

AEL Leadership Forum

VOLUME 16, ISSUE 1

SEPTEMBER 2023

UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct. 10, 2023
7:00 pm
AEL Executive
Board Meeting,
via Zoom.

Nov. 1, 2023
4:00—8:00 pm
AEL Fall Social,
Blue Dolphin,
Gambrills
Free to Members

Nov. 14, 2023
7:00 pm
AEL Executive
Board Meeting,
via Zoom.

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Understanding, Collaboration and Progress Ahead

By Tracey Ahern, AEL President

I hope this message finds you well and rejuvenated as we embark on a new academic year filled with boundless possibilities. It brings me immense pleasure to welcome you back to school and to celebrate the remarkable achievements we have secured through tireless negotiations. The Association of Educational Leaders has stood strong in advocating for our members, and together, we've achieved remarkable strides.

We recognize and support the vision of our Superintendent, Dr. Bedell. His commitment to enhancing AACPS compensation packages to be competitive with other counties in the State of Maryland is a testament to his dedication. Dr. Bedell understands that in order to attract and retain the finest educators and leaders, we must ensure our compensation aligns with the dedication and

expertise our roles demand.

As we pause to celebrate our victories, it's essential to recognize that our journey has only just begun.

The commencement of this new academic year signifies the start of another round of negotiations. Our goal remains clear: to create a negotiated agreement that accurately reflects the demands and expectations of the educational landscape in 2023. The responsibilities placed upon our shoulders continue to evolve, and so must our compensation.

In this dynamic educational environment, our roles encompass far more than the mere dissemination of knowledge; we are mentors, role models, and guides who play pivotal roles in shaping the future of our students. From diligent

supervision in classrooms to maintaining discipline and fostering an environment of mutual respect, we are committed to nurturing not



Tracey Ahern

only academic growth but also the personal development of our students. Additionally, our engagement with parents and caregivers is vital in creating a strong support system for each learner's journey. The pivotal role of administrators in the observation and supervision of teaching and learning cannot be overstated. Our administrators provide invaluable support and leadership, ensuring that our educators receive the guidance and resources they

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Collaboration and Progress...

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“Whether you volunteer for committees, attend meetings, or simply engage in discussions, your involvement will make a difference.”

*Tracey Ahern,
AEL President*

need to create a rigorous and engaging learning environment. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement, administrators help staff members refine their teaching methods, develop new strategies, and adapt to the evolving needs of our students. Together, as educational leaders and managers of this multifaceted endeavor, our combined efforts make a profound impact on our educational community, and it's only fitting that we advocate for equitable compensation that genuinely reflects the value we bring to our communities.

We must also acknowledge that the educational landscape is evolving, and new challenges and uncertainties are emerging. The Maryland Blueprint brings new dynamics to our work,

and it is our responsibility to work hand in hand with AACPS to understand the expectations and develop structures that support our work fairly and equitably.

As we move forward, let us remain united in our commitment to fostering the best possible educational experience for our students. Our dedication to negotiation and collaboration will once again be our guiding force. We anticipate an exciting year ahead, filled with opportunities for growth and success. Together, we will continue to elevate AACPS to new heights.

Achieving our mission requires more than just collective strength; it requires active involvement from each and every one of you. I encourage you to join us in supporting the mission of the

Association of Educational Leaders. Your voice, your ideas, and your energy are invaluable assets to our cause. Whether you volunteer for committees, attend meetings, or simply engage in discussions, your involvement will make a difference.

In closing, I want to express my gratitude for your unwavering support and dedication to our noble cause. It is through your tireless efforts that we have achieved so much, and I am confident that with your continued support, we will accomplish even greater feats in the days ahead.

Wishing you all a wonderful and successful year, and may our negotiations be marked by understanding, collaboration, and progress.

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.

