From the President's Desk

First, I want to thank all of teachers (and their spouses) that stayed past the employees awards ceremonies that took place at the last board meeting on April 18th, to listen to both myself, and Chris Vargas, President of CSEA, talk about the needs of our students and employees of Ontario–Montclair School District. Despite the majority of the audience leaving to probably enjoy a celebratory dinner after the awards presentations, a group of nearly eighty interested people, (mostly Ontario–Montclair Teachers Association members) heard me talk about the need to support teachers. I mostly addressed the need to support teachers by providing the assistance needed to allow us to do the job we initially signed up for: teaching our students without the daily disturbances many of our teachers face every single day.

But as is the norm in this district, at the end of the evening, Superintendent Dr. James Hammond had the last word. He agreed we have students that need special attention and disrupt learning environments in OMSD classrooms. He also claims that the district has to save money to pay down the Cal STRS and Cal PERS liabilities stemming from teachers’ retirement pensions. Dr. Hammond and Phil Hillman, CFO, continue to downplay Governor Newsom’s generous proposal to support public education by using surplus money from the General Fund to pay $3 billion of California school districts’ rising obligations to CalSTRS, as well as providing extra funding to Early Childhood Education and Special Education. The district hangs their hat every year on the CalSTRS liability, but again, when there is a distinct possibility that some financial gain and relief may be in store for OMSD, they continue to plead the district needs to be cautious.

Let’s talk about being cautious with money: Looking on Ed Data [https://www.ed-data.org/](https://www.ed-data.org/), one can find some interesting information about school districts all through the state. This site brought to light data regarding the ratio of administrators per student. Now bear in mind these number reflect 2016–17, but I’m willing to bet the numbers have not changed much. Ontario–Montclair’s ratio of students per administrator (according to ED Data) is 157.8 students to one administrator. Other San Bernardino County School Districts read thusly: Alta Loma (315 students to 1); Central (298 to 1); Chaffey Joint Union (388 to 1); Chino Valley (276 to 1); Colton (266 to 1); Cucamonga (252 to 1); Etiwanda (373 to 1); Fontana (294 to 1); Mountain View (284 to 1); Redlands (331 to 1); Rialto (286 to 1); San Bernardino (164 to 1); Upland (380 to 1). Other neighboring school districts: Azusa (204 to 1); Bonita (365 to 1); Covina Valley (285 to 1); Hacienda La Puente (273 to 1); Pomona (209 to 1); Rowland (237 to 1); interestingly enough, Los Angeles Unified being as big as it is, has 219 administrators per student. One can see that Ontario–Montclair has the highest ratio of administrators per student.

Continued on Back Page
Negotiations is a process. It’s long and complicated and if you haven’t been at the bargaining table, you really need to talk to those who have been. It’s frustrating and full of disagreements on the way to what often seems like too few agreements. Nothing is final until a Tentative Agreement is ratified by our membership, or until a Memorandum Of Understanding is signed by a representative of OMTA and OMSD. But there is much that happens long before either of those two options comes about.

While neither ‘side’ gets all that it hopes for, neither side should have to give in to all the other’s demands either. That is what it means to negotiate. Both sides need to work at seeing things from the other’s perspective, and compromise on issues when necessary. But also, in the case of education, everyone at the table should be working toward what’s best for the students. Unfortunately, as in so many things, different sides see what’s best for the students from different perspectives.

Perspective often colors the way one sees everything.

When it comes to negotiating our contract, OMTA brings to the table the perspectives of our members. Whether it be Kindergarten minutes, SpEd caseload, nurses, counselors, or TOA hours, elementary and middle school behavior issues, or assessments (just to name a few items we’ve discussed), we work to solve our members’ problems, problems that arise over the years, and through the mandates coming to our jobs from government and from the district.

Our members feel the crunch of these mandates. We have been told what to do and how to do it over the years and very few of us feel our perspectives have been honored by district administration. We have been expected to use most of our non-student time for meetings, requiring more and more of our non-contract time to be used for preparing for our students.

Assessments, behaviors, lessons, meetings, and so many other things have been brought to OMTA, and we have in turn taken it to negotiations. However, there are 9 OMTA members on the Negotiations team. There are 10 OMTA board members. There are about 60 reps on Rep Council. That is a small percentage of our group of 1100. We are repeatedly told that the concerns we bring are from just a small group of teachers, that most people don’t feel the same way. Nearly 500 people completed the bargaining survey sent out in the fall.

If you want the district administration to know how you feel, and we need you to let them know, please join us at the board meetings. Seeing is believing.

After all, who knows better than we do how to manage our classrooms and inspire our students? And inspiring our students to learn, to do more than pass tests, is one of our most important goals. That is the perspective we carry to the table.

The district management is working to keep us fiscally solvent, academically relevant, and competitive in the modern world that is Public Education. Though perhaps not part of our daily focus, we must acknowledge these are also important goals.

