

AEL Leadership Forum

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 2

MAY 2023

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 13, 2023
7:00 pm
AEL Executive
Board Meeting,
via Zoom.

AEL Executive
Board Meetings
are held monthly.
The schedule for
2023-24 will be sent
later this summer.

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Reflecting on This Year and Looking Ahead with Optimism

By Tracey Ahern, AEL President

As I reflect upon my first year in this role, I am amazed by the dedication and hard work exhibited by the individuals who lead this organization. Together, we have been working tirelessly to support the interests of all Unit II employees, including school administrators and coordinators.



AEL President Tracey Ahern

Our executive board is a group of exceptional individuals who invest a significant amount of their personal time to achieve

the objectives we have set forth. Their commitment to our cause is truly commendable. We recognize the complex nature of our responsibilities, as we strive to create safe and inclusive learning environments that engage all learners and inspire our teachers.

I am particularly excited about the positive changes that are taking place in Anne Arundel County Public Schools. Dr. Bedell is listening to us. He is taking the time to hear our concerns and is making changes that make sense. These changes reflect a progressive approach toward education, one that is focused on fostering student growth, innovation, a sense of community, and employee compensation. By embracing these changes, we can shape a future where all students have the

opportunity to thrive and succeed.

Additionally, we believe in the importance of engaging all learners. Each student brings unique perspectives, talents, and challenges, and it is our responsibility to meet their individual needs. By embracing diversity and fostering inclusivity, we can create an environment where every student feels valued and supported in their educational journey.

Our teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our students. We are dedicated to providing them with the necessary tools, professional development opportunities, and support they need to excel in their roles. By encouraging teachers to adopt innovative teaching methodologies and promoting collaboration among educators, we can create an environment that nurtures a passion for learning and excellence.

As we move forward, I am

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Looking Ahead...

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confident that AEL will continue to advocate for the best interests of our members and the students we serve. We will work collaboratively with district administrators, school boards, and other stakeholders to ensure that our voices are heard, and our collective vision for quality education is realized.

I wanted to take a moment to update you on the significant strides we have made in the area of compensation for our school administrators. Over the past year, the Association of Educational Leaders (AEL) has placed a strong focus on developing a competitive compensation package that aligns with counties across the state of Maryland.

Currently, we are nearing the completion of the negotiation process for this year's compensation package. Our efforts have been aimed at ensuring that the hard work and dedication of our administrators are recognized and appropriately rewarded. We understand the importance of attracting and retaining top talent in our schools, and a competitive compensation package is a crucial component of that.

However, our work does not stop here. As we wrap up the negotiations for this year, we

are eagerly looking ahead to the process of negotiating our entire agreement. This presents us with a valuable opportunity to take a deep dive into our current negotiated agreement and address the evolving role of administrators in our educational landscape.

We recognize that the job expectations placed upon us as administrators are constantly growing and evolving. It is essential for our negotiated agreement to reflect these changing dynamics and provide us with the necessary support and resources to fulfill our responsibilities effectively. This process will involve a thorough examination of our current agreement, identifying areas where improvements can be made, and ensuring that the needs and concerns of our members are adequately addressed.

By engaging in this comprehensive review, we aim to ensure that our negotiated agreement is not only fair and equitable but also tailored to meet the unique challenges faced by administrators. Our goal is to advocate for a comprehensive agreement that empowers us to excel in our roles and create a positive impact on the education system in Anne

Arundel County.

I want to express my gratitude to each and every one of you for your dedication and commitment to our profession. Your unwavering efforts are what make our schools thrive and our students succeed. As we continue on this journey, I encourage you to stay engaged and actively participate in the process. Your input and insights are invaluable in shaping the future of our negotiated agreement.

In the coming months, we will be reaching out to gather your feedback and suggestions. Your voices will guide us as we work towards a comprehensive agreement that truly reflects the needs and aspirations of our members.

Thank you for your continued support, and I look forward to the fruitful negotiations ahead.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as your President and to work alongside such dedicated individuals. Together, we can make a significant impact on the lives of our students and shape the future of education in AACPS.

