



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

December 2012

New Certification Regulation Could be Trouble for Educators

Option Four is one of several proposed changes to teacher certification. While MSEA and the Professional Standards Teacher Education Board (PSTEB) support the majority of these changes, Option Four completely undermines the teacher certification process.

There are currently three options (Master's Degree, Master's Equivalency, and National Board Certification) to renew or qualify for your Advanced Professional Certificate (APC). However, Option Four circumvents the need for teachers to pursue the professional development which helps them continually improve their craft and ensure that we have a highly qualified educator in front of every classroom. Moreover, Option Four devalues the profession and lowers standards. It runs contrary to the concerted efforts that have been made to recruit highly trained educators and strengthen the profession with higher standards.

Option Four does this by not requiring any coursework and linking the APC to a highly effective teacher evaluation rating. Option Four requires teachers to submit evidence of highly effective teaching for a minimum of three of the last five years immediately preceding the issuance or renewal of the APC. This new option would tie a teacher's certification to an evaluation system which has not been tested for accuracy and validity, a troubling proposition. PSTEB spent more than a year discussing and researching this issue resulting in a unanimous vote to oppose the proposed regulation changes and publication. Nevertheless, MSDE ignored PSTEB's objections and unilaterally pushed this proposal forward.

MSEA is working with other state educational organizations to oppose this change in certification regulations and to preserve the high standards and credibility of our profession, and stands ready to work with MSDE to identify other alternatives for strengthening the profession.

MSEA/TAAAC fully supports the strengthening of the current certification process. However, we strongly oppose certification being tied to student growth and teacher evaluations. If a teacher chooses Option Four as the route to initiating or renewing an APC and does not receive a highly effective rating, they will need to begin the process over again. Teachers in this situation may not be certified to teach until they have met the requirements. For some, it may be too late in the year to do so, especially if the APC is set to expire in July.

Distinct from the other three routes to an APC, Option Four requires no professional development and no ongoing coursework. Unfortunately, teachers may choose Option Four as a quick and less rigorous method to secure or renew an APC, unaware that it may be the most difficult route in the end. The highly effective rating may be impacted by a change in assignments, grade level, content areas, new administrative staff, and the accuracy and validity of the evaluation system itself. Tying certification to student growth and highly effective teachers will lower the standards for professional development. Option Four is reliant upon an evaluation system that has not been tested for accuracy and validity and lacks a training component for evaluators, making the





Bill Jones

Where have all the friends of teachers gone?

At the national level we have the Race to the Top, a program that may be well-intended but bad for teachers nonetheless. Part of presidential promises to improve education by giving teachers the support they need including the appropriate professional development and paying them better. Instead, we have teachers looking forward to being evaluated on how well their students perform on tests, professional development sessions that are often duplicative to others already presented, and a workload that gets increasingly impossible to manage. The Obama Administration, through Secretary Duncan, continues to push the square peg of business practices into the round hole of pedagogy. If Racing to the Top has been a boon to any teachers, it must be somewhere besides here. There was grant money involved, but eligibility required us to change the way we do business. Those changes to date have not been for the better. Then most of the money went where greater need was perceived, leaving us with more burden than benefit.

At the state level, our new superintendent of schools is imposing evaluation requirements by regulation that her predecessor failed to secure in legislation; specifically,

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that 50% of teachers' evaluations must come from student growth and 20% from standardized testing. Currently being published for comment are newer regulations that will limit not only the teachers authority in the classroom, but the authority of local education agencies to determine their own policies in classroom control and student

“The Obama Administration, through Secretary Duncan, continues to push the square peg of business practices into the round hole of pedagogy.”

discipline. Fiscally, public educators were exploited again at the state level. To balance the budget, public educators' contribution to retirement went up to 7% while the benefit was reduced and the vesting period doubled. Worse yet, not all of the contribution fell to the benefit of the retirement system. Rather, for FY2013 a chunk was used to relieve some pressure elsewhere in the operating budget. It was appropriately called a “teacher tax” by our state affiliate. Despite their best effort, and ours, the teacher tax became a reality.

