

## *A Message from the President of the SHTA*

“Don’t take things personally.” As a fourth generation union leader, this piece of advice has regularly been repeated to me by family members who know that this work has become a part of my life. It keeps me afloat when times get tough, but it is sometimes harder to feel than to say. That being said, I believe it is some of the best advice for anyone in a leadership position.

I would argue that the difference between a union leader and other leaders is that union leaders, at least with independent Associations like ours, are the same dues-paying full time professionals as the members they represent. We are the same. It may be cliche but there is no union without “U” and “I”. This makes the effort not to take things personally that much more challenging, especially in times of institutional change.

I get it. SHTA membership is similar to having car insurance. You take it for granted until you need it. But when you need it, you REALLY need it. That’s part of the work. I am not writing to solicit sympathy or to chastise anyone. I am writing to encourage you to communicate and get involved.

We have disagreements within the Representative Council and Executive Board. Even our officers disagree at times. However, we are doing the work to represent the collective good of the SHTA. We are in communication and have relationships with one another. As our Association continues to evolve through contract negotiations, institutional changes, and state and national pressures, we need Shaker educators who are willing to talk and work together on the issues that matter.

If you disagree with something that the SHTA is doing, or not doing, reach out to the representatives we have in our buildings. We have doubled our representation for grades K-8 to more widely capture the voices of our members who have been moved due to the Woodbury transition. Reach out to Executive Board members and officers, myself included. Run for SHTA representative in the spring. Attend a Representative Council meeting. What I am asking you is not to be silent, complacent, and unsatisfied. The union is what we (you and I) make it.

It’s been a busy winter. I spoke with superintendent Dr. David Glasner regularly. I communicated with Human Resource Director Dr. Tiffany Joseph regularly. I updated the SHTA Facebook page with Publications Editor Andrew Glasier. I met with Innovation Center members and administration about future plans for the IC. I communicated with Mercer Head Representative Eileen Sweeny about a member’s concern. I attended a listening session with Dr. Glasner. I met with the SHTA Executive Board to discuss the district voluntary separation incentive. I worked on a membership communication with SHTA Officers that Andrew Glasier sent out to all members. I worked with Vice President Darlene Garrison on reaching out to SHTA members in need. I communicated with Special Education Chair Tito Vazquez concerning multiple building concerns. I communicated with SHTA Legal Consul Brooks Boron about member concerns. I communicated with Personal Rights and Responsibilities Chair Mike Sears about grievances. I communicated with Boulevard Head Representative Cathy Grieshop about a building concern. I communicated with members about Voluntary Severance Incentive eligibility. I worked with SHTA Lawyer Brooks Boron on a communication with the

district on legal interview protocol. I worked with Mercer Head Rep. Eileen Sweeney and SHTA Health and Safety/Sick Day Transfer Chair Matt Zucca on a member's concern. I attended the Voluntary Severance

Incentive plan meeting at the High School. I worked with Professional Rights & Responsibilities Chair Mike Sears and Treasurer Donte Hayes on a clarification on the program. I discussed issues with SHTA Lawyer, Brooks Boron.

### **IMPORTANT DATES**

Monday, February 2, 2026: SHTA Executive Board Meeting, Fernway

Monday, February 9, 2026: SHTA Representative Council Meeting, SHHS

Again, this is not a letter to solicit sympathy or to offer chastisement. It's a call to communicate, collaborate, and get more involved. You are all valued members of our Association. Reach out. Don't remain silent. We can't provide all the answers, but we have a strong contract that provides many of them. We also have a grievance process and newsletter that allows us to shine light on our common challenges. I realize that not everyone has the impulse to run for a leadership position, but I would love to see more communication and involvement from all of our members. This is our SHTA. Please reach out at [morris\\_j@shaker.org](mailto:morris_j@shaker.org) or x6030. If you have a criticism, I won't take it personally.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
John L. Morris, PhD*

***The SHTA is on FACEBOOK!***

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Shaker-Heights-Teachers-Association>

# **SHTA OFFICERS' REPORTS**

## **VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Welcome back! I hope everyone enjoyed a restful and joyful winter vacation spent with family and friends. I also hope you were able to take time for self-care and reflection, allowing yourselves to recharge. As we begin the second semester, let's carry that renewed energy forward as we continue our important work together.

Get ready for an unforgettable evening! The annual **Night for the Red & White** returns on **Saturday, March 14th, from 7:00–11:00 PM**, at the Agora Ballroom. Join us as we celebrate the incredible spirit of our Shaker community while raising vital funds to educate, empower, and engage our students. Shaker staff can enjoy special pricing on up to two discounted tickets at **\$125 each [online](#)**, which include a delicious dinner, dancing, valet parking, and two drink tickets. Tickets are on sale now and available through the [Shaker Schools Foundation](#) website, with the added convenience of **payroll deduction in March and April**. We hope you'll join us for this meaningful and memorable night!

Please consider donating to ***A Night for the Red & White's*** silent auction by completing the [online auction form](#). The Silent Auction is a favorite part of the event, especially when it involves unique experiences offered by staff members! These kinds of donations bring in funds and create lasting memories for students and their families. Here are a few creative ideas:

**Examples include:**

- Unique handmade items
- Bowling and pizza with the principal
- Tickets to a sporting event or lunch with a teacher
- Principal, coach, and sports announcer for a day
- Special lessons, tutoring, a round of golf, a tennis match, or a cooking class
- Museum membership or package
- Movie outing with a teacher
- A party with a small group or class
- Shopping excursion

We encourage you to be creative! Please complete the attached online [Silent Auction Agreement](#) by March 2, 2026.

Winners of the Dr. Rebecca L. Thomas Fellowship Grant, please remember to submit all receipts to me in order to receive your reimbursement. You can receive up to \$100 to use for your personal professional development. The grants may be used towards any of the following activities:

- Professional Workshops
- Seminars
- Professional Conferences

- College Course work
- Membership fees for professional associations (Does not include SHTA)

***Fellowship Grants may not be used for classroom materials, supplies or special projects.***

Over the past several weeks, I have been actively engaged in supporting our members. I communicated with Administrative Assistant Erica Verderber and Executive Director Holly McCormick regarding the creation of a letter to the membership explaining the Silent Auction and ways to donate to A Night for the Red & White, including encouraging participation through popular teacher gifts and unique staff-donated experiences. The online Silent Auction continues to be very popular, especially when it features unique experiences donated by staff members, and auction donation forms are due by March 2nd. I also completed the necessary paperwork to process reimbursements for the Dr. Rebecca L. Thomas Fellowship Grant, submitted receipts and requisition forms to Treasurer Bill Scanlon, and sent reimbursement checks to members who submitted receipts.

