

# TAAAC ACTION REPORT

*Your Professional Organization*

Volume 41, Number 3



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

November 2008

## Democracy in Action

County Executive John Leopold is responsible for two major initiatives which have a significant impact on children and educators.

The first effort involved changing the county impact fee schedule to more honestly reflect the real costs of building infrastructure in the county. This effort will provide sorely needed funds for, among other things, school construction. After months of effort, a study committee, several rewrites and a final County Council hearing the legislation passed with the votes of Council Chair Cathy Vitale, Vice Chair Ed Reilly, and Councilmen Josh Cohen and Daryl Jones.

In a second victory for his legislative agenda County Executive Leopold secured funding for a STEM related stipend program. The goal of this stipend is to encourage NBC certified teachers to continue to teach in STEM schools. Thanks also to the County Council members who approved this legislation.

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## So you want to take more graduate courses... and think you can't afford them

Your contract provides for reimbursement for a maximum of six (6) credits of approved coursework per school year. The reimbursement rate is up to \$250 per semester hour based upon actual tuition fees.

However, if you pay more than \$250 per semester hour, or you complete more than (6) graduate-level course in a school year to maintain certification, you may be entitled to an income tax credit on your Maryland return.

You may claim a credit for 100 percent of the unreimbursed amount of tuition paid, or \$1,500, whichever is less. A credit of up to \$3,000 is allowed on a joint return if each spouse qualifies for the credit. The credit is determined on a calendar year, not school year, basis.

To qualify for the credit, you must:

- Be employed by the board of education in any of Maryland's 23 counties or Baltimore City.
- Serve as a classroom teacher in a public school.
- Hold a standard professional certificate or an advanced professional certificate.
- Have completed one or more graduate-level courses with a grade of B or better.
- The courses taken must be required to maintain certification and the cost of the courses must exceed any amount reimbursed by the county.

The credit can be claimed on Maryland forms 502, 505 or 515. It is not available on short Form 503.

This is a Maryland tax credit, not just a reduction in taxable income. In simple terms, this is a dollar for dollar reduction in taxes. And, if you have not claimed your eligible incentive credit on your past taxes, you probably should consider filing an amended Maryland State Tax Return. Please consult your financial advisor.



**Timothy Mennuti**

Dear Colleagues,

The Holiday season is upon us. First a happy whirl of activities and then the cold hard reality of a new year.

As I write this column in the middle of a snow shower and a collapsing stock market, I am reminded of the fact that we are all part of the eternal show. Educators, more than most, are daily affected by the moods, whims and actions of others whose lives they are expected to change for the better. This holiday season I ask each and every one of you to take some time to take stock of what is happening in your lives. How many of us have New Year's Resolutions for 2008 that were never implemented? How many of us promised to squeeze just a few minutes out of a busy schedule so that we could have a few precious moments of downtime for ourselves?

Depending on where we are in the life cycle, the on-going economic challenges will affect our lives in different ways.

Those at the very beginning of their careers are looking for financial security perhaps to be able to pay off college debts, to save up for a baby or a house, or all three. Those in the middle are frequently dealing with financial

# COMMENTARY

challenges which involve teenagers and college bills, while looking for a way to plan for a future retirement.

The more senior members of the group could well be looking at the possibility of retirement or using retirement income to change careers. The old idea of people being put out to pasture at 65 seems to be fading as more and more baby boomers realize that they really don't want to spend their "golden years" out of the action.

***"The answer may well be that you really enjoy the people you work with and the children whose lives you impact on a daily basis."***

Wherever you are on the stage of life, this is a good time of year to reflect on your personal goals.

Do you have a "plan" or are you simply floating with the tide? Are there things that you have promised yourself that you should do, but haven't? Do you have a "bucket list" (reference to the movie)?

The idea of a "plan" is a good one. At various points in our lives we tend to be career directed, while during other periods we tend to be otherwise focused. Regardless of which period in

your life you are focused on, this is an excellent time of year to take a look at where you have been and where you might like to be going.

Some of you have told me that you are "barely holding on," living from day to day. We can all relate to that because most of us have been there at some point in our lives. I have talked with those of you who have come to understand that education is not where you want to spend the rest of your lives. I understand how difficult it was to make that decision, and I respect your honesty.

The great group in the middle, however, is the most challenging. You go from day-to-day making do and getting along but not necessarily knowing why. Many of you are happy doing what you are doing but others ask "what if."

Realize that there isn't a "quiet season" in your life. The best most of us can do is to take a few minutes here and there to think about "what if."

