

TAAAC ACTION REPORT

Your Professional Organization

Volume 39, Number 3



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

November 2006

TAAAC Endorsed Candidates General Election - November 7, 2006

Governor

Martin O'Malley (D)

Lieutenant Governor

Anthony Brown (D)

Attorney General

Douglas Gansler (D)

Comptroller

Peter Franchot (D)

US Senate

Ben Cardin (D)

Anne Arundel County Executive

No recommendation

County Council

District 1 – Daryl Jones (D)

District 2 – Ed Middlebrooks (R)

District 3 – Ron Dillon (R)

District 4 – Jamie Benoit (D)

District 5 – Cathy Vitale (R)

District 6 – Josh Cohen (D)

District 7 – Ed Reilly (R)

Legislative Dist. 21

Senate Jim Rosapepe (D)

House of Delegates

Barbara Frush (D)

Joseline Pena-Melnyk

Ben Barnes (D)

Legislative Dist. 30

Senate John C. Astle (D)

House of Delegates

Michael E. Busch (D)

Virginia Clagett (D)

Barbara Samorajczyk (D)

Legislative Dist. 31

Senate Walter Shandrowsky (D)

House of Delegates

Joan Cadden (D)

Thomas Fleckenstein (D)

Craig Reynolds (D)

Legislative Dist. 32

Senate James E. DeGrange (D)

House of Delegates

Mary Ann E. Love (D)

Ted Sophocleus (D)

Pamela Beidle (D)

Legislative Dist. 33

Senate Scott Hymes (D)

Legislative Dist. 33A

House of Delegates

Patricia Weathersbee (D)

Paul Rudolph (D)

Legislative Dist. 33B

Bob Costa (R)

Foundation to Help Local Students

One of TAAAC's functions is to assist local students in continuing their education. TAAAC does so through its Foundation for Educational Excellence which gives competitive scholarships to college bound young people.

The Foundation provides at least five scholarships to local public high school students each year which are funded by members, outside donors, and occasional fundraising events. In addition, there are two memorial scholarships funded through direct donations: the Robin Coleman Award for Science and Technology, and the Samuel and Bessie Chao Memorial Book Award. Applications are distributed through all public high school guidance counselors. The forms will be sent out in January for the 2007 scholarship awards. For more information, contact your school guidance department or call the TAAAC office.

The Foundation's Children's Fund provides prescription glasses and warm clothing to local public school children in need. Grant request must be made by a TAAAC member.

(Continued on page 5)



Timothy Mennuti

Leadership

One of the challenges of being President is to be able to provide services to all members on an equal and fair basis. Much to my surprise, I've discovered that several schools have no TAAAC representation. I don't mean that we aren't trying and I don't mean that TAAAC isn't representing the members.

What I do mean is that at several schools not one person has agreed to work with us, to attend the ARC, to stuff school mail boxes or to call TAAAC from time to time to see what is new.

I started this column with the headline "Leadership." How many of you are aware that several of our senior administrators including the Superintendent were active in their unions when they were teachers? How many of you are aware that several of our present principals were active in TAAAC as teachers and that some continue their membership?

In this era when high stakes testing is the litmus test for an administration, school districts are looking for leaders more than they are looking

COMMENTARY

for managers. Very few districts can recruit from outside their districts much less outside the profession. The path from teacher to superintendent is a very narrow one. Not everyone who makes it to assistant principal will go any further. Those that do will probably stop at some level below that of superintendent.

"You all continue to amaze me, not only by what you accomplish but by how you are able to accomplish so much with so few resources."

What then of the dedicated teachers who are determined to stay in the classroom their entire careers? Their leadership skills are honed by coursework, peer review, evaluations, teacher directed training, and skill development.

Where am I going with this? Well let's return to the beginning. My introduction dealt with the fact that at several schools no one or no group is willing to take on the responsibilities of TAAAC leadership. As I stated in an earlier column, the job is fairly simple and it can be done by one person or by several people acting together as a committee. No one person has to do everything.

Why am I focusing on leadership? The simple answer is that a strong TAAAC presence in schools is good for both the teachers and the administration. In those schools with a functioning Faculty Council and strong TAAAC leadership, there seems to be more opportunity for the administration and teachers to work together on challenges to prevent them from becoming distractions to instruction. In schools with strong Faculty Councils teachers feel that they are a part of the process and that their ideas and concerns are being listened to and addressed.

Unfortunately in schools with a non-working Faculty Council and or a weak TAAAC presence, we can see "routine" issues raised to a grievance level simply because there is no other way to raise the issue in that school.

