

SHTA *news*

No. 5, February 21, 2012

Message From the President

To say it has been a busy February would be an understatement. I have worked on personnel issues with Dollye Finney, medical issues with Mike Sears, substitute issues with Debbie Musca and Lisa Howell, and building issues with Joel Rathbone. I attended the Educator's Summit meeting with Cleveland Teachers' Union (CTU) President David Quolke, NEOEA President Dave Saywell and NEOEA Executive Director Bill Lavezzi. I also had the pleasure of attending the Diane Ravitch speech sponsored by CTU given at the Pilgrim Church in Tremont. I have met with Mark Freeman, Andrew Glasier and Silvia Sheppard on the Performance Pay committee and with Eileen Sweeney to discuss upcoming events with our PAC of SHTA. It's been a very busy month and there is still more work to be done.

One of the most significant experiences I've had recently was seeing Diane Ravitch speak. She is easily the most respected educational historian alive today. She has worked with multiple presidential administrations in advisory roles on education and was an early proponent of No Child Left Behind. Since 2004, Ravitch has had an about face and is now the program's biggest critic, especially when it comes to the over-reliance on standardized testing and the increasing privatization of public education through charter schools. This was one of two speeches Ravitch gave in Cleveland, the other being at the City Club. As a side note, Ravitch spoke for free to both groups as opposed to Michelle Rhee's recent \$25,000 speaking fee for her Cleveland appearance. Ravitch's primary message was that America's new educational "Corporate Reformers" like Rhee would like to both privatize and de-professionalize public education. Ravitch encouraged her audience to recognize the present state of education as being "in crisis". She encouraged us to see educators as the defenders of democracy in an era when corporate reformers would turn the public good into for-profit hands. It was a harrowing and inspirational speech. I would argue that any of our several members who were in attendance would say the same.

I'm encouraging all of you to read Diane Ravitch's book *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*. Then I would like you as many of you who can to attend the PTO Community Discussion of the book on Monday February 27th at 7:00 p.m. in the Upper Cafeteria at the high school. Ravitch provides the research and the rationale why Corporate Reform solutions like merit pay, charter schools, union bashing and over-reliance on standardized test scores do not work. She is the lion of our profession and public education and

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deserves our readership. It would also be wonderful for us to show our support for our PTO who, as Becky Thomas noted, chose this book among many recent educational titles, a considerable amount of which do not support public education. As Dollye Finney says, we are the “T” in PTO. Let’s show it in our attendance at this event.

As always, it is an honor to serve our Association as President. As Diane Ravitch stated, we are at a crisis point in American education. I am proud to weather this crisis with the professional, intelligent, and motivated colleagues I work alongside in the SHTA. I have faith that we can take American education back for our students, our communities and our profession. Another quote that has stuck with me from the Pilgrim Church speech is that “they may be powerful and wealthy, but they are the few and we are the many.” It is my intent that we continue to be among the many that fight for our democratic educational system and keep our voices heard.

*Respectfully submitted,
John L. Morris, president*

Reports from the Executive Board

VICE PRESIDENT’S REPORT

The *Night for the Red and White* is fast approaching and a number of you have committed contributions to the Silent Auction- thank you so much for your support. I hope that you are considering sharing this evening with other supporters of the Shaker Heights City Schools. *A Night for the Red & White* will be held on Saturday, March 10, 2012, 7:00 p.m., at Landerhaven in Mayfield Heights. The Committee is again offering a special staff ticket price of \$90. If you have additional questions or concerns please contact me at #4916. Thank you to Matthew Zucca for organizing the Red and White drawing and congratulations to our drawing winners: **Melissa Beccera (Boulevard School), Kevin Wagner (Lomond School) and Debbie Deep (Boulevard School).**

The SHTA Teacher Fellowship recipients are still encouraged to submit receipt documentation to collect reimbursement. This money can be used to enhance your professional development. I look forward to hearing from the Fellows.

A note from the PTO :

On February 27.2012 at 7 pm, PTO Council will sponsor a community book discussion of *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education*, by Diane Ravitch. A former Assistant Secretary of Education under George W. Bush and former advocate for No Child Left Behind, Ravitch tackles the history and provides an in-depth critique of recent school reform tactics. She also shares her beliefs about what constitutes good schools, and lists her priorities for fostering them. This discussion is open to all members of the community. It will be held in the High School Cafeteria, 2nd floor. The discussion will be moderated by Beth Welch, an organizational consultant and former Shaker parent. Please consider attending this book discussion as this book is an excellent read and lends itself to a

powerful discussion. As teachers we are all members of the Shaker Heights PTO and this is an excellent opportunity to interact with your peers and community members.

