

# TAAAC ACTION REPORT

*Your Professional Organization*

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

September 2005

## Teachers Start the Year off With a Celebration



Over 800 teachers attended the “Celebrate Teachers” event at Mayo Beach. A wonderful time was had by all. See article and photos on page 5 and 6.

## Workload Task Force Recommendations Largely Ignored

Last year, during Negotiations, TAAAC agreed to remove four workload issues from the table in return for a joint committee that would make recommendations to be implemented this school year. The Superintendent “borrowed” the idea and assigned the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Nancy Mann, to make it happen. Mrs. Mann and TAAAC President Sheila M. Finlayson Co-chaired the committee, which worked diligently for two months to generate recommendations. The Committee drew on past reports and the combined knowledge of the committee, which included teachers from every corner of the county, every content area, guidance, pre-K and special education, principals, coordinators and directors.

Throughout the process, the Committee was assured that Dr. Smith wanted this committee to complete its work so that recommendations could be implemented for the fall.

The Committee presented its recommendations to the Board in June, with hopes of presenting again, in greater detail, in a Board work session. The work session never came to fruition.

After much criticism about the lack of action on the part of the Board and Superintendent, an amended document was shared which revealed the actions that are to be taken on the recommendations.

See page 7 for the Short-Term recommendations of the Committee, which had little if any fiscal implication.



Sheila M. Finlayson

# COMMENTARY

## Welcome back!

I hope you had a wonderful summer and took time to take care of yourself. As you return to new students, new courses, new curriculums and maybe even new schools, I hope you will find joy in this new start.

We were able to kick off the new year with a celebration for you. The Celebrate Teachers event was more than I could have asked for with over 800 teachers and their families attending. It was a wonderful day on a very beautiful beach, with great food and desserts, and with many, many contributions coming in from true supporters of teachers.

After the picnic, reality set in and I was forced to look ahead on the new year. As I begin my fourth year as President, I look at the challenges ahead and see four areas that will demand much of the Association's time.

The first issue, with which we ended the school year, is workload. Unfortunately, little is being done to eliminate the teacher workload

problem. To the contrary, things are still being added to your plate. We'll be fighting to eliminate the huge workload that teachers are facing and combat the misperception that eliminating workload will hurt the kids. It is very clear that the Superintendent does not understand the connection between giving teachers time to do their work and the success of the students. He just doesn't get that what's good for teachers is good for kids.

*"What's good for teachers is good for kids."*

The second issue is negotiating the next contract. Negotiations begin in October for the '07 contract and already we are getting the vibes about threats to our healthcare. Then there is the agreement to negotiate a salary that would make our salaries competitive. The Superintendent's Salary Task Force seems to be bent on presenting proposals instead of investigating the salary disparity and providing the facts. Even the outside consultant who was hired comes from a non-bargaining state, so it appears to be an obvious attempt to thwart the bargaining process. We'll be fighting to maintain the integrity of bargaining.

The third issue is improving our pension. Maryland is the fifth wealthiest state in the country yet we have the 50<sup>th</sup> worst pension in the country. Our teachers deserve to retire with 60% of their salaries. This year we will have pension enhancing legislation that will improve our pension for all active employees, retroactively. Other states can do it and we can and should also. It will take the actions of all of us but we can make it happen. This is a battle we must fight together with all of our colleagues from around the state.

The last issue is the '06 elections. We have all seen the impact of elected officials on what we do everyday, from class size to funding of the classroom to maintenance of our buildings and construction. It is imperative that we elect "genuine" friends of education. All candidates now want to declare they are education candidates but it is clear that many have no clue what we do and have no genuine interest in it. We must look closely, not only at records, but also at the levels of support in all other areas to determine whether they can be trusted with our endorsement and support.

This new year promises to be a challenging one but I believe we are up for the challenge and we have the determination to win.

## TAAAC Action Report

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## From Contentia this month . . . Join TAAAC Now...Before it's Too Late!

Every year, without fail, the TAAAC office receives several calls from non-members, frantically seeking the assistance of the Association following an incident with a student, parent or administrator. Often, the non-member has been told a complaint has been registered against them, and an investigation into the matter has been initiated. Of course, the non-member's expectation is that TAAAC will assist them with guidance, representation and legal services throughout the subsequent investigations, pre-discipline hearings, and possibly a recommendation for suspension or termination. The non-member suddenly recognizes the Association's worth and is willing to sign up for membership immediately. So, now they're covered, right? In a word, NO. The only legal obligation in which TAAAC has to provide representation to non-members is through the grievance procedure. Legal appeals and legal assistance are not provided to non-members. Observations, ratings, and *any decision made by the superintendent in connection with your employment* often must be addressed through the legal system, rather than the grievance procedure.

