

SHTA *news*

No. 3 • 14 November 2011

Message From the President

We did it! Issue 2 is defeated! SB5 is no more! This is the most significant news since last month or the months since SB5 first appeared in Columbus. The battle to maintain our collective bargaining rights has been won for now, but the war undoubtedly is not over. However, we have to take a moment to be grateful to all who have supported us in this fight and not lose the solidarity we have established with other teachers' unions and public workers throughout our state and beyond. We Are Ohio and our own PAC of SHTA were instrumental in making this happen and so were your individual and collective efforts. I would like to thank Eileen Sweeney for her tireless work as PAC Chairperson and John Sweeney for his work as PAC treasurer. Without their leadership and our PAC, our efforts to help defeat Issue 2 would have come up short.

To say it has been a busy month would be an understatement. On the Issue 2 front, I have attended the City Club Debate on Issue 2 with our officers, Mike Sears and Past President Becky Thomas. I have taken part in the "You Decide 2011" election program on Fox8 News. I have done a talkback on Issue 2 after the Ensemble Theatre's production of "Waiting for Lefty," thanks to an invitation from High School Head Representative Joel Rathbone. Like many of you, I have phone banked, canvassed and worked polling places on election day with our PAC of SHTA. Finally, I attended the reception for We Are Ohio on election night and celebrated the defeat of Issue 2 with local public union leaders and members as well as national figures like Dennis Kucinich and AFT President Randi Weingarten. It was truly an inspirational night.

Within our own district, life has not been on hold. I have worked on teacher evaluation issues with Steve Smith. I have consulted with Mike Sears on the new medical benefit changes taking effect on January 1st. I have worked with Bill Scanlon, Dollye Finney and John Sweeney in seating up the finances for our Association and our PAC of SHTA. I have also worked with Bob Bognar at Woodbury on a facilities issue within the building and Paul Repasy at the Middle School concerning auditorium roof concerns. Bob and Paul were both excellent at representing their building's members and seeking resolutions to these concerns. Dr. Bob Kreiner at the administration building has been incredibly helpful at addressing these problems as well. It has been a busy month.

I am also actively working on making sure Progress Book is effectively utilized at the elementary level and making sure that planning time is being honored and IB meetings are productive and manageable for our teachers. As the demands on teachers' time continues to grow and our class sizes do as well, we have to be vigilant and address these concerns as soon as they arise. I encourage you to keep communicating with your building representative on these issues so they can be addressed effectively. Also, feel free to contact me directly with any contract concerns at morris_j@shaker.org or at extension 6033.

Issue No. 3

Typically, the Representative Council does not meet in December and there is not a December Newsletter. As I expressed in a previous communication, make sure to thank all the friends, family and “fence straddlers” who you asked to Vote No On Issue 2. It obviously made a difference. Also, thank your partners and your children for helping you weather the storm as these anxiety-filled months have passed. I think we all have taken for granted how stressful this uncertainty has been. Personally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a relaxing and enjoyable holiday season with your family, friends and loved ones. Best wishes for 2012.

*Respectfully submitted,
John L. Morris, president*

Reports from the Executive Board

VICE PRESIDENT’S REPORT

Congratulation SHTA in your efforts to defeat Issue 2!! I would like to personally thank the PAC of the SHTA, lead by Eileen Sweeney, for their tireless efforts in disseminating information and mobilizing our Association. A special thank you to our President, John Morris, who has admirably represented The Shaker Heights Teachers’ Association through out this campaign.

I am asking you to me in congratulating the following SHTA Fellows of 2011-12:

Stephanie Eagleton Boulevard School
Kevin Hill Boulevard School
Selena Brown Fernway School
Jennifer Vail Fernway School
Mathew Zucca Fernway School
Elizabeth Brazalovics Lomond School
Marci Cohen Lomond School
Jocelyn Dietz Lomond School
Jill DiPiero Lomond School
Tim Gesing Lomond School
Tim Kalan Lomond School
Larry Miller Lomond School
Steven Smith Lomond School
Kevin Wagner Lomond School
Neal Robinson Mercer School
Tara Strachen Mercer School
Karen Tritt Mercer School
Marty McGuan Onaway School
Susan Mears Onaway School
Amy Santos Onaway School
Aisha Mason Woodbury School
Heather Pincoe Woodbury School
Sondra Saddler Woodbury School
Cheri Shapero Woodbury School

