TAAAC FEE Scholarship Winners

The TAAAC Foundation for Educational Excellence, a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation, organized and run by active and retired TAAAC members was founded a few decades ago. It serves as TAAAC’s philanthropic arm and serves local public school students in two ways.

- Its Children’s Fund provides AACPS students in need with prescription eyeglasses, coats and clothing and they also have a backpack program.
- Its Scholarship fund provides scholarships for which AACPs students earn through competition.

While the Children’s Fund operates throughout the year, attention is drawn to the Scholarship Fund each spring. At the May 3, 2017 Association Representative Council the winners of the 2016-17 scholarships were announced. Winners of this year’s TAAAC-FEE Scholarship Awards are: Jessica Parker, Broadneck HS; Zachary Sotelo, Meade HS; Samantha Stallings, North County HS; Anthony Anastasi, Southern HS; and Champagne Hunt, Annapolis HS.

The Foundation administers four additional scholarships funded by private donations. The winner of the Robin Coleman Scholarship is Nathan Ho, Chesapeake HS; The winner of the TAAAC-Retired Scholarship is Jamar Turner, Annapolis HS; The winners of the Samuel and Bessie Chao Book Scholarships are Rachel Pennington, Chesapeake HS and Catianne Suegang, Meade HS.

Congratulations to all the winners and best of luck on their college endeavors!
In negotiations for FY12, a joint team of negotiators from TAAAC, AEL, AFSCME, and SAAAAAC worked collaboratively with the Board on healthcare changes that were projected to save $30M over the subsequent 3 years. The projections were accurate, and the evidence was in the healthcare fund balance. At the start of FY15, the healthcare fund balance had reached $40M. During the FY15 budget process, then County Executive Neuman saw the robust fund balance and recognized it as an opportunity to reduce expenses and cut the Board’s request by $6M. It was not an unreasonable cut in light of the fat fund balance. At the same time, however, AACPS salaries had been virtually flat for the previous five years.

In the next step of the FY15 budget process, a well-intended county council reduced the healthcare request by another $10.5M, redirecting most of it to provide educators a well-deserved and long-awaited salary increase. Again, it was not an unreasonable action in light of the fat fund balance. But far too little effort was made to backfill those reductions over the following two years and increasing healthcare costs ate away at the once fat balance until it was gone. For that, the current county executive wears some of the blame.

In FY17, the Board asked for a $20M allocation to the fund. That would have meant $20M in permanent money that would remain in the base budget. The county executive responded by cutting the request to Zero (yes, $0.00) and replacing it with $10M one-time non-recurring money. Granted, that was more than he was required and we can thank him for that effort. But the temporary “bandage” did little for the long-term structural deficit in the fund.

Recently, in the FY18 budget process, the Board requested an allocation of $20.5M, responding to the growing specter of insolvency. The county executive reduced the request to $5M, but supplemented it with another $22.5M of non-recurring, $10M of which only replaces the $10M of non-recurring from FY17, netting the school system $15M to be available in FY18 and gone again in FY19.

The result of the reductions in healthcare allocations at the same time the increases in healthcare cost are rising have placed a burden on employees to contribute more…and we have agreed to do so. We recognize the richness of our benefit, and we recognize our shared responsibility for the solvency of our self-insured healthcare fund.

We also have to acknowledge and publicly thank the county executive for what he did, and recognize that it was far more than what was lawfully required of him in both FY17 and FY18. But some of that gratitude must be tempered with how much more could have been done. The treatment of the healthcare fund created a crisis predetermined to generate a transfer of healthcare costs onto school system employees so that they had little choice but to bear a similar healthcare burden as that of county employees.

If we are to phase in a healthcare benefit plan of similar value that of the county government, and as

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Early Release Days (June 14-17)
“The two days of early release time for students, scheduled immediately prior to the end of each semester will be utilized to provide self-directed work time for teachers at all levels. (Article 11, N)”

Don’t feel obligated to attend any “housekeeping” meetings at your school from June 8 - 9 after the students are dismissed. That is YOUR time to do what you need to complete report cards and end of the year work.

Personal Business Leave Days
“…Personal Business Leave shall not be taken…at the beginning or the end of the school year. (Article 8, A)”

The last five duty days constitute the “end of the school year.” If circumstances require your absence, the restriction may be waived by the principal.

Excess Positions
Since principals have received their tentative student enrollment numbers for next year, most teachers have already been notified of positions being excessed from schools. It is important to understand that excessing is based on seniority in the county—not seniority within a school. Additionally, it is important to stay in contact with the Human Resources staffing specialists to find the best possible match for you within the system. Excessed teachers are encouraged, but cannot be required, to participate in the voluntary transfer process since this is a proactive approach to finding a suitable position. If excessed teachers have not received their new assignments by the last duty day for teachers, they will have priority over new applicants and teachers requesting voluntary transfers.