I continue to enjoy working with the SHTA leadership and membership. I am continually impressed by your accomplishments.

*Respectfully submitted,
Dollye Finney, vice president*

TREASURER'S REPORT

I have trouble believing it is already February. I feel like this year is passing by pretty quickly. The Senate Bill 5 battle we fought seems like a long time ago. I hope everyone is having a good year and is proud of the education we provide for our students. I just recently attended the Centennial celebration at the high school auditorium and was awed by our students' performances. I felt like I was at Carnegie Hall, and it filled me with pride knowing that I am a part of this district. Let's all keep working hard for our students and keep challenging them to work even harder.

As Treasurer I have been paying bills for our Association, paying out Teacher Fellowships and paying for our public relations endeavors.

I have also been 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), along with working with John Sweeney to file papers with the state of Ohio for the PAC of SHTA.

At the beginning of this month I joined a number of our fellow members in attending a talk given by Diane Ravitch, the author of *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*. It was sponsored by the Cleveland Teachers' Union and it was fabulous. Ms. Ravitch does an amazing job of using research to show how Accountability-focused educational policy is killing our American schools. Next week on Monday night (February 27th) is the PTO sponsored book discussion about Diane Ravitch's book. I encourage all of our members to think about attending. Even if you haven't read the book you can go online to the [City Club of Cleveland](#) and listen to the speech she gave at the beginning of the month, which is like a "cliff-notes" version of the book. I commend our PTO for choosing this book as a discussion piece, and I will surely be there: **7 p.m. Monday, February 27th in the High School Cafeteria.**

*Respectfully submitted,
Bill Scanlon, Treasurer*

PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Members who have children age 18 and older receive a form every year in the fall asking them if their adult children will stay on the family health insurance plan in the upcoming calendar year. It's very important to complete these forms accurately and return them to Sue Garber as soon as possible. Children can now stay on a parent's family health insurance plan until they are 26, and they can stay on a parent's dental plan until they are 24. Children no longer need to be claimed as dependents on their parents' taxes to be eligible for these benefits.

The link to this article from the Chicago Tribune in 2010 explains that the school district did not have to offer this benefit until January 1, 2012 because the new health care law had a provision to grandfather-in plans that do not change. However, now that our plan has changed, this provision has taken effect. Unfortunately, if you have adult children who are not currently enrolled in your plan, you will have to wait until open enrollment in the fall to add them.

http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2010-09-09/business/sc-cons-0909-started-20100909_1_health-insurance-dependent-coverage-health-care

Since our insurance plan now includes a deductible, there may be a little confusion about when you have to pay out of pocket expenses. You may want to go to the Anthem - ESI plan change presentation on the front page of the staff website <http://www.shaker.org/StaffTemp.aspx>.

According to this presentation, any diagnostic services performed by either a primary care physician (PCP) or a specialist in the doctor's office will only be billed the \$20 co-pay. However, if you have a test done at a facility that is out of network, then you will be billed a higher price that will count toward your deductible. Here is a direct quote from the slideshow:

“Lab services at Quest Diagnostics and LabCorp and other Anthem preferred in-network labs are covered at 100%, no deductible, for both diagnostic and preventive services. Hospital labs are typically paid at deductible/coinsurance.”

You may want to check before you have blood drawn to make sure you're at an in-network lab.

Also, there are several preventive services that are now free because of the wellness provisions in the new health care law. Examples include:

- * Immunizations and wellness visits for children
- * Routine preventive exams for adults
- * Adult immunizations
- * Adult screenings (e.g. mammogram, prostate, diabetes)
- * Colorectal cancer screenings
- * Annual medical eye exam
- * Annual hearing exam

The slideshow also tells you how to create an account on anthem.com where you can track your health care needs and costs.

*Respectfully submitted,
Mike Sears, chairperson*

SALARY TENURE COMMITTEE

The Performance Compensation Committee and the Evaluation Committee are due to meet again in March. New school board member Rueben Harris joined the Performance Compensation Committee in Peter Robertson's place.

