ELECTION 2022
VOTE — and Participate —
Like Everything Depends on You!* *(It Does)*

“The weather was perfect for Cherylane Jones-Williams, Para Chapter Chair (left), and MML Ruth James-Dickens at the 2022 Election Campaign literature drop. Hope to see you at the next one!”

The weather was perfect for Cherylane Jones-Williams, Para Chapter Chair (left), and MML Ruth James-Dickens at the 2022 Election Campaign literature drop. Hope to see you at the next one!

We’ve heard it before, ‘this is the most important election season,’ but this time is key — these elections will determine the direction of our democracy,” said CTU President Shari Obrenski.

“We are counting on CTU members like you to help with phone banking, labor walks, literature drops, and other campaign activities in support of our endorsed candidates,” said David Quolke, former CTU President and CTU’s 2022 Election Coordinator.

“CTU members are well known for their political activism and participation,” he added. “We’re in the final sprint to Election Day, and our candidates need your help now. Elections always have consequences. But especially this year, not just in Ohio but across the country, the consequences of these elections could last for years, for better or worse.”

Mr. Quolke is back with CTU to work with Shauntina Thornton, CTU Legislative Committee Chairperson, and Cindy Antonio, CTU Trustee and Director of Member Mobilization, on labor’s 2022 election campaign. They will coordinate CTU activities with the OFT and Cleveland’s North Shore AFL-CIO Federation of Labor.

“CTU members, use this QR code to sign up for CTU 2022 campaign activities! Help us elect union and educator-friendly candidates in November.”

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Just The Facts: Voting in Ohio in 2022

Make sure your voice is heard this year!

October 11 is the deadline for Voter Registration for the November 8 General Election. Go to the official website of the Ohio Secretary of State at www.ohiosos.gov to check your registration and make any necessary changes. If you are not registered to vote, register today to make sure you can vote this November.

The Ohio Secretary of State has purged thousands of Ohioans from the list of registered voters over the last few years. Are you sure you’re registered? Double check your registration status to make sure you are still registered to vote, and that your address is correct. (It only takes a moment — take out your phone and do it right now! www.ohiosos.gov) You can register to vote or update your registration online, including updating your address if you have moved.

“Join us next weekend!” Shari Obrenski and David Quolke — CTU Presidents, current and former — prepare for a Labor Walk. Scan the QR code above to find a CTU campaign activity for you.
books contain the 2021-2024 Collective Bargaining Agreement, Memoranda of Understanding, and endorsements from the AFT Teacher and School Staff Shortage Task Force; CTU President Shari Obrenski was a member of the task force. They developed a plan and vision for a new era of education: one in which educators and school staff are appropriately compensated, educators have a stronger voice, and public schools are safe and welcoming with the resources needed to meet the needs of all students. Read the report on the AFT website, www.aft.org.

Thumbs up to Ms. Hill! Her professionalism and consideration when dealing with CTU members (and officers) is phenomenal and deserved recognition. Thank you, Ms. Hill!

Thumbs up to CTU members who participated in the Summer Learning Experience, helping to provide valuable learning opportunities for our students.

Thumbs down to the Ohio Legislature and Governor DeWine for passing and signing HB 99, the new law allowing teachers to carry firearms in Ohio classrooms, if their districts approve. More guns is not a solution. Thankfully, the Cleveland Board of Education wisely decided that employees who are not safety and security officers will not be armed in our schools.

Thumbs up to those who assisted in getting our new CMSD-CTU contract books printed and distributed. The books contain the 2021-2024 Collective Bargaining Agreement, Memoranda of Understanding, and recommendations from the AFT Teacher and School Staff Shortage Task Force, CTU President Shari Obrenski was a member of the task force. They developed a plan and vision for a new era of education: one in which educators and school staff are appropriately compensated, educators have a stronger voice, and public schools are safe and welcoming with the resources needed to meet the needs of all students. Read the report on the AFT website, www.aft.org.

Thumbs up to CTU members who volunteer for CTU election campaign activities. Please join us in at least one (but hopefully more than one) activity this election season — we need you! And thumbs up to our endorsed candidates — support them with your vote in the November election. The complete list is on the OFT and CTU websites.

Thumbs down to the nationwide teacher and school staff shortage, which contributes additional stress and burnout for already-spread-thin school personnel. For many reasons — including austerity budgets, the pandemic, and politicized attacks — the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and the teacher and school staff shortage is now a crisis. One in four teachers leave the profession before retiring, and

Wanted: CTU Website Manager

Are you a tech-savvy CTU member? Would you like to get more involved with your union? If you answered yes to both questions, we have an opportunity for you! The CTU is looking to hire a website manager for our website www.ctu279.org. This position is appointed by the CTU President and qualifies for stipends each month. Responsibilities include:

- Familiarizing yourself with Union Active (we have training videos and paperwork to help with this)
- Managing the home page and website layout
- Managing the calendar to inform members about CTU Committee workshops, CTU meetings, and other events for members
- Uploading recordings of virtual PD sessions
- Removing old/outdated content as necessary
- Other responsibilities pertaining to CTU website, as needed

If you are interested, apply at: https://bit.ly/ctuwebmaster
More information will be sent to chapter chairs and they will distribute it to members, Ms. Antonio explained. (Note: members’ personal emails, not CMSD emails, must be used for political activities.) Information about activities will be posted on the CTU website and Facebook page. CTU members are asked to fill out the interest form in President Obrenski’s September 16 email update.

“Once we get the list of what members want to do, it will be easier to reach out to specific people for each activity,” said Ms. Antonio. “We will need members to phone bank, fill out post cards, and do labor walks.”

“We educators are the professional advocates for our students,” said Ms. Thornton. “We showed it during the pandemic, and we show it every day in our schools. Now, we need to turn that advocacy into political action, from now through November 8. Please join us in our campaign activities!”

Shauntina Thornton is the CTU point of contact for any questions about CTU election activities. Contact her at sthornton@ctu279.org using your personal email.

**Education and Workers’ Rights on the Ballot**

The last few years have been tough for public schools. Significant challenges have made it harder for educators to do their jobs.

“Now, more than ever, we need elected officials who will come to work every day with the goal of solving problems and bringing people together,” stated Darold Johnson, OFT Director of Legislation. “Unfortunately, too many Ohio politicians have sought to advance their careers by inflaming divisions in our communities, placing unwarranted blame on public schools, and making it harder for teachers to teach and for students to learn.”

That’s why your union is asking you to make your voice heard! First, make sure you are registered, and then vote for our endorsed candidates who support educators and public education. The list of endorsed candidates is available on the OPT website, www.oft-aft.org, and the CTU website, www.ctu279.org.