At the local level, friendly treatment appears just as scarce. When the county finally had sufficient resources to fund a part of the salary increases that were negotiated, the council refused to do so. To

avoid losing millions of dollars of operating money, the superintendent was bullied into promising to use the available money for new positions instead of promised salary increases.

While responsibility for the most recent financial mistreatment of teachers falls to Mr. Leopold and the majority of the County Council, our own AACPS administration is not faultless. Their contribution is in workload. Re-do's, re-teaching, re-testing all take time away that teachers might have had to address the growing amount of non-teaching responsibilities. Meetings, meetings, meetings, data entry, data analysis, emails and more are breeding an environment where teachers can spent as much time seated in meetings or at keyboards as they spend standing in front of students.

I was told two decades ago as a young (well, *younger*) UniServ Director on the heels of the ...*stemming the rising tide of mediocrity*...days, that everyone wants great schools but no one wants to pay for them. The statement has never been more true. Instead, teachers themselves are subsidizing school improvement; do so with concessions in salary, retirement, healthcare benefits, and even job security. Where is all this headed? How long will college graduates agree to a career of long hours, hard work, frequent criticism, and the dubious opportunity to be the *goat* when a politician or talk show host wants to play the *hero*.

We don't have to be prophets to see some danger on the horizon for public education.

TAAAC Action Report

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From Contentia this month . . . *The Role of a Department Chairperson*

It is not news to inform you that workloads across the county have gone up over the past five years. New Federal and State requirements, plus the increasing demands of our students, has made the job of the Unit One employee more difficult than ever.

It is fair to say that Administrators face increased workload as well. They often face the same difficult choices with their time that you are forced to make. Unfortunately, TAAAC has been made aware that much of this administrative workload is being passed onto Department Chairpersons.

Department Chairs are Unit One employees. Their role includes the following:

- Content and Curriculum Specialist
- Professional Development
- Advise/guidance to teachers (NOT formal evaluation)
- Organizational duties for meetings/requirements/books etc...

Currently, Department Chairs are being forced into participating in Unit Five (administration) jobs including grade changing, evaluation and rating, and discipline of their fellow Unit One members. Department Chairs have no authority to do any of these things and don't want to. They enjoy the other parts of the job including scheduling and curriculum, but are being forced into things that they don't want to do.

Administrators are supervisors, and therefore are not viewed (correctly) as "equals" or "friends" by Unit One members. Department Chairs are now being placed into this category – forced to evaluate, discipline, and change the grades of people they consider to be equals and friends. If Department Chairs had wanted to go into administration, they would have gone into administration.

The Negotiated Agreement allows for some observation by Department Chairs, but there are significant limits including an 80 percent vote by the membership of that department to allow this to move forward (**Article 16/A/3**). If your department has not followed these strict guidelines, the Department Chair should not be forced to observe you and participate in the evaluation process.

Please report violations of this policy to TAAAC. It is imperative that we do not allow administration to force Department Chairs to do their work for them. It isn't their problem.

AFLAC - New Guaranteed Issue Income Protection Plan - Fills Gaps in Sick Bank

Do you have a health issue? Have you been turned down for Hartford/Aflac Disability? For years, some of you may not have been able to purchase disability income protection due to existing health concerns, and are at risk now of losing income if you become sick or injured and run out of sick leave. Now, our TAAAC-sponsored Aflac plan may be purchased on a Guaranteed Issue basis. That means you are now eligible for income replacement that has been out of your reach, and you can enroll in plans that pay anywhere from 3 months up to 24 months. Aflac plans pay in addition to Sick Leave and Sick Bank benefits, and pay even in the summer months.