An excess can create an opportunity for some teachers. If your principal is required to excess a staff member or members, and you want to leave the building, you may volunteer to be excessed. Volunteering to be excessed places you in the involuntary transfer process and you will be assigned to a different position next year at another building. Note that you may still interview for a voluntary transfer; however, if you are unsuccessful in securing your own assignment for next year, you will be placed by Human Resources. If you are invited back for another year, tenured or non-tenured, you will be guaranteed a position within the county.

Finally, be cautious if faced with a decision between accepting a part-time position and being excessed, be cautious of accepting the part time position unless you are prepared and willing to earn part time salary and benefits for what might be a few years. The road back to full time usually requires success in the voluntary transfer process. Guarantees of a quick return are rare and lack adequate recourse in the event of a reneging.

Regardless of the specifics associated with any particular excessing or reduction scenario, members are always free to call TAAAC so that we can help guide you through the process and your options.

Save The Date – Celebrate Educators TAAAC Picnic
Once again, TAAAC is sponsoring a back to school picnic for all members. Mark your calendars for Friday, August 25, 2017. Join us at Sandy Point State Park to celebrate a new year together. More information will be coming soon!
ESSA – The New School Accountability

With Maryland implementing the new federal education law—known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—TAAAC members in collaboration with the Office of School Performance have an chance to shape a new school accountability system that focuses schools more on providing equitable learning opportunities and less on standardized testing. In fact, with the passage of the Protect Our Schools Act, Maryland’s system for gauging school success will be the least reliant on test scores in the nation. That means more attention on ensuring high attendance rates, safe and supportive learning environments, and effective administrative leadership—measures that more accurately explain a school’s performance.

The Protect Our Schools Act also blocks the Betsy DeVos school privatization agenda in Maryland. After Gov. Hogan's appointees on the State Board of Education began discussing ways to use ESSA to convert public schools to privatively operated charters or handing over operations to for-profit management companies, MSEA GR committee and TAAAC lobby teams collaborated with legislators to prohibit such privatization schemes in the law. MSEA also stopped efforts to label schools on a disparaging A-F scale, a common method used by anti-public education advocates trying to paint our schools as failing. Maryland has always made a strong commitment to strengthening our neighborhoods schools, and now with this big win, we blocked one of Secretary DeVos’ paths to erode that public commitment to our kids.

That's why the Protect Our Schools Act is being held up as a national model for ESSA implementation. Diane Ravitch, a prominent researcher and public education defender, wrote, “Congratulations to the educators and parents and students of Maryland for defeating Governor Hogan's effort to impose the DeVos agenda on the state's public schools.” Monty Neill, founder of FairTest—the leading national advocacy group working to reduce standardized testing—wrote in The Washington Post, “The challenge for testing reformers across the nation is how to follow Maryland's lead in mobilizing the grassroots and building the powerful coalitions needed to win meaningful assessment and accountability reforms.”

The Next Steps

While the Protect Our School Act handles much of ESSA implementation work, it leaves many important decisions to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and state school board. For example, what long term goals should we set in measuring progress as a state? At the local level, TAAAC and AACPS have the opportunity to shape what ESSA looks like in our county within the guidelines offered by the state. We know No Child Left Behind set completely unrealistic expectations of 100% proficiency in math and reading and that mistake created many problems for schools. We can't make similar errors again.

Here’s the timeline for how ESSA gets implemented in Maryland, both by the state and by AACPS:

- June: MSDE works with stakeholders and the State Board of Education to develop a final draft for Maryland's ESSA plan.
- Late June: The final draft of the Maryland ESSA plan is released to the public.
- July-August: The public has a chance to weigh in through an online survey and public comment opportunities at State Board of Education meetings. MSDE then makes changes based on public feedback.
- August 22: The State Board of Education votes to approve Maryland's ESSA plan.
- September 18: MSDE submits the plan to the U.S. Department of Education, which has 120 days to approve or reject the plan.

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Professional Email Etiquette: It’s a GOOD Thing … A VERY GOOD Thing

Always remember that email communications with parents, colleagues, supervisors, and administrators are a reflection of you and your profession. Emails from your school account should contain only thoughtful professional correspondence.

Avoid personal sentiments in your school email signature, including quotes or references to religion or politics. Be smart, savvy, and safe. One poorly worded email, or ill-advised response, could damage your reputation and your profession.