**How Endorsements Are Made**

OPT endorsements are based on the candidates’ responses to an OPT candidate questionnaire, and for candidates who have held elected office, on their voting history and experience. All endorsements are approved by a majority vote of OPT’s Executive Council, which is made up of delegates from all OPT local unions.

Dues money is not used to support candidates. Political funds come from separate, voluntary donations to a union COPE (Committee on Political Education) Fund. If you are interested in contributing to CTU’s COPE fund, contact Shauntina Thornton at sthornton@ctu279.org.

**Our Candidates**

Tim Ryan has consistently been on the side of educators and working people during his 20 years in Congress. He has supported investments in public education, opposed trade deals that hurt Ohio workers, and advocated for passage of the PRO Act to make it easier for workers to form unions. OPT proudly endorsed Tim Ryan for U.S. Senate.

OPT also endorsed education champions for statewide office, including Nan Whaley for Governor, Jeff Hofmann and Ms. Fedor are also both steadfast supporters of statewide education. Ms. Hofmann and Ms. Fedor are also both steadfast supporters of education and labor, working people, and public education.

Few elected positions have as much of an impact on our day-to-day work as the State Board of Education. OPT made endorsements in three key State Board of Education races: Teresa Fedor (District 2), Katie Hofmann (District 4), and Tom Jackson (District 10). These candidates with deep backgrounds in education will help reorient the State Board toward ensuring that Ohio’s students have safe and equitable learning environments. Ms. Hofmann and Ms. Fedor are also both OPT members.

As we’ve seen throughout the ongoing redistricting debacle, a healthy democracy in Ohio is dependent on a majority on Ohio’s Supreme Court that believes in and is willing to defend democracy. We endorse Justice Jennifer Brunner for Chief Justice because she has been steadfast in upholding Ohio’s voter initiated redistricting reforms. We endorse Judges Terri Jamison and Marilyn Zayas for Ohio Supreme Court. They are both facing incumbent who repeatedly ignored the state constitution and the will of the voters for petty partisan gain.

On its website, OPT has a complete list of endorsed candidates statewide, including candidates for Ohio Senate and House races. The list will also be available on the CTU website when early voting begins on October 12, and the endorsement list will be sent out to schools. Please check the list when you vote, and support these candidates who will support you, your union, and public schools.

**Asking CTU Members...**

Between now and November 8, the CTU has these asks of members: make a plan to vote, make a plan to get involved, and make a plan to participate in one or more of our CTU election activities.

**ELECTION 2022**

CTU and North Shore AFL-CIO members engage in campaign activities. Make a plan to volunteer at least two hours this fall!

Crossman for Attorney General, Taylor Sappington for Auditor, Scott Schertzer for Treasurer, and Chelsea Clark for Secretary of State.

For Congress, the endorsed candidates in our area are Marcie Kaptur (District 9), Shontel Brown (District 11), and Emilia Sykes (District 13), all steadfast supporters of labor, working people, and public education.

To get involved, and make a plan to vote, make a plan to get involved, and make a plan to participate in one or more of our CTU election activities.
CTU members understand the importance of union membership: the Cleveland Teachers Union provides negotiated salaries, benefits, and working conditions, and guarantees member protections through the collective bargaining agreement and the grievance process.

“But your membership in the union includes much more,” explained Wendi Kral, CTU Membership Chairperson. The CTU provides many additional services and perks to members through its local committees, directors, activities, and programs. Membership in the CTU provides automatic membership in its national and state affiliates, the American Federation of Teachers and the Ohio Federation of Teachers.

**Extra AFT Benefits**

Through the AFT, you are part of a community with its own marketplace, AFT+ Member Benefits, that combines the purchasing power of AFT’s 1.7 million members with the benefit offerings of Union Plus, the AFL-CIO’s benefit branch. AFT+ provides a wide array of discounts, services, and benefits that go beyond the workplace. Many of these programs are available to your family members, too.

Ms. Kral encourages all CTU members to look into the AFT+ Member Benefits Program. The program provides discounts and special opportunities in the areas of education, finance and legal, health services, discounts and shopping, insurance; travel, and mortgages, auto, and home services.

AFT has added benefits to deal with members’ needs in this particular moment after the COVID-19 pandemic. A valuable new benefit is free trauma counseling to support recovery from personal and workplace challenges. The program is free of charge to working members, in the one-year aftermath of a traumatic incident. You are covered 365 days a year if your incident includes: domestic violence, aggravated assault, sexual assault, mass shooting or terrorism, or if you are injected, injured, or traumatized by a disease during a major disaster. At work, you are covered if you are traumatized by being bullied, harassed, or threatened; experience a secondary trauma; witness a violent act; or contract an infectious disease. If you are unsure if your incident qualifies, you are encouraged to file a claim to find out.

Two other new programs are NewsGuard, a program to help members discern fact from fiction online, and Summer, a service to help minimize student loan debt and repayments.

Do you need help with your student loans? Higher education? A competitive mortgage rate? No-fee credit cards? A great wireless plan? Discounts on travel opportunities? AFT+ has benefit programs for all of these, and more. For additional information, visit www.aft.org/benefits. If you have questions, email Ms. Kral at wkral@ctu279.org or contact afiplus@aft.org.

**Liability Insurance**

“The liability insurance that AFT provides to its members is one of the best benefits our union members have,” said Ms. Kral.

The AFT provides liability insurance — up to $1,000,000 — for qualifying claims and charges arising out of an educator’s employment activities. The Occupational and Liability Insurance plan is automatic for members in good standing, and provides broad protection for legal defense costs and court judgments.

**Union Membership = Many Benefits**

“Your union is always here for you,” Ms. Kral reminded CTU members. “If you have problems at work, contact your chapter chair or UCC members. You are covered if you are traumatized by being bullied, harassed, or threatened; experience a secondary trauma; witness a violent act; or contract an infectious disease. If you are unsure if your incident qualifies, you are encouraged to file a claim to find out.

Many Benefits

**Support for labor unions is on the increase . . .**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Americans who say they approve of labor unions:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In 2009: 48%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In 2022: 71%</td>
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**Unions are stronger in the public sector . . .**

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<th>Percentage of union workers in public vs. private sector in 2021:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Public sector: 33.9% (teachers, firefighters, police, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private sector: 6.1%</td>
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October 31, 2022 is the deadline for federal student loan borrowers to get credit for loan payments that previously didn’t qualify for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) or Temporarily Expanded Public Service Loan Forgiveness (TEPSLF).

Under the limited PSLF waiver authorized by President Joe Biden, you can get credit for past payments even if you didn’t make the payment on time, didn’t pay the full amount due, or weren’t on the right repayment plan.

