Protect Our Schools’ March

On March 13th, despite the impending snow storm, TAAAC members joined approximately 500 educators from Maryland for MSEA’s march and lobby night in Annapolis! We had one simple message for legislators: Protect Our Schools.

We met at MSEA Headquarters in Annapolis at 5 PM to hear rousing words from NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia, MSEA President Betty Weller, and others. We then marched up to the Maryland General Assembly to meet with state delegates and senators. We asked them to:

- Pass the Less Testing, More Learning Act of 2017. Help protect time to learn! And set a 2% cap on annual instructional time used for mandated standardized testing.
- Pass the Protect Our Schools Act of 2017. Stand up to the State Board! Help ensure that Maryland’s ESSA plan isn’t just a retread of No Child Left Behind. Resist the State Board’s disastrous plan to forcibly convert public schools to charter schools and not redirect precious school funding to failed voucher programs.
- Defeat Gov. Hogan’s privatization agenda! The governor wants to lower standards for charter schools, increase charter funding to eclipse that of traditional public schools, and fund private school vouchers with your taxpayer dollars.

The march emphasized our undying belief in public education and the need for our elected officials to pass legislation that will improve learning for all our public school students, and to support our public schools with appropriate funding.
People Say Numbers Don’t Lie…
…and the people who say that either have not seen or have not understood the exhibit being distributed by the Schuh Administration through his Education Officer, Amalie Brandenburg. Not long ago, Ms. Brandenburg stood up in the Boardroom of the Parham Building and gave a short speech about the richness of teacher benefits. In doing so, she badly misstated the employer/employee contribution to the defined benefit pension plan, and justified her numbers with an apples to cinder blocks comparison of the pension plan to a defined contribution 401-K plan. The speech was soon skewered by then County Auditor, Teresa Sutherland, who remarked on the inaccuracy of Brandenburg’s comments and her complete misunderstanding of the pension system. Recent document distributed on behalf of the Schuh administration by Brandenburg indicate shenanigans are underway once again.

The referenced document is a chart listing the rankings of AACPS teachers by salary, total compensation, and hourly total compensation compared with colleagues in Baltimore County, Baltimore City, Calvert County, Harford County, Howard County, Montgomery County, and Prince George’s County. The rankings shown for the AACPS by salary (5), Total Compensation (3), and Total Hourly Compensation (3) are badly overstated and the salaries considered are out of date.

Salaries were pulled from Fiscal Year 2014-15. AACPS teachers have lost another salary step increase since then. It was the fifth. Such lost salary steps are not considered the simple cell-to-cell comparison provided by the chart, despite their obvious relevance. The consequence is that the chart tells a lie. It does not identify salaries actually earned in relation to the years of experience. Due to frequent freezes in salary steps, the correlation of years of experience and salary no longer exists.

The chart defines an experienced teacher as one on salary step 8 and shows that AACPS teachers in their eighth year earned a salary of $59,181. That is simply untrue. AACPS teachers don’t earn that even now, two years later after a step increase and a 2% cost-of-living adjustment. Most current AACPS teachers in their eighth year are paid at salary step 3 with a significant but lesser number at step 4. With an Advanced Professional Certificate (APC), current salaries are $53,158 and $55,284, respectively.

Consider also that an AACPS teacher actually on salary step 8 could have up to fourteen years of experience. At the beginning of this year, there were 275 educators on salary step 8. They had an average of twelve years of experience. AACPS teachers have received only four (4) salary steps since Fiscal Year 2009. Baltimore County, Howard County, Montgomery County, and Calvert County have provided nine (9), eight (8), seven (7), and five (5), respectively.

The scattered relationship between salary steps and experience credit from district to district reduces comparisons like the one Brandenburg distributes to fiction. Since salary is such a significant component to the additional rankings in total compensation and hourly pay, those lose their value and reliability as well.

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TAAAC recently won over $7,000 for five TAAAC members who stood up for themselves and filed a grievance for being denied their rightful mileage reimbursement.

There are four steps to the Grievance Process as outlined in the Negotiated Agreement. The first three steps involved asking AACPS to reconsider their own decisions. Unsurprisingly, grievances are usually denied by AACPS.

However, step four of the Grievance procedure is Arbitration, which gives the contract much of its “teeth.” It involves bringing in an outside person (selected by mutual agreement between TAAAC and the BOE) to hear both sides of a contractual dispute. The arbitrator then issues a ruling that both sides have to live with. This is called binding arbitration. TAAAC is the only group of employees in AACPS that has this powerful provision in their contract.

Here is the kicker: The loser in these arbitration cases has to pay all fees associated from the arbitration, which can run as high as $10,000. This provision encourages settlements of cases because when the BOE knows they are wrong, it is easier to “pay now than pay (more) later.”

The mileage case involved a specific group of five itinerant teachers who were suddenly denied mileage reimbursement after receiving it for years. After they contacted TAAAC, it was discovered that they should still be getting their mileage reimbursements as outlined in the Negotiated Agreement.

