

TAAAC ACTION REPORT

Your Professional Organization

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Teachers Association of Anne Arundel County, An MST/NEA Affiliate

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Charter Schools are Coming

Two years ago the State Legislature passed a law that allows private groups to establish publicly funded charter schools in Maryland. The Maryland law is one of the best laws in the country, thanks to MST/ and Speaker Michael Busch. Under our law, charter schools are independently governed but are held to the same high standards as traditional public schools.

The law states that local boards of education are the primary chartering authority, with the state board of education serving as a secondary chartering authority, with the ability to overturn local boards' decisions. Charter schools are required to operate under the supervision of the public chartering authority, which would be the local board.

The staff of a public school, parents/guardians of students in the county, a nonsectarian nonprofit entity, a nonsectarian institution of higher education, or any combination of these groups are eligible to apply for a charter, but specifically excludes a private, parochial, or home school from being granted a charter.

One strength of the law is that it requires that charter school employees are public school employees, as defined in the

Education Article, are employees of a public school employer, and retain the rights of collective bargaining. Charter school employees fall under the same contract as other Unit I employees in AACPS. Any changes to contract provisions, such as hours and salary, must be negotiated through the Board and TAAAC.

Another strength of the law is that students in charter schools will be held to the same high standards and testing assessments that students in regular public schools are expected to meet. They are required to take the same state assessments administered to other students.

According to the law, charter schools must have open enrollment, to all students, and will select by a lottery if more students apply than space is available. The professional staff of the charter school must hold the appropriate state certification and comply with the provisions of NCLB for highly qualified teachers.

Public school dollars are used to fund charter schools. The law states the local board will disburse to the charter school an amount that is "commensurate with the amount disbursed to tra-

ditional public schools in the district." The local board will determine the amount, taking into consideration costs for administration and other such materials that are provided.

Anne Arundel, like all other counties, has a plan in place to begin to accept applications for charters this year. Today, three organizations have expressed an interest and are working on their applications. KIPP, Knowledge is Power Program, has a history, opening 36 middle schools and one elementary and one high school in thirteen states. They target underserved communities, students on free and reduced lunch and students who will be the first to attend college in their families. If approved, they plan to open their school in the City of Annapolis.

The Chesapeake Science Point and LITE Public Charter are the other two organizations that have expressed an interest.

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Bill Jones

Healthcare Update / Bargaining Notes

Well, the good news is that the four-month old dispute regarding the preferred provider network is apparently over. UnitedHealthcare did not prevail in either of its actions. Its bid protest to the local Board resulted in an unfavorable ruling. Its complaint filed to the Circuit Court, in which TAAAC intervened, also resulted in an unfavorable ruling. The injunctive relief requested by UnitedHealthcare was denied. The restraining order was lifted. The school system is proceeding with the extension of its contract with CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield, thereby granting the remedy demanded in the pending grievance filed at the onset of this dispute by twelve elected TAAAC Officers and Directors on behalf of themselves and other impacted Unit I employees.

For the foreseeable future, the agreed upon preferred provider network will continue to be available. Those Officers and Directors who took action should be credited.

COMMENTARY

Also, to be credited should be the leadership of AFSCME Local 1693 and SAAAAC. And special credit should go to the leadership of AEL, who joined TAAAC in its Circuit Court Action.

Loose healthcare ends left to be tied include an intent expressed by UnitedHealthcare to appeal the decision to the Court of Special Appeals, and the pending grievance

“After two months of meetings, TAAAC and the Board are still far apart on compensation and workload issues.”

