

TAAAC ACTION REPORT

Your Professional Organization

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

November 2014

Testing is Taking a Toll on Educators

Delegates to the National Education Association's annual meeting in July voted to launch a national campaign to put the focus of assessments and accountability back on student learning and end the "test, blame and punish" system that has dominated public education in the last decade. The campaign will among other things seek to end the abuse and overuse of high stakes standardized tests, and reduce the amount of student and instructional time consumed by them. NEA President, Lily Eskelsen Garcia, has been on the radio circuit denouncing the toxic testing going on in our schools across the country.

Some have characterized the flurry of testing going on in our schools in this way. Teachers diagnosis students' needs on a daily basis. Observation, quizzes, and tests of student behavior and skill acquisition have primarily been the main mode of evaluation over the years. With the data collection revolution at its highest peak since it began several years ago, our students endure more testing than ever. Educators feel knowing students strengths and weaknesses helps inform instruction. Many appreciate what the assessments offer in terms of data to help drive differentiation in their classrooms. However, no matter how well the Maryland State Department of Education and AACPS intended to help us reach that goal, it has caused angst among our educators across the state and county.

Teachers across the state have been dealing with the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. In order for Kindergarten teachers to complete the assessments, they have designed engaging independent activities for their students (5 year olds) and spent many hours of instructional time assessing students one on one. Many teachers received a day of sub time to help them meet with students to complete part of the assessment. It was acknowledged at the Central Office that one day isn't nearly enough. The Central Office has worked closely with TAAAC to help offer relief in the form of solutions that can impact the time issue.

Additionally, local educators across our county are using new assessment tools to help inform instruction. The implementation of the Fountas & Pinnell assessment and Dibels across many grade levels has run the gamut in terms of reaction to the testing. Every educator we talk to has expressed their desire to have data to help them differentiate instruction. Although they are dismayed by the amount of time it has taken to get the testing completed. One teacher reported that she "cheated" one day and skipped testing to take a group for small group instruction. She said it felt great. I don't think that we should be feeling like we are cheating in order to properly instruct our students. Here it is November, and some educators are just now finishing up the testing with their students and can finally form their groups for small group instruction. Having the data to back up their instructional decisions would have most people thinking "that's great"! Only problem with that is many have expressed that they have lost

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Bill Jones

Part of the job of every member of TAAAC's professional staff is member recruitment. Much of that job is accomplished by rotation in which the staffers take turns presenting to new teachers during their new employee processing sessions. Those sessions begin in late June and roll through March in most years. On the day of this writing, it happened to be my turn. There was one new employee to be processed; an experienced, articulate and pleasant new addition to our membership and sick leave bank rosters. But a comment was shared by her that troubled me, and I had to wonder how many of our members are like-minded.

Many of our schools' faculties were visited this fall by our President, a member of the UniServ staff, or me. The visits were brief and every one brought the same message; "Please vote on November and please check the website for TAAAC recommended candidates." That same message had been brought to new employees at processing. My new hire assured me that she voted regularly "...but not the way the union wants me to." We talked amicably a bit afterward, but I couldn't shake the comment.

COMMENTARY

TAAAC's leadership does not presume that every member should and will follow TAAAC's candidate recommendations. Obviously, there are many reasons to select one candidate over another. In a healthy democracy, voters collect information and choose thoughtfully in accordance with their individual priorities. While we hope

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that most public educators hold public education and public educators among their highest priorities, it is folly to presume that every single educator holds them as their single highest, far above all others. We understand that our list of TAAAC recommended candidates is only one factor in the mind of the individual voter, member or otherwise.

The *Teacher Recommended* label means that the candidate through a fairly elaborate vetting process has shown through questionnaire responses, interviews, and voting records (for incumbents), that he or she is the most likely candidate to support public education and public educators. It is not an

attempt by TAAAC to dictate who members must support, as sometimes charged. It IS to show folks who hold public education and public educators among their highest priorities, what candidates are most likely to serve their interests.

By the time this edition is distributed, the results of our November 4th election will be known. As readers consider those results, they need to know that TAAAC's leadership put more effort into impacting those results since unseating a hostile County Executive back in 1998. For the past several months we've had TAAAC officers, directors, staff and member-volunteers phone banking, canvassing, dropping literature, and poll-working for candidates who successfully earned TAAAC recommendation. We also nearly exhausted our *Fund for Children and Public Education*. Whether we did enough will determine whether public education might again become a higher funding authority to our county government or whether our schools, students, and teachers, will continue to struggle with four more years of annual allocation of no more than the minimum allocation allowable by state law.

If the results indicate that all we did was still not enough, I will be troubled wondering how many of our own did not hold public education and public educators in high enough regard.

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From Contentia this month . . . *What do you have to tell your school if you will be out more than three days?*

Any absence over three days may be complicated. We must take into account doctors' notes, available sick leave, the Family Medical Leave Act and/or the Sick Leave Bank. In addition, it is important to know what information you should share with your school administration, and what you are not required to share.