Susan Corbin SMS
William Moroney SMS
Clara Pelfrey SMS
Dawn Sullivan SMS
Abbey Welsch SMS
Brian Berger SHHS
Shana Black SHHS
Kady Cole SHHS
Kenneth Culek SHHS
Karen DeMauro SHHS
Valerie Doersen SHHS
Renee Manuel SHHS
Sara Manary SHHS
John Moore SHHS
Kim Pons DeLeon SHHS
James Schmidt SHHS

These members have earned \$100 that they can use to promote their professional development.

I would like to take this time to remind you of the annual PTO Council campaign. I am asking that you seriously consider making a contribution to the annual campaign if you have not yet done so. The Council is responsible for the creation and distribution of the calendar that I know so many of us use on a daily basis. Please send these contributions through school mail to the Administration Building to The PTO Council Treasurer Sheri Morford.

I wish you all a happy and safe Thanksgiving!

*Respectfully submitted,
Dollye Finney, vice president*

TREASURER'S REPORT

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

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

Thank you all for your hard work defeating Issue 2 and repealing Senate Bill 5 from our state's law books. We cannot forget this fight. I am sure with Governor Kasich only 1 year into his term (it's hard to believe he has only been in office since January) we will have more to fight before he is gone. This battle we had to go through should also be on our minds 3 years from now when it is time to elect another governor.

*Respectfully submitted,
Bill Scanlon, Treasurer*

FINANCIAL REPORT

7/1/10 11/10/11

COMPOSITE BALANCE

Balance 7/1/10		844,407.77
Receipts 7/1/10 to present		19,451.50
Change in Valuation 7/1/10 to present		<u>-12,243.01</u>
		851,616.26
Expenditures 7/1/10 to present		-9,249.51
Expenditures charged to last fiscal year 2009-2010		<u>-3,087.50</u>
TOTAL		839,279.25

BANK AND BROKER RECONCILIATIONS**A. KEY BANK (10/28/11)**

Certificates of deposit		
29 mo. @ 0.149%-Matures on 2/6/14	<u>21,185.43</u>	
Total Certificates of deposit		21,185.43
Business Money Market Account (0.35% APY)		41,560.29
Unposted deposits and transfers		<u>0.00</u>
		62,745.72
Less outstanding checks		<u>-4,549.31</u>
TOTAL KEY BANK		58,196.41

B. EDWARD JONES (10/28/11)

Regular Association Account	410,076.54	
Advisory Solutions Account	<u>371,006.30</u>	
		<u>781,082.84</u>

TOTAL		839,279.25
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Budgeted Accounts

<u>Account</u>	7/1/11				11/10/11	
	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>Debits</u>	<u>Transfers out</u>	<u>Credits</u>	<u>Transfers in</u>	<u>Balance</u>
Accounting Compensation for officers, representatives, et al.	3500.00	1,282.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,218.00
President	9302.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	9,302.00
Vice President	5581.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,581.00
Secretary	5581.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,581.00
Treasurer	5581.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,581.00
P.R. & R. Chairperson	5581.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,581.00
Editor	4653.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,653.00
Building reps. and alternates	10000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10,000.00
Conferences and meetings	2500.00	832.59	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,667.41
Contingency	250.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	250.00
Fellowships and Grants	4000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,000.00
Insurance	5000.00	4,375.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	625.00
Legal	5000.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,900.00
Negotiations	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Executive Board expenses	500.00	74.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	425.64
Officers' expenses	500.00	173.81	0.00	0.00	0.00	326.19
Payroll taxes	550.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	550.00
Publications	1000.00	1,410.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-410.00
Public Relations	7000.00	951.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,048.25
Social STRS(TPO contributions)	2500.00	50.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,450.00
	<u>5100.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>5,100.00</u>
TOTAL	83679.00	9,249.51	0.00	0.00	0.00	74,429.49

PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

No Report.

*Respectfully submitted,
Mike Sears, chairperson*

SALARY TENURE COMMITTEE

I have met with the Evaluation Committee and the Performance Compensation Committee twice this Fall. The Evaluation Committee is working to align our evaluation system with the criteria for *Race to the Top*. We have reviewed the draft of the new Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES), which is currently being piloted in several districts around Ohio. This system includes a plan for including student data in the evaluation of teachers at some point in the future. We have also reviewed the Marzano teacher evaluation system, for which I attended a three day workshop in June. Both systems require extensive clerical work and observation data.

