

ADVOCATE



ONTARIO-MONTCLAIR TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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MAY 2008

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LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The following is an excerpt from an article by Larry Lezotte about leadership and school improvement. The direction OMSD is going will demand that schools follow the principles that are partially outlined in the article that follows. Perhaps the most important part of the school improvement process is getting schools to the point of true collaboration, not simply an environment in which the principal is telling everyone what to do. You will know you are at that point when the plan being carried out is not "my plan" but "our plan." Our plan can only be developed collaboratively with everyone involved in its development and execution. The reason for this is made clear in the article; it's the only way to make changes sustainable and permanent.

"The bureaucratic, top-down, outside-in, standards-based, results-driven call for school improvement is sweeping over the schools of this nation like a tidal wave. Metaphorically, it's as if the advocates of higher standards are at the school's front door unloading the higher standards curriculum, and the assessment and accountability police are standing at the back door checking to be certain that the school responds. Unfortunately, educational history is filled with evidence that this approach to school change stops at the front and back doors." (Tyack & Cuban, 1995)

In the final analysis, sustainable school improvement is a process that is inside-out, bottom-up, and school-by-school. Internal commitment by the school's stakeholders coupled with effective leadership is the fuel for the improvement process. Likewise, the internal school improvement process represents a rich opportunity to strengthen the leadership capacity of each school.

Like all organizational change, implementing implementation of a successful school improvement process is a challenging and demanding task. Those responsible for implementing school improvement must become skilled and effective leaders who can:

Understand the importance of the school's vision, mission, and core values.

Obtain a commitment from school stakeholders to perform the tasks necessary to achieve the mission.

Anticipate, facilitate, and lead change.

Utilize data in the decision-making process.

Provide guidance in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the plan to improve the school.

Document results.

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FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Rick McClure

Collaboration is a buzzword in education these days. OMSD has prided itself on being collaborative. I would argue that while collaboration exists at the level of the district and association, it does not exist at most of our schools. Elsewhere in this Advocate is an excerpt from an article by Larry Lezotte, a leader of the educational reform movement and the author of *The Correlates of Effective Schools*. In the article he discusses why real collaboration is necessary and what it looks like.

There are not very many schools in OMSD where real collaboration exists. Most of you work in a school where your principal is firmly in charge. If there is a plan or vision at the school, it belongs to the principal, not to you. You may have been asked for input, but any real discussion, let alone disagreement, was discouraged, or even punished. If your school has made AYP, exited program improvement, or reached the 800 level of API, your principal and many of you probably feel like you're on the right track.

These accomplishments are real, and are not to be belittled. Are they sustainable though? If you got a new principal, would your school have to start all over again with someone else's vision and plan? Are you being made to do things that bring only marginal improvement to student achievement but take up enormous amounts of your time? Do you resent the things you're told to do because you have had little or no input about them?

It is my opinion that all of our schools should have a core instructional program. That program should consist of using the adopted texts and following the pacing guides developed by the district using the experts – teachers. There should be time in each school day to teach *all* of the subject areas, not just language arts and math. Any additional programs or activities should be done only after the staff has decided in a collegial and collaborative way that it is necessary in order for students to achieve the goals you've set out for them. Unfortunately, this is not how it works in most of our schools.



In an effort to help the district understand just how far we have strayed as a district from the core instructional program I have asked your association reps to complete a survey identifying all the things that teachers are told they must do at each of your schools. I intend to use this information in order to help the district understand better just how much work all of you are doing and how much more some of our schools are demanding you do beyond the core instructional program. I especially want to point out to them how much of this is being demanded because your principal thinks something is a good idea and how little you are consulted.

On another note, I have some concerns about how TOAs are used at some schools. Let me be clear, when they are misused it's because of what the principal tells them to do. However, TOAs are teachers, too, and have no business directing other teachers to do anything. This is particularly a problem with program facilitators. Reading coaches are a problem at some sites as well because the principal tells them to direct teachers in ways that make them the "Reading First Cop," or give the appearance of reporting to the principal what they see going on in teachers' classrooms. Again, where this is going on, it's the fault of the principal, not the program facilitator or reading coach. This is another area for which I will be seeking feedback in the survey I mentioned above.

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Building and Leading High Performance Teams

The school improvement process requires that individuals from all stakeholder groups work together—collegially and collaboratively—in teams. Leadership development occurs when individuals become more skilled in getting individuals everyone to work together as a team and when they have the opportunity to *develop high-performing work teams*. Katzenbach and Smith (1993) wrote: “We believe that teams should be the basic unit of performance for most organizations, regardless of size. In any situation requiring the real-time combination of multiple skills, experiences, and judgments, a team inevitably gets better results than a collection of individuals operating within confined job roles and responsibilities.”

Throughout the implementation of the school improvement process, individuals are expected to work collaboratively. Developing the perception that they are working together as a team with all the positive connotations that are associated with “team”—as opposed to their working on a “committee” which, in many instances, may have negative connotations—will produce more positive results. Individuals typically volunteer for a team; are proud to be a members of a team; have a common focus; assume various roles and responsibilities as a members of the team; support each other as team players; and share in the team successes, victories, or wins. Working together as a team to improve student achievement will bring the same satisfaction, gratification, and rewards—not only to the team members, but to the students as well.”

