

TAAAC ACTION REPORT



Your Professional Organization

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

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Educator Recruitment and Retention in Tough Times

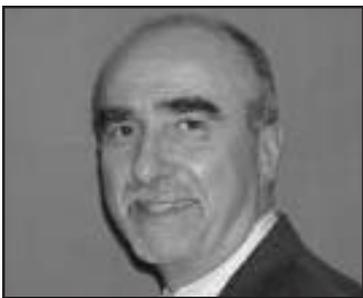
By the time this article is distributed and read, the Superintendent's Budget Presentation will have been held and the public will be aware of what he wants for our system. Odds are that he will present a budget that will (for the most part) reflect the needs of the schools. Dr. Maxwell and the Board will engage in the annual struggle in the hope that our County Executive will find and provide sufficient funding, and depend much upon TAAAC and its members to give the County Executive reason to look hard. And, TAAAC will do its share. The end result, however, will be to a large extent dependent upon what is available.

Public comments from the Arundel Center have indicated that schools should expect no more than maintenance of effort in the coming year. That would be \$8.3 million in new revenue for the county. That's less than a 1% increase and not likely sufficient to recruit or retain educators by offering them a higher standard of living. That would justifiably mean that effort must be made to improve working conditions. And that, in turn, means we need to get control over workload issues, classroom control and safety issues. In general, we need to make educating our young people more of a career and less of a lifestyle.

How? For starters, we eliminate the frivolous 181st student day. A day added this year as a poor alternative for bad behavior at the graduation ceremonies of a couple of high schools, because the will to simply enforce reasonable behavior standards was absent. In an environment where workload has risen to match salary as a bargaining priority and the Administration verbally acknowledges its own empathy, it was downright offensive to take a full day of teacher work time away so a few schools could use staff as caped and robed playground monitors. It was especially troublesome in that some of the cost additional bus drivers, additional support staff hours, and additional energy usage necessary across the entire county was paid for by reaching directly into the pockets and purses of the people upon whom the workload was piled.

Yes, we just segued into the topic of furloughs. The scheduled days have just about all been served, paychecks have been adjusted, and by the time of this publication one day will have been refunded. But the issue should not be forgotten too quickly. We gave up our money but then we saw fund balances fatten, new programs remain on schedule, the appearance of some new contracting out, and the stubborn holding on to that frivolous 181st day.

TAAAC will be "stepping up to the plate" at the bargaining table and at the Arundel Center to negotiate and fund a fair and reasonable collective bargaining agreement. In fact, it is in the business of doing so. But TAAAC will also take any actions within reason to ensure that if/when concessions become necessary, sacrifice is shared by both parties to the agreement.



Timothy Mennuti

Happy 2010

Wow – For the first time we are into double digits for a new year this century. Let's not start the New Year by asking where the old one went. Instead let's take a deep breath and be thankful that we made it through the last year. It is no secret that 2009 was a challenging year on many fronts. As I write this column, the TAAAC staff is working hard to tie-up a number of loose ends.

As we start 2010, we all know that it will be a year of challenges and surprises. While we hope that most of the surprises will be happy ones, one can never tell. At the end of 2009 the economy weighed on our minds. Unfortunately, that challenge will be front and center as we watch the development of the 2010-2011 Board of Education Budget.

In mid-December, as Chair of the MSEA Legislation Committee, I provided local presidents with an overview of the things that MSEA and TAAAC would be watching in 2010.

Top of the list was the state budget. While Anne Arundel County is

COMMENTARY

blessed with a low unemployment rate, unfortunately, it is also dealing with a significant shortfall in revenue. Simply put, this is going to be one of those years when our money will not cover our needs.

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A second area of concern is pensions. The current retirement system has the State paying the full retirement cost for teachers statewide. The legislature has significant concerns as to whether or not this is equitable. Their position is that since the local BOEs negotiate teacher contracts without regard to the State's ability to pay for the pensions, that there should be some changes. The whole issue will be front and center when the General Assembly convenes in Annapolis on January 13, 2010.

A third area that requires attention is the Labor Bill. Unfortunately, in Maryland education employees have very few rights. We will be trying to pass a Labor Bill which more evenly balances the scales between the Boards of Education and educators. At present, it is like having a dispute with your spouse and then having to turn to a moth-

er/father in-law for a final ruling. No matter how far we go under the present system, the local Board of Education has the authority to say “no.” How bad is it? Even if we get a neutral third party to try and settle the issue, the Board of Education has the RIGHT to pick and choose what it wants to do with the ruling. Believe it or not they can actually look at the ruling and pick and choose just like you do with a menu in a Chinese Restaurant. “We the Board of Education like this one but not that one. We don't like any of these.” That is how unfair the process is – they can actually reject all of the rulings in our favor and IMPOSE whatever they want. In this regard, terrorist suspects detained at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba actually have more rights than teachers in Maryland – Go figure!

