

MTA News

Murrieta Teachers Association

11/5/2013

President's Report

Kathy Ericson, MTA President

With Halloween behind us and Thanksgiving approaching, you will soon have a week off! We all look forward to our November break. I know it is well deserved. Each new school year brings unique challenges, and this year has brought to the forefront trials with multifaceted change. Perplexing new state funding formulas, common core with new accountability systems, and technology top the list. As exciting as some of these changes are, change is never easy. During my visits, I'm still hearing from teachers that are overwhelmed by the shifts taking place and confused about the direction one should be taking. Included in my article are some things to think about that I hope will relieve some of the pressures some of you are still feeling.

We are at the beginning of what will be a multi year transition to common core. Even the state of California realized that we could not begin to transition to common core while still holding on to testing from the past. They have eliminated most CST tests beginning this year. Elementary students will be testing in either language arts or math, the determination of which is to be decided by Smarter Balance. They will decide which test will be given by grade level for each site. We will not be provided scores, and there will be no means of accountability this year. In addition, Ed Services is anticipating a common core focus for our January Buy Back Day which they are hoping will include time to view the practice tests.

Computerized testing brings with it additional concerns. Many sites are not equipped to handle testing on

computers. The technology department has been working with sites to determine what computers are currently available and what is needed in order to allow testing to occur in a timely fashion. In answer to concerns about the numerous technology changes and demands, the district has established a technology committee, and they are working closely with ITLs, newly appointed ITCs, and our own MTA Tech Committee. This opens up several avenues of two way communication. I encourage you to share concerns and ideas via any of these groups.

Finally, Ed Services has responded to concerns shared by many of you regarding direction for PLCs by providing areas of focus to administrators. In turn, your principals will share these ideas at your sites. PLC activities are teacher designed, but none of us want to be spinning our wheels some where out in left field. Guy Romero has shared these areas of focus with me. They not only align with new accountability systems, but encourage PLCs to look at the whole picture. I believe you will find these focus areas provide direction and purpose, and are worthy of your time.

As always, I want to encourage you to contact me with any worries, suggestions, or solutions as we continue to move forward. If I don't see you before then, have a wonderful Thanksgiving break.

Member Benefits

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You may not be aware that, as a MTA (and CTA) member, you enjoy numerous benefits in addition to your rights to due process. A few benefits are listed below:

- Discounts for aquariums, comedy clubs, dinner shows, movie theaters, theme parks, tours, and water parks— Call 1-800-537-8491 or visit www.cta.org for details!
- Legal defense costs in lawsuits arising out of educational employment activities— Educators Employment Liability (EEL)
- Group Legal Services (GLSP) for employment-related legal services

News from Your MTA Directors

Elementary: Kim Chevlin

Middle School: Beth Szabo

High School: Anthony Blount

- State Council is governing body of CTA—a business meeting
- State Council creates policy, decides budgets and action items—it is NOT a conference
- In addition, there are 4 meetings with the Service Center Council—1st meeting was October 5th at 8:30 a.m. in Corona

- There is confusion about PLC direction, because there is no longer a need for CST-driven data.
- Class size overages—there is confusion about average vs. over-maximum. This should be resolved soon. Let your site rep or middle school director know if you are still unclear about this.

- Met with principals over the summer
- Principals are all committed to being proactive about addressing issues that are teacher concerns.
- If teachers at your site are experiencing any concerns, contact Anthony Blount.

Representative Council Highlights for November

- We are still awaiting results from AdHoc before bargaining can begin. Your site rep may have breaking news on this.
- The Bargaining Team is analyzing results from the survey they sent out to determine teachers' priorities as far as bargaining is concerned.
- Teachers DO NOT HAVE to attend the DuFours conference in Palm Springs. Principals can encourage, but not mandate that teachers attend a conference that requires time beyond contract hours.
- Deborah Santolices from MVHS has volunteered to chair the MTA Tech Committee. She and Kathy are working on the direction/purpose of the committee.
- PLCs are teacher-directed, and therefore, administrators cannot direct all site PLCs to meet in a common location, such as the MPR or library. Contact your elementary, middle, or high school director if PLCs at your site are directed to meet in a common location.
- Ed Services is expected to provide some direction to PLCs, as far as implementing common core standards versus collecting data for CST-related goals. The direction will be a general focus, not intended to take control of PLCs from the teachers, but to clarify that the direction of the district is to implement common core standards.