Cindy Antonio, CTU Trustee, K-8, and CTU’s point person for Public Service Loan Forgiveness, encouraged CTU members who qualify for the PSLF program to get their forms in on time to take advantage of this valuable opportunity to have their student loans forgiven, even some loans that did not previously qualify. There is a PSLF Help Tool on the StudentAid.gov website that can help you with the process.

If you have a type of student loan or repayment plan that does not qualify, you must first consolidate your loans into a qualified loan. Consolidation is when any or all of your federal student loans are combined, giving you one monthly payment.

To verify that you work for a non-profit (CMSD), you will need to complete an Employee Verification Form. You will also need to submit an Income Verification Form.

Ms. Antonio explained that CMSD and CTU have been collaborating to establish links on the District’s website and specific emails for employees to use to facilitate the loan forgiveness process. CMSD recently set up a new quick link for verifying employment and income information. The forms are available at CMSD Resources > Employment and Income Verifications. Email your completed forms to both Lucit@Cuyahogaoh and EmployeeRelations@clevelandmetroschools.org.

“But don’t delay!” Ms. Antonio stated. “Don’t wait until the last minute to complete and submit your PSLF form and apply for loan consolidation, if necessary. The process takes time, and the deadline is October 31, 2022. Don’t miss your chance to use this one-time limited waiver to get your student loan debt forgiven.”

CTU-Sponsored PSLF Workshops
For CTU members with student loan debt, Ms. Antonio organizes monthly informational workshops on the PSLF program. These sessions have helped CTU members become more knowledgeable about student loans and save significant amounts on their student loan debts.

Ms. Antonio is also available to answer individual questions about student loan issues after school hours. You can reach her by email at cantonio@ctu279.org.

COVID-19 Forbearance Ends in 2023
The COVID-19 emergency relief for federal student loans — the pause in loan payments — has been extended through December 31, 2022. From the beginning of the pandemic until December 31, 2022, borrowers have been able to suspend repayments with no penalties and no additional interest charged.

“Repayments will begin again in January 2023,” Ms. Antonio said, “so be prepared to make your regular monthly loan payments after the new year.”
The CTU Grievance Team wrapped up a greater-than-usual number of summer (June-August) grievances, reported Debbie Paden, Grievance Co-Director and 3rd Vice President, Senior/ Special. “We saw a huge uptick in grievances, and almost every one dealt with compensation problems, such as class size overages, incorrect steps, wage errors, other pay issues.” By contract, overage payments are to be processed by July 15.

The union filed two major class action grievances regarding the Summer Learning Experience, one about incorrect hiring for SLE positions, and another about substitutes not being called by seniority. The union is waiting for arbitrator's responses on these. Other SLE grievances that could not be included as part of either class action filing were presented by the Grievance Team individually, resulting in a busy summer for Grievance Team members.

“CMSD and CTU have been meeting to work on the problems with overage payments,” said Jillian Ahrens, Grievance Co-Director and 3rd Vice President, K-8. “The verification process is cumbersome, but the District wants to improve it. We are working together to identify problems and how to avert them in the future.”

Another class action grievance was filed about the June 20 pay snafu. June 19 fell on Sunday, so the new Juneteenth federal holiday was officially celebrated on June 20 — and banks were closed. According to the contract, the CMSD payday should have been moved ahead to June 17, but instead some employees were paid on June 21. CTU members who were harmed by the late payday filled out a form, and remedy payments were made to grievants.

Grievance 101

The CTU Grievance Team encourages every CTU member to read the new contract book. The CBA is also available on the CTU website, www.ctu279.org. If you think the contract is being violated, file a grievance. It’s not personal — it’s business. And it’s your right as a union member.

Step 1 grievances are filed at the building level. Present the completed grievance to your principal or supervisor. They have three working days to respond. If they don’t respond in three days, or if the issue is not resolved to your satisfaction, complete a Step 2 Appeal form. Send the completed Step 1 form, all related paperwork and evidence, and the completed Step 2 Appeal form to grievances@ctu279.org. All grievance forms are available online at the CTU website.

“Be sure you have completed all parts of the grievance forms,” added Ms. Paden. “Don’t email incomplete grievances or leave out evidence — that delays the process. If you have questions, ask your chapter chair for help or call the CTU.”

Both Ms. Paden and Ms. Ahrens warned CTU members “not to sit on money issues.” Check your pay each pay period, and check overages and other compensation to be sure you have been paid correctly.

CTU Grievance Team

The members of the CTU Grievance Team are: Co-Directors Jillian Ahrens, 3rd Vice President, K-8 and Debbie Paden, 3rd Vice President, Senior/ Special; Mary Moore, 3rd Vice President, K-8; Cherylene Jones-Williams, Paraprofessional Chapter Chairperson; Cheryl Neylon, Sergeant-at-Arms; and Jim Wagner, K-8 Trustee.
The CTU Leadership Retreat is back! “We are thrilled to be holding our first Leadership Retreat for CTU chapter chairs and Executive Board members in two years,” announced Ms. Rzucidlo. Exercising caution around COVID-19, the union did not hold its annual retreat in the fall of 2020 or 2021.

The two-day overnight retreat will be held at Geneva State Park and Lodge October 27-28. Ms. Rzucidlo and Jim Wagner, CTU Treasurer, are co-chairs of the event.

“To support teachers as they transition to the new software reporting system for grading, it is important for CTU leaders at every level: for educational purposes, for sharing ideas, and for developing collegiality,” added Ms. Rzucidlo. “The Leadership Retreat is important for CTU leaders at every level: for educational purposes, for sharing ideas, and for developing collegiality.”

The sessions are staffed by 30 PowerSchool-trained support specialists — CTU members helping CTU members.

“The PowerSchool Specialists were instrumental in assisting the district in making sure this process worked for CMSD,” explained Mr. Baumgartner. “I’d like to give a huge shout-out to Sara Baldassar from Memorial School who has taken the lead with the Professional Learning Communities and all the scheduling of office hours for the PowerSchool Specialists.”

To support teachers as they transition to the new software reporting system, the CTU will continue to offer virtual after-school help sessions, Monday through Friday from 3:00-6:00 p.m. through the first quarter of the school year. The sessions are staffed by 30 PowerSchool-trained support specialists — CTU members helping CTU members.

In addition, Mr. Baumgartner and Rosa Morales Cruz, CTU Educational Issues Chairperson, held two in-person drop-in training sessions for CTU members on August 23-24 at Max Hayes High School and East Professional Center.

“The CTU will be in ongoing weekly contact with the district regarding PowerSchool,” Mr. Baumgartner said, “to address any problems and ‘put out fires’ as we go. The union is trying to give as much support to our members as we have the capacity to do, to help them use PowerSchool.”

CTU members are encouraged to take advantage of the virtual support sessions if they need help with PowerSchool.

