



ADVOCATE

Ontario-Montclair Teachers Association

March 2015

IMPORTANT DATES

OMTA HAPPY HOUR
April 3rd

**OMTA EXECUTIVE
BOARD MEETING**
April 6th

**OMSD SCHOOL
BOARD MEETING**
April 9th

**CTA/OMTA TRAINING
CalSTRS Overview**
April 14th

**OMSD SCHOOL
BOARD MEETING**
April 23rd

**CTA –
Free Common Core Training**
April 25th

**OMTA REP
COUNCIL MEETING**
April 27th

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A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Amy Johnson



I know testing is underway. I hope this doesn't bring you more stress. On March 11, 2015, the State Board of Education voted unanimously to suspend the Academic Performance Index (API) for the 2014-2015 school year. The state is waiting to develop a more comprehensive accountability system based on multiple measures rather than just a single index. State Superintendent Tom Torlakson stated: "One of my top priorities is developing an accountability system that meets California's needs by looking at a broad range of measures defining student and school success, rather than relying on just one test. This will give us a complete picture rather than a narrow view." We are very fortunate in California, during this common core/SBAC transition, to have a pro-education Governor and State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Each year the district has to revise the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). The state has 8 priorities; the district must focus on those 8 state priorities and then write district goals based on them. The district has to engage all stakeholders in getting feedback on the goals to determine what should be in the LCAP. There should have been a presentation at your site given by your administrator to all staff about the district LCAP, and there should have been time for you to give feedback on what you would like to see added or changed. For the 2014-2015 school year, the district and the LCAP team came up with 12 goals. Sites need to make their School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) from the district goals and using 12 goals was a bit cumbersome at sites. There were just too many goals and many of them overlapped, so this year we will focus on only 5 key goals. Teachers should be a part of the planning process for the SPSA and help determine how the district goals will be implemented at school sites. The SPSA should be an open document developed with input given by all and presented to School Site Council for approval each year.

I'm sure by now you have heard that the district adopted Eureka as our math curriculum. Some are happy with this and some are not. This is a temporary adoption until the publishers come out with second edition math curriculum that is more common core aligned for us to pilot. If we did not adopt something new for next year, the district would have had to purchase all the Houghton Mifflin Math. We know for sure that would be a waste of millions of dollars, as Houghton Mifflin is not currently aligned to common core. Middle school math teachers will also be using Eureka with supplemental materials to help teach integrated math. Please make sure you are reading the L&T newsletters. There is very good, up-to-date information about common core and the district's instructional plans and direction for this year and beyond.

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Open enrollment is coming May 27th to May 15th. There will be 13 days at the Hardy Center or Briggs to help you sign up for your benefits. The insurance committee is meeting to finalize rates; updated rate information will be available to everyone well before open enrollment starts. Unfortunately, we will not be done with negotiations before open enrollment. Negotiations will start at the end of April. We know that whatever is negotiated will be voted on in August, since it is so close to the end of the school year and election timelines are tight. We hope to be done with negotiations by rep council on May 11th so we will be able to share the tentative agreement with you before we go on summer vacation. OMTA and the District are able to bring forth two articles for our reopener for the 2015-2016 school year (class size and salary and benefits are automatic reopeners each year and do not count toward our two). This year our reopeners are Article VIII- Hours of Work and Article XVIII- Compensation for Special Assignments. The two articles the

district is bringing forth are Article XI- Evaluation Procedures and Article VII- Special Education. As always, we will email bargaining updates after each bargaining session.

Please join OMTA at 3:30 pm March 31st for training on Child Abuse. This workshop reviews the legal obligations of educators for mandated reporting as well as how to recognize the signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect. Issues dealing with social media and the use of technology are also covered along with steps to take if you as an educator are accused of child abuse. There will also be training on April 14th on STRS. This training will cover the basics of CalSTRS Defined Benefit Program, Enhancements, 2012 Legislative CalSTRS Reforms and Social Security Offset. All trainings are at the OMTA office and from 3:30-5:00. These are the last two trainings of the year and your last chance to get entered into the drawing to win an airline ticket. Snacks will be provided. See you there! 🍏

ESEA REAUTHORIZATION: WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW

By: Tracy Lee Taylor

I was elected NEA Director for our area in January. Two weeks later I was on a trip to Washington, DC for a Board meeting, which included a day of lobbying Congress members. With two others, I visited 7 House offices and one Senate office. Our goal was to lobby the California offices about the reauthorization of ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act), more recently known as NCLB (No Child Left Behind).

There are a number of things in the proposed bill that do not benefit students, including:

- Yearly High-Stakes Testing – Many believe the only way to know if teachers are doing their jobs is to continue testing as it has been these last 12 years.
- Portability – Rather than funding districts in ways that guarantee adequate amounts of base funding, a certain dollar amount would be assigned to each student. If a student were to leave a school, the money would leave with the student.
- Sequester level Funding – Some in Congress wish to keep school funding (among other programs) at sequester level or less.

Members of NEA are calling for an ‘Opportunity Dashboard’ that will provide far greater transparency about the kinds of supports students truly need to improve learning and serve the whole child. This dashboard will also reveal gaps in some of the basic components of a high quality, well-rounded education that prepares each student for the future. These indicators of school quality cannot be available only in some areas. They must be available to all children in all schools and states would be required to show that all students have access to: Advanced coursework - (AP/IB, dual enrollment, college gateway math and science); Fully-qualified teachers in every classroom with no ‘loopholes’ and no

‘shortcuts’ in training; Specialized instructional support personnel (school counselors, nurses and psychologists); High-quality early education; Arts and athletic programs; Community health care and wellness programs

NEA supports Grade-Span Testing and removing the High-Stakes component – Teachers are not opposed to testing. We all test to measure how well a student has mastered what was taught. But the high-stakes, punishment-driven tests that have become the focal point of our schools over the past 12 years have not benefitted students. NEA proposes ‘grade-span testing’ which would limit standardized testing to three times during a child’s years in school, once in elementary, once in middle and once in high school. In addition, the high-stakes nature of these tests must be stopped. There is no evidence the overemphasis on testing has done anything to help children. Tests should not be used as a device for punishing students, teachers and schools. Rather, they should be used to guide instruction, and measure progress in a way that enables teachers to help children to the next goal.

