

The OTA Round-Up



Dear OTA Members,

At the December 9th OJUSD school board meeting many OTA members came out to support the negotiations team and to hear the OTA president advocate for our union. Below is a transcript of the speech.

Good Evening everyone,

As anyone knows who is regularly here for the board meetings, I usually say the bare minimum at the association report time. Today, if you will bear with me, I will be collecting my unused time. I must start with some acknowledgements.

First: to my executive board, negotiations team, and site representatives, I want to thank you for your support, your passion, and for making the union president position a positive experience for me.

Second: I want to thank all of the union members who are here tonight for coming to hear what I have to say and foremost for supporting our negotiations team.

Marc Malone, as a union president I have worked very closely with you through many issues. In all issues and throughout our association as colleagues, I have found you to be honest, thoughtful, and highly moral in your approach to your position as superintendent. Because you were born, raised, and live here you are intimately connected with the people and with the legacy your actions as superintendent will create. This makes you an excellent superintendent for our district, and it shows in the many accomplishments, from test scores, to new facilities, to the many awards our students have earned. It has been an honor to work with you.

School board members, I want to thank all of you for your thoughtful and caring stewardship of our district. Many people do not realize all of the work you do that leads up to the actual board meetings.

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Contract FYI & Meetings

Contract FYI: Evaluations

ARTICLE 11: EVALUATION PROCEDURES

11.1 Probationary employees shall be evaluated at least once each year during probationary service.

11.2 A formal Stull Evaluation of each teacher, in permanent status, shall be made in writing once every two (2) years, unless the teacher received a less than satisfactory Stull Evaluation on his/her previous evaluation.

11.2.1 Unit members with a minimum of six (6) completed evaluations on file who have had an evaluation in either District teaching year ten (10) or eleven (11) shall have a Stull Evaluation ever three (3) years rather than every two (2) years, unless the evaluator determines that there exists cause for the unit member to remain on the existing evaluation schedule.

11.3 The District shall normally schedule a meeting on or before October 15th with each teacher to be evaluated, but no later than November 1st. At this meeting, the identified evaluator will furnish a copy of the evaluation procedures. The evaluator and evaluatee will seek to agree on: (1) the goals and objectives to be achieved during the evaluation period; (2) the progress of students toward the established standards; (3) the teacher's non-instructional duties and responsibilities; (4) the suitable learning environment within the scope of the teacher's responsibilities; and (5) classroom management/instructional techniques and strategies used. If a teacher and his/her evaluator cannot agree on one or more of these matters, the disagreement shall be noted on the District evaluation form prior to the actual evaluation assessment.

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11.4.1 For each permanent teacher, the evaluation procedures shall include one scheduled observation of no less than thirty (30) minutes. If a teacher receives a less than satisfactory observation in any area, more formal observations may be scheduled to review and assist remediation in the deficient area(s).

...

11.5 The final Stull evaluation shall be completed no later than (30) calendar days before the end of the teacher's instructional year. Evaluation shall be in writing and a copy of the evaluation report shall be furnished the evaluatee. The teacher shall be given the opportunity to append a written statement of his/her views to the evaluation report and such statements shall be included in the teacher's personnel file.

11.6 The teacher shall have the right to identify any constraints which the teacher believes may inhibit his/her ability to meet the objectives and standards established.

11.7 A teacher who received a less than satisfactory observation(s) shall, upon request, be entitled to an additional classroom observation and conference by a mutually agreed upon District evaluator.

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11.14.1 These documents shall be the only evaluation forms which may be placed into an employee's personnel file.

OTA Executive Board

Meeting Dates:

January 16, 2020

February 13, 2020

March 12, 2020

April 9, 2020

May 7, 2020

OTA Site Rep

Meeting Dates:

January 30, 2020

February 27, 2020

March 26, 2020

April 30, 2020

May 15, 2020

All meetings take place at Fair Oaks and are open to members.



