

# ADVOMTACATE



**ONTARIO-MONTCLAIR TEACHERS ASSOCIATION**

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**FEBRUARY 2009**

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## STATE BUDGET UPDATE

I'm writing this on Tuesday, Feb. 17, five days into the budget stalemate in Sacramento. The leaders of both parties and the governor have reached an agreement on a budget to close an over \$40 billion gap in revenues over the next 18 months. It has stalled in the Senate lacking 1 additional vote from the Republicans to pass it. I hope by the time you read this we will have a budget in place.

Assuming that what is ultimately passed is what is currently on the table, here's what it looks like for education. The budget will reduce spending under Prop. 98 by \$8.6 billion. Included in this, though, is a provision to protect funding for 4 categorical programs, Special Education, Economic Impact Aid, School Lunches and Class Size Reduction. The protection of Class Size Reduction is a major victory for CTA in this budget as the Governor originally proposed to give districts the money for it, but allow them to spend it in any way they wanted. That would have resulted in the elimination of CSR in many districts and would have caused the layoff of as many as 25,000 teachers statewide. In addition, the governor's original proposal to wipe out the maintenance factor of over \$9 billion (this is money that would be owed that the state would eventually have to make up) has been defeated.

What this means to OMSD will be covered in From the President. What you see going on in other districts, such as the layoff notices in Pomona to over 1/3 of their teachers, will not happen here. Other districts, unlike OMSD, have seriously considered eliminating CSR and other programs which would result in deep cuts in their teaching staff. How this would serve the children of those districts is unclear, but we all know the anxiety it has created on the part of everyone who works there.

Assuming a budget is passed by the time you read this, OMTA will be updating you with any changes from what is written here as well as providing you with more details.

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## KNOW YOUR CONTRACT – TRANSFER

Because we are entering the time of year when schools are going to be staffed for next year, many of you may be subject to being administratively transferred. The contract does spell out when an administrative transfer can take place and how teachers are selected to be transferred. Declining enrollment at schools is the major reason for administrative transfers. To determine if a school must administratively transfer anyone, the school must first determine how many teachers will be necessary for the number of students projected to attend next year. From that number, any teachers on temporary contracts are subtracted. If the school is still over staffed at that point, administrative transfers will be necessary. ...cont page 3

## FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

*Rick McClure*



I know everyone is anxious about what the dismal state budget means for all of you here in OMSD. I have had several conversations with Dr. Barnes about this and can report that we will see very few changes at schools next year. It is anticipated that the district will have about the same number of teachers next year as this. Even though enrollment continues to decline and we will lose teaching positions because of this, the QEIA program will continue to require the hiring of additional teachers at those sites. Dr. Barnes also assured me that he expects schools will have about the same budgets next year as this.

There have been, and will continue to be, reductions at the district office. An example of this is the elimination of 3 fiscal analysts in the business division, resulting in a savings of about \$500,000. There will be other cuts in the district office as well. It is my opinion that this is exactly where the district should look first to balance the budget.

The current budget situation also means we are looking at a time when we will not receive a raise. I do not anticipate having to give back anything, though, from the salary schedule or benefits. I know many of you are worried about the governor's proposal to take 5 days off the school calendar for next year. Dr. Barnes and I have discussed this; while we are not going to rule it out, we think it's unlikely we'll have to do it.

The rhetoric of keeping cuts away from the classroom is easy to say, it's more difficult to put in practice. I think what we're seeing in OMSD is the correct approach and Dr. Barnes has the support of OMTA as he goes through the difficult process of keeping the district financially solvent in very difficult times.

I am pleased with other changes I've seen in OMSD in the time Dr. Barnes has been here as well. One that is particularly welcome is the elimination of the walkthroughs by groups like the Alternative Governance Board. Having participated in that myself, I can tell you that I always wondered how having people from the district office going through classrooms with clipboards, marking things off, was supposed to improve instruction. I know it increased anxiety on the part of schools we visited. I know it led to requirement of things like posting objectives on your whiteboards, but rarely led to any discussion about why that should be (because kids should know what they're supposed to be learning) or how to make sure it was meaningful (you talk to the kids about it too) Such discussions usually took place before or after administrators were there, so we rarely saw them.

There has also been a reduction in mandates from the district office about how you should be teaching. I know there are still sites where you are subjected to the latest thing someone saw at a conference and are expected to make it part of your teaching, along with the multitude of other ideas just like it. Most of you though can now concentrate your efforts on simply providing good instruction to your students. You also have time in your day now for subjects other than ELA and Math. We've all known that well rounded students need to learn about Social Studies, Science, and the Arts, as well as have time every week for PE, but most of you didn't have time to do it. Now you do. I know that the situation is a bit different at our middle schools and I'm not particularly happy about that either, but the association and the district have been talking about ways to make that better. I'm confident we'll make progress.