The Three R's

By Rick Kovelant, AEL Executive Director and General Counsel

In the far distant past of my very early educational background, I recall being told that the three most important topics taught in school were “Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.” At some point, and for some unknown reason (perhaps to be poetically included with “reading”) “writing” and “arithmetic” became “riting” and “rithmatic” and together with “reading” became known as the “3R's.” Rather than search for the learned individual who coined that phrase (by purposely misspelling words), I would rather discuss, in this limited space, the continued need to avail oneself of this cutesy educational concept.

Recently, issues have arisen regarding assigned placement in job groups. We all know that your current rate and, indeed, your future rate of compensation are, in large part, dependent upon which job group has been assigned to the tasks that you perform. The job group analysis is a function of the Hu-

man Resources Department affectionately referred to as “HR.” The assignment of the compensation you receive that is warranted by the tasks you perform is a result of the negotiation process and once agreed is thereafter embodied in the Negotiated Agreement.

Knowing your assigned job group is essential to understanding what you are to be paid. HR assigns you presumably to the correct job group and hence the pay you receive is based on a negotiated amount. AEL has recently been informed there may be a problem associated with some job group assignments and is attempting to verify the accuracy of Unit II employee placement. This is largely a task with which you need to become involved, and it is especially critical now that your placement on the new **and “improved” salary scale** (we can only hope) is accurate. All Unit II employees need to be in their correct starting position when placement on the new sala-

ry bands occurs. In short, as annoyingly painful as it may seem, employing the “3R's” at this stage in your employment life is very important. Let's give it a try!



Rick Kovelant

READ, your pay stub and the information provided by HR and verify you are in the correct job group and verify your step location within that job group. Find time to cross check your position and the required compensation by reading the Negotiated Agreement to determine if the job groups and steps in the Negotiated Agreement correspond with what HR has reported and what you are being paid.

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Three R's ...

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RITE, to AEL if your verification process indicates you have been “job group misas-

signed” and as a result, underpaid. Nobody likes to be misassigned and

work for less compensation. There are steps that be taken to correct the error.

RITHMATIC, becomes important if you have been job group misassigned, because backpay and benefit contributions toward retirement funding and social security need to be adjusted as well as compensation and benefits going forward. In short, you may be entitled to additional compensation and the funds available for your retirement may be short changed. The school system is not entitled to have you work for less than the pay associated with your correct job group and steps as set forth in the Negotiated Agreement.

As the new pay scale is being created, it is critical that all Unit II employees are in the correct position on the “starting line.” It is never too late to apply the “3r's” even if you know the phrase/concept was a product of poetic license!

Association of Educational Leaders

FALL

Social

NOVEMBER 1

4 pm to 8 pm
Free to AEL Members
Door Prizes, Buffet Dinner, Dessert & a Complimentary Beverage

Blue Dolphin
1166 MD3 North, Gambrills
RSVP by Oct 20
smsmith1@aacps.org

Negotiations '24: What's in Store...

By Edie Picken, AEL President Emeritus

As you have learned, AEL accepted the Superintendent's monetary offer resulting in an overall 8% increase in Unit II employees' salaries. This was accomplished as a result of Unit II employees responding to accept a new pay structure that overall enhanced salary. The Board has wanted all bargaining units to consider moving away from the archaic step structure to a more fluid means of remuneration. This new structure will be a work in progress as AEL and the Board work to fine tune what will now be "pay bands." What will be of significant importance is the **Blueprint's impact on salary.** AEL wants to make sure that Unit II employees are being paid the most possible as the new band structure takes shape. Be sure to read **AEL's newsletter, *Leadership Forum***, email blasts from Tracey Ahern, AEL President, or other AEL Executive Board Officers sending essential information to you and possibly asking for your input. Though moving to bands was a very smart decision, be sure that you stay updated.

