

Oroville Secondary Teachers Association

## TEACHER TALK

<http://www.ostahome.org>

*All articles are submitted by OSTA unit members. Please submit them to  
Linda Draper at LPHS e-mail [ldraper@ostahome.org](mailto:ldraper@ostahome.org)*

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### Executive Board for 2009-2010

**President:** Larry Cobbler (LP)    **Vice President:** Steve King (O)    **Treasurer:** Steve Wolf (O)  
**Secretary:** Leanna Felardo (O)    **Publicity:** Linda Draper (LP)    **Research:** Shane Walter (LP)  
**Policy:** Rodger Townsend (O)    **Membership:** Mike Caratenuto (O)    **Political Action:** Lisa Avila (LP)  
**Board Rep:** Carol Anderson (O)    **Grievance:**    **PHS Site Rep:** Scott Martin (PHS)  
**OHS Site Rep:** Teisha Hase (O)    **LP Site Rep:** Melody Mayfield (LP)    **Ad Sch Rep:** Susan Hoopes (OAS)

**Head Negotiator 09-10:** Scott Martin (PHS)

**Negotiator 08-10:** Nannette Walker (LP)    **Negotiator 09-11:** Teisha Hase (O)

**Negotiator 08-10:** David Gnesda (LP)    **Negotiator 09-11:** Steve King (O)

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*Note: Meetings are held the first TUESDAY of the month at the Western  
Pacific Brewery Restaurant (formerly The Depot) at 3:30 p.m. You are always welcome.*

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### President's Corner

By Larry Cobbler

I am calling on the general membership to step up and join the election committee. I know we all are very busy, but this is a task that desperately needs to be done. We have to follow our bylaws for elections, and this requires general membership involvement.

The Election Committee can not have any executive board members or individuals running for office as members of the committee. The job of the committee is to review the bylaws on elections; set up the election process timeline and procedures; ask for nominations; create and produce the ballots; issue, collect and count ballots; determine election results; and follow up with any possible challenges, etc.

The guidelines are spelled out in the bylaws, and we followed this procedure last year. I will be happy to meet with the election committee to help in the process, but I can not be directly involved.

I would like to have at least one to two individuals from each site on the committee. We need to get started on this process as soon as we come back from Winter Break.

Please consider volunteering for the Election Committee. Your association needs you.

Thanks and Happy Holidays!

### Winter Fling Reminder

By Linda Draper

Don't forget: The Winter Fling is Saturday, Dec. 19 at 6:00 p.m. at The River. This is a new venue for the annual dinner. The restaurant is on Montgomery Street in historic downtown Oroville; however, dinner will be served in The River banquet room, which is on Myers Street next to the Senior Citizens Center. The River has been open for the past year,

and it's quickly become known for its excellent steaks and seafood. The menu will be tri tip, pasta primavera, and rosemary chicken.

This is a great opportunity to enjoy each other's company; it's often difficult to find the time during the workday. We hope you'll come and enjoy an evening with your friends in OSTA.

## **Excerpt from “Fighting the Tests: A Practical Guide to Rescuing Our Schools” By Alfie Kohn**

Note: This article can be found online.

**Kohn raises some valid points about the current testing climate in our country. While these ideas aren't new, it does reinforce what so many of us feel about standardized testing.**

