

SHTA *news*

No. 4 • 17 January 2012

Message From the President

Welcome back! I hope that your break was both restful and rejuvenating. It's been two months since the Association last met and much has happened. I have continued to work with the Educators' Summit, along with PAC Chairperson Eileen Sweeney and Past President Becky Thomas. We have met twice as a large group and I have personally met with NEOEA's Bill Lavezzi and David Saywell as well as CTU's David Quolke to discuss ways in which both independent and affiliated teachers' unions can work together to represent teachers in this difficult political environment. We will convene once again on January 12th to discuss future issues on the horizon. Eileen Sweeney and I will keep you updated on these activities.

Within the district I have communicated regularly with Lisa Howell on FMLA issues as well as concerns about substitute quantity and quality. Lisa updated me with information on two recent intakes of approximately 30 new substitutes. Lisa also discussed another intake for February. I applaud Lisa and her staff for being responsive to this important issue.

You should have received your new Anthem cards over the break, as well as a dental card, which is a recent addition. As we begin the new medical outlay for our contract, please feel free to share concerns with PR&R Chair, Mike Sears and myself. You should also expect to see your 1% stipend as of the January 16th paycheck.

I would like to once again applaud Darlene Garrison on her outstanding work on our Holiday Party. With over 60 members in attendance, it was one of our most successful social events in recent history. Darlene's vision and hard work made it happen. I look forward to future events like this one.

In our Vice President's report, Dollye Finney will discuss the importance of donating to our PTO. I would like to echo that sentiment. Our PTO is a valuable organization that supports students, parents and teachers in our district. Making a modest \$25 donation is the least we can do to show our appreciation for the funding, activities and support provided by our PTO. Please take the time to send that little envelope to our PTO. They should be in the district calendar, or contact Dollye or myself to obtain one.

I also attended President Obama's address with Dollye and Eileen. It was an honor to have our Commander in Chief visit the district twice in as many years. I believe it is a testament to the quality of our students, our community, our school district and your professionalism. It was also an honor to be able to stand on the podium and represent Our Association.

As we enter a new year, I would to remind you about how important it is for us make our colleagues aware of the work we do as an Association. When a member, or

especially a non-member, asks you for guidance about the contract or clarification on how to deal with professional issues, remind them that their small membership dues make our work as an Association possible. With the loss of teachers due to attrition, our numbers are down. It is more important now than ever, given the political climate that we maintain solidarity within our own school district as well as the larger world outside our classroom doors. It continues to be a pleasure serving and representing you as president. I look forward to working with you in 2012.

*Respectfully submitted,
John L. Morris, president*

Reports from the Executive Board

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Happy New Year to all!

I hope that you are off to a positive and productive start to a new year. I also hope that your building representatives have approached you to consider your contribution to the Silent Auction for the Night for the Red and White. These contributions should be submitted before February 1, 2012. The contribution forms can be found on the Shaker Heights City Schools Web site on the Shaker Schools Foundation Link. The committee continues to support teacher attendance by offering a discounted ticket price of ninety dollars. I hope that you will contribute to the auction, as well as, plan to attend this event. The SHTA is providing a Kindle Fire and as well as a \$50 dollar gift card to Amazon to be used by the winner at their own discretion. Each year our contribution has been a success. If you have any questions about this event please feel free to contact me at 4916. The Night for the Red and White continues to provide substantial gifts to The Shaker Heights City Schools and the party is a blast. The event will be held Saturday, March 10, 2012, 7:00 pm at Landerhaven located at 6111 Landerhaven Dr., Mayfield Heights

I continue to represent the Association at monthly PTO Council meetings. It is not too late to make a contribution to the PTO annual drive. It is essential that we work cooperatively with the parents of our district as we strive to provide the best education possible to all students. It is essential to partner with parents and remember that the T in PTO is teachers.