Information on OTES @
education.ohio.gov/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/OEDDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=521&ContentID=108217

The Performance Compensation Committee is working to develop a shared philosophy of the goals of a performance compensation system. This committee was formed as a result of the side letter which accompanies the current contract.

*Respectfully submitted,
Lena Paskewitz, chairperson*

TEACHER EDUCATION

- Non-tenured teachers: Here are some important dates to keep in mind:
- Salary Reclassification – Coursework must be completed by the **November and April Board Meetings**. Requests must be submitted in time for the November and April meeting.
 - Tuition Fund – Deadline for applications is **December 1st**.
 - Evaluations – December evaluations and March Evaluations
 - Evaluations must be sent to the Personnel Office no later than 15 days prior to the April Board of Education Meeting.

Please remember that my role with the Association is not just to assist new teachers and their mentors. I am also available to any **non-tenured teacher** who may have any questions or concerns. Please contact me to discuss any aspect of the evaluation process or any other area of your employment in Shaker Schools as you move towards tenure within our district. I can be reached through the district e-mail (smith_st@shaker.org), at Lomond (295-6385) or at home (216-577-7014).

*Respectfully submitted,
Steve Smith, chairperson*

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

When I agreed to take on the role of Legislative reporter for the SHTA, I thought, “Well, this will be interesting; it will be fun to do a little light research.” I had no idea what was to come! I am happy to report that this is the first time since February when I don’t have to write about the battle for our professional rights.

The citizens of Ohio did not disappoint us. Rather, they offered us their resounding support, approval and solidarity by rejecting Issue 2. I sincerely thank those who voted no. I thank everyone who donated money, walked neighborhoods, made phone calls, got into heated debates with friends and relatives (sometimes on Facebook,), wrote postcards and letters to legislators, wore red, said prayers...whatever you did, thank you. I believe all of it helped.

I have said it before, we all have, it is nearly certain that the current State leadership will continue to throw obstacles in the way of teachers, other public employees, and unions in general. We anticipate this, but not with fear. We have seen that we can, in our professionalism, in our dignity and in our knowledge of what is right and good about public education, rise to any occasion.

John Morris is right... we should enjoy this moment.

*Respectfully submitted,
Anna Hruby chairperson*

LEGAL AID COMMITTEE

Legal Aid has no report.

*Respectfully submitted,
Chante Thomas-Taylor, chairperson*

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

This past month I have been working on finalizing the advertisement for the December/January issue of the *Shaker Life* Magazine, which will acknowledge the National Merit Scholars from the Shaker schools. We also had an advertisement appear in this past month’s issue of the *Shakerite* newspaper. In addition there have been a few additional public relation opportunities that I have explored and will be discussing with the Association. I am also looking for suggestions from members for this year’s teacher appreciation gift given in the spring.

*Respectfully submitted,
Debbie Musca, chairperson*

MEMBERSHIP/ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Membership/Elections has no report.

*Respectfully submitted,
Stacy Elgart, chairperson*

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE OF SHTA

In February, Senator Shannon Jones of Springboro, Ohio, proposed Senate Bill 5 and simultaneously declared police officers, firefighters, nurses, teachers and all public employees as public enemy #1. The SHTA, in concert with We Are Ohio, answered this attack with action. Over the past eight months SHTA has changed its' by-laws to allow political action, creating the PAC of the SHTA. SHTA members have donated money, attended rallies across the state, circulated the referendum petition, held a rally at Our Lady of Peace Church, marched in Memorial Day & Labor Day parades, purchased SHTA t-shirts, hosted the Educator's Bash fund raiser, manned phone banks, canvassed neighborhoods, wrote letters to their house representatives and senators, and wrote postcards. Phew!

The repeal of SB 5 has materialized because of the coordinated efforts of the SHTA through We Are Ohio. The solidarity of labor unions in the effort to repeal SB 5 sends a resounding message to the Governor and the State legislature that we will not sit idly by and allow transparent union busting efforts be shoved upon Ohio for political gain. Each of us needs to reflect upon the power of this solidarity. We need to bask in the glory of this accomplishment.

