

ADVOMTACATE

The logo for the California Teachers Association (CTA), featuring the letters 'CTA' in white on a red oval background.

Ontario-Montclair Teachers Association

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The logo for the National Education Association (NEA), featuring the letters 'nea' in a stylized, lowercase font.

April 2013

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WHY AM I IN STRS?

And By the Way

How is My Retirement Money Doing These Days?

By Brad Richards

Recently I was at a meeting of teachers from OMSD. One of them confirmed a rumor that he was retiring. "I went to my STRS meeting and everything looks real good," he said. Everyone's energy peaked and we all started talking about when we would be able retire. After a round of congratulations for the new retiree, two of the teachers said, "I'm going to make an appointment with a STRS counselor too." It's a sentiment I hear from teachers all over the district. With multiple assessment bands, budget cuts, and a new set of curriculum standards on their way, the idea of retirement appears to be creeping into the thoughts of our colleagues, if not our own. Oh, and did I forget to mention many of us belong to the Baby Boomer generation and we're getting close to retirement anyway? Retirements will continue to increase in the next 10-15 years. Last year, there were nearly zero certificated retirements in the district and this year OMTA recorded 21 at last count.

At about the same time, my neighbor said to me, "I saw that article in the LA Times about the state's pension fund being out of money [he tends to over exaggerate when it comes to state government]. What are you going to do now?" he asked. After telling my neighbor that teachers have their own separate pension fund from other state employees, I began to wonder. How are things at STRS? Are they having the same kinds of problems as PERS (the other state pension fund)? Will the tradeoff that I made for less than private sector wages now, allow me be confident about that future benefits will be there for me? To get my questions answered, I decided to go straight to the top. One of my CTA colleagues mentioned that she knew a CTA member who was on the State Teachers Retirement System Board. I'd ask her to introduce me. Maybe I could get the board member to give me her assessment of the situation. I would learn everything that I needed to know and feel better that my retirement was in good hands. I wouldn't pick the LA Times off my driveway one morning and find out I'd be working, well, forever.

A few months later, when I was introduced the STRS Board Member at a conference and asked my question, she said in true teacher style, "...you can read-up on STRS at their website and CTA's and e-mail me if you have any questions." So, after some research, posting on blogs, and listening to other OMTA leaders, I pass on some information to you, future retirees.

The California State Teachers Retirement System was created in 1913. If a teacher started teaching before that year, she received credit for past service (It was the Progressive Era, so I guess the state legislators were feeling generous). It was created to provide a stable funding source for teachers in their retirement years and act as an incentive for teacher retention. Here's an interesting side note: during this time, the state, which was directed by the federal government to set aside 5.5 million acres of land in California for the purpose of funding public schooling, sold 90 percent of it (please send me an email if you'd like to know more about that). Anyway, after about 6 years of operating on good intentions and a 5 percent state inheritance tax, the fund had amassed a deficit of 26 million dollars in 1919. It was then that teachers started to work together for the common good and contributed 12 dollars each per year to keep the cash flowing. The system continued that way until 1972.

After 1972 the state of California and school districts were required to make contributions to the fund. The changes had to become part of California state law because the fund was overseen by the California State Board of Education. The state Legislature, and this is important, to this day is the only entity that can make changes to the state teachers retirement fund now known as STRS. Anyhow, the formulas were adjusted and laws were passed, but by 1964 the projected deficit had grown to whopping 2.1 billion dollars, and by 1975 the STRS obligations were 7.8 billion and rising.

Concurrently, starting in the 1960s the fund began to make investments in securities. The legislature had given the okay through Proposition 6, for you political junkies, to invest in real estate and securities on a limited basis. It wasn't until a few years later and mainly due to its investments, that for the first time in its history, the teachers retirement fund was 50% funded, that was 1980. Also in the 1980s, the teachers retirement fund, now being referred to as STRS, severed its investment ties with the other state retirement system PERS and a commission was appointed create a vision for the future of STRS. That's how it all started. Now let me tell you about the money side things.