In addition, I attended the Woodbury gathering at Midnight Owl Brewery and shared in that meaningful staff/family event, while also sending thoughtful items to staff members who needed extra comfort and support. I have continued working with members to answer questions related to the Employee Severance Incentive Package, encouraged attendance at the January 12th informational meeting, suggested members schedule individual meetings with EPC, the company in charge, and attended the meeting myself. I communicated with Stacy Poole regarding adding SHTA meeting hours to My Learning Plan and am currently awaiting a response. Looking ahead, the next PTO Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 3rd.

Thank you so much for your continued support and if you need anything, please feel free to contact me.

***Respectfully submitted,***  
***Darlene E. Garrison***

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Happy 2026 to everyone! I hope that you all were able to enjoy family, friends and festivities during our time away. If you are at all like me, Winter Break is now a distant memory which is now replaced by beautiful yet sometimes challenging students, and all the other challenges that come with the work we do.

As I am sure you have heard by now, Shaker Heights central administration is offering an optional incentive/buyout to members who have taught in the district for 12 or more years. Because the district needs to save a significant amount of money over the next several years, they are offering this incentive to encourage SHTA members who are at the top of our payscale to retire this year. I have heard a wide variety of reactions, both positive and negative, to this offer and it looks like some teachers are planning to take it. In November along with SHTA President Dr. John Morris, I attended the initial presentation to teachers given by EPC, the company handling the buyout. The SHTA Executive Board had a meeting in December to discuss this incentive, and just this week, teachers who wanted more information attended a meeting with EPC at Shaker Heights High School. I attended all three meetings. SHTA is not encouraging members one way or another on this offer but wants everyone to be aware of their options.

I have been conferring and advising a member who is having significant difficulties with a student in their class. I have been also communicating with Mercer Head Representative Eileen Sweeney regarding this issue. It seems that the issue has somewhat improved recently.

I will be compiling and distributing SHTA Drawing tickets this month. This is an important fundraiser for SHTA. The winners of the drawing will receive two tickets to Shaker Heights' annual event A Night for The Red & White which will take place on March 14th at The Agora Theater and Ballroom. Please consider purchasing tickets.

As Secretary of SHTA I continue to send invitations to the Representative Council and Executive Board meetings, attend, and take notes at these meetings. Happy New Year to All!!

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Lisa Hardiman*

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Happy 2026 everyone. I recently attended the EPC (Educator Preferred Corporation) meeting about the ESP (Employee Severance Plan) - in other words, the buyout meeting. There are 262 employees eligible for the buyout but EPC predicts less than 40 teachers will take it. There's a lot that goes into the decision. I can use my case as an example. This is my 31st year of teaching. If I take the buyout I will get this \$65,000 payout (spread out over 5 years) but then I will end up with a yearly retirement pay of 62% of my salary. If I don't take the buyout and teach for a 32nd year, I will get a yearly retirement pay of 70% of my salary. That would be an 8% yearly hit for the rest of my life if I take the buyout. There are of course other factors that come into play like health care costs and how this affects the sick-day payout. This is why the SHTA cannot advise anyone one way or the other on this decision because every eligible employee's case is so different. I hope this opportunity enriches the lives of some of our members while helping the District financially.

I communicated with our accountants at Edward Hawkins & Co., Ltd. to prepare our end-of-year tax forms and to provide information about our financials from last year and to relay tax information. I communicated with Vince Julian, our Key Bank Investment representative. I communicated with Brady Krebs, our Edward Jones representative about our investments. I paid bills and paid the December salary amounts to our Association Officers. A full financial report is included here.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Bill Scanlon*

## ***SHTA FINANCIAL REPORT***

<b>Balance Sheet</b>		<b>Profit and Loss</b>	
Shaker Heights Teachers' Association		Shaker Heights Teachers' Association	
As of January 15, 2026		July 1, 2025-January 15, 2026	
Distribution account	Total	Distribution account	Total
Assets		Income	
Current Assets		Income	
Bank Accounts		Member Dues	102,960.00
Key Bank Checking	76,174.88	Total for Income	\$102,960.00
Key Bank Savings	100.02	Investments	
Total for Bank Accounts	\$76,274.90	Change in Value for Key Investm	7,100.49
Other Current Assets		Change in Value in Edward Jones	116,378.34
Edward Jones 13760-1-1697,771.28		Edward Jones-Fees & Charges	-4,555.18
Edward Jones 13768-1-3 1,309,833.54		Interest-Savings, Short-term CD	0.16
Key Investments	156,382.32	Key Bank Investments - Fees & Charges	-718.17
Uncategorized Asset	0.00	Total for Investments	\$118,205.64
Total for Other Current Assets	\$2,163,987.14	Total for Income	\$221,165.64
Total for Current Assets	\$2,240,262.04	Gross Profit	\$221,165.64
Total for Assets	\$2,240,262.04	Expenses	
Liabilities and Equity		Operations	
Liabilities		Accounting	422.28
Total for Liabilities		Banking	490.27
Equity		Total for Accounting	\$912.55
Opening Balance Equity	201,324.23	Compensation	75,478.94
Retained Earnings	1,920,218.04	Conferences & Meetings	1,943.74
Net Income	118,719.77	Executive Board	400.00
Total for Equity	\$2,240,262.04	Fellowships & Grants	1,735.25
Total for Liabilities and Equity	\$2,240,262.04	Insurance	5,909.00
		Legal	1,200.00
		Officers' Expenses	177.98
		Payroll Taxes	1,094.34
		Publications	49.00
		Public Relations	2,500.00
		Social	478.08
		STRS (TPO Contribution)	10,566.99
		Total for Operations	\$102,445.87
		Total for Expenses	\$102,445.87
		Net Operating Income	\$118,719.77
		Net Other Income	
		Net Income	\$118,719.77

# **EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS**

## **PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES REPORT**

In the past month month, I have:

- Attended an Executive Board meeting on December 8th to discuss the school district's buy-out plan.
- Met with the Supplemental Committee on December 16th to review one request, which was denied.
- Attended the Executive Board meeting on January 5th and Representative Council on January 13th.
- Helped a member with questions about steps on the salary schedule, and avoided a grievance by having her step corrected by the district treasurer Donte Hayes.
- Currently working with a member about medical leave and workers compensation, and planning to meet with administrators to create better protocols for members on unpaid leaves of absence, especially for those who were injured at work.
- Communicated with treasurer Donte Hayes with members' questions about the buy-out.
- Attended the informational meeting with Educators Preferred Corporation on January 12th regarding the buy-out incentive plan.
- Received the dispositions from both Grievance 11.10.25, regarding planning time, and Grievance 11.25.25, regarding supplemental contracts.