The legal services offered to TAAAC members are actually provided by the state affiliate, the Maryland State Teachers Association. Four, full-time attorneys, with expertise in labor union and education law are on staff to provide members with the highest quality legal representation available. However, it is strict policy that MSTTA will not represent, through legal services, any non-member, or any member wherein the incident occurred prior to effective membership. In the above-referenced scenario, even though the non-member sought membership, the incident occurred before his or her membership, rendering the MSTTA legal services unavailable. Keep in mind; legal services provided for by attorneys outside the Association can result in retainer fees exceeding \$5,000, and in some cases reaching \$10,000, depending on the infraction.

Don't get caught without this valuable members-only benefit in place BEFORE you need it. It's heartbreaking and unnecessary to listen to non-members utter the words, "I didn't think this could happen to me," but we can assure you, it does.

## Welcome Sarah



**Sarah Johnson** comes

to TAAAC from Montgomery County Education Association (MCEA). She has been assigned to MCEA since August of 2001 and over the last eighteen months her assignment has been to provide all individual service for members on issues involving payroll, ADA, retirement, insurance, leaves, worker's compensation, evaluations, investigations and terminations. She also provided service for all special schools, twelve month employees, substitutes, and home and hospital teachers.

Sarah was hired by MSTTA in 1998 and served as a consultant on the Eastern Shore, organizing and advocating for support personnel. She was then assigned as a tempo-

rary UniServ Director for Howard County in 2000 and then was transferred to Montgomery County in 2001.

Prior to being employed by MSTTA, Sarah was a teacher in Wicomico County for nine years. She taught English grades 9-12 and Yearbook. Most of her ninth grade classes were Special Education, so she has worked extensively with students with learning and behavioral disabilities.

While teaching, Sarah was active in the Wicomico County Education Association serving as building rep, state and national delegate, member of the Board of Directors, Secretary, and vice President.

# What's your contract say?

## Non-professional Duties

Non-professional duties are defined in Article 14 as duties not contributing to teaching:

**A. Duties not contributing to teaching**

The Board and TAAAC recognize that the function of the teacher is to teach and perform related professional duties; therefore, the parties agree that effort will be made to eliminate duties which do not contribute directly to the primary learning function.

Except in emergencies, individually assigned non-professional duties will not exceed 20 minutes per day during the student day. For the purpose of this article, supervision of students during arrival, departure and transitions between classes will not be considered non-professional duties. Nothing in this article shall preclude a different arrangement or schedule of duties if agreed to by the Principal and Faculty Advisory Council.

The 20 minute daily limitation on duties is not to be extrapolated out to 100 minutes per week, and then divided however an administrator chooses throughout the week. Unless the FAC and principal have an agreement to exceed the 20 minute daily limitation, it cannot be exceeded.

For this school year, there is a modification to the policy regarding supervision on playground or cafeteria duty. ***A certificated teacher is no longer required to perform this duty.*** Teacher assistants and volunteer parents are now qualified to supervise students on the playground during recess and in the cafeteria during lunches. Additionally, the Board has increased the stipend paid to playground monitors, from \$8 to \$10, to facilitate the hiring of additional monitors.

Given the recent ignorance of most of the Workload Task Force Committee's recommendations, which outlined 33 long and short-term proposals to help reduce teachers' workload, it is imperative that duties are reduced to the absolute minimum. The Negotiated Agreement requires that TAAAC and the BOE make efforts to *eliminate duties which do not contribute directly to the primary learning function*. Staus quo is not sufficient; effort to eliminate is the requirement.

If any of the aforementioned requirements are not being implemented at your school, contact TAAAC immediately so appropriate action can be initiated.

## Attention! Part-time Employees

If your employment status has changed and you have an annual salary below \$32,560 and/or are working .6 tenths or less, please contact the TAAAC office so that your membership dues can be adjusted accordingly.

## TAAAC Member Wins Vacation

TAAAC Member Michael Barnett left the NEA Convention with something to look forward to. Mike was one of two delegates, of the 9,000+ in attendance, who won a "Getaway" prize from Wells Fargo Mortgage Company. Mike and his family will be taking off for 3 days and 2 nights in a hotel of his choice, in the continental United States.