It was my profound pleasure to join with the community in hosting the President of the United States of America – President Barack Obama. What an honor to be a part of this community. One so outstanding that our President has visited twice!! A district with nationally renowned teachers and students. SHTA be proud- I am!!.

*Respectfully submitted,
Dollye Finney, vice president*

TREASURER'S REPORT

Teaching can sometimes be isolating. You work hard to provide an enriching learning experience for your students but...

I am proud to be a part of our Association, especially when we engage our members in discussions of state and national education issues. In the fall I had a chance to see the movie *American Teacher* and listen to a subsequent panel discussion. It was exciting to discuss with other educators issues important to our profession. Coming up in February, Diane Ravitch, author of *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* will be speaking at an event sponsored by the Cleveland Teachers Union. Later in the month, the PTO of Shaker will hold a community book discussion on her book. See the Important Dates section in this Newsletter for more information. I can't wait to be part of these events and I encourage you to take advantage of these types of opportunities. You'll find it rewarding.

I am currently working with our accountants, Edward C. Hawkins & Co., Ltd., to complete the compilation of our 2010-11 financial statements and to file our tax forms (form 990).

*Respectfully submitted,
Bill Scanlon, Treasurer*

FINANCIAL REPORT

7/1/11

1/12/12

COMPOSITE BALANCE

Balance 7/1/11	844,407.77
Receipts 7/1/11 to present	42,395.86
Change in Valuation 7/1/11 to present	<u>3,683.09</u>
	890,486.72
Expenditures 7/1/11 to present	-32,567.15
Expenditures charged to last fiscal year 2010-2011	<u>-3,087.50</u>
TOTAL	854,832.07

BANK AND BROKER RECONCILIATIONS

A. KEY BANK (1/3/12)

Certificates of deposit		
	29 mo. @ 0.149%-Matures on 2/6/14	<u>21,188.03</u>
	Total Certificates of deposit	21,188.03
Business Money Market Account (0.35% APY)		53,917.43
	Unposted deposits and transfers	<u>7,460.00</u>
		82,565.46
	Less outstanding checks	<u>-1,550.00</u>
TOTAL KEY BANK		81,015.46

B. EDWARD JONES (1/9/12)

Regular Association Account	407,661.36	
Advisory Solutions Account	<u>366,155.25</u>	
		<u>773,816.61</u>

Budgeted Accounts

<u>Account</u>	7/1/11		Transfers		1/12/12	
	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>Debits</u>	<u>out</u>	<u>Credits</u>	<u>Transfers in</u>	<u>Balance</u>
Accounting	3500.00	1,282.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,218.00
Compensation for officers, representatives, et al.						
President	9302.00	4,651.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,651.00
Vice President	5581.00	2,790.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,790.50
Secretary	5581.00	2,790.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,790.50
Treasurer	5581.00	2,790.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,790.50
P.R. & R. Chairperson	5581.00	2,790.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,790.50
Editor	4653.00	2,326.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,326.50
Building reps. and alternates	10000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10,000.00
Conferences and meetings	2500.00	958.09	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,541.91
Contingency	250.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	250.00
Fellowships and Grants	4000.00	300.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,700.00
Insurance	5000.00	4,375.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	625.00
Legal	5000.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,900.00
Negotiations	0.00	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-50.00
Executive Board expenses	500.00	74.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	425.64
Officers' expenses	500.00	173.81	0.00	0.00	0.00	326.19
Payroll taxes	550.00	263.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	286.94
Publications	1000.00	1,410.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-410.00
Public Relations	7000.00	1,451.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,548.25
Social	2500.00	1,450.05	0.00	0.00	350.00	1,399.95
STRS(TPO contributions)	5100.00	<u>2,539.53</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>2,560.47</u>
TOTAL	83679.00	32,567.15	0.00	0.00	350.00	51,461.85
TOTAL						854,832.07

PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Several building representatives at the fall council meetings reported an unsatisfactory situation regarding substitute teachers. I've had a couple phone conferences with the Personnel Department about steps they are taking to address this problem. The district has hired 39 new substitute teachers since November. Each group has attended an orientation session, which includes training on AESOP, IB, and a District Procedures/Handbook review. In addition, Lisa Howell is checking on a teacher-training program offered through the Cuyahoga County Educational Service Center specifically for substitutes. The district is currently encouraging new substitutes to attend this training, and it could become a requirement in the future.