The disposition for 11.10.25 included the following statement from the administration:

"To address these concerns and strengthen collaboration moving forward, **the District reaffirms that we are committed to honoring contractual planning-time guarantees at both elementary and secondary levels.** Furthermore, we affirm that required meetings (IEP, ETR, 504, acceleration, etc.) may occur during planning as needed and expect administrators to monitor and, when appropriate, redistribute meeting loads to ensure demands are balanced across staff. Principals and building committees should engage in collaborative problem solving when concerns arise."

The disposition from Grievance 11.25.25 included the following statement from the administration:

"The additional line that was added to the supplemental contract, '**Performance Outside Contractual Hours: All duties related to the supplemental assignment shall be performed outside the employee's regular contract work schedule**', will be revoked."

The January 16th paycheck includes the 2 % cost of living adjustment (COLA). This increase only applies to days worked during the 2026 calendar year (100 working days), so gross pay between 1/1/26 and 1/16/26 does not increase a full 2 %. The full benefit of the 2 % raise isn't realized until 9/16/26.

Beginning with the January 1st, 2026 paycheck, the total funding rate for both Medical Mutual's major medical and prescription drug coverage through Express Scripts went up 12 %. Delta Dental's funding rate stayed the same. SHTA members continue to pay 14 % of those funding rates (premiums), while the school district pays 86 %. Member rates will increase to 15 % on January 1, 2027. Costs for EyeMed (voluntary vision discounts) stayed the same from 2025 to 2026.

Here are the numbers you should see on your paycheck if you are participating in these plans:

Coverage Tier	Medical	Prescription Drug	Medical + Prescription Drug
	Per Pay	Per Pay	Total Per Pay
Employee Only	\$66.00	\$16.24	\$82.24
Employee + Family	\$173.58	\$43.10	\$216.67

- **Delta Dental Monthly Dental Rates:**
  - Single: \$5.53 (\$2.26 or \$2.27 per pay)
  - Family: \$15.66 (\$7.83 per pay)
- **EyeMed Vision Rates:**
  - Single: \$6.94 (\$3.47 per pay)
  - Family: \$17.70 (\$8.85 per pay)

*Respectfully submitted,  
Mike Sears, Chairperson*

## EVALUATION COMMITTEE

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

Here is a [link](#) to the Evaluation OTES Overview slides. These slides serve as a resource for both teachers and evaluators as they engage in the evaluation process. There are numerous links to videos, examples of forms, the High Quality Student Data menu, and Ohio Evaluation System (OES) support. Please use the OES site to complete all forms.

As the first semester comes to a close, full-cycle evaluations should be well under way. Holistic observations and post conferences are opportunities for evaluators and teachers to collaboratively identify specific growth goals for the informal observations (a.k.a. walkthroughs) and the focused observation. It is important for holistic observations and post-conferences to occur during the first semester in order for teachers to have time to effectively reach identified growth goals. Focused observations should NOT take place until feedback from the holistic observation during a post-conference is received. Off-Cycle evaluations require one 30 minute observation at any time prior to the end of April. Walkthroughs are not required during off-cycle evaluation years.

As always, peer evaluators are expected to follow the same protocols to complete evaluations. Peer evaluators conducting full cycle evaluations will receive \$375 and those conducting off-cycle evaluations will receive \$125. I appreciate the continued support and recognition of this program as valuable professional learning work. I truly believe that this work brings us towards alignment with other highly professional fields. Andrew Glasier (High School), Addie Tobey (Middle School) and I (Elementary) serve as the co-coordinators of the program. We are happy to assist you in any way we can throughout the process.

I am here to help answer teacher and evaluator questions and navigate any part of the process with you, as are all members of the committee.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Lena Paskewitz, chairperson*

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Over the past month, I attended the Executive Board and Representative Council meetings. I discussed many special education concerns with SHTA President Dr. John Morris. I represented a member in a fact finding meeting and a disciplinary meeting. I supported a member with work load concerns with Lomond Head Rep. Lauren Meek.

I met with a member about a student's safety plan to adequately meet the needs of the students in the classroom. I met with Shaker Heights High School Principal Mr. Isaiah Wyatt and Associate Principal Liz Massey to solve staff concerns and shortages of staff to support students with disabilities and seek clarification and guidance on various issues.

I communicated with Shaker Heights High School Exceptional Children Department Chairs Tana Thompson and Keesha Woodruff discussing concerns at the high school. I had a meeting with speech and language pathologist and speech therapists to discuss their current workload expectations, and how they align with the contract language. In the meeting , SLP's informed me of workload concerns and administration calculations concerning workload and individual caseload demands for SLP's, who are simply becoming overwhelmed. This includes lack of adequate planning time and documentation requirements to ensure everything is manageable, equitable, and consistent with our contractual agreement. I brought this concern to the attention of Student Services Director Dr. Meghan Shelby, and she expressed that the administration has been trying to find a part time SLP to support the preschool who has had a lot of evaluations recently. We've only been able to find people who do virtual and that is not a good option for preschool. Administration is reaching out to other agencies. This is a high priority for us but staffing has been incredibly difficult.

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

## **OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

This month, I worked with the payroll department to help process a sick day transfer for a member in need. I also connected with Shaker Middle School Head Building Reps Kevin Thomas and Noreen Smyth-Morrow to

talk through a broader request from SHTA members related to Sick Day Transfer enrollees and next steps for the program.

Data was gathered on workplace injuries through a survey created with Eileen Sweeney, Mercer Building Rep. We'll be reviewing the data to look for trends and determine how best to address concerns moving forward.

