



ADVOCATE

Ontario-Montclair Teachers Association

February 2016

IMPORTANT DATES

OMTA EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

February 1st

OMSD SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

February 4th

LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY – NO SCHOOL

February 12th

PRESIDENT'S DAY – NO SCHOOL

February 15th

OMSD SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

February 18th

OMTA SOCIAL HOUR

February 19th

OMTA REP COUNCIL MEETING

February 29th

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A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Amy Johnson



Happy 2016! I hope you had a wonderful and restful winter break. I am pleased to share with you that with a new year starts new federal policy in the United States. We no longer are living under the ineffective laws of “No Child Left Behind.” On December 10th President Obama signed into law the updated Elementary and Secondary Education Act called “Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).” The law passed overwhelmingly by bipartisan votes in the U.S. Senate and the House. Although no law is ever perfect and this one isn’t everything we had hoped for, it is a huge improvement from the No Child Left Behind era.

According to the NEA Today’s Tim Walker: “ESSA strikes the right balance between the respective roles of federal, state and local governments in formulating education policy. There are new flexible pillars of school accountability and it reaffirms the original law’s vision that ZIP codes shouldn’t determine the quality of a child’s education. There is no longer rigid, punitive mandates dictated to states on how students and schools should be evaluated. For the first time, state-designed accountability systems must include at least one indicator of school success or student support to determine where holes should be filled. These indicators might include lack of school counselors, or inadequate access to advanced coursework or a richer curriculum. ESSA will still require annual tests in grades 3-8 and once in high school. There is no longer Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) monitoring under the new law. ESSA provides funding for states to audit and streamline assessment systems, eliminate redundant and inefficient assessments and improve them. The new law also creates a pilot program for state-designated assessment systems that are driven by teaching and learning, rather than accountability. And where states allow, ESSA maintains the right of parents to opt their children out of statewide academic assessments and allows states to limit the amount of time students spend taking annual tests. The new law prohibits the federal government from mandating teacher evaluations or defining what an ‘effective’ teacher is and calls for many decisions for local schools and states be determined by collaboration between educators, parents and other community members.”¹

All of this is especially positive when you live in a state like California, where educators are valued and are already sitting at the table when leaders make decisions and policy about education. Now we begin our work with state legislators who will be playing a decisive role in determining how ESSA is to be implemented. 🍏

1. NEA Today, December 9, 2015: “With Passage of Every Student Succeeds Act, Life After NCLB Begins,” by Tim Walker

CAN TEACHERS BE LEADERS FROM THEIR CLASSROOMS?

By: Andrea Thune

How many times have you heard yourself say, “Don’t TELL me what you know, SHOW me what you understand.” For humans to learn, Richard Elmore points out in his research that they need “encouragement and support, access to special knowledge, time to focus on the requirements of the new task, [and] time to observe others doing it.” Educators know the power of learning together. Yet, teaching is such an isolated profession; we go into our classrooms, shut the door, and then magical things happen from within our four walls. Outsiders rarely see. Our administration and district leaders catch little glimpses of the “magic,” and in an attempt to share our bag of tricks, they ask us to participate in Professional Learning Communities. Talking just isn’t enough, and in our profession we don’t have systems in place for us to “see” one another in action. I’d like this to change. What if we could share more effectively? What if I could see what cool things are happening in my friend’s classroom next door and never have to write sub plans?

This year, a small group of Ontario-Montclair School District (OMSD) teachers, spanning preschool to eighth grade, have made the commitment to try and make a positive change to a system, which we believe, needs some help. Our Spotlight team wants to be the missing link between being told best practices to *showing* best practices. Spotlight Classrooms are an internal model of instructional support, which takes place during a regular school day. Our colleagues have two ways of visiting us; either through a classroom visit, or by watching videos uploaded to our Teaching Channel Teams group. Our team is willing to open our doors in order to be a resource for learning. While our team is not expected to be perfect in their practice, we are willing to take a risk so that all OMSD teachers have access to participate in discussions around pedagogy. Our goal is to

provide an authentic opportunity for our colleagues to see first hand best practices in action with our students.