Let us go through two scenarios and examine what you should do:

You are out more than three days but have many sick days, plus you are in the sick leave bank —

Obligation: The contract states: "Sick leave in excess of three consecutive days shall be attested to by a physician." The ONLY thing you need to provide your school is a note from a doctor saying you are under their care for the appropriate time period. No other details need to be provided.

You are going to be out for an extended period of time and there is a possibility you will run out of sick leave —

Obligation: The one thing you do not want to do is go into "lost time." This occurs when you are not in school and have no leave of any kind left. Not only is the leave unpaid, but your job status can be impacted as well. Therefore, you should notify your school that you will be out and also call the Board of Education (410 – 222 – 5090). You will be required to complete FMLA paperwork. More detailed medical information will have to be provided, but it will remain private. They have a confidential fax line to receive this information. By doing this, you create federally job-protected leave for yourself. If you are in the Sick Leave Bank, you will have to complete additional paperwork. At no time do you need to tell your school anything regarding your specific medical condition other than to say you will be out and under a doctor's care.

To summarize the main points:

- Your specific school never needs to know the medical reason for your absence, even if it is for an extended period of time.
- For absences in excess of three days, you are required to provide your school a note saying you are under a doctor's care. Nothing more.
- For extended absences where your sick leave could run out, FLMA paperwork protects your leave and job status. If using FMLA, you will be required to provide specific medical information and possibly have to be medically cleared to return to work.
- Protect yourself. Join the Sick Leave Bank.

Common Core Corner

Join us November 13 at the TAAAC office for a Chat, Chew and Brew with our local Common Core Cadre. We would like to chat about Common Core implementation successes and challenges here at the local level. The Cadre will also offer a differentiated presentation on Common Core with information tailored to the elementary and intermediate/secondary levels. Topics will include Common Core myths & facts, "decoding" the standards as well as grade/content specific strategies for both teachers and students.

The follow up session will be on December 8 at the MSEA office in downtown Annapolis. That session will focus on the various professional resources available as well as community resources to help families better understand what Common Core is, what it isn't, and how we can all best support our students.

Follow up information from both sessions will be available after the presentations on the TAAAC website, under CC/SLO.

Student Learning Objectives FUN quiz – The UniServ Perspective (*YOUR RATING AND JOB!!!)

- T F 1. You have the final say on whether your SLO is acceptable.
- T F 2. Principals will be judged on school-wide SLO results.
- T F 3. If you don't like your SLO score you can grieve the result
- T F 4. For 2013-14, SLO's scores in A.A. County (on average) hurt teachers overall rating more than they helped
- T F 5. The higher you set your goals for your students the more you put your individual score at risk.
- T F 6. There are too many downsides to arguing with your administrator over your SLO targets to merit attempting to try and do so.
- T F 7. The smaller the group of students you use for your SLO target group, they better off you are
- T F 8. If something unforeseen happens during the SLO testing period, you can modify your objective working with your Administrator.
- T F 9. If you score a 3.0 on both SLO's, you only need 6 total points from the entire Professional Practice section to get the required 1.7 necessary for a Satisfactory Rating.

For answers please go to www.taaaconline.org — then click on CC/SLO

October ARC Attendance

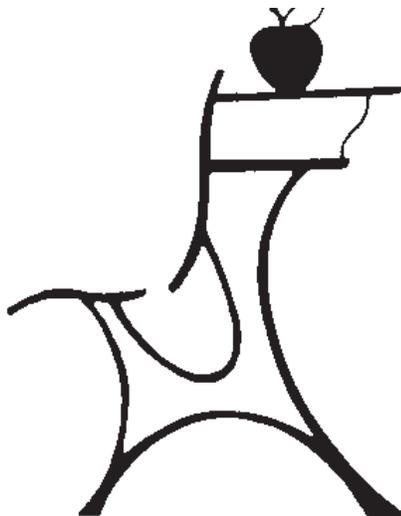
The following schools, departments, and affiliates were not represented at the October 1, 2014 Association Representative Council Meeting.

Affiliates – Coaches Association, Counselors, EBOTA, Reading Teachers, SLAAAC; **Departments** – Riva Road; **Elementary** – Arnold, Belvedere, Bodkin, Brock Bridge, C & I Resource Ctr. @ Point Pleasant, Community Based Servs. @ Point Pleasant, Crofton, Davidsonville, Deale, Folger McKinsey, Freetown, George Cromwell, Germantown, Glen Burnie Park, Glendale Annex, Glendale/Glendale Level V, Hillsmere, Jacobsville, Jessup, Jones, Lothian, Manor View, Marley, Meade Heights, Millersville, Nantucket, North Glen, Oakwood, Pasadena, Piney Orchard, Severna Park, South Shore, Van Bokkelen, West Meade, Woodside; **Secondary** – Arundel High, Brooklyn Park Middle, Chesapeake Bay Middle Resource Ctr., Corkran Middle, Marley Middle, Northeast High, Old Mill Middle N., Old Mill Middle S., South River High, Southern Middle; **Specials** – Arlington Echo, Center of Applied Tech. N., Center of Applied Tech. S., Chesapeake Science Pt., Infants & Toddlers, J. Albert Adams, Marley Glen, Mary E. Moss, Monarch Academy Glen Burnie, Monarch Laurel, Phoenix, Staff Development – Carver.

