



ADVOCATE

Ontario-Montclair Teachers Association

April 2020



IMPORTANT DATES MAY

2nd OMSD BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

11th OMTA EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING VIA ZOOM

16th OMSD BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

18th OMTA REP COUNCIL MEETING VIA ZOOM

21st LAST DAY FOR STUDENTS

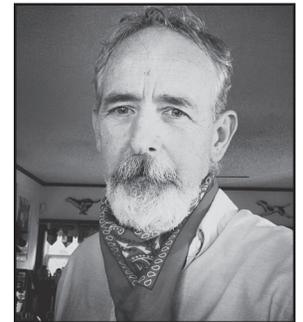
22nd TEACHER PREP DAY

25th MEMORIAL DAY



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Hello to all of you. I don't think I need to say how stressful these past weeks have been. I cannot fathom how weary and burnt out some of you must be from all the directives coming from the district re: distance learning. This is a far cry from the discussion that was had with members of the cabinet, and Chris Vargas, CSEA President in Dr. Hammond's office the last few days before schools were closed to protect students from the coronavirus. I was hopeful that day when Dr. Hammond talked about closing schools and having teachers provide learning opportunities for their students who could



do them. He was also concerned that day that teachers not be burdened, because he knew they were going home to be with their own families, during this pandemic. I was hopefully optimistic that this was going to be a time where teachers would find some comfort from their employer in knowing that they were being looked out for because of the uncertainty of this health crisis.

I know working conditions change between various "school sites" because of site administrators and their interpretations of what the teachers under their supervision should be doing. I am so appreciative of the principals who understand that teachers' moving their classroom home is not the easiest thing to do. I am glad that some principals are providing the flexibility and the leniency to teachers, and understand teachers are doing their very best to reach out to their students and establish contact with parents/guardians. My family of four lives in a 1,002 square foot house and I can't imagine teaching from that tiny dwelling. My hat's off to each and every teacher out there making the effort.

I know I sound like a broken record sometimes, maybe all the time, but you, our members need to know that because you are now out of the classroom, your contractual rights have now changed. Since you are all now displaced from your classrooms (your work environment) and now using some sort of distance learning application to reach out to your students and provide learning

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**During OPEN ENROLLMENT
Members can log back into
BenefitFocus to make changes
through May 8th**

OPEN ENROLLMENT – THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

By: MaryKay Scheid

As I'm sure you know, Open Enrollment began on Monday, April 13, 2020. The Open Enrollment window closes on May 8, 2020.

All employees, even temporary unit members who are not certain they will be returning next year, are asked to log in to select benefits options. If you do not select your benefits, you will be automatically rolled over into the same plans you carried last year. The benefits plan year ends on June 30, and your new selections are effective July 1. You can review and update your benefit selections on the online platform by clicking this link: <https://omsdbenefits.hrintouch.com>.

Temporary employees who are not placed in a position for the 2020/2021 school year prior to June 30 will lose coverage effective July 1. Still, those employees are encouraged to participate in the Open Enrollment process because benefits elections can have an impact on your coverage options in the future. Temporary employees are entitled to purchase "COBRA" coverage when their coverage ends, and whatever choice was made during the Open Enrollment period is the only option that will be available through COBRA. If you think you may be interested in purchasing continued coverage through COBRA, be sure to select the plan that best suits your needs; that is the only plan that will be offered. You do not need to worry about being billed for coverage. You have 90 days to decide if you want to purchase COBRA coverage, retroactive to July 1.

A second issue with temporary teachers is that any temporary teacher invited to return to OMSD is not considered a new hire. If you are not yet placed but a position becomes available in July, you might be invited to accept the position as a returning employee. Because you would be a returning employee, you would not be eligible to choose a benefits package at that time. Again, you need not worry about being billed for coverage during the months that you are not employed.

Once Open Enrollment is over you will not be able to make any changes to your plan unless you have a qualifying life event. Qualifying life events are defined by the federal government and include such things as: the birth of a child, marriage, divorce, or a child reaching the age of 26.

Those who opt out of benefits because they are covered through a spouse can submit their proof of insurance to the benefits department through May 8, 2020 to omsdbenefits@omsd.net in order to receive a cash in lieu benefit of \$1500.

The benefits allocation presented in our tentative agreement fully covers the employee for medical, dental, and vision for BlueShield

TRIO and Kaiser HMO Option 2 plans. Benefits monies not used to purchase coverage can be used to purchase additional voluntary benefits or can be returned to you as taxable income. You will have out-of-pocket costs if you opt for two-party or family coverage. All out-of-pocket medical costs are taken pre-tax and reduce your taxable income.