There are several pro-active steps we can all take to make sure our students have a productive day with a substitute. Establish professional relationships with the regular substitutes in our buildings. Treat them with the same respect we would treat all of our colleagues. If possible, plan ahead by requesting a colleague who works well with our students. Put the absence into AESOP as soon as possible. Leave clear lesson plans that are easy for someone else to administer. Contact someone in our buildings (team teacher,

department chair, grade level leader) who can check on our classes, and make sure the substitute has everything necessary for a successful day. Complete the evaluation when you return to work and contact Gena Cerasuolo if you have a concern about a particular substitute.

If you anticipate being on an extended sick leave or maternity leave, please contact me about the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) paperwork. It is a standard form from the state of Ohio, with sections for both you and your doctor to complete. The district is now requesting that everyone who is out for more than 10 consecutive sick days complete this paperwork. Employees may still use sick days (as long as they have them), but this paperwork is important for auditing purposes.

A recent article in the Sun Press noted how the changes negotiated in our health care benefits last spring will help save the school district \$1.6 million in the next year.

http://www.cleveland.com/shaker-heights/index.ssf/2011/12/shaker_heights_school_district_3.html

This is a tribute to the members of our association who were willing to take on additional costs for office visits, prescription drugs, deductibles, and emergency room visits. This also makes the increased share of our premium more manageable since it is taken out of a smaller whole number. At a time when health insurance costs are rising, the administration and teachers worked together to reduce the cost of insurance premiums.

*Respectfully submitted,
Mike Sears, chairperson*

SALARY TENURE COMMITTEE

The Evaluation Committee continues to meet in efforts to revise our current evaluation system. The Ohio Department of Education has drafted a new Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, which is currently being piloted in many Ohio districts. Plans for Shaker Heights to pilot the system next year are being considered.

The Performance Compensation Committee has also met this month to continue dialogue and research about possible ways a performance compensation program might be successfully implemented.

A web page has been developed on the staff page of the shaker.org website under “special committees”. On this page, you can find minutes of these meetings, committee members names and contact information, as well as links to articles and downloadable resources, such as the OTES.

*Respectfully submitted,
Lena Paskewitz, chairperson*

TEACHER EDUCATION

No report for Teacher Education this month.

*Respectfully submitted,
Steve Smith, chairperson*

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

House Bill 136 on the shelf for now?

In the fall, Eileen Sweeney and I, sent you information regarding House Bill 136, legislation that proposes a dangerous increase to the school voucher/school choice program. Both of us urged you to contact your representatives to voice opposition to this bill, and in the past few months, hundreds of school districts, including our own, have adopted official resolutions against this legislation. House Bill 136 would cost public school districts millions of dollars in funding, and would see tax dollars given instead to private schools, even those affiliated with religions.

Good news: Channel 13 (ABC) from Toledo just reported today that the sponsor of the bill, State Rep. Matt Huffman (R-Lima), went on the record to say that HB 136 "is not going forward in this General Assembly." Although the bill has already been amended in committee, it is supposedly going to be overhauled, reducing the family income eligibility amount from (a maximum of) \$95,000 to \$45,000.

However, State Rep. Huffman said that school choice is not going away. Stay tuned. Hopefully, additional information confirming the suspension of this legislation will hit the airwaves in the coming days.

*Respectfully submitted,
Anna Hruby chairperson*

LEGAL AID COMMITTEE

No report.

*Respectfully submitted,
Chante Thomas-Taylor, chairperson*

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Welcome back and Happy New Year! An ad was placed in the December/January issue of the Shaker Life Magazine acknowledging the National Merit Finalists from the Teachers' Association. I am also working on the teacher appreciation gift that will be given out in the spring.