News on Negotiations

“The new contract books have been printed and delivered to CTU members — now everyone needs to read it!” encouraged Mary Moore, CTU Director of Negotiations and 3rd Vice President, K-8. The contract book includes the current three-year Collective Bargaining Agreement, important tables, Memoranda of Understanding, and a comprehensive index.

Members should refer to the Collective Bargaining Agreement if they have questions or concerns about something happening in their buildings, she added. “There’s a good index available in the book — use it.”

In other positive negotiations news, the union and district extended the MOU for CMSD’s COVID-19 hotline. The number is 216-838-9355. The hotline is available to all staff, but nurses especially should contact the hotline with any COVID-19 issues, to get the latest Health Department guidelines.

Ms. Moore thanked CTU members who took the time to thoughtfully participate in the union’s online surveys, especially the Working Conditions survey at the end of last school year. “Your candid, specific responses will help the CTU Negotiating Team set priorities for future negotiations — now only two short years away — and make appropriate decisions to improve teaching and learning conditions in our schools.”

Professional Issues

PowerSchool Transition Delayed

The transition from eSchool to PowerSchool’s technology system for grade reporting experienced delays, causing confusion as the new school year began. “PowerSchool’s transition process was behind schedule, and not everything was in the system correctly at the beginning of the school year,” said Mark Baumgartner, CTU Director of Professional Issues. “But this was not a CMSD problem — the problem was with PowerSchool.”

According to Mr. Baumgartner, CEO Eric Gordon has had daily contact with high-level PowerSchool executives, working to fix problems and expedite the implementation process. And as of this printing, PowerSchool was ready for interims. The district has shared directions with teachers on the steps to input the interim scores.

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CTU members are encouraged to take advantage of the virtual support sessions if they need help with PowerSchool.
The CTU Social Committee honored 36 recent retirees and their guests at the annual CTU Retiree Luncheon on September 10 at Windows on the River.

“Of all my duties with the Social Committee, hosting the Retirement Luncheon is my favorite,” said Cassandra Carter, Social Committee Chairperson and Member-at-Large, K-8. “I love being able to recognize retired CTU members for their service to Cleveland children. And this is my last year as a host — I’m looking forward to attending the luncheon next fall as a new retiree!”

CTU President Shari Obrenski welcomed guests to the luncheon and congratulated retirees, acknowledging their years of work to educate and care for CMSD students. She read Robert Fulghum’s “All I Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten.” Andrea Dockery-Murray, CTU Trustee-at-Large, read a poem and Dorothy Fair, Trustee, Senior/Special, gave the invocation before lunch.

Following lunch, Hazel Hicks, President of CTU’s retiree union affiliate chapter, NEO AFT 279-R, encouraged retirees to stay active in union activities by participating in the retiree chapter. CTU retirees receive a complementary first year of membership in 279-R.

Three Executive Board members, Treasurer and Bargaining Unit Director Michael Kulcsar and former Nurses Chapter Chairs Patricia Forrai-Gunter and Sherdina Williams, were honored for their service to the CTU. Retirees who had served as CTU Chapter Chairs were also honored: James Cregar, Meg Ehlinger, Sandra Logan, Judy Miles, and Rudy Towns.

Retirees were called individually to receive personal congratulations from President Obrenski and Ms. Carter. Members of the Social Committee presented each retiree with a gift from the union: a crystal apple with blue laser-engraved CTU emblem.

The Cleveland Teachers Union extends its congratulations — and best wishes for long, healthy, happy retirements — to the members of the Class of 2022!
School Founder & CEO Visits Planning Centers

by Lakisha Tuggle
PCIA, William Rainey Harper

CMSD Planning Centers are known around the United States for successfully replacing a punitive-style concept with a Restorative Practice-centered approach. The CMSD Planning Center concept is based on creating a safe space where scholars have the opportunity to deescalate, reflect, and come up with appropriate strategies for the challenges that they are presented with daily.

Since the inception of CMSD’s Planning Centers, school leaders across the country have visited Cleveland to “see how the magic unfolds” in Planning Centers. Last spring, select Planning Center Instructional Assistants (PCIAs) and administrators welcomed Bill Kent of St. Louis, Missouri’s BioMe School for tours and sit-down conversations centered around the importance of Social-Emotional Learning.

Mr. Kent and Patricia Tilow, CMSD Humanware Partner (Networks 2 & 4), joined William Rainey Harper’s PCIA Lakisha Tuggle and Principal Dr. Ajayi Monell. The focus of their conversation included the importance of stakeholder buy-in. In order for a healing-centered environment to be successful, community partners, parents, scholars, and staff must collectively recognize and embrace the importance of a safe space like Harper’s “Zen Den” (Planning Center).

While in Cleveland, Mr. Kent also visited Garfield’s Planning Center, facilitated by PCIA Larry Calhoun. Mr. Calhoun explained that as a successful PCIA, you must really buy into the concept yourself. You must also have a principal who buys into the Restorative Practice approach as well. The principal has to be your main support because you are literally working by yourself in the Planning Center. You must also have a strong presence about yourself as a PCIA.

The resounding message conveyed to Mr. Kent centered around team buy-in. It is important that all stakeholders are on the same page when implementing a therapeutic, non-punitive method. CMSD participants extended an open invitation to his team to visit again, so they can get a chance to experience our progressive approach first-hand.

Paras and CMSD Summer Learning Experience

The second CMSD Summer Learning Experience program included opportunities for paraprofessionals from all classifications to engage, interact, and participate in daily structured activities with Cleveland’s scholars. Paraprofessionals greeted and monitored students, and enjoyed opportunities to participate in fun summer enrichment programs, such as the Drums and Vibrations curriculum. An example of one of the curriculum prompts, called Daily Provocations, is: does vibration make sound or does sound make vibration? Thanks to the paras and other educators who worked in CMSD’s exciting summer programs and provided extra summer learning opportunities for Cleveland students!

Election 2022 Campaign Update

From Shauntina Thornton
CTU Legislative Committee Chair

The CTU will be coordinating with the North Shore AFL-CIO. We’ll list all of our events on the Labor 2022 Calendar. Events can be found here: https://northshoreaflcio.org/events.

Check your email ACTION NETWORK with more information about election events and other ways to participate.

Want to learn more about the election? There is a great article summarizing the candidates and issues that are on the ballot this fall. You can access it online at the Ohio Capital Journal. Go to their homepage at ohiocapitaljournal.com and select the link Politics & Gov. Search Your 2022 Ohio Midterm Election Guide. The August 24, 2022 article by Morgan Trau covers statewide candidates, ballot measures, state legislators, members of Congress, appellate judges, and the voting schedule.

Election Day is Tuesday, November 8, 2022. Early voting begins on Wednesday, October 12, 2022. See you soon at one of our campaign activities!