The Evaluation Committee is tentatively planning to pilot the new Ohio Teacher Evaluation System with a small group of teachers during the 2012-2013 school year.

*Respectfully submitted,
Lena Paskewitz, chairperson*

TEACHER EDUCATION

Some important information for non-tenured teachers:

Evaluation: Your next formal evaluation will be scheduled before Spring Break. Between January 4th and that time, you will have at least two formal classroom observations. Formal observations have to be a minimum of 30 minutes and done by your administrator. Your first observation can occur any time in January, February or early March. The second observation will occur in March, but the two observations need to be at least 15 school days apart.

Salary Reclassification: Board action on salary reclassification will be taken two times a year at the regular Board Meetings in November and April. Payment for classes only occurs once a year, but reclassification occurs twice. Remember, your coursework must be completed before you can be considered for reclassification.

Tenure: Tenure is granted at the April meeting of the Board of Education. You must have completed all of the necessary coursework by this time. If you are taking classes on semesters, this means that the Fall semester work will apply. Spring semester classes that are not completed until after the April Board Meeting will not apply.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have: 216-295-6385 or smith_st@shaker.org.

*Respectfully submitted,
Steve Smith, chairperson*

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

HB 191: Surprisingly, there has been little mention of House Bill 191 in recent news. Yet it could potentially have a huge impact on how our school year and daily lives look.

Co-drafted by Republican Rep. Hayes and Democratic Rep. Patmon, the bill **changes the basis for minimum school year requirements from days to hours.** Instead of the minimum school year being 182 days, as it currently stands, it would be changed to 480 hours for half-day kindergarten, 960 hours for full-day kindergarten and grades 1 through 6, and 1,050 hours for grades 7 through 12. These changes would take hold beginning the 2012-2013 school year. Under the law, school districts would be prohibited from holding classes or extracurricular activities **before Labor Day and after Memorial Day.** Exceptions to the mandated calendar would be year-round schools, summer school programs, and any calamity days that would need to be made up. Also,

school districts would be permitted to hold staff trainings and in-service days between Memorial Day and Labor Day, as needed.

Another feature of HB 191 is that it **completely does away with free calamity days**. Schools would naturally be permitted to close for inclement weather, power outages, etc., but would have to make up any and all missed time.

What does this mean? Our current contract would hold until its expiration date, but who knows what this would mean down the road. Since we would be teaching the same amount of hours, we would certainly not see a pay reduction, though, I am left wondering where in-service hours and professional development days would fit in. How would our school day look? Much is left to the imagination at this point.

How do you feel about these proposed changes? Let your local State Reps know!

*Respectfully submitted,
Anna Hruby chairperson*

LEGAL AID COMMITTEE

No report.

*Respectfully submitted,
Chante Thomas-Taylor, chairperson*

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

No Report.

*Respectfully submitted,
Debbie Musca, chairperson*

MEMBERSHIP/ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

Payroll deduction for SHTA dues began with the October 16th paycheck - \$20 per pay for 10 pays. Payment for dues will be complete after the March 1st paycheck deduction.

*Respectfully submitted,
Stacy Elgart, chairperson*

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE OF SHTA

No Report.

*Respectfully submitted,
Eileen Sweeney*

POLICY COMMITTEE

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

Our Secretary is responsible for keeping records and communications.

Here is the Article in full:

The Secretary:

1. Shall keep a careful record of the proceedings of all meetings of the Association, the Executive Board, and the Representative Council.

2. Shall submit the minutes of Representative Council to the Editor of the Newsletter for general distribution.
3. Shall file all reports submitted to the Executive Board, the Representative Council and the Association.
4. Shall maintain an accurate record of attendance at Representative Council and Executive Board meetings.
5. Shall notify the membership of proposed Constitutional and By-Law amendments.
6. Shall keep a file of all incoming and outgoing correspondence of the Association.
7. Shall handle the preparation and distribution of all notices to the members of the Association.
8. Shall perform such other duties as may be assigned by the President and/or the Executive Board.
9. Shall place in the permanent files of the Association, at the end of the term of office, all files of the Secretary and those of all other Executive Board members.

*Respectfully submitted,
David Klapholz, chairperson*

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

I am working on the spring recognition reception, which will be May 24th in the Shaker High School cafeteria.

