Welcome to 2022!

We’ve been hoping this year would be more welcoming than the last two turned out to be. Remember when they told us “two weeks”? When they sent the country home and everything was going to be fine in two weeks? It sure didn’t turn out that way; that was nearly two years ago. And, since then, we have gone through rounds of lockdowns, distance learning, mask wearing, the ever-changing CDC guidelines, closed restaurants… canceling that first NBA season and, closing Disneyland?!? When has any of this ever happened before?

Even so, we’ve all learned a lot in the last two years – much of it, things we never imagined we would need or want to know – about ourselves, our friends, our communities, and our world. And even though many things are open again, it’s certainly not back to normal.

Yet, even with all that’s happened, we must all believe it’s going to get better. (It kind of has to, doesn’t it?) Many of us continue to struggle with this kind of optimism. But we must be optimistic. We must come together to help our students learn, grow, and thrive. If anything, it’s been harder for them than it has for us. But they, in turn, help us. The relationship between teachers and students has changed with masks and other covid protocols, but it is still the most important part of what we do. Our kids need us; we need our kids.

The strain on everyone because of covid has conducted many of us nearly to the breaking point. We are in constant worry about contacts with others and contracting an illness that affects everyone a bit differently. No one knows who will get a severe case and who will be affected lightly. Living with constant anxiety doesn’t help our mental well-being. Worrying over keeping our families safe, running out of sick days, and keeping our students safe, among so many other things, is taking a toll. And every time we think it’s getting better, that we’re nearly done with this, there’s another surge.

But here we are, together, which makes obvious our resolve to work together; we’re going to get through it. We don’t all agree on what will make it better. We don’t even
all agree how much of a problem this is, or whether the problem is the virus or the mask-wearing and vaccines. Maybe we need to ‘agree to disagree’ on some of that. But ultimately we need to renew our common charge, and remember how much we need each other for this cause. Our relationships with one another, our colleagues, are essential to this end. In fact, our work relationships are more important than ever before. We need each other just like we need our kids. Helping one another out will get us through to May. Because we will get there, and we will have a break over summer. To really rest. To really do that self-care we hear so much about. But the ride will be just a bit easier if we show one another the resourcefulness, kindness, caring, and commitment that first brought each of us to the careers that brought us together today, tomorrow, and the essential and inevitable weeks of work ahead. Our students deserve that gift; the best of our better nature, on their behalf. And so do each of us.

~ Tracy

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Welcome Jennifer!

Since we are not having large meetings at our building right now, many of you have not had the opportunity to meet our new, in-person, office assistant, Jennifer Rentschler. She has been a great asset since she started back in August, and a friendly voice on the phone when you call in.

Her hours are:

- Monday from 9am – 5pm
- Tuesday – Friday from 1 – 5pm.

Stop by and say ‘Hello’ when you get a chance!

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Mask Mandates and Possible Vaccine Mandates

For a short time it seemed the risk of contracting Covid had lessened. However, the virus has not disappeared, a new variant emerged, it got worse, now it may be getting better, but there may be another new variant…. Omicron is said to be much more contagious than any of the previous strains have been, and who knows about what is coming.

A public health order issued in August from the state required that school districts verify vaccination status of employees or require a weekly covid test from any employees not presenting proof of vaccination. There is much speculation that the state will soon require vaccinations only, without the option of weekly testing.

The orders/mandates did not come from our school districts or our unions. The orders came from the state. The state then required employers to carry out the orders. Valid exemptions may still be accepted, but they are not defined yet.

If you wish to have some impact on the process, please contact your state legislator to let them know your beliefs/feelings on the vaccine and possible vaccination mandate. They are the decision-makers in this.

Use this website if you don’t know who your Assembly Member or State Senator is: https://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov

You just need to put in your address and it gives you the names of your representatives.

You can also contact them to encourage the new covid leave, or if it’s passed by the time this is published, you could contact your legislator with a “Thank You” for helping with the sick days.

It’s very important that you participate in the process if you want your voice to be heard. We don’t always get what we want even when we do speak out, but no one will know what you think if you don’t speak up.
Those who know me know that I have been campaigning to get the Willie Brown provision into contract for several years. I have been on my “crusade” for multiple reasons—first, I believe it is an option that would provide a benefit to Veteran teachers; second, I know it would allow experienced teachers to share their wisdom with our newer colleagues; and third, I can show it could result in savings (albeit small) to the District.

The CalSTRS Reduced Workload Program, which is also known as the Willie Brown Act, allows Veteran teachers to reduce their workload from full-time to part-time duties, defined as at least 50 percent of full time, for up to 10 years, while simultaneously earning a full year of STRS credit. This differs from the job share option often utilized by newer teachers with young children at home. In a typical job share, the part time teacher earns salary, benefits, AND STRS credit in accordance with the percentage of the contract year they work. So, if you job share 50/50 with another unit member, your STRS contribution for the year is .5 years—even though you earn another full year of service credit with the District.