Please call us to discuss how these new plans work and what they cost. Through Aflac and Hartford, TAAAC has over 14 plans which vary to fit your needs depending on your family, your health, and your finances. Plans are tailored to you. We also offer spouse and family protection plans. We can meet you at your school, home or a local coffee shop. Call EPS at 301-985-2020 to meet with an Aflac or Hartford representative.

final rating dependent.

Special Ed. Task Force Event a Huge Success

The Special Education Task Force held their annual event at Severna Park Middle School on November 5, 2012. The ***Fall Solutions Gathering*** was the result of a unique partnership between the Board of Education and TAAAC.

The Task Force, led by Chairperson Gail Wood, sent out surveys to all TAAAC members in the areas of Special Education, Special Services (OT/PT/Speech), and Psychology/School Counseling. The survey asked for solutions to problems that exist in their areas of education. Many times people gather to complain about what is wrong, but this event was all about how to **solve** the problems these unique groups face.

Mary Tillar, the Director of Special Education, was the point person for the Board. At the event, the facilitators included TAAAC members Robin Murray, Shirley Foreman, Nicole Tello, Pam Bukowski, and Robin Satchell. Board facilitators included Pam Courson, Bobbi Pedrick, Jodi Williams and Barbara Schwartz.

After a yummy dinner from Boston Market, the sub-groups examined and added to the list of solutions sent in by the membership. Each group reported out to the main body, and the data was collected when everyone had shared their “best” ideas.

Mary Tillar, the Task Force, and other leaders at the Board of Education are moving forward with the solutions

Teacher Evaluation Tool

During the 2010 session of the Maryland General Assembly, the Education Reform Act of 2010 was passed. The changes affect principals and teachers with a new evaluation tool to include student growth as a factor. According to MSDE the results of the new evaluations will offer a more detailed look at educator performance so that targeted and supportive professional development can be provided in a timely manner. This professional development will in turn strengthen the knowledge, skills, and classroom practices of educators to improve student achievement, helping Maryland to develop the strongest educator corps in the country.

The state’s new “Teacher Evaluation Model” was test piloted during the 2011-2012 school year in seven school systems including Baltimore City, Baltimore, Charles, Kent, Prince George’s, Queen Anne’s, and St. Mary’s Counties. Since Anne Arundel County signed on to Race to the Top (RTTT) we are part of a no-fault field test of the new evaluation system that is being piloted in two high schools, two middle schools, and 4 elementary schools. The purpose of the field test is to provide valuable feedback to the Board/TAAAC joint committee on teacher evaluation. We want to learn as much as we can to be sure that what is implemented is fair. Whatever model the joint committee comes up with will be implemented during the 2013-2014 school year.

The state model will be a default model for Anne Arundel County should the Board of Education and TAAAC fail to come to an agreement on our own evaluation model. With that said, the joint committee on teacher evaluations have met together to discuss the state model. TAAAC has expressed concerns with certain portions of the evaluation system, particularly the use of lag data. The Board and TAAAC have also been meeting with MSDE to follow the field testing progress.

The state model and ultimately the local model will have part of teacher evaluation tied to test scores. As the talks progress it is suggested that 50% of the evaluation be the traditional category of “Professional Practice.” These come from the Charlotte Danielson model that includes *planning and preparation, instruction, classroom environment, and professional responsibilities*. An additional domain will be added based on the Board’s priorities. The other 50% of the evaluation will consist of SLO’s (Student Learning Objectives), MSA scores, and possibly SPI (School Progress Index). It should be noted that MSDE recently changed the “P” in SPI from “Performance” to “Progress.” While the formulas are quite complicated, MSDE is working with local school systems and will be testing the formulas to work out any kinks. In addition, the measures between elementary, middle, and high school will vary greatly. More details can be found on the MSDE website at: www.marylandpublicschools.org then click on Teachers and Principals. Look for the newsletter, “Maryland Classroom.” It is October 2012, Vol.18, No.2.



to create change within the system. Look for the “solutions” that came from TAAAC members to be put into effect during the spring of 2013.