However, because we were asking the decision-makers to reconsider their own decision, we still lost our grievances at levels 1-3. All that was left was Arbitration.

At level four, TAAAC easily prevailed in a decision that was scathing towards the BOE and one administrator in particular. Our members won over $7,000 and the BOE was forced to pay over $5,000 for fees to the Arbitrator.

The moral of the story is three-fold:

1) If you are denied mileage for having to travel farther from your home than your base school, please call TAAAC immediately.

2) If TAAAC and you believe your contract violation issue is legitimate, TAAAC and MSEA will pursue your issue through the grievance process up to and including arbitration, if necessary, to get an appropriate settlement for you.

3) The grievance process is there to protect your rights; don’t be afraid to use it.

TAAAC Congratulates the Five Finalist for Teacher of the Year!

Joshua Carroll, STEM teacher at South River High School
Sally PazyMiño Wilson, second-grade teacher at Tyler Heights Elementary School
Stacey Scofield, media specialist at Mills-Parole Elementary School
Timothy Smith, physical education teacher at Folger McKinsey Elementary School
Denise Stephanos, math teacher at Arundel High School
The 2017 Mills-King Award Ceremony held on March 16th was an inspirational, well-attended success this year honoring exemplary individuals for their contributions to Human Relations in the field of education. All six nominees for this celebrated award received a brief biography presented to the audience by TAAAC President Richard Benfer. Nominees this year included: Anne Cooper, Derrick Farmer, Raymond Gerald, Melodie Kern, Michael Mitchell, and Lisa Pline. The judges from the TAAAC Human Relations Committee deliberated over a difficult decision to choose one recipient, but consensus was reached, naming Derrick Farmer as the 2017 recipient of the Mills-King Award for Excellence in Human Relations.

As a dedicated, hard-working and kind teaching assistant at Meade High School, Derrick provides profound support for students, parents and staff in his school community. Derrick always strives to convert adverse situations into positives ones and works diligently to uplift those around him. As a 1987 graduate of Meade High himself, Derrick's work as a teaching assistant helps him maintain a solid connection to the school. His greatest gift to education has been his commitment to preventing substance abuse. Derrick has spent six years volunteering for the Substance Abuse and Education Service through the Department of Health. He was instrumental in forming WASP, the Western AA County Substance Abuse Prevention Program. Derrick also developed a Power for Parents seminar though his affiliation with the Meade High School Alumni Association.

Lovely center pieces adorned the tables that were made by Belvedere Elementary students under the guidance of Art Educator and TAAAC member Lynn Goff. Beautiful choral renditions were performed by the Glen Burnie High School Vocal Ensemble conducted by TAAAC member Anthony Pinder.

This year’s keynote speaker, The Honorable Rhonda Pindell Charles, provided inspirational words for our nominees and a rich history lesson of Walter S. Mills and Douglas S. King.

Congratulations to Derrick Farmer and all the nominees for their timeless commitment to human relations through community service and education.

(Continued from page 2)

Just as troubling (perhaps more) is that both Steve Schuh and Amalie Brandenburg know that salary steps no longer reconcile with years of experience. With certainty, they know that nearly every teacher here in the AACPS, with any number of years of experience, sits lower on the salary scale than most teachers in most districts with similar experience. Yet their peddling of fiction continues.

ATTENTION!

Are You Paying Too Much

If your employment status has changed and you have an annual salary under $42,179 and/or are working .5 or less, please contact the TAAAC office so that your membership dues can be adjusted accordingly.
A WORD FROM MSEA’S LEGAL TEAM

In today’s schools, there are many demands on a teacher’s time—not all of them related to instruction. Do piles of paperwork and meetings unrelated to your students or your content area sound familiar? Many ESP and other school staff are constantly pulled from their classrooms or offices to serve as substitutes or to attend meetings.

Your negotiated agreement is your lifeline. Your contracts are negotiated to protect you and your ability to effectively help your students, and that’s why every teacher and ESP agreement in Maryland defines the workday.

My workload is overwhelming. What do I do?

First, consult your association rep or UniServ Director and your local association’s negotiated agreement with the board of education, which defines and limits your work year and workday.

Every contract provides for individual planning time. You can protect your time by asserting your rights, including a grievance when necessary. Planning time is reserved explicitly for professional use during your workday and no administrators or colleagues should be allowed to interrupt.

If a teacher is required to work outside of the negotiated work hours, it should be limited to preparing for instruction, not filling out paperwork. ESPs should never be asked to work outside of the negotiated work hours unless compensation is being provided.

In Anne Arundel County, teachers have successfully curtailed workload and limited the amount of work performed beyond the workday by using the grievance process. With the help of their UniServ Directors, members were able to prove that:

1) the school system didn’t provide the time negotiated for completion of student grades;

2) negotiated planning time was used for non-planning requests and instructional preparation, normally done during planning time, had to be performed outside of the workday; and

3) the administration required the completion of paperwork unrelated to instruction, which could only be done beyond the negotiated workday. In each instance, educators cited their negotiated agreement and received compensation for work performed outside of the agreed upon workday.