Scan the QR code on the front page of this issue to sign up with CTU today.

Shauntina Thornton, CTU Legislative Chair: “CTU needs two hours of your time before November 8th. Contact her at sthornton@ctu279.org or use the QR code on page 1.

LABOR DAY PARADE

CTU members display their union pride in the 11th Congressional District Labor Day Parade along Cleveland’s Kinsman Avenue, September 5, 2022.
AFT Partners with Hungry for Music

The AFT launched a new partnership with the nonprofit Hungry for Music, which distributes new and refurbished musical instruments to kids and school programs in need — similar to what the AFT does with books in its Reading Opens the World campaign. The collaboration began this summer in Cleveland with CTU members at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame’s Fam Jam. Pictures of the CTU event are featured with the article on the AFT website.

AFT Secretary-Treasurer Fedrick Ingram got the partnership going. As a professional musician and former high school band director, he grasps the importance of bringing children the joy of music. He also understands the need, because he attended public school in a Miami neighborhood where families like his couldn’t always afford to buy or rent musical instruments.

To kick off the new partnership, the Cleveland Teachers Union joined Hungry for Music in a Reading Opens the World event at the annual summer Fam Jam in June. The AFT, in collaboration with longtime partner First Book, provided hundreds of free children’s books on musical topics, such as the lives of musicians like Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Elvis Presley, and Mahalia Jackson; Native American music; the history of the blues; and more. The collection included several Spanish-language editions.

Volunteers distributed nearly 400 books in CTU goody bags on a beautiful weekend day, accompanied by a dynamic drum performance by the Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Ohio and fun activities such as a musical instrument “petting zoo” with instruments young children could touch, hear, and learn about. By the end of the day, Hungry for Music had received a donation of an acoustic guitar destined for an aspiring young rock star, and had distributed drums and other guitars to children in the Boys & Girls Clubs.

At each of these events, the AFT affiliate sets up a booth next to Hungry for Music. AFT members distribute new, music-related children’s books, while Hungry for Music both collects donations of musical instruments and distributes new and refurbished instruments to kids in need who have requested them.

Hungry for Music also has a Title I musical instrument program up and running. Through October 15, music teachers, special educators, social workers, and paraprofessionals at Title I schools who work in music or music therapy can request free instruments for children who cannot participate because of financial hardship. The program limits requests to a few instruments per teacher and is already running low on inventory this fall. It sends instruments to Title I schools, after-school music programs, and social workers whose clients would benefit from music therapy.

You can follow Hungry for Music on its website and Facebook. If you have a musical instrument lying around unused, you can donate it through a link in the article on the AFT website. Hungry for Music has a network of professional volunteers who repair instruments and supply parts like picks, bows, strings, and cases.

[Source: Annette Licitra, AFT website]

Romanian Educators Meet with CMSD School Psychologists, Counselors

by Laura Gabel

CMSD School Psychologist

CMSD school psychologists and counselors met with a group of Romanian educators at Max Hayes High School on August 17, to share information and resources on working with Ukrainian refugees. The Council of International Programs USA hosted the event.

The Romanian educators and CMSD school psychologists and counselors discussed many topics, including working with refugees, helping students dealing with trauma, and working with bilingual children.

Our CMSD team hopes that this very engaging meeting provided helpful information and ideas for these educators to assist their new Ukrainian students.

[Source: Annette Licitra, AFT website]
Say Yes!
Is Now in Every School

“Every CMSD school is now a Say Yes school,” said Mark Baumgartner, CTU Director of Professional Issues and CTU’s representative on the Board of Directors of the Cleveland Transformation Alliance.

The 2022-2023 school year is the fourth and final year of implementation of Say Yes Cleveland. Say Yes provides tuition gap-closing scholarships to all eligible Cleveland graduates who attend an Ohio public four-year university, two-year college, or eligible trade/certificate program.

While the scholarships are valuable, just as important are the critical supports Say Yes provides,” Mr. Baumgartner asserted, “supports that are essential to ensure student success from pre-K through post-secondary education.”

Say Yes core services include a family support specialist working in each school, after-school and summer learning opportunities, and mental health and pro-bono legal services. The services assist students and their families, too. Say Yes implements a tech-based Postsecondary Planning System, which uses existing data about students to identify their progress and connect them to needed services.

The program unites the many existing services that are already serving a community’s children to share their data and work together. The collaboration helps the organizations better address students’ individual needs and connect them to additional support services from pre-K through post-secondary graduation.

Mr. Baumgartner credits the relationship between Say Yes Executive Director Diane Downing and the CTU, especially participating charter chairs, with improving the Cleveland program’s effectiveness. “Ms. Downing met with charter chairs when the program was first implemented, and listened to their concerns and frank comments about what was working and what needed improvement. That collaboration and team work laid the foundation for a successful program.”

Six local Cleveland entities are working collaboratively with each other and with Say Yes to provide support services to students: City of Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Cleveland Teachers Union, Cleveland Council of Administrators and Supervisors, and Cleveland Public Library.

The original Say Yes program was founded in 1987 by money manager George Weiss. He promised to prepare 112 Philadelphia sixth graders for college and to pay their college tuition if they graduated high school. In 2008, Say Yes grew to help entire communities make a similar commitment to every public high school student.

Say Yes Cleveland, which launched in January 2019, is the fourth community chapter in the country. The Cleveland rollout plan incorporated 15% of schools in 2019-20, an additional 25% in 2020-21, 30% more in 2021-22, and the remaining 30% in 2022-23.

As Cleveland entered its fourth year with full implementation, the Critique spoke with Diane Downing, Executive Director of Say Yes Cleveland.

**Critique:** What are you most proud of that Say Yes has accomplished in its first three years in Cleveland?

**Diane Downing:** It has been a whirlwind first three years, and even with the challenges posed by the COVID pandemic, we are extremely proud that we have completed our planned expansion to 100% of CMSD schools by this school year, putting our services in far more schools, far faster, than any other Say Yes community.

When COVID hit, it was clear that the need for support, intervention, and assistance for our students and their families was only growing larger and more urgent than it had been. We had to keep growing so we could help more students and families, who were facing a significant increase in challenges around mental health, food insecurities, as well as medical and legal assistance.

We are also extremely proud of the fact that this year, with only three classes of CMSD graduates having had access to Say Yes scholarships so far, we have already had 78 graduates from two-year colleges and career training programs, and even four-year colleges and universities. In these first three years, we’ve paid out over $5 million in Say Yes scholarships.