Thank you for your unwavering support and commitment.

“It is essential
for our negotiated agreement to reflect these changing dynamics and provide us with the necessary support and resources to fulfill our responsibilities effectively.

*Tracey Ahern,
AEL President*

Older and Wiser?

By Rick Kovelant, AEL Executive Director and General Counsel

While it has been said, and for the most part, adopted, **“The older you get the wiser you become,”** I think this quote misstates the matter. As one who has accumulated a significant number of years (gotten older), I **don’t find myself particularly wiser.** I do, however, find that the older you get, the more reflective you become, and indeed, I seem to have achieved a higher degree of reflection. With respect to AEL, I would like to share my reflective thoughts that you may or may not find agreeable. **Please don’t confuse them with wisdom.**

AEL, like many organizations, has evolved from a hybrid professional organization to a union entity, uniquely sustained by its Unit II members for the benefit of all Unit II employees. It is unaffiliated with any state or national organization, which makes it quite different than the remaining AACPS bargaining units. Given this unique status, membership is mainly comprised of school-based supervisors (principals) and subordinate employees (assistant

principals). As a result, providing representation to these two distinct membership groups is a challenge, especially in the area of disciplinary matters.

Sometime in the not too distant past, AEL appropriately redefined its purpose. This statement of purpose, adopted by the membership, was reduced to writing and was identified as **“The Bill Of Respect.”** It has become an integral part of the Negotiated Agreement and it reads as follows:

“The Association of Educational Leaders holds these tenets to be true and self-evident. We believe that:

1. Our Negotiated Agreement is critical to the professional stature of our membership.
2. We should be adequately and equitably compensated for the duties and responsibilities to which we are assigned in accordance with the salary guidelines and work schedules.
3. The membership shall have optimal options for fringe benefits.
4. The personal and profes-

sional leave time shall be respected according to individual needs.

5. Professional improvement is essential for continued excellence in leadership performance.

6. Fair, consistent, and equitable practices should be adhered to when dealing with promotions, assignments, and discipline.

7. There should be mutual support when resolving school and community **conflict.”**

I would like to reflect on items 6 and 7 of the Bill Of Respect as I believe, upon reflection, it should have an impact and be considered applicable, both internally to all Unit II employees, as well as to the BOE which agreed to its inclusion in the Negotiated Agreement.

During the COVID crisis, learning shifted from the schools to the home utilizing a virtual platform. As to be expected, disciplinary issues were few and far between and for the most **part, didn’t occur at all.** The return to school build-

“Fair, consistent, and equitable practices should be adhered to when dealing with promotions, assignments, and discipline.”

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Older and Wiser ...

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“Frankly, sitting down and discussing concerns is also a means of resolution in both instances. In short, not everything requires a nuclear investigation option.”

ings brought the return of traditional and, to some extent, unique disciplinary issues requiring investigations and resolutions. The spirit of cooperation and understanding between supervisors and their subordinate staff has dissipated, resulting in an increase in referrals that could have otherwise been handled in a less intrusive and frankly, less draconian manner.

I am not suggesting that mandatory reporting should be ignored or that any incidents between school personnel and students go unreported. I am suggesting, that whenever possible, consideration of the language in items 6 and 7 be incorporated into the review of what action can be undertaken to correct an existing problem at the school level. Too often, there is confusion between conduct that is performance based and that which is a violation of school policy. The former is a subject addressed through the evaluation process and the latter through the disciplinary protocol. There may be an overlap where certain questionable conduct impacts both

areas, however, careers can be ruined if these areas are improperly identified, and the wrong call is made.

Item 6 mandates the application of fair, consistent, and equitable practices in dealing with disciplinary issues. This should not only be recognized by the BOE, but amongst Unit II employees as well. Personal bias and conflicts of interest need to be seriously considered. The failure to do so gives rise to the appropriate defense that the individual who initiated the investigation has a personal stake in the outcome. Alternative methods of addressing a non-mandatory referral are available. Certainly, counseling letters are a valuable tool to correct improper conduct and evaluations are a means of identifying and addressing performance issues. Frankly, sitting down and discussing concerns is also a means of resolution in both instances. In short, not everything requires a nuclear investigation option.

