

The Morgan Hill Teacher

Morgan Hill Federation of Teachers

CFT / AFT / AFL-CIO / Local 2022

16450 South Monterey Rd., #3, Morgan Hill, CA 95037
(408) 779-2316 • FAX (408) 779-1169 • www.mhft.org

August 12, 2014

Welcome Back!

We hope that you have enjoyed a wonderful summer, filled with family, friends, adventure and relaxation. And that you are now ready to return to the chaotic but vibrant world of school. We wish all of you a successful and rewarding year. Please remember that we are here for you if you need us. And that we are only as strong as our commitment to one another, and to the students we teach.

TWO CHARTER PETITIONS FILED WITH MHUSD

On June 26, the district was served a petition from **Voices Charter** to open a K-8 charter school within the district for the 2015-2016 school year. This charter management company specializes in a dual immersion model for primarily ELL and economically disadvantaged students.

On July 8, **Navigator** filed another petition to open a K-8 charter school within our district for the 2015-2016 school year. Most of you will remember that the model for this charter management company is to focus on English Language Arts and Mathematics to promote high test scores on standardized tests. They also use large computer labs with aides rather than teachers.

If their charters are approved, both schools would start with lower grades and work their way up through the eighth grade. As you know, the first public hearing for both charters was held yesterday, August 11. The MHUSD Board will vote on both petitions on September 23. It is critically important for our MHUSD board to hear from all of our community throughout this process.

MHFT OFFICE STAFF

Our local office is staffed every day (in the afternoons – we are all teaching in the mornings) to do the ongoing work of representing our members. This year, the office staff will be Gemma Abels, Terri Knudsen, Andrea Kusanovich, Theresa Sage, and Lori Shoemaker. Please call us if you have any contract issues.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETINGS

Executive Council (MHFT Officers plus site Building Reps) meets regularly throughout the year, typically twice a month, from 3:45 to 5:30 pm at the Federation Office. Meetings are open to all members. The schedule is posted at www.mhft.org.

BUILDING REP ELECTIONS

Nominations are open through August 20 for Building Reps and Alternates for each school site. If you would like to represent your colleagues, please call to put your name in nomination. Elections will be held at the sites August 22-25. Please keep an eye on your staff mailbox for your ballot, and be sure to vote.

Board MEETING SITE PRESENTATIONS

Again this year, each site will be giving a short presentation to the school Board on a designated day. The theme for these presentations will be “Unity and Community.” The schedule will be posted at www.mhft.org.

If you would like to participate in your site’s presentation, please contact your Building Rep. It is very important for both the Board and the community to be made aware of the great things that are happening at our schools. If you do not want to be a part of the presentation, please keep the date clear so that you can still go show your support for your school.

MHFT/MHUSD CONTRACTS

Revised contracts have been published and are available for you to read on the district’s website and the MHFT website. Building Reps, MHFT Officers, and site administrators also have hard copies, if you would like to look at one. And if you’d like your very own copy, there are a few available.

HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE; STIPENDS COMMITTEE

Both of these joint District-MHFT committees will resume in mid-September. If you are interested in joining either of these committees, contact MHFT President Theresa Sage.

PARENT COMMUNICATION & GRADES

The District will be focusing on improving parent communication surrounding grades this year. This is an important professional responsibility, and is also a focus of the California Standards for the Teaching Profession. Please be conscious of this expectation as you set up your classes for the new school year.

PAYROLL CHANGES

Building Reps have hard copies of the new salary schedule, and will post them at sites. The new schedule is also posted at www.mhft.org.

Also, the district has moved to paperless direct deposit. Login information and directions will be sent to all teachers. You will also be able to monitor your sick leave through this system. Those who have signed up to receive paper checks will still receive paper checks.

Whether your pay is by direct deposit or by paper check, PLEASE BE SURE TO EXAMINE YOUR PAY STUB CAREFULLY to make sure there are no errors, either in step & column placement or in your deductions.

PERSONAL NECESSITY LEAVE CLARIFICATION

By state law, districts may allow teachers up to 7 days of personal necessity leave per year. HOWEVER, this does not mean that we can just take a day whenever we want for any reason. Personal necessity does require prior administrator approval, except in emergency situations. Please do not code your medical appointments as personal necessity; those are correctly coded as sick leave.

EXPIRING CREDENTIALS

Be sure to check the date of your teaching credentials. It is your professional responsibility to be sure that you have a valid teaching credential that is appropriate to your assignment.

If you allow your credential to expire, the county WILL NOT issue you a paycheck. Please go to the CTC website to check the date and keep current. Keep in mind that it can take several months for a renewal to be issued.

