

# ADVOCATE



**Ontario-Montclair Teachers Association**

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**May 2013**

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**CALIFORNIA DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION, APRIL 2013, SACRAMENTO, CA.**

*By: Tracy Lee Taylor*

(If you belong to another political party, don't give up. Read on. I suspect many of the same issues come up regardless of your political affiliation.)

Politics. Many don't want to have anything to do with it. Understandable. Politics often doesn't seem to affect us personally. However, someone has to watch over those who are elected to political office. They make the decisions that have serious consequences for the rest of us.

In April, I attended the state convention for the Democratic Party. The rumor is that the Democratic Party is controlled by Union Thugs. Simply put, this is not true. The fact that some of our legislators understand and support teachers and the jobs we do, that they recognize we have the knowledge and the skills base to do what is needed to truly educate children, does not mean they are 'in the pocket of the union.' Many legislators recognize that we are the experts on Education.

However, not all legislators do support us, and the work we do. In the following resolution, two prominent 'reform' groups are mentioned by name. Michelle Rhee, the face of StudentsFirst, and Gloria Romero of Democrats for Education Reform each calls herself a Democrat. So, clearly not all people elected from this party are supportive our work in public education. The 'reform' groups out there have an agenda. There is a lot of money in education reform.

All these groups claim to support students (not teachers or public ed.) by making the teachers accountable. Using High Stakes Testing, they have pushed for 'reforms' which would make it possible to evaluate teachers based on the scores children achieve on these tests. Though many still champion this plan, others are learning what a disservice this has been to our students over the last 10 years. With the focus of the classroom being on only the outcome of the standardized test, students have had to endure endless hours of practice testing and bubbling while true education has sometimes been ignored. Teachers have been helpless to change this in the places where it is happening.

Admittedly, teachers don't agree on exactly what to do going forward. We have expertise on our side, however we are independent thinkers. Even so, I believe there is one thing on which we, as educators, can (mostly) agree. And that is: We, the people who go into the classrooms day after day, are the ones who have the best ideas for how to teach our state's children. Our Association leaders believe it. Many of our elected officials believe it as well. We know what's best for our students, we need to make our voices heard, whether that means going out ourselves and talking to our legislators and writing to our local newspapers, or simply supporting the leaders who are supporting us. Politics is calling. We need to answer, again, regardless of your political party. We have no choice anymore.

The following is a resolution passed by the delegates of the CA State Democratic Convention. It would appear we have the support of these delegates.

## SUPPORTING CALIFORNIA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND DISPELLING THE CORPORATE "REFORM" AGENDA

WHEREAS, the so called "reform" initiatives of Students First, rely on destructive anti-educator policies that do nothing for students but blame educators and their unions for the ills of society, make testing the goal of education, shatter communities by closing their public schools, and see public schools as potential profit centers and children as measureable commodities; and

## A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Amy Tompkins

Can you believe the school year is over? It seems to go by so fast. As the end of the school year approaches and testing is over, it's the perfect time reflect on the differences you have made in the lives of your students. What a rewarding job to take children through a year of learning. I have learned a lot this year as your President. It has been an honor to meet and work with so many fabulous teachers in our district. I was able to bring pizza to 23 school sites this year, providing a chance to get to know your schools and your staffs. If I did not get to your site this year, I look forward to seeing you in August and September with pizza. Those sites I did visit, I look forward to visiting you again and seeing and hearing more about the great things that are happening at your school. I had the opportunity to sub in about 7 classes this year so I can stay connected to the classroom and know what you do every day. I was invited to many classrooms to walk through and am blown away by the amazing things you are doing.



I have been working this year on building more opportunities for you to collaborate and connect with your colleagues from around the district and get training on various educational topics from CTA. Next year we will continue our monthly "happy/social hours." This has been a great way to meet new educators and talk about hot topics in education. We will also continue to bring in CTA for monthly trainings. Our IPD chair John Egan and I have been working on getting meaningful trainings scheduled for next year and hope to have a yearlong calendar out to you soon so you can see what trainings will be offered and what you may be interested in attending. We have included such topics as: teacher bullying, STRS/403b, common core, and personal finances. We will also resume the teacher lead meetings on Tuesdays, now called Teacher Network Forum. If you are interested in hosting one of these meetings in your classroom on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, or 5<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month, please email me. The meetings occur during contract time and a great way to collaborate with colleagues from around the district about grade level issues and ideas. Why reinvent the wheel?

I'm sure everyone has fabulous exciting plans for the summer. If you find yourself bored or missing educational conversations and information there are a few great sites you can sign up for and receive weekly emails about the Common Core. One is CCSS updates from the CDE, just send a blank email message to [join-commoncore@mlist.cde.ca.gov](mailto:join-commoncore@mlist.cde.ca.gov). Another great resource for Common Core is the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium from the CDE. To subscribe send a blank email to [subscribe-sbac@mlist.cde.ca.gov](mailto:subscribe-sbac@mlist.cde.ca.gov). For those anxious to know more about the Spring 2014 Common Core assessment, the CDE will provide online access to sample questions starting May 29<sup>th</sup> via the Smarter Balanced Web site; it will be available until we begin to implement the assessment in our classrooms.