This is where Teaching Channel Teams comes into play. Teams is helping us to build an internal library of these best practices from within our classrooms. Our Spotlight Team is coconstructing our Learning Plan steps as we go along with the idea that our model can be duplicated by any willing group of teachers. We have been armed with iPad minis, a Swivl (a personal cameraman), and a tripod. Each of us has created a group on Teaching Channel and is posting short videos of parts of lessons we are currently teaching in our classrooms. We believe through the use of technology, we can be leaders from within our classrooms. Our vision is that in the near future, every OMSD teacher will have a piece of their “magic” to spotlight.

Andrea Thune started her teaching career with the Ontario-Montclair School District in 1990. She has had experience teaching in grades K8 and as an Instructional Coach. She is currently working on her Masters in Elementary Administration with the desire to NEVER be a principal, but to become an instructional leader from within her middle school classroom. 🍏



References:

R. F. Elmore, Harv. Educ. Rev. 66 (Spring 1996); <http://edshare.educ.msu.edu/scan/TE/danagnos/te9206B.PDF> .

Holk, L. M. (2010, June). Educational Leadership: Good Teaching in Action: Demonstrating Teaching in a Lab Classroom. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educationalleadership/summer10/vol67/num09/DemonstratingTeachinginaLabClassroom.aspx>

NGSS AND THE CALIFORNIA SCIENCE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

By: Vickie Harri

How familiar are you with the new California science standards and NGSS? Are you already implementing NGSS or do you think “NG..what”? Either way, the annual conference of the California Science Teachers Association on October 21-23 in Palm Springs might be for you.

CSTA is looking for educators, especially primary and intermediate teachers, to present workshops at their annual conference. The workshop length has been expanded from one hour to 90 minutes in

order to allow for professional learning about lesson sequences and how they fit into larger instructional segments. The 2016 Conference proposal form will ask you to share information about what you and the participants will be doing during the course of the workshop; how your session demonstrates what NGSS looks like in the classroom; how the three dimensions of NGSS are integrated into your lesson; and how you see the session fitting into a classroom setting. Lead

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SPOTLIGHT ON SUCCESS: EUCLID ELEMENTARY

By: Wendy Beltran with the help of Euclid Teachers

Euclid Elementary is a special place to work. Just upon entering the beautiful grounds, you can feel a positive and supportive vibe. It is a school that parents request, and, have even made decisions about where to move their families based on boundary lines!

What makes Euclid so special? Well, we have many wonderful programs for students here, including Lego Robotics, our morning Walk and Talk program, and our after school sports. Additionally, we are a Project Based Learning school, so students have a chance to conduct research and make various projects to present to a wide variety of audiences. Our upper graders also participate in the Promise Scholars program and partner with local colleges. We have an annual shoe drive to help others, as well as raise money for student needs. We have a very positive response to this drive every year. We also have a great student council; the “Jag Squad” comprised of upper grade students, and run by volunteer teachers.

Teachers at Euclid go out of their way to help and support students, as well as each other. They are willing to help families in need, be it students or staff. We have a “Helping Hands” group that makes sure special occasions are celebrated. They take care of those in need of support as well, whether it is food, a caring card or letter or small gift. When a teacher retires, that person leaves knowing how loved they were and what an impact they made on the Euclid family.

Our administration is supportive and caring of students and staff alike. Monica Ayala, and Elyse Fernandez are both very approachable and willing to work with families, teachers, and all staff members in a positive manner. The entire administrative team, including our coach and our community liaison, are always there to support teachers, even covering classrooms when a need arises. Of course, we would all be lost without our office staff! They know our families very well and our teachers and staff even better. They are always there to help, in any way they can, and with a smile on their face to boot.

We are also in our second year of PBIS here at Euclid. Because we are already such a positive staff, the transition has been very natural. Families appreciate the positive approach to managing and supporting student behaviors. One thing that makes our PBIS program so popular with the students is our mascot, Jaggy the Jaguar! Our custodians, our mentor and other staff members have all been willing to don the popular suit to generate enthusiasm at our rallies! Our on campus mentor program, which was initiated last year is a very effective addition to PBIS as well. Our campus mentors have helped not only our students, but are a support to staff members as well.

We have great communication and a genuine community spirit here at Euclid. Working here means you get to know the cafeteria workers, the custodial staff, the playground supervisors, the P.E. teachers, the office staff, administrators, our wonderful nurse, our psychologist and mentor as well as all of our teachers. We refer to

ourselves as the Euclid Family, and it is sincere.

