

LEADERSHIP FORUM

The Newsletter of the Association of Educational Leaders, Anne Arundel County

Vol. 5, No. 1
Winter 2007

Making improvements is a choice

by Denise Hofstedt

If as an organization we do not address the problems we are having growing and keeping good administrators, then we get what we deserve, according to Dr. James Hamilton, principal of Severna Park High School and the county's most senior principal.

A principal since 1990, Hamilton has seen first-hand what happens when practices and policies that need to be overhauled are not. He agreed to share his thoughts with the AEL newsletter, *Leadership Forum*.

"The job of the high school administrator has become much more detailed," according to Hamilton. "The job comes with huge stipulations and increased expectations of parents

and the county. Now it is much more data-driven and more regulation-driven. The depth of knowledge that is needed is greater than ever before. The concern in our school system is that there are greater demands and expectations, but no additional resources given... specifically, personnel resources."

With more demands and not enough support, Anne Arundel County educational leaders are being stretched. For example, covering the myriad of evening activities falls within an administrator's workday. "Since we don't have full time activities directors, administrators are having to work 70 hour weeks. In

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AEL to launch website

by Larry Lorton, Executive Director

As soon as enough content is developed AEL will launch its website. The organization of the site is all but complete. Among its major sections will be the Home Page, "About Us," Benefits, and AEL Business Services with tentative plans for a Members Only link.

The "Home Page" will contain the AEL logo, all the applicable links, a narrative describing AEL and what it stands for with instant links in the context, a calendar of AEL and other important events, and a "News and Notes" or bulletin board for instant updating of issues important to members.

"About Us" will include the AEL/BOE collective bargaining agreement, archived and current AEL newsletters, current salary and wage scales, AEL vision statement, and By-Laws.

A "Benefits" section will host sites for the BOE, affiliated professional associations through payroll deduction such as MASSP, MAESP, ASCD, and ACTE and links to AEL member-only benefits and services. The objective with this latter feature is the develop-

ment of arrangements for AEL member-only access to reduced fees, special rewards, services, insurances, purchase price reductions, and memberships. Twenty-one such options are currently being considered including AFLAC, travel, cultural arts ticket discounts, a variety of family-centered services such as driver training, medical air services, tax planning, post-retirement employment services, and financial planning, computer and car purchase/rental discounts, shopping club memberships, and health related benefits. Any suggestions you may have are more than welcome.

"AEL Business and Services" will include on-line application for all AEL/BOE arrangements such as AEL membership application, and payroll deduction, sick leave bank and cancellation forms, membership registers, and AEL committee rosters.

The "Members Only" link, if it becomes a reality, will be password protected identical to that of the AEL e-mail system (see article on page 2). ■

Dates to Remember

Feb. 7, 2007
AEL Meeting
4:30 pm
Old Mill High School

Feb. 15
Deadline to sign up for FREE AEL email address.
See details on page 2.

March 17, 2007
AEL Meeting
4:30 pm
Old Mill High School

March 22-24, 2007
MASSP Spring Conference
Ocean City, Md.
For more information, visit www.md-massp.org

April 11, 2007
AEL Meeting
4:30 pm
Old Mill High School

May 9, 2007
AEL Meeting
4:30 pm
Old Mill High School

May 10-12, 2007
MAESP Conference
Ocean City, MD
For more information, visit www.maesp.org

AEL email addresses available to members

New member service to improve association communication

An accompanying article reviews the status of a new AEL website: www.aelaacps.org. Our new website will also have a password protected e-mail account. Email can be used immediately upon the registration of our user names and passwords. AEL has contracted with Mackenzie Inc. to develop both our new website and e-mail account. Keith Phebus, with Mackenzie, is our contact and website designer.

Each AEL member must contact Keith by email at: kphebus@mackenziegraphics.com with his/her full name and desired password. Keith will complete the account and send each member a confirmation email with instructions on how to access the email address. This window will be open until **Feb. 15**. Please don't delay.

Our AEL email user names will look familiar: first initial, last name @aelaacps.org. For example: bferguson@aelaacps.org. Keith will work out any conflicts with us individually.

Among its features will be mailing groups: elementary assistant principals, administrative interns, high school principals, AEL central office staff members, negotiations team, etc.

The goal is not only to dramatically improve our ability to conduct AEL business but to provide immediate, secure access to each other for support, advice and assistance, professional growth, problem solving, shared information and other AEL business.

