



ADVOCATE

Ontario-Montclair Teachers Association

March 2018

IMPORTANT DATES APRIL

- 10th CPR TRAINING
- 13th OMTA SPRING SOCIAL
- 16th OMTA EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
- 19th OMSD BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
- 23rd OMTA REP COUNCIL MEETING

FROM MARYKAY TO YOU



For those unable to attend the School Board meeting on March 8, I am sharing the message I delivered on your behalf. With the help of a few OMSD Board of Trustee members, OMTA was successful in securing 5 minutes of time on the Board agenda more than a year ago. This speech exceeded the time limit, but our CSEA colleagues yielded their time so that I could finish. Your voices were heard.

Good Evening President Rivas, Board Members, Dr. Hammond, and Cabinet Members. So much is happening in our district right now. Greetings to all our teachers and staff here this evening. You are the ones who greet our students each day, work to reach them in every way possible, strive to keep them safe, all while balancing a myriad of challenges before the end of the school day, not to mention all the activities and work you must do after school and at home.

I am so happy to see you here tonight. Our presence says that teachers have major concerns about where we are as a district.

We are concerned about the workload created outside the classroom that not only encroaches on our family time, but also on our ability to meet the needs of our students. We are concerned that our voices regarding quality meetings, not quantity, are not being heard. We are concerned that we are exposed to Professional Learning Development programs and strategies that are not revisited often enough, before going on to the next “best” program. We are concerned that our increasing workload impedes our ability to know our students, which is what enables kids to connect with school and their peers. We are concerned many in this district forget that the special programs that have made this district award-winning are a direct result of the extraordinary efforts made at school sites, through site administration, teachers, and staff. We are concerned that our message is not getting through to our elected policy makers.

We believe that voicing concerns is critical; it is in fact the only way to move forward and accomplish all we need to do. Together. And we are hopeful.

We are hopeful that our elected officials will hear our voices, not only on our behalf, but also on behalf of our children and their learning needs. We are hopeful that our district will continue to place a premium on school, staff, and student safety. We are hopeful that we can step up our watchfulness and concern for students who need our help. We are hopeful that we can remain strong as we continue to bargain in good faith with the district.

We understand that we have seen a slowing of LCFF revenues. We understand the realities of declining enrollment. We understand the fiscal picture the district is painting, and the future obligations to STRS and PERS, and we thank fiscal services for sharing the district’s funding

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MICHAEL FLORES

By: John Egan and Daniel Salcido

Dr. Michael Flores is arguably the most affable and engaging of our board members because of his knowledge and history of Ontario and its surrounding areas. Michael Flores grew up in Ontario, attending Corona Elementary for most of his youth, outside of a short stint at Del Norte. From there he went onto Imperial Avenue Junior High, which is now known as Ray Wiltsey Middle School; and ultimately finished up at Chaffey High School.

Education, interestingly enough, was his plan B, if plan A didn't work. He initially went to law school, but because of monetary issues ended up at Cal State Fullerton and worked in libraries. He took education classes there working with teachers who designed the four-quadrant learning system, and eventually got his teaching

credential. He finished up his education getting his doctorate degree in Education. Dr. Flores currently plies his craft at Cypress College, where he has taught History since 2000.

Dr. Flores is the first person we've known that has legitimately taught all grade levels, kindergarten through grade 12, including special education; having taught at some time or another, all subjects, save for the hard sciences. He has even worked as a school custodian, librarian, and a preschool aide. So, he has a clear understanding of what public education is.

Of the board members, Dr. Flores is known as a "facilities guy." When asked why this is, he explained that he has been in so many schools and classes as a student and as a professional; he has seen many buildings that are so sorely lacking that now he has become very observant of school environments and the impact that an environment has on student learning. Whether it's inside or outside of the classroom, Dr. Flores' wary and studious eye is always taking note of it.

As far as being a board member, Dr. Flores takes pride in his ability to look at both sides of an issue; his willingness to look at all concerns with an open mind. He also believes that unit members and OMSD constituents have the right and responsibility to ask board members questions and keep them accountable. 🍏



Michael Flores, far left, joins OMTA at a CTATraining

SPECIAL EDUCATION

By: Aurora Mejico

Greetings fellow educators! My name is Aurora Mejico and I'm the new OMTA representative for special education. I started my career as a general education teacher and then obtained both mild/mod and mod/severe special education credentials. As a special education teacher I have taught grades K-12 in county programs for students with emotional disturbance, mild/mod SDC and in RSP settings. Currently, I am the RSP teacher at Vista Grande Elementary. I also co-teach ELA with our 6th grade general education teacher and provide intervention support for general education students.

Our district services students with a range of disabilities and it is our job to provide these students with free and appropriate public education (FAPE). We are held accountable to laws that protect these students by ensuring that they have access to the same educational

rights as students without disabilities. Did you know that our district has a great resource called the "Special Education Procedural Manual?" This manual is designed "to serve as a resource for staff for the purpose of identification, assessment, placement, and instruction of students with exceptional needs."

Many topics and procedures are covered in the manual, such as the "IEP Process," "Placement & Programing," and "Behavior Interventions & Supports." There are even explanations of key terms like least restrictive environment (LRE) and free appropriate public education (FAPE). Roles of the IEP team members are also outlined in the manual.

This manual can be accessed digitally by following these steps.

- 1) Log into My OMSD.