**Critique:** Can you comment on the relationship between Say Yes and the Cleveland Teachers Union and CTU educators?

**Diane Downing:** Say Yes Cleveland could never have achieved what we have so far without the support and leadership of CTU and CTU educators. CTU has been a partner from the beginning, playing a critical role in our Operating Committee. Most importantly, CTU educators have taken the lead in completing the Say Yes PPS Postsecondary Planning System surveys that allow us to monitor student progress. We will continue to work hard to stay open and receptive to regular feedback from CTU leadership and members, so we can maintain and improve this crucial relationship.

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**Social-Emotional Learning**

**Restorative Practices Program Expands**

The Phase 1 schools in CMSD’s Restorative Practices (RP) program received Day 2 training on September 23. The RP program for educators, from the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), is a part of CMSD-CTU’s social-emotional learning plan.

Participants are learning about fundamental theory and practices to foster positive classrooms and school cultures for students, staff, and parents. The program teaches strategies on how to set high expectations while being supportive, how to provide direct feedback and ask questions that foster accountability, and how to use the most effective methods to resolve common conflicts.

Schools who want to participate this school year can apply to be in Phase 2. Chapter chairs and principals got email links to use to apply, if their schools are interested. Participating schools will use two professional days for the training.

“Restorative Practices is a strong program with great potential benefits for our students, staffs, and school communities,” said Jillian Ahrens, CTU Lead on the Joint SEL/Humanware Committee. “It’s a quality, research-based program that can be especially beneficial now, as we all work to recover from the socialization losses after COVID-19.”

For information about IIRP and its programs, go to their website at https://www.iirp.edu.
Protecting Your Dues Money

Do you know how your CTU dues monies are allocated and dispersed? Who’s in charge of CTU funds?

It’s the job of the trustees and the treasurer to handle the union’s finances. They are the guardians of all CTU funds, and no bills or expenses are paid without their inspection and approval. The CTU Constitution lists the specific duties of the trustees and treasurer related to CTU finances.

The Trustees

CTU has five trustees: two K-8 Trustees, one Senior High/Specials Trustee, and two Trustees-at-Large. The K-8 trustees are Cindy Antonio and Bonnie Hedges. The senior/special trustee is Dorothy Fair. These three trustees are elected by members in their respective divisions in even-numbered years.

The two Trustees-at-Large are Mark Baumgartner and Andrea Dockery-Murray. They are elected in odd-numbered years by all CTU members in a city-wide election.

A major part of a trustee’s job is to review and approve all payments. Trustees meet to review vouchers for every single CTU expense. At least three of the five trustees must approve a voucher before any payment can be issued. In other words, nothing can be issued. The current trustees and treasurer are proud of decades of perfect audits of CTU finances, evidence of their fiscal responsibility.

Another important trustee duty is the annual CTU budget. Trustees develop a proposed budget that is discussed at the May Delegate Assembly, and after discussion, must be approved by chapter chairs and delegates. Once the annual budget is approved, trustees meet with committee chairs during the summer to discuss their proposed programs and allocate the funds that have been appropriated for the committees for the upcoming fiscal year.

The Treasurer

The CTU Treasurer has specific constitutional duties, too. The Treasurer’s responsibilities include: receiving all monies from all sources; issuing receipts; forwarding per capita dues to our affiliated unions; presenting monthly financial reports at meetings; maintaining records for the Auditing Committee; issuing checks based on the approved budget; handling CTU banking; and working with Executive Board and delegate Assembly on investments.

And More

In addition to their fiduciary work, CTU Trustees and the Treasurer are assigned other duties and responsibilities by the CTU President. Some work on specific programs or serve on joint CTU-CMSD committees, and some assist members with IPPD’s and other union issues such as disciplinary hearings.

Ms. Dockery-Murray chairs the Trustee Committee and serves on CMSD’s Equity and Inclusion Committee.

“Trustees are the guarantors of the CTU’s spending,” said Andrea Dockery-Murray. “We verify and certify or deny donations, invoices, and all payment vouchers. We make sure we do business with union venues and union-owned shops. We deal with monies and members.”

Mr. Baumgartner serves as CTU Director of Professional Issues. He was one of the coordinators of CTU’s Get Out The Vax (GOTVax) COVID-19 vaccination program, a partnership with the Urban League of Greater Cleveland.

“I am proud to be a trustee, and I appreciate the trust CTU members put in me to keep the finances of the union strong and honest,” said Mark Baumgartner. “Every year the budget is balanced and the audit is a success.”

Dorothy Fair is the CTU representative for the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) component of CMSD’s Humanware committee, and collaborates with SEL initiatives and activities in the district. “In addition to my Trustee duties, I’m proud to work with SEL programs and with the OFT Human Rights Committee,” she said. “Both include striving for more equity, diversity, and inclusion in our schools and in society.”

After teaching all day at Willson, Bonnie Hedges serves as a member of the District’s Local Professional Development Committee (LPDC) and as an IPPD point person for CTU. “I enjoy working with CTU members to help then write IPPD’s and get them approved,” said Bonnie Hedges. “I also work with Debbie Faden and Jim Wagner on the IPPD approval process. As a K-8 Trustee, I am fiscally responsible for your union dues, a responsibility I take very seriously. I work with all the trustees to develop the annual budget and ensure that CTU dues are spent properly and wisely.”

In addition to her Trustee duties, Cindy Antonio is CTU’s point person for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, and serves as Director of Member Mobilization.

“This former Chairperson of the Salary and Benefits Committee, I know the importance of staying on budget and making sure that CTU members’ dues money is being spent appropriately,” said Ms. Antonio. “I’m bringing those financial skills to my job as a K-8 Trustee.”

Treasurer Jim Wagner was previously a K-8 Trustee and brings that experience and knowledge of CTU finances to the office of Treasurer. He is a member of the Grievance Team, CTU’s IPPD help team, CMSD’s Equity and Inclusion Committee, and represents CTU members in disciplinary hearings.

“As Treasurer, I represent 4,000 members, and I’m accountable to all of them when it comes to CTU expenses and investments,” said Mr. Wagner. “It’s a big responsibility, but I’m up for the challenge. My past experience as a trustee has been helpful in the new office.”

Without the ongoing work of these six officers, the CTU would not function. And without their integrity as guardians of CTU funds, our union would not be as strong, as powerful, or as fiscally sound.
The conditions of the district are such that . . . now is the precisely right time to carefully plan for a successful handoff to the next leader of the Cleveland Municipal School District. It’s time to pass the baton.

– Eric Gordon, CMSD CEO, at the State of the Schools Address on September 21, 2022

The state of our schools in the days to come depends on the investment each and every one of us is willing to make now.

CMSD and CTU leadership, management and labor have a good working relationship.

“Over time, the space at the table for CTU has grown larger, with a systematic emphasis for the CEO on working together to solve problems,” credited President Obrenski. “That much-needed levy in November 2020. Through our cooperation, we were able to rally the community to support our students and our schools with a 20-mill levy, even as we were in the throes of a full-blown pandemic.”