Conversely, in the Reduced Workload Program, both your and your employer’s contributions to STRS will be paid based on the full-time earnable compensation, rather than your actual part-time earnings. Because contributions are based on your full-time earnable compensation, you will receive full-time service credit while working less than full time (but at least 50%). At retirement, your benefit will be calculated as if you continued to work full time, including the determination of your final compensation and service credit. Furthermore, the unit member on Reduced Workload would be allocated health benefits in accordance with those that are offered to full-time employees.

To be eligible for the program, you must:

- Be age 55 or older.
- Have at least 10 years of service credit with the District.
- Have been employed to perform creditable service on a full-time basis for five years immediately before entering the program.
- Have the agreement to reduce your workload in effect at the beginning of the school year.
- Enter into a contractual agreement with your employer to participate in the program for the entire school year.
- Enroll before the school year begins.

If you do not work at least 50% of the full year, your service credit for the year will be calculated on the actual time worked, so a 60/40 split would not be an option for two unit members who both wanted the Reduced Workload option (but a unit member could be employed without a job share partner to work 50% or more of the year). The Reduced Workload unit member could also lose the full year of STRS credit if they run out of sick time. For example, if you were employed 50 percent of full time and your pay was docked because you became ill after you had run out of sick leave, you would not have performed creditable service for at least 50% of full time that year. Therefore, for that year, you would not be eligible to participate and would earn service credit only for the time worked. Finally, if you retire before the end of the school year, your contract under the Reduced Workload Program will be revoked, and you will receive service credit only for the part-time service you actually performed.

How is this possible? And how can it save the District money? The Reduced Workload unit member earns only 50% of their salary BUT contributes to STRS based on the full-time salary equivalent. For the sake of mathematical simplicity, let’s assume the unit member earns $100,000 and works 50% of the year. Those who enrolled in STRS before December 31, 2012 currently contribute 10.25% of their salary to STRS. So, this unit member would earn only $50,000 for the year but would owe $10,250 to STRS (10.25% of the $100,000 salary). Similarly, the District would contribute to STRS as if the employee were earning the full-time salary. The savings to the District occurs because two higher-salaried Veteran employees working half time will be replaced by a newer unit member not as far along on the pay scale.

Because of the significant reduction in earnings for the Reduced Workload employee, it is unlikely that too many unit members would be interested in participating. But for those who have the desire and the means to move gradually into retirement, this option is ideal. How wonderful it would be for the District to offer its hard-working Veteran teachers this benefit! (If you think this is something you might have an interest in doing, please let the bargaining team and the District know!)
What Makes a UNION Strong?

By Tisha Curry

I started teaching in OMSD back in 1998. These were the “Old Days”, when probationary employees only had to sign one contract. I have never felt the fear that Spring brings to those who wonder where, or if, they will be teaching the next year. It pains me to know there are still colleagues who continue to have that fear. Getting teachers on the path to permanent status has always been a priority for OMTA. Across the county, there are other teachers who also have this fear, plus among many others.

Last month, I attended the National Council for Urban Educators conference in Hollywood. Educators from around the country came to present what was happening in their locals. One of the presentations really struck a chord with me. Leaders from Educators Austin shared their struggles living in a “right-to-work” state. In such states like Texas, employees are prohibited to collectively bargain a contract like we do. A few years ago, teachers lost their ability to have three-year contracts. This meant that all teachers in the Austin district were temporary one-year employees. With a new push for increases in for-profit charters within the district, many teachers’ fears about job security heightened.

Educators Austin may not have the ability to collectively bargain, but they do have the ability to organize. Together, the teachers worked with their school board and the community to make some important improvements to their schools. They have worked with the board to make sure safety was a top priority, above benchmarks and testing when they returned to campus this past year. With much organizing, Educators Austin was also able to reinstate their three-year contracts.

Unions do not just negotiate raises. We also work on improving the learning environment for our students and our own working conditions. I enjoy an uninterrupted lunch, unlike some colleagues in South Carolina who are required to eat with their students daily. My maternity leave was spent without any pressure of working from home. Remember, many of our brothers and sisters across this country don’t always have the ability to say ‘no’ without repercussions. Some of you know my love for a good list, and my union benefits list just keeps growing. Tomorrow, I will not take for granted my duty free lunch. I may not always take all 45 minutes to myself, but at least it’s my choice to make that copy or prep for the science activity.

Attending the NCUEA conference really reminded me how much I love being a member of the Ontario-Montclair Teachers’ Association. I am thankful for my union, and its leaders both past and present. But the one thing I took away from the teachers in Austin is that they have an amazing spirit. They worked together, as a team, to make things happen. Our union isn’t only me, Tracy, or any one person. WE are the Ontario-Montclair Teachers’ Association. WE make great things happen both in and out of our classrooms.

