

# SHTA *news*

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No. 2 • 17 October 2011

## Message From the President

It has been a busy October. Contracts are finally here and have been delivered to our membership. Committees are meeting to discuss the important work of our Association. Our PAC is working day and night to fight Issue 2 and Stop SB5 this November 8<sup>th</sup>. And, of course, we have our continuing professional and personal commitment to educating and nurturing our students.

This month I have been motivated to look closely at our By-Laws and Constitution. There have been two separate instances in which members have expressed to our representatives and me their discomfort in meetings when the tone became accusatory or hostile. These members sought council from our Association. As President, my job is to represent our membership and to serve as a steward of the Contract and our By-Laws and Constitution. In the By-Laws and Constitution, I was reminded of why this document is so significant to our Association. On the final page, under the section "Special Policy", it states,

**C. If in a conference between a parent, teacher and administrator a situation arises in which it is no longer possible to maintain a conference in which the educational needs of the child is paramount, then our member, with as much decorum as possible, should request that the conference be terminated until such time as the member is able to secure SHTA/legal representation. The administrator should honor such a request.**

As professionals, when the tone becomes accusatory or hostile, we should politely request that the meeting be re-scheduled and immediately contact a building representative for the next meeting. This is why our Association is so important to us.

This month I have also sent out two separate emails dealing with Issue 2/SB5. The first was a plea for donations and the second was a request to sign a petition to confront a purposefully misleading and damaging advertisement. In the first email, I said that We Are Ohio, the umbrella group that is at the front of public employee unions fighting SB5, was being outspent by pro-SB5 groups 3 to 1. Several members approached me the next week and shared an article stating that We Are Ohio was outspending Building a Better Ohio (a pro SB5 group) by 5 to 2

(<http://www.vindy.com/news/2011/oct/10/sb-5-foes-take-command-in-tv-advertising/>).

I looked into the issue and talked with the We Are Ohio contacts who had given me the 3 to 1 figure for clarification. They shared with me that yes, We Are Ohio is outspending

Building a Better Ohio by 5 to 2, but Building a Better Ohio is one of several pro SB5, anti-union organizations that are trying to sustain SB5. Among these pro SB5 organizations are Americans for Prosperity, Crossroads GPS, Make Ohio Great, and Alliance for America's Future. With Building A Better Ohio (the authors of the misleading ad) added to their number and We Are Ohio being the only anti-SB5 group creating radio and television advertisements, we are still outnumbered 5 to 1. To make a long story short, we still need to donate our time and our money to We Are Ohio (<https://contribute.weareohio.com/page/contribute/main>) and our own PAC of SHTA (see the PAC report).

As President, I look forward to opportunities to help our membership in any ways that I can. I am also dedicated to defeating SB5 and other harmful legislature that will arise in the coming months, including HB 136 (see Anna's report). Encourage your friends and family to Vote No On Issue 2 to Stop SB5 on Tuesday, November 8<sup>th</sup>. Walk, talk, or give (see the PAC report). It is the most challenging time in recent memory to be in the teaching profession. I am honored to have been elected as President and I will continue to do my best to live up to the responsibility during these difficult times.

*Respectfully submitted,  
John L. Morris, President*

## Reports from the Executive Board

### VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Happy fall! It is time again to apply for SHTA Fellowships. I hope that each of you has received an application from your building representatives. These awards are designed to promote professional development and can be use to attend workshops, for payment of dues to professional affiliations (except the SHTA), journals or professional materials. The winners are selected via random drawing. Please send to *Dollye Finney, Boulevard School*, by noon Friday October 28, 2011. Multiple entries will be disqualified and only members of the Association are eligible for participation. Forty recipients will be chosen and awarded \$100 each. Winners will be notified by school mail and their names published in the November newsletter. If you need an application contact your building representatives or contact me at 4916.

If you have not already done so I would like to encourage each of you to contribute the PTO Council Annual Drive. As you know The Association has forged a close working relationship with the PTO. The PTO annually sponsors teacher grants and participates in a number of teacher-sponsored events.

