



ADVOCATE

Ontario-Montclair Teachers Association

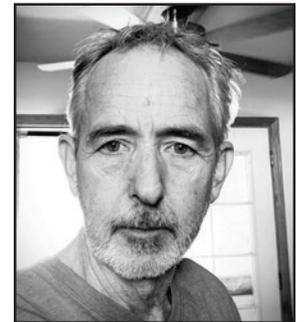
August 2020

IMPORTANT DATES SEPTEMBER

- 14th OMTA EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
- 17th OMSD BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
- 28th OMTA REP COUNCIL MEETING

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Welcome back everyone. I hope everyone is doing as well as could be during these stressful and challenging times. I am hopeful everyone is teaching online from the location they want to teach from at this point in time. After the fourteen-day quarantine of Corona Elementary, it was good to see that the District changed its mind regarding the directive requiring some of our unit members to teach from school sites. I am pretty sure that this decision was prompted by those of you who took the time, either individually or as a team, to voice your opinions and concerns about the safety issues as well as the inequity of having teachers report to work at school to teach online. I do not believe there is any evidence that suggests there are advantages to teaching online from school versus teaching from home, provided you have the materials you need.



Regardless, I do not think the District would have made this decision without you, our members, acting proactively and contacting the board members in this regard. This was basic activism at its best. Some of you took this upon your own, some of you I did prompt to write a note to the board. Some of you organized to come up with a collective letter, like the groups at Sultana and Central Language Academy. If I didn't mention any other groups that decided to take up action on your own behalf I apologize. Regardless, this is your "victory", because I know how much work I put in, trying to change minds over at D Street, and they wouldn't budge. I am certain the District will say that they made this choice because they chose to, without impetus of our members input. I do get emails and calls, asking me what I am going to do; asking me why we are not doing what Los Angeles Unified School District does. As much as I wish I could wave my hand and be "the union", I am not. I am the president of this union, or association, as our title suggests. We are the union, all 1,000 plus members of us, who pay membership fees. You witness a semblance of that power when we collectively meet at school board meetings. Believe me, when you and your school don't show up, there is a difference among that board and that cabinet that sit there. There are a select few of you that show up religiously to school board meetings. I know who you are, and I thank you.

As far as the school board is concerned, I do have my questions. A couple of you were kind enough to let me know that when you sent your letters to the school board trustees that Assistant Superintendent, Hector Macias answered your letter with the response, "I am designated by Dr. Hammond to respond on behalf of the Board of Trustees to acknowledge receipt of you concern. This matter will be reviewed and shared with the Board." School board trustees are accountable to those they serve: the students and their parents, as well they should be interested in teachers' thoughts regarding the climate within district schools and classrooms. School board trustees are a separate and distinct entity, that directs the superintendent and district to provide public education.

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I am concerned because school board members are supposed to be available to teachers, and more importantly, community members. School board members should be able to respond to questions put to them without a district cabinet member interceding. This would be one of the many ways a school board trustee would/could get information to inform the superintendent and district to take action. Also, when I last accessed the District website, the trustees had no contact information listed. This is thought provoking, as at one time the contact information was available.

I believe that our members do not realize the command that they “collectively” wield. Los Angeles Unified does. They saw it firsthand when they went on strike January 14th, 2019. And now they throw their weight around a bit. They worked for years to build that coalition by the way. Now, I’m not suggesting that we need to strike, or that we need to mobilize, but we should consider the numbers we do have. We have 1,040 members. 1,040 people. Now consider the number of people down at the District office. It’s hard to ascertain who is “District” at the District Office, the people pulling the strings so to speak. I know we have classified folks working at the District Office as well as certificated members as well. Simply put, there is more of us than them. Now, I am all for playing nice and having an even playing field, but things are not always that even keeled in the land of OMSD. It would be nice to know

that if things were to come to a head that we could count on half of our membership to show up to defend our collective bargaining agreement or advocating for safe working conditions if need be. When it comes to bargaining, numbers do matter.

My job as president is to represent our membership, and my job is also to teach. I know some do not like the idea that we are a labor organization. Some get the idea that when “labor organization” is mentioned, they picture angry people with signs, and people yelling, protesting. I know I still do. I feel the need to teach a little bit about how we do our work because I want to move this association forward, and you will need another president in less than two years. We all should want an informed membership in order to cull an informed leadership. I am very proud to say that we have more members taking pen to paper and either getting up at the lectern to speak at board meetings or emailing their thoughts to be read at the virtual board meetings. A lot of what we have been able to accomplish is because of you and your willingness to show up. When we can identify those common issues that impact our work environment (student behavior, safety conditions, etc.), or our way of life (salary and benefits, hours of work, etc.), we need to be willing to rally together and support one another to make the changes we, and our students deserve. 🍏

TWO IMPORTANT ITEMS TO DISCUSS

Recently two important items have come up that needed to be addressed. One issue that we recently were able to come to a mutual decision with the District was the assessing of Special Education students by their respective teachers, be it Resource Specialists, Special Day Class teachers, Speech and Language Pathologists, etc. The recent advent of coronavirus directly put assessments on a hold pattern for a time. However, those assessments are what drives IEPs and instruction, and assessment needs to take place because of federal guidelines. At issue was whether to assess online or in-person. Because of COVID, you can probably guess what many teachers wanted. Just like our Gen Ed teachers, teachers wanted choice. As the president of our association I was not willing to agree to have all teachers have to do in-person assessments. I wanted choice. I am very grateful, that Dr. Hughes-Hunter and Dr. Ortiz were willing to agree to choice and allow those teachers who were ready to assess students at school site or the Linda Vista assessment center to do so, and allow those teachers who are still not comfortable with assessing to do so when Hybrid Learning begins when COVID lifts in our county.

