesson plans when most of our current curriculum is scripted? This time could be used for planning Wit and Wisdom, IB, Bridges, Caring School Community, Foundations and everything else we are expected to teach and do.
- Administration is coming around and observing Wit and Wisdom lessons while carrying a checklist. This feels like a gotcha move. What is on this checklist? Isn't it good pedagogy to let learners know what is on the rubric or checklist beforehand?
- Teachers care about their students and want to do well and end up putting in the needed time no matter what. This is too much. We are already burnt out.
- We miss the building sub/tech person. Ours was a great team-player and now literacy specialists as well as single subject teachers are having to cover these absences. Our administrative assistant ends up spending her time emailing the staff for help with coverage and piecemealing coverage needed by the people who volunteer.
- This year, buildings have chosen to stack library, Art and Spanish teachers with full days of 6 for the majority of the week. We have 3 classes back to back in the morning and afternoon with only 50 minutes between. On these days, we are forced to choose between taking our contractual 50 minute lunch or being prepared to teach. Most days, we do not eat because of the time it takes to clean up from our morning classes and reset for the afternoon. We want to stress that this schedule is a **choice** made by the administration to stack our days in the manner. It is not a necessity, as it is possible to have days of 5 and spread them across the 5 day week.
- We miss the life-cycle events emails. These were important and helped us stay connected. We care about our colleagues. We strongly feel that the communications department needs to bring back district communication on births, deaths and celebrations.

Fernway-Jamie Harden, Lee Appel

- September 15, 2025 Fernway SHTA newsletter that includes SHTA newsletter and other info sent to members
- September 16, 2025 First touch base meeting scheduled with Chris Hayward (Lee Appel, Jamie Harden). Topics included: Supplemental contracts being issued after staff stated the work for some supplementals. The contracts were available shortly after the following board meeting. Moving stipends for specialists were also discussed and Chris Hayward followed up with that concern. The next Touch base is scheduled for October 21st.
- September 19, 2025 First Fernway Building Committee meeting. Many thanks to the staff members that volunteered to participate in the monthly meetings. Subjects included missing tech help

Lomond-Lauren Meek, Jackie Abrams, Krystal Allen-Jackson

- Some members feel frustrated that compensation for work completed over the summer that was used for district grade level peers during August professional learning days, was not paid until October due to lack of communication regarding new forms.
- We have several members receiving letters that medications they have been on for months or even years are now being denied to them.

Mercer-Eileen Sweeney, Nicole Cicconetti

- This month I attended the Building committee meeting. During this meeting we discussed the following issues:
 - Low attendance at curriculum night. A survey will be sent to stakeholders to inquire why and what model would be better.
 - Lunch deliveries interrupting instruction. Mrs. Campbell communicated the food delivery policy in the Mercer Messenger and sent it to teams so that they can put it in their newsletter.
- The administration approved extending the Kindergarten helpers by two weeks. This was greatly appreciated!
- I reviewed the SHTA membership spreadsheet shared with me by Chante Thomas and updated the list to reflect Mercer's current members.
- I attended a meeting at Mrs. Campbell's request with a member. Per our contract, only a member can ask for SHTA representation at a meeting.
- It was the understanding of the membership that the new contract guaranteed, self-guided, planning periods. This is what was communicated prior to the vote to ratify the contract. The language in the contract does not reflect guaranteed protected and self-guided planning periods. The administration continues to schedule meetings during the teacher planning. The administration is counting before school and after school minutes in their calculations, but many staff have morning and afternoon bus duty/carpool assignments that do not provide their full morning/afternoon minutes without student contact. It is my opinion the administration and the executive committee need to sit down and hammer out what teacher planning periods are designated for.