*Respectfully submitted,
Debbie Musca, chairperson*

MEMBERSHIP/ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

No report.

*Respectfully submitted,
Stacy Elgart, chairperson*

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE OF SHTA

No Report.

*Respectfully submitted,
Eileen Sweeney*

POLICY COMMITTEE

This month's 'Law-in-the-Limelight' is **By-Law IX** of our Constitution:
Affiliation.

Here is the complete By-Law:

The Shaker Heights Teachers' Association shall be an independent teachers' association.

Although we all understand that our independence is a defining quality of the SHTA, I suspect that the reasons that we became independent are starting to fade from our collective awareness. So, for this report I asked our former President, Becky Thomas, to give some details about why we became an independent Association. What follows are her words:

When I joined the SHTA in 1976, our Association was affiliated with OEA/NEA. As a new teacher, I joined the Association but I did not really know what the SHTA was or did. I just knew that I wanted to be a part of the professional group that represented teachers. One of the first major decisions that I remember participating in was voting on the proposal to disaffiliate from OEA/NEA.

As I remember it, the SHTA leadership at that time decided that our members were well-served by our local leadership (It was the early 1980s and Sal Fabrizio was the president at that time). Instead of sending a large percentage of our dues to regional, state, and national organizations, the leadership proposed disaffiliation, which the membership voted on and approved.

I just think about the boldness of that decision. We went from having the support of a large association to being on our own: hiring our own accountants, attorneys, and consultants. Our general fund was small; however, with the careful stewardship of then Treasurer Tom Patrick, our general fund grew substantially. It continues to grow under the leadership of our current Treasurer Bill Scanlon and the Investments Committee.

When we disaffiliated, our dues were \$140.00 per year. They have increased only one time—more than 15 years ago—to the current \$200.00 per year. I am sure you know teachers in other districts who pay much more.

There are sure to be teachers, either current or retired, who have other insights into how the disaffiliation was accomplished. Please email me with your input and I will revise and update this information. I think it is important to know about our past as we make decisions for the future.

-Rebecca Thomas

*Respectfully submitted,
David Klapholz, chairperson*

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

The Holiday Party at The Boneyard was a great success. We had so much fun bringing in the Holiday Cheer. Hopefully, this can be an annual event and we can make it better each year.

Our next event is the Spring Recognition Reception. It is scheduled for Thursday, May 24th at 3:45 in the high school upper cafeteria. Be on the look-out for more specific information.

*Respectfully submitted,
Darlene Garrison, chairperson*

PAST PRESIDENT

Happy New Year. I hope you had a relaxing winter break and holiday season. As past president, I am available to assist SHTA President John Morris and the members of his leadership team and the Association. Recently, Dave Klapholz, Policy Chairperson, asked me to write about the history of our Association focusing on the disaffiliation of the SHTA from OEA/NEA. You can read this in Dave's Policy report.

One of the activities that I will continue to do is attend the meetings of the Board of Education. I attended the January 10 meeting and wanted to alert you to a change. The Board will now meet at 6 p.m., not 8 p.m. as they have in the past. The meetings will continue to be on the second Tuesday of each month. The Board may also schedule work sessions on the fourth Tuesday of the month.

I look forward to continuing to work with all of you. I appreciate and enjoy the opportunity.

*Respectfully submitted,
Becky Thomas*

SECRETARY'S REPORT

MINUTES FOR THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING

January 9, 2012

Mercer Elementary School

The President, John Morris, called the meeting to order at 4:29 p.m.

Lindsay Florence, principal of Mercer, welcomed the SHTA representative council.

The minutes of the November meeting were unanimously approved.

ADMINISTRATION REPORT: Lisa Howell stated the district recently had a substitute teacher intake.

PTO REPORT: Tracy Williams, PTO Council co-president, talked about changes to the grants from the PTO Council. The deadline for the grant application is March 12.

