



Dear MPA Community,

At Menlo Park Academy, our mission is to “develop the potential of gifted children through an exemplary program, rewarding experiences, and nurturing the whole child.”

Menlo Park Academy does not wish to engage in a “war” over unionization. The MPA community deserves better, and this division must stop. The school asks our employees and our community to afford us the legal right to go through the petition process and continue to explain directly to our employees our stance on unionization, without being treated as adversaries. This isn’t a national fight that requires that the board be flooded with hundreds of form petitions from out of state or parents receiving flyers in carline. This is a discussion between an employer and employees about the best direction forward, and we hope to successfully find the best resolution for all parties involved.

Menlo is better than this.

Due to the recent events, we feel it necessary to share some information with the MPA community, in order to clarify the situation, add some additional context to what is occurring, and clarify our position. It also serves as an educational opportunity around collective bargaining, and what it does, and does not, actually solve for.

We call for an **honest** dialogue with the teachers at MPA. No one wins when we are divided.

Let’s work together!

Menlo Park Academy Board of Directors & Menlo Park Academy School Leadership



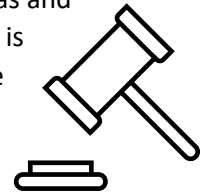
Dispelling Misinformation

The Menlo Park Academy Board of Directors is composed of professionals from a diverse array of backgrounds. They are also **unpaid volunteers**, despite Ohio law allowing board members to be paid for their service, we choose to forego that payment so that our limited funds can be directed to students and staff. **4 of 6 are current MPA parents**, 1 is an alumni parent, and the other an alumni grandparent. The board is not an outside group, but dedicated members of the community who work countless hours weekly to serve in the best interest of MPA.



67% of the MPA school board has been on the board for 2 years or less, with each term lasting 3 years. Many joined the board in direct response to seeing problems at the school, such as leadership turnover, and a desire to be a part of the solution.

Menlo Park Academy has not spent exorbitant funds on “union-busting.” The school has and will continue to send communications to staff explaining our position on unionization, as is our legal responsibility. We will ensure that the school’s long-time lawyers represent the school fairly in all legal proceedings as a result of this filing—we presume the union’s lawyers will do the same. A unionization petition is a legal filing, and thus requires a response from our lawyers. The school’s lawyer responding to a legal filing for an agency hearing should not be misrepresented.



The school has furniture and books, and many of our parent volunteers helped with arrangement and assembly of these items this summer. We are unsure why claims to the contrary have been made on Twitter. **MPA spent \$335K on instructional materials and classroom supplies** between July 2020 - October 2021 and **over \$80K on furnishings** (including desks at the request of teachers) just since July of this year. MPA’s students, parents, and building design necessitate flexible spacing, and flexible seating is a part of the academic model at MPA. Issues with classroom spacing should be communicated to school operations. **The board is not aware of any complaints regarding a lack of furniture or books that has not been addressed.**

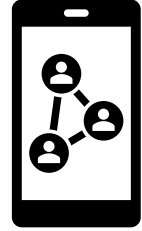
MPA provides several avenues for direct employee feedback to the board, in addition to daily opportunities for interaction with school leadership. These avenues include an annual board-staff retreat, skip-level meetings, staff surveys, and an anonymous suggestion box located in the building. We also hold board meetings twice monthly, have additional board committee meetings throughout the year, and are available by phone and email. **No MPA teacher has attended a board meeting in at least the past 2 years.** We do not expect our teachers to regularly attend board meetings, but if there are underlying concerns at the school that aren’t being addressed by school leadership, **we need to know.**



MPA has added a number of new support positions and modified the school administration structure as the direct result of staff feedback. These positions include, but are not limited to: Director of Curriculum, Director of Operations, Dean of Student Life, Volunteer Coordinator, HR & Finance Coordinator, Assistant School Director (interim), and an additional Guidance Counselor.