Are teachers the only ones affected by lack of leadership at the school level? The simple answer is "No." It is important to remember that no principal wants to be singled out for attention because of problems in his/her school. Just as there is a teacher grape vine there is a principal/administrator grape vine. No area director wants a school in his/her district with high teacher turnover. Schools like that require constant management and a lot of time and effort that might be better used in helping another school raise scores. *(Continued on page 4)*

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	Timothy Mennuti, President Richard Benfer, Vice President Ron Russell, Secretary-Treasurer	Enid Collison-Lee Susie C. Jablinske Yolie Marshall Shirley Little Sarah Weller-Bentivegna	Tamara Johnson Ken Baughman Grace Matthews Carol Petrosky Diana Peckham Bill Jones, Executive Director and Managing Editor Roxanne L. Beach, Editor

From Contentia this month . . . *On the pressure of workload....*

From an economic perspective, Anne Arundel County educators are better off now than they were three years ago. Effective on July 1, 2004, became a TAAAC-negotiated across-the-board increase of 3%, plus steps and longevities, plus a mid-year increase of \$250; effective July 1, 2005, a TAAAC-negotiated across-the-board increase of 4%, plus steps and longevities; and effective July 1, 2006, a TAAAC-negotiated across-the-board increase of 6%, plus steps and longevities, plus valuable scale restructuring, and the promise of two more years of significant salary gains. The anticipated five-year impact up to July 1, 2008, is that local educators will have collected almost 28% in across-the-board increases alone. With steps, longevities and restructuring, most TAAAC-represented educators will be earning between 45% and 57% more in 2008 than they were in 2004. So, why are they still quitting?

While total turnover may be down, the portion of our bargaining unit that have resigned seems to have remained high. With a three-year Agreement in place, intended to stop the bleeding, we *Contentians* have to guess that the likely culprit is workload. It has been suspected with some reason that at least a portion of the workload burden has been the by-product of some of Dr. Smith's initiatives, and that some has been the result of federal and state mandates. The recent data tends to indicate that perhaps it has been more of the latter. After all, Dr. Smith has been gone for nearly a year, but that spike (an actual doubling) that occurred from 2003 to 2005 has become more of a plateau. To our surprise, when the retention and recruitment update was given on October 18, the portion of our separation due to resignation remained high. Further, they remained disproportionately high for teachers in their first five years of service.

Obviously, retention is more than a simple matter of money. We need to acknowledge the problem and do something to provided relief. Some progress was made on and off the bargaining table with new provisions for teacher-directed work time, limitations on duties, and the recommendations from the Joint Workload Task Force. But teachers are still spending valuable time in non-professional tasks like watching children play and eat, keyboarding data in a computer, rote copying of information from one form to another, making somewhat robotic attendance calls, and standing in line at the copier.

Getting serious about retaining teachers, and about improving student outcomes, will require giving teachers more time to teach and more time to prepare for teaching. There are only two practical ways to do that; eliminate all but the essential non-professional functions completely, or bite the financial bullet and provide more staff.

A word of advice to our teachers...remember that the only task that can be required of you beyond your paid workweek is planning your lessons.

(Continued from page 3)

Guidelines for doing so are in the TAAAC Association Representative Handbook and on the TAAAC website at www.mstanea.org/taaac. To make a grant request, or for information about making a contribution, please call the TAAAC office or visit us on the Web.

*“Patience is the companion
of wisdom.”
-Augustine*

BE YOUR OWN BOSS

Progressive International company with the latest state of the art developments in health and nutrition looking for a limited number of women or men for leadership positions who would like to work 10-20 hrs. a week and be their own boss. Complete training. Prior business management a plus. If serious call 410-279-5526

(Continued from page 2)

The topic of this column is leadership. If your school has strong TAAAC leadership and a functioning Faculty Council “Good on you” as the Irish would say. If you are at a school with a non functioning Faculty Council, give us a call and we will be more than willing to come out and help you. If you can’t figure out who the TAAAC leadership in your school is and if you just might like to give it a try, please call us and we will do whatever is necessary to help.

In the end TAAAC is only as strong as its individual school based organizations. The school year is still young – now is the time to get involved.

A stronger TAAAC presence in every school is a great first step to better working conditions in all of our schools. What have you done to help yourself today?

The Visits

So far this year the Superintendent and I have visited well over half of all Anne Arundel County Schools. These visits, averaging about an hour each, are the best way for me to learn something about each and every school. Is this the end of my involvement? - hardly. Once this set of visits is completed, I will schedule visits which will allow me to have more time in each school. Historically the TAAAC President has visited each and every school at least once during a four year period. While this is not an ideal situation, it has been the best we could do based on scheduling demands,

many of which are not controlled locally.

This year due to the fact that we have a new Superintendent and a new President, we were able to speed up the process.

This intensive visiting schedule has enabled me to develop an “image” of these schools. I’ve learned quite a bit about the “personality” of each school, staffing considerations, teacher retention or attrition at each school, and something about the surrounding community.

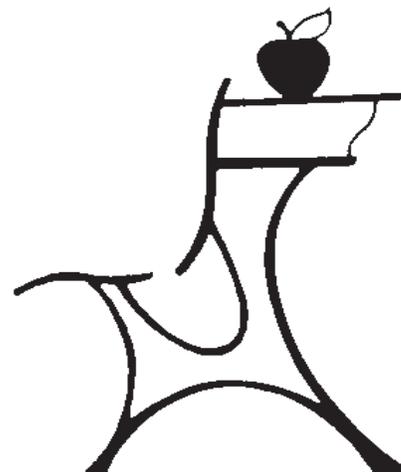
I don’t claim to “know it all” but I must say that I have a better appreciation of the conditions under which many of our teachers work. It was interesting to discover that one elementary school is using a former boys bathroom (complete with fixtures) as a storage room. At one of our high schools the math teachers have to go through the men’s room to get to their storage closet.