Premium Holiday, December 12th

Negotiating salaries wages and benefits in an environment of scarce resources is at best a *difficult* task. Every single item that has a price-tag to our cash poor county is a struggle to secure – even those that were low-hanging fruit only a handful of years ago when the school system was averaging \$60 million per year in new money. The premium holiday was the result of a joint negotiations that revamped much of the healthcare options and coverage's that took place over several months and included negotiators from the Board, TAAAC, AEL, SAAAAC, and AFSCME Local 1693.

In the first paycheck in December our members will see a higher than normal net pay, the level of increase determined by the plan and coverage selected. The increases for some may be slight. For instance a single individual participating in Blue Choice and no extra Dental or Vision will see an approximate \$10 increase in take-home pay. But others in more expensive plans with spouse or family coverage will pocket some pretty significant amounts. For some examples:

- A 26-pay day Triple Option participant carrying coverage for a spouse along with Traditional Dental and Vision Option 2 will take home an extra \$61.
- A 22-pay day Triple Option participant carrying family coverage with Dental and Vision Option 2 will take home an additional \$94.
- A 26-pay day PPN participant carrying coverage for a spouse and no additional Dental and Vision Option 2 will take home an additional \$188.
- A 22-pay day PPN participant carrying coverage for a family with Traditional Dental and Vision Option 2 will take home almost \$233 more than usual.

This premium holiday should not be a one-time event. In accordance with the collective bargaining agreement as ratified, each year will bring a sort of reconciliation of our healthcare fund. If the balance in that fund at the close of the fiscal year is more than 150% of average monthly claims expenses, AACPS employees will receive their portion of the coverage back in the form of a premium holiday, or partial holiday where appropriate.

New Vision Plan Effective January 1, 2013

A most aware, new vision benefits will be improved for about 2,500 AACPS employees who will pay no more for the enhanced benefits of CareFirst Vision at no greater payment than they would have had under the old and lesser Vision I. In addition, the approximate 5,000 employees who were in Vision II will be retaining the same higher level of benefits in CareFirst Vision but will pay a lower premium. For the readers' convenient reference, a copy of the CareFirst Vision annual coverages is excerpted below.

Eye Exam	100% of allowed benefit*
Single Vision Lenses	\$52.00
Bi-Focal Lenses	\$82.00
Double Bi-Focal	\$100.50
Tri-Focal	\$101.00
Cataract (o) Lenses	\$181.00
Contact lenses (medically indicated)	\$352.00
Contact Lenses (cosmetic, single)	\$97.00
Frames	\$45.00

**Patient may be balance billed for eye exams, lenses, frames and contact lenses*

NOMINATIONS OPEN

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

Nomination forms must be received at the TAAAC office by 5:30 PM on Monday, January 08, 2013.

Name _____

Address _____

School _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____

Email _____

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

Secretary-Treasurer

Board of Director

NEA Delegate

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

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Beth Tfiloh Camps seeks head counselors and instructors of sports, campcraft, singing, nature, art, and swimming. The Owings Mills day camp runs Monday-Friday from 9 AM-4 PM for 8 weeks (June 24-August 16). Visit our website at www.btcamps.org or phone 410-517-3451. **YOUR CHILD ATTENDS FREE!**

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 at 1-888-785-7665 or, e-mail to:

n_navarro@drdpools.com

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Mensah Alkebu-Lan
 Amie Beeman
 Christine Cecere-Ziemer
 Sandra Ciecierski
 Anna Cooper
 Mark Fulco
 Jessica Griffith
 Jennifer Hamilton
 Janna Kintzley
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 Lori Triplett
 Brad Willard

ATTENTION!

Are You Paying Too Much

If your employment status has changed and you have an annual salary under \$39,097 and/or are working .6 or less, please contact the TAAAC office so that your membership dues can be adjusted accordingly.