Several members reached out after severe morning weather raised concerns about unsafe parking lot conditions. Members shared that safety felt secondary to compliance expectations.

I was also made aware of a serious personal health and safety concern involving a Mercer member. The committee will continue to support this member and stay involved as steps are taken to ensure their safety.

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

***Respectfully submitted,***  
***Matt Zucca, Chairperson***

## **POLICY COMMITTEE**

By-Law III, Section C of our constitution outlines the Duties of the Vice-President:

- 1. Shall attend all meetings of the Executive Board and Representative Council and shall have the powers and duties of the President in case of the absence of the President.*
- 2. Shall be authorized to sign checks in the absence of either the President or the Treasurer.*
- 3. Shall perform such other duties as may be assigned to him or her by the President and/or the Executive Board.*
- 4. Shall be an ex-officio member of each committee.*
- 5. Shall attend P.T.O. Council meetings throughout the school year.*

As we approach election season, if you have any interest in running for representative, or an executive office, don't hesitate to contact your Building Representative or our Executive Board.

***Respectfully submitted,***  
***Tim Kalan, Chairperson***

## **MEMBERSHIP/ELECTIONS COMMITTEE**

As the Membership/Elections Chairperson, I monitor the payroll deductions to maintain an accurate count of SHTA membership. I update our payroll sheets, delete members who are no longer with us, change member names and building locations. I also coordinate elections in the spring. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions.

## The 2025-2026 Representative Council Elected Members are:

Boulevard- **Cathy Grieshop**, Heather Pincoe

Onaway- **Noreen Smyth- Morrow**, Stacey DeYoung

Fernway- **Jamie Harden**, Lee Appel

Lomond- **Lauren Meek**, Crystal Allen-Jackson, Jackie Abrams

Mercer- **Eileen Sweeney**, Nicole Ciconetti

Middle School- **Kevin Thomas**, Lori Billington, Melissa Albrecht and Desmarie Carter, Addison Pretnar

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

Ludlow- **Allison Colvin**, Leanne Moses-Kruluts

IC- Anne Hay

Happy New Year! May your dreams blossom and fulfill you in innumerable ways!

*Respectfully submitted,  
Chante Thomas, Chairperson*

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE

As we approach African American History Month—and continue this reflection throughout the year—I find myself increasingly mindful of how history shapes our present-day realities.

From Slave Codes enacted in the 1600s to Black Codes established after 1865, alongside Jim Crow laws, U.S. history reveals a deliberate pattern of disenfranchisement and restricted access to education for Black Americans. Although these laws varied by state, they shared a common objective: the denial of civil rights to Black people. Jim Crow laws, in particular, institutionalized racial discrimination across nearly every aspect of life.

Despite these systemic barriers, Black Americans have long understood the transformative power of education. Even during slavery—when literacy could result in severe punishment or death—Black people took extraordinary risks to educate themselves and others. Learning took place in secret schools, churches, and, on rare occasions, with the assistance of sympathetic individuals within enslavers' households. Education was not merely a pursuit of knowledge; it was an act of resistance.

### Did you know?

George Andrew Reisner Jr., an American archaeologist of German origin, played a significant role in shaping early archaeological narratives about ancient Egypt and Kush civilizations. For decades, his interpretations minimized or obscured the historical reality of Black pharaohs who ruled these civilizations. Reisner's inability—or unwillingness—to accept that Black African rulers could have achieved such political and cultural greatness contributed to a distorted historical record. One such ruler, Pharaoh Taharqa (Tirhakah), king of Kush, is even referenced in the Bible (2 Kings 19:9). Acknowledging how racial bias influenced archaeological scholarship is essential to recovering the true legacy of these African civilizations and honoring the achievements of their leaders.

Understanding this history—both what was recorded and what was deliberately obscured—allows us to better appreciate the resilience, intellect, and contributions of Black people across time.

**Resources:** [African American Archives](#)

*Respectfully submitted,  
Angela Goodrum*

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

I hope you had a restful and enjoyable winter break. As we begin the new year, I look forward to sharing continued updates and insights on key legislative issues. Below are several legislative developments that have emerged since my last report in November 2025.

- **Ohio SB 19:** Senate Bill 19 would require Ohio public and charter schools to provide free tutoring or other intervention services to students scoring at the lowest level in math or English on state tests, beginning in the 2026–2027 school year. Although the bill passed the Senate unanimously and is now in the House, education groups warn it could be costly and difficult to implement because it includes no additional funding for schools or the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce. The legislation also increases state oversight of math instruction through required improvement plans, curriculum guidance, and new professional development for teachers. ([more info here](#))
- **Ohio SB 34:** Ohio Senate Republicans passed S.B. 34, which would require public schools to display selected “historic” documents in classrooms, including the Ten Commandments, drawing criticism over potential First Amendment violations and concerns about church–state separation. Supporters argue the bill highlights foundational legal and moral texts, while opponents and legal experts warn it may be unconstitutional despite recent Supreme Court rulings that allow religious displays only within broader historical contexts. This adds to other GOP-backed bills advancing through the legislature that would permit instruction on the “positive” impacts of religion in American history and require students to view a fetal development video, further intensifying debate over the role of religion in public education. ([more info here](#))
- **Public School Funding in 2025 Wrap-Up:** Ohio public schools faced significant financial strain in 2025, with nearly \$3 billion cut from expected state funding while districts took on additional responsibilities, leading to overcrowded classrooms and growing educator burnout. While Gov. Mike DeWine argues the state is making progress and has pushed back against some deeper cuts, he also signed legislation reducing public school funding while allocating \$1 billion to private school vouchers. Educators and district leaders warn that continued underfunding creates a cycle that weakens school performance and morale, with little indication the legislature plans to change course. ([more info here](#))

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Matt Kłodór*

## SHTA PAC COMMITTEE

As we begin 2026, we hope you are all taking care of yourselves, and are making space and time to stay connected with family and friends as we transition from the holiday season.

To speak of “politics” at this current time is admittedly overwhelming, and if you share in that sentiment please know you are not alone. However, *the remedy to overwhelm is action*, so we thought we could provide opportunities to take action at three levels: Local, State, and Federal.