Several of the concerns we're seeing on social media posts **are not things that have ever been requested to the board**. This either means that there is a breakdown in communication somewhere, or the union has advised our teachers to use a known, but unfortunate, tactic for negotiating. We believe several of our staff members have been misled into believing that the board is aware of concerns, but does not care or does not listen. This could not be further from the truth. **Teacher and staff feedback has always had a direct influence on all decisions that the school makes.**



Our most recent staff survey results were mostly positive, and we received very positive feedback to the board retreat where staff & board collaborate on improvement opportunities year over year. Each year, this feedback is reviewed, and strategies put in place to implement the desired changes over the summer. This year was no different. This leads us to conclude that the unionization sentiment has not been stirring, but instead is a reaction to some recent event at the school. **The board is not aware of any major problems, deficiencies, concerns, or growing grievances with our staff before this petition was filed.** We have always had a very collaborative and open relationship with our staff, and we're disappointed that the teachers decided to file a petition and campaign instead of communicating concerns. **For clarity, we still do not know with certainty what the current grievances are, nor the reason for filing, as the teachers have chosen not to share that with MPA, we assume per the advice of the union.**

In order to be heard, you must speak, and we deeply value your feedback. You have a voice. Legally, after an initial petition is filed and deemed proper, an election procedure begins. **The union has advised the staff who signed the card to not speak to management about the filing before the election**, in what we believe is an effort to rush the election without due process or a chance for teachers to hear both sides. The rules of a filing dictate that an employer can't ask employees directly why they filed. This means that we must rely on our staff to speak with us openly and without ambiguity.



Leadership turnover is a recognized concern across the MPA community, and has been for several years. However, it may surprise some of our community members to know that leadership turnover in charter schools is not unusual. It is a stressful and oftentimes thankless job, and we are proud to have had some great leaders. Additionally, due to privacy, it is important to understand that **not all leadership turnover is preventable** nor the result of a grievance, and the reasons behind departures in most cases may not be shared publicly. **Dr. Hronek, the current interim school leader, is a former MPA school director and former board member**, and we have positive relationships with other former MPA leaders.

The board has been devising strategies behind our next school leader search, and we elected to have an interim director to give the school time to collect feedback from the MPA community on the best search team and strategy. **We want our teachers to be a collaborative part of this process.**





#MenloFacts

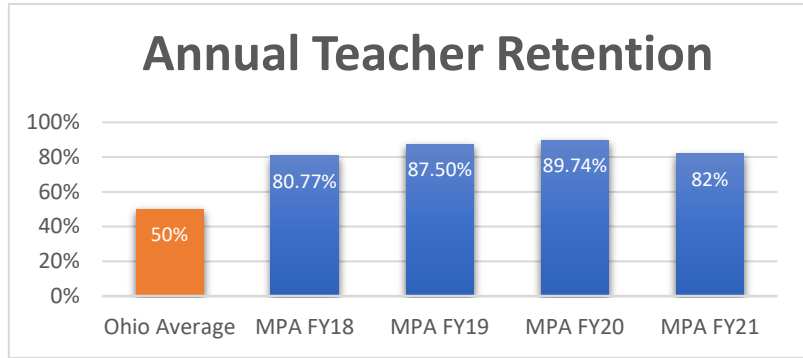
Teacher Retention

50% = Ohio avg charter school teacher retention rate

85%* = MPA's avg teacher retention rate over 4 years

* Not all teachers are invited back after a contract year, dependent upon performance, so MPA's retention rate would be higher if that was considered

#MenloFacts



MPA Avg. Teacher Pay	
FY18	\$34,097.68
FY19	\$39,031.08
FY20	\$39,667.65
FY21	\$41,926.00
FY22	\$43,385.00

Current Avg Charter School Teacher Salary in OH = \$38,673

Teacher Pay

MPA had a \$9,287 increase in average teacher salary over the past 5 years, and our avg salary is \$4K+ higher than the Ohio average for charters.

Additionally, our CQC bonus program allows teachers to earn **additional bonuses and salary increases** on top of **merit increases** upon making progress toward completing their **gifted teacher's license endorsement**. To qualify for CQC, teachers are given **3 years** to complete the first gifted endorsement course, which is **100% paid by Menlo**. **There are 11 levels of bonuses/raises involved in the CQC program**, allowing for the opportunity to earn continued base salary increases and bonuses year-over-year.