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A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Amy Tompkins

Testing is over...deep breaths. I hope the last 17 days of the school year will be full of enrichment and “fun” educational activities. I know that the end of the year brings about a great deal of stress for all, especially our temporary teachers. I have met with many temp teachers this year: I understand your pain and frustration and I know how hard it is for you to wonder every year if you are going to have a job. OMTA would like all the temp teachers to know that we are out there every year advocating on your behalf and trying to encourage the district to do what’s right -- move more temps over to permanent status. There are some legal obstacles in OMTA’s way. Temp teachers take the place of permanent certificated employees who are out of the regular classroom doing other work, or teachers on leave, in job shares, or working in categorically funded jobs like TOAs and QEIA classes. OMTA has had CTA legal come into the district for the last 2 years to make sure the district is in compliance with how many positions are in the above positions as compared to the number of temps we have. So far the district has been in compliance. Each year, including this one, CTA is checking the positions to see if there is a possibility that more temps can be moved to permanent status. I know that the district is committed to retaining talented teachers who have demonstrated their commitment for all these years to our school district. OMTA is hoping that recent improvements in education funding will result in a better future for our temps and our students.



I want to dedicate most of my message this month to helping you learn your contract. Since we are winding down to the end of the year, I want to give you some contract language to keep in mind. There are so many topics in the contract that are important, especially for the beginning and end of a school year. Each year new language is added or deleted and it is important to know your contract. Your site reps are great resources to ask any questions you may have. You can also access the most recent contract on our OMTA website at www.myomta.org.

For those of you being Formally Evaluated here is a timeline and process that needs to be followed:

1. In preparing the Final Evaluation Report for placement in the unit member’s personnel file, the evaluator shall rely primarily upon data and evidence generated through the evaluation method selected. Any practices not consistent with standards which may have been brought to the attention of the unit member and subsequently corrected shall not be included in the final evaluation form.

2. The Final Evaluation Report shall be completed and a copy provided to the evaluatee, at least thirty (30) calendar days prior to the last duty day.

3. No later than fifteen (15) calendar days prior to the unit member’s last duty day of the school year, a final evaluation conference shall be held to discuss the content of the Final Evaluation Report. In the event the unit member disputes the content, the unit member may prepare a written statement which shall be attached and incorporated into the final evaluation

I know that many of you are eagerly awaiting your classroom assignments for next school year. According to contract, you must be notified of your tentative assignment 15 duty days from the end of the school year. That would be by May 2nd.

If your new assignment causes you to have a Non-Voluntary Room Change, please follow the new contract language: *When it becomes necessary, for programmatic reasons, to relocate a unit member to another room at the same site, the District/Site will supply sufficient boxes and packing tape to complete the move.*

The administrator and unit member will agree to a plan for the move and document the agreement in writing.

If the move occurs during the school year, the unit member will be provided non-teaching release time of up to three (3) instructional days to move.

If the move occurs beyond the contractual year, the unit member will receive a stipend of up to \$450/\$150 per non-contract day worked.

The District will provide custodial support to move all appropriately labeled and packed boxes, administratively approved furniture, and required texts to the new room.

For Administrative Transfers:

If a site change occurs beyond the contractual year, the unit member will receive a stipend of up to \$450/\$150 per non-contract day worked. The district will also furnish reasonable assistance to move personal teaching materials and equipment.

TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES FOR CLASSROOM COMPUTERS AND IPADS

By Cindy Lopez Elwell

A couple of years ago, I bought an iPad. I was surrendering to the use of an electronic calendar. Little did I know what joys awaited for its use in my classroom. Below is a short list of computer based and iPad applications to help you generate learning experiences for your students to enhance mastery, increase engagement, and develop 21st century skills. Here's the key (*computer **tablet/mobile device ***both), and here are some resources:

Dropbox: a remote storage application that invites users to share folders and documents and upload, edit, download files, documents, pictures. I use it with students, teacher colleagues, and a writing group that I belong to. One account and I can see the files for each group but they only see what I share with them.***

CaptureNotes: is one of several apps that utilizes a 'notebook' format. Take notes, import pictures or files, draw, write by hand, color code, and organize information into different notebooks and by your own categories. Great for planning lessons, events, and units.**

AudioNote: record your own voice in sync with text documents that you can create or import. I use this app in centers. Students can hit play or pause, click on links and move to other documents as I direct them to do in my recording. Both visual and auditory learners get scaffolded support for a quasi-independent learning experience.**

Showbie: Combination Dropbox, CaptureNote and AudioNote designed specifically for the classroom teacher to stream line your student workload. Feedback with markups and voicenotes. This app has SWAG!