AEL's negotiating team worked hard to try and move the **Board's negotiating team** away from the ever-present response of "No" to everything AEL proposed. It was not an easy task, but

they were able to get the Board to agree to a special trial of five (5) virtual workdays when students were not in the building. These days cannot be used for the Friday during the summer 4-Day Work Week, nor can it be used when students are in the building. So when can you use them? Simple. Take Thanksgiving week for example. Teachers and Administrators are in the building on Monday and Tuesday, while the students are off the entire week. You can use one or two of those days on the workdays you are scheduled to be in the building. Same for the Winter Break, though it appears that Dr. Bedell is looking to give everyone off the entire Winter Break with no workdays during that time. Same for the Winter Break, though it appears that Dr. Bedell is looking to give everyone off the entire Winter Break with no workdays during that time.

To use those days, your supervisor must approve your working from home and you will need to provide appropriate documentation that you used this time to complete required work. There will be more specific information coming regarding the use of these days, so stay tuned.

This upcoming year, 2023-2024, negotiations will involve what we call "Full Book." That means the entire Negotiated Agreement is open for revision. This summer, the negotiating team along with members of AEL's Executive Board, met for a summer retreat to review the contract agreement and determine which articles need to be seriously considered for revision. This will be particularly important in light of the Blueprint. During this process there may be times when AEL reaches out to you for your input. AEL represents all 380+ Unit II employees, which makes it especially important we reach out. When you see emails coming from the President or other Executive Board member, please take the time to read that email. Having participated in the process many times, it is arduous, sometimes frustrating, but necessary. You may be asked to complete a quick survey; take the few minutes required to complete it. This lets the negotiating team know in what direction to move.

If you have any questions regarding negotiations, by all means contact us. We are more than willing to take the time to speak with you.

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AEL Highlights 5- Star Recognition

Introducing AEL's 5-Star Recognition program where AEL members have the chance to recognize colleagues who go above and beyond the call of duty.

Linda Chandler, Old Mill Middle South School

Linda is a hiring champion - she has made welcoming new teachers to her school an event via social media and created an inclusive culture well before the first day for students. She also helps other colleagues, pointing interested teachers to the right schools to get a great fit. She is passionate about getting employees to our high-needs areas and I have truly enjoyed working with her to staff not only her school, but other schools via her networking.

~Vikkie Romanoski

Ryan Durr, Meade High School

Dr. Durr was brand new to AACPS this past school year and had to navigate a major construction process that is currently taking place and has experienced a lot of setbacks with the new construction. Even though the construction process has not gone according to plan, the school was able to increase student success and decrease inappropriate behaviors.

~Phillip Elliott

To nominate a Unit II member, please complete the google form-
[AEL Highlights- 5 Stars](#)



MRSPA Legislative Update: Maryland Taxing Pensions

By *Edie Picken, AEL President Emeritus*

In my article last year, I wrote about my experience serving on the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association's (MRSPA) Legislative Committee during my first year of retirement. I am continuing my involvement and will be providing updates as the lead of the AEL Legislative Committee. Though MRSPA works on behalf of retired individuals, this committee in particular considers issues affecting those still working. This is the organization that works hard to protect your pension, but also works hard to keep politicians from getting too involved with curriculum and other education policies.

Last year, MRSPA wrote numerous letters to state legislators chairing committees whose focus was to try and dictate curriculum. We specifically reminded them that this was not their purview and they needed to remain out of this educational area since it is the responsibility of the State Board of Education and local Boards of Education to make those determina-

tions. All of those bills never passed. Our voice was heard loud and clear.

There is an issue that I personally feel needs to be seriously addressed by the legislature: STOP TAXING OUR PENSION!!! Governor Hogan tried his entire tenure in office to get the legislature to pass a bill that would no longer require retirees to pay State taxes on their pension distributions. Last year, there was more discussion by legislators than the previous immediate **"No."** This tells me that there is hope. It will take every one of us, working and retired, to literally barrage our State legislators regarding this issue. Maryland is one of the highest taxing states, and with more than 50% of the population considered to be **"senior"** there is no wonder that many are fleeing Maryland for states that do not tax pensions or overall, more tax friendly.

