Knowledge and Skills are Not for Sale

Student achievement is a goal we all share. When we begin each school year, we have high hopes for progressive growth and measurable improvement for every child in the classroom. We’re here because we have acquired the knowledge and skills to prepare students for a successful future. Our expertise is significant and it should never be ransomed for sale.

Merit pay is a ruse that dangles a carrot with a promised bonus based on subjective evaluations and increased student test scores. On first glance, it may appear to be a reward for going beyond the call of duty to get results, but isn’t that what we’ve always done? With No Child Left Behind, there is a greater pressure to get the numbers high and keep them high, and local boards seem willing to pull money out of a hat to encourage us to do what we’ve committed to do all along. Further, research has failed to show a relationship between pay and performance.

Fair compensation for all educators is the best way to attract and keep knowledge and expertise in the classroom. We are devoted to providing quality instruction every year to every child. That dedication should never come with a qualifying price tag. You can’t buy achievement with a nebulous formula that in the end has a negative impact on the entire teaching force.

Our goal is to continue to negotiate for competitive salaries and to support a continued program of professional development that fosters achievement for educators and students. Remember – if it looks too good to be true, it usually is.
How long can our system stay afloat with folks at the helm who are not willing to support those who do the work? A school system that ignores the needs of the teachers cannot continue to meet with success.

At the mid-month Board meeting, teachers came out to share with the Superintendent and Board Members their concern about the drastic increases in workload. Twelve to fifteen teachers spoke, representing every area of the county, every content area, and every level. They spoke on behalf of faculties and feeder systems. They shared their individual and collective stories about the issue of increased workload. And what they received from our Board members were stoic looks and blank stares. From Board members who traditionally will ask questions of the minutest details, there was no acknowledgement of concern for the work teachers are doing.

For those who stayed around after public participation, salt was added to the wound to hear that two teacher positions were sacrificed to fund a new Coordinator of English as a Second Language (ESOL). Now, I understand the need for the position, since NCLB requires that our ESOL children be held to the same standard as all children; they too must learn to pass the tests. But the issue of how the position was funded is of great concern.

When class size is off the charts, and workload is overwhelming, a new director is added to the Central Office staff and the position is funded using money targeted for teachers. Only one Board member seemed outraged, as the Board members were hearing about this new appointment for the first time, when we heard it.

There is no wonder why AACPS is recognized around the state, by elected officials, teachers, parents and students, as not being teacher friendly. There is no wonder why 2/3 of the teachers who left AACPS last year did not retire, but left to go elsewhere to work. Every other school system has the same requirements of NCLB but for some reason they are managing their business without chasing away the very folks they must rely upon to deliver the instruction.

Is the intent to drive out the senior teachers, who have the most experience and cost the most to the system? They could get two for one! Never mind the experience they take with them. And who will mentor the young teachers? (Oh that’s right, most of our mentor positions have been either cut or reassigned.) It should be interesting to see how we can continue to raise the test scores without the benefit of the experienced, committed teachers in front of the classroom.

Never mind the large percentage of teachers who have less than five years in the system who leave every year. It doesn’t take a new teacher long to realize that AACPS does not give the necessary support they need. The young teachers are the future and they’re being driven out.

Will our Board and the Superintendent see the light and give teachers the recognition and support they need or will the revolving door remain open? Again I ask, how long can our system continue to meet with success with folks at the helm who are not willing to support those who do the work?
From Contentia this month . . . WHAT IS BEING DONE ABOUT DISRUPTIVE STUDENT BEHAVIOR?

What has us in Contentia-land steamed this month? Well it continues to boggle our collective minds why there are still certain AACPS administrators who seem unable to get four basic concepts through their collective heads. What concepts are we referencing?

1. AACPS educators really, really want to TEACH.
2. Good teaching leads to successful LEARNING.
3. A classroom is supposed to be a LEARNING environment.
4. Disruptive behavior keep other students from LEARNING.

Why are we prattling on about four basic concepts that seem crystal clear to us? Well the number of calls that have come into this office in the last two months about disruptive behavior is staggering. The calls are not to tell us that disruptive behavior interferes with learning, but that disruptive behavior is ignored by many administrators. This causes students to think that there are no consequences for disruptive behavior. Therefore it continues, repeats and/or escalates. (4168)

Most schools have a policy that calls for referrals to be submitted for disruptive behavior. Educators expect that when they take time to write a referral on a student, that an administrator will find time to deal with the situation. Instead, students often are sent right back to class and the teacher is never notified 1) if an administrator saw the student; 2) if any corrective action was issued; or 3) what corrective action was administered.