This holiday season grant yourself permission to ask "what if." The answer may well be that you really enjoy the people you work with and the children whose lives you impact on a daily basis. There is never anything wrong with being happy with your job.

The TAAAC leadership and staff wish you and yours a happy, peaceful and safe Holiday Season.

## 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 (301) 261-8309 www.mstanea.org/taaac	Timothy Mennuti, President Richard Benfer, Vice President Ken Baughman, Secretary-Treasurer	Enid Collison-Lee Colleen Benda Sara Silverman Shirley Little Sarah Weller-Bentivegna	Tamara Johnson Anthony Rezendes Michael Barnett Donzella Parker Bert Diana Peckham Bill Jones, Executive Director and Managing Editor Roxanne L. Beach, Editor

## From Contentia this month . . . *Watch Your Work Hours*

Everyone in the education business recognizes that teachers are often required to perform duties outside the normal workday, but what exactly is the normal workday? The normal workday is clearly defined in the Negotiated Agreement in Article 11, Work Time and Work Load:

### A. Required work hours

The Board recognizes that additional time for individual planning for the delivery of instruction may be necessary outside of the required workweek. Teachers shall be required to work 37½ hours a week at their assigned work location, exclusive of time for lunch.

In addition to regular classroom instruction, related professional duties to be performed during these hours shall include, but not be limited to, parent and student conferences, additional help to students, consultation with supervisors and administrators, studying and maintaining required records, preparation for instructional activities, and attending professional meetings.

The normal working day shall be 7.0 hours exclusive of duty-free lunch time, with the remaining 2-1/2 hours per week reserved for meetings and/or other activities not included in the normal working day schedule. If these meetings and/or activities should require more than 2-1/2 hours in any week, any teacher affected shall have the 7.0 hour schedule(s) for one or more days reduced to compensate for this additional time.

Any directive from your employer to work more hours than the specified amount in the Negotiated Agreement results in an illegal extension of the workday. Your salary and workload is based on the provisions of the Agreement, which defines how many hours you can be required to work. If your schedule does not provide sufficient time to perform your duties in compliance with these provisions, arrange a meeting with your administrator to inform them of the excess workload. At times, you will hear less effective administrators respond by telling you to “do the best you can” or that nothing can be changed. Their positions are often changed when they are presented with a grievance and face the possibility of monetary settlements for failing to take an active role in scheduling and assignments. Scheduling and assignments are an administrator’s responsibility, but all too often they expect teachers to mysteriously create time where none is available or to accumulate hours of work at home on their personal time.

Nobody works for free these days and neither should you. If you are losing your individual planning time to complete duties other than planning for the delivery of instruction, working into the evening (well past the end of the duty day) to complete tasks that should be performed during the regular work day, or not getting your full duty-free lunch time, TAAAC can help. Grievances can restore the time you have lost and/or result in compensation for hours worked. If you need help keeping track of your lost planning time, TAAAC staff can assist you with the development of record keeping documents.



## *Season's Greetings!*

The TAAAC office and Schools are closed December 24<sup>th</sup> - January 2<sup>nd</sup>

## *Have a Safe, Happy New Year!*

# WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Michele R. Bandler  
 Emir Bilen  
 Barry Booth  
 Jennifer Carson  
 Ginger C. Costa  
 Megan Dunivant  
 Adria I. Erwin  
 Eric A. Hehl  
 Natalie D. Jones  
 Susan K. Mclean  
 James Prendergast

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Spend the Summer in the Sun  
 DRD Pool Service Inc. is accept-  
 ing applications for summer job  
 openings as swimming pool field  
 supervisors and swimming pool  
 managers. No experience neces-  
 sary and free training. For more  
 information, call Noelle Navarro  
 at 1-888-785-7665 or email to  
 n\_navarro@drdpools.com

*“We cannot hold a  
 torch to light  
 another’s path  
 without  
 brightening our  
 own.”*

*-Ben Sweetland*

## TAX PREPARATION

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

Monday, February 23	1-7 PM
Thursday, February 26	1-7 PM
Tuesday, March 3	2-7 PM
Monday, March 9	2-7 PM
Thursday, March 12	2-7 PM

Please call the TAAAC office to schedule an appointment.

## NOMINATIONS OPEN

The Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for the positions of **Secretary-Treasurer, Board of Directors, and NEA Delegates.**

Nomination forms must be received at the TAAAC office by 5:30 PM on Tuesday, January 13, 2009.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_

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

Secretary-Treasurer

Board of Directors

NEA Delegates

(Have you been a delegate before? YES or NO)