When MRSPA wrote in support of no longer taxing the pension, the stance taken was that with more money in the hands of retirees receiv-

ing Maryland Pension distributions, the more likely they would remain in Maryland. As a result, more money in hand, more spending. Maryland would not lose. However, when asked specifically what impact this would have on **Maryland's economy**, according to the budget office it would be a loss of \$9 billion. So, are those of us receiving our pensions, and those of you who will receive your pensions when you retire, the sole supporters of The Blueprint? It almost seems that way. **Blueprint's cost is \$9 billion.** I think you get the picture. Everyone will experience all too soon an increase in property taxes so that this plan can be implemented. That being the case, it appears that more Marylanders will be bolting from Maryland in order to continue affording their expenses and those wanting to enjoy their retirement years.

Do not be afraid to contact your State representatives and let them hear your thoughts about this. Though it may not pass right away, I am one that will continue to push for this change that Maryland clearly can afford.



Edie Picken

"This is the organization that works hard to protect your pension..."

For more information about the MRSPA Legislative Committee, a copy of the brochure is attached.

2023-24 AEL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE/BOARD/STAFF

Tracey Ahern (2022-26)	President (P, Odenton ES)	(o)410-222-6514	tahern@aacps.org
Stacey Smith (2022-26)	1st VP (P, South River)	(o)410-956-5600	smsmith1@aacps.org
Brian Love (2022-26)	2nd VP (Admin, BMAH)	(o)410-761-8950	bllove@aacps.org
John Wojtila (2022-26)	Secretary (P, Rivera Beach ES)	(o)410-222-6469	jwojtila@aacps.org
Ryan Sackett (2020-2024)	Treasurer (C, Secondary Mathematics HS)	(o)410-222-5383	rsackett@aacps.org
OPEN	Director at Large		
OPEN	Director at Large		
Edie Picken	Director Emeritus	(c) 410-371-9527	rag_qb@hotmail.com

REPRESENTATIVE DIRECTORS (14): CLUSTERS/FEEDER SYSTEM

Richard Rogers	Annapolis Cluster	(P, Mills-Parole ES)	rrogers@aacps.org
Gina Davenport	Arundel Cluster	(P, Arundel HS)	gdavenport@aacps.org
Kellie Anderson	Board of Ed	(C, NCSP)	kjanderson@aacps.org
Stacy Herbert	Broadneck Cluster	(AP, Magothy River MS)	sherbert@aacps.org
Shanna Cahoon	Chesapeake Cluster	(AP, Chesapeake HS)	secagoon@aacps.org
Alexis McKay	Crofton Cluster	(P, Nantucket ES)	amckay@aacps.org
Tamara Kelly-Molock	Glen Burnie Cluster	(P, Marley ES)	tkelly-molock@aacps.org
Erica Garren	Meade Cluster	(AP, Meade MS)	egarren@aacps.org
Shira Dowling	Old Mill Cluster	(P, Rippling Woods ES)	sdowling@aacps.org
Open	North County		
Open	Northeast Cluster		
Open	Severna Park Cluster		
Kerri Buckley	South River Cluster	(AP, South River HS)	kbuckley@aacps.org
Tamika McPherson	Southern Cluster	(AP, Southern HS)	tmcpherson@aacps.org
Shannon Motsco	Special Centers	(AP, Chesapeake Sci Point)	smotsco@aacps.org

There are several Open Cluster Representative positions, please contact Bob Ferguson for more information.

STAFF

Rick Kovelant, Executive Director and Legal Counsel)	(c) 443-848-8022	rick@kovelantlaw.com
Will Myers, AEL Liaison	(c)410-570-9031	wtm1588@gmail.com
Edie Picken, President Emeritus	(c) 410-371-9527	rag_qb@hotmail.com
Bob Ferguson	(c)443-223-5645	leafman65@gmail.com
Denise Hofstedt, Publicity & Website	(c) 443-223-0273	dm.hofstedt@gmail.com

AEL Office, 2521 Riva Road, Suite L-2, Annapolis, MD 21401 (o)410-224-3311 (f)410-224-3345