First let us define the term, “disruptive behavior.” According to the Board of Education’s Policy Book, “Disruptive Behavior includes behavior which interferes with the teaching and learning process or interferes with the safe management of students in or about the school building or school property, or during any school-sponsored activity.”

Now let us look at what the Negotiated Agreement between the Teachers Association of Anne Arundel County and the Board of Education of Anne Arundel County says should happen when a student is referred to the administration for disruptive behavior. The contract says, “A student who refuses to obey a reasonable request (disrupts the learning process) of a teacher may be excluded from class and shall be retained in the office for the remainder of the instructional period. A serious disciplinary infraction or disruption by a student whom the teacher can no longer control shall be referred to the principal or to another staff member designated by the principal to deal with such a case. Both the teacher and the school administrator shall be involved in the final resolution of such problems.”

Our members are constantly surprised, frustrated and disrespected when they refer a student whose behavior has interfered with the teaching and learning process AND NOTHING HAPPENS. How can teachers get their jobs done when administrators are reluctant to do theirs? All we ask and expect on behalf of all educators is support from school administrators in the disciplining of students who exhibit disruptive behavior. Since there is specific contract language that supports this expectation, teachers are urged to give this office a call when your rights have not been upheld.

Next time we will go into what the new Code of Conduct in the AACPS Student Handbook and the Code of Maryland’s Education Law say about disruptive behavior. STAY TUNED!
Welcome New Members

Christopher D. Gress
Monika M. Grogan
Laura L. Groo
Jennifer L. Grow
Jessica L. Guerrero
Molly F. Gulden
Pamela K. Gunsolley
Denise Hagerman
Blair R. Haldeman
Cynthia A. Hamel
Kevin J. Hamlin
Beth A. Harpel
Amie Jo N. Havens
Deanna R. Hearle
Bonnie S. Heckner
Laura J. Heinz
Julie A. Heltsley
Janice M. Hemelt
Sarah A. Hendren
Julia K. Herbert
Julie E. Hesenperger
Suzanne L. Hess
Deborah B. Heyes
Brooke A. Hicks
Christine J. Hines
Margaret A. Hirsch
Gretchen A. Hirt
Darlene Y. Hittle
Louisa N. Hogan
Geneva W. Hollins
Deborah J. Holloway
Angela A. Hopkins
Alex Horwitz
Monica Hudock
John Humphrey
Sarah E. Huse
Sherrill Hykin
Michelle L. Hymowitz
Paula G. Itnyre
Jessica A. James
Marguerite L. Jarvis
Kathleen M. Jepsen
Alison D. Jethwa
Molly L. Johnson
Nathan E. Johnson

Shana L. Johnson
Tamara J. Johnson
Vicki L. Johnson
Virginia M. Johnson
Lauren M. Johnston
Tanda L. Jones
Karen Jones-Lantzy
Adrienne L. Judson
Sherri L. Julian
Hilary L. Jump
Jennifer L. Karl
Andrew C. Karnes
Mary M. Kay
Bobby J. Keaton
Nicole M. Keeler
Mary S. Kelly
Tamara J. Kelly
Caroline E. Kemerling
Teresa Keslar
Charles Kimbrow, Jr.
Ayse Kirk
Nancy J. Klein-Marcus
Colleen H. Klemens
David N. Klingel
Jamie Kocik
Alicia W. Kreitzer
Jennifer J. Kucera
Thomascine Kumer
Tessymole J. Kunnappallil
Georgia K. Ladd
Angela K. Landers
Charles L. Landon, Lii
Nina L. Lattimore
Kelly E. Law
Renee E. Layshock
Anika C. Lehman
Kathleen M. Leonovich
Kenneth C. Lesikar
Elaine M. Levit
Denise Y. Levitine
Lindsay M. Lieberman
Stephanie L. Lima
Deborah R. Lind
Alexandra M. Lisko
Dana Little
Michelle M. Littommedieu
Anne-Renee Livingston

