

TAAAC ACTION REPORT

Your Professional Organization

Volume 38, Number 10



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

June 2006

MSTA Announces Endorsements for Fall Elections at Spring RA

The Duncan, O'Malley, Cardin and Mfume signs crowd the side streets around the Sheraton Columbia told the story even before delegates entered the hotel's meeting rooms.

After a months-long process that culminated in speeches and visits by candidates for statewide office from both parties, delegates to the 2006 Spring Representative Assembly voted to endorse the candidates they believed demonstrate the greatest commitment to students and public education and the greatest ability to advance their education agenda.

Attended by a record breaking 388 delegates from across the state, the RA also saw passage of the first-ever two-year MSTA budget and the election of Yvonne Baicich as the newest member to the MSTA Board of Directors. Baicich replaces MSTA's newly elected vice president, Betty Weller.

Duncan or O'Malley?

Both gubernatorial candidates who spoke before the delegates were eager to share their visions of a friendly, accessible State Board of Education and responsive, engaged executive in the Statehouse.

In the end, neither candidate reached the difficult 58 percent threshold required for an endorsement and a motion was approved to endorse the candidate who wins the Democratic nomination in the September primary. Governor Ehrlich did not respond to invitations to participate in the MSTA recommendation process.

Other endorsed candidates were Kweisi Mfume for U.S. Senate; Tom Perez for attorney general and Peter Franchot for state comptroller. Mfume's Senate endorsement is not official until approved by the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education in June.

Also in attendance was Anne Arundel County Executive, Janet Owens, as she began her quest for State Comptroller.

TAAAC Foundation for Educational Excellence

2006 Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to the following recipients of the TAAAC Foundation for Educational Excellence Scholarship.



Rachel Alexander, North County Sr.

Elizabeth Brown, Meade Sr.

Ameila Dotson, Chesapeake Sr.

Amanda Schwarzmann, Chesapeake Sr.

Sophie Tullier, Annapolis Sr.

Taylor Morgan, Glen Burnie Sr.

Phillip Howden, Meade Sr.

Have a wonderful and safe summer!



Sheila M. Finlayson

Dear Colleagues,

My how time flies!

As I transition out of the office of the president of TAAAC, I want to take this final opportunity to reflect back on the last four years. I have often described my tenure as your president as trial by fire. The good part about it is that we survived and survived well. Through the difficult times, much has been accomplished and I hope that I leave this association in a better place.

First of all, I must say a personal thank you to Charles LoCascio, who was the Executive Director when my term began. He prepared me for the job ahead as best he could, given the new administration that arrived at the same time as I did. His knowledge of the operation of this Association and his gentle guidance and direction gave me my sea legs. Thank you, Charles.

I then had the pleasure of hiring Bill Jones, our new Executive Director. I believe Bill and I have worked well and to quote a staff person, "we're a great balance." Thank you, Bill. To the Board who stretched themselves and allowed me to think out of the box and to

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the absolute best staff in the world, I thank each of you!

So, what have we done in the last four years?

During my first year, we developed a public relations campaign to ensure public support for teachers. The TV ads and commercials helped to share our vision and tell our story.

Farewell and Thank you!

In an effort to better communicate, we improved and upgraded our website, hired a webmaster and made our site the place to go for Association information. I have worked to keep you informed individually and collectively through my regular email Updates and messages. I have also tried to bring you closer to the leadership by encouraging the Board of Directors to work as liaisons to you.

As your spokesperson, on TV, radio or when I was invited to speak to community, civic or political groups, I always carried your message. The regular meetings with the County Executive, Superintendent, and local presidents from around the state helped me stay informed and keep you informed.

We took strong stands and made tough decisions especially on contract issues. During my first year, our mid-year pay increase was not funded. We worked to rule, picketing outside of our schools, and then hundreds of you converged on Lawyer's Mall for a Rally for Salaries. We went to impasse twice and had three job actions in four years. These actions probably set the stage for the great contract that was to come.

In 2004, we had the first every member meeting in over 25 years, to talk about healthcare and pensions. In September of 2005, almost a thousand of you came to the Healthcare rally at the Board of Education.

In the spring of '05, over 1,100 of you responded to the first ever evaluation of the superintendent. A few months later, we took a vote of no confidence in the superintendent.

