

# SHTA *news*

---

No. 7, April 16, 2012

## Message From the President

March was a relatively quiet, yet eventful, month. I continue to participate in meetings on behalf of the members of the Association, including meeting with Dr. Freeman and members of the Performance Compensation Committee to clarify the intent and potential direction of the committee; reviewing issues regarding the district medical plan with Bryan Christman and Mike Sears; and meeting with members from Mercer and the High School on building concerns. What was eventful is our Association's participation in a Union Summit meeting. In the past, I have met with leaders of other unions, including David Saywell, Bill Lavezzi, Kurt Miller, and Linda Bacon from NEOEA and CTU. I have discussed shared interests with Solon and South Euclid-Lyndhurst. On April 4, after meeting with several union presidents to organize our agenda, I helped conduct an evening meeting...a Union Summit...which was also attended by SHTA members Eileen Sweeney and Andrew Glasier.

The Union Summit is an undertaking that deserves discussing in this forum. It has been a group composed of Cuyahoga County teachers' unions with the initial intent of rallying around SB5/Issue 2. Since the defeat of Issue 2 in November, I have been part of ongoing talks on how we can utilize the open line of communication that has been established among our organizations. With my involvement as SHTA president, I have become the de facto representative of the independent associations in the county. The SHTA, along with South-Euclid and Solon, represent the three Cuyahoga county independents. As of our last meeting as a summit, we have unified all teachers' unions in the county! This is truly an historic moment. I am proud to have represented our Association through these efforts.

Our involvement in the Union Summit will not challenge our self-governance or independence as an Association. We are not being courted by OFT or OEA to re-affiliate. In fact, it is our independent status that gives us our unique strength in the group. We cannot be accused of being directed by a larger, more political national group. We do not endorse candidates as an Association and we do not contribute money to legislation. However, we do have an active PAC that can and will put people on the ground, on the Internet, and on the phones to ensure and defend our profession against the onslaught of poorly designed and inequitable legislation coming our way.

At this point the Union Summit is working on creating a common vision for the group. I am advocating for the adoption of common tenets that all teacher unions in the county can embrace and utilize as a rationale to support one another when collective action becomes necessary. At this point, I have proposed that we unify around the themes of valuing experience, enhancing collaboration, fostering professionalism, ensuring equity and

**Issue No. 7**

emphasizing democratic educational ideals. I am only one president among many in the county and I look forward to seeing our ideas evolve as meetings continue into the future. Whether it is taking a stand against the Cleveland Plan and its attack on collective bargaining or confronting the Right-to-Work legislation that is on the horizon, I look forward to working towards the preservation and strengthening of our Association, both within our district and without. Please do not hesitate to share your thoughts with me on this matter or any other. I can always be reached via email at [morris\\_j@shaker.org](mailto:morris_j@shaker.org) or at extension 6033.

Finally, we received a note from our colleagues in the Chardon Schools in appreciation of the baskets of apples that were sent to show our support and sympathy. Thank you to Dollye Finney for her thoughtfulness.

*Respectfully submitted,  
John L. Morris, president*

## Reports from the Executive Board

### VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I hope that you enjoyed a safe and restful spring vacation. This month I have a very brief report. The *Night for the Red and White* was held at Landerhaven on Saturday, March 10. There were 750 attendees with 106 staff members present. This event profited \$105,000 for the schools! Over the twenty years of the *Night for Red and White* the proceeds have now topped two million dollars. I would like to thank you all for your assistance in making this a continually successful event.

Please continue to submit receipts for reimbursement of Teacher Fellowship Applications.

Congratulations to all of our members that have been offered continuing contract!

*Respectfully submitted,  
Dollye Finney, vice president*

### TREASURER'S REPORT

I hope everyone's school year is progressing well. The Investments Committee (Chante Thomas, Matt Zucca, Dollye Finney, Todd Keitlen, and Bill Scanlon) met with Brady Krebs, our Edward Jones advisor on Thursday, April 12<sup>th</sup> to discuss our Association's investments. Our investments are doing well. I have also been paying bills for the Association.

In May the membership will vote on a budget for the next fiscal year (July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013). The process of placing the budget on the May ballot runs as follows:

The Executive Board comes up with a budget based on the projected income and expenses for the next fiscal year. This budget is then presented to the Representative Council who can ask questions and suggest changes. At the May Representative Council meeting the Representative Council votes to send the

budget out to the membership for a full membership vote of approval or disapproval (the May vote mentioned above).

