

TAAAC ACTION REPORT

Your Professional Organization

Volume 40, Number 4



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

December 2007

The Negotiations Quandary...

TAAAC and the Board are currently at the negotiating table on a limited number of re-openers that include compensation and work time. We anticipate that a settlement may be difficult even though we believed most of the groundwork was accomplished nearly two years ago, when the agreement was struck for three consecutive 6% increases and additional 2 hours of weekly work time. Those extra two hours were agreed upon, however reluctantly, with a legitimate belief that we would be paying teachers for time they'd been working for free. Unfortunately, the use of those additional two hours has varied widely. In too many cases, it has provided nothing in the way of additional teacher work time. Rather, it has been eaten up by additional meetings, additional paperwork burdens, and other activities not directly related to planning or delivering instruction. In at least one instance, a middle school principal used the extra time to hold a meeting so that teachers could sit and be required to read a book.

Resultantly, a recent survey of TAAAC members indicated that they are very much opposed to additional compensation being tied to a longer workweek. It is not surprising, nor is it inappropriate. Workload has probably never been worse, and the current 37 ½ hour workweek is a myth, Mr. Berson's comments notwithstanding; and the real workweek is often in excess of 60 hours. On November 14, three hundred of our colleagues turned out to carry signs to remind the Board of the growing issue.

Teachers in the AACPS are still behind in salaries in comparison to the other urbans, but not behind in work hours. Our efforts to "catch up" should not require us to work longer than the educators in surrounding districts simply to earn salaries commensurate with theirs. Unfortunately, at least in preliminary conversations, it appears that the Board may insist that we do so. If we do not, that third 6% may not occur, and we will be further delayed in closing the salary gap that has already stood too long.

With Mr. Leopold committed to funding our 6%, as he has publicly stated, wouldn't it be ironic if it cannot be negotiated? Wouldn't it be shameful if it turns out that our elected County Executive proves to be a greater friend of public educators than their own employer?

TAAAC CALENDAR

December

6	Membership	4:30
11	Negotiations	8:30 – 3:00
12	BOD	4:30
13	MAC/HR	4:30
14	Negotiations	8:30 – 3:00
17	Negotiations	8:30 – 3:00
18	Nominating	4:30

January 2008

9	ARC – Severn River Middle	5:00
12	BOD	4:30

(All meetings are at the TAAAC office unless noted otherwise.)

HAPPY



HOLIDAYS



Bill Jones

The monkey at the keyboard...

A couple decades ago, I heard a Penn State University professor explain the inherent irony in our country's criminal justice system, and the cause for so many inexplicable dispositions. His metaphor consisted of a description of the largest most elaborate room-sized computer, rife with spinning tapes, gauges and buttons. (Remember, this was 70's technology.) As our minds' eyes examined the imaginary but monstrously sophisticated machine from top to bottom, what did he see but a monkey seated at the keyboard. **(1353)**

The late Dr. Reed Phelan, one of my favorite instructors, was obviously referring to the fallibility of a system designed to avoid punishing the innocent even if that meant some guilty go free, a system in which advocates for both the prosecution and the defense undergo years of post-graduate education and training, as does the presiding officer. The irony is none of those highly educated, trained, and experienced people get to make the decisions. Rather, the decisions are made by jurors of widely varying levels of abilities, education, cognitive function, and education. Dr.

COMMENTARY

Phelan's comparison may be a bit elitist, and maybe a tad offensive, but it makes the point that elaborate systems and processes cannot protect us from an uninformed decision-maker. That point is apparently applicable to appointed policy-setters also.

"It may be a cute political spin to write them off as "union protesters," but they were teachers organizing to generate some system improvement. Then again, that's what union protesters often do."

On Thursday, November 15, I had an opportunity to read comments made from a policy-setter that had to be generated by a blind political spin and not true life facts and circumstances. The statements made in the Capital and in an e-mail response by our most conservative appointed member of the Board were just wrong, and that's not just opinion. I mean factually wrong. And some correction is required.

First, the Board member characterized the workweek of teachers as 37 hours. It may be a minor point, but the negotiated workweek is 37 ½ hours exclusive of lunch time, exclusive of lesson planning, and exclusive of back-to-school night. The major point, either missed or intentionally ignored by the Board member, was that no one complained about the length of the

negotiated workweek. Complaints contained in the testimony unanimously identified the meetings, data entry, assessments, analysis, and various administrative functions that have been heaped onto the teachers' workload causing them to work 58, 60 and more hours per week and still not managing to keep up. Worse yet, these additional demands are serving to actually detract from the teachers' ability to plan and deliver instruction by stealing time away that is to be used for that purpose. Our Board member's solution is to make workload an issue to be addressed between the principal and the teacher, thereby empowering the principal instead of the "union," only reveals the level to which he is unaware of how much of this problem is beyond the principal to fix.

