



ADVOCATE

Ontario-Montclair Teachers Association

October 2020



IMPORTANT DATES NOVEMBER

5th OMSD BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

9th OMTA EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

11th VETERANS DAY
NO SCHOOL

19th OMSD BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

13rd - 27th
THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
NO SCHOOL

30th OMTA REP COUNCIL MEETING



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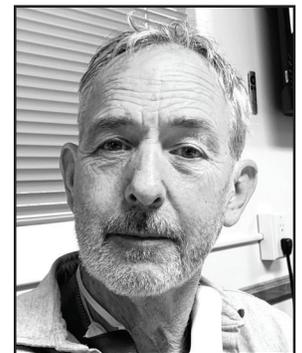
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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

We had interesting discussion these past weeks in the office with teachers coming in to vote for the state council representative position. It all stemmed back to the beginning of this COVID nightmare we are currently living in. We closed down schools in March and made do with trying to teach students with packets as we all hunkered down at home to try and figure out how to teach via distance learning. We made it through summer “vacation” which seemed little like a vacation because of how much we restricted ourselves from our normal goings-on during this impacted break from work.



As August rolled around, we were getting ready to return to teaching, and the expectations that we would be working/teaching from home. Then the Work from Home Agreement happened. Call me naïve, but my expectations were that teachers were going to be able to just come into their respective school sites, and pick up what they needed to do their jobs from home. But, no. The District apparently had this clear idea that teachers were to report to school in order to teach online from the classroom.

How disappointing is it that this District actually had you sign an initial agreement so that you could teach from home? We know this was not what the majority of Districts were doing around us. I think of the amount of time that the District took interviewing teachers on Zoom for a couple of weeks. I think of the emotional phone calls I conducted with veteran teachers who wished to work from home because of young children, older parents, or their own physical health, let alone some of the teachers who live a considerable distance from Ontario-Montclair. It made no sense to me to take the chance to leave home while this virus was still escalating locally to teach in a classroom devoid of children.

We are talking about adults who chose a livelihood around educating children. We are talking about professional adults who hold a variety of degrees, credentials, and licenses in order to educate children. We are not talking about teenagers working a menial job, that might skip out and not report to work because there is a concert they want to go to. How disappointing is it that this District did not trust you to do the job that you initially invested so much time and energy in order to do? I know many of you consider this to be your vocation, and not just a job.

Ironically, this is the District that tosses the term “family” around quite frequently during board meetings and discussions. The District can use this term all they want, but it makes me shake my head every time I hear it. If we were truly “family”, there would be more trust.

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Teachers would feel more respected. Teachers would feel better about instructional rounds and evaluations. Teachers' time would be more respected and not scheduled. Teachers would be heard. If by "family", they mean the District is the "parent", and the teachers and classified employees are "children", then I would agree with this idea. Because the District does treat teachers like subordinates. The idea that teachers need more professional development, more guidance, more training, is getting tiresome. This District has spent too much money on trainings and professional development through the years when it could have truly invested in its teachers.

During this pandemic, is the ongoing practice of "instructional rounds" and documentation being used by administrators to gauge teachers and the effectiveness of online instruction. Yes, administration should be in classrooms, but first and foremost to give support and constructive guidance during these times. The last thing that teachers need is the added stress of wondering if their practice is being questioned when we are still barely two months into online instruction. Respectfully, OMSD administrators do not have the experience of having to create and develop lessons for all curricular subjects (God bless elementary school teachers) explicitly for online instruction, and then have to on a day to day basis successfully and seamlessly deliver this instruction to a group of their students who may or may not be attending on a regular basis. All preconceived expectations and personal projections should be dutifully waived as soon as an online classroom is being visited. Then to add the expectations of providing asynchronous instruction for students, extra support for

students and maintaining relationships with parents, the attendance and participation piece from the CDE, conferences, staff meetings, professional development, et al... Forgive me, but the only thing I think a principal should be saying to their teachers is "Thank you". And this is not to paint any administrator in a bad light. I have not heard any ill will from teachers regarding their site administration. Just please understand that teachers days are explicable full. Fuller than they have ever been.

The discussions continued about student performance. Several teachers walked through our door to talk about how grades and assessments will be invalid during this time frame. Teachers talked about how since a student is not physically in a classroom, it is impossible to validate the learning that is going on. Teachers averred to parents off screen coaching their children in various ways, as well questioning if student work submitted back to them was the student's output, or the hands of another. It will not be until later when students return to the classroom, that we will be able truly gauge the effectiveness of online learning, and not at the expense of the teachers. The one thing that teachers cannot do, is transcend through the screen and truly verify student accountability. Most upper grade students have smartphones, and answers are only a Siri query away.

For teachers to be giving grades that they truly can't verify is unfair to the teachers and the students' parents. It is setting teachers up and the families they serve, for big disappointments down the line when those students do return to school, and have to acclimate back to the rigor of the classroom, and ultimately assessments. 🍏

OMSD SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

I want to thank those who have participated in writing to the school board this year to share your opinions and concerns with the board. School board meetings are still being held audibly on YouTube via the district link found on the OMSD homepage under the "Board of Trustees" heading. There are three school board meetings left in this year: November 5th and 19th, and December 17th. The December meeting is the Annual Organizational Board Meeting where they will undoubtedly elect Trustee Elvia Rivas, President again. The position of president used to be rotated among the trustees, but for some reason this practice has stopped. 🍏

RETURNING TO SCHOOL

California Labor Code § 6402 states that “no employer shall require or permit any employee to go or be in employment or place of employment which is not safe and healthful”. Further, (from CTA) any school that does not operate safely can become a vector for spreading the coronavirus and perpetuating a risk to public health.