As a result of the 61% to 39% defeat of Issue 2, the Republican Party might hesitate before embedding parts of SB 5 into future legislation. But, don't be fooled by Governor Kasich's humility on Election Day. He is determined to push through his administration's agenda. Now is the time for diligence. The Governor has said, "We are at war with these people [public employees]." If it [Issue 2] goes down, he and the legislature are going to "ram it through" in other forms of legislation. We must anticipate their next move. The possible tactics that they would pursue could target teachers alone. Polling indicates that the public likes merit pay, the 10% contribution for pension, and 20% for health care. Be ready for the call to action.

Currently, we have three issues that are detrimental to education. House Bill 136, which will expand vouchers and take up to \$6,000 per pupil from local districts. House Bill 194, the Voter Rights bill, is state law but it will be on the ballot in the next election to allow the law to be repealed. The most serious issue, House Bill 319, the statewide redistricting map, has the greatest impact on Ohio's policies, laws and our leadership. There is a petition to put a referendum on the ballot to repeal House Bill 319 currently being circulated. HB 319 will give an unfair advantage to the Republican Party and allow for the advancement of their agenda. Be sure to sign it and allow the citizens of Ohio to decide if the redistricting map is fair.

A big thank you goes to SHTA President John Morris, the executive board and the representative council for their efforts to defeat Issue 2. Great job to all of our membership who helped repeal SB 5 and protect union rights.

*Respectfully submitted,
Eileen Sweeney*

POLICY COMMITTEE

This month's 'Law-in-the-Limelight' is **By-Law V, Part K**: Professional Rights and Responsibilities (Grievance) Committee.

Issue No. 3

If things get difficult between you and an administrator, then you should speak with the Head SHTA Representative of your building. If that doesn't resolve the problem, you may soon be speaking with Mike Sears (Middle School), the Chair of the PR & R committee. Here is some of the wording from By-Law V, Part K:

There shall be a Professional Rights and Responsibilities Committee. The function of this committee shall be:

1. To interpret the Agreement between the Association and the Board on behalf of the Association. Final interpretations may be subject to review by legal counsel, the Representative Council or Executive Board.
- .
- .
- .
3. To assist in the resolution of any professional problems of any of the members where the good offices of the Association may be utilized.

*Respectfully submitted,
David Klapholz, chairperson*

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

SHTA invites you and a guest to our Holiday Gathering on Friday, December 9th at 6:00PM. The cost for this event is \$10.00 per person. SHTA is helping to defer the actual cost. Please join us for fun, games and a great meal. Your building head representative has tickets to sell; cash only. For all the details, please refer to the attached flyer.

On Thursday, May 24th, SHTA and Shaker Heights City Schools will sponsor the annual Spring Recognition Reception. This special event will take place at the High School, upper cafeteria.

*Respectfully submitted,
Darlene Garrison, chairperson*

PAST PRESIDENT

In the SHTA Constitution it states "The Executive Board shall consist of the officers, the immediate Past President of the Association, and the appointed Chairs of the standing committees" (Article VII). For many years, the Past President has not been available to serve the Association. Even though I am retired, I am staying in the area (for now) and, with the approval of current President John Morris, I will serve as Past President. There are no written expectations for Past President in the Constitution and By-Laws; however, there are guidelines for the Executive Board including "perform other duties as assigned by the President" (By-Law IV). So, I will be guided by John.

For now, I will attend Executive Board and Representative Council meetings and perform other duties as directed by John. I will be paid like any other member of Executive Board/Representative Council, which means I will receive the same meeting stipend that they do. I still have my Shaker email at Thomas_R@shaker.org and you can contact me via this email.

It is my intent to assist John Morris and his leadership team, particularly in the area of transition. I know firsthand what a challenging job it is for our officers. I am eager to provide any assistance that they may want. My accepting this responsibility had to wait until now because STRS requires a sixty day moratorium on any work or volunteering as a teacher or, in this case, for the teacher professional organization.

I look forward to assisting John and maintaining my connection with all of you. One personal comment—I am grateful for John Morris's leadership in the efforts to repeal SB5. He served as an articulate and passionate representative of the SHTA. We are a small, independent Association and through John's efforts, and those of Eileen Sweeney, John Sweeney, Mike Sears, and many others, our voice was heard. Thank you to John and to all who helped defeat Issue 2.