Many of our schools are well maintained and my hat is off to the maintenance people who put in long hard days and nights to keep them that way.

The issue of mold continues to be a major problem at some schools. I stopped counting the dehumidifiers after the first day. I also have a greater appreciation for schools with portables. I am now aware of the fact that we have two classes of portables (those in the BWI flight path and those outside the flight path). I’ve been introduced to the “magic number” regarding portables. Apparently, once you reach eight or nine portable classrooms

you are entitled to a fully functioning portable bathroom facility. I’ve actually seen one in operation. I’ve been impressed by the way in which various staffs handle the challenges of moving students to and from portables and how they handle bathroom visits.

These visits have helped me to relearn the lesson that nothing is ever as easy as it looks. You all continue to amaze me, not only by what you accomplish but by how you are able to accomplish so much with so few resources.



“Have a short memory for mistakes, failures, and behavior slips. Every child deserves a fresh start each morning.”

-From the book 501 Tips for Teachers by Robert D. Ramsey, Ed.D.

A New and Valuable TAAAC Member-only Benefit

...and it may benefit some of our senior members the most

Due to a change in IRS rules that became effective in January 2006, schools can now offer a **Roth 403(b)** option to their employees. With a Roth 403(b) plan, employees have the opportunity to defer some of their wages on an after-tax basis. The major advantage of the Roth 403(b) is that any earnings in the Roth 403(b) account can grow tax-free and remain tax-free at time of withdrawal. **TAAAC is the first local affiliate in Maryland to have a payroll slot available for members to take advantage. It is available on our NEA Payroll Plus slot negotiated a year ago. It has the potential of saving thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of members' tax dollars.**

The Roth 403(b) is more generous and flexible than the Roth IRA. For 2006, the Roth 403(b) salary deferral limit is \$15,000 vs. \$4,000 for the Roth IRA. The "catch up" contribution for those 50 and older is \$5,000 vs. \$1,000 for the Roth IRA. Loans are possible in a Roth 403(b) account, but not in a Roth IRA. And, unlike the Roth IRA, employees at all income levels are eligible for the Roth 403(b), provided the employer offers this feature in the plan.

Participants may split their contributions in any proportion between a traditional 403(b) account and Roth 403(b) account. However, the aggregate contributions may not exceed the elective deferral limit mentioned earlier. Contributions once made to the Roth 403(b) account cannot be re-characterized as pre-tax savings.

Because earnings generated in a Roth are generally not subject to income tax at distribution, the Roth 403(b) would make more sense for:

- \$ Those who think that their tax rate may be no lower at retirement than when actively employed, *including some retired educators who might be will be collecting a defined pension benefit, plus social security, plus IRA and/or 403B withdrawals.*
- \$ Long term investors that have the potential to accumulate considerable compounded earnings in their account over time and want that growth to stay tax-free.
- \$ Those concerned with passing some of their retirement funds tax-free to their heirs.

The Roth 403(b) is one more tool for participants to tailor their investments to meet their individual retirement objectives. TAAAC members should consult with their tax advisors to assess their individual Roth savings opportunity.

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

Military Caucus

Instructions: TAAAC is interested in starting a military caucus. This group will address issues specific to those who have served in the military. If you have ever served in the military, please fill out this form and send it to TAAAC.

Name _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____

Personal E-Mail _____

School _____

Branch of Service _____

Dates of Service _____

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Bethany L. Barnhouser
Robyn L. Bell
Mary N. Bellone
Debra L. Biggs
Sally B. Bistok
Lauren Blakefield
Nelsa D. Brown
Paula V. Caprice
Frederick A. Cech
Belinda Cofield
Kiersten E. Corona
David J. Doy
Maryellen A. Drake
Joyce D. Ducksworth
Lucinda R. Edwards
Susan L. Foudy
Michael Garabedian
Krysten L. George
Elisabeth Grunert
Laura Hay

Karen L. Herbert
David V. Holton
Ramon F. Jarvis
Mariana D. Johnson
Jennifer A. Lober
Carrie Macharola
Sara Martin
Jacquelyn G. Mattingly
Alison Mcanally
Brandon E. Merrell
Stephanie L. Miller
Carol A. Monger
William W. Morris
Jennifer A. Murphy
Robert F. Olmert, Jr.
Catherine M. O'Sullivan
Jenny M. Palmer
Alan F. Patrick
Kimberly D. Peterson
William A. Randes

James Redman
Linda S. Rhinehart
Elizabeth A. Riisen
Jaclyn L. Rindos
Claudette Robinson
Virginia K. Simmons
Jessica M. Stanley
Dennis E. Sullivan
Jamie L. Sweitzer
Julia M. Taddeo
Mary Ellen C. Talson
Angela L. Taylor
Erin L. Thomas
Kristen C. Toms
Toula D. Vavaroutsos-Patti
Steven M. Watson
Melinda J. Welsh
Richard I. White
Erin M. Wilson
Kristie L. Young