CMSD’s Academic Gains

Before COVID-19, CMSD’s academic gains were outpacing school districts throughout Ohio and the nation. CMSD graduation rates had improved from 52.2% to 80.9%. The new state report card, released September 15, shows that students struggled during the pandemic, but Cleveland scores are already improving. Some categories have returned to pre-pandemic levels, and overall, CMSD was the highest performing of Ohio’s eight largest urban systems.

Although the graduation rate fell during the pandemic, it had been climbing each year for the past 11 years, setting a new high each year. The four-year graduation rate dropped 6.6 points, from 80.9% to 74.3%, but is expected to climb again as the pandemic wanes.

Two important measures of progress, success in closing achievement gaps and value-added, received four stars on the new report card, meaning that CMSD exceeded expectations in these areas. In the performance index that measures test scores, results returned to pre-COVID-19 levels. Notably, this was achieved despite the fact that CMSD has the highest rate of child poverty in the country.

CMSD was the only member of the Ohio 8 large urban systems to score four stars in gap closing, and CMSD and Toledo were the only districts to receive four stars in value-added.

The CEO gave credit to students, teachers, and families for the academic successes, saying that he asked teachers to stop “teaching to the test” and instead, challenge students with complex tasks. “When we do really great teaching, the test results will take care of themselves.”

CMSD Success Recognized

Under Mr. Gordon’s leadership, with collaboration from the CTU, the Cleveland District earned national attention for achieving growth that outpaced other school districts.

A study that the Council of the Great City Schools released in 2021 said urban districts were exceeding expectations when their scores were taken into account. It called CMSD a “window of opportunity” for students. A 2021 Education Week article included CMSD among a select group of U.S. districts that were beating the odds.

Not finished Yet

The CMSD news release announcing his resignation said that CEO Gordon began his tenure on a “one-year, prove-himself contract” and became CMSD’s longest serving superintendent in more than four decades, but he’s not finished yet. “I have always felt honored and privileged to lead this District,” the CEO said. “And I still feel that way. I will give nothing less than my best until the last day.”

President Obrenski said the union will miss his leadership and devotion to Cleveland kids, the schools, and the entire community. “We look forward to working with him in his last year as our CEO and wish him nothing but the best in his future endeavors.”

She encouraged CTU members that during this school year, when the CEO visits schools (as he will surely continue to do), they take a moment to thank Mr. Gordon for his service and wish him well. Added President Obrenski, “He will be missed.”

Search for New CEO Begins

In regards to the search for a new CEO, President Obrenski said the CTU will push for a seat at the table. The union will advocate for a new CEO who comes “with an unwavering value for labor’s voice.”

“It is essential that new leadership respects the gains that we have made and the work that we do, each and every day, understanding that CTU members are part of the solution—not the problem.”

For the first time, CMSD is the highest-rated urban district in Ohio.

CMSD, 11 as CEO.

His tenure as superintendent — the longest in over 40 years for Cleveland schools — provided much-needed stability for a school system known for revolving-door superintendents. The average tenure of an urban superintendent is less than three years, according to the CMSD News Bureau.

“Though CTU leaders and the membership have had some difficult times with our CEO over his tenure, we have always been able, at the end of the day, to work out our differences and find a solution and labor have a good working relationship.

The conditions of the district are such that now is the precisely right time to carefully plan for a successful handoff to the next leader of the Cleveland Municipal School District. It’s time to pass the baton.

Leading by example: CEO Eric Gordon, like President Obrenski and other CTU officers, got their first COVID-19 vaccine publicly at a CMSD vaccination site, encouraging staff to getvaxed so schools could reopen safely.
AFT Task Force Report on School Staff Shortage

Educators: Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?

“Stressful, frustrating, challenging, overwhelming, yet rewarding.”

Those are the most frequent words AFT President Randi Weingarten said she has heard from educators this year as they describe their jobs.

Teaching, an already hard job, is becoming unsustainable, she stated. The pandemic, combined with political culture wars, has made the last two years the toughest in modern times for educators. And on top of all of that, the unthinkable happened again, when gun violence took the lives of 19 students and two teachers in Uvalde, Texas.

“It’s hard not to be stressed when the pandemic has created so much disruption and uncertainty — when you’re trying to give students individualized attention, but your classes are too large, or you are pulled away to cover extra classes or have students added to yours because of the shortages of staff,” she explained. “It’s hard to help children recover from this pandemic when there is a crying lack of school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and nurses to support kids’ well-being. And the growing calendar and paperwork requirements tend to be more important to the powers-that-be than they are to children’s needs. And then there are the politics. It’s hard not to be stressed when you’re worried that you’ll be fired for teaching the basics about history and social studies.

Educators have already been dealing with tough situations for years: a lack of professional respect; inadequate support and resources; subpar compensation; untenable student loan debt; and a culture of blame that weaponizes standardized tests to attack public schools and public school teachers, contributing to endless paperwork with little educational value.

“The pandemic only underscored the reality that for a long time, teachers and school staff have lacked the climate, culture, conditions, and compensation to do their jobs,” she asserted. An AFT poll from this year showed that 75% of our teacher members said they would not recommend teaching to young people today. This must change, or America’s educational system will face a catastrophic shortage of qualified teachers.

In a July 2022 report, Here Today, Gone Tomorrow? What America Must Do to Attract and Retain the Educators and School Staff Our Students Need, AFT leaders from across the country made recommendations on what can be done to alleviate the educator shortage.

CTU President Shari Obrenski served on the task force. “I saw a post on social media that summed up the teacher shortage perfectly. It said that teachers are leaving because the profession has been made unattractive and unsustainable. And things won’t change until these issues are addressed: compensation; micro-management and management through fear; de-professionalism; overwork and make-work; and the politicization of curriculum,” she said.

The full report is available on the AFT website, www.aft.org.

Recommendations

The report includes recommendations in four major areas: Revitalize the Educator and School Staff Pipeline; Restructure Schools to Create Positive Working and Learning Conditions for All; Provide Sustainable and Commensurate Compensation and Benefits; and Utilize the Collective Voice and Strength of Our Union to Impact Change at All Levels.

The task force developed recommendations targeted for each area, and the specific actions that should be taken by federal, state, and local governments, school districts, and unions to deal with the educator shortage.

“We were asked to think big and bold on the task force,” said President Obrenski, “to envision student-centered, educator-led schools where dedicated people come to work and want to stay. We also looked at the daily realities facing public educators and students. We thought about how to create schools where teachers want to teach, students want to learn, and parents want to send their children. We thought about what needs to happen to create these schools — and stop the drain of educators from our profession. I encourage everyone to read the report on the AFT website.”