OFFICERS' REPORTS:**PRESIDENT**

John Morris stated he attended the Educators Union Summit. He attended the SHTA Holiday Party, which he stated was very well attended and a very fun event and thanked Darlene Garrison for putting the party together. He talked to Lisa Howell about substitute quality and the recent intake of new subs. He was fortunate to be able to attend the visit from President Barack Obama (see picture below).

VICE-PRESIDENT

Dollye Finney reported that the SHTA's donation to the silent auction for "A Night for the Red and White" is a Kindle Fire. She reminded the members that the PTO council is still accepting donations for their annual fund.

SECRETARY

Matt Zucca discussed the SHTA's Annual Red & White Drawing to be held on February 13. Ticket sales are for SHTA MEMBERS ONLY and will close on February 9. He stated that this year's prizes in the SHTA's Red and White drawing are three sets of two tickets to the event on March 12. You may win only once. A flyer will be published in the newsletter.

TREASURER

Bill Scanlon discussed our current financial report.

EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS**PAST PRESIDENT**

Becky Thomas stated she attended the Educators' Summit. She is working with a teacher and the Ohio Department of Education. She will be attending the next Board Meeting.

POLICY

Dave Klapholz had no report.

TEACHER EDUCATION

Steven Smith has been working with teachers regarding tenure questions.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Debbie Musca stated that the SHTA will have an ad in the Shaker Life Magazine. She is working on the SHTA teacher appreciation gift and stated she would take suggestions.

PUBLICATIONS

Andre Glasier said that newsletter submissions are due on Wednesday. Please send them to him at glasier_a@shaker.org.

LEGAL AID

Chante Thomas-Taylor had no report.

LEGISLATIVE

Anna Hruby was unable to attend the meeting. Her report will appear in the Newsletter.

SOCIAL

Darlene Garrison stated she is working on the spring recognition reception, which will be held in May. Darlene is working on membership feedback from the Holiday Party.

MEMBERSHIP AND ELECTIONS

Stacy Elgart stated we currently have 399 members.

SALARY/TENURE

Lena Paskewitz stated she has been attending the Evaluation Committee meetings and the Performance Compensation Committee.

PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Mike Sears discussed some changes in the documentation process with FMLA.

BUILDING REPORTS

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

High School is pleased with how the building administration handled some personnel concerns.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

John Morris thanked Lisa Hardiman for hosting the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:54 p.m.

THE NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2012.

Respectfully submitted,
Matt Zucca, secretary

Devastation and Reform

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

I couldn't fall asleep last night. Not because I drank too much coffee but because I had the opportunity to hear "school reform" power couple, Michelle Rhee and Kevin Johnson, speak at the Cleveland Clinic's Ideas for Tomorrow program. I was tossing and turning in anger at the teacher union bashing based on half-truths, misunderstanding and an apparent lack of historical knowledge, which is especially grating being a history teacher. School reform cannot happen without teachers. Instead of working against or provoking the associations that represent teachers, why not work with them?

Michelle Rhee is the worst type of "school reform" ideologue; one that states all the right things but backs them with faulty actions and thinking. Her premise for public education is that students must be the focus of all initiatives. During the discussion both Rhee and especially Mr. Johnson focused on the need to have high expectations for all students, regardless of race or socioeconomic status. They spoke that all children can learn, regardless of their background. At Mr. Johnson's charter school in Sacramento, CA., children are told that college is an option from kindergarten on, using funds to travel to colleges around the area. All this I believe in.

The issues spring from the implementation of their simple solutions to complex problems. When Rhee became superintendent of Washington D.C. schools, she did find a district in crisis. Her answer was to create a merit pay system based primarily on test scores and getting rid of the so-called "last-in, first-out" seniority firing rules. Her reign led to impressive growth in test scores.