Second is the issue of Independent Study. I am still awaiting a response from the District on this matter. Initially the District offered three separate learning models to parents and their students before coming back to school for the 2020-21 academic year. Unfortunately,

when the school year rolled out, many teachers found themselves performing distance learning and independent study. This is not right. The District should understand the amount of work a teacher is undertaking performing distance learning whether from home or from school site. It takes time for teachers to create lesson plans for students for online learning and also adapt those lessons to an online platform. Not to mention the amount of contacts between parents and students trying to get their families acclimated to this new learning, and the upcoming student attendance and participation logs from the California Department of Education. *Then* a teacher is saddled with Independent Study? If this were a two-week plan because the student was going on a leave of absence due to emergency, as Independent Study was initially designed, that is one thing. However, the idea of Independent Study as a year-long plan for one student takes a lot of work because the teachers is designing an individual curriculum tailored to the needs of the student. This time also takes away from the time the teacher would be devoting to their online class. The District should either hire a teacher just to manage a classroom of Independent Study students or give those teachers a healthy stipend. Regardless, we are taking a healthy look at this because this version of “Independent Study” is a change of work conditions for those teachers being asked to do this task and can possibly be a grievance. 🍏

SCHOOL BOARDS

This is going to be an ongoing article regarding school boards. I will be virtually attending neighboring school boards to see how they conduct business especially during this coronavirus outbreak, and to compare with our own school board meetings, which has a limited amount of dialogue between trustees. This article will be spotlighting Pomona Unified and Fontana Unified school board meetings. Also, interesting to note the trustees for both school boards have their email addresses, on the school board profile page. Fontana Trustees also list phone numbers. Contact info is something we do not see on the Ontario-Montclair Trustees web page.

Pomona's Trustees are President Adrienne Konigar-Macklin, Vice President Andrew Wong, Frank Guzman, Roberto Perlman, and Jason Rothman. Pomona Unified School District's Board Meeting was an interesting listen. A little different was their Superintendent Richard Martinez was able to give an opening statement that was indicative of the current pandemic and the challenges of distance learning after performing a good number of pulls from the meeting agenda. He also commended the Inner West Community Foundation scholarship winners.

Dorothy Kim, Associated Pomona Teachers President, gave a long thoughtful talk about collaboration, in reference to how PUSD handled the MOU for distance learning and the leak of language from bargaining that created confusion. She also expressed disappointment with Superintendent Richard Martinez's comments at a new teacher orientation regarding bringing K-3 teachers back sooner because younger learners do not carry the virus, and not discussing this new idea with APT leadership. President Kim then talked about why she chose to use general statements and not the naming of principals, so as to make sure that everyone "hears the message". Then she called out principals who decided they did not need to follow the MOU believing it was written solely by APT, and were willing to take a slap on the wrist from the union. Kim then proceeded to say, "This year will be different, I will be calling out principals publicly if disrespectful comments continue to occur". Interestingly enough none of the trustees shared any thoughts regarding President Kim's remarks.

Public comments were represented by a good number of community members (over 15) that expressed an interest in ethnic studies to be implemented in grades K thru 12, with ethnic studies being a graduation requirement for high school. They also all reaffirmed that the curriculum needs to reflect the community. The other community item was extending the vote for school board to youth and non-citizens, and the notion that if this didn't happen the board would be voted out.

Fontana's Trustees are: President Jason O'Brien, Vice President Marcelino Serna, Peter Garcia, Mary Sandoval, and Adam Perez.

Fontana Unified School District's Superintendent Randal Bassett started the meeting talking about schools opening online on August 24th with the theme "Everybody Counts" and talked about being highlighted several times on NBC Live re: Fontana's implementation on online learning. Superintendent Bassett talked openly about board policies that were up for first reading and discussed recent purchases of Discovery Education and the hiring of Daniel Walker as a consultant. All business items were opened for discussion by President O'Brien among the trustees.

When it came to the selection and creation of two committees, one for celebrating diversity, and the other regarding police brutality and inequality, there was easily a good forty minutes of open discussion between all the trustees. The diversity committee discussion mainly focused on the diversity of the committee and if there was enough ethnic diversity, faith-based diversity, and business diversity. This was tabled for a later date. The police brutality committee discussion was around having an acting, and a former police chief on the committee. Trustee Perez was openly against having two and cited some previous concerns about the former police chief. Ultimately, they had a vote that was 3-2 in favor of having both chiefs on the committee.

This led to the conclusion of the ninety-plus minute meeting and closing comments from the Trustees. The most prominent comment came from Trustee Serna who opened with, "Discourse is a beautiful thing", before the trustees made their general comments.. 🍏

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

Your Role in the Union

The decision you have to make, as an individual represented by a union, is really no different from your obligations as a member of society. You can choose not to keep informed about union issues and not to participate in the daily life of the union. The, just as with what happens in the larger society, you can gripe about who's running the union and the decisions they make. But there is an alternative, of course: since your union is nothing more than a collection of individual members, you can choose to become involved, and in so doing shape what your union is and what it does.

So if you want to "own" your union and to share in the members' responsibility of running it, what can you do?

- Educate Yourself
- Be a Set of "Eyes and Ears"
- Show Solidarity
- Be a Union Emissary
- Get Involved

The union is you and your co-workers; you have it within your power to make you union an ever-more-effective fighter for workplace rights and justice.

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HFB/Hardy Center: Jeff Quick
Health/Nurse: Dana Smith
Music: Daniel Salcido
PE/APE: Daryl Durston
Special Ed: Aurora Mejico
Speech: Ulla Tang Larsen