INCREASE IN UNION DUES KEPT TO A MINIMUM

The MHFT Constitution sets our local dues at 1.89% of Step I, Column I on the salary schedule. In addition, we collect CFT and AFT dues from our members, and pass them along to our parent organizations. When there are annual increases in CFT and AFT dues, those are called pass-throughs and they are automatically added to our dues.

Whenever we negotiate a raise in salary, an increase in our local dues results mathematically. According to this formula, our local dues this year should go up by \$9.11 per month. The CFT pass-through of .72 per month, and the AFT pass-through of .49 per month, would bring the total increase to \$10.32.

At the MHFT Executive Council meeting on Aug. 6, Federation leadership took the position that the full increase resulting from our negotiated raise is not necessary at this time. Therefore, the Executive Council adopted a more modest local increase of \$2.84 per month. When combined with the AFT and CFT pass-throughs, this results in a total increase of \$4.05 per month (from \$107.95 to \$112.00). This is a total increase of 3.76%.

These increases are needed to enable our national, state and local organizations to continue to be strong advocates for the education profession and for public schools and students. This modest dues increase at the local level is necessary for MHFT to maintain and staff our office, continue to defend and improve our contract, and protect the rights of unit members in our district. The new union dues rate will take effect September 1.

Please contact Terri Eves Knudsen at the MHFT Office if you have any questions or concerns.

STRATEGIC CAMPAIGN INITIATIVE GRANT

MHFT was awarded a \$5,000 grant by CFT, to be matched by MHFT, for community outreach. We will be using the funds to continue our effort to get out a positive message in the community, and to promote connecting our communities to our neighborhood schools to support all students.

Because of this program, we will be identifying one Outreach Organizer (a teacher) per site, to organize 3 outreach efforts throughout the year and take on a few other responsibilities. The stipend for these positions will be \$500 per year.

We will also be needing an Outreach Leader, who will work with site organizers, plan 2 district-wide events, and attend CFT trainings. The stipend for this position is \$1,000.

Finally, we have two COPE (Committee on Political Education) positions available: Political Issues Organizer (\$1500 stipend), and COPE Chair (\$995 stipend). These are critically important positions, ideally suited for the activists among us!

Building Reps have applications for all of these positions, and you can also find them on mhft.org. To apply, send letter of intent - due by August 22.

COPE ACCOUNT NEEDS REPLENISHING

We had quite a few COPE (Committee on Political Education) expenses last year, due to the intense charter battle we fought. As a result, our COPE account (which is kept separate from our general fund) is running low. We know that we will need an infusion of funds to fight the battles looming on the horizon this year, and it is important that we do so. In the primary election this fall, we will be focusing primarily on the MHUSD and SCCOE school board elections, and to a lesser extent on the State Superintendent of Schools election.

In order to meet these needs, the Executive Council approved a monthly transfer of \$2 per member from the MHFT general fund to the MHFT Cope Account for 5 months. This will not result in increased dues for our members; it is simply a shifting of funds between budgets. A voluntary donation COPE drive will be held to raise some more money for this account later this year.

**MHFT POLITICAL ENDORSEMENTS
FOR NOVEMBER 4, 2014 SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS**

There will be four seats up for election on the MHUSD Board, along with the Santa Clara County School Board District 7 seat (which covers Morgan Hill, and is currently held by Julia Hover-Smoot). It is extremely important that all of these seats be held by people who believe in and care about public education. Last year, it became eminently clear to us that we must take an active role in campaigning not only for MHUSD Board Member candidates, but also for members of the County Board who are not hostile to our schools.

MHFT will hold endorsement interviews for these positions right away. All members are more than welcome to attend and participate in this process:

Tuesday, August 12th at 3:45 pm at the MHFT office

There are six candidates running for four seats on the MHUSD Board:

Ron Woolf (former Britton teacher & MHFT Building Rep, and current board member)

Donna Foster-Ruebusch (former Live Oak Teacher & MHFT President)

Stephen Klem

David Girard

Gino Biorgioli

Janine Moreno

Claudia Rossi (current MHUSD board member) is challenging **Julia Hover-Smoot** for her seat on the Santa Clara County Board of Education.

TASTE OF MORGAN HILL BOOTH: SEPTEMBER 27 – 28

We will have a booth at this fun street fair, in order to promote our schools in the community, and our endorsed candidates. Each site will have a 2-hour shift assignment. Please consider signing up to help out at this very positive and important event! This community loves its teachers, and the more they see your lovely faces, the more good will we spread.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING MEETINGS

August 21 is the next MHFT Executive Council meeting. All members are welcome to attend.