Second, our Board member was quick to disregard the 300 teachers holding signs on Riva Road as "union protesters." With the exception of three staff members, everyone holding a sign was a teacher in the AACPS calling attention to the increasingly serious problem of workload, its effect on teachers, on teacher turnover, and on student learning. Many were teacher leaders elected by their school faculties to represent them. TAAAC is an employee organization run for teachers by teachers. Those "union protesters" are the

(Commentary 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 Ken Baughman, Secretary-Treasurer	Enid Collison-Lee Susie C. Jablinske Sara Silverman Shirley Little Sarah Weller-Bentivegna	Tamara Johnson Michael Barnett Grace Matthews Carol Petrosky Diana Peckham Bill Jones, Executive Director and Managing Editor Roxanne L. Beach, Editor

From Contentia this month . . . *Assualts*

One of the hardest parts of my job as President is trying to help teachers who have been assaulted at school. In November, I worked with two teachers who had been assaulted at school. The first was hurt while trying to break up a girl fight (one combatant was pregnant). Unfortunately this teacher still has significant injuries. For causing those injuries, each girl was suspended for 10 days. When we went to court (and we had to go twice because one girl didn't show for the first hearing and the Master had to issue a Bench Warrant for her and her mother) the Juvenile Master found them both delinquent and sentenced them to 30 days house arrest.



The second case involved a teacher who was also hurt while trying to break up a fight. One of the two 10/11 year-olds turned on her and caused serious injury to her wrist. At the Juvenile Intake, because of the seriousness of the teacher's injuries, the Department of Juvenile Justice decided to send this case on to the State's Attorney for Anne Arundel County. We will be watching this case closely to make certain that it does go before a Juvenile Master.

On Sunday, November 18th, the Washington Post carried a front page story focusing on the misreporting by school systems of dangerous incidents under *No Child Left Behind*. If you open a copy of our Student Handbook to the Glossary (Page 26) you will see that our BOE doesn't ever use the words "Assault" or "Battery." The term it uses is "Attacks." While the Board of Education lists several levels of "Attacks," the BOE only requires that one be reported to the police. If, however, you check out the terms "Assault" or "Battery" in criminal law, you will see that many of the things that the BOE calls "Attacks" would constitute an "Assault," a "Battery" or both. Unfortunately, it appears that the main goal of the BOE's use of language is to preclude your getting justice if you are a victim of threats or violence at school.

We are also aware of a situation in which a student, who was already wearing an ankle bracelet, threatened to kill a staff member. When told about the incident, an administrator stated, "Well he didn't mean it so I'm not going to do anything about it." HELLO - It isn't up to the administration to rule on issues of law.

There are circumstances under which a threat can constitute an Assault. Further, even where it may fall short of an Assault, the act of threatening a teacher by itself may constitute a criminal misdemeanor in accordance with the relevant provision of the Education Article. For these reasons we request that if you are threatened, Assaulted and/or Battered, that you call TAAAC so that we can provide competent and professional support. **(8643)**

Along the same lines - if you are hurt at school, accidentally or on purpose, you have the right to seek outside medical help. If you get sprayed with blood, you have the right to go to an Emergency Room to get decontaminated. We are aware of a situation in which an administrator told a teacher that she couldn't leave because there wasn't a substitute to cover her class. HELLO - if that ever happens to you call TAAAC.

We have more and more anecdotal information indicating increased attacks on staff by elementary students. Remember - if the BOE can't provide the services that a student truly needs, there is a chance that a judge can order that the services be provided.

(Contentia continued on page 4)

(Contentia continued from page 3)

During these times of high stakes testing, the expectation is that you will be doing your best each and every day. The system can't afford to have you out on assault leave. The best way to preclude that from happening is to make certain that we are consistent and that each and every offender is dealt with. The last thing we need to be doing is to be socially promoting from grade to grade and level to level, troubled youth who need services.

Thanks for all you do. Please take some time during the upcoming Holiday Season to do something that will reduce your stress level.

Your President, and Guest *Contentian*,

Tim Mennuti

(Comentary continued from page 3)

very same teachers who are working so far beyond their paid hours on behalf of their students, who took time away from their families and friends to make a point to the Board that has not been made effectively enough through simple conversation and testimony. It may be a cute political spin to write them off as "union protesters," but they were teachers organizing to generate some system improvement. Then again, that's what union protesters often do. (7847)

If there was anyone remotely connected to local education who would be willing to completely disregard live testimony on the unmanageable workload of educators, growing turnover through resignations, diminishing time to plan and deliver instruction, and the resultant cost to student improvement; it would make sense that it is the same Board member who characterized the Board's Legislative Program as a *left wing liberal document*, who voted against the Board's proposed budget, and who gave testimony before the funding authority stating that they were being asked to spend too much money on education. Will someone please take his keyboard away?

Foundation to Help Local Students

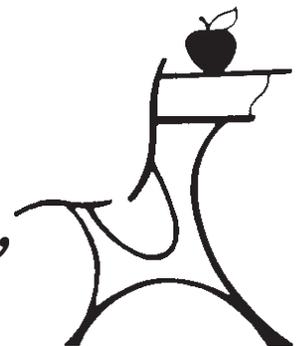
One of TAAAC's functions is to assist local students in continuing their education. TAAAC does so through its Foundation for Educational Excellence which gives competitive scholarships to college bound young people.