Maureen F. Lombardo
Diane F. Lorton
Nicholas F. Love
Ashley L. Lowe
Alyssa C. Lowman
Jamie M. Lusk
Keith E. Machtinger
Phyllis J. Mackay
Nancy A. Mackey
Colleen A. Maclean
Stephanie L. Major
Jill A. Manning
Lisa S. Marcello
Andrea J. Marcus
Laurie A. Marlow
Anna K. Mavrellos
Kathleen L. McAlpine
Lauren M. McBride
Megan E. McCann
Michelle H. McCarty
Barbara J. McClernon
Brenda M. McCray
Lauren E. McDonald
Monica G. McDonald
Jessica R. McKenny
Sandra D. McKone
Kelsa M. McLaughlin
Lenore E. McLean
Kimberly A. McNenar
Dawn D. Meade
Jennifer Reid Meikrantz
Jocelyn L. Mengel
Martha P. Meredith
Toniann Micale
Amy H. Michalesko
Lauren N. Mickley
Kimberly Miller
Kristin L. Miller
Jennifer S. Mills
Thomas B. Moody
Jessica L. Moon
Shannon M. Moran
Gillian Morgan
Karen S. Morgan
Kimberly Moses-Boyce
Amy C. Moxley
Linda L. Mumper
Why does TAAAC pay $10 bounties to membership recruiters?

Membership is the key to any professional organization’s strength. Leadership is an important facet, but the real muscle behind our Association’s success in bargaining, protestation and public awareness, is membership size and involvement, e.g. BOE Healthcare Rally. There are several reasons we offer a bounty to recruiters:

- Bounties reward those members willing to make an extra effort to recruit non-members
- Bounties can be collected by any TAAAC member, not just building representatives
- Increased membership unifies and strengthens our Association
- It is a proven effective recruitment tool

The TAAAC Membership Committee has raised the bounty, from the long-standing bounty of $10 to $20, paid to both the new member and the recruiter. The increase only lasts through the annual Membership Blitz, typically held every autumn. It is unfortunate that an anonymous member has voiced discontent with this very effective and beneficial recruitment technique. Threats to drop membership based on this concern only stands to further weaken our organization. In the long run, it is the members that truly benefit from the increase in membership and increase in revenue. The Committee encourages any member who has concerns regarding this or any other membership program to join the Committee, so those concerns can be addressed in a professional and safe venue. We are always open to new strategies and ideas that will help increase our membership.

Respectfully submitted,
TAAAC Membership Committee

Delegates Contribute $15,000 to the Fund

The Fund for Children and Public Education holds its largest and most successful fund raising opportunity at the annual MSTA Convention. This year was no different with delegates digging deep into their pockets to contribute to the political action efforts of the Association, since dues dollars cannot be used.

While the minimum contribution was $10, fifteen TAAAC Delegates contributed the maximum of $50. A special thank you must go to Michael Barnett, Theodore Bell, Richard Benfer, Gaydell Bingham, President Sheila Finlayson, Susie Jablinske, Alia Johnson, Alice Liptak, Yolie Marshall, Edith McDougald, Cheryl Menke, Vice President Tim Mennuti, Anne Russell, Ron Russell, and Tasheka Sellman.

The delegates to the 2004 Convention raised over $15,000; the TAAAC delegation contributed $1,140, for an average of $30.81 per delegate. Thank you to all for your participation.

High School Concerns Committee Formed!

The TAAAC High School Concerns Committee is looking for members to meet monthly to share concerns or issues affecting area high schools. Diana Peckham, Annapolis High School, has been appointed to Chairperson of the committee and she looks forward to building an effective and productive venue to address the many problems plaguing high school faculties. Please call the TAAAC office to reserve your seat on this valuable committee.
No Anonymous Letters, Please

Over the past year, TAAAC has received anonymous letters regarding workload issues, student discipline [or lack thereof] issues, pay and benefit issues, and most recently, a new member dues rebate issue. We, your elected and appointed TAAAC leadership, need to state that anonymous letters do not help assist in addressing your concerns for a number of reasons. Those reasons are:

- We cannot be certain whether the sender is a dues-paying member, and that knowledge is critical. Dues-paying members drive and fund our programs.
- We cannot verify the information given and take action if necessary.
- We cannot give feedback, because we do not know who needs to be contacted.
- If the issue needs only an explanation, we cannot respond with the explanation.
- In those instances where the problem can be fixed, for all of the above reasons, we may be unable to gather the necessary information to take appropriate action, and the very problem presented anonymously will be prolonged.