The purpose of the NEA Convention is to gather delegates from around the country to set the policies that will guide the actions of NEA and its affiliates. The Convention is also a great opportunity to raise money for the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education. (Dues dollars are not and cannot legally be used for political action.) Delegates reached their 2005 goal by raising \$1,349,950. While the Fund had daily drawings for giveaways, the big winner always comes on the last day of the Convention. This year, a first time delegate from Iowa won the Fund Giveaway of \$25,000.

## Have your say!

There has been much discussion about the high school start times. Recent newspaper articles highlighted several options and there is valid research to support the argument.

What is your feeling on the subject? Which option would work best for you? Please share your positions by emailing me at [sfinlayson@mstanea.org](mailto:sfinlayson@mstanea.org)

# Celebrate Teachers Event a BIG Success

Anne Arundel County Public Schools has met with many successes over the last year and it is the teachers who should be thanked. On Friday, August 26, the community gathered to say thank you to the teachers for their hard work and dedication.

More than 800 teachers and their families came out to be honored at the event at Mayo Beach. Great food provided by Adam's Ribs, desserts from The Chart House and beverages by Katcef Brothers/Anheuser Busch. The entertainment was provided by The Cold Spring Jazz Quartet, lead by South River's Brian Smith, and Rob Stocjakovich a teacher from Chesapeake Senior.

The wonderful team work of the TAAAC Board of Directors, the many members, and the many volunteers from around the State helped to make the event a colossal success.

A very special thank you must go to the following individuals and companies who contributed to the event:

Adam's Ribs	Gumpert Printing
Anne Arundel County Council of PTA's	Hershey Park
Anne Arundel County Recreation & Parks	Senator Phil Jimeno, District 31
Association of Education Leaders	Sheriff George Johnson
Senator John Astle, District 30	Tricia Johnson, Vice Pres., Board of Education
Pam Beidle, County Council 1 <sup>st</sup> District	Katcef Brothers, Anheuser Busch
Phil Bissett	Kings Dominion
BJ's Wholesale Club	Michael Leahy, Board of Education
Bill Burlison, County Council, 4 <sup>th</sup> District	John Leopold, House of Delegates, Dist. 31
Speaker Michael Busch, District 30	Mary Ann Love, House of Delegates, Dist. 32
Joan Cadden, House of Delegates, District 31	Maryland State Teachers Association (MSTA)
CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield	Tony McConkey, House of Delegates, Dist. 33
Edward "Ned" Carey, Board of Education	Enrique M. Melendez, Board of Education
Chart House Restaurant	Delegates Menes, Frush, & Moe 21 <sup>st</sup> District
Coalition for Fair Contracting, Inc.	Mike's Crab House
Bob Costa, House of Delegates, District 33	County Executive Janet Owens
Senator Ed DeGrange, Sr., District 32	Eugene Peterson, Board of Education
Delicious Cake Creations	Radisson Hotel
Dillon Bus Service, Inc.	Regal Entertainment Group
Entertainment Publications, Inc.	Barbara and Stan Samorajczyk
Giant Food LLC	Sly Horse Tavern
Terry Gilleland, House of Delegates, Dist. 32	Konrad Wayson, President, Board of Education
Ground Round of Annapolis	

Noticeably absent from the list were others who were approached but who decided they could not support this teacher event. They are:

The Annapolis and AACo. Chamber of Commerce	Commerce First Bank
M & T Bank	R.E.S.P.E.C.T.
Paul Rudolph, Board of Education	

