

TAAAC ACTION REPORT

Your Professional Organization

Volume 38, Number 4



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

December 2005



Some attentive Brooklyn Park Elementary School educators doing their share.



TAAAC President Sheila Finlayson and House Party Guest Lily Eskelsen, NEA Secretary Treasurer

Over the holidays, while talking to friends, family and neighbors, don't forget to Push for Pensions. This is the perfect time to host a house party or start a conversation about your much needed and much deserved pension reform. Let the public know about MSTA's efforts to improve teachers' pensions through newly proposed legislation. Explain that improvement is needed because Maryland teachers have the WORST pension in the nation. And tell others that they can help this worthy initiative by telling their legislator that pension reform is needed for Maryland teachers, and MSTA's plan is the way to go.

While you are telling the public about this worthy cause, don't forget to contact your legislator and tell him/her how important pension reform is to you. Every time you visit, call, write or e-mail your state senator or delegates, you influence their vote on your pension. For more information on the Push for Pensions Campaign and to locate your local legislators' names and contact information visit www.mstanea.org. Have you contacted your legislator today?

Mark your calendar for these upcoming TAAAC Push for Pensions events:

December - Legislative Breakfast

January 23, 2006 – TAAAC Night in the Legislature.

COMMENTARY



Bill Jones

On Negotiations, Workload, and Polishing the Apple

As most TAR readers know, the privilege of contributing this commentary is shared on an alternate basis by your Association President and by your Executive Director, me. In that we face a deadline for a tentative agreement at the negotiating table on January 15, this article has some import. It will be my last before we have the result... voluntary agreement?...or impasse and job action? There has been some lively debate at the bargaining table, and it will be no surprise to the reader that the four most important issues are salary, benefits, workload, and association security. Of the four, workload may prove to be the most difficult to effectively address. And the reason has less to do with the debate at the bargaining table than it does with what I believe to be a lack of recognition on the part of the employer.

How can I say the employer does not recognize the problem of unmanageable workloads after all that has been said on the topic by the Board and by the departing Superintendent? Quite easily, I am basing my conclusion on what your

employers have done about it, not by what they may have said about it. It is a truism that action speaks louder than words, and for the past several years there has been plenty of rhetoric around workload, as we all watched it continue to grow until actual time-to-teach gave way to data processing.

“Teachers are still spending valuable work time watching other adult monitors watch students eat.”

Virtually everyone in the local public education industry, including your employer, says they are in agreement that some control over growing teacher workload is necessary. In a public gesture, your employer even agreed to participate in a joint task force whose explicit purpose was to find ways to reduce teacher workload. The report produced by the task force, while not completely ignored, fell well short of its objectives. Rhetoric notwithstanding, these issues continue:

* Teachers are still spending valuable work time watching other adult monitors watch students eat.

* Teachers are still spending valuable work time watching other adult monitors watch students play at recess.

* Teachers are still sitting at key-boards entering hundreds of items of test taking data.

* Special area teachers still have caseloads so high they barely get to know their students names until the caseload changes again.

* Accountability standards now have turned special educators into project managers and bookkeepers.

* Virtually no teacher in the system is capable of getting the job done in the time he/she is paid to do it.

Why is *Polishing the Apple* pertinent to the broader workload issue? Because after all the discussing, studying, grieving, and task-forcing on teacher workload, it may have given the clearest indication of your employer’s real regard for your workload issues. They might as well have said out loud: “We don’t care how busy you are. You can take a half-hour and complete this customer service survey, and you can do it over and over until you get it right.” Can this apple really need polishing that badly right now?

If our negotiations end without a voluntary agreement again, please participate in our impasse activities. They may well involve having to leave undone some of the work that cannot be required of you beyond the paid workweek. In the meantime, hard work is being done at the bargaining table in the hope of reaching a mutually satisfactory agreement.

TAAAC Action Report

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From Contentia this month . . . *Counselors Have it too*

TAAAC's endeavors to represent the hours, salaries, working conditions and benefits of classroom teachers are well publicized, and as a general rule, are appreciated by those most affected. One such initiative led to the formation of the joint Workload Task Force Committee, and was a commitment by both TAAAC and the Board of Education to address the burgeoning and overwhelming workload issues facing all of our members. Although classroom teachers' workload would be greatly reduced through implementation of many of the thirty-three recommendations presented to the superintendent, it was never the intention of the committee to present recommendations that would benefit some, while adversely affecting others in the same bargaining unit.