*Respectfully submitted,
Darlene Garrison, chairperson*

PAST PRESIDENT

My activities this month have included attending Representative Council (2/13) and the February meeting of the Board of Education (2/14). I plan to attend the District Finance and Audit Committee Meeting (2/21), the PTO Book Discussion of Diane Ravitch's book *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* (2/27), and the Board of Education Work session (2/28).

I encourage you to attend the PTO Book Discussion on Monday, February 27. The subtitle of Ravitch's book says it all—"*How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education*". This is an important book for all of us. It supports many of the initiatives that we would like to see for our schools and our students. By bringing attention to this book, the PTO is providing us with a framework for discussions about educational reform. Please try to attend.

This month, I also returned to work for three days as a substitute librarian at Woodbury. While this was not an SHTA role, it did allow me to reconnect with students and staff. It was great to see so many colleagues. The best thing, of course, was seeing kids. I do enjoy being retired. Still, I have missed helping students and hearing their insights. I was glad to have the opportunity to return to my school library roots. And, I am glad of the opportunity to continue to work with all of you as past president.

*Respectfully submitted,
Becky Thomas*

SECRETARY'S REPORT

MINUTES FOR THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING

February 13, 2012

High School

The President, John Morris, called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

Michael Griffith, principal of Shaker Heights High School, welcomed the SHTA representative council.

The minutes of the January meeting were unanimously approved.

ADMINISTRATION REPORT: Lisa Howell reported that the spring evaluation and tenure evaluations were being done currently.

PTO REPORT: There was no representative from the PTO to give a report.

OFFICERS' REPORTS:

PRESIDENT

John Morris stated he has been working on the use of communication using e-mails between staff members and parents. He attended the Educators Union Summit, which discussed merit pay issues, the value of seniority with teachers, and the value of teacher's unions. He has been dealing with questions about health care and salary re-classifications. He attended the Diane Ravitch speech at Pilgrim United Church of Christ sponsored by the Cleveland Teachers' Union. He also met with Dr. Freeman to clarify issues concerning the Performance Based Pay Committee.

VICE-PRESIDENT

Dollye Finney encouraged members to make a donation to the silent auction for *A Night for the Red and White*. She reminded the members that the PTO council is still accepting donations for their annual fund. She encouraged members to attend the PTO sponsored community book discussion on the Diane Ravitch book *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*.

SECRETARY

Matt Zucca conducted the drawing for the SHTA's *A Night for the Red and White*. The Three winners were Melissa Becerra, Kevin Wagner, and Debra Deep. The drawing earned over \$700, which will be used to defray the cost of our silent auction donation.

TREASURER

Bill Scanlon discussed our current financial report.

EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS

PAST PRESIDENT

Becky Thomas stated she will be attending the next Board Meeting. She thanked the PTO for choosing Diane Ravitch's book *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* as the choice for their book discussion.

POLICY

Dave Klapholz had no report.

TEACHER EDUCATION

Steven Smith has been working with teachers regarding spring evaluations and tenure concerns.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Debbie Musca was unable to attend the meeting. Her report appears in this Newsletter.

PUBLICATIONS

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

LEGAL AID

Chante Thomas-Taylor had no report.

LEGISLATIVE

Anna Hruby was unable to attend the meeting. Her report appears in this Newsletter.

SOCIAL

Darlene Garrison stated she is working on the spring recognition reception, which will be May 24th in the Shaker high School cafeteria.

MEMBERSHIP AND ELECTIONS

Stacy Elgart stated we currently have 398 members.

SALARY/TENURE

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

PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Mike Sears discussed concerns about health coverage of older children of association members.

BUILDING REPORTS

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

Mercer had concerns about access parents get to teachers during the school day. The building administration is working on creating procedures for this issue.

Woodbury had concerns about student supervision that falls after contract hours and issues with special education teachers not getting appropriate breaks while they are proctoring tests.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Andrew Glasier discussed the upcoming showing of the film *American Teacher* possibly at the high school.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

John Morris thanked the High School for hosting the meeting.

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

THE NEXT MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR MONDAY, March 12, 2012
at the Middle School.

Respectfully submitted,
Matt Zucca, secretary

“Teachers’ working conditions are children’s learning environments!” Diane Ravitch

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.

Reprint of Letter to the Editors, Plain Dealer, published February 12th.