I truly believe that we should all work together for the common cause. One of the first requests I made of Bill was to bring together all four of the unions within AACPS. AEL, SAAAAC, AFSCME and TAAAC formed a new organization, the Coalition of Education Employees, with the mission of working together to solve common issues and to show our unity. Together, we were successful in thwarting attempts to

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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 www.mstanea.org/taaac	Sheila M. Finlayson, President Timothy Mennuti, Vice President Ron Russell, Secretary-Treasurer	Donzella Parker Bert Alice Liptak Yolie Marshall Carol Petrosky	Enid Collison-Lee Susie C. Jablinske Richard Benfer Shirley Little Edith M. McDougald Kathy Naeseth Ken Baughman Shirley Little Bill Jones, Executive Director and Managing Editor Roxanne L. Beach, Editor

From Contentia this month . . . *Substitute Coverage*

Teachers are being requested to cover absent colleagues' classes at an alarming rate this year, and teachers are asking why substitute teachers are not available. The Board maintains there are literally thousands of registered substitutes available to cover teachers' absences. Unfortunately, many of the substitutes are very selective in the assignments they are willing to cover. When substitutes designate specific grades, days of the week, times of day, school locations and subject areas that they will cover, it significantly reduces coverage availability. So teachers aren't forced to perform this service on a regular basis, whose responsibility is it to ensure adequate substitute coverage? It is TAAAC's contention the Board of Education bears that responsibility. **(4515)**

Article 15(B) of the Negotiated Agreement requires:

When provided

Substitutes shall normally be provided for all teachers absent from their regular teaching assignment including art, music, media specialists and physical education. Only after reasonable but unsuccessful efforts to obtain substitutes shall the principal assign teachers to other teachers' classes during their non-teaching periods.

Except in an emergency which occurs during the school day, no teacher shall be required to take a class for another teacher unless the teacher requested to take the class is given a reduced schedule or work load within the next five (5) work days.

What constitutes "normally be provided?" The dictionary defines normally as ordinarily, usually, or as a rule. TAAAC has been made aware of situations in several high schools and middle schools in which this provision is not the norm and teachers are directed to cover classes on a regular basis; in contradiction to contract language. TAAAC has requested more data and information on this issue from the Board and may be pursuing a class-action remedy through grievance procedures.

Meanwhile, if teachers are required to cover classes in situations other than emergencies (sudden absence during the same day), principals are required to reduce the workload or the work schedule of the teacher covering within five (5) days. There is no implication that the teacher must request the time through the principal, the reduction should automatically be given by the principal in exchange for the coverage. This provision does not authorize a teacher to reduce their own workload or work schedule; it must be approved by the principal. If you are required to cover a class and you do not receive the reduction in workload or work schedule, contact your TAAAC staff representative to initiate the grievance process.

Increasing Pay for Rehired Retired Teachers

As May came to a close, TAAAC submitted a written request to the Board's chief negotiator to schedule a meeting between the teams of both parties to discuss the salary of Rehired Retired Teachers currently serving our students. As you know, there is a provision of state law which waives the retirees' earnings limitation under specified circumstances. Rehired Retired Teachers who take advantage of the provision and return to teaching sign one-year contracts and retain their full pension benefits while receiving salary for active employment. That salary amount, prescribed in Article 23(B) of the Negotiated Agreement, has been left unmodified since July 1, 2001. At the time of this writing, time had not allowed for a reasonable response time. **(6658)**

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change our healthcare provider without our concurrence. There is strength in numbers!

Early on, I was approached by a group of recently retired members who wanted to organize a TAAAC-Retired. I invited them to our Retreat and gave them an opportunity to put the wheels in place and, two years later, we had an organization with its own bylaws, officers and recognition by MSTA and NEA. For the last year, or more, I have worked with TAAAC-R and the Anne Arundel County Retired Teachers Association, to develop a strategy for guaranteeing healthcare benefits in retirement.

In 2004, everyone was positively surprised when we were able to get delegation sponsorship of our Fair Share legislation, on the first try. Even more surprising was the fact that it was signed into law by the Governor. When the Board declared they could not bargain fair share until it became law in October, we requested and received an Attorney General's opinion that indicated otherwise. While it took us another two years to reach an agreement, fair share is now part of the new contract.