Speech, cont.

Dave Kline, In our association over the last two years as the assistant superintendent of human resources, I have been impressed by your thoughtful reflection on our conversations. Moreover, I am pleased with your openness to discussing, and working through issues, and appreciative of your honesty, professionalism, and candor.

To the administrators throughout the district, I want to thank all of you for opening your doors to me and, when needed, working through issues professionally.

I am in my 33rd year of teaching and my last year as union president. Like Marc I am thinking about my legacy. How can I take my many years of experience as a teacher, union member, and member of a school district and leave something for the colleagues I leave behind and for the future of our district? I had a previous sixth grade student visit the other day, and he said that I was the reason he was in college. I often think of lessons, conversations, and experiences that I provide my students as planting seeds, and tonight I hope to plant a few for the district.

When negotiations happen the teachers talk to the Union, the administrative team talks to the board, and then the two negotiating teams meet and convey what they heard. Never do we all talk together. So I am taking this moment to talk to everyone involved (thank you union members for coming) and I am hoping to plant a seed in the district. Current negotiations are coming to a close, most likely tomorrow, so I will talk about issues that go beyond what we can solve in one year.

This year our test scores were the highest in the county! How did we get there? I think one of the biggest factors was when Mr. Malone and Mrs. Rapinchuck instituted instructional norms. Why was that powerful? Because we had a shared language and a shared understanding. It also led to shared goals. Goals for instruction, student engagement, and student outcomes. It also took time. We were not the highest in the county the first year we started talking about instructional norms.

Tonight, I will discuss our shared truths, a language to frame current and future negotiations, and possible current/future goals.

The first shared truth is that there are no bad guys in this situation. I opened with my acknowledgments because in every case whether talking to teachers, administrators, classified, or school board members I invariably discover that people are working hard, each in their own way, to make OJUSD the best district possible. Not only do the people who work here want the best for the district; they also want what the people around them to thrive. What varies, and at times separates us, is how best to accomplish that goal.

The next truth is that money is a finite resource, and that it is hard to talk about. The hardest conversations for most couples are conversations revolving around money. Money is perhaps an even more challenging subject in a school district. The money discussion is a challenge for multiple reasons which include: the restrictions on different funding sources, the need to plan and budget for unknown future events, the sheer size of our budget and the million variations between a plan and its execution in the real world.

Budgeting money is always a matter of finding the balance between what you want, what you need, and what the future may hold. OJUSD, through the years I have been here, has been careful and conservative in their approach to finances. During the last economic

downturn our district benefited from a healthy reserve combined with both unions making large sacrifices to ward off layoffs.

Another truth we can all agree on is that we want our district to be financially solvent. When the next economic slowdown comes we want to have a cushion. The balance and the negotiations dance is partly around how big that reserve needs to be. This is where the idea of balance and prediction of future events must be examined carefully. We have often been told the sky is falling only to find the next year that it did not.

I also know that if we make a poor monetary choice and pay a consequence later it will be Mr. Malone, Cassandra Booth Chief Business Officer, and the school board that would bear the brunt of the criticism for that choice. While they carry the burden, it would be all of us that would feel the effects of that choice. On the other hand when OTA members see projections from the district's own accounting that show a significant annual increase in the reserve over the next three years we have to wonder if the balance the district is proposing has leaned too far in one direction.

We have a lot of interest this year in our negotiations. We had a record of 170 submissions to our negotiations survey, which is almost three times as many as we have had in the past. These surveys are what guide our negotiations team in preparing for negotiations. When I look at these surveys each year, in my mind there are three categories the items fall into. One is **clarification**. A contract benefits all participants by making clear to all parties the procedures and processes required to run the business. Clarification issues are often proposed by both sides. This year there were a couple ideas in this area that both sides brought to the table and productive conversations were had. The issues of clarification are often the easiest to conclude as a clear contract benefits all parties and clarification is usually cost free which is why I listed it first.