August 23 will be the MHUSD Board Meeting charter petitions vote.

MHFT is now on Facebook! Please LIKE us!!

“WHY PUBLIC EDUCATION NEEDS TEACHERS UNIONS”

Alright, the lack of apostrophe in this title bothers your editor no end, but the article itself is good. Please read it! It will help you to defend your profession, if the need arises. (It's on the back of this page.)

And finally ...

Send an email to your editor (wallacej@mhusd.org), with the name of the AFT charter member quoted in the article on the back of this page, to be entered into a drawing for a ream of colored paper!

Why public education needs teachers unions

July 27, 2014 Gary Ravani

“I consider it important, indeed urgently necessary, for intellectual workers to get together, both to protect their own economic status and also, generally speaking, to secure their influence in the political field.” – Charter member of AFT Local 552 (c. 1938)

There have been many assertions made over time about the negative effects of teachers unions on student performance. A number of states have moved legislatively to curtail the collective bargaining rights of teachers and, indeed, some states have never allowed teachers’ collective bargaining.

Conservative critics of teachers unions – the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, for example – [claim there is no relationship](#) between high levels of union membership and high levels of student achievement. There are 10 states where there is little or no collective bargaining by teachers. If Fordham and other teachers union critics are right, these states should demonstrate student achievement that ranks very high, or at least above the national average, on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). According to commentary in the [Washington Post](#) by Matthew Di Carlo, senior fellow at the Albert Shanker Institute, “out of the ten [non-union] states only one (Virginia) has an average rank above the median, while four are in the bottom ten and seven are in the bottom fifteen.” The article concludes that states “without binding teacher contracts are not doing better, and the majority are actually among the lowest performers in the nation.”

There are studies that refute the position of the conservatives and assert that teachers unions have a positive effect on student achievement. These include work done by researchers Brian Powell, Lala Carr Steelman and Robert Carini, [“Do Teacher Unions Hinder Educational Performance? Lessons learned from State SAT and ACT Scores,”](#) published in the Harvard Educational Review (Winter 2000), as well as [“Teachers’ Unions and Collective Bargaining Agreements: Roadblocks to Student Achievement & Teacher Quality or Educational Imperatives?”](#) The study concludes that “...excluding teachers from policy-making is dangerous because teachers have vital experience and knowledge and should play a prominent role in policy-making. Teachers are also essential advocates for their students because their needs are bound up with the needs of their students to the extent that concessions for teachers benefit students and enhance teacher quality and student achievement.”

Many argue that, regardless of the number of studies pro or con on the teachers union/student achievement question, it is difficult to draw more than correlational relationships, not causal ones, on the issues. They argue that student demographics, state spending and other policies, as well as the economic status of the states are more important drivers of student achievement. What can be concluded looking at NAEP, ACT and SAT scores state by state, though, is that teacher unionization does not guarantee low student achievement and a lack of unionization does not guarantee high achievement. Teacher unionization does allow for teachers to have a stronger voice in professional matters and also allows them “to secure their influence in the political field.” State education funding per student tends to be higher in unionized, higher achieving states.

Other [educational experts have spoken out](#) on the topic of teacher unionization.

- Diane Ravitch, in her blog, notes that unions give teachers a voice in policy decisions and allow them to be advocates for higher education spending.
- Linda Darling-Hammond is a Stanford University education professor and chairs California’s Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Darling-Hammond asserts it is the education professionals who hold the keys to successful school reform: “We need the union of professionals to step up and say we care how our profession will be treated.”

The self-styled reformers frequently use international test scores to emphasize that U.S. economic competitiveness is being sacrificed to the “self-interest” of adult educators and the unions that represent them. (They never note that when scores are controlled for poverty the U.S. scores near the top.)

Finland is a small country that typically scores near the top in the vaunted international tests. Do teachers unions have any inhibiting effects on Finland, where 95 percent of teachers are unionized? According to Pasi Sahlberg, a director at the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and now a visiting professor at Harvard, “Without the union, we really cannot implement anything. Its role is securing and protecting the rights of teachers. ... It’s a very important part of the system.”

Another voice on the efficacy of teachers unions is that of the AFT charter member whose quote begins this essay. You have likely heard of him. His name was Albert Einstein.

Gary Ravani taught middle school for more than 30 years in Petaluma. He served for 19 years as president of the Petaluma Federation of Teachers, is currently president of the California Federation of Teachers’ Early Childhood/K-12 Council, and is a vice-president of the CFT. He chairs the CFT’s Education Issues Committee.