‘Shouldn’t the work we all do make progress toward each of these goals?’ You would think so. But so often we don’t agree on the way to achieve goals even when they are the same. It’s that perspective thing again.

We sometimes get bogged down in our own worlds and forget we all share so many of the same responsibilities. We can be distracted by differences across grade levels and through our various job descriptions even within our group of 1100. We even sometimes compare our duties with our colleagues and feel no one else can possibly have as much to do as we do. Sometimes we (as colleagues who should have each other’s backs) judge more than we ought to; we choose to see the differences more than what holds us together. But if we do this we become fragmented, and we lose.

United we stand, divided we fall.

Union: 1) the action or fact of joining or being joined, especially in a political context; 2) a state of harmony or agreement; 3) a club, society, or association formed by people with a common interest or purpose. We are all these things, at least more often that we aren’t.

OMSD is a very large district. Outside of Los Angeles and San Francisco, we are among the largest districts in the state. We have approximately 1100 certificated employees in OMSD.

1100 people is huge. If we could get past what differentiates us from one another and focus on what we have in common, we would be strong enough to get our message across.

#StrongerTogether
ARTICLE VIII - HOURS OF WORK

A. Minimum School-Based Assignment: The District recognizes that the varying nature of a unit member’s day-to-day professional responsibilities does not lend itself to a day of rigidly established length. The minimum school-based assignment hours shall be six and three quarter hours (6 ¾) exclusive of the unit member’s regular lunch period.

Weekly instructional minutes will not exceed:
Elementary: TK/Kindergarten = 1125 weekly instructional minutes

H. Transitional/Kindergarten Share Time:
Unit members teaching transitional kindergarten/kindergarten classes will work sixty (60) minutes each day with other transitional/kindergarten teachers or transitional kindergarten/kindergarten students (share time). When there is an even number of AM and PM teachers, the time will be provided to support instruction in their partner’s classroom.

If there is an odd number of transitional kindergarten/kindergarten teachers or all of the transitional kindergarten/kindergarten classes are scheduled in the AM, teachers will be expected to collaboratively develop a plan to provide equal support to each other.

Alternatively, the transitional kindergarten/kindergarten teachers may develop a plan to support instruction of students in other primary grades, subject to the approval of the Association and District.

ARTICLE X - CLASS SIZE

A. Pupil/Teacher Ratios: The District shall meet the following pupil-teacher class maximums, subject to possible constraints such as staff availability and classroom space:

1. Transitional/Kindergarten Goals: 26 pupils per class average per school, with the maximum 27.

In light of the District’s move to transitioning back to Traditional Kindergarten, it is important to know that there is still the possibility that school sites can develop an MOU with the approval of the Kindergarten team and OMTA to modify the Kindergarten schedule to meet the needs of the school and the families.

If Kindergarten teachers are approached by their site administrators about modifying the Kindergarten daily schedule, the Kindergarten team needs to make sure that they are included in the discussion, as well as OMTA. Any time an MOU is initiated, all language therein becomes bargainable. This means number of students, materials, aides, etc.
Message from President Continued from Page 1

Why do I bring this up? Administrators cost money. The question is what do these administrators do? I’ll let you decide that. But I would gladly trade an administrator or two, for some counselors, or behavioral therapists, etc. In case you did not know, board members would have to vote to agree to hire and pay as many administrators as this district has. Some of the school board members had nothing to do with these hires, but some did.

So while we are on school board members, I want to bring to light a board bylaw that is on the Consent Calendar for Second Reading and Adoption at the May 2nd Board Meeting. It is AR 4231.1 and 4331.1 and it is regarding Staff Development for Personnel. It’s too long to present the whole thing. It states though, that the people eligible to receive reimbursement for “staff development” of up to $15,000 a year per employee ($40,000 district maximum per year) are: “Executive officers and employees in the following classifications... are eligible to receive funds: Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources; Assistant Superintendent, Learning and Teaching; Chief Business Official; Executive Assistant to the Superintendent; Human Resources Analyst–Certificated; Human Resources Analyst–Classified; Position Control Analyst; Senior Assistant to the Superintendent.”

If I were to list these people by name you would know who they are. I believe these people can afford to go to school on their own dime. Now in all fairness, I do not know how many of these people actually take advantage of this policy. But the idea that this district would reimburse district administrators for their college expenses, and that board members would even consider signing off on this, is unconscionable. Especially since the school district is worried about being fiscally "conservative”.

Some of the members of our school board even agreed to give a raise to OMSD’s Superintendent of Human Resources and Superintendent of Learning and Teaching just this last July of 2018. Just to remind you, last year teachers did not receive a raise, but received a 4% one-time increase that did not even count toward your CalSTRS retirement. Yet, the board thought highly enough of the above, to reward both of these administrators with an $11,000 raise that will impact their CalSTRS benefits.

So, with hindsight being 20/20, we really need to think closely about who, or whom, is making (as well as who has made) the decisions in this district, and whether they truly are for the betterment of the students and their families, as well as their communities, or for those making the decisions.