Locally, new Board members were sworn in on January 13th, and congratulations to Doug Wang as the new Board President. As always, staying in tune with the BoardDocs and attending meetings is the best way to stay informed. We wish our new board best wishes on their important work and hope all SHTA members feel empowered to collaborate with them.

At the state level, the government reconvenes on January 26. There are several issues that threaten the conditions of education, the power of unions and collective bargaining, and the dignity and expressive freedoms of our students and colleagues. Monitoring and informing members of threatening legislation is at the top of our agenda as a PAC, however there is so much strength in numbers. PLEASE consider joining us in our work or informing us of issues you would like to bring to our collective attention. Additionally, the race for Governor is heating up considerably, and as a Political Action Committee we hope you will consider supporting Dr. Amy Acton as your candidate for the 2026 election. While we do not take sides in elections lightly, it is unmistakably clear Vivek Ramaswamy does not support unions, public education, or the real conditions in the state of Ohio. Please consider donating money or time to Dr. Acton’s campaign.

Federally, we know so many of our members are alarmed, concerned, and even frightened of the increasingly hostile conditions our federal government is sponsoring throughout our nation. Lending your individual voice to protest and collective action is more important than ever before. The increasing presence of ICE/CBP in our cities is alarming, full stop. Please use this link to the National Immigrant Justice Center’s guide to [Know your Right if you encounter ICE](#). Your voice and your presence is your power and is important to our union. Please contact us if you are looking for more information on how to get involved or if you have specific concerns you would like us to support.

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

## PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

As part of Public Relations ongoing communication efforts, SHTA apparel orders produced by Madison Graphics were successfully distributed, with all staff members receiving their items prior to winter break. In addition, an advertisement was placed in the Shaker Heights City Schools yearbook in coordination with Gristmill, supporting SHTA visibility and community outreach efforts.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Bob Bognar, Chairperson*

## NEW TEACHER COMMITTEE

Happy New Year everyone and welcome back! Hopefully you all had a restful and healthy break. As collegiate semesters have come to a close, if you have taken classes, please do not forget to submit transcripts and class receipts to Stacy Poole for tuition reimbursement and salary reclassification. Just as a reminder, salary reclassification happens twice a school year. One time in November (retroed to the beginning of the school year) and one time in April (retroed back to January 1.).

As we enter this busy time of year with evaluations, please make sure you have everything in order if this is a tenure year. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have at any time. I am here to make sure that your professional journey runs smoothly. Take care and remember to take time for yourselves.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Gwendolyn "Wendy" Lewis, Chairperson*

## LEGAL AID COMMITTEE

NO REPORT

*Respectfully submitted,  
James Schmidt, Chairperson*

## PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

I have been working to improve the connectivity of our website, [SHTAweb.org](http://SHTAweb.org). The website is older and is being transferred to another server, but there seems to be many complications. I am in contact with the company to rectify the issues. We are also looking to create a new website, using updated code. This would significantly improve the connectivity and hopefully ease of use. If you have any questions or suggestions please feel free to contact me at [glasier\\_a@shaker.org](mailto:glasier_a@shaker.org) or #3304.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Andrew Glasier, Chairperson*

## **MINUTES FOR THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING**

**SHTA President, Dr. John Morris** started the January 13, 2026 Representative Council Meeting at 4:32 PM. The meeting took place at Mercer Elementary School. Dr. Morris introduced **Mercer Principal, Mrs. Roneisha Campbell**, to the Representative Council.

**Principal Mrs. Roneisha Campbell** welcomed SHTA's Representative Council to Mercer School. She said Mercer has had a really good start to 2026. They had a wonderful assembly starring OTIS The Robotic Dog which everyone enjoyed. Staff and kids are working hard. Mrs. Campbell then wished the council a good meeting.

**A motion for approval of the MINUTES** from the November 10, 2025 Representative Council meeting was made by Robert Bognar and seconded by Tim Kalan.

### **Administration Report**

**Human Resources Specialist, Ms. Stacy Poole** was present for the SHTA Representative Council Meeting. She reminded members that license renewal is coming up. Tuition reimbursement for 2025 will be on the board agenda tonight and payment will be processed. There are still 10 people who need transcripts.

### **P.T.O. Report**

**PTO President Ms. Christina Gobal** was present for the meeting. PTO is planning a service project for February. They are also planning a city-wide Martin Luther King Day event. It will be a community meal on January 18th at St. Dominic's Church. Zanzibar restaurant will be catering for this event. Last year this event included 150-175 people. Saturday there will be a donation drive at Shaker Heights Middle School.

### **Officers' Reports**

#### **President, John Morris**

- Spoke with superintendent Dr. David Glasner regularly
- Communicated with Human Resource Director Dr. Tiffany Joseph regularly
- Updated SHTA Facebook page with Publications Editor Andrew Glasier
- Met with IC members and administration about future plans for the IC
- Communicated with Mercer Head Representative Eileen Sweeney about a member's concern
- Attended listening session with Dr. Glasner
- Met with SHTA Executive Board to discuss district buyout plan
- Worked on a membership communication with SHTA Officers on the Voluntary Severance Incentive that Andrew Glasier sent out to all members
- Worked with Vice President Darlene Garrison on reaching out to SHTA members in need
- Communicated with Special Education Chair Tito Vazquez concerning multiple building concerns
- Communicated with SHTA Legal Consul Brooks Boron about members' concerns
- Communicated with Personal Rights and Responsibilities Chair Mike Sears about grievances
- Communicated with Boulevard Head Representative Cathy Grieshop about a building concern

- SHTA Secretary Lisa Hardiman reached out to me about changing the Rep Council Meeting to the January 13th so members can go to the Voluntary Severance Incentive meeting
- Communicated with members about Voluntary Severance Incentive eligibility: "Employment with the District for twelve (12) or more years; and/or eligibility for STRS or SERS retirement, whether reduced or unreduced. No salary threshold is used in determining eligibility."
- Worked with SHTA Lawyer Brooks Boron on a communication with the district on legal interview protocol
- Worked with Mercer Head Rep. Eileen Sweeney and SHTA Health and Safety/Sick Day Transfer Chair Matt Zucca on a member concern
- Attended the Voluntary Severance Incentive plan meeting at the High School
- Worked with PR&R Chair Mike Sears and Treasurer Donte Hayes on a clarification on the program
- Discussed issues with SHTA Legal Consul Brooks Boron