If the BOE has, by its recognition of the Bill Of Respect, acknowledged that, **“Fair, consistent, and equitable practices should be adhered to when dealing with... discipline,”** it stands to reason that Unit II employees should be given the same treatment by their Unit II colleagues.

It further stands to reason that when third parties are involved in an incident, Item 7 of the Bill Of Respect should be followed as well. Mutual support should be provided, not only from the BOE when resolving school and community conflicts but should also include mutual support from AEL as an organization and all Unit II employees to each other. Both the organization as a whole as well as all individual members have a shared responsibility to protect and defend the rights of each other and provide the support necessary to ensure that all Unit II employees are treated fairly, consistently, and equitably.

FY24 Negotiations Update

Negotiations are in full swing for the calendar year 2023-2024. The team has met on multiple occasions and is working collaboratively with the Superintendent's representatives to discuss compensation and other "aspects" of Unit II that need to be addressed. It is a reality that Maryland Blueprint will impact not only Unit I, but Unit II in ways that we can only imagine at this point in time, ranging from compensation to job responsibilities. The negotiations team is committed to doing what is best for the whole of Unit II! Unit II is overworked and underpaid. It is our belief that we are entitled to monetary compensation and/or a decrease in workload that is sustainable. **The board can't keep telling Unit II to take care of themselves** mentally, and in the same breath- pile on more work!

In the coming days, all Unit II members will vote on the negotiated items for the upcoming school year. A virtual meeting will be held by the negotiations team in order to answer any questions you may have. Please take advantage of this opportunity. Our goal is to be as transparent as possible and alleviate any unknowns.

In the near future, a survey will be sent to all Unit II employees. We encourage all Unit II members to complete the survey and provide input that will be used to drive the negotiation conversations for the 2024-2025 school year. Your input is extremely valuable as we move into a "full book" negotiation- this means we will be reviewing our entire negotiated agreement to identify areas for improvement. We want your input.

The negotiations team is at your service. If you have a question, concern, or just want to talk, **please don't hesitate to reach out.**

Ryan Sackett, Coordinator Career and Technical Education

Stacey Smith, Principal South River High School

Kristy Snyder, Principal Piney Orchard Elementary School

Lakisha Mitchell, Assistant Principal Brooklyn Park Middle School

Tracey Ahern, Principal Odenton Elementary School

AEL has three open Cluster Rep positions: North County, Northeast and Severna Park. If you are interested in serving, please contact Bob Ferguson at leafman65@gmail.com

AEL Spring Social

Thanks to all who attended the AEL Social April 27th at Hellas in Millersville. Ryan Sackett provided an update on Negotiations. And retirees George Lindley and Christopher Wooleyhand were honored and several people won a door prize drawing.



Happy Retirement!

Many thanks for your years of service and your dedication to the students of AACPS. The following educational leaders were recognized at the Spring Social.

George Lindley
Christopher Wooleyhand



Leaving My ‘Comrades in Arms’

By George Lindley, Principal, Arundel Middle School

It is with a mixture of many emotions that I compose this farewell message to you. A nagging pang of a guilty conscience rises on occasion as I think about leaving my “comrades in arms.” Yet, for this year anyway, just as the guilt rises, some outrageous situation occurs that confirms my decision was a sound one! The level of stress and

tions and quick fixes it is evident that answers are not readily available if they are available at all. As such, there are many times when we are left with unresolved situations. It is an unsettling feeling, and I am sure we have all shared at one time or another.

If I can offer some comfort though, it would be that children are resilient, as is the American spirit. The pandemic is an historical watershed moment which will forever be referenced as an experience that changed the paradigm of our country and global society. Nevertheless, I am confident that we will return to a sense of equilibrium to **what feels like “normal,”** but it will take more time than we may have originally thought. With resilience of our own combined with grit and determination, we will get there.