I could not have asked for a better final year of my term. Mrs. Mann arrived in time to help lift the morale and improve the working conditions. We finally convinced our state legislators that our pension had to be enhanced this year, and while companies are reducing or eliminating retirement benefits, we received an enhancement that will put thousands of additional dollars into the pockets of educators. And then there is our contract

which is probably the best agreement that will be reached in the state of Maryland.

As a member of the bargaining team for well over ten years, I believe the most significant accomplishment is the current three year agreement that will soon be approved by the Board. We made our case for teacher salaries and so the three year agreement, with the potential for 6% each year, was widely accepted and supported. (Thank you Bill for creating that salary comparison chart!) Even more significant is the compression of the salary scale which will increase lifelong earning potential by almost half a million dollars over a thirty year career.

I have served on too many committees and task forces to list them all but the two that come to mind immediately are the Workload Task Force and the Work Force Housing Committee. The Workload Task Force Recommendations made their way into the Superintendent's budget for '07 and I trust the incoming superintendent will want to continue to eliminate workload concerns. As we have seen the cost of housing in Anne Arundel County grow in the last five years, it is very obvious that more must be done to provide workforce housing for educators.

I have tried to be a collaborator while working with the school system as evident by my involvement in the PHELP Project at Harvard. While my involvement was only for one year, it did give me the opportunity to share the other side of the story for Harvard and AACPS to hear.

We have expanded our leadership

base by giving members training opportunities and experiences. I focused on the younger teachers and encouraged them to attend meetings and speak up for themselves. I truly believe that the young teachers are our future. We also expanded our working relationships with community organizations and we now have a lifetime membership in the NAACP and ties with both Chambers.

There are two TAAAC Committees that allow us to expand our reach to the students and the community. The Minority Affairs Committee sponsors the History Bee thus allowing us the opportunity to recognize the accomplishments of students who have chosen to excel by participating in this program. This year, the program was wrought with problems, not the least of which was a low number of participants. I would challenge you to get involved and sponsor a team at your school so that this program is not allowed to die. I recently heard from teachers that our program is great preparation for the widely popular Black Saga, as well as another opportunity for students to succeed after the Black Saga competition. We say it is all about the kids and this gives us a chance to demonstrate our interest in the children.

Special Congratulations must go to the MAC Committee for receiving a \$5,000 grants from NEA for the recruitment and retention of minority teachers.

The Human Relations Committee allows us to reach into the community. The Mills/King Awards is our opportunity to honor educators, as

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well as community leaders, for their contributions to education.

Our hearts were in the right place as we contributed over \$2,000 to the Katrina Relief Fund with our money earmarked for the Bay St. Louis-Waveland School District in Mississippi.

So what have I learned over the four years? Well, I learned to play golf. They say deals take place on the course; I say just having a presence makes all the difference.

I knew there was no greater profession in the world than to educate the children but I also learned that the next best thing is to advocate for those who teach the children.

I found my niche in advocating for you so I will not cry because it's over. I will smile because it happened. Best of life to each of you and remember "Success comes in cans. Failures come in can'ts."

Farewell and thank you!

Elementary Electronic Report Cards on the Way

After many years of fighting for workload reduction, electronic report cards for elementary schools are finally being approved for use next year. This year, elementary teachers were required to report attendance electronically, in preparation for the new report cards.

The new electronic report cards were piloted in five schools: Overlook, Piney Orchard, Mills-Parole, Lothian and Shipley's Choice. After receiving input from the teachers and parents, changes were made and the final outline of the new report card was presented to the Board for approval on June 7, 2006.

The roll out will begin in two areas of the County. The elementary schools that feed into Glen Burnie, North County, Northeast, Severna Park, Broadneck and Chesapeake will begin using the

report cards during the first nine weeks. The elementary schools that feed into Annapolis, South River, Southern, Arundel, Meade and Old Mill will begin using the report cards during the second nine week period.

Next year all teachers will be given training in the SASI program prior to the implementation of the electronic report cards.

The new report card will have fewer areas for evaluation, with the technology grade being eliminated completely. While teachers will not have access to the report cards at home, they will have access to the program in their classrooms. **(0871)**

There should be a considerable reduction in workload since teachers may select from a list of comments, while still having the option of typing in their own.