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 2008 scholarship awards. For more information, contact your school guidance department or call the TAAAC office. (1785)

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. To make a grant request or for more information about making a contribution, please call the TAAAC office or visit our Website at www.mstanea.org/taaac

***"Education is the power
to think clearly, the
power to act well in the
world's work, and the
power to appreciate life."***

-Brigham Young



Spotlight on Our Members 2007-08

Name: Anna K. Worsham

School/Subject/Level: Central Elementary School/Second Grade

Number of years teaching: 5 years

Number of years of TAAAC/Union Membership: 5 years

What is it about teaching that brings you to school each day? To me, teaching everyday is about helping children learn new concepts and develop new skills that will prepare them for their future. In addition, I enjoy seeing how children develop and mature throughout the year and I look forward to seeing the progress they make on a daily basis.

What teaching/classroom/school tip would you like to share with other members? Organization, especially in the elementary school environment, is something that has helped me throughout the past five years. Being organized allows to me to focus more on my student's needs and come to work prepared everyday.

What do you do for stress relief/or keeping yourself positive both in and outside of the classroom/school? My family and friends provide a lot of support outside of school. I also try to go to the gym at least three days a week to keep healthy and relieve stress.

What programs offered by TAAAC have you used/found beneficial? TAAAC has provided me with information regarding leave of absence and sabbatical leave. My TAAAC representative has also been helpful in providing me a plethora of additional information.

What would you like to see TAAAC do for you/our members/students/county? Continue working to help teachers receive an increase in cost of living over the next few years. Maryland has become a very expensive state to live in and without an increase in the cost of living, it can be very hard to live and work in Anne Arundel County.

NOVEMBER ARC ATTENDANCE

The following schools, departments, and affiliates were represented at the November 7, 2007 Association Representative Council meeting:

Elementary – Annapolis, Arnold, Belle Grove, Belvedere, Benfield, Broadneck, Brooklyn Park, Central, Crofton, Crofton Meadows, Crofton Woods, Eastport, Fort Smallwood, Four Seasons, Glen Burnie, Park, Glendale, Hebron-Harman, High Point, Hillsmere, Hilltop, Jacobsville, Jessup, Jones, Linthicum, Mayo, Meade Heights, Park, Pasadena, Pershing Hill, Quarterfield, Richard H. Lee, Ridgeway, Ripping Woods, Riviera Beach, Rolling Knolls, Seven Oaks, Severna Park, Shady Side, Solley, Southgate, Tyler Heights, West Meade, Windsor Farm, Woodside – **Secondary** – Annapolis High, Arundel Middle, Bates Middle, Broadneck High, Central Middle, Chesapeake Bay Middle, Corkran Middle, Crofton Middle, George Fox, Glen Burnie High, Lindale Middle, Magothy River Middle, Meade Middle, Meade High, North County High, Northeast High, Old Mill Middle North, Old Mill Middle South, Old Mill High, Severn River Middle, Severna Park Middle, Severna Park High, South River High, Southern Middle, Southern High – **Specials/Centers** – Central Special, Marley Glen Special, Phoenix Annapolis – **Affiliates** – EBOTA, EMAAAC, PPW, PSY – **Departments** – PSY

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

NOMINATIONS OPEN

The TAAAC Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for **President, Vice President, Board of Directors, and NEA Delegates.**

Nomination forms must be received at the TAAAC office by 5:30 PM on Monday, January 14, 2008.

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**

[Have you been a delegate before? YES or NO]

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Jeanne I. Beans
Yasmini O. Beazer-Barclay
Alexander H. Bishop
Sarah A. Cahill
Jaime Cousins
Saham U. Dave
Jason D. Dunlap
Susan T. Gallo
Deanna R. Hearle
Nancy P. Heiles
Barbara A. Irwin
Lori J. Kallis
Natalie S. Klein
Heather M. Lucas
Valerie Macys
Cynthia M. Mayette
Christie K. McConnon
Mary M. McCormick
Robin J. Mullins
Holly L. Myers
Amy K. Noggle
Michael C. Parker
Francesco Pitonzo
Joseph Winans
Carrie A. Wolak
Angela M. Youmans

17th ANNUAL MULTI-CULTURAL HISTORY BEE

The Minority Affairs-Human Relations Committee of TAAAC is currently in search of members to become volunteer coordinators for the 17th ANNUAL MULTI-CULTURAL HISTORY BEE. At this event, elementary and middle school students compete for prizes by demonstrating their knowledge of contributions made by multi-cultural Americans. The event will be held on Saturday, February 2, 2008, at 9:30 AM at Annapolis High School. Those interested should call Mike Meredith at the TAAAC office or email mmeredith@mstanea.org.

TAX PREPARATION

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

Monday, February 25	1 PM – 7 PM
Thursday, February 28	1 PM – 7 PM
Tuesday, March 4	2 PM – 7 PM
Thursday, March 6	2 PM – 7 PM
Monday, March 10	2 PM – 7 PM
Thursday, March 13	2 PM – 7 PM

Please call the TAAAC office to schedule an appointment.

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

Please call the TAAAC office to claim your prize!