FOLLOW THESE 10 SIMPLE RULES OF EMAIL ETIQUETTE IN ALL OF YOUR PROFESSIONAL AND COLLEGIAL CORRESPONDENCE:

1. Always show the highest standards of professionalism—Use proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
2. Be efficient—Get right to the point and answer questions or concerns in clear and concise language.
3. Protect yourself from the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) violations—Use only initials, or first name with initial of last name, when referring to a student.
4. Communicate with parents about their child and only their child.
5. Don’t use all UPPER CASE, or use different fonts, sizes, and colors—a professional email uses one simple black font.
6. Don’t forward emails from anyone that contain potentially libelous, defamatory, offensive, or racist remarks.
7. Don’t “Reply All”—If you don’t know the other individuals included in the email, or the others don’t need to be involved, reply only to the sender.
8. Think before you click “Reply”—Consider a telephone call and have a direct conversation, particularly if the issue is a complex one.
9. In the case of a “serial emailer,” seek guidance from your administrator to stop the emails.
10. Do not use email to discuss confidential matters of any kind.

TAAAC Events Calendar

**June 2017**

5 – Sick Leave Bank @ TAAAC Office
6 – Retired Teachers Reception @ Michael's Eighth Ave.
7 – Daytime Board of Education Meeting – 10:00 AM @ BOE
7 – ARC – 5:00 PM @ Severn River Middle
7 – Middle School Concerns – Following ARC Mtg.
12 – TAAAC Executive Team @ TAAAC Office
14 – TAAAC BOD – 10:00 AM @ TAAAC Office
19 – Sick Leave Bank @ TAAAC Office
21 – Daytime Board of Education Meeting – 10:00 AM @ BOE

**July 2017**

June 30 – July 6 – NEA Convention – Boston, MA
3 – Sick Leave Bank @ TAAAC Office
12 – Daytime Board of Education Meeting – 10:00 AM @ BOE
17 – Sick Leave Bank @ TAAAC Office
19 – 21 – MSEA Summer Leadership Retreat – Salisbury University

**August 2017**

8 – 10 – New Teacher Orientations – Old Mill High
14 – Sick Leave Bank @ TAAAC Office
17 – Daytime Board of Education Meeting – 10:00 AM @ BOE
23 – TAAAC BOD – 4:30 PM @ TAAAC Office
25 – TAAAC Celebrate Educators – 11AM-3PM Sandy Point State Park – Admission $3 per car
28 – Sick Leave Bank @ TAAAC Office

**Next Meeting September 6, 2017 – 5:00 PM @ Severna Park Middle**
January 2018: Districts begin working with educators in their schools to write their own ESSA implementation plans—creating blueprints for future strategies on everything from discipline policies to supporting and retaining great teachers.

MSEA is monitoring how state officials finish the work we started in the legislature. We will make sure educators across the state have a chance to weigh in on the final draft before it is finalized, approved, and submitted to the U.S. Department of Education. TAAAC is working locally through the TAAAC ESSA workgroup. We had our first meeting where MSEA Press Secretary Steven Hershkowitz gave an overview to members about what ESSA is and what it is not. Monthly meetings with Dr. Kubic in the Office of School Performance has brought our voice to the table.

We lived with No Child Left Behind for more than a decade. To make sure we don’t relive it with ESSA, we need to get it right for our schools and our kids. The Protect Our Schools Act was a huge step forward, and now we need to finish the job over the summer and next school year.

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Some more share of the healthcare costs like county employees have agreed to do, it is only fair to provide us with salaries and wages as well as county employees are treated. From FY2010 to FY2017, pay increases to county employee bargaining units have outrun those of teachers and other educators by up to 17%.

In the face of increasing total healthcare costs, school employees have accepted their shared responsibility to keep their healthcare fund solvent, as have our coworkers in county government. In the face of increasing employee healthcare costs, the county funding authority should be providing increased resources for school employees to pay those costs as it does for our coworkers in county government.

WELCOME NEW MEMBER

Judy Alison

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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.
TAAAC members can now buy tickets for Six Flags! Just logon the Six Flags website to buy tickets with substantial savings off the main gate price. This benefit also allows you to “print and go” so you have your tickets in hand when you get to the park.

To access your special tickets, please go to sixflags.com/PartnerLogin with the following:

Username: TAAACAM
Password: Sixflags2
(password is numeric & case sensitive)

Ticketsatwork is your authority on the best deals at theme parks and water parks nationwide! With savings up to 60% off, your family will have exclusive access to all the hottest rides, water activities and attractions available this season.

Visit www.ticketsatwork.com and enter our company code, TAAAC, for the most up-to-date offers on theme parks, hotels, Broadway shows, local deals, shopping partners and much more.

Calling it “right to work”

is like calling drowning “RIGHT TO SWIM”

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@acslapartners.com
Bill Bush, CFP®, CPA

Specializing in retirement planning, investment planning, education planning, tax strategies, and insurance needs.

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.