I am currently working with the Night for The Red and White Committee. The event is scheduled for Saturday, March 10, 2012, 7:00 pm at Landerhaven in Mayfield Heights. Please consider both making a contribution and attending this year's event. More event information will follow. I also would encourage any member that is interested in becoming a part of the teacher committee please contact me.

I have also been attending the Race to the Top Planning meetings. The Shaker Heights City School District has been awarded a grant of nearly \$400,000 in total to be used over a period of four years. The leadership of the SHTA agreed to work on this committee and to support the district's efforts to seek and secure funding sources. This

agreement is based on our partnership with the schools to promote fiscal responsibility. These funds are administered by the Ohio Department of Education. The committee is comprised of teachers and administrators. Race to the Top supports activities that are designed to increase college attendance rates and reduce achievement gaps. There is a link to Race to The Top on the Shaker Heights City Schools webpage; follow the link to the district's [Strategic Plan](#). The funds are being used for activities that are closely coordinated with the District's [Strategic Plan](#), including:

- Alignment of the curriculum with new state standards
- Professional development
- Exploration of new ways to evaluate teachers' performance

I encourage you if you have questions to read this link and we will keep you apprised as to this committee's progress.

Thank you for your continued support of the Association and feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Dollye Finney, Vice  
President*

## TREASURER'S REPORT

The Investments Committee (made up of Todd Keitlen, Matt Zucca, Chante Thomas-Taylor, Dollye Finney and myself) will be meeting on October 19<sup>th</sup> with Brady Krebs, our Edward Jones advisor to discuss our investments.

I am currently working with our accountants, Edward C. Hawkins & Co., Ltd., to complete the compilation of our 2010-11 financial statements. We did not operate under a balanced budget last year. We never do during a negotiations year, but last year was especially costly due to the length of the negotiations process.

Payroll withdrawal for dues (\$20 per pay), for those who chose that option of payment, started with the October 16<sup>th</sup> paycheck. Anyone who prefers to pay her/his \$200 dues all at once may send a check to me (payable to SHTA), Bill Scanlon, at the high school or to Stacy Elgart at the Middle School.

The last thing I must mention is the importance of the time from now until November 8<sup>th</sup>. [Issue2](#) (the effort to repeal SB5) is going to impact our profession, our paychecks, and the buildings we work in drastically. Many of our members have been devoting a lot of time fighting this attack on our livelihoods by working the phone banks, canvassing door-to-door, or by donating to [We Are Ohio](#). By the time this newsletter is published I will have done all three.

For phone-banking and canvassing, go to the [We Are Ohio](#) office in Shaker Square. If you would like to donate you may either go on the [We Are Ohio](#) webpage and donate electronically, write a check to the [PAC of SHTA](#) (every \$25 check received will send \$20 to [We Are Ohio](#) and \$5 to the [PAC](#)), or do both. **Join your colleagues in the fight.**

*Respectfully submitted,  
Bill Scanlon, Treasurer*

## PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As many of you know, several changes to our health insurance plans will take effect on January 1, 2012. The Insurance Committee met on September 21<sup>st</sup> to discuss how to get information about these changes out to the membership. Treasurer Bryan Christman has scheduled meetings around the district to present these changes. The administrative team presented the information at Representative Council on October 10. Membership meetings are scheduled for:

**Tuesday October 25** 4pm Medical Plan Overview Upper Cafeteria – HS

**Thursday October 27** 4pm Medical Plan Overview Upper Cafeteria – HS

Another meeting is still being scheduled; check your e-mail to find out when and where this meeting will be held. If you are not able to attend a meeting, talk to your building representatives. If you still have questions, you can reach me at 295-4770 or sears\_m@shaker.org.

Walgreens pharmacy customers recently received a letter stating that they will not be able to fill their prescriptions after December 31, 2011. Express Scripts is our prescription drug provider. Walgreens and Express Scripts are in the middle of a tough negotiation about their 2012 service agreement. It is possible that they will not reach an agreement. Unfortunately, there is not much we can do to prevent this. Express Scripts is not optimistic that an agreement will be reached with Walgreens before December 31, 2011. If you have recently used Walgreens to fill prescriptions, you should be receiving a letter from Express Scripts that explains this situation. **You will have to find another pharmacy to fill your prescriptions, unless you want to pay the full price for each prescription.** One advantage in this situation is that several pharmacies offer incentives when you transfer prescriptions to them; such as reward points, coupons, discounts, etc.