Educators represented by TAAAC should not, and do not, have to hesitate to identify themselves when bringing an issue to our attention. Confidentiality is maintained, until the caller consents to action being taken by us. Know that by our collection of your dues money, our fiduciary responsibility is to you, the members. Please do us, and yourselves, justice by presenting your issues in a way that we can address them appropriately. We all will benefit by your candor.

2004 Read Across America Kick-Off Reading Contest

Contest Rules

- Contest open to classes in grades 1-8.
- Each class/period must enter separately.
- All books must be read in a 30-day period from November 1 thru November 30, 2004.
- Books must be age appropriate.
- Must be independent reading only. Class-read books do not qualify.
- An individual reader may not list duplicate readings of a book.
- Entries must be postmarked or emailed no later than December 2, 2004.
- Each teacher must submit their students’ logs with a class summary cover page. The cover page will include teacher/reading specialist’s full name, school, address, phone and/or email, county, grade, class/period and total books read by class.
- Each student’s reading log must include student’s name, teacher’s name, school, grade, book title, author, date completed, total books read.
- Teachers may use MSTA RAA entry forms or a form of their own design but it must contain all the information listed above.
- Classes will be competing in 3 grade categories: Grades 1st – 3rd, 4th – 5th and 6th – 8th.
- One winning class in each grade category will be awarded a prize package worth $1,000 from Saturn/UAW and Staples, plus a $100 gift certificate for the teachers of the winning class.

Deadline: Entries must be postmarked by December 2, 2004
“I Surrender”

I come before you bearing a white flag, an age old symbol of defeat. I am here to declare, officially, that you have defeated me and as of Feb. 1, the first day I am eligible to do so, I will retire from teaching after 30 yrs, 28 of them, here, in AACo. This soldier is resigning from the Army because you have defeated me and I surrender!

I have been defeated by the pacing guide. Contrary to Dr. Smith’s declaration last year at the Superintendent’s Teacher Advisory Committee that it was to be used as a “good guide,” this year it is being used to informally assess teachers as department chairs, principals, and area directors pop into our rooms, carrying clipboards and determining if we are on the correct page.

Department Chairs, also Unit I members, are now expected to observe Unit I colleagues and report their findings to their principals on a weekly basis.

I have been defeated by the A-day/B-day schedule which has given me six classes to teach instead of five, 170 students instead of 145. The increase in students and class size means more papers to grade and record, more grades to average, more interims and reports to generate, more parents to contact, more conferences, more make-up work, more individual help if I can ever find the time to offer it.

I have been defeated by the increase in work load and the decrease in time to do it. The after school hour from 2-3 is now used up by faculty meetings, department meetings, grade level meetings, vertical team meetings, computer training and parent conferences. Rarely do I have that hour to use for grading or planning so – I have to work at home even more so than I ever have. I arrive earlier than ever and stay longer than ever and I work more at night and on weekends. Not only do I receive no compensation for all these hours of unpaid labor, but also I found the need to protest in the rain just to keep my healthcare.

I have been defeated by testing. Preparing my ninth graders for the PSAT test last Wednesday took three days. Only 1 ½ were “allowed” according to the pacing guide, but I did it anyway because my level two ninth graders, most of whom do not read on grade level, needed to know how to attack such a daunting test.

The HSA test has now been moved to tenth grade and so I have to administer practice assessments to all 113 of my tenth graders four times a year. Each test includes 15 multiple choices and two essays. That means, four times a year, in addition to all my other grading of homework, projects, quizzes, journals, book reports, and compositions, I have to grade 226 test essays. My ninth graders also have to take these practice tests. They have to write three essays each, so I have 81 essays for my 27 ninth grade students. Again, four times a year.

If this weren’t defeat enough, all the scores for each student have to be hand entered, by me, and sent to the Board via computer: 17 responses X 113 students = 1,955 answers for my tenth graders, 216 responses for my ninth graders for a grant total of 2,171 responses entered into the computer by me. The strategic question, of course, is WHEN? Next Wednesday, October 27, after school my colleagues and I will receive training at 2:00, after we have taught all day and before we go home to cook dinner and then sit down to more grading or planning.