In an attempt to make the process more transparent and collaborative, I presented a proposed budget a month early to give people time to look it over and discuss it before the voting process.

There are zeros placed in the salary amounts for the six salaried positions because, as spelled out in our By-Laws, the salaries are to be determined by the Rep. Council at the May meeting. The amounts approved by a Representative Council vote will then be added before the budget is put on the May ballot. The main areas of the spreadsheet you should focus on are the last two columns. The second to last column is the proposed budget. The last column is the difference between last year's amount for that line item and the new amount.

The total proposed budget amount is a lot lower than it has been in the past. This is because we used to base the budget on the dues income of 420 members, but now we have to base it on 400 members. We don't have the membership numbers we used to (due to attrition of staff and due to people's choice not to join our Association). As a result of this decrease in membership we have to cut back on our expenses.

You should also look at the bottom row of the attached proposed budget. The brief explanation there shows how this proposed budget remains below the \$80,000 income amount based on the dues of 400 members.

If anyone has any questions about the budget please email me [scanlon\\_w@shaker.org](mailto:scanlon_w@shaker.org) or call ext 6296.

The last thing I will mention is something that was brought up by my predecessor, Tom Patrick, when he was retiring. As Tom was finishing up his tenure as Treasurer he said the Association is probably going to have to have a dues increase fairly soon. That was seven years ago. I must reiterate that statement, especially looking at next year's proposed budget. We cannot continue at our current level of service to our members without addressing the higher expenses of the Association.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Bill Scanlon, Treasurer*

**SEE PROPOSED BUDGET ON NEXT PAGE.**

**Issue No. 7**

<b>Account</b>	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Debits</b>	<b>Transfers out</b>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Transfers in</b>	<b>Balance</b>	<b>Proposed Budget 2012-2013</b>	<b>Difference from 7/1/11</b>
Accounting	<b>3500.00</b>	6,082.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-2,582.00	<b>5000.00</b>	<b>1,500.00</b>
Compensation for officers, representatives, et al.								<b>0.00</b>
President	<b>9302.00</b>	4,651.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,651.00	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-9,302.00</b>
Vice President	<b>5581.00</b>	2,790.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,790.50	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-5,581.00</b>
Secretary	<b>5581.00</b>	2,790.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,790.50	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-5,581.00</b>
Treasurer	<b>5581.00</b>	2,790.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,790.50	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-5,581.00</b>
P.R. & R. Chairperson	<b>5581.00</b>	2,790.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,790.50	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-5,581.00</b>
Editor	<b>4653.00</b>	2,326.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,326.50	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-4,653.00</b>
Building reps. and alternates	<b>10000.00</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10,000.00	<b>10000.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Conferences and meetings	<b>2500.00</b>	1,842.73	0.00	0.00	0.00	657.27	<b>2500.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Contingency	<b>250.00</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	250.00	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-250.00</b>
Fellowships and Grants	<b>4000.00</b>	799.96	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,200.04	<b>3500.00</b>	<b>-500.00</b>
Insurance	<b>5000.00</b>	4,915.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	85.00	<b>5000.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Legal	<b>5000.00</b>	200.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,800.00	<b>5000.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Negotiations	<b>0.00</b>	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-50.00	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Executive Board expenses	<b>500.00</b>	322.34	0.00	0.00	0.00	177.66	<b>500.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Officers' expenses	<b>500.00</b>	437.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	62.25	<b>500.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Payroll taxes	<b>550.00</b>	263.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	286.94	<b>550.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Publications	<b>1000.00</b>	1,410.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-410.00	<b>200.00</b>	<b>-800.00</b>
Public Relations	<b>7000.00</b>	3,323.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,676.25	<b>4000.00</b>	<b>-3,000.00</b>
Social	<b>2500.00</b>	1,450.05	0.00	0.00	350.00	1,399.95	<b>1800.00</b>	<b>-700.00</b>
STRS(TPO contributions)	<b>5100.00</b>	<u>2,539.53</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>2,560.47</u>	<b>5100.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83679.00</b>	41,775.67	0.00	0.00	350.00	42,253.33	<b>43650.00</b>	<b>-40,029.00</b>
<b>Total salary amount for the 6 salaried positions (from last year)</b>	<b>36,279.00</b>		<b>Budgeted amount plus salary amount</b>		<b>79,929.00</b>		<b>Income based on 400 members</b>	<b>80,000.00</b>

## PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

I attended two meetings with Bryan Christman and John Morris concerning health insurance. I also fielded questions from members about sick days, personal days, FMLA, maternity leave, job sharing, and leaves of absence. Please continue to contact me either through e-mail ([sears\\_m@shaker.org](mailto:sears_m@shaker.org)), classroom phone (295-4770), or cell phone (216-571-0447). One of the best parts of this job is helping our teachers with questions and/or concerns. Even if you have read through the contract or talked to your building representative, it is often a good idea to check with me to make sure your situation is being handled appropriately.

Sue Garber and I communicated via e-mail about an error in my February report. She will not contact you about your dependent's insurance status until they turn 19. Also, children do need to be eligible for a federal tax exemption in order to receive dental coverage on their parents' plan. If the Affordable Care Act remains in effect, health and prescription coverage are available for all dependents up to the age of 26, regardless of their federal tax exemption eligibility. Therefore, employees will have to complete verification forms for dependents 19 and over about dental coverage in the fall of 2012. If they do not, they may be billed for the dental premium.

I also wrote in the February newsletter about checking to make sure the blood lab you go to is a preferred Anthem lab. If it is not, you will be subject to higher fees that will count as part of your deductible. A preferred lab will only charge the \$20 office visit fee, and it will not count toward your deductible. I'd like to thank Onaway representative Susan Mears, Treasurer Matt Zucca, and Policy Chair David Klapholz for helping me research quick ways for our members to locate preferred labs and other medical services. Here is a link to a service on Anthem's website that allows you to type in your zip code, check off the services you're looking for, and search for those services in your area. You do have to enter the first 3 letters of your Identification Number (found on your Anthem card).

<http://provider.bcbs.com/>

We are still waiting to hear from Express Scripts about new prescription cards. The cards we received previously do not list the co-pay amounts and are still valid. The numbers listed on them related to our plan are all correct. If you need to request additional cards, you can call their 24-hour customer service number, 1-800-206-4005. This service can also help you if you're trying to fill a new prescription at a different pharmacy and you don't have your card.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Mike Sears, chairperson*

## **SALARY TENURE COMMITTEE**

The Teacher Evaluation Committee met in March to continue working on aligning our current evaluation system with the criteria from the state and Race To The Top.

The Performance Compensation Committee also met in March. We were joined by John Morris and Mark Freeman with the goal of clarifying a shared understanding of the goals of the program. Teachers on the committee are diligently working to ensure that the program we design is based on research and respects the professionalism of all teachers.

Please visit the link on the Shaker.org website for "Special Committees" to view resources, meeting minutes, and contact information of committee members.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Lena Paskewitz, chairperson*

## **TEACHER EDUCATION**

No Report.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Steve Smith, chairperson*

## **LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE**

### *Legislative Report: HB 191; Cleveland Woes*

Ohio House Bill 191 proposes, among other things, that schools be prohibited from holding classes between Memorial and Labor Days, has been amended in the past week. The new proposal still shifts the measurement of minimum school year requirements from days to hours, but drops the provision requiring schools to open after Labor Day and to close no later than Memorial Day. Currently, Ohio schools are required to be open for 182 days. If passed, the new law would require that grades 7-12 would complete 1001 hours, grades 1-7 would complete 910 hours, with half day kindergarten requiring 455 hours per school year. According the Representative Hayes, the bill's sponsor, this will empower school districts to be flexible in setting their own calendars. The current school year, as it stands, runs 900 hours/182 days.

As you have probably heard, thanks in great part to the PAC, our colleagues at the Cleveland Municipal School District have had a fight on their hands. On April 12, a deal was reached between city leadership and the Cleveland Teachers Union (CTU), and the following changes have been made to the proposed legislation.

\*The "Fresh Start" (isn't that a kitty litter?) provision has been thrown out. This would have nullified all existing contracts, and given the city the right to impose its terms if an agreement with the CTU were not reached (à la SB5/Issue 2). I am happy to report that this is off the table!