I worked with members this month on maternity leave questions and absences with pay. There is a section in the contract (**Article XX- 20.01 letter d, p. 22**) that explains how a member could be absent from work with pay without using a personal day or a sick day. The employee must provide “evidence...that such absence was beyond the control of the employee in the exercise of reasonable diligence.” This evidence must be presented to Personnel Administrator Lisa Howell. Jury duty is one example. AESOP lists Jury Duty as an absence reason. If the absence reason is not listed on AESOP, the employee has to select Personal Day. Once Ms. Howell has documentation, the Personal Day will be added back to the employee’s balance. One example where this would apply would be a subpoena to court. Be sure to check your sick days and personal days on your pay statement to verify their accuracy.

I understand there is some confusion about the new flexible spending accounts (FSA’s, or the 125 plan). These are available to us now because of collective bargaining. They are a benefit to us. **Signing up for these can put more money in your pockets because these accounts put you in a lower tax bracket.** In the current economic and political climate, adding this benefit made sense to everyone involved in negotiations. Here are some questions and concerns about this that I’ve already been asked:

- 1) Won't the monthly fee cancel out any tax savings?

The monthly fee is around \$4.75. If you have \$100 a month taken out of your paycheck, you'll save between \$25 and \$35 a month on your Federal Income Taxes alone. The savings outweighs the costs.

- 2) What if I don't spend my money and lose all of it on December 31<sup>st</sup>?

The district and the FSA vendor have agreed to allow us to spend our money up to March 15, 2013. This allows extra time to make that eye doctor's appointment and get that new pair of glasses with tax free money.

- 3) How will I know how much money to put into these accounts?

If you're using the account for dependent care, you can only put \$5,000 into the account. Most people with one child in childcare spend that much in a calendar year, so you would put the full amount into your account. You can also use this money for summer day camps (not overnight). The maximum amount allowed in the medical savings account is \$2,500. Many of us will not spend this much money out of pocket in a calendar year. However, if your children need braces or if you need a medical procedure only partially covered by our plan, you may want to set aside the maximum amount. Otherwise, you have to look at how often you go to the doctor and at your prescriptions. After January 1<sup>st</sup>, the co-pay for an office visit will increase to \$20 and prescriptions are going up from \$4 to \$7 (generic) and from \$12 to \$25 (non-generic). In addition, we will have a deductible for the first time. The vendor's web site will have a calculations formula you can use to help you decide the best amounts for your situation.

- 4) Does participating in this save the school district money?

Yes, but not a lot of money. Every employee hired after 1986 pays 1.45 % of their salary to a Medicare tax. The school district has to match that at 1.45 %. Any money that employees put into their FSA's will not be taxed at all (Federal, State, or Local). Therefore, the school district will not have to pay the Medicare tax on this amount of money. For example, if 100 employees put \$5,000 each in a dependent care spending account and 30 employees put \$2,500 in a medical care spending account, then the school district saves 1.45 % of \$575,000 in Medicare tax, or \$8,337.50.

- 5) What about my insurance premium (currently 8 %, changing to 12 % on January 1, 2012)? Can that money be set aside into my medical savings account?

No, because that money is already tax exempt. When we started paying a percentage of our premium (about 10 years ago), the school district set up a

125 plan for premiums only. When you look at your taxable income on your W-2 forms, the taxable income is lower than the salary because of both your STRS contributions and your payments toward your insurance premiums.

Signing up for FSA's may not be in the best interest of every employee. A single person with no dependents without regular prescriptions who rarely visits a doctor would not benefit from these accounts. However, I encourage most of our membership to go to a meeting and find out how these FSA's could work for you. November is our open enrollment month, and will be the time to sign up for your FSA's. Come to the Medical Plan Overview meetings for more clarification and to ask specific questions. See the first paragraph of my report for dates and times.