Prezi: Powerpoint on steroids.***

My Class Dojo: avatars and real time feedback for students on class climate indicators of your choosing***

SmartSeat: electronic seating chart, randomizer and anecdotal notetaker**

Music Cue: Rick Morris app uses music for transitions and independent work time**

Story Dice: electronic version of the real thing; infinite writing, discussion, and grouping possibilities**

Root Word: like hangman, sort of, with root words...AWESOME!**

SayHi: voice activated translations, over 40 languages: SWEET!**

RhymeZone: tablet version of RhymeZone.com***

PoemsbyHeart: it's poetry, it's audio, it's visual, it's novel, It's scaffolded, it's Shakespeare, Kipling, Poe...need I say more?***

Idioms: study aide, topic listings, quizzes...by Grammar-Express.com**

AppsGoneFree: not specifically for teachers, but it is a great daily resource for new apps

Keynote Remote: run your Keynote presentations from afar with your iPhone**

Star Walk: the night sky in your hand.

Stage: be John Madden and sketch over and record live video, documents or pictures, collaborate in real time, save and post to your website, School Loop, Facebook, or Edmodo...**

Speaking of Edmodo***...I'm out of space. There are many more to list here and I'm sure as you read, you can think of others that I haven't listed. For questions or to share, email me at cynthia.lopez@omsd.k12.ca.us, friend the OMTA Facebook page, or check out the website for more information and ideas and share your great uses of technology, too. We all learn better when we learn together.

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OMTA
Executive Board Meeting
May 6th
Rep Council Meeting
May 20th

OMSD
School Board Meetings
May 9th & 23rd
7 pm at Central Language
Academy

Why am I in STRS from page 1

By 1986, STRS was managing 19 billion of our retirement dollars. Yes, that's a "b" for billion. The investment gurus and accountants at STRS had done a good, if not outstanding job, but it was still only 65% funded. By the end of the decade the fund had grown to 29 billion and 73% funded with a goal of being 100% funded by 2030. Then came the 1990s, and in just 10 short years the fund reached an all time high of 104% funding or approximately 100 billion dollars. This brings us to the year 2000 and an important development that is affecting STRS now.

In 2001 the state legislature passed a bill that authorized STRS to create an additional account for each actively employed teacher called a Defined Benefit Supplement Account. You can find this account listed on your yearly STRS statement. The account diverted 2% of the money a teacher contributed to STRS away from the main investment pool where most of the progress was made over the last two to three decades to bring STRS to a fully funded system. One of the arguments being made at CalSTRS board meetings today is that the siphoning off of this money and other benefit increases and contribution reductions, when STRS was over 100% funded, has caused it to decrease to 62-67% funded (for you accounting aficionados, the difference is if it's assessed from a mark to market, or an actuarial basis). Additionally, the drop in the value of stocks and other assets during the 2008 financial crisis compounded the decrease. The 2% diversion to the DBS account ended in 2011.

How will STRS recoup its unfunded liability? Well, it has stopped diverting contributions to DBS accounts. Recently it has increased minimum retirement age to 62 to receive 2% for new teachers. The legislature is grappling with mandating additional contributions from us teachers, school districts, and the state's general fund. If STRS pays 7.5% of its assets per year to its pensioners it will have a zero balance by 2044. I will turn 80. In the meantime the stock market has begun to revive bringing the fund back up to 161 billion as of January 31, but well below its high in 2007 of 180 billion. STRS continues to be the second largest pension fund in the United States, just behind its sister fund PERS.

Next time, I will suggest some steps you can take to increase your retirement income and some things you ought to take care of as a new or maturing STRS member.

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