***Vice President, Darlene Garrison***

- Communicated with Administrative Assistant Erica Verderber and Executive Director Holly McCormick about the creation of a letter to the membership explaining the Silent Auction and ideas for donating to A Night for the Red & White.
  - Please consider donating to the Silent Auction
  - Teacher gifts are the most popular
- Completed necessary paperwork to process reimbursements for the Dr. Rebecca L. Thomas Fellowship Grant.
  - Sent receipts and requisition forms to Treasurer Bill Scanlon
  - Sent reimbursement checks to members who submitted receipts
- Attended Woodbury gathering at Midnight Owl, had to share this very special event
- Sent heartfelt items to staff members who needed a little comfort.
- The next PTO Council meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, February 03rd.
- A Night for the Red & White is on Saturday, March 14th at The Agora Theatre and Ballroom.
  - Staff tickets are \$125 and up to 2 tickets may be purchased
  - This year, you may use payroll deduction for the tickets. Money will be deducted from payroll checks during the months of March and April
  - The online Silent Auction is very popular, especially when it features unique experiences donated by staff members
  - Auction form due by March 02nd
- Have been working with members to answer questions related to Employee Severance Incentive Package
  - Suggested to attend the January 12th meeting
  - Suggested for members to schedule their individual meeting with EPC
- Communicated with Stacy Poole about adding SHTA meeting hours to My Learning Plan
  - Still waiting to hear back from her
- Attended the January 12th meeting explaining the Employee Severance Incentive Package

### ***Secretary, Lisa Hardiman***

- Emailed invites for Representative Council meetings
- Emailed invites for Executive Board Meetings
- In November, attended a meeting along with President Dr. John Morris with the EPC group about the district incentive/buyout
- Attended meeting with SHTA Executive Board regarding teacher incentive/buyout
- Conferred with a member on a number of occasions regarding a serious issue with one of her students
- Responded to Treasurer Bill Scanlon about a question
- Rescheduled Monday's Representative Council meeting because of the incentive/buyout general meeting
- Shared meeting attendance with Vice President Darlene Garrison
- Attended information sessions general meeting about the district incentive/buyout
- Preparing materials for SHTA Drawing where winner will win two tickets to A Night for The Red & White on Saturday, March 14th

### ***Treasurer William Scanlon***

- Spoke with SHTA Officers about buyout
- Distributed Profit and Loss document
- Wrote fellowship checks
- Communicated with accountants about books
- Communicated with Key Bank agent
- Attended Buyout meeting
- Highlighted that SHTA now has 2.2 million dollars in investments

## **Building Representative Reports**

### ***Boulevard-Cathy Grieshop, Heather Pincoe***

- Thank you to the Boulevard PTO for the lovely luncheon in December. It was delicious!
- I talked with teachers, John Morris and principal Neal Robinson concerning a safety issue.
- Teachers are wondering if the district will be willing to approve job share arrangements.
- Because of the significant number of changes made over the summer and last school year, teachers are feeling uncertain about their placements for next year. We are hoping to know our placements sooner rather than later.

### ***Fernway-Jamie Harden, Lee Appel***

- Thank you Fernway PTO for sunshine treats that bring so much joy.
- December 5, 2025 : A member reported being scheduled for an IEP meeting during their lunch time. The member was concerned about the request becoming a habit. The member was advised to decline the meeting and not give up lunchtime.
- January 8, 2026: Three members shared concerns about the icy parking lot they encountered upon arrival. One FE member initiated an email to principal C. Hayward, representative L. Appel, custodian I.

Spector and representative J. Harden stating “*The parking lot was a mess today. Cars were sliding and almost hitting each other. It should have been salted this morning.*”

- C. Hayward responded that morning that he talked with I. Spector and that I. Spector will look out for the black ice in the morning when he arrives and salt it by hand if the truck hasn't come through.
- January 9, 2026: Sick Day transfer request forwarded to FE membership.
- January 12, 2026: Similar icy parking lot concerns were reiterated by members. In conclusion, the weather was suspect on January 8th and 12th. Slippery conditions still existed after plows visited Fernway. Our custodian takes care of the sidewalks and school blacktop area. This is a cause for concern of our members falling again.
- January 12, 2026: Two members initiated emails to I. Spector and C. Hayward regarding the freezing temperatures in their classrooms. I was looped in and followed up with C. Hayward on January 13, 2026. C. Hayward confirmed that maintenance was addressing the issue that morning and staff should expect a follow up email soon.
- January 12, 2026 : Monthly Fernway reps and principal meeting scheduled for 1/20/26

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

- The staff would like to thank principal George Clark for providing lunch the week before winter break. They would also like to thank the Lomond PTO for providing goodies on their treat cart.
- Attended Building Committee meetings. Mr. Clark is working with the Shaker Heights Police department to get signage updated on the streets and has reached out to get a police presence at arrival and dismissal.
- Attended fact finding meetings. Mr. Tito Vazquez also supported this.
- Worked with members to understand the employee severance package.
- Reached out to Dr. Morris to gain clarity on member concerns regarding planning time and scheduling 504s and IEPs.
- Worked with Assistant Principal Doug Myles to help a staff member who was injured at work to get the correct form to fill out.
- Met with Ms. Krystal Allen-Jackson and Ms. Jaclyn Abrams, alternate SHTA representatives, to plan and hold a building meeting for membership to share concerns.
- Held a building membership meeting to clarify planning time and hear concerns from staff.
- Shared all concerns with Principal Clark and he addressed them.
- Staff continues to be concerned with lunch and recess supervision and transitions. Mr. Clark continues to work with staff to be present at recess/lunch transitions and address student concerns prior to students returning to class.
- Staff (and students) are feeling the stress from an “over planned” school day.

***Mercer-Eileen Sweeney, Nicole Cicconetti***

- Met with principal Mrs. Ronesha Campbell for our regularly scheduled meeting. The Building Committee did not have a December meeting. Mercer SHTA colleagues were emailed the Building committee meeting dates.