November and December would also be a good time to review your W-4 forms with the Payroll Department. You may decide to have less tax money taken out of each paycheck if you have added dependents or recently purchased a home. Our take home pay starting January 1st will be less than what it has been in the past. You may prefer to have more of that money in your hands instead of waiting for a large refund check a year later.

Finally, I strongly encourage you to do everything you possibly can to make sure Issue2 (Senate Bill 5) is defeated on November 8<sup>th</sup>. Donate money to *We Are Ohio*. Get a Yard Sign. Talk to your neighbors. Talk to your family and friends. Volunteer at the *We Are Ohio* phone bank at Shaker Square. Drive voters to the polls on Election Day. Help people you know understand the basic issue of this campaign: to save collective bargaining. Without it, our students suffer and so do we. Without it, teaching is no longer a professional career. The early television ads from the pro-SB 5 campaign are designed to confuse voters. It looks like they are not even making an argument for their side. Instead, they are saying things about how SB 5 helps teachers and firefighters. It is up to each of us to explain this issue to voters and clear up the confusion. Vote NO on Issue2!

*Respectfully submitted,  
Mike Sears, Chairperson*

## SALARY TENURE COMMITTEE

Lena Paskewitz is the new Salary Tenure Committee Chairperson. She has no report.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Lena Paskewitz, Chairperson*

## TEACHER EDUCATION

I have worked on salary reclassification questions. I have sent out information packets to all new teachers that highlighted parts of the contract especially important to them. I plan to meet with all new teachers during October's New Teachers meeting.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Steve Smith, Chairperson*

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

### **H.B. 136**

Aside from Issue 2 weighing heavily on educators' minds, there is new legislation that merits your immediate attention. House Bill 136, known as the *School Choice* bill, was narrowly approved by the House Education Committee on September 21.

The bill calls for the creation of the Parental Choice and Taxpayer Savings Scholarship (PACT) Program, which would use funding from public districts to provide scholarships and student savings accounts to students wishing to exit the public system. Unlike the current Ed Choice or Cleveland scholarships to charter schools, the PACT would allow funds from public school districts to be turned over to families for tuition at all approved (accredited) private schools, including religious ones.

Public districts would need to turn over up to \$5700 per PACT scholarship recipient. If private school tuition were less than the \$5700, the remaining funds would not be returned to the school district, but would be placed in a savings account for the student to later use toward further tuition, including college. The PACT would be phased in over four years' time, with all students eligible by the start of the 2015-2016 academic year.

Students from lower income families would receive more of the base amount, with those earning 2.5 times the reduced lunch income standard (and above) receiving 40% of the base amount. Families earning up to \$95,000 would be eligible to receive PACT funds from public districts. There is a limit to how many applicants will be eligible for each district, and this is based on that district's State funding. For more information, see the Bill analysis at the official website listed at the end of this article.

This is just another step in the current leadership's desire to privatize public education. School districts, already strapped for money and facing further devastating cuts in State funding, may now have to foot the bill for private and parochial schools? While this raises many practical and ethical questions, the most obvious might be the question of whether this practice violates a separation of Church and State. Not to mention, it hardly seems fair to use tax dollars to set up savings accounts (that may be used toward college in the future) for PACT recipients, while students who do not seek to exit the public system would be given no such financial perk to assist with future college expenses.

I strongly encourage you to contact your Ohio House Representatives immediately regarding H.B. 136. Raise your concerns, raise the obvious ethical questions, and defend the public education system that has been the cornerstone of our communities and nation. This legislation could potentially cripple school districts, and not just those already struggling financially.

Last but not least, please do whatever you can to assist in the campaign against Issue 2. The PAC of the SHTA has provided you with lots of information about ways to be involved. Donate time and/or money, and at the very least, cast your vote!