This is NOT the Army life it was when I was recruited in 1974. This is NOT the stint for which I enlisted. And so, on February 1, I will officially declare defeat as I resign. And yet, in my heart of hearts, I know as did the apostle Paul, that “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

This testimony was given at the October 20 BOE meeting by Julia Pruchniewski, an English teacher at South River High School.
MORE New Members

Amanda Adley
William W. Banks
Thomas C. Barnicoat
Kenneth J. Bechtel
Jean R. Benoit
Steven M. Broderick
Margaret A. Burkhart
John R. Cotter
Elizabeth M. Crooks
Christina S. Dixon
Jocelyn M. Dunn
Frances E. Evans
Stephen D. Fletcher
John W. Ford
Marie N. Ford
Kelly E. Fulton
Renee L. Hallam
Jennifer D. Harrah
Eileen W. Jellison
Catherine E. Johnson
Heather A. Jones
Mary Lese
Sharon K. McElfish
Laura B. McGlaughlin
Virginia Miller
Joyce M. O’Connell
Susanna W. Parks
Anne E. Phelps
Crystal L. Phillips
Tyease J. Poole
Melinda J. Rebert
Stacie M. Richards
Quina H. Robinson
Julie H. Sandmann
Lisa S. Schmit
Donna M. Schmitz
Cornelius W. Stepney
Shelley L. Summers
Jennifer D. Taylor
Mark O. Terrence
Lang W. Wethington
Amy E. Worden
Denise N. Yarbough
August M. Zephir
Kathryn D. Zorn

NEA victory:
Tax breaks for classroom expenses extended!

Thanks to the lobbying efforts of NEA, the $250 tax deduction for out-of-pocket classroom expenses incurred by teachers and paraprofessionals will be extended for the 2004 and 2005 tax years. (This is part of the House- and Senate-passed legislation, H.R. 1308, extending marriage penalty relief and the child tax credit.)

In 2002, Congress passed legislation giving teachers and paraprofessionals a $250 federal tax deduction for out-of-pocket expenses for instructional materials and classroom supplies. The legislation represented an acknowledgement – for the first time – that teachers and paraprofessionals are spending their own money to equip their classrooms. This modest tax break expired at the end of 2003.

NEA and some lawmakers worked throughout the year to reinstate the deduction, and we will continue to work to make the deduction permanent and to expand eligible expenses to include professional development.

The tax bill also includes two other NEA victories – the extension of the Qualified Zone Academy Bond Program providing $400 million each year in 2004 and 2005 for school construction, and the extension of a tax deduction for corporations that donate computers to public schools. The President is expected to sign the bill into law shortly.

MSTA testified in favor of similar state income tax credit legislation as recently as last year, however the Maryland General Assembly failed to pass the bill. Educators typically spend approximately $800 dollars of their own money for classroom supplies each year according to MSTA’s last member survey.

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
PART-TIME PROGRAM MONITORS

The American Institutes for Research, a well-established research organization specializing in education, educational assessment, and other social policy issues, has openings for part-time Program Monitors to document implementation of Reading First, a Federal elementary school reading program.

This position will perform classroom observations, interview teachers and administrators and review grant materials. It is a great opportunity to observe reading instruction on a national level. Successful candidates will have:

• K-3 classroom instructional experience and knowledge of K-3 reading curriculum
• A minimum of a B.A. in Elementary or Early Childhood Education required, graduate degree and teaching certification preferred
• Demonstrated understanding of scientifically based reading research
• Good writing and interpersonal skills

Travel to selected schools is required. **This involves week-long visits each month of the school year (and may include out-of-state travel).** Preparation and follow-up work can be done via telecommuting. Workload will range from 40-60 hours per month. Pay is $20-25/hr. Travel expenses will be reimbursed.

Application materials can be e-mailed to resumes@air.org, or sent to the address below. Make sure your cover letter and/or resume describe all expertise with reading (and any knowledge of Reading First), along with research experience. Include experience related to data collection, classroom observations, teacher/administrator interviews and grant activities.

Contact Kristin Nicholson at KNicholson@air.org with any questions. Forward cover letter, resume, and writing sample to resumes@air.org; subject line: Program Monitors, or by mail/fax to:

American Institutes for Research
Human Resources – Program Monitors
1000 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20007-3835
Fax: 202-403-5454
Website: www.air.org

Employment Opportunity

Debt Shield, Inc.

We are an employer in Columbia looking for qualified candidates who might be interested in supplementing their income with inside sales work. Teachers interested in working part-time after school should contact:

Brooke Silverberg
Human Resource Recruiter
443-259-8710
www.debtshield.net

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Apply on-line: www.iie.org/fmf
Information: 1-888-527-2636, fmf@iie.org
Deadline: December 10, 2004

You may have won $10.00! Have you spotted the last four digits of your phone number?