This is an exciting initiative for AEL members with unlimited potential. Our challenge will be to take advantage of it. ■

Improvements are a choice, from page 1

other counties, those who work at night get paid to work at night," he says.

The challenge for AACPS is to build administrators within our organization and to make our system attractive to outsiders, he says. But because of years of not keeping up with other counties AACPS is behind – and that trend is not going to abate anytime soon. "Our administrative demands, work load issues are well known... we don't have enough school-based administrators," says Hamilton.

The heavy workload not only takes its toll on seasoned administrators, perhaps hastening retirement, but it causes promising administrators to seek better conditions in other localities.

"[Assistant Principals] in neighboring counties are making \$10,000 to \$15,000 more than APs in our system," says Hamilton. "That is making it difficult to retain and attract talented administrators." He recalls that earlier this year an administrator he knows was hired by Carroll County for \$18,000 more than the administrator was making with AACPS.

"Every year we lose a handful of young talented APs to Carroll, Charles, and Baltimore counties...."

Hamilton says that the method of cultivating talent from within the system has been affected by the unaddressed workload and pay issues as well. "Our hope is that teachers in our system aspire to become administrators – but we are hard pressed to find teachers that would be crazy enough to on take the job."

Thus qualified administrators are getting harder to find. The practice of hiring back retired administrators helps in the short term, but does not address the structural, systemic problems within the system. And the practice of hiring people from other counties at higher pay than those here with the same experience is a solution that can quickly deplete morale.

"If the job is worth that amount of money, then we should be paying people that amount of money," says Hamilton. "When you start bringing in people at inflated salaries... you need to step up and do the right thing."

Hamilton offers a simple suggestion – where there is a will, there is a way. "We know what the problems are. The hope is that we have is that we're serious about having good administrators.... We can do better. We can choose to do better if it's a priority for us." ■

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Keeping you posted: Jobs, negotiations, etc.

Unit II employees recently received a memorandum from the administration advising that job openings for eligible employees would be posted on the ACPS website as part of the Brass Ring Program. Previously, positions were not advertised as to their availability to school employees as a group prior to the announcement to the general public.

During a recent meeting with Dr. Maxwell, Bob Ferguson and I were able to discuss this new procedure with him and his staff. AEL and the Superintendent believed that there was a highly qualified pool of employees who had many years of experience in this system but were being overlooked.

Although many candidates had gone through the interview process, they were missing the opportunity to apply for these positions, as they were unaware of the existing vacancies. The posting of these vacancies through the ACPS website will give current Unit II employees an early opportunity to apply and be considered. As always, the interviewing process and promotional requirements will have to be met.

During our discussions, the Superintendent, at AEL's request, acknowledged that a link between Brass Ring and the AEL website could be established. This would provide our members even greater access to this process. As you will note elsewhere in this newsletter, an AEL website is being constructed and will be operative in the near future. This will enhance our ability to communicate with our membership about these vacancies and other important issues.

Dr. Maxwell's willingness to approach and be approached by AEL is refreshing. Obviously, the administration and the union are not in agreement on all issues. The attitude between us, how-

ever, has developed to one of mutual respect. Thus, the willingness to discuss differing points of view, for now, seems to be beneficial for all parties. Time will tell if this will carry over to the bargaining table.

Negotiations

Negotiations are continuing. The focus, as always, seems to be on compensation issues.

We hope to have some favorable items to report on the website. The negotiation team is working hard to secure a multi-year contract with favorable pay provisions that recognize the hard work and effort of Unit II employees.

As always, funding of any compensation package will be the ultimate challenge. In short, any "generosity" we receive from the Board of Education will have to be pursued at the County Council and County Executive levels.

School Violence

Finally, AEL is concerned about the escalating violence in schools and the reporting of administrators to Social Services when they were involved in trying to break up the combatants. Not only have our members been physically injured in the course of performing their duties, they have been reported to the authorities by the Board's Office of Investigation.

Often these reports are made when a parent complains to the administration that a student was touched by a building administrator who was trying to restore order. Without any investigation, names of administrators have been summarily referred to these authorities. While none of these referrals have resulted in formal charges or investigations, the inclusion of these names is not a positive thing for one's career.

We are following this issue very closely and will take all necessary steps to work out an acceptable procedure. ■

**by Richard Kovelant,
Executive Director & General Counsel**

Not only have our members been physically injured in the course of performing their duties, they have been reported to the authorities by the Board's Office of Investigation.

The Association of Educational Leaders

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Association of Educational Leaders

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Story ideas and Letters to the Editor welcomed

We encourage members to use this newsletter to share their opinions and ideas.