Recently the Ontario-Montclair School District has had several instances recently of employees who have been in contact with people who have had positive results of coronavirus either at school or away from school sites. This is not an indictment of those employees. It makes sense however, in a school district that is as large as ours, that employees were bound to come down with the virus, especially now that the weather is starting to cool, and families and friends start to head indoors. Hindsight being 20/20 and all, if the school district initially directed all employees to work from home to deliver online instruction, as difficult as that might be for some of our employees, we could argue that transmissions would have been held more or less at bay.

There are no bad intentions at play here. We know the reasoning all comes down to providing the absolute best online instruction as possible for our students. Even so, we must now consider the aspects of moving forward with the advent of autumn and the influenza season soon upon us. The district has already started the opening of cohorts at various sites. Fortunately, very few OMTA members are not participating and those that are, are doing so because they chose to do so. It has recently been brought to the District’s attention that OMTA wants to open discussion before the addition of more cohorts and the added impact to bargaining unit members.

A recent article in the Los Angeles Times, talked about the challenges of opening schools safely. Both the California Teachers Association (CTA) and United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) have publicly stated that districts do not have the resources to provide the level of protection to bring teachers and students together in classrooms. Also, important to note is the apparent dissatisfaction of online learning as indicated in the poll conducted by Education Trust-West that saw an approval for online instruction of 57% in March 2020, dip to 35% recently. Important to note that low income parents are also more likely to find online learning as unsuccessful due to lack of support, connectivity issues, childcare issues, etc. We also know many parents are not ready to send their children back to school just yet.

As far as OMSD, The Association has been meeting weekly with the District to discuss the return to school for both teachers and students. This would initially involve three models:

- 1) Online Instruction as we currently know it. Though there is discussion on apportioning minutes synchronously and asynchronously.
- 2) Independent Study, which has been brought up for discussion, and will continue to be discussed due to the time infringement it has on those teachers that are also concurrently performing Online Instruction.
- 3) A Hybrid model where teachers would have half of a class either on a M/W and T/TH schedule, or an AM/PM schedule, both schedules with a weekly office day. There would be staggered class times so that it would negate the over congregation of students at the school sites. PPEs would involve masks and/or face-shields, hand sanitizer in every classroom, hand washing stations throughout school sites, clearly marked walkways and signage to help control and manage student movement. Our classified colleagues will be doing what they can to help classrooms stay sanitized between classes and maintain/sanitize all school facilities. Still, this may be not enough. With the CDC recently acknowledging that coronavirus can survive in the air and spread via airborne transmission, never has it been more important to make sure there is proper ventilation and air-flow in all classrooms when we do open up.

Bear in mind, this MOU is still being bargained and there are concerns on class sizes, class formations at school sites, safety protocols, etc. There are also concerns whether teachers will be doing solely one of the models listed above, or a combination of the models. Coming back to school, will involve a lot of relearning and reteaching, and getting used to a new teaching environment where our movements and habits need to be personally evaluated in order to guarantee everyone’s safety. 🍏



BE HEALTHY

As we head into flu season it is important for all of us to start following precautions more vigilantly again, as well as start taking care of ourselves physically. We need to make sure we take our vitamins and dietary supplements to help ward off those cold weather maladies. It is essential to know that you can have the flu and COVID at the same time. Taking care of your immune system and your gut are the best way to help ward off sickness as the temperatures drop. Lemon, ginger, turmeric, and cinnamon are just a few of the many food supplements that help the immune system. I know there are many more that I am leaving out.

One of the concoctions I actively use to reboot myself is I take a gel cap each of turmeric, cinnamon, and ginger. I open them up into a small bowl or cup. To that I add about a tablespoon of honey and mix until it becomes a paste, after that I will eat it. This has gotten me through many a cold and flu season. Your probiotics can be gotten either in the supplements aisle or in the grocery store. Yogurt, sauerkraut, kimchee, and other fermented foods will all aid in gut health. Vitamin D is also very important to your health. And, with of the amount of work and duress you are under, make sure to make time for yourself. As well, enough cannot be said about getting the proper rest and sleep you need for your body to recuperate from your busy days.

I have to add the importance of those common practices we will all need to continue through the impending flu season: washing

your hands and wearing a mask. As I alluded to in another article in this Advocate, the virus is being brought onto campuses, and our colleagues are being sent home for their and your safety. I know we all miss our friends and colleagues on campus. But we need to be vigilant in not congregating in staff lunchrooms without masks on. Masks are not political statements. Yes, some may not like wearing a mask, maybe even not believe in them. However, why would one take a chance on possibly infecting a colleague or neighbor by not wearing one. It is the conscientious thing to do during these times. Remember that wearing the mask is not about protecting you, it is about protecting the other person. Thank you and stay safe. 🍏

Red for Ed T-shirts for Sale

A new batch of Red for Ed T-shirts have been delivered to the OMTA office. They sport the CTA logo “outlined” by the state of California on the front of the shirt, and the OMTA logo on the back.

We have a supply of:

5-Medium, 7-Large, 8-XL, 5-2X, and 5-3X.

Prices: \$18 for small to XL | \$20 for 2X and 3X

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president@myomta.org

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Elections Chair: Sendai Parker

Office Manager: Cindy Newey
officemanager@myomta.org

Advocate Design: Dorreen Petersen Davis

OMTA Office

417 West “E” Street • Ontario, CA 91762

Tel: (909) 986-2414 • Fax: (909) 983-0585

OMTA REPRESENTATIVES

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