AFT leaders acknowledged that the recommendations constitute a big to-do list. And as there is no single cause of the teacher and school staff shortage, there will be no one-size-fits-all solution.

“Education is never ‘one sizes fits all,’” President Weingarten stated. “Some of these ideas will work better in some settings than others. The point is, they are all targeted toward giving teachers and school staff the time, trust, tools, training, and compensation they need. Build it and they will come — and stay.”

CTU Members Weigh In

In the CTU’s Working Conditions survey at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, CTU members confirmed the negative effect staff shortages had on them. Over 700 members, including teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers, representing 99% of CMSD work sites, responded to the survey.

In response to the statement, “There are enough of the following staff members at my school to get all of the necessary work done,” the percentage responses are as follows:

- Enough Teachers: 42% agreed or strongly agreed, 55% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- Enough Paraprofessionals: 41% agreed or strongly agreed, 54% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- Enough Related Service Providers: 33% agreed or strongly agreed, 55% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- Enough Mental Health Providers: 14% agreed or strongly agreed, 82% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- Enough Security Officers: 19% agreed or strongly agreed, 70% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Note: The two numbers may not total 100% because some responders selected “don’t know” as their response.

In response to another question, in the past month, how often have you felt physically and/or emotionally exhausted at the end of the work day, 79% of respondents said often, 18% said sometimes, and 3% said rarely or never.

Not surprisingly, the survey showed that a shortage of available substitutes led to missed planning time and lunches, which understandably led to the high numbers of reported exhaustion.

CMSD Staffing Efforts

“Actually, CMSD is doing better than many other urban districts when it comes to staffing shortages,” said President Obrenski. “We are still experiencing shortages in the traditionally hard-to-fill areas of math and science, and some special areas. And we definitely need more substitutes for both teachers and paraprofessionals. But overall, staffing is adequate in most areas. However, if the national shortage continues to get worse, it will
CDHR Committee

Don’t Miss These PD Opportunities!

“Be sure to register for the informative Professional Development sessions presented by the Civil, Democratic, and Human Rights Committee!”

Stephanie Henderson, CDHR Chairperson and Member-at-Large, K-8, reminded members.

The popular sessions cover timely, thought-provoking topics of interest to educators. You may be able to use the PD hours for Voluntary Professional Development (VPD) time or CEUs depending on your school’s AAP and UCC agreement. This varies from school to school.

Session times are 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. They will be presented on the Zoom platform and also in person at East Professional Center.

In order to attend, you must register online in advance through PowerSchool Professional Learning at ClevelandMetroSchools.org. Registration is limited. Raffles are held at the end of each session; winners must be “present” at the Zoom session or in person to win.

The Committee is finalizing topics and speakers for the monthly sessions. Look for information on the CTU website and in emails sent to Chapter Chairs each month, so you can get your registration request in on time to guarantee your spot!

The dates for the 2022-2023 CDHR sessions are:

- Wednesday, October 19, 2022
- Wednesday, November 9, 2022
- Wednesday, December 14, 2022
- Wednesday, January 11, 2023
- Tuesday, February 7, 2023
- Wednesday, March 8, 2023
- Wednesday, April 12, 2023
- Wednesday, May 10, 2023

THE PRESIDENT’S REPORT

by Shari Obrenski

2022: Determining Our Future

As the people who actually do the teaching, CTU members’ voices are important and we need to be heard.

You may not be aware of every benefit the union provides for you, or every right the union protects for you, until the day you lose them.

You may not understand the importance and influence of a strong, powerful union in your professional life, until the day it is weakened.

You may not think you personally need a union to protect you, represent you, and stand by you, until the day you do.

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The 2022-2023 school year is barely a month old as I’m writing this report, and it’s difficult to sum up all that has happened in just the past few weeks (whew!) and what the next weeks have in store for CTU educators.

Teacher and Staff Shortages
A lack of substitute teachers was an issue in every school last year, and in districts across the country. The CTU survey at the end of last school year found the lack of substitutes led to cascading problems, including exhaustion, burnout, and mental health issues. It created very difficult situations for CTU members who regularly lost planning time and lunch periods and covered extra classes.

The good news this year is CMSD and districts across the country found the lack of substitutes was improved, and we will continue to monitor it.

Our staffing problems are not unique, and it’s not hard to figure out why fewer young people are going into education overall. I believe it boils down to two things, compensation and respect. Other professions can offer higher pay and less stress for the same level of college studies. However, most teachers don’t go into the profession for the money, although we expect to make a fair living wage and have a decent retirement.

Respect — or lack of it — is a major factor in why teachers are leaving and why there are fewer replacements. We educators wear many hats as we do our jobs: teachers, social workers, standardized test gurus, healthcare providers, guidance counselors, and now counselors.

When the pandemic hit, it exposed all the problems that existed in education. Educators kept doing their jobs, even as more and more was put on our plates, and nothing was removed.

Then, to make things even more difficult, we have to deal with meddling from lawmakers who know nothing about teaching and don’t want to hear our voices.

That’s what’s really important to us: having our voices heard and valued in the decision-making process. We want to be part of the solution instead of being ignored and condemned as part of the problem. How can we change this situation? Keep reading...

Which Way for Ohio and the Nation?
The 2022 midterm elections are only weeks away now, and early voting begins October 12. I know you have heard it before: “This election is the most important one.”

But as we have all experienced (especially in the last six years), elections really do have consequences, for better or worse. Our votes and our activism do make a difference. And, the most important election really is the upcoming election, because that election will determine the immediate future course of our communities, our state, and our nation.

We are experiencing a nationwide teacher shortage. It was exacerbated by the pandemic, but it didn’t begin then. It has been getting worse for years, as societal problems, intrusive politics, and onerous laws have made the profession of teaching more and more difficult.

The choices are clear. Do you want legislators who support public schools, who will vote to fully fund them, and who will provide the services needed for every child to succeed? Or do you want legislators who will give more public tax dollars to private schools, who want to limit the power of unions and take away educators’ voices? We are on the precipice — we must take a stand for ourselves, for our profession, and for our students and their families. Or we can sit back and allow those who want to destroy us to succeed.

In November, we have a real opportunity to move our state and our nation in a good direction, to support democracy, inclusion, and progress. I am hopeful about the future. Hope is a good quality.

However, hope is not a strategy. We need effective strategies and deliberate actions now, to protect our profession, our future, and our democracy.

Hope is not a strategy. We need effective strategies and deliberate actions now, to protect our profession, our future, and our democracy. We need your help.

What can CTU members do? First, VOTE. Vote early, if possible. Stuff happens. Make sure your vote counts by voting early, either in person or by mail. It is the best way to make a difference. And the most important one.”