One recommendation, under the notion of supporting student instruction and teacher planning time for the elementary level, recommended incorporating guidance instruction into the instructional day, and infusing these classes into the current scheduled weekly rotation (as with cultural arts and media). This recommendation cannot be viewed in a vacuum; the committee also recognized the budgetary implications and **the need for additional certified staff at every elementary building** to effectively implement this recommendation. **Without providing additional staff**, this recommendation would result in the increase of workload for guidance counselors at the elementary level. It is inappropriate, based on the committee's recommendations, for any elementary administrator to make efforts to integrate guidance instruction into the regular schedule without additional certified staff.

Based upon the nationally recognized standard of one counselor for every 300 students, the elementary guidance department is understaffed in AACPS by approximately 40 counselors. In some cases, elementary guidance counselors are carrying a caseload of over 700 students. In addition to the extreme deficit, elementary counselors in some schools are required to instruct up to 19 classes per week, with little to no planning time. Factor in the multiple committee assignments, teacher-in-charge duties, attendance and tardiness data responsibilities, administrative tasks, emergencies and myriad other delegated responsibilities, and an increased workload is easily identified as unacceptable. It is also unacceptable that this large department has no permanent Guidance Coordinator, nor has AACPS made an attempt to fill that position with a permanent placement in recent history.

TAAAC will be the first in line to state the importance of providing more planning time for classroom teachers, and extol the virtues of that provision in the form of improved student success. However, that success cannot come at the expense of other current bargaining unit employees in the form of increased workload. More planning time translates into more work for counselors unless the Board of Education implements the recommendation fully and hires additional staff for guidance instruction. If not, TAAAC must agree with the counselors on this issue; without the additional hired staff, more work is unacceptable.

TAAAC Fashion Show a Big Success

On Tuesday, October 18, TAAAC members gathered at the Hecht's in Annapolis Mall for a special treat, just for them. Through a partnership with Hecht's, Jones New York, Clinique and Elle Magazine, teachers were pampered with manicures and facials while tuxedo clad waiters served champagne and hors d'oeuvres. The fashions, provided by Jones, and the models provided by Elle, gave teachers a sampling of what the well dressed, practical teacher wears to school. And, to top off the evening, fashion show participants were treated to a 20% discount on clothing purchases.

Board Budget Process Underway

The Board of Education budget process is almost a year-round activity, with parents speaking almost at every meeting about their needs for their schools. School system staff generates their recommendations in the fall to be included in the superintendent's budget.

At the mid-month meeting in December, the superintendent's budget recommendations will be submitted to the Board. Then the Board will make its considerations and create their own budget which will be sent to the County Executive.

Between now and the first of February, you will have numerous opportunities to speak to the Board about what you will like to see included in their budget. You should use the time dedicated to public participation at the regularly scheduled Board meetings or at the two budget hearings they will hold in January to express your needs.

At the mid-month meeting in November, President Finlayson spoke on increasing staffing of PPW's, mentors and guidance counselors. In addition, several members of the TAAAC affiliate of Counselors spoke about their workload and their understaffing.

At the same Board meeting, the High School Concerns Committee spoke about the A Day/B Day schedule and they invited members of the Board to attend their meetings and have a dialogue with them about their concerns.

Pregnancy Leave and Workload

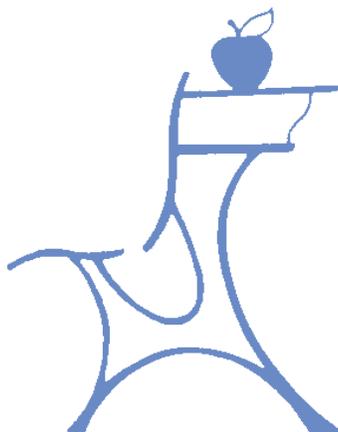
Every year, TAAAC gets questions about pregnancy and job related duties. Once you find out that you are pregnant, it is important to consult with your doctor about your specific job-related responsibilities. If in the course of that conversation your doctor has concerns about your ability to perform some tasks, it is important for any limitations to be documented. For example, if you are only to be on your feet a certain percentage of the day, you should get that in writing from the doctor and turn it in to the administration at the school. Likewise, if you teach Special Education students and are expected to lift or restrain them, any limitations on those activities should be recorded by the doctor and turned into the building administration.

Not only do you have rights under the Negotiated Agreement, that provide you with a safe work environment, but there are further protections under Federal Law. The Pregnancy Discrimination Act, which is an amendment to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, provides that the employer must treat a pregnant woman or a woman with pregnancy-related concerns the same as they would treat any other employees with regard to their ability to perform their work. In cases where there is a disability caused by the pregnancy or childbirth, the condition must be treated the same for all job purposes as disabilities caused by other medical conditions. Therefore, any temporary limitations that you have while pregnant, as long as they are medically documented, are protected under this law. Further, your administration cannot discriminate against you because you are pregnant.