The MOE is our fourth area of challenge. The Maryland Association of Counties is lobbying the General Assembly in order to change the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) legislation which requires counties to provide a minimum level of support to county schools. Guess what will happen if the county doesn't even have to provide a MINIMUM level of funding to schools statewide?

A fifth area of concern is BOAST. This is one of those ideas that sounds good when you aren't thinking clearly (New Years Day for instance). However in the light

(Continued on page 3)

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From Contentia this month . . . *A Rose By Any Other Name...* *Plan of Action for Improvement*

Some of you are having some perceived difficulties with your assignment and have been put on a plan of action of some type by your administrator.

A “plan of action for improvement” is a negotiated item that can be found under the Evaluation and Rating article of the Negotiated Agreement. Whether your administrator calls it a “plan of action,” a “plan for improvement,” “plan for improving instruction,” or some other words intended to produce a similar result, these “plans” all fall under the scrutiny and requirements of your contract and the guidelines of the Employee Performance & Conduct Management manual. Your administrator can’t just change the name so he or she doesn’t have to follow the rules.

Your contract clearly defines the “plan of action for improvement” to be an extension of the observation portion of the evaluation process. Within two (2) duty days of a formal observation, scheduled or unscheduled, your administrator is required to hold a post-observation conference with you. When the administrator indicates a need for improvement, he or she shall indicate suggestions for improvement in the written evaluation and shall develop a “plan of action for improvement” **during the post-observation conference**. Furthermore, the contract states that the suggestions be constructive and should include consideration of the professional preparation needed for the assignment and the conditions under which the Unit I member works including physical facilities, pupil load, and special pupil needs.

Additionally, the Employee Performance & Conduct Management manual clearly states that the activities set up to assist improvement and the steps set up to help the Unit I member improve **must be jointly developed with the teacher**.

There are three questions to ask yourself:

1. Was the plan of action developed during the post-observation conference?
2. Was the post-observation conference held within two duty days of the observation?
3. Did you have input in developing the plan?

If the answer to any of the above is “no,” you need to call your UniServ Director immediately. You may have grounds for a grievance or appeal. Remember, there are timelines attached to these actions. Please don’t wait until it is too late.

(Continued from page 2)

of day this turns into a day mare. In essence the idea is to allow people to make donations of goods or money to private or religious schools and to take a tax deduction for the amount. Well what does it actually mean? It means that every dollar they can take as a tax deduction is a dollar that can’t be spent for public education. Most years we barely have enough. Guess what will happen in a down economy like the one we are in now? Not good for our students.

In addition to these challenges we are also faced with “Race to the Top,” which is the Obama

Administration’s proposal to “help” schools.

We realize how hard you work and how much “free” time you actually have. For your own sake, however, please try to read the Updates we will be sending out from time to time. For the first time in a long time, we may need you to help us help you during this General Assembly.

Be safe out there!



Have a Safe, Healthy, and Happy New Year!



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Spend summer in the Sun – **DRD Pool Service, Inc.** is accepting applications for summer job openings as swimming pool field supervisors and swimming pool managers. No experience necessary, free training. For more information, call Noelle Navarro @ 410-761-7665, 1-888-785-7665, or e-mail to: n_navarro@drdpools.com.

Beth Tfiloh Camps seeks head counselors and instructors of campcraft, singing, nature, sports, art, and swimming. The Owings Mills day camp runs Monday-Friday from 9 AM-4 PM for 8 weeks (June 21-August 13). Apply online at www.btcamps.org or phone 410-517-3451. **YOUR CHILD ATTENDS FREE!**

TAX PREPARATION

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

- Monday, February 22 1-7 PM
- Thursday, February 25 1-7 PM
- Tuesday, March 2 1-7 PM
- Monday, March 8 2-7 PM
- Thursday, March 11 2-7 PM

Please call the TAAAC office to schedule an appointment.

NOMINATIONS OPEN

The TAAAC Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for **President, Vice President, Board of Directors, and NEA Delegate.** Nominations forms must be received at the TAAAC office by 5:30 PM on Tuesday, January 12, 2010.

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

School _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____

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

- President
- Vice President
- Board of Directors
- NEA Delegate

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

TAAAC MULTI-CULTURAL HISTORY BEE CANCELLED

The TAAAC Minority Affairs/Human Relations Committee regrettably announces the cancellation of the 2010 TAAAC Multi-Cultural History Bee. After much discussion and consideration, the Committee has decided to concentrate its efforts to revise the current structure, considerably enhance the variety and number of questions, and formalize consistent rules to create an improved version of the History Bee. The Committee members apologize for any disappointment this decision has caused TAAAC members, parents, and students; however, in order to address the excellent job our students have done in memorizing the existing Bee study guides, the Committee will need additional time not currently available to expand the guides and challenge our very bright participants. As such, the History Bee is cancelled until further notice.

TAAAC is seeking additional Committee members to commit time and dedication to this time-consuming project. If you are interested in donating time to research and enhance the History Bee study guides and serve as a Committee member, please contact the TAAAC office and provide your contact information.