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several weeks of small group instructional time. Conferences are only weeks away. Generally by this time educators have a firm grasp of their students needs and what makes them tick.

No one disputes that having data for each student that drills down to their skill level is a very good thing, but we do not have the time to implement such initiatives without sacrificing instruction for our students. Many things are added to our plate and nothing is coming off. As mentioned before, TAAAC meets regularly with Central Office personal to help them understand the dilemma of educators in the trenches. They have responded positively to help alleviate some of the stress. The TAAAC ASI Advisory group will meet monthly to share issues, comments, and solutions with Central Office staff in regards to curriculum and instruction. This open dialog will help communicate problems and solutions to the correct administration to help provide a conduit for communication of solutions across the system. Meanwhile, MSEA and TAAAC need to hear your stories about testing. Betty Weller, President of MSEA, has asked folks to email her about issues with the KRA and upcoming PARCC assessments. She can be reached at bweller@mseane.org, and Richard Benfer, President of TAAAC, can be reached at rbenfer@mseane.org.



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Spend Summer in the Sun

- DRD Pool Service, Inc. is accepting resumes for summer job openings as swimming pool field supervisors and swimming pool managers (Full or Part Time). No Experience Necessary.
- For more information, email Noelle Navarro at n_navarro@drdpools.com

Tutorrific!

- Tutor in homes throughout Howard County (Elkridge, Columbia, etc.) A great way to make extra money! Make your own schedule. Please send an email and/or resume to Deborah Markowitz at tutorific@comcast.net

TAAAC Meeting Calendar

NOVEMBER

- November 5 – ARC – 5:00 PM @ SRMS
- November 5 – Middle School Concerns – Following ARC meeting @ SRMS
- November 6 – TAAAC Minority Affairs Committee – 4:30 PM @ TAAAC
- November 10 – Sick Leave Bank @ TAAAC
- November 12 – TAAAC BOD – 4:30 PM @ TAAAC
- November 13 – Common Core Cadre – Chat, Chew, & Brew – 4:30 PM @ TAAAC
- November 17 – Government Relations – 4:45 PM @ TAAAC
- November 19 – High School Concerns Committee – 3:30 PM @ TAAAC
- November 19 – Nominating Committee @ TAAAC
- November 19 – TAAAC Executive Team @ TAAAC
- November 20 – TAAAC/BOE Negotiations @ TAAAC
- November 20 – TAAAC ASI - 3:30 PM @ TAAAC
- November 24 – Public Relations – 4:30 PM @ TAAAC
- November 24 – Sick Leave Bank @ TAAAC
- November 26 – 28 – Thanksgiving Holiday – Office Closed

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Jessica Alvear
Amanda Bolton
Shelley Davenport
Kimberly Dove
Karen Gummeringer
Jennifer Laque
Justin Long
Jeffrey McGuire
Sheila Merrin
Gonul Ozturk
Jamequa Redmond Summerall
Steven Soly
Jeffrey Vincent
Andrea Willey

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 PM on Tuesday, December 9, 2014.

Name _____

Address _____

School _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____

Personal 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]

Big Discounts You Might Not Know About

TAAAC Members and Their Families Only

- 1. RockWell Fitness** – Huge Severna Park gym with everything (classes, machines, weights, child care, personal trainers, lockers rooms) for only \$1 per day! This is over a 25% discount from regular prices. In addition, one time initiation fee will be lowered from \$49 to \$19 for TAAAC members and their families only. Call RockWell Fitness and mention “TAAAC” (410) 432-6140. www.rwfitness.com
551 Baltimore Annapolis Blvd. next to Gary’s Grill. If you have any questions, you may contact Patrick Connelly at (410) 802-4254.
- 2. AT & T Cellphones** – TAAAC members get a 15% discount on their cell phone bill. Add that up over a year and see how much savings that could be! Go to www.neamb.com and use code **4491660**. Go to any AT & T store and use the code and bring school ID. If you have any questions, please call Michael Putten at (240) 472-7011.
- 3. Tickets at Work** – TAAAC members get large discounted tickets to almost any event/amusement park/movie they can imagine both locally and throughout the nation. Go to www.TicketsatWork.com and enter the code **TAAAC**. You may also call (800) 331-6483.
- 4. BJ’s Wholesale Club** – For Renewing or Applying - TAAAC members get \$10 off the \$50 annual membership fee or \$20 off the Rewards Fee, PLUS 15 months. A Free household card is included. You can renew ahead of time. For the application, contact Joyce Turpin at jturpin@bjs.com. Be sure to put “TAAAC” in the subject line.