We have received calls this year from women who have stated that they have been told that they cannot sit during the work day, or that comments have been directed toward them by supervisors, such as "because of their pregnancy hormones," etc. These comments are not only inappropriate, but can be construed as discriminatory, especially, if the employer is reprimanding the teacher or including such instances as part of their observation record or rating.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Mary M. Barrett
Melissa L. Brousseau
Ireti M. Burvell
Stephanie L. Carr
Katrina L. Carter
Jennifer K. Duvall
Amy B. Fulford
Jana S. Harrison
Jan Hayes
C. Delane Hill
Madonna C. Holsopple
David A. Ifill
Rebecca A. Johnson
Caitlin A. Kinsella
Maria A. Miller
Deborah M. Morrison
Lou Ann Patterson
Mary P. Piffath
Raven D. Pray
Judy C. Richardson
Patricia L. Ryan
Nicole K. Shepherd
Gerald Sullivan
Jennifer S. Sussman
Briget G. Williams



ACCESS Follow Up

To all those who telephoned TAAAC over the past month for more information, thank you. We hope that your experience with the ACCESS program was as easy and as cost saving as you'd hoped.

The telephone calls provoked by last month's ACCESS testimonial revealed that too few of our members are aware of some of the valuable services offered, some which help member cost of dues and more. One is the ACCESS card. Others are found in the Housing Partnership, Income Protection Plans, TAAAC Auto Purchase Plan, and a host of other consumer benefits. ACCESS is the newest benefit and the one most subject to regular use. Here's how to use it.

Look at your TAAAC/MSTA/NEA membership card. That card is also your ACCESS card. If you're planning a trip, a dinner out, a round of golf, or just a day of shopping, sign on to the MSTA website first [www.mstane.org] and use the ten-digit membership number to get into the Member-Only portion. Click onto the link for ACCESS and follow the menu to the geographic area and service of interest. The cost saving will be evident.

TAAAC Adopts a School District in Katrina Relief Effort *"Give a little, help a lot."*

Through the NEA Adopt a School program, TAAAC has been matched with the Bay Waveland School District in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, which experienced catastrophic damage during the recent hurricanes. The six schools in the district are North Bay Elementary, Second Street Elementary, Waveland Elementary, Bay Waveland Middle, Bay High School and an alternative school. (Unlike in most of Maryland, school districts are very small in other states.)

In this time of giving, we are asking every employee in AACPS to "give a little to help a lot." A \$2.00 contribution from everyone in the system will allow us to meet our goal of \$15,000. (Of course, you may contribute more!) AEL, SAAAC, and AFSCME Local 1629 have joined with us, along with the 21st Century Foundation, which has pledged \$500.

We know there is no worthier cause than to help our colleagues and the children who have been victims of the most destructive hurricanes in history. Please see your TAAAC Rep to contribute. Together, we can make a difference.

For more information about Bay Waveland, visit http://risingfromruin.msnbc.com/2005/11/an_emotional_re.html

TAX PREPARATION

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

Monday, February 20
8 AM — 2 PM

Thursday, February 23
2 PM — 7 PM

Wednesday, March 1
2 PM — 7 PM

Tuesday, March 7
2 PM — 7 PM

Monday, March 13
2 PM — 7 PM

To schedule an appointment, please call the TAAAC office.

NOMINATIONS OPEN

The TAAAC Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for **President, Vice President, Board of Directors, NEA Delegates, and MSTA “Fund for Children and Public Education” Representative.**

Nomination forms are due in the TAAAC office by 5:30 p.m. on January 17, 2006.

NOMINATION FORM

Name _____

Address _____

School _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____

I would like to place my name in nomination for the following position(s):

- President
- Vice President
- Board of Director
- NEA Delegate
- MSTA “Fund for Children and Public Education” Rep.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Teachers needed for the ACCESS/21st CCLC after school program. This is a great opportunity to make some extra money after school. We have four sites in our program: Georgetown East, Germantown, Mills-Parole and Tyler Heights Elementary. You can work as little as 5 hours a week or as many as 10. The rate of pay is \$25.00 per hour. If interested, please call Lynn Grap at 410-222-1034.

DRD Pool Services, 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 @ 410-923-7665, 1-888-785-7665, or visit our website: www.drdpools.com

Summer day camp in Baltimore County seeks assistant director. Must be positive, reliable, enthusiastic, and experienced as a leader. Part-time with flexible hours from fall through mid-June. Full-time during summer school break. Excellent pay and promotion opportunity. Fax resume to 1-309-408-7173

**BEST WISHES FOR A HAPPY
AND JOYFUL HOLIDAY!**

