

AEL Leadership Forum

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 7

APRIL/MAY 2021

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 14, 2021
**AEL Executive
Board Meeting**
5 pm
via Google Meet

May 5, 2021
**AEL Executive
Board Meeting**
5 pm
TBA

June 9, 2021
**AEL Executive
Board Meeting**
5 pm
Via Google Meet

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Fighting the Up Hill Battle

By Edie Picken, AEL President

Hopefully, everyone continues to experience smooth hybrid transitions. The question is, what's next? Of course, there will be more changes—it's a never-ending tidal wave of adjustments: more students are coming, and will we go to four days a week with all that have been brought in before the end of the school year? Dr. Arlotto has been firm that he will be following the guidance of the Health Department and will be discussing the nuances of the CDC recommended changes, including those that do not make sense. Of what am I confident? We will get through it; we always do. That's who we are. We do owe an enormous debt of gratitude to all the principals and those working beside them who have made it happen. You have

done a yeoman's job. At the Board Meeting on March 17, the Superintendent was lauded and given a standing ovation for his hard work and dedication. Every school-based administrator should have received a standing ovation and accolades for all the hard work put in to making all things work. This was a missed opportunity. Only Dr. Tobin commented on the work teachers were doing. At that time, I emailed her and cc'd the members of the Board with my concern for not acknowledging our hard work. For all you have done, thank you!

So, where are we with AEL? Negotiation is the battle we continue fighting to win. We

opened the eyes of the Board to what has been occurring with respect to salaries, particularly the



salary increases in which Units V and VI have luxuriated over the past three or so years. The Board's auditor requested the information we presented to the Board in addition to that of Unit II. We provided that to the auditor. What transpired from the exchange of information was an offer; however, we do not believe that offer is adequate enough to satisfy what AEL believes is justly owed to and de-

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Up Hill Battle ...

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“Clearly, there is no desire on the part of the chief negotiator to negotiate.”

served by Unit II. The battle is up hill as it has been for quite some time, but we are nearing the top. We are more than halfway and continue to prod the Board’s negotiator for more dates. As of this writing we were just given two more dates from which to choose. What is unfortunate about this, is that AEL had to request them. Clearly, there is no desire on the part of the chief negotiator to negotiate. It is about telling and dominating the meetings with information that is either unnecessary or irrelevant. It is the tactic to waste time to keep us from actually negotiating. We have had enough and will continue to pursue what we believe is our just reward for all the commitment and hard work we put into what we do daily. When we are able to give specifics, by all means we will be sharing with you. Until then, the fight continues.

Moving forward, AEL encourages more Unit II members to become active in the As-

sociation. There are several committees that could use additional volunteers; one of which is Workload. Over the past three years, there has been an outrageous increase in our workload and the Board does not seem to mind. The reason: they are not hearing our voice. It is not incumbent on the AEL Executive Board to be the sole voices of all Unit II. This would be a great opportunity for more involvement. This committee has been silent this past year mainly due to what we have all been confronted with by the pandemic. Now more than ever, this committee needs to become louder than it has ever been. Whenever workload is shared with the superintendent, his static response: “You know what you signed up for when you took the position.” That is not a true retort. We did know what we signed up for, but it wasn’t to become a dumping ground without adequate supports in place or increase in salary due to the increased workload. There has been no stoppage in the

increase of the number of folks working at Riva Road. That does not seem to meet the true needs of the system. Where we need additional people is in the schoolhouse, not the big house. That being said, again I encourage more of you to become involved. We all need each other.

Hopefully, you are hearing from your Cluster Representative. They are a great source to share information, ask questions, and get information. To find your Cluster Representative, visit our website, www.aelaacps.org. As mentioned many times, become familiar with this website, and check it for the newsletter, which we post every two months. You can find previous editions in the archived section.

In closing, I wish everyone a restful, relaxing Spring Break and a safe return after. And, above all, thank you for the tremendous work you do and for going above and beyond.

Play Ball — A New Season?

By Rick Kovelant, AEL Executive Director and General Counsel

In baseball, there is an important distinction between a fair and foul ball. A fair ball can provide the team at bat the opportunity to increase the score, while a foul ball will not advance the score and often maintains the status quo. A fair ball provides an equal opportunity to both teams. It can score a run or it can result in an out.

In the context of contract negotiations, the terms “fair” and “foul” do not have precisely the same meaning or consequence, but do have some analogous value. Additionally, however, imagine if one team was also the umpire, that is, given the right to determine what is a fair or foul ball.

Negotiations with the BOE have been underway and as of this writing, are continuing. While both sides

have agreed to refrain from public comment concerning the status of these “talks,” certain public factors have come to light that are free commentary and are applicable to my fair and foul ball analogy.

AEL has discovered a perpetuation of compensation advancements for Unit VI that is obviously a continuation of the past practices of the budget process. The increasing salary disparity between Unit VI staff and Unit II employees is a fair ball for Unit VI since it continues to increase Unit VI’s salaries. On the other hand, the failure to adjust Unit II salaries to an equitable level and reduce the pay differential between these Units is a foul ball for AEL. If one were to take a look at the proposed budget and consid-

er the compensation being offered to Unit II, it is clearly “out of bounds.”