*Respectfully submitted,
Becky Thomas*

SECRETARY'S REPORT

MINUTES FOR THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING
November 7, 2011
Boulevard School

The President, John Morris, called the meeting to order at 4:23p.m.

Colleen Longo, principal of Boulevard School, welcomed the SHTA representative council.

The minutes of the October meeting were approved.

ADMINISTRATION REPORT: Lisa Howell was unable to attend the meeting. There was no report from the administration.

PTO REPORT: PTO Council did not have a representative at the meeting. There was no report.

OFFICERS' REPORTS:

PRESIDENT

Dr. Morris reported he has been working very hard on the defeat of issue 2. He attended the City Club debate on issue 2 with other SHTA Officers and Executive Board members, spoke to Fox News, worked the phone banks and canvassed for We Are Ohio.

Dr. Morris has also worked on contract issues. He is working on evaluation issues for teachers who work in different buildings.

He thanked Paul Repasy for his work in addressing the roof issue at the Middle School.

VICE-PRESIDENT

Dollye Finney announced the winners of the SHTA fellowships. The winners will have their names published in this month's newsletter.

SECRETARY

Matt Zucca took attendance. He reported that he attended the City Club Debate on Issue 2, the October new teacher meeting, and met with Associations' Investment Committee.

TREASURER

Bill Scanlon presented and discussed our current financial report. He attended the meeting with our financial planner and the SHTA's Investment Committee. He met with the Associations' accountant. He attended the City Club Debate on Issue 2 and met with the new teachers in October.

EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS

PAST PRESIDENT

Dr. Thomas discussed her duties and role as Past President. She is currently working on a contract issue that she was previously working on in the summer.

TEACHER EDUCATION

Steve Smith was unable to attend the meeting. John Morris reported that Steve was working on evaluation issues that have arisen for teachers who work in two buildings.

MEMBERSHIP AND ELECTIONS

Stacy Elgart reported that we currently have 404 members.

LEGISLATIVE

Anna Hruby discussed plans to write about Governor Kasich's education plan.

POLICY

Dave Klapholz had no report.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Debbie Musca discussed the possibility of an online ad with the Shakerite. She stated the sponsorship of the women's crew team boat will continue for another year. She announced an opportunity for an ad for the Association in a special edition of the *Shaker Life Magazine*.

LEGISLATIVE

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

PUBLICATIONS

Andrew Glasier stated that items for the newsletter need to be sent to him by midnight on Wednesday at glasier_a@shaker.org.

LEGAL AID

Chante Thomas-Taylor had no report.

SOCIAL

Darlene Garrison supplied flyers to building reps for the Association's social event scheduled for Friday, December 9th at The Bone Yard. The event will include a buffet dinner and game tokens. She encourages all to come.

SALARY/TENURE

Lena Paskewitz stated that the Evaluation Committee is currently working on a new evaluation process that will be aligned with Race to the Top requirements.

PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Mike Sears stated that the premium increase members will be paying will take place in January. He attended the City Club Debate on Issue 2 and met with the new teachers in October.

BUILDING REPORTS

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

Boulevard reported that they have issues with obtaining substitute teachers.

Fernway reported that they are also are having problems with coverage with substitutes. They also reported issues with the use of Progress Book.

Mercer reported problems with substitutes, Progress Book and slow copy machines.

Woodbury reported that the administration has been addressing the mold issue in one of the rooms. They reported an issue with the number of staff meetings interrupting planning periods.

The **High School** met with the administration to clarify the "Walk Through" process.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

John thanked the Boulevard Reps and Darcel Arrington for hosting the meeting.

Dollye Finney informed the Council of improper reporting by the payroll department regarding STRS contributions.

Bill Scanlon reminded members that meetings and conferences that require participation over a weekend are not mandatory and members do not have to attend them.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

THE NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2011.

Respectfully submitted,
Matt Zucca, secretary

What if Teachers Ran Public Education?

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.

These have been heady days for teachers in the United States. We have been attacked from the right and the left. More and more people have begun to tell us how to do our job better, often with mixed results. Many people believe we are over paid, don't pay enough of our benefits and that we shouldn't have such a "luxurious" pension. Even our professional development has been taken out of our hands and is being run by the administration to better follow the strategic plan.