"65% Solution" - Not the Answer

Evidence doesn't support claims of student achievement increase

This idea has not come to Maryland yet but with the election looming and the post-Thornton funding period approaching, it's a possibility. This solution would mandate that 65% of all education budgets go directly to the classroom. On the surface, it sounds like a good idea. Again, the devil is in the details.

The Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice released a new report, in its series of policy briefs on education issues, *A Policy Maker's Guide to "The 65% Solution" Proposals*, by independent researcher Gerald W. Bracey.

Bracey reports the so-called "65% Solution," a proposal under consideration in at least 18 states would require schools to spend 65% of their budgets on "in-class instruction," but it has no solid evidence to support its claim of increased student achievement. Bracey found that school districts currently spending 65% or more of their budget on "in-class instruction" do not have higher achievement levels than districts that spend less. The plan also has serious definitional problems. For example, administrators, library/media services, guidance counselors, testing and professional development for teachers would not be considered "in the classroom," but football uniforms would be. Bracey concludes the "65% Solution" is a "one-size-fits-all" pseudo-reform that disguises a political agenda.

Election of TAAAC Building Representatives

The election of Association Representatives to serve as TAAAC representatives in schools and central office is vital to the strength and communication base of the organization. Each year, in May or June, elections must be conducted in each facility for the purpose of selecting Association Representatives (ARs). Procedures that govern the election process are as follows:

The Association Representative Council shall be composed of the Board of Directors of the Association, elected representatives of the schools, the offices of the Board of Education and affiliated groups and needed at-large delegates. Schools and offices of the Board of Education will hereinafter be referred to as “representative units.”

Representation from each representative unit shall be determined by the number of assigned professional staff who are members of the Association. The formula for calculating representation to the TAAAC Association Representative Council shall be: **one Association Representative for each 1-20 members and one representative for each additional 20 members or major fraction thereof.**

The Credentials Committee shall notify representative units shortly after May 1 of each year of the number of representatives which they may elect for the following year on the basis of membership at that date. Representatives shall be elected in May or June by an election conducted by the current AR. The AR will provide for secret ballots. In the case of two or more representatives of the same unit, one of them shall be designated as Chairperson. At the time of the election of representatives, each representative unit shall also elect alternates equal to two more than the number of representatives to which they are entitled. Names of representatives and alternates shall be submitted to the President by June 15 on a form provided by TAAAC. Duties of the AR’s can be found in the TAAAC Bylaws. **(8163)**

Please conduct your elections as soon as possible. If you have any questions regarding these procedures, contact the TAAAC office for clarification.

Sick Leave Bank Notice

The annual open enrollment period for TAAAC members who are not participating in the Sick Leave Bank is July 1 through September 30.

Those who wish to terminate their participation in the TAAAC Sick Leave Bank must do so by June 30 or risk the irretrievable loss of their one-day contribution.

Appropriate forms for enrollment or cancellation may be obtained from the TAAAC office.

Workers’ Compensation Bulletin

TAAAC’s long-time workers’ compensation consultant, Bryan Marshall, has left his employer, the Law Offices of Debora Fajer-Smith, LLC. Mr. Marshall is opening his own practice and he will be retained by TAAAC as the referral for TAAAC members who suffer job-related injuries or illnesses. For nearly a decade, Bryan has been offering TAAAC members very competent conscientious service in workers comp matters. By experience he is aware of the overlap of benefits provided by certain provisions of TAAAC’s collective bargaining agreement, the teachers’ retirement and pension systems, the Education Article, and Maryland Workers’ Compensation Law, and he makes use of that knowledge.

At the TAAAC office, we are confident that Bryan will continue to offer the high level of effective service that we have experienced to date. We are certain that our members who use his services will find that we have good reason.