For the full, official explanation and analysis of H.B. 136, please visit:  
<http://www.lsc.state.oh.us/analyses129/h0136-rh-129.pdf>

*Respectfully submitted,  
Anna Hruby, Chairperson*

**LEGAL AID COMMITTEE**

Legal Aid has no report.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Chante Thomas-Taylor, Chairperson*

**PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

I am currently working on placing ads on behalf of the Association with various publications such as the Shakerite and the Shaker Life Magazine. Our ads typically consist of our Association's name, the logo underneath and the phrase "Professionals Dedicated to Educating Shaker's Youth" underneath that.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Debbie Musca, Chairperson*

**MEMBERSHIP/ELECTIONS COMMITTEE**

Payroll deduction for SHTA dues will begin with the October 16<sup>th</sup> paycheck - \$20 per pay for 10 pays. For those who paid by check, thank you for your payment. If you have not yet done so, please submit your check for \$200 to your building representative.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Stacy Elgart, Chairperson*

**PAC OF SHTA**

The latest poll conducted by Quinnipiac University shows that Senate Bill 5, on the ballot as state Issue 2, is losing by 13 percentage points — down from 24 a little more than two months ago. Peter A. Brown, assistant director of the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute in Hamden, Conn. attributed the shift to the start of television advertising just after Labor Day, as well as growing GOP support (*The Columbus Dispatch, September 28, 2011*). State Democratic Party Chairman Chris Redfern has said he expects a great deal of corporate money to flow in to pay for a last-ditch push by Building a Better Ohio in this campaign. It is critically important the each of us fight to ensure the repeal of Senate Bill 5. We are suggesting that individuals donate \$25.00 to the PAC of SHTA, \$20.00 will go to the WE ARE OHIO organization and \$5.00 will go to the PAC. The PAC of SHTA has organized the following events that we need our membership to support. We are asking each teacher to sign-up at their building meetings or by emailing: [pacshed@gmail.com](mailto:pacshed@gmail.com).

**PHONEBANKING: Fill the Shaker Square WE ARE OHIO 4:00-6:00 or 6:00-8:00 every Tuesday until Election Day.**

**CANVASSING: Saturdays at 10:00-1:00 & Sundays at 1:00-3:00 through Shaker Square WE ARE OHIO office.**

**POLL WORKERS: Sign up to work a Shaker Heights Ballot location. Sign-up for shift from 6:30-8:00, 4:00-5:30 or 5:30-7:00.**

**Wear your SHTA union shirt or a red Shaker shirt on every Friday in October and on Tuesdays in November.**

*Respectfully submitted,  
Eileen Sweeney*



## POLICY COMMITTEE

This month's 'Law-in-the-Limelight' is the **Special Policy** at the conclusion of our By-Laws. John Morris brought this section to the attention of the membership at the most recent meeting of the Representative Council. This part of the By-Laws gives guidelines to teachers that are dealing with a confrontational parent. With Parent Conferences coming up in just a few weeks, it makes sense for all members to remind themselves of these guidelines.

### **POLICY FOR SOLVING PROBLEMS**

- A. We expect our members to take part in any conference so long as the educational needs of the child remain the focal point of that conference. If the conference is to be held outside of the normal school hours, then the teacher must be agreeable as to the time.
- B. If a situation arises in which it is no longer possible to maintain a conference in which the educational needs of the child are paramount and there is no administrator present to terminate the conference then our member, with as much decorum as possible, should inform the other party involved that the conference is terminated for now and will be resumed if the other party so desires, when our member is able to secure SHTA/legal representation and/or the presence of an administrator.
- C. If in a conference between a parent, teacher and administrator a situation arises in which it is no longer possible to maintain a conference in which the educational needs of the child is paramount, then our member, with as much decorum as possible, should request that the conference be terminated until such time as the member is able to secure SHTA/legal representation. The administrator should honor such a request.
- D. Remaining in a conference that has degenerated into a forum for the leveling of undocumented charges cannot in any way serve any legitimate educational need and will only serve to make a future solution to the problem more difficult, if not impossible. A cooling-off period is needed. This is what we hope will be accomplished by terminating the conference.
- E. As a professional association we have a dual responsibility: First, we must do everything possible to insure that every member recognizes and assumes his/her professional responsibilities; Second, we must also insist that our members be treated as professionals at ALL times. We will support them with all our resources in this effort.
- F. We would hope for the support of the central administration in our efforts to seek educationally sound solutions to problems that arise as we deal with the many complexities involved in our efforts to fulfill our professional responsibilities. However, we will continue to advise our members to terminate all negative conferences, to allow for a cooling-off period, and we will insure that the teacher will have SHTA/legal representation at any future meetings. We do not seek to avoid the public. What we hope to accomplish is to insure that an atmosphere conducive to the solution of problems on the highest level possible shall be maintained at all levels.

