Hello OMTA!

This year began with a lot of leapfrogging priorities, but we’ve finally made it to the first edition of the Advocate! We hope to keep it regularly published, but anything can happen, so be patient with us.

I felt we needed to come up with words of inspiration about how great it is to be back on campus, and how productive, fun and inspiring this year will be. Everyone was excited, if somewhat nervous, to return to our classrooms. The kids were definitely excited to be back. It was a hopeful and energetic beginning. But once we got going and the realities of quarantining, Covid testing, possible exposures, notes home to parents, masks and social distancing intervened, a sort of dismay and depression set in for many among us. We were supposed to be getting “back to normal” but what we’re doing now is anything but normal.

We are not on Zoom all day; we have our students in our classrooms with us (most of the time) and there’s still the joy and motivation that accompanies that experience. But the traumas we’ve all lived through, children and adults, have taken a toll. Teaching and learning cannot be the same as they would have been without the relentless Covid procedures and protocols. And having good emotional and mental health is harder to come by than we realized it would be. Still, we’ve started together, and it’s a good first step. We are learning how to manage together, move forward, and do what we are learning we must do during this pandemic to support our healthy children and their families in our schools and communities.

Even with the hardships and the confusion there remains that joy every time we see a child begin to understand something we’re teaching. It’s a thrill to watch the lightbulbs come on and their eyes light up. And no matter how many times we need to teach the same lesson because of absences and short attention spans, we are here, for and with our students. It’s our job to show them the positive way to happiness and academics as we work together through this year.

This is not normal. I can’t use the term “the new normal” because, to me, it means we’ve accepted this as how it’s going to be. Believing this is only a temporary condition of our times makes it a bit easier to work through.

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Tracy Lee Taylor, President

I began my career as a school bus driver at OMSD in 1983. I drove buses for three years (I loved that job!) and during that time I performed classroom field work in partial fulfillment of the requirements for my teaching credential. I began as a full-time teacher in third grade in 1986. Since then I have taught in each of first - fifth grades. It is a remarkable privilege to teach, to help our students grow and learn about the world and their place in it. Over the last 12 years I have been honored to represent OMTA members in many ways. I have served locally as a Site Representative and association Vice President. At the state level I’ve worked as a State Council Representative for CTA. And on the national level I was elected to serve for 4 ½ years on the National Educational Association Board of Directors.

This year I shall be serving as your OMTA President. I’m looking forward to acting in this capacity and doing all I can for each of our constituents and for the greater Association to help make the year a safe, fulfilling and inspirational one for our members and our students.

Tisha Curry, Moreno - 1st Vice President/Service Center Rep

Hello members! The start of this year marks the beginning of my 24th year here in OMSD. I currently teach TK; there is nothing like seeing the sparkle in the eyes of my kids as they master a new skill or find new social successes during the year. Before this, I have taught all grades from 1st – 5th.

I am starting my first term as your OMTA 1st Vice President though I have held many other positions in OMTA leadership over the years. One of the committees I serve is the Teacher Initiated Funds, TIF. If there is an outside conference you wish to attend, you may be eligible to receive partial funding from TIF. Need help with TIF? Just ask!

Monica Lite, Vista Grande - 2nd Vice President/Service Center Rep

This is my 24th year in our district. I have taught Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade. I currently teach 2nd grade at Vista Grande. Early in my career, I spent my summers off teaching preschool. I am a mom of two boys. I have a senior in high school and a US Marine. Before I ran for Executive Board, I was the site rep at my current site. As your 2nd VP, I plan events such as the Teacher Appreciation Lunch and the Retirement Dinner for OMTA.

The “why”: Knowing your contract and rights is the key. Serving as a site rep, I worked to communicate with members and expedite their concerns to OMTA. It is these concerns that bring about changes in procedures and policy throughout the district.

Favorite Quote: “We are only as strong as we are united, as weak as we are divided.”-J.K. Rowling

MaryKay Scheid, Vernon - Treasurer/State Council Rep

Hi everyone! I’m a teacher with more than 20 years of classroom and leadership experience. Because I have several credentials (multiple subject, single subject English, and single subject History), I’ve taught a variety of courses and multiple grade levels. This year, I am teaching 8th grade History and running a Drama Club after school. These are my two favorite things to do, so I am looking forward to a great year.