There is still time to call our Senators. We need to let them know what needs to be in the law that is good for students and our nation’s schools. Before we complain they do not listen, we need to be sure there are voices of Educators for them to hear. A Union is not made up of a small number of leaders who do it all. Our Association is made up of thousands of Teachers all over the U.S.; we are the ones who make NEA/CTA powerful. We are the voices Congress needs to hear.

Speak up. The reformers and the privateers will speak up whether we do or not. You may phone the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121. A switchboard operator will connect you directly with the Senate office you request. 🍏

GOT MONEY?

By: John Egan

Ever had a lesson that you've always wanted to teach but no matter how much of your personal money you were willing to put into it, you knew it still wouldn't be enough? As an art teacher I am more than familiar with this feeling. I'm referring about those lessons that can excite and engage students; that can impact them, possibly make them life-long learners. I know full well that money doesn't make a good teacher, but it certainly does help to have the ability to get the things you need to make a difference in a student's education. About a year ago, I stumbled onto a revenue source that has enabled me the opportunity to showcase my skills and expertise.

In 2014 I had the opportunity to attend the CTA Issues Conference which is held every January in Las Vegas. This is where I met Dick Gale, Program Director of CTA-IFT (Institute for Teaching) and became aware of the IFT Grant. CTA funds this grant through a small portion of CTA members' dues. All CTA members have the opportunity to apply for this grant, which is competitive.

The beauty of this grant is that it puts the teacher back into the driver's seat and allows classroom teachers to teach to their interests and strengths, which is referred to as "Teacher Driven Change". CTA believes that all classroom teachers know what their students need. The IFT grant was designed to connect and support teachers in the classroom, as well as getting teachers more involved with their profession. The premise is that teachers who are more invested in their classroom instruction via their instructional strengths and interests will be more interested in protecting their profession. The belief is that teacher investment also creates leadership at school sites (without having a position of authority in the local association) which is critical in developing strong schools.

The characteristics of Teacher Driven Change are: Learning will be student centered, as well as collaborative and innovative. Teacher Driven Change brings together a variety of teachers, taps into your creativity and passion, and action-oriented and project-based.

The above criteria fell right into my wheelhouse for my proposed grant here at Vernon Middle School. The goal is to teach middle school

students, who have an interest in art, to paint portraits of influential people on the 3' by 3' panels that are above the classrooms affiliated with the main buildings at Vernon. There are more than 30 of these panels. The students select the individuals with dialogue/debate and the assistance of their teachers who should go over the doorway. I submitted this grant in early spring of 2014. Before the school year ended I was

apprised that I had been selected for the educator grant where I was awarded the full \$5,000. All the funds went to OMTA, which reimburses me the cost of materials and other support for the project.

As previously mentioned I was awarded an educator grant, which tops out at \$5,000. There is also a chapter grant of up to \$20,000 which is perfect for a grade level or team projects. If you apply for the grant, the funds can be used for supplies, training, field trips, etc. that supports the learning as it pertains to the individual's grant focus. The district has no control over the funding; it is strictly run through CTA and the local.

Initially, getting the project up and running was tough sledding. I was in my second year as an art teacher at Vernon after being an elementary teacher for many years, so I was feeling very much like a new teacher as I talked up this project around school. There were also some district obstacles I had to overcome which delayed our start date (Abraham Lincoln and Beethoven are near completion), but

once we were able to discuss what was going to happen at the school site, the district has been more than supportive.

The IFT Grant application I found to be very straight forward and relatively easy to complete. I'm not going to say it was fast and quick to finish, there is to be some thought put behind the purpose of your project. The grant has seven "Strength-Based" matrix factors which ask how the proposal meets student needs such as creativity, self-reliance, interdependence, strengths over deficits and the school needs of community and school-family relationships. In applying you will also need to include a timeline, as well as a budget.

There are two other grant winners in Ontario-Montclair, one at Ramona and one at Wiltsey. If you are interested in applying for the grant or would like more information, go to <http://www.teacherdrivenchange.org/>



TEACHER INITIATED FUNDS (TIF)

As of the March TIF meeting, there is no more money available for this school year for conferences. Per contract language in Article XII, Section 8- Leaves of Absence: "The Professional Growth Leave fund shall be \$35,000 per year, funded by the District. Unused monies in the Professional Growth Leave fund shall carry over from year to year." During the 2014-2015 school year, we received \$35,000 and had some carry-over from the year before. We spent a total of \$49,670.90 on conferences and trainings initiated by teachers. I think it's fantastic that teachers want to attend conferences to grow as professionals. There will be \$35,000 placed in the fund for the 2015-2016 fiscal year, which will begin on July 1st. The money is granted on a first come first serve basis and there is a cap of \$800 per conference (any expenses in excess of \$800 may be tax deductible, consult your tax professional for more information). Teachers can only use the fund once per school year. You can find more information about TIF on the OMTA website at www.myomta.org.



OMTA's annual Retirement Dinner will be held on Friday, May 15th at the Pomona Valley Mining Company. If you are a retiree, please plan on coming so we can honor all you've done for OMSD. OMTA is happy to pay for you and a guest to attend. If you have a retiree at your site, come and help honor your retiree! More details will follow with your reps.

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