- Met with a staff member regarding an injury sustained by a student. I collaborated with Dr. John Morris, SHTA President, and Matt Zucca, Building Safety/ Sick Day Transfer Chairperson, to discuss the teacher's rights and outline remedies to ensure safety. I met with the teacher and Mrs. Campbell, Mercer School Principal, to define the action steps to ensure student and staff safety is prioritized.
- Represented a teacher who experienced a health emergency as a result of work-related problems. I collaborated with John Morris and Matt Zucca to identify possible resolutions. I met with Mrs. Campbell, Dr. Morris and the teacher. We agreed upon future necessary steps to ensure the safety of the teacher.
- Sick day transfer requests on behalf of members Bruiittany Tonti and Shyla Nyms were sent to the building SHTA members.
- A huge thank you to the PTO for the generous gift cards & snack cart given to SHTA members.

***Onaway-Noreen Smyth-Morrow, Stacey DeYoung***

- Building Committee did not meet this month
- Sent out Sick Day Transfer requests

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

- Met regularly with principals Eric Forman and Jasmine Venson.
- Supported a union member in a series of administrative meetings.
- Answered many questions from teachers about early retirement.
- Although it's still a long way off, I've had a number of teachers come to me with questions and concerns about the new middle school building; primarily in terms of spaces like rooms and offices. I've shared these concerns with the building administration and encouraged them to start having conversations with staff and making some tentative plans. We know that staffing, student numbers and situations will be changing between now and then, but the hope is to limit teachers' anxiety about the move and make sure that all voices and concerns are heard.

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

- Happy New Year to everyone. We hope 2026 brings renewed energy, and plenty of reasons to celebrate.
- Communicated with the Rights and Responsibilities Chair Mike Sears on multiple occasions regarding questions about supplementals and leave.
- Filed a grievance on behalf of multiple members concerning violations of Articles 29.01 and 29.02 of the contract.
- Attended a meeting with John Moore, Jeff Grosse, and members who filed the grievance. The outcome was that the line violating Article 29.01 would be removed from the supplemental contracts.
- Responded to a member's questions regarding potential reassignment for the next school year.
- Met with a member to address questions related to sick days and personal days.
- Attended a fact-finding meeting with a member.
- Met with high school principal Mr. Isaiah Wyatt to discuss whether a long-term substitute had been hired for a maternity leave. Mr. Wyatt confirmed that interviews were underway and a hire would be made soon.
- Engaged in ongoing discussions with Mr. Wyatt regarding the need for building substitutes.
- Worked with Mr. Wyatt to develop a first-semester survey to identify issues and solutions that would help staff and administration better support teachers' classroom needs.

- Attended an additional fact-finding meeting with a member and discussed expected timelines and the need for clearer communication to members from the administrative team regarding fact-finding processes.
- Mr. Wyatt indicated he will begin scheduling time to be present in common areas to make connections with staff. A schedule will be shared in the future.
- Met with Assistant Director of Buildings and Grounds Sean Brown to discuss ongoing heating issues in several classrooms along the front hallway of the high school. These rooms and issues continue to be worked on, most have received space heaters to make the room more comfortable.
- Spoke with Mr. Wyatt regarding concerns about icy conditions in the parking lots.
- Discussed concerns raised by MIC room teachers regarding the final schedule and its impact on students. Ms. Hunter and the teachers collaborated to create a schedule that was compliant with the contract.
- Responded to members' questions regarding the severance package.
- Answered members' questions about the negotiated 2% increase and when it would be reflected in paychecks.
- Mr. Wyatt shared that fire panel repairs would not occur during the school day to prevent accidental alarms.
- Met with a member to answer questions about evaluations and concerns that they had.
- Met with a member regarding the need to become van certified and spoke with Director of Human Resources Tiffany Joseph for clarification. The issue has been resolved.
- Attended a fact-finding meeting at the request of a member.

#### ***Innovative Center--Anne Scott***

- Communicated with assistant-principal Katie Slifkin numerous times.
- Communicated with SHTA President Dr. John Morris numerous times.
- We have had significantly less non-district people in the space unannounced! Since the last union meeting, we have only had 4 people.
- Since the start of the snow on 12/1, the emergency exit was not cleared of snow. The stairs became clear on 1/6-1/7 due to the rain.
  - Slifkin spoke to Sean Brown on 1/7 regarding this.
- A member filed a grievance in the fall, there was no clear resolution regarding lunch/planning time and contact minutes.
  - For example, a teacher has students scheduled for periods 2-10. The only period with no students is period 1.
- A member who fit into the requirements for the severance plan, did not receive their letter. They needed to reach out and ask for it.
- In regards to the move/merge, it has been shared that the anticipated next step is to survey stakeholders.
- As we move into the second semester, increased presence from the central office and main campus administration teams at the IC will be essential for alignment, understanding, and informed decision-making.
- The IC team would like to thank the PTO for the treats provided prior to and after winter break.

#### ***Ludlow--Allison Colvin, Leanne Moses-Kruluts***

- Building Committee meeting was held
  - Pressing issues were safety including warped floors that are not secure

- Administrator said that there was a punchlist that was worked on over break
- Climate survey was in November results discussed at staff meeting
  - Some action is taking place. Results will be shared with staff

## Executive Board Reports

### ***Publications—Andrew Glasier***

- [SHTAweb.org](http://SHTAweb.org) has loading issues. Have been in contact. Still needs updates. What do we want from our website?
- Updated SHTA Facebook & Instagram accounts
- Attended an Executive Board meeting on December 8th to discuss the school district's buy-out plan
- Sent our emails for Executive Board members and PAC
- Editorial: Exams are Back
- Spoke to numerous members about the buy-out.
- Helping a member with an evaluation issue

### ***Evaluation-Lena Paskewitz***

- Will clarify off-cycle evaluations requirements

### ***Teacher Education-Wendy Lewis***

- No Report

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

- No Report

### ***Policy-Tim Kalan***

- No Report

### ***Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion-Angela Goodrum***

- No Report

### ***Public Relations-Bob Bognar***

- Looking for suggestions for the Spring Teacher Appreciation Gift
- Shirt and hats are distributed
- Advertisement in High School yearbook

### ***Special Education-Tito Vazquez***

- Attended the Executive Board and General Body meetings.
- Discussed members' concerns with SHTA President Dr. John Morris.
- Represented a member in a fact finding meeting and a disciplinary meeting.
- Supported a member with work load concerns with Lomond Head Rep. Lauren Meek.
- Met with a member about a student's safety plan to adequately meet the needs of the students in the classroom.