which is on its way to binding arbitration. To our knowledge at the time of this writing, UnitedHealthcare has not filed the appeal, and the grievance seems to be moot, since the demanded remedy has been granted. There may be reason to go forward for a decision, since the stage is set for an identical dispute to reoccur as the new contract with CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield approaches the end of its term, but there is quite little to argue. The contract language requiring TAAAC concurrence for the change is clear and unambiguous, and the record is quite clear that concurrence was not given. Even within its participation in the benefits recommendation commit-

tee, UnitedHealthcare was not the selection by either of the TAAAC representatives. Further, there are several documents showing that TAAAC leadership stated explicitly to Dr. Smith, the Board members, and selected staff, in both verbal and written form that we did not concur. **(6131)**

As you might have guessed, the bad news concerns bargaining. To describe its pace as slow would be to overestimate its speed. After two months of meetings, TAAAC and the Board are still far apart on compensation and workload issues. Further, the Board has gagged its negotiators from discussing TAAAC’s two proposals on the professional development/fairshare issue. Let me be very clear on that. It’s not that they refuse to agree to TAAAC’s proposals, they refuse to even enter into discussion. It is quite telling when a Board claims to want an open and collaborative relationship with its employees, then refuses to discuss an issue because it may be a new or difficult one. Those of us who make our judgements by what others do, and by what they say, are left to draw the natural conclusion. Readers may also be interested to know that after all the discussion about workload issues over the past few years, the Board sent it negotiators to the table with not a single proposal on workload.

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TAAAC Action Report

Teachers Association of Anne Arundel County	Officers	Board of Directors	Editors	
2521 Riva Road, Suite L 7 Annapolis, Maryland 21401 (410) 224-3330 (410) 841-6022 (301) 261-8309 FAX (410) 841-5117	Sheila M. Finlayson, President Timothy Mennuti, Vice President Kathy Naeseth, Secretary-Treasurer	Donzella Parker Bert Alice Liptak Yolie Marshall Carol Petrosky	Enid Collison-Lee Susie C. Jablinske Richard Benfer Edith M. McDougald Ron Russell Ken Baughman Darlene Murphy	Bill Jones, Executive Director and Managing Editor Roxanne L. Vietmeier, Editor

From Contentia this month . . . *Grades: How many and when?*

Every year at the middle of the marking periods and then again at the end of the marking periods, teachers are often faced with the question, “How many interims and grades am I required to send home?” There are several sources of information that outline requirements regarding interims and grades. Let’s start with the Negotiated Agreement, Article 11, which states:

L. Interim Reports and/or Comment Sheets

Unit I members will be required to complete interim reports and/or comment sheets only for those students making unsatisfactory progress. However, in schools capable of generating progress summaries through electronic grade books and that have a sufficient number of computer stations to input grades and generate student progress reports within the teacher workday, Unit I members may be required to produce student progress reports (interims) for all students.

Next, we need to look at the Board policies pertaining to grades and interims, which states:

Title: **Grading** Policy Code: **608**

IV. Student progress shall be reported to students and parents by school staff on a regular basis. Report cards will be issued four times during the school year. The date of distribution will be printed in the Anne Arundel County Public Schools’ official calendar.

The dates that interim reports and grades are to be sent home with students are clearly delineated on the AACPS 2004-2005 School Calendar. There is no requirement implicitly, or explicitly, contained in Board policy or the Negotiated Agreement, obligating a teacher to send more than two grades home during any single marking period. All parents have the right to schedule a conference with their child’s teacher to discuss academic performance and progress. However, with workloads ranging from 150 to 300 students per teacher at the secondary level, it is nearly impossible to find time to accommodate every parent’s request for additional grades or interim reports. Parents are always encouraged to take a more active role in their children’s education, but not at the expense of an already overwhelmed educator. **(8582)**

The bottom line is; there is no provision requiring teachers to exceed the two-grade limitation per marking period. If you are directed by an administrator to provide more than two grades per marking period, follow his/her directive (so as not to be insubordinate), then call the TAAAC office to initiate a grievance. Remember, administrators are the only personnel that can direct such a requirement, since they are your direct supervisors. Always ask the administrator when time will be provided (outside individual planning time) to accommodate this additional task. If no time is provided, keep track of the additional time spent outside the workday complying with the directive, so TAAAC can refer to that documentation when trying to secure a monetary award through the grievance procedure.