To make matters worse, those who are a part of Unit VI negotiate on behalf of the BOE and continue to insist that the compensation package offered to Unit II is a fair ball. Not so!

At a recent budget hearing, Edie Picken, President of AEL, brought these compensation disparity issues to the attention of the Board. The Board requested that AEL provide supplemental salary comparisons between Unit II and both Units VI and Unit V for a period of several

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years. These figures were provided to the Board's auditor as requested. Although AEL is awaiting the results of the auditor's analysis, it would appear that between fy 2018 -2019 and fy 2020-2021 the actual average increase in salary enhancement for members of Unit VI, which includes the Superintendent, was in excess of \$31,000. To be clear, this is not to say that every Unit VI employee received this sum of money. Some received more and some less, but in the aggregate, Unit VI didn't fare too badly. From Unit VI's perspective, this is a fair ball and the bases remain loaded in its favor.

The determination of a unit's compensation is a result of the budget process. This process starts

with the Superintendent, who assesses the needs of the school system, including a review of the salaries paid to the various bargaining and non-bargaining groups. The issue then becomes whether or not a fair and impartial consideration is to be included in the budget for each unit. As provided in the Superintendent's Employment Agreement dated May 16, 2018, which is presumably still in effect, there is an interesting provision regarding how his compensation is to be increased. His annual salary is "...increased, by an amount equal to the increase, if any, granted to 12-month executive staff (Unit VI) employees." In other words, for every percentage increase Unit VI receives, the Superintendent, who recommends

the increase in the first place, receives the same. Unit II salaries are not a factor in this consideration and are in no way linked to Unit VI and the Superintendent's respective salaries.

As we proceed with negotiations, we can only hope that the BOE will agree to ensure fair play by equalizing salary steps and increasing sufficient COLAs to equal the dollar value of the percentage increases made available in the budget for the Unit VI Executive Staff. After all, it has gone out of its way to ensure Unit I receives the equivalent in salary increases as Unit II. This would be a fair ball and advance the game. Foul balls can only lead to an out.

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Lessons Learned: COVID-19 and the School Community

By Olu Banmeke, Assistant Principal, the Phoenix Academy

The proverb, “absence makes the heart grow fonder”, took on significant meaning for most school communities, and particularly, for our school community at the Phoenix Academy with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The sense of isolation from our colleagues, students and their families made us all long for one another. Even staff members who, pre-COVID pandemic, would have complained about too many faculty meetings wanted to meet “virtually” every day.

We wanted to check on one another – for our physical and mental well-being, and those of our students. It was even noted in some quarters that “social distancing” is a wrong guidance term for any school setting whose

functions include socialization; rather, “physical distancing” is more apt!

The fondness in our hearts led to exceptional creativity and innovation in the performance of job responsibilities and beyond the call of duty.

We delivered Chrome-books to students, provided school supplies and engaged with local food banks and organizations to donate food supplies to our school families as needed.

Many staff members who have never done home visits to their students before, voluntarily stepped up and delivered PBIS incentives to their students; thereby building the much-needed sense of community to reduce the well-researched devastating effects of isolation on mental health.

We now value

“community building circles” more at our school. It is now not just for students only or for resolving disputes as a restorative practice structure but a therapeutic outlet for staff to share and empathize with one another and to embrace our common humanity.

A greater sense of community and a showcase of our “WHY” as educators are key lessons we relearned from this pandemic. As pressure reveals character, this COVID-19 pandemic continues to reveal the especially good heart of the educator. Indeed, we are better together, and we are #AACPSAwesome.

Olu Banmeke is an AEL Special Centers Cluster Representative (2020-2021).

“The fondness in our hearts led to exceptional creativity and innovation in the performance of job responsibilities and beyond the call of duty.”

The logo for the Association of Educational Leaders (AEL) is a red square with the letters "AEL" in white, bold, sans-serif font.

When in Doubt, Call Rick

If you need help, advice or just need to ask a question, please remember to contact **Rick Kovelant**. He is AEL's legal counsel and has a wealth of experience in assisting our members. He is a valuable resource and **available to you as part of your AEL membership**. He can be reached at 443-848-8022 (Pacific time).



AEL Mission Statement

The Association of Educational Leaders exists to ensure all Unit II employees are fairly and equitably treated in the course of their employment.

We commit to accomplishing this mission on behalf of Unit II employees by ensuring:

1. Adherence to our Negotiated Agreement.
2. All Unit II employees are adequately and equitably compensated for their responsibilities and work load.
3. Personal and professional needs shall be respected.
4. Fair, consistent and equitable practices shall be adhered to when dealing with hiring promotions, assignments and evaluations.
5. Fair, consistent, equitable practices in dealing with matters relating to discipline and conflict resolution.
6. Fair, consistent, equitable practices in resolving school and community conflicts.

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