*Respectfully submitted,  
David Klapholz, chairperson*

**SOCIAL COMMITTEE****\*\*\*\*\*PLEASE SAVE THE DATE\*\*\*\*\***

On Friday, December 9, 2011, SHTA will be hosting a Winter Holiday Party. Please join us at The Boneyard on Mayfield Road. You will be receiving more information soon regarding time and cost. We are looking forward to something new and exciting, hopefully you are too.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Darlene Garrison, Chairperson*

**SECRETARY'S REPORT****MINUTES FOR THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING**

October 10, 2011

Fernway Elementary School

The President, John Morris, called the meeting to order at 4:20 p.m.

Chris Hayward, principal of Fernway Elementary School, greeted the SHTA Representative Council.

The minutes of the September meeting were unanimously approved.

**ADMINISTRATION REPORT:** Lisa Howell, Director of Personnel, was unable to attend the meeting. Dr. Stokes attended the meeting on her behalf.

**PTO REPORT:** Ann Garson, PTO Council Co-president, thanked teachers for their warm welcome showed to the visitors who took advantage of Tour Your School Day.

**MEDICAL PLAN PRESENTATION:** Bryan Christman presented information on medical plan changes.

**OFFICERS' REPORTS:****PRESIDENT**

John Morris was happy to announce that hard copies of the contract have been passed out. He met with Dr. Stokes and Dr. Freeman about concerns with class size in the K-6 buildings. He pointed out that according to the Associations' By-Laws, teachers who feel a parent teacher conference is not going well and continues to deteriorate are allowed to remove themselves from the conference. Dr. Morris also said a committee has been formed that will work on creating a performance pay pilot program.

**VICE-PRESIDENT**

Dollye Finney distributed the SHTA fellowship applications. This opportunity is provided for SHTA members only. She has started work on the Night for the Red and White. She has also been working on the Race to the Top committee.

**SECRETARY**

Matt Zucca recorded attendance. He asked that if rep council had long detailed reports that the members should send him a copy to ensure that the reports are accurate.

**TREASURER**

Bill Scanlon discussed the current financial report. He plans to meet with the Investments Committee in October.

**EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS****PUBLICITY**

Debbie Musca reported that she is working on the Associations' ad in the *Shakerite*.

**PUBLICATIONS**

Andrew Glasier asked that articles for the SHTA Newsletter be submitted to him by email at [glasier\\_a@shaker.org](mailto:glasier_a@shaker.org). The deadline for submissions to the newsletter is the Wednesday after each representative council meeting.

**SOCIAL**

Darlene Garrison is working on a holiday party at *The Boneyard* on December 9<sup>th</sup>.

**TEACHER EDUCATION**

Steve Smith's report was given by John Morris. Steve has worked on salary reclassification questions. He sent out information packets to all new teachers that highlighted parts of the contract especially important to them. He plans to meet with all new teachers during October's New Teachers meeting.

**SALARY/TENURE**

Lena Paskewitz had no report

**LEGAL AID**

Chante Thomas-Taylor had no report.

**MEMBERSHIP AND ELECTIONS**

Stacy Elgart distributed membership rosters to building representatives. Payroll deduction begins with the October 16 paycheck and continues for 10 pays.

**POLICY**

Dave Klapholz had no report.

**PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Mike Sears has been working on FMLA issues for some members. He has been keeping abreast of all the medical and insurance changes.