In one of my many meetings I must attend, I began to daydream a different world; *What if teachers ran public education?* How would my profession be different? What would the focus be? How would the community treat us? What would politicians have to talk about?

Teachers join the profession because they love to work with children and they love their subject matter so much they want to share it with the students. They all want their students to succeed and will work within their limits to help those students. With that in mind I began to imagine life in a teacher centered education world.

I believe the goal for education would be equality for all and preparing the students for life. In a country based on equality for all, we would make sure that all students were provided with a high quality education that would compensate for the children's deficits and inequalities outside of the school. A parent's wealth would not be the determinate in how much funding a school receives or the quality of the education. The teachers would have teams of social workers, psychologists, nurses and special education teachers to help students that needed more. A "whatever it takes" attitude towards helping the student would permeate society and allow teachers to collaborate in order to do so.

Teacher candidates would be chosen from the top 10% of their university classes. The classes would be rigorous. All teachers would be required to get a masters' degree before entering the profession, which was paid for by the state. This would effectively grant teachers equal status with lawyers and doctors. Special education teachers would be required to take a sixth year of university training but would make more than the classroom teacher because of the specialization. These strong teacher candidates would be filtered into schools that needed them and be paid for their accumulated knowledge and tenacity.

Schools would be kept small so that all teachers would know all the students of the school. In the elementary grades, playtime would be a valued commodity, as all teachers realize the importance of play in a child's development. Teachers would spend fewer hours teaching so they may collaborate to build their curriculum and properly assess their students' strengths and weaknesses. Discretionary funds would be available for special resource teachers and other special needs. Resources would be distributed equally yet control would remain locally to better suit the children of that specific region.

A vast array of vocational training that prepares selected students for life outside of school would be available. Preparing students to be self sufficient outside of the classroom is more important than pushing everyone into a college oriented track that leaves 50% of first year students dropping out and confused.

Respect and autonomy would be the compelling reason for strong candidates to join the profession. The community would defer to the teacher to implement the best solutions for the students' development. This would mean that teachers fought hard to help students' progress and earn the trust of those around them. Salaries would be attractive and allow teachers to live comfortably with their family in the community.

Not until a later grade would students sit through a standardized test, and only if the teacher agrees to participate. Results would not be publicized but used by teachers to better understand the students' needs and areas in which the teachers have strengths and needs of improvement. In most cases teachers would know more about the students than the tests could tell them.

I lied. These are ideas I garnered after reading an article from *Smithsonian* magazine (link to article below) about why Finland's schools have been so successful. Yet they seem so familiar. These are ideas I have believed in since I joined the profession. They are thoughts about how to better improve public education in the United States. All of them center on focusing on what is right for the children and leaves the professional educator to do her or his job. Why is that such a far fetched idea here? Why do others feel compelled to tell us how to do our job better? Why is equality preached yet not practiced? But most importantly, how can we get from here to there?

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/people-places/Why-Are-Finlands-Schools-Successful.html>

AG

Important Dates

Monday, November 14	Conference Day, No Classes, K-8
Tuesday, November 22	Thanksgiving Recess begins at 4 p.m.
Monday, November 28	Return from Thanksgiving Recess
Monday, December 5	Executive Board (as needed)
Monday, December 12	Representative Council (as needed)
Friday, December 16	Winter Recess Begins
Tuesday, January 3	School Reopens
Tuesday, January 3	Executive Board @ Woodbury
Monday, January 9	Representative Council @ Mercer
Monday, January 16	Martin Luther King Jr. Day (No School)

*Let the warmth of friendship
take the chill from the air
and the spirit of the season
make winter easier to bear!!*

*The Shaker Heights Teachers' Association
invites you and a guest to our
Holiday Gathering...*

Friday, December 09th, 6:00PM - Dinner

The Boneyard

5900 Mayfield Road

Mayfield Heights, Ohio

Please see your building head representative for tickets

Cost - \$10.00/person

(cash only, please)

Menu Includes:

*Boneyard salad, pork tenderloin, chicken picatta, herb roasted potatoes, penne
pasta with marinara and rolls @ butter*

Fun and Games!!!