- Mercer teachers and staff automobiles were damaged, possibly, by a company that was contracted by the city, to perform sewer repairs. The resolution of this issue is in limbo as we wait for lab testing to verify if a chemical used in the process damaged the staff's cars. Many staff and teachers do not feel supported by the district. This is a very frustrating situation that has dragged on for over a month. Should we grieve this issue?
- Last month I reported a concern about teacher injuries. Over the past month, more teachers have been injured in the building. This is more than an issue at Mercer. I considered filing a grievance when I was hurt, but I wonder if we should survey the entire district staff to get a better picture of the frequency and severity of teacher injuries and the administration's responsiveness. The consequences of getting hurt at work can impact a person's quality of life, income and emotional stability. The banality of the administration's response exposes more teachers to the risk of injuries. I propose we survey the SHTA membership to better understand the breadth and depth of this issue.
- Frontline does not have the capacity to allow teachers to log an absence of less than 2 hours. This creates a problem if a teacher needs to leave early to get to a doctor's appointment, parent teacher conference, etc. Past precedence was the principal could allow the teacher to leave early or the teacher signed out early to document their early dismissal. Why is past precedence not being followed now?
- Finally, I spoke with Mrs. Campbell about supporting a staff member in their daily duties. I advocated for more support/ professional development for the staff member. The administration is providing more support for the member.

Onaway-Noreen Smyth-Morrow, Stacey DeYoung

- Bldg. committee met this month- We created a bldg-wide safety plan for times when a student is experiencing distress and has eloped from his/her classroom, requiring the crisis team to respond. At times the team has to deescalate the student in the bldg. (ie: hallways). The bldg.-wide safety plan is intended to keep all staff and students safe and minimize disruptions to the routines of the building.

Middle School—Kevin Thomas, Melissa Albrecht, Lori Billington, Addison Pretnar, Desmarie Carter

- At the middle school, there have been several concerns about the increasing clerical workload. The Language & Literature and Math departments, in particular, have experienced a significant rise in clerical tasks due to changes in gifted progress monitoring. Administration has provided some release time and coverage to help mitigate this issue. In addition, the admin has asked teachers to conduct regular student check-ins during the middle school's Team Time. This is one of several issues that disproportionately affect team teachers, and we are exploring ways to more evenly distribute these responsibilities.
- We are still working on finding an alternate placement for a student who has become physically aggressive toward staff on multiple occasions. I continue to check in with the teacher who was injured, and I want to extend special thanks to Tito Vazquez for his extensive involvement in

managing the situation. While a plan for a new placement is in progress, ongoing incidents continue to pose safety concerns for both students and staff as we are waiting for the new placement to become available.

- Finding time during the school day to provide extended time and academic support for students remains a challenge. We are hopeful that, when we move to the new building, the schedule will be revised to incorporate more flexible time for student support.
- There is also a need to restructure supplementals. Staff members, especially department chairs, are only now receiving contracts for the work they have already been performing this year, and it has become clear that the compensation figures may need adjustment.
- Finally, transportation continues to be an issue, with buses arriving late on a regular basis. We were initially told that the later start time would address this problem, but late arrivals remain a persistent concern.

High School—Jessica O'Brien, Nick LaPete, Jayce Bailey, Megan Dora, Adam Cohen, Enid Vazquez, Sharita Hill, Joel Rathbone

- Met with Assistant Director of Buildings and Grounds Sean Brown about screens that need to be installed on windows on the 3rd floor. Members are experiencing issues with bees and have students with allergies. Sean is working with Pella and hopefully will have information for us soon.
- Spoke with two members that were experiencing pay issues and sick day issues. I have been communicating with Payroll Supervisor Jennifer Browne about this situation. One has been resolved, still waiting for the other to be resolved.
- Helped two members that were having issues with a student that was creating an unhealthy and unsafe work condition. The administration is working on resolving this issue.
- Worked with Rights and Responsibilities Chair Mike Sears and SHTA President Dr. John Morris to help two members with questions about FMLA, sick days, and pregnancy/adoption leave.
- Answered workers compensation questions from a member.
- Meeting weekly with High School Principal Mr. Wyatt.
- Discussed with Mr. Wyatt the need for building substitutes as some classes are going uncovered. The removal of building subs has created a situation where most days there is at least one to two classes not covered, sometimes more.
- Met with Mike Sears and two members to clarify insurance, FMLA, and leave questions.
- Worked with Principal Wyatt, Associate Principal Massey, Dr. Morris, and Administrative Assistant Laurie Brem to solidify the two conference days on Oct 31st and Nov. 3rd which will both be 8-4.
- Worked with Laurie Brem to create a schedule for the PSAT and SAT that would work with our contract.
- Discussed with Jennifer Browne a discrepancy with a supplemental contract. We are working on that.
- Answered a few questions from members about the supplemental contracts and the requirements that are being expected of them.