What she failed to mention is *USA Today's* scathing expose of possible wide spread fraud concerning test scores in the district (http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2011-03-28-1Aschooltesting28_CV_N.htm). She left after a short, three-year tenure before she was fired by the new in-coming mayor, because of parent and teacher resistance to her actions. She left behind a district still struggling and forced to defend the scores on mandated-tests. Her answer to these scandals often states that it may be only a few people who cheat but as a whole, the district has improved, based again on these tests. What does aggressively higher scores mean on tests? Yes, learning could have improved widely, but it could also mean that teachers are now forced to adopt a test specific curriculum and teach not only to the test but test taking skills also. Are these children truly getting a better education that empowers them outside of the classroom by focusing only on testing? Are the third-graders learning to read or learning to complete the test? Do we want a country of excellent test-takers or creative and insightful thinkers?

In her speech, she remarked that teacher Union leadership was primarily focused on protecting teachers and not students. She also emphasized on many occasions that Union leadership differed from the teachers in the classroom, who, she remarked, tended to favor her aggressive evaluations and dismissals. In our association and in most others, union leaders and union representatives are teachers. They work inside the classroom everyday with their colleagues. They hear their complaints and frustrations. And in many occasions true educational changes (I refuse to use reforms as it has been butchered by those against us) come not from above but starts from union members with the blessing of the leadership. While some bad teachers may be protected by contracts, many contracts, including ours, gives specific steps to terminate poor-performing teachers. Yet most administrators fail to begin the process because they are understaffed or unwilling to begin the conversation with said teacher. I applaud the removal of poor teachers but sense that most administrations are unwilling to go through the process. How is that a Union leadership issue?

The history of many of the items both Rhee and Johnson rail against are based on the actions of administrators and politicians not teachers. Teachers have simply reacted to poor administration and improper political will through collective bargaining and lobbying for legislation to protect the profession. For instance, the so-called “last-in, first-out” legislation was created because foolish administrators were pink-slipping teachers based NOT on students’ needs or teachers’ evaluation but primarily on the teachers’ salary. By firing an experienced teacher and hiring a younger one, administrators could cut costs, yet do detrimental harm to the classroom. Massive losses of experienced teachers happened frequently, leaving inexperienced teachers without solid veteran mentorship.

I do not condone bad teaching. I do not condone all that actions of every teachers’ Union. I know that we do not always get things right. Yet our public education is often the envy of the world. When I travelled to Korea last summer, the students of a private-world language high school praised the less structured more holistic approach to education in the United States as opposed to their testing focused one. While we should not rest on our laurels, effective change to our system needs to come from the people who work with students everyday and see how implementation of policies will work on the field. People who are properly trained and focused on students needs do have the answers. Often that is not the administrator, politician or school reformer. Often these people have good intentions but lack the basic understanding of the complexity of the problems and put forth simple answers that only compound the issue. While these reformers have begun the dialogue that needs to be addressed, they need to come to the source to begin the discussion, not attack it.

AG

Important Dates

Monday, January 16	Martin Luther King Jr. Day (No School)
Friday, January 20	Close of First Semester (Professional/Clerical day, graders 7-12)
Thursday, February 2	A Conversation with Diane Ravitch, 6PM @ Pilgrim United Church of Christ, 2592 W. 14 th St., Cleveland. Sponsored by Cleveland Teachers Union
Monday, February 6	Executive Board
Monday, February 13	Representative Council-High School
Monday, February 20	President's Day: No school
Monday, February 27	PTO Community Book Discussion of Diane Ravitch's <i>The Death and Life of the Great American School System</i> . 7PM @ SHHS Cafeteria
Friday, March 2	Professional Day (Grades K-6)
Monday, March 12	PTO Grant applications DUE

Win
“A Night for the
Red and White”
in the
SHTA’s
Annual Drawing

Three winners will each receive two
tickets to the event on Saturday,
March 10.



Chances are only \$2.00 each!

See your SHTA reps for tickets.

The drawing will be held on February 13th .

Issue No. 4