While I have great respect for Mayor Jackson and his ideas for Cleveland, his new corporate reform school plans are the antithesis of research-based educational ideas. He has failed to work collaboratively with the people implementing the plan, the teachers. This in itself will sink the plan. Never has a top-down educational plan worked without the support of the educators implementing it. This plan is a punishment to the people that share the workspace of Cleveland’s children. He proposes merit pay, which again, has never been proven to work and actually works against educational collaboration, a cornerstone of true reform. He proposes getting rid of seniority rules, which in a cash strapped district like Cleveland, will lead to a massive firing of experienced teachers because of their pay scale and leave novice teachers, another blow to Cleveland’s children. He will rely on charter schools, which have continuously underperformed, compared to public schools in the state of Ohio. Why would such a smart man choose such flawed ideas and hurt the children of the city he loves so much?

Andrew Glasier

As we all know from living in this region, Cleveland is the epicenter of our greater community. What happens in Cleveland impacts us in so many ways. That is why we need to fight Mayor Jackson’s preposterous plan to use corporate reform methods in the Cleveland public schools.

Year after year I see lists of the best companies to work for, both here and across the country. Companies such as Google offer their employees’ childcare, on-site gymnasiums, free and chef-created meals and many other amenities to retain talent. Yet many school districts, such as Cleveland are doing the opposite. Forced by financial constraints, districts have cut pay, increased health care costs, enacted merit pay, done away with seniority rules, increased class sizes, etc... Yet people wonder why 50% of

teachers leave the profession after five years?! As control of education leaves the hands of educators and is placed in the hands of politicians more and more mistaken educational policy is being implemented.

Corporate reformers, who are proposing more privatization of education and de-professionalizing educators have only the teachers' unions in their way from destroying public education, the only true path to democracy. Corporate reformers want teachers to be fearful and quiet, while they bully us and destroy all the gains we have worked for. It is our time to stand up and say ***NO!*** What we want is right for students and what corporate reformers want is wrong.

Charter schools have performed below public schools in the state of Ohio, when using test data (which corporate reformers love to use) as an indicator. Cyber-charter schools have been hugely profitable to the companies that control them (who are also generous to the Republican administration who supports them), yet have a 12% graduation rate on average. Ohio has 326 charter schools with many on academic watch or emergency yet they remain open. Charter schools are a disaster to public education.

Merit pay has never worked anywhere in the world as an incentive for teachers. It has also never increased student performance in any place it has been implemented. Vanderbilt University's study of merit pay and performance found no difference in performance by those that received merit pay to those that did not. School-wide "bonuses" in New York City public schools made no difference in performance. Merit pay stems from a 100 year old idea that incentivizing work will create better performance. Teaching however is collaborative in nature. It requires that a community work together to help children. Merit pay destroys the incentive to work collaboratively and therefore it doesn't work.

Tenure is a way of keeping senior teachers protected from being eliminated during financial crisis and to allow them a greater role in school leadership without the fear of reprisal from administration. It allows teachers to advocate for students who do not have parental advocates. It allows teachers to push for policies that help students learn. While administrators have many constituents they must respond to including parents, voters, upper administration, politicians, tenured teachers can focus on helping students achieve and guide policy that is student focused. It allows teachers to teach. Yes, there are bad tenured teachers, but most contracts have clear guidelines for eliminating poor performing teachers that administration fails to implement. They want it to be easier, to fire teachers yet they are the ones that granted the teacher tenure.

Teachers need to lead reform in this country. We need to do so with our words and deeds. We need to express our outrage at the dismantling of public education by ignorant businessmen and the politicians that are supported by them. They are the few and we are the many. It is time for new thinking. Public education is the pillar of a democracy and we need to fight for it.

SOURCES:

<http://news.vanderbilt.edu/2010/09/teacher-performance-pay/>

<http://www.cityclub.org/mediacenter/cityclubpodcast/Podcastp Sting/tabid/194/Default.aspx> (Link to podcast of Diane Ravitch speech @ City Club of Cleveland, 2/3/12)

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Important Dates

- Monday, February 27** PTO Community Book Discussion of Diane Ravitch's *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*.
7PM @ SHHS Cafeteria
- Friday, March 2** Professional Day (Grades K-6)
- Monday, March 5** SHTA Executive Board meeting @ Woodbury
- Monday, March 12** PTO Grant applications DUE
SHTA Representative Council Meeting @ Middle School
- Friday, March 16** Conference Day (Grades K-8)