The next category is **advocating for students**. While everything we do to improve our district improves things for students, some items land directly on them. The item that comes up every year and in every survey is class size. Each year when class size is brought up the union is told that it is challenging to handle. It of course costs extra money to hire additional teachers. Also students do not come in tidy even packages, but instead students vary in numbers and interests thus challenging us by the variation each year, not to mention the students that come and go throughout the year. These points are true.

Last year and this year OTA has suggested that we provide teachers with some additional money when their class size goes over. That might sound like the teachers are just wanting more cash. However, that is not the reason. What we know is that when there is a monetary incentive tied to an item, the response to that item changes. Reasonable class sizes directly effect students.

When we asked for money for class size overage last year the district proposed lowering class size to 30 from 32, and they proposed listing class sizes by grade level groups. We accepted that proposal but it does not always seem to matter much because the language says, "which will be maintained where practical." What is practical? How do we measure it?

When a high school English teacher has 8 students above the 30 limit, each time they give feedback on essays they are looking at an additional 2 hours and 40 minutes of grading (based on 20 minutes per essay) Is that practical? If you consider that about a third of your class may need individual support each day, is interacting directly with more than 10 students during a lesson practical?

When primary grades were limited in class size with a monetary penalty, districts worked their way up to the limit rather than starting at the limit. Even though that penalty is no longer in place, if we look at the primary grades they are all at or below 24. Even after the

monetary incentive was removed the idea of working up to it remained. However, above third grade this is not true for all grade levels. If a contract is to specify my working conditions, what am I to think when I start the year above the stated limit of 30? I do not remember the last time my class was at 30.

Our neighboring school district, Riverbank, instituted a program to compensate a teacher when the classes get above a certain level. Their union has reported that many more classes are within the class size limits than before. Additionally, when it is not practical to reduce the size that teacher is given some compensation which helps to balance the additional workload. I would prefer a realistic class size number that we work towards rather than having it in my face that once again I am starting above the stated class size. When I am above the stated limit year after year, what am I supposed to think?

Is a reasonable class size district wide possible? Primary numbers point to this being true. We need numbers the district can live with and a monetary incentive to do so. If we could do that we could solve one of the biggest issues between teachers and the district. Most importantly while class size has not been strongly linked to improved test scores, we all know that students receive better service and support and that many of the important things that are not measured by test scores benefit by a reasonable student teacher ratio.

The third category are negotiation items that will **attract and retain** employees. This is often the most contentious as it is the item with a large price tag. Sometimes the OTA team has been told we do not need to worry because lots of people want to work in Oakdale. When you look at a scattergram of the ages of our teachers you will see that many of us are at or nearing the age of retirement over the next few years. That means not only will the district lose seasoned professionals, but moreover will be hiring many new teachers. Not only general ed teachers but speech pathologists, special ed teachers, resource teachers, nurses and administrators.

Yes I know administrators are not in our bargaining unit. I will get back to them in a moment.

Often the wonderful community (which it is), and the great students (that I have enjoyed) and the hard working staff (whom I will miss) is brought up when we bring up this issue of attract and retain. I am super pleased to have worked here since 2005. However, I did not know any of those things when I applied. What I knew was that I would get a pay increase and reduced out of pocket for benefits, and it was significant enough to justify commuting 90 minutes a day. Just as the economy will not remain forever strong, neither will Oakdale remain the powerhouse it is if we do not compete for quality new teachers.

Number one in test scores in the county. That is a testament to our teachers, administrative leaders, coaches, classified staff and trainings. So where are we when it comes to money and benefits? There are different ways to compare district salary schedules and benefits. No matter which way you compare, we are in the back of the pack in our county. With 24 school districts we come in at 15th when you look at column 14 (14 years which is about mid career) and you add the district health cap. What kind of money difference are we talking about? Our health cap is \$7,210 for a "full" family, for a single guy like me without kids it is \$6,458. Other districts? Riverbank is \$10,000. Turlock \$11,329 Sylvan \$14,898. Salary at step 14? Oakdale 87,450, Riverbank 88,500, Modesto 97,332 and Ceres \$99,037

Does pay matter for retention? Our district's administration group is very stable. Administrators come and seldom leave. Why? Oakdale is a great place to work and Oakdale's administrative pay is in the top half of the top ten in the county. So we retain quality administrators and they seldom go anywhere.