My confidence comes from working with such a

high caliber of colleagues such as you. There have been many occasions during which I have gained confidence and stolen good ideas from my compatriots in sister schools and from my own administrative team. The camaraderie I have found among our AEL colleagues is one that has been sustaining and uplifting. I can truly say that I have developed lifelong friendships from this work. Thank you for your support throughout my career.

I am so thankful for AEL’s continued support and advocacy for our work. It is required if we are to receive the degree of respect and compensation our position demands. I recognize that we are public servants and with that comes an expected degree of sacrifice for the good of our community. Yet at the same time, it is important that we are treated with the esteem our education and dedication demands. Our AEL leaders are tireless in their work to ensure that is the case for which I express my deep gratitude.

“With resilience of our own combined with grit and determination, we will get there.”

George Lindley, Principal



AEL President Tracey Ahern and George Lindley

anxiety with which our society is currently dealing has compounded the challenges we all face in the schoolhouse as parents, teachers, students, and **those “above us”** look to us for solutions. While we work diligently for resolu-

Farewell

By Christopher Wooleyhand, Principal, Pershing Hill Elementary

“It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena...”

-Teddy Roosevelt

“Never let anyone try to define you or your school unless they are willing to get in the arena with you.”

*Chris Wooleyhand,
Principal*

I began teaching 36 years ago as a Peace Corps volunteer in the West Indies. Those years on the tiny island nation of St. Kitts were a catalyst for a fun and rewarding career. I am grateful to the students, families, staff, and colleagues I have known over the years. I have learned so much from everyone.

I will not be leaving the profession, although I am hoping to get some rest in July. In August, I will take over as the Executive Director of MAESP. I am excited about this opportunity and hope my colleagues will be active in attending and presenting at local, state, and national conferences. The Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals needs your involvement.

Being a principal is hard and is not getting any easier. Hope, however, is not lost. It is not lost because there are still so many passionate school leaders who go to work every day with a singular focus on doing what is right for children. No one knows your school better than you. You are the men and women in the arena. While there are many critics outside the school building, you are the ones who know what is best for your schools. Never let anyone try to define you or your school unless they are willing to get in the arena with you.

Finally, I would like to thank AEL for supporting our profession. Special thanks to Rick Kovelant who has been a rock for our organization for a long time. I am personally



grateful for his strong and steady approach to supporting our union members. Thanks also to Bob Ferguson, Edie Picken, Tracey Ahern, Ryan Sackett, Denise Hofstedt and all the cluster representatives. The strength of AEL is its membership. I urge you to stay involved and stay connected with your colleagues. You need each other now more than ever.

With gratitude,
Christopher Wooleyhand

When I Retire, Then What?

By Edie Picken, AEL President Emeritus

Though I am completing my first year of retirement, I remain committed to and involved with AEL as president emeritus. In my new role as retiree, I learned there is much going on behind the scenes on behalf of AACPS locally and statewide. I joined the Anne Arundel Retired School Personnel Association (AARSPA) and the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association (MRSPA). Both organizations remain committed to the work we have done and the work that continues in the schoolhouse.

If you did not know, AARSPA is responsible for raising the funds for Scholarship for Scholars. Each month through their newsletter and monthly luncheon meetings, members make contributions in order to provide four scholarships in the amount of \$5,000 each. Additionally, **AARSPA's community service** committee establishes a monthly items collection focus. This year, items for needy students, schools, or outside organizations that service the community are just a few examples. Schools and students received food, clothing, and necessary school supplies. Most recently, toiletries, clothing, snack food, and art supplies were collected and distributed to assisted living centers in

need. The Free School in Davidsonville is staffed by retired AACPS teachers and administrators, at times conducting lessons with visiting students as they were taught back in the day. This upcoming October will be the **Free School's 300th** birthday that includes a well-planned celebration. These are only a few of the activities in which AARSPA participates on behalf of AACPS teachers, students, and community. AARSPA remains involved with the Board of Education, meeting with the superintendent to discuss issues of importance to both AACPS and AARSPA, one of which is working to maintain our healthcare insurance when we retire.