- Clarified for members that if they do not agree with their supplemental contract they should cross out what they disagree with, sign it and send it to the district office in interoffice mail.
- Met with SHTA representative Joel Rathobone to discuss a fact finding meeting that he attended with a member.
- Spoke with Matt Zucca who will be reaching out to Director of Human Resources Tiffany Joseph about a member's sick day accrual.

Statement from the counseling department of the high school addressing the IC report last month.

- As one union, we are always striving to learn, grow, and collaborate with the IC. We welcome opportunities to have direct conversations in order to work together to support the students we all serve.

Innovative Center--Anne Scott

- Met with John Morris numerous times to discuss concerns.
- Met with Katie Slifkin numerous times to discuss concerns.
- APs Pat Rashid and Logan Crawley each joined a meeting.
- I supported a member at a step 1 grievance meeting.
- I supported a member at a step 2 grievance meeting.
- I supported a member in filing a step 1 grievance.
- I supported a member at a step 1 grievance meeting
- We again had numerous instances of who we assume to be city maintenance workers in the space.
 - On 9/11, there were two men in the space for numerous hours.
 - On 9/12, man in the space playing music and using tools for numerous hours.
 - On 9/17, two men came into the space to check fire extinguishers. Learned that ours are long past expiration (called relics by the inspector) and need to be replaced. To our knowledge, no replacements have yet to be provided.
 - On 9/25, three men were in the space for a short period of time.
 - On 10/8, man in the space for a short period of time
 - We have been told that a process is being worked on regarding district and non-district people entering our space. Our concern is non-district people.
- On 9/11, IC teachers were provided a lunch and planning schedule
 - On this same date, Katie Slifkin was notified that IC teachers are over contact minutes in this new schedule.
 - On 9/22, we received an updated lunch and planning schedule. It still puts IC teachers over contact time.
 - The majority of our planning time sits before or after students are in class (8:00-8:20 and 3:15-3:45) which removes space and time for IC CPT, general team meetings, staff meetings, IEP/504 meeting availability etc.

- The IC team looks forward to determining a plan in which we can balance administrative needs, teacher needs, and student needs.
 - The IC team would like to thank Denise Johnson for her support in getting Edmentum up and running for our students.
 - The IC team would like to thank Dr. Evans and Dr. Glasner for taking time to visit the IC.
 - The IC team would like to thank the PTO for providing treats for our students at the end of September and for curriculum night.
 - The IC team has again requested conversation regarding the direction of the IC and a potential MOU.
- In a disposition received from Isaiah Wyatt on 10/9, there will be a meeting scheduled prior to the end of October and another prior to November 14th to discuss the future location of the IC.

Ludlow-Allison Colvin, Leanne Moses-Kruluts

- Thank you to the families at Ludlow who provided breakfast for us on Friday.
- Ludlow Rep met with a member at the request of Mr. Caroff for a fact finding session about a construction worker on site at Ludlow who expressed his unsolicited thoughts and opinions about the lack of readiness and safety of the Ludlow building. It was resolved.
- Ludlow Union Reps had a walkthrough with Matt Zucca, at the request of Mr. Caroff and Shaker administration to determine the health and safety conditions of Ludlow for teachers to prepare for the start of school. The conditions were better but not without issues. Teachers requested air purifiers and masks because of the dust from construction work in order to prepare for school to open on Sept. 15 for the children.
- Construction is still going on on-site, however most of it is on the outside during school hours. Teachers had to have 1/2 of their PD time spent at the Shaker Public Library so that some of the construction inside the building could be completed.
- Teachers feel that there is a lack of and delayed communication with teachers and families and a feeling of unpreparedness at Ludlow. Art supplies including paint and paper were just delivered. New teachers to Preschool, at least 3 classes, just received some of their basic supplies for instruction last week...a month after school started.
- Supplies, including toys, are just coming in this week. A new classroom has opened this week for students without new supplies being ordered to prepare. We reached out to Tim Kalan for art supplies.
- Ludlow is still without a nurse. The Ludlow School needs a nurse. We have children currently, and children on the way, with high medical needs. Teachers are filling out, and required to fill out, extensive incidents reports for each bump, bruise, scratch, or fall. We have to take 4 children sometimes with us to get ice for an incident or to stay in ratio for one child. We've already had EMS called during Aftercare for an emergency, and we had a child during normal school hours who had a fall during recess and needed medical attention. The principal who was covering recess at the time,

contacted the parent to take them to the emergency room. The child ended up needing stitches. From the playground to the classroom, for the youngest of learners who are prone to accidents, a full time nurse on site is needed. We do not have a nurse for Ludlow. We need a nurse.