#strongertogether

Salary vs Benefits -

By Sendai Parker

What is the difference between an on-schedule salary increase and an increase in benefit dollars? The biggest difference between the two items is salary is reported to STRS (your retirement) and benefit dollars are not. The District is required to make payments on your behalf to STRS when your salary increases, but not so with an increase in benefits. While it might seem that an increase in benefits gives you more money in your check, because you don’t see a deduction on your pay warrant for medical, the fact is the net difference to your bottom line is the same. For example, a $1000 increase in benefit money can only be used for benefits. An increase of $1000 on-schedule can be used for food, gas, clothing, and if you need or desire, medical. If you use the money for medical, then the amount is deducted from your salary on a pre-tax basis. So the major difference between the two options is an increase in benefits helps you now, and an increase on-schedule helps you now and later.
Curriculum Café Opened For Learning

Interested in a new way to engage in professional learning?
Check out the Curriculum Café for professional learning videos that you can view at your leisure. You can access the videos two ways:

- **Curriculum Café Site**
- **YouTube Channel**

A table of contents can also be found here as an easier way to locate a topic you might be looking for.

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OMTA OFFICERS AND OPERATIONS

**President:** Tracy Taylor  
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**1st Vice President:** Tisha Curry

**2nd Vice President:** Monica Lite

**Secretary:** Isabel Santos

**Treasurer:** Mary Kay Scheid

CTA State Council Representatives  
Tracy Taylor, Mary Kay Scheid, Daniel Salcido

Service Center One Representatives  
Monica Lite, Tisha Curry, Isabel Santos, Glenn Wong, Kimberly Hunber

**Bargaining Chair:** Brad Joplin

**Elections Chair:** Sendai Parker

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**Berlyn:** Crystal Cook, Erik Kobulnick

**Bon View:** Debbie Roose Baker, Cindy Lopez Elwell

**Buena Vista:** Michael Hatter

**Central:** Susanna Casas, Marina Garcia

**Corona:** Julie Rafedie

**DeAnza:** VACANT

**Del Norte:** Natalie Cantos

**Edison:** Diana Eberle, VACANT

**El Camino:** Janean Rogers/Cindy Smith

**Elderberry:** Lisa Inga, John Packer

**Euclid:** Wendy Beltran, VACANT

**Hawthorne:** Janeth Salazar

**Haynes:** Robert Mariani, Paula Catbagan

**Howard:** Alecia Montgomery

**Kingsley:** Jesus Villa-Rojas, Robert Paulak

**Lehigh:** Robin Carr, Jennifer Barringer

**Lincoln:** Diego Sanabria, Tamara Lemmon

**Mariposa:** Sendai Parker, Dionne Treadway Contreras

**Mission:** Debby Hilak, Brittany Ortega

**Monte Vista:** Jose China

**Monteria:** Dawn Falkenberg, VACANT

**Moreno:** John Ross, VACANT

**Oaks:** Lisa Eckersley, Malinda Hurley

**Ramona:** Trudy Cowan, Lisa Dilonardo

**Serrano:** Ana Moreno, Glynnis Ellis

**Sultana:** Elsa DeShazo, Terri Tucker

**Vernon:** Regina Purcell, Rosa Whitton

Vina Danks: Noe Ortiz, VACANT

Vineyard: Nila Delise, Lesia Beasom

Vista Grande: Annmarie DeHerrera

Wiltsey: Kim Hunter, Brad Joplin

Counselors/Orcs: VACANT

Early Ed/Pre-School: Alison Guadalupe

HFB/Hardy Center: Lizeth Ferrer

Health/Nurse: Dana Smith

Music: Daniel Salcido

PE/APE: Daryl Durston

Special Ed: Aurora Mejico

Speech: Ulla Tang Larsen/Kimberly Cieslik

Professional Therapists: Nimisha Pradhan

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Bargaining/Negotiations

We owe a great big THANK YOU to our Bargaining Team for this year! Brad, Mary Kay, Tisha, Sendai, Cindy, and Jose did a great job of keeping member issues the focus of the conversations in the negotiations meetings with District. We had a combination of new members and some who have been on the team for years. (There is no term limit as a member of the bargaining team.) This year’s team has shown steadfast teamwork, although the work was done on Zoom. I look forward to working them on our contract issues for next year.

OMTA’s goal was to work through some immediate issues, finish this year’s negotiations, and bring you a Tentative Agreement for ratification relatively quickly. We got District to reopen salary to bring us to the COLA for the year, reduce class size in all grade levels, increase the compensation for special assignments, and more.

Once our ratification process is completed, we will start the negotiations process for next year. After we vote there will be a new survey sent to all members for you to tell us what is most important to you. If we get started in March or April, the goal would be to bring members a TA for next year as close to the start of the year as possible. That way we are not negotiating for time already past.