\*The provision that would have allowed the district to fire all teachers at failing schools has also been dropped, and instead, teachers of those schools (and district-wide) will be given input as to how to fix and staff said schools. Teacher input? Sounds good!

The bad news: this is still a disturbing piece of legislation that includes, among other problematic mandates, undefined criteria for evaluating teachers. Much like the fabled

“merit pay,” the Cleveland evaluation process will in part determine the district RIF list, whereas in the past, seniority was the determining factor. This legislation, in my opinion, takes way too much power away from Educational professionals and places it into the hands of elected officials.

Since the CMSD agreement was reached as I was writing this, more details are sure to emerge, so stay tuned. What is happening in Cleveland is just more proof that we teachers must continue to speak up for our qualifications, our abilities, and our experience. It is evident that the assault on our professional autonomy has not ended with the defeat of Issue 2.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Anna Hruby chairperson*

## **LEGAL AID COMMITTEE**

No Report.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Chante Thomas-Taylor, chairperson*

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

I hope everyone had a relaxing spring break. I have informed the building representatives that I will be distributing to them at the end of the month our Teacher Appreciation Day gift from the SHTA to be passed out to our members during the week of May 7. I also placed an advertisement in the April/May issue of the Shaker Life magazine.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Debbie Musca, chairperson*

## **MEMBERSHIP/ELECTIONS COMMITTEE**

If you are interested in serving as a representative for your building for the 2012-2013 school year, please submit your name to your head representative by Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup>. Any member on a continuing-contract, who has been an active member for the three years immediately preceding the election, is eligible to be a building representative. We will elect building representatives and vote on the proposed budget on Monday, May 21<sup>st</sup>.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Stacy Elgart, chairperson*

## **POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE OF SHTA**

Recent legislation proposed in the State Senate, co-sponsored by State Senator Nina Turner who represents Shaker Heights, has targeted the educational woes of the Cleveland Municipal School District through punishing teachers. Mayor Frank Jackson and The Cleveland Foundation have proposed a recycled version of Senate Bill 5. The reform plan includes giving the district’s chief executive officer more power to fire underperforming teachers and close underperforming schools. It would also include partnering with charter schools, including some that are underperforming. Also, it could lengthen school days and years.

One of the more controversial aspects to the mayor's reform plan is the so-called "fresh start" in which all contracts with the teachers would become null and void. Conditions of employment including pay, teacher evaluations and tenure would be negotiated as if nothing existed before. If this legislation passes, it would seriously weaken the collective bargaining rights of the teachers in the Cleveland Municipal School District.

Why should we care? We should care a great deal because the governor has explicated stated his intention to use the Cleveland reform plan as a model for other districts across Ohio... as Cuyahoga County goes so goes the state. It is clear that the Governor failed to hear the message sent by the people of Ohio last November when they voted down Issue 2. The Governor did not get his way and so his new plan is to attack unions one by one in order to take away the collective bargaining rights of teachers. The collective bargaining process has proven to be an effective tool for addressing the problems in our schools. The Cleveland Teachers Union has already offered considerable concessions over the past years. Additional progress appears to have been made in the current negotiations. As State Senator Shirley Smith of the 21st congressional district has said, "That's important because if we want success, we must respect the voters' position and put education first instead of putting it at odds with collective bargaining."

What can we do? It is important to engage in meaningful dialogues with our colleagues, neighbors, administration and friends about the teaching profession. Teachers have been vilified and our jobs are misunderstood. We need to change the public perception of our profession in order to get more support and respect from our communities. On May 10<sup>th</sup> the SHTA, the PTO and the Shaker Heights City Schools are co-sponsoring a showing of the movie, *American Teacher*. This event will take place at the Shaker Heights High School large auditorium and begins at 7pm. We encourage you to join us to celebrate National Teachers' Day.

Last, it is extremely important to contact your legislators and state senators and tell them that you do not want them to support the Cleveland Reform Plan. You can contact your legislators by going to [www.legislature.state.oh.us](http://www.legislature.state.oh.us) or [ohio.gov/government](http://ohio.gov/government).

*Respectfully submitted,  
Eileen Sweeney*

## **POLICY COMMITTEE**

This month's 'Law-in-the-Limelight' is **By-Law III Part B.** of our By-Laws: Duties of the President.