BenefitFocus, our online benefits platform, is available 24/7. Support is only a phone call away. If you need help navigating the process, call the Benefits Team at 909-418-6456 or 909-418-6459 to schedule a phone appointment.

There are several exciting enhancements to the Blue Shield TRIO plan. Doctors are making house calls again through a program entitled "Heal." They are offering a \$0 copay for the first visit. Virtual doctor's appointments through Teledoc are also available with a \$0 copay. A program called Healthy Savings provides discounts on healthy foods at major grocery chains like Albertsons and Safeway.

Even with excellent health insurance, you will have out-of-pocket costs associated with your healthcare. You can minimize the sting of patient copays for you and your dependents by sheltering up to \$2750 in a flexible spending account for health care (there are flexible spending accounts for child care costs as well, see pg. 17 of the 2020-2021 Employee Benefits Study Guide).

The money you set aside to cover the health care costs not covered by your plan will be deducted 10th-ly and will not be taxed. You save receipts for things like office visits, prescriptions, hearing aids, chiropractic care, prescription eyeglasses, and braces. You can even be reimbursed for mileage for trips to the doctor. Once you submit your qualified receipts, you will be reimbursed. One of the best things about the flexible spending account is that money can be available to you BEFORE it has been deducted from your paycheck. You may submit for reimbursement after American Fidelity receives the first deposit on October 1. So, if you have reimbursable medical expenses of \$1000 in September or October, you can receive that entire amount after October 15 but before you have \$1000 deposited in your flexible spending account. In addition, you can save \$250-\$700 on your tax bill –depending upon your tax bracket.

The money you agree to contribute to your Flexible Spending (125) plan MUST be spent on medical expenses incurred during the plan year, September 1, 2020 – August 30, 2021, or it may be forfeited. You have 90 days after the plan year ends to submit

receipts, and up to \$500 of unused funds may be rolled over into the next plan year. Because of the forfeiture rule, it is best to estimate your medical expenses conservatively.

If you intend to participate in a Flexible Spending plan, YOU MUST REENROLL every year. While there is an opportunity to enroll in Flexible Spending during Open Enrollment, you don't have to make a final decision until August. Payroll will host 2 make-up days in August. After those days, you may not enroll until the following year. To enroll during the Open Enrollment window, you must schedule a phone call with an American Fidelity representative.

American Fidelity also offers voluntary products, like Cancer and Disability Insurance. The cost for these products is automatically deducted from your paycheck. If you do not update your preferences, your voluntary products will automatically roll over. While American

Fidelity is able to sell voluntary products at any point during the year, you are only able to unsubscribe from pre-taxed products during the Open Enrollment window (employees may drop disability and life insurance plans during the year; but products like cancer and accident insurance can only be dropped/changed during Open Enrollment since they are pre-taxed products). If you would like to update your voluntary American Fidelity products, please contact them directly at 800 365-9180 | 951 600-0122 to schedule a phone appointment or click the following link: <https://benefits.americanfidelity.com/ontario-montclair-school-district>.

Even if you've already logged on and made your selections, employees can log back into BenefitFocus to make changes to benefits through May 8th. 🍏

Message from President Continued from Page 1

opportunities, there is no contract language that pertains to these working conditions.

Which brings us to the COVID-19 MOU and the Tentative Agreement. I am grateful for all those reps out there who kept on emailing me about the MOU, and its release to members. I know how important these items are to members, but these documents do take time to finalize. No one wanted that MOU out there more than me. But negotiating is also now done through distance platforms, and getting all the required parties assembled in front of their cell phones and laptops is not as easy as one would think. The COVID MOU I hope provides some clarity. Please read through it carefully and do not read it before you go to bed. Contract language is known to put one to sleep. Some of you will be pleased to know in the section Equipment and Support, members can be reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses for costs incurred due to working from home.

As far as the Tentative Agreement, I know many of you will be disappointed as I was. I can unequivocally vouch for the bargaining unit team and the hours they put in planning and being out of the classroom working hard to try and get the best deal possible for all our members. Unfortunately, during the bargaining process, the coronavirus gained momentum and forced the district to start making critical decisions that affected the budget. I am not going to sit here and tell you that the district was justified in their very minimal counteroffers. Truth is the district does have a healthy reserve. However, we do not know what the future holds after the coronavirus scales down. We know what kind of impact it has already had on business in and around Ontario. Knowing the possibility of economic downturn which in turn will impact local and state taxes, there is a

very good chance that public education will be severely under-funded the next few years. This could also affect class size and possible reductions in force.