BEST WISHES FOR A HAPPY
AND JOYFUL HOLIDAY!

TAAAC Officers, Directors and Staff

Elected School Board?

Is an elected school board in the future for Anne Arundel County? For the last ten to fifteen years, the topic has been bantered around. Several legislators have taken on the task and attempted legislation that would mandate how our Board is selected. The League of Women Voters conducted a study to determine the merits of an elected versus an appointed board. Their findings were that there was equal value in both forms.

The State of Maryland is only one of four states in the country that has appointed Boards of Education. The remaining states have elected Boards that are fiscally autonomous, which means they have taxing authority. About half of the Boards of Education in Maryland are elected while the other half have some form of appointed board. None have taxing authority. **(8560)**

In Anne Arundel County, we have a Nominating Convention which invites community groups to send delegates to select the representatives for the Board. The names of the top two vote getters go to the governor who actually makes the appointment. The governor is not bound to appoint from the list sent to him, and too often, we cannot count on the top vote getter being selected.

Over the years, the process, while it is political by nature, has grown more partisan as governors have selected only from within their party ranks. Once the County Executive recommended someone not in the process and on another occasion a state senator questioned the Convention choices based upon her perception of the racial makeup of our Board and our county.

There is a general belief that the time has come for all of Maryland's counties to have elected school boards. They would not have taxing authority, which would require a change in the State Charter, and they would lack the fiscal autonomy to invest in priorities that will ensure success in our public schools.

An elected school board is generally more accessible to the community, parents and employees, and more accountable for their actions. If the elected board is not accessible to you and accountable for its performance, it is the right of the voters to select new board members who will see to it that the needs of the students, employees and community are met.

Local school boards are at the center of the governance process that directly correlates to individual educator's classrooms and work sites. As it is becoming more difficult to be heard and recognized by our local board, it may be nearing the time for TAAAC to take a position on an elected school board.

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Chesapeake Science Point, sponsored by Chesapeake Lighthouse Foundation, would like to open their doors in Glen Burnie with a focus on science and technology for middle and high school students. LITE Public Charter, sponsored by Restoration Community Development Corp., would also like to open in Annapolis with their attention given to character education. After a four-month application process, those approved will be notified with the expectation of an opening in the Fall of 2005.

TAAAC President, Sheila M. Finlayson, was part of the school system team that visited a KIPP school in Baltimore and she and Executive Director Bill Jones have met with the principal-to-be of the school. While TAAAC does not have a position on charter schools, we will follow the process and be prepared to work closely with the agencies to make sure teacher rights and protections remain in place.

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On the other hand, TAAAC brought in five substantive proposals intended to directly address work time and workload issues. All are still pending and we are near agreement on none.

It is my hope, and that of the rest of your TAAAC negotiators, that we will soon be able to hold these sessions with an unaggrieved team of Board representatives and make some progress.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Darryl A. Adams
Arton Allen, III
Sara M. Ballard
Kenneth B. Barrett
Ayanna Barrows
Jennifer E. Barteo
Keya S. Belt
Julie Bonner
Barry Booth
Christina M. Bowman
Mark E. Braun
Delise J. Brown
Nicole Brown
Meranda F. Byers
Quincy Caldwell
Laura Coe
Michael A. Cornetti
Laquel M. Cuzzo
Ethel-Olivia Davis
Michael Davis
Helene Devine
James L. Donnelly
Elizabeth A. Elliott
Denise Epps-Nzambi
Nancy M. Ewald
Elizabeth Farrell
Sarah F. Freeberg
Susan F. Harrell
Maureen Hartman
Joanna L. Heckman
Thomas A. Kelley
Kaycie S. Lomax