Our President is has a wide range of responsibilities. Here is the Article in full:

The President:

1. Shall preside at all meetings of the Association, the Executive Board and the Representative Council.
2. Shall be an ex-officio member of each committee.
3. Shall call such meetings of the Executive Board, the Representative Council, and the Association as are provided for in the By-Laws, or as shall seem expeditious.
4. Shall direct the preparation and distribution of the Executive Board and Representative Council agendas prior to the meetings, and of other reports and papers at other times.

5. Shall, with the Treasurer, sign all checks for disbursement.
6. Shall appoint committee Chairs and members of all standing committees and any special committees unless otherwise provided for in the By-Laws. Elementary and secondary levels shall be represented on each standing committee.
7. Shall prepare, prior to the start of the school term, a calendar of Association meetings and functions for the school year and coordinate the dates set with the Superintendent to obtain maximum articulation between Association and Administration activities.
8. Shall initiate a unified and positive program of activities designed to serve the needs of the Association.
9. Shall, with the approval of the Executive Board, be the official voice of the Association as well as represent the Association at official functions when necessary.
10. Shall, with the aid of the Executive Board, execute the program of the Association.
11. Shall represent the interests of the Association at administrative meetings called by the Superintendent or other administrative staff.
12. Shall attend monthly meetings of the Board of Education when possible.
13. Shall approve all released time for Association duties as designated in Article II, Section 2.03 of the Agreement between the Association and the Board of Education.
14. Shall approve official communication with legal counsel.
15. Shall, with the approval of the Executive Board, retain the services of professionals.

*Respectfully submitted,  
David Klapholz, chairperson*

## **SOCIAL COMMITTEE**

The annual SHTA/Shaker Heights City Schools Recognition Reception will be held on Thursday, May 24<sup>th</sup>. This very special event will begin at 3:45PM in the Shaker Heights High School upper cafeteria. Please come out and show your colleagues support for all of their hard work! **Please see the attached flyer.**

*Respectfully submitted,  
Darlene Garrison, chairperson*

## **PAST PRESIDENT**

I continue to attend evening meetings on behalf of the Association. This month, I attended the business meeting of the Board of Education and will attend the Audit and Finance Committee meeting on April 17 and the Board of Education Work Session on April 24.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Becky Thomas*

**SECRETARY'S REPORT**  
**MINUTES FOR THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING**  
**April 9, 2012**

**Shaker Heights Middle School**

The President, John Morris, called the meeting to order at 4:25 p.m.

Sue Alig, principal of Lomond, and Carina Robinson, assistant principal of Lomond welcomed the SHTA representative council.

The minutes of the March meeting were unanimously approved.

ADMINISTRATION REPORT: Lisa Howell reported that the spring evaluation for non-continuing contract members and continuing contract members are going well.

PTO REPORT: Ann Garson, PTO Council co-president, talked about PTO council co-sponsoring with the SHTA a viewing of the movie *American Teacher*. She reported that many grant applications have been received and that a decision on awarding the grants would be made soon.

**OFFICERS' REPORTS:**

**PRESIDENT**

John Morris reported that he attended the last Performance Compensation Committee meeting along with Dr. Freeman. They discussed the focus of the committee. He attended another Union Summit meeting. He worked with the Mercer building Representatives, regarding concerns with the building administrator. He met with Mike Sears and Bryan Christman to discuss insurance concerns.

**VICE-PRESIDENT**

Dollye Finney reported on final details from *A Night for the Red and White*. There were over 750 attended, with 106 being staff members.

**SECRETARY**

Matt Zucca took attendance for the meeting.

**TREASURER**

Bill Scanlon discussed our current financial report. He discussed the proposed budget for the 2012-2013 school year. He will be meeting with the investment committee by the end of the month.

## **EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS**

### **PAST PRESIDENT**

Becky Thomas stated she would be attending the next Board Meeting and the city's Finance and Audit Committee meeting.

### **POLICY**

Dave Klapholz had no report.

### **TEACHER EDUCATION**

Steven Smith stated he would be sending out congratulatory letter to members who will be given a continuing contract.

### **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Debbie Musca stated that an advertisement for the SHTA would appear in the April/May *Shaker Life* Magazine. She will send out the Teacher Appreciation gift for the first week of May.