We also commit to monthly in-service days focused on professional development, and have a transparent scale for initial salary determination, which includes a base rate, and rewards for experience, higher education, and gifted experience. This occasionally needs to be adjusted for market change. At the teacher's request, we also reviewed our current teacher salaries and were prepared to make salary adjustments at our November board meeting but had to table the action due to the union petition filing. #MenloFacts

Teacher Benefits

MPA's new benefits for 2021 offer **more comprehensive** coverage with **more choice** than ever before at the school. Employees who chose the recommended healthcare plan this year received comparable coverage and **saved on average \$50-\$220 monthly** as compared to the renewal rate increase from our previous provider. #MenloFacts

✓ 14 healthcare plans, 14 dental plans, 4 vision plans	Our staff is currently taking advantage of 9 of the 14 different healthcare plan options
✓ Voluntary Benefits	Short-term disability, Long-term Disability, Additional AD&D plans, Group accident, Critical illness, Hospital indemnity, Auto, Home, Legal and even Pet insurance
✓ 24/7 HR Support	HR Support for benefits, questions, or tasks available by phone, chat, and email
✓ Online Portal / HR Management System	Electronic onboarding, HR document repository, Virtual training center, Electronic feedback and performance evaluation tool



Our Stance on Unionization

It is our honest belief that unionization will not get teachers more than what MPA is already willing and able to provide. We are not willing to compromise on the integrity of the program available for our students, by negotiating away integral aspects of the program such as gifted endorsements.

Additionally, we are a non-profit public charter school, with limited funding. Menlo Park Academy would much rather spend money on things that directly benefit our students. We believe that if the union gets in, it will redirect resources from our students and our school.

We have been able to create an incredibly unique program, which rewards merit, rewards continued education, and rewards collaboration. We are open to change, and the results of the many changes implemented over the last several years can be seen in the increased retention rates, pay, and benefits that our teachers currently receive. We are not rigid in our stances and are constantly re-evaluating and re-tooling our organization in order to improve student outcomes.

Unionization isn't a magic bullet. Unions don't buy furniture, change the structural design of the building, or change the school's curriculum. Instead, unions often make collaboration more difficult, make it more difficult to resolve individual concerns, often reward tenure over merit, often create negative feedback loops by stifling communication between management and staff, may cause discomfort between union and non-union staff in the building, and make promises that cannot be guaranteed. Unions also often use threats of a strike and bullying as a *first* negotiating tactic, creating an adversarial "us" vs. "them" mentality. We have already begun to see this in our school, as evidenced by the events of this week.

Most importantly is that unions **make it harder to communicate openly and honestly between staff and management, not easier.**

HERE ARE SOME HARD FACTS TO CONSIDER WHEN UNIONIZING:

- Employees can't go directly to their supervisor, any administrator, the school leader, or the board whenever they want to address concerns about working conditions.
- Employees can't decide what issues to raise with the administration – and the union steward can choose what to and what not to consider if a concern is brought to them.
- Employers may be required by the union to terminate employees who cannot pay or become delinquent on union dues.
- A first year union contract often takes over a year to negotiate, and pay, benefits, and change remain stagnant during that time.
- Unions can make it longer for problems to be recognized, acknowledged, and resolved.
- Less than 2% of charter school teachers have voted to form a union.

We believe that deeper collaboration will resolve these differences, without the risks of unionization.

We call for an honest dialogue with the teachers at MPA, without demands. Let's work together!

Thank you



Educational Links

None of these links are endorsed by MPA - They are just helpful information related to unionization.

Ohio Charter School Teacher Retention Studies

- <https://news.osu.edu/study-ohios-charter-schools-show-alarming-teacher-turnover/>
- <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/study-ohios-charter-schools-see-high-teacher-attribution-rate/2005/07>

Ohio Chart School Teacher Salaries

- [Charter School Teacher Annual Salary in Ohio - ZipRecruiter](#)

How Unionization Impacts Charter Schools & Teachers

- <https://www.publiccharters.org/node/28042>
- https://crpe.org/wp-content/uploads/3-4_charter_unionization_brief_feb_2021.pdf
- <https://fairygodboss.com/career-topics/pros-and-cons-of-unions>

Additional Statistics

- <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/bloomberg-law-analysis/analysis-union-decertifications-rose-sharply-in-first-half-2021>
- <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/bloomberg-law-analysis/analysis-how-long-does-it-take-unions-to-reach-first-contracts>