I asked a few staff members for their thoughts about Euclid as well. Here are some of the things they had to add.

Mrs. Johansen talks about how Euclid fosters the Arts — “Mrs. Johannsen and Mrs. Nieves brought our love of the arts to Euclid in 2007. Together, we developed an after school program centered on our expertise in puppetry and dance which first launched in 2008. This year, we are excited to host our fifth installment of our VAPA After School Program! Over 60 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students are participating in our program this year, the most that we have ever had! Our program features a rotation schedule during which students learn about different aspects of the arts. Our program this year features lessons in visual arts, puppetry, vocals, and dance. Also involved in the VAPA program is 6th grade teacher Ms. Amiwala and our site mentor, Mr. Chris, who have provided their expertise in visual arts and vocals. Our program began at the end of November and we meet every Thursday for one hour after school. This year’s theme for the VAPA After School Program is “Around the World.” We are focusing on where in the world art originated and how art from other cultures influences modern society. For example, students will learn the art of Ancient Chinese Shadow Puppetry as well as how West African Dance influenced many other well-known dance forms. In the end, students will have well-rounded experiences learning about the arts and will select which discipline they would like to showcase at the end of the year. Our program culminates in May in the form of a showcase performance featuring our students and what they learned during our six month program. “

Our Elementary Administrator, Elyse Fernandez had this to add— “Over the past couple of years our teachers have worked very hard with students who struggle with behavioral challenges. I have the utmost confidence and respect for our teachers in the way they build positive relationships with our students. They encourage, challenge, and support our students in remarkable ways... Euclid teachers believe in our kids and that they can reach their highest potential!”

Sixth grade teacher, Shaunna Lee, shared these remarks — “Some of the wonderful things that Euclid does is: All students use thinking maps. GATE icons are taught to all students. We have a wonderful, supportive staff. “

Fifth grade teacher, Lisa Lay, wanted to highlight the collaboration and teamwork that goes on in each PLC. In speaking about her own grade level, she says — “How about how wonderfully the 5th grade team collaborates on class projects and students are creative and very communicative throughout the day! We agree to work on what’s best for the students for achievement.”

Euclid truly is a special place to call home! 🍏

presenters must be current members of CSTA and will receive a fifty percent discount on conference registration, allowing full access to over 150 workshops and events over the course of the conference. Co-presenters are not eligible for registration discounts. You can access the presentation proposal form at http://www.cascience.org/csta/conf_wsprop.asp. Workshop proposals are due March 4, 2016 and conference registration will open in May.

Another way for elementary teachers to experience the CSTA conference is to participate in the Primary (K-2) and Intermediate Pathways (3-5) strands. These pathways are designed to assist teachers, TOSAs, and administrators with understanding NGSS, what it looks in the classroom, and how to begin to implement it. Last year's Primary Pathways encompassed three hours for each day of the conference.

Day 1 - (afternoon) – participants experienced a 5E lesson for grade 1 on sound. This was a very hands-on and 3-dimensional activity. The debrief included how the lesson was aligned to both NGSS and Common Core EL

Day 2 - (morning, with breakfast included) - the previous lesson was connected with engineering, with a guest speaker from the Engineering is Elementary program.

Day 3 - (morning, some breakfast) - deeper dive into the NGSS. A teacher described how she shifted one of her lessons

to be more NGSS and the participants were given time to use a lesson planning template and collaborate to develop a mini-NGSS lesson.

This year's Primary and Intermediate Pathways is still in the planning phase; additional information from the 2015 conference can be found at http://www.cascience.org/csta/conf_PrimaryPathway.asp.

The CSTA conference can be an excellent way to improve your science content knowledge and familiarize yourself with NGSS and the California Science Standards. As a member of the CSTA Conference Planning Committee, I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Please contact me at vickie.harri@omsd.net 

A FEW THINGS TO KNOW....

- The Teacher Initiated Funds is all used up for the current school year. There will be another \$35,000 placed into the account beginning with the new school year on July 1, 2016.
- RAINY DAYS/INCLEMENT WEATHER schedules: Elementary schools should still be receiving their 45 minutes of duty free lunch each day.
- RETRO \$: You will see your 2% retro raise on your February 1st paycheck and the 2% increase going forward. You will also see your benefits adjustment in February if you receive benefits.

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