Finally, I know many of you, especially if you are on a temporary contract with the district, are worried about having a job next year. I have been assured that the district will make every attempt to see to it that everyone who wants a job will have one. It may not be the same one you have this year, but somewhere in the district there will be a spot for you. Given the severity of the budget problems facing California and OMSD, I think that is very good news indeed.

## **MORE ABOUT COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENTS**

by Melody Kelly

Collaboration is ongoing in the teaching profession. Teachers work together formally during trainings, conferences and meetings. Informally we might collaborate in the staffroom, in our classrooms, on the sidewalk, etc. We operate in grade level teams, across grade levels, in specific subject area groups, and in every sort of committee under the sun. We discuss, plan, create, generate and deliver the best programs we can despite planning time constraints. We imagine what we could REALLY get done, "If only we had more time..."

In his letter to OMSD Staff last June, Superintendent Barnes stated "...a school must work collaboratively to solve problems and implement new ideas to develop the synergy that only comes from deep collaboration." Mariposa's fourth grade team is firmly established in this process. Faye Ferguson tells us her team is the "best" because everyone pitches in, analyzes data together, solves problems, and claims EACH fourth grader as their own. Grade Level Leader Jeff Williams, Tami Hayes, Vanessa Samuelson, Mary Osaki, Judith Phipps and Faye meet often to discuss how to best serve every student.

It is so important our engagement and outcomes in collaborative sessions are meaningful and productive in order to make the curriculum more accessible for our students as well as making the prep time we DO have more fruitful. In order for this process to be successful, meetings should have some built in flexibility to let teachers discuss and make decisions rather than sticking to a rigid agenda of information sharing or the delegating of tasks. Taking the time to tap into each team member's expertise will promote our goals!

With our sights on closing the Achievement Gap, OMSD teachers continue to do "Whatever It Takes" to best serve our students and the community. Sharing our strengths is what makes us "THE BEST." Please email OMTA President Rick McClure with your great ideas to help facilitate the ongoing development of this model.

## Know Your Contract - Transfer cont...

How someone is selected to be administratively transferred is covered in the Contract (Article IX, starting on page 37). When it is determined that a school must lose teachers, the first thing an administrator must do is to ask for volunteers. If there are none, or not enough, "the following non-ordered criteria" will be used: "a) Credential Authorization, b) NCLB 'highly qualified' status, c) Level of training/professional development, d) Educational program needs and requirements, e) School staff balance in terms of experience, sex, race and ethnicity, f) Number of staff moves involved in new assignment(s), and/or reassignment of pupils so as to have the least detrimental effect on the educational program. When application of the above criteria does not result in the selection of the transferee, contracted certificated district hire date shall determine priority among those under consideration." Further, no one can be administratively transferred more than once every three years

For a voluntary transfer, you must have permanent status and have a voluntary transfer form filled out and on file with Human Resources. Voluntary transfers can take place after administrative transfers are completed and the district begins considering placement of temporary teachers and new hires for the remaining vacancies.

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## **NEED HELP ON YOUR 403(B) PLAN?**

A very important decision you can make as a school employee is whether to participate in a 403(b) plan (often referred to as a tax-deferred annuity). These plans allow you to put aside funds (elective deferral limit for 2009 is \$16,500) on a tax-deferred basis that can supplement your CalSTRS or CalPERS retirement. And, the earlier you invest the faster your investment dollars will grow.

The Internal Revenue Service has put into place new regulations pertaining to 403(b) plans that will substantially change the manner in which school districts offer these plans to school employees. The goal of the new regulations is to bring 403(b) plans into much closer alignment with other voluntary retirement savings plans such as 401(k) and 457 plans.

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## OMTA REPRESENTATIVES

**Arroyo:** Karen Hirschfield  
**Berlyn:** Crystal Cook, Erik Kobulnick  
**Bon View:** Sally Field, Angela Pratt  
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**Speech:** Susan Yee Alt: Ulla Larsen  
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**Hardy Center:** Linda Meyer  
**HFB:**



## Need Help On Your 403(B) cont...

As a current 403(b) participant or potential new investor, the new IRS regulations may impact you. It is important to make informed investment decisions and there are several resources available to help you. CTA has released a newsletter called The Advisor, summarizing the new IRS regulations and its impact on chapters and members. The newsletter is available on the CTA website at [www.cta.org/forms/OrderForm.aspx](http://www.cta.org/forms/OrderForm.aspx).

On November 30, 2004, the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS) launched a website that will allow you to compare approximately 90 vendors and 300 different 403(b) retirement investment products. Called 403bCompare, this website is a free retirement planning tool for all CTA members and school employees. The website, [www.403bCompare.com](http://www.403bCompare.com), will assist you in comparing retirement savings investment options. You can go online free of charge to search 403(b) products, and compare product features, including fund descriptions, fees and returns



OMTA Executive Board Meeting  
March 2nd at 3:45pm

OMTA Rep Council Meeting  
March 23rd at 3:45pm

OMSD School Board Meeting  
March 5th & 19th - 7:00pm at  
Central School

## OMTA OFFICERS AND OPERATIONS

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