Make sure you know your contract and what protections and powers you have. And know that your contract is there to ensure you’re able to do the work you care about most: helping your students succeed.

Questions? Contact your MSEA UniServ Director or MSEA’s Center for Legal Affairs. For more information, visit marylandeducators.org/LegalAid.

Link up with TAAAC on Social Media

Please scan the code to follow us on Twitter

Please scan the code and Like us on Facebook

TAAAC Events Calendar

April 2017

3 – ESOL Affiliate Meeting – 4:30 PM @ TAAAC Office
3 – Government Relations Lobby Night – 5:00 PM @ Harry Browne’s
5 – Daytime Board of Education Meeting – 10:00 AM @ BOE
5 – ARC – 5:00 PM @ Severna Park Middle
5 – Middle School Concerns Committee – Following ARC
6 – Membership Committee – 4:30 PM @ TAAAC Office
10 – 17 – SPRING BREAK
18 – Sick Leave Bank @ TAAAC Office
18 – Nominating Committee – 4:45 PM @ TAAAC Office
19 – High School Concerns – 3:30 PM @ TAAAC Office
19 – TAAAC BOD – 4:30 PM @ TAAAC Office
19 – Evening Board of Education Meeting – 7:00 PM @ BOE
20 – TAAAC ASI @ TAAAC Office
24 – Special Ed Task Force – 4:30 PM @ TAAAC Office
24 – Sick Leave Bank @ TAAAC Office
26 – Teacher of the Year Banquet

Visit www.taaaconline.org
Pay Days 12th & 26th

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Kaitlyn Cowden
Jennifer A. Murphy
Nancy O’Donnel
Derick Parks
Chrsitina Sutt
Protecting Our Schools, Expanding Opportunity

IMPLEMENTING THE “EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT” IN MARYLAND

RE-FOCUSING SCHOOL SUCCESS ON OPPORTUNITY

Under ESSA, the state school accountability system doesn’t have to be based entirely or even predominantly on test scores. Instead, states have the chance to include new indicators of school success in their measurement — inputs that we know make for really great schools, like small class sizes or access to quality pre-kindergarten.

In order for these indicators to really count, Maryland’s system needs to do three very important things:

• Make each indicator the same weight (so schools don’t focus on one over another).
• Give the “opportunity” indicators as much value as ESSA allows (just under half of the overall weighting).
• Include three or more “opportunity” indicators for every school in the model.

Only then will districts and schools be truly incentivized to focus on filling these opportunity gaps.

PREVENTING SCHOOL PRIVATIZATION

ESSA requires states to use their indicators to identify which schools need support and improvement. It lists three major groups for school turnaround: the bottom 5% of Title I schools, high schools that fail to graduate 67% or more of their students, and schools with “underperforming” student subgroups as defined by the state.

But it’s up to the state to design how to support schools as they try to improve. That opportunity has leaders on the State Board of Education—now controlled by appointees of Gov. Hogan—working towards school interventions that would systematically privatize our public schools.

According to The Baltimore Sun, “The state school board is considering bold measures—offering vouchers, creating new charter programs and establishing a statewide school district—to improve consistently low-performing schools.”

Example of Maryland Indicators, Refocused on Opportunity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACADEMIC INDICATORS</th>
<th>OPPORTUNITY INDICATORS*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51% of Total Score</td>
<td>49% of Total Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARCC Proficiency*</td>
<td>Class Size and Caseload Ratios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARCC Student Growth (Elementary/Middle)*</td>
<td>Access to Pre-Kindergarten (Elementary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Proficiency for ESOL Students*</td>
<td>School Climate Survey Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Rate (High)*</td>
<td>Access to Advanced Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Absenteeism Rate</td>
<td>Access to Related Arts Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career and Technology Certification Rate</td>
<td>Advanced Teacher Certification Rate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Required by ESSA (ESSA requires one or more non-academic indicators of school success)
NOMINATIONS OPEN

The TAAAC Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for a VACANCY on the Board of Directors.

Nominations will be accepted until Wednesday, May 3, 2017 ARC meeting.

Name ______________________________________
Address ____________________________________
___________________________________________
School _____________________________________
Phone (H) ______________  (W) ________________
Personal Email _______________________________

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

☐ Board of Director
   (Term ends July 31, 2018)

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LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE

✓ Offering discounted long-term care insurance to TAAAC members and their spouses/partners.
✓ Helping members protect their hard-earned assets.
✓ Giving members a way to remain in control of their healthcare choices.
✓ Providing members with peace-of-mind.

For a no obligation consult and quote, contact:
Michael Markowitz – 410-455-0680
Mike.Markowitz@acsiapartners.com

TAAAC Action Report
I invite you to call me at (410) 480-0007 or email at William.bush@lpl.com to schedule a free, no-obligation consultation and discover how I can help you pursue your financial goals.