In the middle of May, look out for the Governor's May Revise of the State Budget; it should be passed in the middle of June. This will be very important to us at OMSD. Right now there are a lot of talks going on in Sacramento about the Governor's proposal to change the way school districts get funding and how much funding they receive, it's called the Local Control Funding Formula. There are many bills out there trying to delay this for one to five years, but the Governor is pushing hard for it to pass now. CTA's position on this is that they would like the state to pay back education the billions we are owed before they change the way schools are funded. If the Local Control Funding Formula passes, our district will be a "winner" in the formula; we will receive more money than other districts based on our ELL's, economically disadvantaged students, and foster youth. We will know more after the budget passes in June, and we will keep you informed on our OMTA Facebook page over the summer and in the next Advocate in August. Have a wonderful vacation!

## **STRESSING THE STRESS OF STRESS**

*By: John Egan*

Shortness of breath?... Irregular heartbeat?... Arms going numb?... Just over-all tiredness?... What could this be as I plopped myself down in my mother's kitchen chair... It must be a heart-attack. I waved my mom off the phone. One look in her eye and she knew to hang-up and call 911. Was it a heart attack? Fortunately, no. This was the summer of 2011. I went to the emergency room three times that summer convinced that each time what I was experiencing was a heart attack.

Now you're probably asking yourself why am I writing about this? Well, after returning to school for the 2011-12 school year I was surprised/shocked to find out that a few of my colleagues were suffering from some of the same symptoms, most notably the irregular heartbeat. The following is what I discovered.

After going to a cardiologist for the third time and going through a litany of tests, he told me my heart was fine; there's nothing the matter with me. As I started to tell him again about what I was feeling, he interrupted me and he told me point-blank that I needed a psychiatrist. Thinking back to all the doctors I had seen from going to ER, everyone told me that these symptoms I was exhibiting are also the harbingers of stress.

Every time they mentioned this though I said I didn't feel stressed. How can this be? Well, I found out this *was* the case. You can tell yourself you're handling things okay, but your body might start to buckle as mine did.

After I finally convinced myself it was stress, I proceeded to change a few things. I didn't want to be on pharmaceuticals, which I found the doctors were more than happy to prescribe. That being said, right off the bat I gave up soda, and coffee, and alcohol. Mentally, that made me feel better, though all I drank was water. Then I started eating healthier (oatmeal every morning with honey is good for the heart) and exercising, which I found stabilized my heartbeat. The last thing I did was I decided to pamper myself and scheduled a monthly deep massage which really helped me refocus my energies. It also helped me to realize that I was harboring a lot of pent up feelings over some family members' deaths that I didn't need to be holding onto.

You see, we educators, especially public school teachers, are prime candidates for stress. New implementations, new programs, new trainings, deadlines, administrators' demands on time, changing grade levels, moving classrooms, this list could go on and on as to what happens at school sites everywhere. That's not even factoring in your personal life, which can be critical on maintaining your emotional balance. For when the job starts trickling into home life, be ever aware. It's so important to make time for yourself, to make sure you find time for fun, for laughter, for balance.

Oftentimes, as educators we are put upon to do yeomen's work by administrators, grade level leaders, colleagues and parents. It's important to carefully assess what our peers and administrators are asking us to do and the time afforded to do those tasks. Of course, we all want to pitch in and give our due share to the bettering of our students' welfare, but we also need to carefully weigh the work load we take on, on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. It is very easy for us to get caught up in the importance of our work, and to want to push through and burn the candle at both ends... But if our labors put our own health at risk, what are we really teaching our students?

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**Health/Nurse:** Marissa Sitz  
**Early Ed Center:** Leticia Martinez

## CALIFORNIA DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION FROM PAGE 1

WHEREAS, the political action committee, entitled Democrats for Education Reform is funded by corporations, Republican operatives and wealthy individuals dedicated to privatization and anti educator initiatives, and not grassroots democrats or classroom educators; and

WHEREAS, the billionaires funding Students First and Democrats for Education Reform are supporting candidates and local programs that would dismantle a free public education for every student in California and replace it with company run charter schools, non credentialed teachers and unproven untested so called “reforms”;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Democratic Party reaffirms its commitment to free accessible public schools for all which offer a fair, substantive opportunity to learn with educators who have the right to be represented by their union, bargain collectively and have a voice in the policies which affect their schools, classrooms and their students; .

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the California Democratic Party send this resolution to all elected Democratic leaders in California, publicize the corporate and Republican funding of these groups and work with the authors of this resolution to dispel the false reforms and support the real needs of the classroom: trained teachers, adequate funding, safe and clean facilities, diverse and stimulating curriculum and access to pre school and higher education.

Sponsored by the CTA, CFT, and CFA

We must stand up for our students by supporting our Association leaders and making our thoughts known to our legislators. It's not as hard as you might think.

**OMTA**  
**Executive Board Meeting**  
**August 12th**  
**Rep Council Meeting**  
**August 26th**

**OMSD**  
**School Board Meetings**  
**May 16th & June 6th**  
**7 pm at Central Language Academy**

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