I have had numerous colleagues leave to other schools in the county and every time, pay and benefits was a large incentive when you really talked to them.

So what I would hope for the future of Oakdale is that we can set some goals. It would be great if the board and administration had a target. As an example, "We would like to move up to the top ten." That cannot happen in one year if we want to remain fiscally stable. But if we do not set it as a goal it will never happen. Our team opened with 7% because that would have put us at tenth in the county. We do not need to be number one or even number 5, but if we were above the middle there would be much less incentive for people to move and much more incentive for people to join us.

In addition to retaining people, we need to attract people, and that is an especially large challenge when it comes to nurses, special Ed and resource teachers, and speech pathologists. We need to incentivize those positions. Perhaps a different salary schedule, or stipends, perhaps offer support for the required ongoing education courses required to maintain the Nurse and speech pathologist licenses. Many districts in our county have separate salary schedules for those positions. I know of a district that is offering a \$10,000 signing bonus. Once again this is not going to be solved this year, but we need to set goals for this as a district as well.

Now, everyone take a deep breath. Yes, we just talked about money. All combined, everything I talked about costs money and as I stated at the beginning money is finite, and budgeting is a balance, and we want that balance to be fiscally sound.

In conclusion, let me recap the main points in my overly long oratory.

Truths that we all agree on:

- *Talking about money is hard.*
- *We want a fiscally sound district.*
- *Budgeting is a balance and is based on predicting the future.*
- *When negotiating we have three main lenses to look at things:*
 - *Advocating for students*
 - *Attracting and retaining staff*
 - *Clarifying procedures*
- *Finally, we need long term shared goals that should include:*
 - *A clearer more consistent handling of class sizes*
 - *A goal to improve our financial offerings and our benefits package relative to the other districts in our county.*

Are these big goals?

Yes!

But the district that can score number one in the county, compete in sports like no one's business, and take home awards every time we compete, can certainly rise to the occasion and set and share attainable goals for future negotiations as well.

At this point I want to thank both teams of negotiators for their hard conversations and their dedication, and I wish them a productive day tomorrow; and I want to thank all of the union members that have come out to hear me today and to show their support for our negotiations team.

--End of Speech--

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OTA Officers 2019-20

President—Keith Burns
Vice President—Karyn Miller
Treasurer—Jeanette Ves'sells
Secretary—Shauna Rico
Executive Board, Grievances—Lisa Greenhow
Executive Board, Communications—D. Hawksworth
Executive Board, Elections—Melissa Clark

Site Reps 2019-20

<u>Cloverland</u>	Jordan Gausling
<u>Fair Oaks</u>	Elizabeth Thompson Neil Jackson Letha McLaurin
<u>Magnolia</u>	Myeshiea Lee Nicole Kirschner Jessica Faria
<u>Sierra View</u>	Jane Holmes
<u>OJHS</u>	Nicole DeCoste Marjean Rath Diane Stanton
<u>OHS</u>	Chanel Martins Nancy Morales Toni Zuk Scott Gehl Ana Garnica Omar Salinas Maribel Pineda
<u>Alt Ed</u>	Jeremy Acker

2019 Negotiation Team:

Erin Benbow (lead)
David Schmitt
Michelle Holcomb
Mike Seefeldt
Brian Chubon
Lauren Tanis
Jon Blanc

WEINGARTEN RIGHTS

“If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working condition, I respectfully request that my union representative be present at the meeting. Without representation, I choose not to answer any questions.”