- Met with Shaker Heights High School Principal Mr. Isaiah Wyatt and Associate Principal Liz Massey to solve staff concerns and shortages of staff to support students with disabilities and seek clarification and guidance on various issues.
- Communicated with Shaker Heights High School Exceptional Children Department Chairs Tana Thompson and Keesha Woodruff discussing concerns at the high school.
- Had a meeting with the speech pathologist and speech therapist to discuss your current workload expectations, and how they align with the contract language. In the meeting, SLPs informed me of workload concerns and administration's calculations concerning workload and individual caseload demands for SLPs, who are simply becoming overwhelmed. This includes lack of adequate planning time and documentation requirements to ensure everything is manageable, equitable, and consistent with our contractual agreement. I brought this concern to the attention of Student Services Director Dr. Meghan Shelby, and she expressed that the administration has been trying to find a part time SLP to support the preschool who have had a lot of evaluations recently. We've only been able to find people who do virtual and that is not a good option for preschool. Administration is reaching out to other agencies and this is a high priority for us but staffing is incredibly difficult.

#### ***Legislative-Matthew Kloder***

- **SB 19 – Student Math Intervention Mandate:** Would require schools to provide free tutoring or interventions for students scoring at the lowest level in math or English starting in 2026–27, raising concerns about new requirements without additional funding.
- **SB 34 – “Historic” Documents in the Classroom:** Would require public schools to display selected “historic” documents, including the Ten Commandments, prompting constitutional concerns and renewed debate over religion’s role in public education.
- **2025 School Funding Challenges:** Public schools saw nearly \$3 billion cut from expected funding while responsibilities increased, leading educators to warn of worsening overcrowding, burnout, and declining school capacity.

#### ***Building Safety and Sick Day Transfer-Matthew Zucca***

- Collaborated with administration and the payroll department to process a “sick day transfer”.
- Discussed a broader request from SHTA membership regarding Sick Day Transfer enrollees with Head Building Representatives Kevin Thomas and Noreen Smyth-Morrow.
- Collected data on workplace injuries through a survey developed in collaboration with Eileen Sweeney, Mercer Building Representative. We will distill the data to see how issues can best be addressed.
- Was contacted by members regarding unsafe parking lot conditions following severe morning weather; members expressed concern that compliance expectations were taking precedence over safety.
- Was informed of a serious personal health and safety concern raised by a Mercer member and will continue to support and monitor the situation as measures are implemented to ensure member safety.

#### ***Social-Selena Boyer***

- No Report

#### ***Personal Rights Rights and Responsibilities- Mike Sears***

- Attended an Executive Board meeting on December 8th to discuss the school district’s buy-out plan
- Met with the Supplemental Committee on December 16th to review one request, which was denied
- Attended the Executive Board meeting on January 5th

- Helped a member with questions about steps on the salary schedule
- Currently working with a member about medical leave and workers compensation
- Communicated with Treasurer Donte Hayes with members questions about the buy-out
- Attended the informational meeting with Educators Preferred Corporation on January 12th regarding the buy-out incentive plan
- Received the dispositions from both Grievance 11.10.25, regarding planning time, and Grievance 11.25.25, regarding supplemental contracts.

**Old Business**-None

**New Business**-None

### **Good of the Order**

- Dr. John Morris thanked Mercer representatives for the food

Motion for adjournment was made by Robert Bognar and seconded by Jamie Harden. Meeting adjourned at 6:54 pm

*Respectfully submitted,  
Lisa M. Hardiman*

### ***The January SHTA Representative Council Meeting @ Mercer School***



**The SHTA PAC is on FACEBOOK!**

**HYPERLINK**

**"<https://www.facebook.com/groups/218943172136501/>"**  
**PAC of the Shaker Heights Teachers Association**

## **EDITORIAL**

# **EXAMS FOR THE WIN!**

*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.*

As I sit in my classroom, watching my 9th graders take their first exam in high school, I reflect on exams and the accompanying schedule at the high school, after a many year hiatus following the COVID epidemic. The high school has reinstated an exam schedule that has been a part of this school since I began working here, but was stopped in 2020 and never reinstated. For the last couple of years, in order to have an exam, some of us had to negotiate and manipulate our schedules to do the testing. We did this because we thought that semester exams were essential for students. We found value in students sitting quietly for tests, learning their studying techniques that would help them succeed, and creating a school culture that expects rigor and sets high expectations for our students.

I also have been contemplating the value of these assessments. There were many arguments back and forth, if exams were necessary, as they are not fundamentally “authentic” assessments. I understand the argument that authentic assessments are ways for students to have real life connections. However, the rigor and process of the exams are also in many ways authentic, as they prepare students for future testing and studying. I have had so many alumni return or who I have seen in the community tell me how the exam schedule and studying for exams at Shaker helped them tremendously when they went to college. While not all our students attend college, many of them are still required to complete testing to obtain specific jobs in governmental fields, or careers that require testing before a person is certified. From fire fighters, to police officers, barbers, auto mechanics, and many more careers require completing state sponsored exams to be certified. There is value in learning the process for being successful in testing.

I also believe that having exams and an exam schedule promotes academic rigor in the school culture. The good stress of showing your knowledge after a full semester of studying a subject in an appropriate manner is meaningful and impactful. I have worked with my 9th grade students on organizational skills, preparation techniques, chunking their studying, sketchnotes, and other studying techniques that will benefit them in future grades and after high school. In my class of 11th graders, we practiced group studying, an essential learning tool for future success. This all leads to better prepared students, and high academic standards that we want for them.

I have heard both students and teachers say that the exams have been too stressful. I counter that studying for exams are *good* stressors. It is short term, should be motivating, and show that the entire semester is important academically for the class. We are helping them perform better under stressful times, by teaching them how to prepare. We have high standards for them but will scaffold the assessment to help them succeed, and that we believe their academic progress is very important. High school is the last stage before adulthood, and preparing for adulthood means dealing with stressors.

My 9th grade students did well on their assessment. All the practice we have done throughout the semester has prepared them. The techniques we taught them were also successful. These students can now better analyze, create a defensible argument, and use sources to back up their argument. I am proud of how far they have come since they first sat in our classroom in August. They have survived their first of many exams.

**AG**

**Follow the SHTA  
On Facebook**

**<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063673557291>**

**And**

**Instagram**

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