Regarding MRSPA, I had the privilege to become a member of their legislative committee. During monthly meetings, we reviewed bills that affect current issues in education, in addition to issues affecting seniors and mental health. This past legislative session over 2,000 bills were put forth. We did not review them all. We reviewed 45 of those proposed bills, responding with letters in support or opposition depending on the issue. There were a number of bills attempting to legislate curriculum, to which we wrote letters strongly op-

posing the legislature's attempts to dictate what is taught. MRSPA made it clear that it is the responsibility of the local school systems and the Maryland State Department of Education to make

those decisions. In all cases, those bills never made it past committee. Another important bill, though a difficult one to get

the legislature to vote for, MRSPA strongly supported: The Tax Reduction bill. In short, if this bill had passed it would have over a 5-year period reduced the taxable amount of the Maryland Pension to where it would no longer be taxed. Though this round the legislature engaged in more discussion, it did not make it out of committee to the Governor. MRSPA will continue to support this bill should it reappear next year. It has the last four.

Other bills MRSPA supported concerned assisted living facilities, tax credits for home care of elderly family members, emergency room wait times, and long-term care insurance. These bills do not just affect those who are retired, but those who are still working.



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When I Retire...

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Some maybe providing care for elderly relatives, while others may have experienced very long wait times in emergency rooms. On these issues, AARP works aggressively on our behalf and with MRSPA providing updated reports to the legislative committee at monthly meetings.

There is concern about the Blueprint and how it is going to impact education and Maryland. We were made aware **that the Governor's budget** has met its financial burden for the first year, will break even the second year, and will be in arrears the following year. Some of the larger school systems can meet their financial part, while smaller systems cannot, even for the first year. It will be **incumbent on Maryland's citizenry** to understand all facets of the Blueprint as it is evident that in order to meet the financial expectations of the

Plan, taxes will have to be increased. Maryland already is one of the highest taxing states in the country.

As you can see, there is much that continues on **AACP's** behalf even in retirement. If you are retiring, please consider joining

AARSPA and MRSPA. Both organizations provide opportunities for you to get involved should you choose, or you can attend monthly luncheon meetings to get the latest updates and connect with those you know who are already retired.

Notification: Change in the Collection of MSSPA Dues

Please be advised that the AEL will no longer act as the collecting agent for MSSPA dues as of June 30, 2023. MSSPA will be contacting you with its transition plan. Please contact Ms. Veronica Boem, Executive Director at 410-707-0420 if you have any questions or concerns.

Notification: Change in the Collection of MESPA Dues

As of June 30, 2023, the AEL will no longer act as the collecting agent for MESPA dues. Please contact Ms. Terry Ball Executive Director, MESPA at 410-596-1619 / TLBALL@MAESP.ORG if you have any questions or concerns.

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.

2022-23 AEL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE/BOARD/STAFF

Tracey Ahern (2022-26)	President	(P, Odenton ES)	(o)410-222-6514	tahern@aacps.org
Troy Hermann (2022-26)	1st VP	(AP, Meade MS)	(o)410- 305-2400	thermann@gmail.com
Brian Love (2022-26)	2nd VP	(Admin, BMAH)	(o)410-761-8950	bllove@aacps.org
Natalie Marston (2022-26)	Secretary	(P, Central Special School)	(o)410-956-5885	nmarston@aacps.org
Ryan Sackett (2020-2024)	Treasurer	(C, Secondary Mathematics HS)	(o) 410-2225383	rsackett@aacps.org
Stacey Smith	Director at Large	(P, South River HS)	(o)410-956-5600	smsmith1@aacps.org
John Wojtila	Director at Large	(P, Rivera Beach ES)	(o)410-222-6469	jwojtila@aacps.org
Edie Picken,	President Emeritus		(c) 410-371-9527	rag_qb@hotmail.com

REPRESENTATIVE DIRECTORS (14): CLUSTERS/FEEDER SYSTEM

Richard Rogers	Annapolis Cluster	(P, Mills-Parole ES)		rerogers@aacps.org
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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
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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

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