- 1.) **Don't let anyone tell you that standardized tests are not accurate measures.** The truth is they offer a remarkably precise method for gauging the size of the houses near the school where the test was administered. Every empirical investigation of this question has found that socioeconomic status (SES) in all its particulars accounts for an overwhelming proportion of the variance in test scores when different schools, towns, or states are compared. Ignorance would therefore be the most charitable explanation for the publication of charts that rank schools (or towns or states) by these scores – or for the practice of using those rankings to draw conclusions about classroom practice.
- 2.) **However, if this was the only problem with standardized tests, we probably would not have sufficient reason to work for their elimination.** After all, one could factor in SES in evaluating test results to determine the “true” score. And one could track a given school's (or district's) results over time; assuming no major demographic changes, a statistically significant shift in scores would then seem to be meaningful.
- 3.) **But here's the problem: even results corrected for SES are not very useful because the tests themselves are inherently flawed.** This assessment is borne out by research finding a statistical association between high scores on standardized tests and relatively shallow thinking. One such study classified elementary school students as “actively” engaged in learning if they went back over things they didn't understand, asked questions of themselves as they read, and tried to connect what they were doing to what they had already learned; they were classified as “superficially” engaged if they just copied down answers, guessed a lot, and skipped the hard parts. It turned out that the superficial style was positively correlated with high scores on achievement tests such as the CTBS (Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills). Similar findings have emerged from studies of middle school and high school students. These are only statistical relationships, of course – significant correlations, but not absolute correspondences. Many students think deeply *and* score well on tests, while many others do neither. But as a rule, better standardized exam results are more likely to go hand-in-hand with a shallow approach to learning than with deep understanding.
- 4.) **What is true of a student's thinking is also true of a teacher's instruction.** A rise in scores may be worse than meaningless: It may actually be reason for concern. What matters is how that change was brought about and what had to be sacrificed to make it happen. Across the nation, schools under intense pressure to show better

test results have allowed those tests to cannibalize the curriculum. Administrators have cut back or even eliminated vital parts of schooling: programs in the arts, recess for young children, electives for high schoolers, class meetings (and other activities intended to promote social and moral learning), discussions about current events (since that material will not appear on the test), the use of literature in the early grades (if the tests are focused narrowly on decoding skills), and entire subject areas such as science (if the tests cover only language arts and math). When students will be judged on the basis of a multiple-choice test, teacher may use multiple-choice exercises and in-class tests beforehand. (This has been aptly called the “dumbing down” of instruction....). Teachers may even place all instruction on hold and spend time administering and reviewing practice tests.

- 5.) **The people who work most closely with kids are the most likely to understand how harmful standardized testing is.** Many teachers – particularly those who are very talented – have what might be described as a dislike/hate relationship with these exams. But support for testing seems to grow as you move away from the students, going from teacher to principal to central office administrator to school board member to state board member, state legislator, and governor. Those for whom classroom visits are occasional photo opportunities are most likely to be big fans of testing and to offer self-congratulatory sound bites about the need for “tougher standards” and “accountability.” The more parents and other members of the community learn about these tests, the more critical of them – if not appalled by them – they tend to become.

### **Tell it to Teacher Talk**

I'd like to thank Susan Hoopes (OAS) for volunteering to be in charge of the Winter Fling. She has spent a great deal of time planning and organizing this event so it will be a great evening for everyone. **Thanks, Susan!**

- Anonymous

I wonder if Camille Upton (LP) realizes how much her efforts on the DAC are appreciated? She has been an articulate and thoughtful chairperson, and thanks to her staying on top of things people in this community have been made much more aware of what's going on than they would have been. **Great job, Camille.**

- Linda Draper

**TOM or FOE:** There were no nominations this month. Be sure to e-mail your nominations to Larry Cobbler, Linda Draper, or Leanna Felardo ([lfelardo@ouhsd.org](mailto:lfelardo@ouhsd.org)) by **January 5, 2010**, which is the next board meeting. This is a great way to show support and appreciation for your colleagues (TOM) or those in the community who assist us (FOE). Teachers who receive the TOM are awarded a nice plaque and a check for \$50 so they can go to dinner with their spouse or a friend.

### **OSTA Newsletter Distribution for 2009-10**

This issue of OSTA's *Teacher Talk* newsletter was distributed by e-mail. If you did not receive it, send me an e-mail ([ldraper@ostahome.org](mailto:ldraper@ostahome.org)) with your name, school, and correct personal e-mail address. We won't be using the district ouhsd.org e-mail accounts for OSTA business. Past issues of OSTA's *Teacher Talk* may also be viewed at [www.ostahome.org](http://www.ostahome.org)