- There is a lack of coverage and support in our building as it seems like in most buildings. Our principal, IB coordinator and administrative assistant have needed to cover classes, lunches, and recess multiple times a week since the start of school. Teachers and paras are being pulled to cover other classes.

- We need a building sub(s), and more support and resources for Ludlow.

Motion for adjournment was made by Andrew Glasier and seconded by Kevin Thomas **Meeting adjourned at 4:59 pm.**

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa M. Hardiman, SHTA Secretary

Link to the SHTA PAC Board of Education Candidates Forum on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1G1fxFfXLm/>

Travel is Important for 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.

"Tourism compels us to reach beyond the languages, cultures, religions, and landscapes in which we feel most at home. Tourism asks us to find the courage to connect with the humanity in people who look, speak, dress, and pray in ways that may, at first glance, appear completely alien to us. Tourism inspires us to demand that our governments and the companies we patronize work to protect the people and places that we are so privileged to visit. And tourism compels us to recognize and confront the prejudices that continue to blind us. Because the moment we make ourselves uncomfortable is the same moment that our souls begin to grow.

The New Tourist by Paige McClanahan

It was 8:30 AM, a week after my colleague and I had finished our work year, and we were all seated in an auditorium of Hebei International School in Shijiazhuang, China, our sister school, awaiting the start of the welcoming ceremony. My colleague, Luling "Raina" Li and I are both clutching gifts for the school and principal that we brought from home. It was the second stop of our China exchange after several days touring Beijing and taking a bullet train to Shijiazhuang, and the ten students we brought were nervous about speaking in front of the assembled students and teachers, but this was part of what they had agreed to along with a ten day home visit with a Chinese family. It will become an experience that will change the students' lives forever, as they adjust to a new culture, language, and society. As they saw the many wonders that a modernized China had to offer, as well as toured the many historic places, some dating back over 2000 years. As I travelled with the students, I saw them navigate new situations, try to communicate in a foreign language, and grow as a person as they were put in different and unique situations. Travel is the most authentic classroom I can offer my students.

Travel and exchange is part of the Shaker community going back to the 1980s and has defined our community. It is one of the major reasons that Shaker has stood out among other schools. We were an international school long before I.B. was introduced. We have had "sister schools" and trips for orchestras, bands, choirs and many other groups for as long as I have taught here. With the help of the Shaker Schools Foundation, these opportunities have been extended to all students that wish to go, and this has meant great growth in our community. Travel is an important part of a Shaker education and I tell my students that they need to go on at least one trip in their high school career.

These trips are not easy to coordinate and maintain. It requires mountains of paperwork, emails, meetings, and organization. The upper administration changes directives from year to year adding to the confusion. Teachers often travel during their vacations, being away from their family and friends. While we might get a supplemental payment to organize the trips, the time on the trip is truly volunteer work. We do this because we are committed to our students and we understand the work we do now will enrich our students' lives forever. A graduate who took part in the Japan exchange, recently reached out to me to ask for information about our trip, as he planned to return to Japan with his college friends to visit his host brother and travel again. He explained how he has taken Japanese language classes at university and wants to study abroad there also. This is why we do it. We understand that travel changes us forever.

I have taken students on four different trips during my summer; to Germany, to Japan twice, and China. On each occasion, I decided to take time out of my summer vacation because these trips have changed students' lives. Student growth happens exponentially and before your eyes. When students are thrown in a foreign country, it forces them beyond their comfort zone and requires them to understand themselves better. It is in some ways miraculous. Parents often comment after the trip how their children have changed and grown.

By the end of the China exchange, the students had become comfortable. They went off by themselves to stores, restaurants, and around parks and other areas. They communicated with locals. They attempted to use their Mandarin skills. They had acclimated to this amazing country, half a world away, where they knew no one, and learned more about themselves in the process. Travelling teaches students in a way that classrooms can't.

AG