I’ve served in a wide variety of leadership roles, at the local, regional, state, and national levels. For OMTA, I have served as a Service Center Rep, Vice President, and President. I am currently a State Council Delegate and your OMTA Treasurer. I also work with the bargaining team and the insurance committee. For our region (Service Center One), I have been the LGBTQ+ Advocacy Coordinator and Secretary. I am currently Treasurer for the Service Center. With CTA, I was recently elected to serve as the Vice Chair of the Retirement Committee for State Council. I have presented at multiple conferences as well. At the national level, I have been a delegate to the annual Representative Assembly for many years. I also currently serve as the Chair of the NEA National Board Certified Teacher Caucus.
I’ve lobbied in Sacramento and Washington D.C. on behalf of students and teachers. In fact, my first experience there was what motivated me to pursue leadership roles in OMTA. I got involved because I am passionate about creating a positive learning and working environment for everyone. I believe we need to advocate for ourselves and our students. I know that change requires help beyond our classroom doors. I believe strongly that to serve our students and support our colleagues, we need to advocate fiercely from the ground up.

Isabel Santos, Hawthorne - OMTA Secretary/Service Center Rep

I have taught in OMSD for 21 years. During those years, in addition to my teaching duties, I’ve served OMTA as a Site Rep and Service Center One Rep. I am currently the OMTA Secretary. Currently I serve students at Hawthorne Elementary as the Instructional Coach.

Wishing everyone an amazing school year! Let us now if you need anything - OMTA is here for you!

Glenn Wong, Vina Danks - Service Center Rep

I love teaching students! This is my 18th year in OMSD. My beloved wife, Denise, is also a teacher in the district. To me, education is all about the people. It’s about providing the best academic environment for each of our students to learn and develop his/her unlimited potential. Success in education also requires providing adequate resources for us, the educators, to service our unique students, and at the same time, provide for our own family.

My mission, as your OMTA Eboard member, is to lobby and fight for the good of our students and our educators.

Kim Hunter, Wiltsey - Service Center Rep

Hello and welcome to our 2021-2022 school year! This will be my 19th year teaching, and 16th year teaching Math and Science at Ray Wiltsey Middle School. I have had the privilege to have served as an OMTA site representative for 7 years, and on School Site Council for 4 years. I have been a Saturday School lead teacher for 4 years, and have taught SASA (summer academy for scholars and athletes) seven years.

As you can see, I am heavily invested in the OMSD community. I am passionate about children and their successful learning. I recognize that day in and day out it is those closest to the students who have the greatest impact on student success. We need to be valued, consulted and listened to.

Although I am so happy to be back on campus and in the classroom with our students, I suspect this will be a year of challenges, hurdles, and opportunities. As we forge forward, I believe it will be more important than ever to reach out, organize and support each other and our community of bargaining unit members (OMTA and CSEA) and families. I am wishing each and every one of you a successful and blessed school year.

We wish you all the best!

And sadly, after nearly two decades with OMTA, our wonderful front office manager, Cindy Newey, is leaving us. She agreed to stay over the summer and to begin this year since she’s had a new president and a new office manager to train. We will occasionally see her back here over this year as she shares her expertise with Jennifer. But those visits will be few, and we will certainly miss Cindy’s presence in our office. She will be moving out of state to be closer to family.

Be sure to say your goodbyes this week as her final day in the office is Friday, October 8th.
Our focus is to plan, learn, regroup and plan again to move forward together toward a normal that will be acceptable to all of us, hopefully without masks and constant testing and quarantine. Working together we can do this, with a sense of camaraderie and conclusion.

There is a brighter, happier future, though it may not be what we once expected when our careers in education began. But it will be better than what we endure now and we shall eventually work with our kids without the underlayment of anxiety that so many of us feel. It’s out there. We shall work together vaccinated or unvaccinated, tested weekly or not, with exposures and quarantines, and fragile emotional health. We’ll work together because we’ve been given the monumental opportunity to serve our nation and our community as teachers.

My name is Tracy (with a ‘y’) Taylor. I have worked in the Ontario Montclair School District since 1983. I started here as a school bus driver as I started working on classes for my credential. Following that I served as a substitute teacher for several months at the end of one year. At the beginning of the next year I began a long-term substitute teaching assignment working half days with Carolyn Rockwood who was then President of OMTA. During this time I completed my fieldwork and student teaching. This experience cemented my relationship to public school teaching; it was exciting and fun to be a part of my first school family.

I’ve taught in four schools in my years in OMSD. I started at Kingsley, moved to Vineyard, then to Ramona, and finally on to Haynes. In service to the Ontario-Montclair Teachers Association I now work with and for my colleagues to help make our kids’ learning environment and our working environment fun, inspiring, productive, safe, and healthy.

I am inspired by our strong and positive colleagues as we advocate for and support our kids. Please call our office 909-986-2414 or email me at president@myomta.org if you need help, have a question, or would like to share suggestions. I promise to listen and will do all I can to serve you. Let’s work together to move forward and get through this tough spot. I know we can do it. By my experience, we always have. ~Tracy