This is why I am often talking about teachers being ever cognizant about how those local, state and federal tax dollars are apportioned locally in our schools. This money should be as close to the classroom as possible. When the economy is good, we have a tendency to take for granted that every year we are going to get an increase, and maybe a substantial one at that. I am suspecting that we are going to fall on lean times, and we may be fighting more for our students' supplies and materials, than a bump in our salaries next year. This money is better spent on and for students, rather than on district administration.

John Egan, OMTA President



Red for Ed T-shirts for Sale

We have available a few Red for Ed T-shirts at the OMTA office. They feature on the front of a red t-shirt the California Teachers Association logo with the state of California outline.

On the back is a nicely-sized logo of the Ontario-Montclair Teachers Association. I currently have these sizes in office:

1 Small, 6 Medium, 5 Large, 3 XL.

I will order more shirts depending on the amount of requests for shirts.

- **Size range** in Adult sizes: Small to 3X
- **Prices:** Small to XL – \$18 | 2X and 3X – \$20

SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES FIRST INITIATIVE

The Schools & Communities First Initiative received 1.7 million signed petitions to get it onto the ballot for the upcoming November elections. I want to thank those of you who signed the petition to get this important piece of legislation onto the ballot. Yes, this is an amendment to Proposition 13. However, the idea that many believe that property taxes will be raised is a misnomer. This has been carefully vetted, and it only increases taxes on large multi-billion-dollar corporations. I agree that CTA has its faults, but it has never gone off course on its legislative action to increase funding for public education. Proposition 98 in 1988, Proposition 30 in 2012 and 2018, and Prop 38 in 2018 are all examples of CTA being at the forefront of making sure that all of California's schools receive sufficient funding. Still, California with the 5th largest economy on the planet, is ranked 38th in funding its schools in the United States. Already there are attack ads funded by corporations with deep pockets who wish to keep their property taxes at 1978 rates. In light of the recent coronavirus pandemic, there is expected a severe economic downturn, which will impact the funding of our schools. The Schools & Communities First Initiative just might be the answer to keeping our schools financially viable. 🍏

SPECIAL EDUCATION MEETING

In the February Advocate I placed an article that was hoping to form a Special Education Committee. After talking to a few folks that were interested in this possibility, I wanted to make it more clear as to what the purpose of this group is. It would not be a formal committee where expectations were that the same people were to show up every meeting. However, participants could if they chose to, if they found it valuable to them. This group would also be open to general education teachers as well who have an interest in special education concerns. I wanted to set aside a regular time where I would be available for an hour or two in the afternoon for special education teachers to share concerns. It would continue to inform me, so that I can in turn inform the SPED department. I have set aside May 7th at 3:15 PM for the initial meeting via Zoom. I know this will be the last meeting for this school year, but this is something I do wish to continue into the upcoming academic year. It would be good to hear about this past year, and what we can work on for next year. 🍏

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2nd Vice President: Monica Lite
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Treasurer: Daniel Salcido

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Corona: Julie Rafeedie
DeAnza: Inaki Bizkarra
Del Norte: Natalie Cantos
Edison: Diana Eberle
El Camino: Susie Imrich/Sandi Missick
Elderberry: Kevin Dixon, Dennis Kelly
Euclid: Wendy Beltran
Hawthorne: Monique Gray, Joyce Johnson
Haynes: Robert Mariani, Cecil Malacarne

Howard: Kelly Pawley
Kingsley: Michelle Montes, Robert Paulak
Lehigh: Robin Carr, Jennifer Barringer
Lincoln: Holly Baca, Alice Mungia
Mariposa: Sendai Parker,
Dionne Treadway Contreras
Mission: Debby Hilak
Monte Vista: Jose China
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Moreno: John Ross
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Serrano: Ana Moreno, Curt Albers
Sultana: Breanna Jones, Terri Tucker

Vernon: Regina Kranzer, Rosa Whitton
Vina Danks: Noe Ortiz, Glenn Wong
Vineyard: Nila Delise, Brett Waters
Vista Grande: Annmarie DeHerrera
Wiltsey: Kim Hunter, Brad Joplin
Counselors/Orcs: VACANT
Early Ed/Pre-School: Alison Guadalupe
HFB/Hardy Center: Jeff Quick
Health/Nurse: Dana Smith
Music: Daniel Salcido
PE/APE: Daryl Durston
Special Ed: Aurora Mejico
Speech: Ulla Tang Larsen