For TAAAC members only: Law Offices of Bryan K. Marshall
14300 Gallant Fox Lane
Suite 103
Bowie, Maryland 20715
(410) 741-1300
<http://www.lawmd.biz>

Healthcare Change is Pending for Retirees

In its meeting on May 17, 2006, the Board of Education barely got enough votes together to make a change in the healthcare package for retired educators under the age of 65. The motion passed with precisely five votes, the minimum required for Board approval on any issue before them. As a result of the vote, retirees will be going to a *triple option* plan. That plan (also referred to on occasion as a *point of service* or *POS*) has the potential to reduce out-of-pocket expenses for retirees and at the same time reduce the employer's claims costs. It does so by effectively rolling three plans into one package, thus allowing the patient to chose the type of coverage at the point of service. To explain by example:

Jerome Horowitz, retired patient, regularly visits his general practitioner, Marcus Welby, MD, as needed. Dr. Welby is a CareFirst PPN participant, but like 90% of his PPN colleagues, he also participates in BlueChoice, the CareFirst HMO. Until now, Jerome has participated in the PPN and has paid Dr. Welby a \$15 co-pay for each visit, and the employer has paid Dr. Welby the higher payment rate in accordance with the PPN agreement. With the triple option plan, Jerome can see Dr. Welby and choose HMO coverage at the time and place service is rendered. Jerome pays Dr. Welby the lower HMO co-pay, and the employer compensates Dr. Welby with the lower HMO payment rate. (7544)

If the plan works as anticipated, both the retiree and the employer may save. That's the good news. The bad news is that there is potential for unintended and unwanted consequences. Doctors will end up treating larger numbers of patients at lower payment rates. And as other bargaining units enter into the triple option, either through negotiations in Units 1 through 4, or by having it imposed by the Board in Units 5 and 6, the problem providers may have with too-deep discounts will exacerbate. That leads to a natural (and for now rhetorical) question: At what point will providers begin to leave CareFirst in greater numbers, or insist on higher payment rates thereby reducing or eliminating the anticipated discount? We will know the answer soon enough, and we will hope that the result is not a shrunken network.

At its initial proposal, the healthcare change did contain a threat to retirees pocketbooks. It was a three-tier prescription deductible that would have harmed more covered retirees than it would have helped. TAAAC, along with its colleagues in CEE (Coalition for Educational Employees), AARTA, and TAAAC-R organized an effort and help eliminate the three-tier plan from the proposal before the Board's vote.

144th Annual Meeting and 85th Representative Assembly

The NEA Convention

June 30 – July 5, 2006

Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, Florida

Pre-RA Events:

- Joint Conference on the Concerns of Minorities & Women
- Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner
- National Council of Urban Education Associations (NCUEA) Summer Conference
- NEA Student Summer Leadership Conference
- NEA Retired Annual Meeting

NOMINATIONS OPEN

The Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for **MSTA Delegates to fill vacancies in the county delegation**. Nominations will be accepted until the September 6 Association Representative Council Meeting.

Name _____

Home Address _____

School _____

Phone (H) _____ (S) _____

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

MSTA Delegate

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Ashleigh Barraco
Mamie M. Ivory

***Have you spotted the
last four digits of
your phone number?***

***If so, please contact
the TAAAC office for
your prize!***

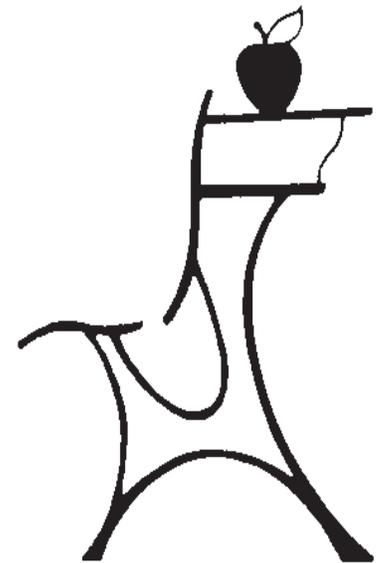
“HOT FUN FOR THE SUMMER TIME”

Don't forget, as an added benefit of your TAAAC membership, discounted movie tickets, as well as discounted theme park tickets may be purchased at the TAAAC office payable with a check or money order.

Regal Entertainment/United Artists Movie Theaters \$7.00
Kings Dominion General Admission Tickets – available soon
Hershey Park Adult Tickets \$31.95
Hershey Park Junior Tickets are \$22.95
Six Flags Season Passes are \$54.99
Six Flags One Day Tickets are \$26.00

**TAAAC OFFICE HOURS
8 AM – 5:30 PM Daily**

**Summer Hours Begin June 14th
8 AM – 4 PM**



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