Jenny Londot
Susan Love
John J. Lowney
Tanya Marrshale
Amy Martin
Chad McCormick
Moussa Njimoluh
Kevin R. Owens
Jennifer D. Patrick
Thomas Powell
Kim S. Price
Laura J. Provost
Michele B. Redmiles
Christine V. Rowland
Dionne Russell
Amanda C. Salveron
Analysa Sawyers
Jessica M. Schaefer
Jennifer A. Seaman
Justeen Sherwood
Karen H. Simpson
Emily G. Spencer
Melanie M. Stefanowicz
Barbara A. Stickle
Renee Stout
Cynthia L. Weston
Larry E. Whyte
Heather R. Williams
Vanessa Williams
Paula B. Wilson
Juanita R. Woolfolk

Special Educators Workload and Fair Share Issues Raised

At the mid-month Board meeting, Special educators came from around the county to give the Board members a glimpse of their excessive workload. With pie charts and other visuals, teachers helped Board members understand the root of their concerns.

Board Member Michael McNelly requested copies of the testimony by Sara Silverman, a Special Education Teacher at Northeast High School, with an interest in sharing her list of responsibilities with the participants at a national conference on Special Education. Mr. McNelly also requested a compilation of the concerns brought before them by Robin Satchel, the spokesperson for the TAAAC Special Education Task Force.

Board Member Konrad Wayson requested the same information so that it could be used and shared at the local level. **(6362)**

Executive Director Bill Jones, Allison Crews, a member of the TAAAC Bargaining Team, and Board Member Ron Russell asked the Board to “lift the gag” on fair share. To date, the Board has refused to allow their team to discuss the issue of fair share at the bargaining table.

Did You Know?

Of the AACPS transportation budget of \$33 million, one third of the total dollars are spent on 2% of the student population. That student population would be our special needs students.

It cost less than \$400 to transport a regular education student and about \$11,000 a year for our special needs students.

Great Gift Giving Ideas

Entertainment Books
Baltimore Edition
\$26.00

Movie Tickets for Regal/United Artist
\$5.50 per ticket

TAAAC Tasty Temptations Cookbook
\$7.00

Employment Opportunity

Spend Summer in the Sun

DRD Pool Management, Inc. is accepting resumes for summer job openings as swimming pool field supervisors and swimming pool managers. No Experience Necessary. For more information, call Noelle Navarro at 410-923-7665, 1-888-785-7665 or email: n_navarro@drdpools.com

December Member Benefits Giveaway!

TAAAC members can register anytime during the month of December 2004 in the "Free Giveaways" area of the NEA Member Benefits website to enter to win. Just visit **MSTA OnLine**, mstanea.org, and click on the MSTA Member Benefits link to win:

- Deluxe personal reference book collection with leather portfolio
- One of 3 cellular phones with a 3-month service agreement.

The reference book collection consists of a beautifully bound dictionary, thesaurus, and world almanac, along with a zippered, leather portfolio.

The cell phone giveaways include a LG1010 wireless phone, free accessories, free activation, and 3 months of free service from NEA Cellular. The package also includes 300 anytime monthly minutes, 1,000 night and weekend minutes, free nationwide roaming and long distance, and free voicemail, caller ID, and call waiting. No contract or check required! It's all on NEA!

Giveaway entry begins December 1, 2004 and ends on December 31, 2004. No purchase necessary to enter.

Visit us on the Web at
www.mstanea.org/taaac

Congrats to Brooklyn Park Elementary for achieving 100% TAAAC membership.

TAX PREPARATION

R. J. Pellicoro & Associates is accepting appointments for tax preparation on the following dates at the TAAAC office:

Thursday, February 17	2 PM – 7 PM
Monday, February 21	9 AM – 5 PM
Wednesday, February 23	2 PM – 7 PM
Tuesday, March 1	2 PM – 7 PM
Friday, March 18	2 PM – 7 PM

To schedule an appointment, please call the TAAAC office.