**Welcome Back! Have a wonderful school year!**



**Short Term Recommendations**

**Cost Implications**

**Action Taken**

Reduce the number of in-house staff development days and replace with teacher work days (2 days at the beginning of the year) Note: One day is already contracted	\$0	Provided 1.5 work days <i>An addition of .5 day, though most did not receive the time</i>
<b><i>Provide lunch and recess monitors in Elementary schools</i></b>	<b><i>\$175,000</i></b>	<b><i>Increased rate from \$8 to \$10 per hr. (No mandate to hire)</i></b>
Exempt middle school WCL teachers from non-instructional duties	\$0	NONE <i>Looking for alternatives</i>
<i>Two hour early dismissals in January and June as teachers workdays for elementary, middle and high school teachers</i>	\$0	NONE <i>Want to re-evaluate</i>
Close schools two hours early one day per month for individual teacher preparation for the delivery of instruction	\$0	NONE <i>Re-evaluating</i>
<i>Hire additional staff to reduce teacher non-instructional duties</i>	<i>TBD in FY2007 budget</i>	<i>NONE- Staffing model to be developed (By whom???)</i>
Ensure that staff development includes preparation for instruction as determined by the staff's needs and interests and the data.	\$0	NONE Needs school staff level input in FY06 to determine staff development school needs
<i>Reduce the number of meetings and duplication of initiatives required</i>	\$0	NONE <i>Provide clear direction to principals to focus on core instructional objectives</i>
Create countywide teams to assist schools AYP	TBD for FY07	Moving forward at APS schools in with FY06
<i>Re-evaluate the effectiveness and process of Kid Talk before final implementation</i>	\$0	<i>Re-evaluating</i>
Re-examine the number and length of written assignments given per course	\$0	Examine writing assignments within pacing guides
<i>Examine roles and responsibilities of reading teachers/literacy coaches</i>	\$0	<i>Alternatives are under review for cost for FY07</i>
Provide each secondary school with a scheduler and provide additional training and support for them	\$0	Alternatives are under review
<i>Provide teacher training days during the regular teacher workday to train teachers who are administering the Alt-MSA</i>	<i>TBD for FY07</i>	<i>Alternatives are under review for cost determination for FY07</i>
Increase planning time for all special educators who must complete paperwork regulated by federal and state mandates	\$0	Alternatives are under review for FY07
<i>Provide 2 substitute days at the beginning and end of the testing period (total of 4) per 5 students of the special educator's caseload</i>	\$0	<i>Alternatives are under review for FY07</i>
Create a computerized program for Alt-MSA, which would include a database for Mastery Objectives, data sheets, parent forms, headings and number pages	\$0	MSDE database has been approved; training is being scheduled for September
<i>Provide the necessary staff to each elementary school to support the transition from ECI to pre-k and K</i>	\$0	<i>Programmatic needs are being evaluated and costs determined for FY07</i>

Next month I will share with you the Long-Term recommendations which all have fiscal implications. As you can see above, most of the recommendations of the Committee are being reevaluated, re-examined and studied further.

# Pension Battle Looms

MSTA has been aggressive on the pension issue for years gaining one of the biggest overhauls in 1998. But those gains were quickly supplanted by those made in other states. Now Maryland, the fifth wealthiest state in the country, has a pension system rated dead last.

In the past two years, MSTA submitted strong pension reform bills to the General Assembly, offering fair alternatives to the current system and receiving strong support from friends of education at the Statehouse\*. The bills didn't pass, but the stage is set for a hard-hitting MSTA campaign to get Maryland educators the pension they deserve.

## Why do we need reform?

- **Pension benefits for Maryland teachers are the worst in the country – 39% of average final salary MINUS taxes.**
- Pension benefits for Maryland teachers are also the worst in the state system (including state employees, state troopers, and legislature).
- **A retired teacher in Pennsylvania will receive a pension benefit of 75 percent of their average final salary and it is TAX-FREE.**
- There is a real teacher shortage crisis in Maryland.
- Maryland Teachers Retirement and Pension Systems are way ahead of schedule for full funding, mandated by the legislature for 2020.
- Action needs to be taken now to keep “highly qualified” teachers in the classroom and recruit new ones.

*\*Visit MSTA OnLine, [mstanea.org](http://mstanea.org), for the 2005 General Assembly voting record and your legislators' vote on MSTA's pension bill.*

## School Visits

Each year every school in the AACPS receives a visit from the TAAAC President or a member of the TAAAC professional staff. Most often, they consist of a visit in the teachers lounge or workrooms through the mid-day lunch periods. With increasing frequency, however, many of these visits are accomplished in the format of a very brief before or after school meeting.

These visits serve two very important purposes. They are an opportunity for members to bring matters to the attention of their paid representatives that may otherwise pass unnoticed and unaddressed. They serve to provide members with an up-to-the-minute report of activities occurring at the bargaining table, county council chambers, state legislature, county executives' office, and the local board.

When you see an announcement posted that a visit is scheduled for your school, please plan on participating. Your TAAAC representatives want to hear from you. Whether your issue is critical or complimentary, those who represent you need to know.

Remember, all of us at TAAAC work for members. You, the dues-payers, are our employers. Come and see us when we're in your school and let us know how we're doing.