PAY CYCLES

I hope everyone now knows what’s going on with their paychecks for next year. Just in case there’s still confusion, though, here’s a brief primer on the subject

If you teach in a year round school and have been receiving 12 paychecks per year, starting with the ’08 – ’09 school year you will receive 11 with the first check payable on Sept. 1. For the ’08 – ’09 school year only, the district will allow you to ask for and receive 12 paychecks. The last day to sign up for that is May 21.

If you teach in a traditional school, but once taught in a year round school and were allowed to remain on a 12 month pay cycle, the same thing applies to you as for the year round teachers.

If you teach in a traditional school and get 10 paychecks per year, starting with the ’08 – ’09 school year you will receive 11 paychecks with the first one payable on Sept. 1.

If you teach in a traditional school and get 10 paychecks and participate in the Deferred Net Pay (DNP) program, you will receive your DNP check on Sept. 1 as well as your first paycheck of the year.

DNP will be available to anyone who wishes to sign up for it for ’08 – ’09 providing you are on an 11 month pay cycle. If you are going to get 12 paychecks next year, you will have to save money for yourself for the month of Aug. ’09 because you are not on the 11 month pay cycle yet. You will be eligible for DNP the next year when you are on an 11 month pay cycle. Anyone currently on DNP will automatically continue on DNP next year.

The Ontario Montclair School Employees Federal Credit Union will be offering a summer savers plan for anyone who would like to save for the summer month on their own. The interest rate this year was 6%. The interest rate for next year is unknown at this time.

TEACHER WEB SITES

The district is going to be rolling out a new feature for teachers at the beginning of next year – the ability to post online class assignments, class news, links important to the class (e.g. for research projects), etc. I have a few notes of caution for everyone to keep in mind when doing this kind of thing. First, remember that what you will be posting will be available to the whole world. Be careful that what you say and post won’t come back to haunt you. Also, be very careful to keep everything very professional. All it takes is for one parent to complain about something you’ve posted to cause lots of problems.

Another thought for everyone about the web. Did you know that when the district is doing pre-employment screenings they google your name as well as check to see if you have Facebook or Myspace pages? Did you know that teachers in other states (mostly the south) have actually lost their jobs because of what is

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OMTA REPRESENTATIVES

Arroyo: Karen Hirschfield
Berlyn: Crystal Cook, Erik Kobulnick
Bon View: Sally Field, Angela Pratt
Buena Vista: Jessica Gagnon
Central: Marina Guevara
Corona: Paul Leal
DeAnza: Debbie Roose-Baker,
Melanie Gomez
Del Norte: Sendai Parker, Nadean Rogers
Edison: Maria Martin
El Camino: Susie Imrich-Snow,
Chris Scoleri
Elderberry: David Morales, Susan Matter
Euclid: Rosalie DeArmijo,
Leticia Montes
Hawthorne: Elizabeth Alapizco,
Dale Johnson
Haynes: Robert Mariani, Leslie Miller
Howard: Christy McPherson
Kingsley: Brad Richards, Yolanda Nunley
Lehigh: Cindy Lopez, Susan Meyer
Lincoln: Susan Hardisty, Tonine Wilson
Linda Vista: Elsa DeShazo
Mariposa: Tami Hayes, Dionne Treadway
Mission: Patricia Hawkins, Nick Zajicek
Monte Vista: Victor Avila, Karen Norquist
Montera: Erine Ames
Moreno: John Hamman
Oaks: Cheryl Lemke, David Millard
Ramona: Jay Lemke
Serrano: Dana Cox, Dennis Askew
Sultana: Lee Hager, Amy Tompkins
Vernon: Robert Armijo,
Stephanie Hibbard
Vina Danks: Donald Brubaker, Steve Loy
Vineyard: Lesia Beasom, Lucy Kopaz
Vista Grande: Helen Cieslik
Wiltsey: Ken Aven, Linda Boren
Music/PE/APE: David Moody
Speech: Susan Yee
Health/Nurse: Denise Mick
Early Ed Center: Leticia Martinez
Hardy Center: Linda Meyer
HFB: Linda Nelson



in their Facebook and Myspace pages as well as other internet sites? Many teachers, especially younger ones, have a presence of some sort on the internet. Teachers, though, are sometimes held to a different standard because we work with children. This doesn't mean you can't have a picture of yourself drinking a glass of wine. You probably shouldn't have a picture of yourself drinking a glass of wine while you're posing in your underwear (or less), though.

One final thought. Beverly Tucker, retired Chief Legal Counsel for CTA would frequently say the following at gatherings of teachers. "Friends don't let friends do pornography on school computers." This is one thing you can do that can and often does lead to losing your job. Remember that whatever you do on your computer, even if you've deleted or erased it, can be discovered by the district. Assume that if you get in trouble of some sort that your school or classroom computer will be looked at. Make sure that you've never done anything on it that could cause you problems in the future.

ELECTION RESULTS

The recent OMTA elections produced the following results: Elected President for 2 years, Rick McClure; Secretary for 2 years, Brad Richards; Service Center Reps for 3 years, Bruce Sarver and Ben Fudge; and State Council Rep for 3 years, Shari Megaw. Congratulations to them all.

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

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

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

OMTA OFFICERS AND OPERATIONS

President
Rick McClure
1st Vice President
Shari Megaw
2nd Vice President
Susan Hardisty
Secretary
Melody Kelly
Treasurer
Michael Weilein

CTA State Council
Representatives
Rick McClure
Shari Megaw
Michael Weilein

Service Center 1
Representatives
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