### **PUBLICATIONS**

Andrew Glaiser said that newsletter submissions are due on Wednesday. Please send them to him at [glasier\\_a@shaker.org](mailto:glasier_a@shaker.org). He also discussed the upcoming showing of the film *American Teacher*. It will be shown at the Shaker Heights High School Large Auditorium at 7 p.m. on May 10<sup>th</sup>. **(SEE FLYER BELOW)**

### **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 on May 24th.

### **MEMBERSHIP AND ELECTIONS**

Stacy Elgart stated that members who wish to be building representatives have their names to her by Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup> by 4:00 p.m. Elections and budget approval will be held on Monday, May 21<sup>st</sup>. She stated that the current membership is at 398.

### **SALARY/TENURE**

Lena Paskewitz stated she attended the last Evaluation Committee meeting and the Performance Compensation Committee meeting. The teachers who are on the committee have been meeting outside of regular meeting dates.

**PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Mike Sears met with Bryan Christman to discuss insurance concerns. He stated that members who need a new prescription card can request one from the Express Scripts website. He has been working on questions members have had about use of sick days and personal days.

**BUILDING REPORTS**

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

**Mercer** reported that they have been working on ongoing concerns with the building administrator.

**Onaway** reported that they were going to inform the building administration of the staff's concerns with slow copy machines.

**Woodbury** has been working on personnel issues.

The **Middle School** reported that concerns of potential health issue with certain areas of the school are being addressed.

The **High School** worked with the building administrator regarding Progress Book concerns.

At 4:55 p.m. the SHTA representative council went into executive session.

**OLD BUSINESS**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

None.

**FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER**

John Morris thanked Lomond for hosting the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

THE NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR MONDAY, MAY 14, 2012 at Onaway.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
**Matt Zucca, secretary**

## The Three Mistakes

*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.*

Many of the supposed educational reform models that have been introduced in the past 25 years have been based on the corporate model of advancement. These capitalist concepts are based on market demand and incentives that are used in businesses throughout the world, in many cases with great success. The thinking is that financial incentives would promote better teaching and that privatizing education will allow for lower scoring schools to go "out of business" leaving the best schools, the "cream", to float to the top. Incentives and market philosophy would reward what works and eliminate the issues in education. These corporate reformers see failing public schools as outside the market; despite their poor performance, these schools remain open and the supposedly terrible teachers remain in their jobs. The root of the issue for many in the corporate reform movement is teachers' unions. They believe that unions protect teachers at the expense of the students. As business minded people, it is not surprising that they implicate unions as the problem. Through this philosophy, corporate reformers have latched on to three primary reforms that have been implemented throughout the country since 1988: merit pay based on test accountability, school choice in the form of charters and vouchers, and the reduction of power of teachers' unions. These reform efforts have failed terribly, leading to an impending disaster for the future of American public education.

The concept behind testing accountability and merit pay is simple enough. Students will be tested in each subject at the beginning of the year and the end of year. If the students in a teacher's class show growth, the teacher would be rewarded financially. This theory works under the pretense that financial incentives increase productivity. Unfortunately, studies have shown that it does not work in creative fields like teaching. Teaching is inherently a collaborative profession with teachers working with many different groups of people depending on the student's needs. Financial rewards would deemphasize collaboration and incentivize "teaching to the test", undermining the creativity that makes our educational system superior to many others. Most importantly, teachers do much more than teach curriculum, where we are social workers, teach financial literacy, explain proper hygiene, help students through complicated life events; where we are psychologist and therapists for students and in some cases teaching parenting skills; where we must teach the Golden Rule and advocate for students and sometimes parents in large bureaucracies and more. There seems to be no economic formula currently available to help answer all of these needs. Written tests do not recognize the many contributions of teachers to the lives of their students. Think of your greatest teacher. What did she/he do for you beyond the curriculum? How did she or he inspire you in new directions? How long after you had the teacher did the realization happen? How can tests account for that? More importantly, how will this help students succeed?