- 2) Hover over the Learning and Teaching tab and scroll down to special education.
- 3) Click on special education.
- 4) Scroll down to Special Education & OMSD-SELPA Handbook and click on it.
- 5) Click on the 4th file titled Special Education Procedural Manual 2017-2018 and the manual will download.

Answers to many common questions regarding special education can be found by referring to this manual.

I would also like to bring attention to World Autism Awareness Day which is Monday, April 2nd 2018. The day is intended to spread awareness about Autism and is symbolized by a light blue color and a puzzle piece pattern which have become the trademarks of Autism Awareness. There are different ways personnel and students can get involved. Our staff is showing support is by wearing Autism Awareness t-shirts or light blue shirts to “light it up blue” and we are encouraging our students to do the same. In the past the wonderful

teachers in the Autism program at El Camino created posters that were displayed on campus. One poster depicted a large tree whose leaves were made from the handprints of the Autistic students from the school. The poster read “Autism, Grow Your Awareness” (So beautiful!). Another idea is to encourage students to acknowledge their peers with Autism. They might use puzzle piece shapes to generate a list of ways they can support their peers with Autism. Ideas may include inviting an autistic student to sit with them at lunch or including them in games. They may also pledge to have patience with their Autistic peers and be mindful of when they are sitting alone. There are also video resources that you can find that are appropriate for your students.

Every day we teach and service students across the spectrum of Autism and it would be great for us to show our support for these students and their parents by helping to raise awareness. Let’s all “light it up blue” on April 2nd! 

GRASS-ROOTS ACTIVISM

By: Tracy Taylor

So much is happening in our nation right now. As you know, students and teachers across the country are rising to promote social change in the aftermath of the Florida high school shooting. Some are organizing protests and walkouts beginning March 14. On April 20, the 19th anniversary of Columbine, there is an NEA/CTA endorsed day of action.

CTA has asked all local associations to remind teachers and district leaders “Safety is our first priority and it is our duty as educators to provide a school environment where students are nurtured and cared for every day . . . The California Teachers Association and the Association of California School Administrators encourage educators to provide students with a secure venue and activities where their voices can be heard. We believe on-campus activities and collaboration between district employees and students can deliver a powerful message of unity.”

While the focus of this activism is on gun violence in schools, there is also the concern that our schools are not well enough funded to provide services that can help our youth deal with life issues as they grow.

So another idea, beside walkouts and rallies, is taking this ‘teachable moment’ to help our students raise their voices in other positive ways, and learn the strength of a unified voice among thousands.

What if we take this opportunity to help our students, K-8, write letters to our elected officials? Letters asking that we stop taking funding away from our schools, that we find funding that would allow for all schools to employ enough counselors and nurses to meet the needs of our students, enough teachers to keep class sizes low, enough funding to provide community services and programs to the families. . . What if, in this rich nation, this state, what if we address funding?

What if every child in our district wrote a letter expressing their concerns for their futures? And we simply help them with the capitals and punctuation, as they write about what they fear and what they hope for and how their school and teachers could help?

What if all the nearby districts did the same? And what if we sent these letters from our students to our Assemblymember, State Senator, and Congresswoman? Can you imagine the impact we could have on legislation? And can you imagine the lesson that would teach our children?

My fifth graders know of Columbine and Parkland. They know of Sandy Hook. They are 10 and 11 years old and they are scared. They don’t know what to do, but we can teach them. . 

priorities. We understand some funds are absolutely not available for bargaining, but we also know that other monies could be freed up for negotiations. We understand a minimal reserve is a legal obligation and a healthy reserve serves as protection against future economic downturns, but we also know that our reserve is one of the highest in the state. We understand that salary is not the only factor of interest to our members. After all, we are talking here about a population that spends as much as \$2000 of their own money to support their students with resources school sites can no longer supply. We understand Measure K money will be spent on behind-the-scenes infrastructure that may not be visible to the public. But many classrooms have critical needs that Measure K funds can help remediate, without decreasing general fund dollars.

During a recent site visit, I learned teachers had declined to order window coverings, blinds, for their portable classrooms so that site funds could be used to improve technology at the site instead (confirming my earlier observation that teachers routinely put students first). The teachers explained that their rooms are abnormally hot in the warmer months, so hot in fact that crayons melt. I fear those teachers will not be safe in the event of an on-campus intruder; they cannot hide in a room without window coverings. Teachers should not be asked to make these sorts of either/or decisions when OMSD has



resources to address both BASIC needs. We know that we, OMTA and CSEA – teachers, nurses, custodians, school staff, provide an outstanding service to our parents, students, and the community. We acknowledge that focusing on clients is an essential business practice. I read an

interesting article in the business section of the LA Times last Sunday. The author writes, “As the labor market tightens, some employers have dangled perks” to keep employees around. They recognize they need to up their game to attract and retain the best talent.

We can offer better working conditions at little to no cost. We can reduce teacher duties and be cost effective by hiring additional classified personnel at a fraction of the cost of district management. We can reduce staff meeting time at no cost. We can significantly minimize assessments, not only for the benefit of personnel, but also to reduce student stress and increase time available for instruction. We can recognize teachers as professionals, those on the front lines who know best what their students need, and support their efforts.

We CAN SEE Unity in this room and solidarity in the sea of black in the auditorium. We can see that the teachers and classified staff of OMSD care deeply about our future and that of our students. We invite you to engage in conversation with us, listen to our frustrations, and help us envision and develop a brighter future for the benefit of us ALL.

MaryKay Scheid, OMTA President 

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