**BUILDING REPORTS**

The following reps asked questions, expressed concerns, or made statements on behalf of the membership in their buildings:

**Boulevard** had a concern about class size in their building.

**Fernway** expressed concerns about the quality of substitute teacher hired by the district.

**Lomond** questioned the 25 to 1 student ratio they also had a concern about class size in their building.

**Woodbury** had concerns about afterschool coverage of students.

**Shaker Heights Middle School** had concerns about a leak in the auditorium roof.

**Shaker Heights High School** is pleased that the administration corrected a problem of teachers being asked to come to school before contract hours.

At 5:29 the representative council went into executive session. It concluded at 5:45 p.m.

**OLD BUSINESS**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

None.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2011 AT BOULEVARD SCHOOL.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
Matt Zucca, Secretary

## ***Cash Rules Everything Around Me***

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

When I came to Shaker Heights City Schools in 1999, as a first year teacher with a Masters degree, I took a \$7000 pay cut from my last profession: a part-time bartender at a fine dining restaurant working four nights a week. I don't make this statement to complain about my pay or the district but advance a wider problem in our community and our nation; the plight of the American teacher. In our country we show success and value by paying that person a significant amount of money, be that a lawyer, doctor, first-class basketball player or chief executive officer. It is a hallmark of the American form of capitalism that wealth is created through talent and ingenuity. Who is more talented and creative than teachers? Why are we not rewarded both in status and financially for this? Why are universities colleges of education not attracting the best and brightest in our country? Why do 46% of teachers leave the profession in the first five years? As we know, there are no easy answers to these questions BUT there are some issues that need to be addressed and conversations begun to move things forward in our country and not for our sake but those of our children.

I was lucky enough to see the film *American Teacher* ([www.teachersalaryproject.org](http://www.teachersalaryproject.org)) at the newly remodeled Capitol Theater with several hundred others. Following the film, a panel discussion led by Civic Commons' Dan Moulthrop and including our own Eileen Sweeney discussed issues surrounding teacher compensation and work environment. The good news is that while there were plenty of teachers in attendance, we were not the majority. Questions in the audience came from lawyers, mothers, reporters and even Cleveland and Euclid city council members. Many of them were shocked by the stories of teachers working second and third jobs, paying \$3000 for classroom supplies and the "real" work hours that teachers put in. We must open the discussion in our own communities. We must tell people we are working this weekend grading papers, preparing for the following week and making calls to the parents of our students from home, keeping us away from our families and other obligations. We need to discuss the problems of retaining talented minorities into the profession. We need to explain to people that how much of our own money we spend on items for our students, many times because our students cannot afford it.

One reason for this is we don't like to complain to folks outside the profession and we also don't like to show pride in our amazing endeavors. Every year we create great lessons, ideas and reaching great heights in our profession because we feel that this is just what good teaching is. Well its time to brag. We need people to know that during the summer we are participating in exciting research and planning, that we are accepted into exclusive experiences that help us to become better teachers, and that we have won awards by professional organizations. As teachers we prefer to have our students have the spotlight. We want the students to shine. This is the way it is suppose to be. In these times, it is also time for teachers to stand up for themselves and show the world all that it takes to help the students of our classes become the first class citizens of tomorrow.

*AG***Important Dates****VERY IMPORTANT MEDICAL PLAN CHANGES MEETINGS****Tuesday October 25** 4pm Medical Plan Overview Upper Cafeteria – HS**Thursday October 27** 4pm Medical Plan Overview Upper Cafeteria - HS-----  
**Monday, October 31** SHTA Executive Board—Woodbury**Monday, November 7** SHTA Representative Council—Boulevard**Tuesday, November 8** Professional Day/Election Day—No Classes  
**Be sure to vote!****Wednesday, November 9** Board of Education Meeting—Woodbury 8 p.m.**Friday, November 11** Conference Day, No Classes K-12**Monday, November 14** Conference Day, No Classes, K-8**Tuesday, November 22** Thanksgiving Recess begins at 4 p.m.**Monday, November 28** Return from Thanksgiving Recess**Friday, December 9** SHTA Social at Boneyard on Mayfield Road