Charter schools were designed in the late 1980s for a singular purpose: to help teachers create a school using alternative teaching methods for the lowest performing students in a district. They have since become state funded private schools for higher

performing students with little oversight. Charter schools handpick their students, leaving behind many of the lowest performing students that they were created to address. Charter schools that fail often do not inform the students or their parents of their demise, leaving them heartbroken and in many cases without transferable credits because of inaccurate accounting. As a colleague once pointed out to me, we already create “charter schools” within public schools when we build programs for our diverse learners. In Shaker Heights High School we offer an International Baccalaureate Diploma, an arts education, both performing and visual, the TEAM program for struggling readers, and more. The Cleveland Public Schools have several public magnet schools that perform above most charter schools, including the fabulous School of the Arts. Why must private funding be used for ingenuity that can be accomplished within a public school setting and with complete public oversight? Even successful charters usurp the American ideology of equality and fairness in a democratic society. Part of our ideal of equality is manifested in the idea that all children are afforded an equitable education. When public monies go toward private schools it disrupts that ideal. The importance of community is fractured.

A teacher’s workspace is a child’s learning environment. When teachers’ unions negotiate for a better work environment for their teachers, they are also negotiating for better schools for students. The fallacy that teachers’ unions only work to protect so-called “bad teachers” misrepresents the truth. When teachers negotiate with Boards of Education, we negotiate not only for salary and benefits but class size, safe working environments, planning time, collaboration, professional development and so on. Each district has their own unique needs and their contracts emphasize that. The Cleveland Public Schools contract caps class sizes to 21 students for kindergarten through third grade at the expense of teachers in upper grades, because Cleveland teachers realize the importance of helping struggling students at an early age with more teacher-student contact. The current administration of Frank Jackson and Eric Gordon would gut this provision to lower costs. Which is right for children?

Let’s begin true reform and involve the true experts in education, the teachers. Let’s allow for individual schools to focus on their own specific problems. Let us help students learn in a creative and enlightened fashion. Let’s safeguard this great American democratic tradition.

*AG*

### **Important Dates**

**Monday, May 7**

SHTA Executive Board @ Woodbury  
**NATIONAL TEACHER APPRECIATION DAY**

**Thursday, May 10**

Screening of *American Teacher* @ SHHS Large  
Auditorium **(SEE FLYER BELOW)**

**Monday, May 14**

SHTA Representative Council @ Onaway

**Thursday, May 24**

District Recognition Reception  
High School Cafeteria @ 3:45 P.M.  
**(SEE FLYER BELOW)**

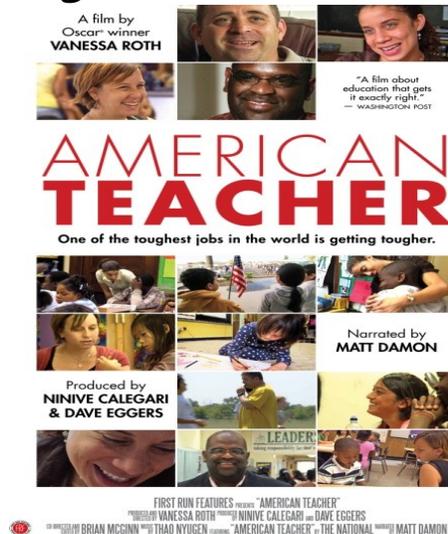
# 2012 Spring Recognition Reception

Thursday, May 24<sup>th</sup>  
3:45 PM to 5:45 PM  
Shaker Heights High School  
Upper Cafeteria

Sponsored By:  
The Shaker Heights  
Teachers' Association &  
Shaker Heights  
City School District



***Celebrate National Teachers Day with the Shaker Heights community for a special screening of ...***



***When:*** Thursday, May 10, 2012

***Time:*** 7 p.m.-9 p.m.

***Where:*** Shaker Heights High School, Large Auditorium, 15911 Aldersyde Drive

***R.S.V.P:*** <http://americanteacherinshakerheights.eventbrite.com/>

*The goal of this special event is to start a dialogue among our community. Dan Moulthrop will lead a panel discussion including teachers, administrators, parents and students to address the following questions:*

- *How do we envision school reform and the teaching profession in the Shaker Heights Schools?*
  - *How do we support student achievement in the light of the severe budget cuts?*
- Join the conversation!*

*American Teacher* is the feature-length documentary created and produced by Vanessa Roth, Ninive Calegari, Dave Eggers, and Brian McGinn. The film chronicles the stories of four teachers living and working in disparate urban and rural areas of the country. By following several teachers as they reach different milestones throughout their careers, *American Teacher* tells the deeper story of the teaching profession in America today.

***Co-sponsored by the Shaker Heights City Schools, Shaker Heights Teachers Association and the Shaker Heights Parent Teacher Organization***