If you would like to express your thoughts on an issue (i.e., "climate surveys") or a time saving tip or a creative solution to a common problem, send your submission to Denise Hofstedt at 410.421.5832 (fax) or dmhofstedt@verizon.net.

New member support available from AEL

Newly appointed interns, administrators and coordinators often find the transition from the classroom overwhelming. We all remember our first days and weeks. It's not just the new job and responsibilities but representation and paperwork. As an association we must be proactive with the new colleague and let none slip through the cracks. Between veteran AEL members and the AEL Administrator, who contacts all new appointees, every potential new member should be guided smoothly through the transition. As a reminder here are a couple of "Watch Out Fors" requiring specific help from us as we welcome our new colleagues aboard.

AEL Membership. AEL membership is the new intern's, administrator's or coordinator's best friend! Collective bargaining for salaries, wages, and terms of employment, legal protection, mutual professional support and counsel, partnerships with affiliated professional associations, payroll deduction, sick leave bank, and a growing list of AEL member-only benefits provided by various service providers are a few reasons for joining AEL.

AEL/TAAAC. New AEL eligible members (BOE designated Unit 2) can no longer be represented by TAAAC (Unit 1). On the effective date of the job change from Unit 1 to Unit 2 TAAAC benefits and protections end. Canceling TAAAC membership asap is crucial to avoid unnecessary TAAAC dues. TAAAC has a simple, clear form to handle dues stop payment.

AEL/TAAAC Dues Deduction. Like TAAAC, the vast majority of AEL members handle dues through payroll deduction. The BOE

will expedite payroll deduction only upon submission of its required form.

Sick Leave Bank. Both AEL and TAAAC provide this exceptional insurance plan for their respective members. The two banks are not interchangeable. One belongs to one or the other, not both. A seamless transition from one to the other is easy and simple but very important.

In addition to our warm embrace and guidance of new colleagues, remind them to carefully read and compare pay stubs before and after the transition. ■

Welcome New Members

Marlene Arkin	AP Annapolis HS
George Bell, III	AP Meade HS
Diane Black	P Marley Glen ES
Bill Bowers	AP Bodkin ES
Denna Britton	AP Glendale Regional Center
Kerri Buckley	AP Annapolis HS
Lori Chearney	AP Chesapeake HS
Christine Davenport	Intern North County HS
Karen DeGraffenreid	AP Davidsonville ES
Trish DeWitt	Special Assistant, CO
Luke Dillon	AP Corkoran MS
Cortney DiSalvo	AP Chesapeake Bay Regional Center
Tom Fitzgerald	Intern Severna Park HS
Annie Foster	AP CAT North
David Grigsby	AP Northeast HS
Sheila Hill	AP Old Mill HS
Nelson Horine	Central Office
Jo-Ann Howard	AP George Fox MS
Linda Jones	AP Severna Park HS
Melissa Jones	AP Magothy River MS
Lisa Koennel	AP Richard Henry Lee ES
Sheila Leatherbury	AP Meade HS
Carol Mohsberg	P Ruth Parker Eason
Jim Moore	AP Old Mill MS North
Tasheka Sellman	AP Marley ES
Deborah Short	AP Crofton ES
Adam Slivka	Intern South River HS
Kisha Webster	AP MacArthur MS
Vickie Zwainz	AP Folger McKinsey ES

AEL Executive Board Meeting Schedule

All members are invited to attend AEL Executive Board Meetings and encouraged to submit agenda items. The meeting dates for the remainder of the school year are: Feb. 7, March 14, April 11, and May 9. All meetings are at 4:30 p.m. at Old Mill High School.

Building a stronger association

One of the key concerns I have had since becoming President of AEL was the development of better communications with our membership. The reasons for better communications are obvious -- the development of methods of communication is far more difficult. To this end, I asked that Larry Lorton take the lead in bringing us into the 21st Century by developing a website that would allow us to instantly connect with our membership. We could share news, voice concerns, and have a virtual dialog, if need be, in near real time. I am proud to announce that we have nearly completed this task and will soon be on line and ready to go.

It is not my intention to make this newsletter obsolete. To the contrary, I want to see it also grow in importance as a physical record of our organization. The website is not a substitute for this type of medium any more than the internet will or should replace the newspaper we receive each day. I believe and hope you share the same belief that we grow stronger when we can discuss our issues openly and effectively. Larry will provide us with the technical aspects of how to access the site and how to use it effectively. As you will note from Rick's article, we are trying to link with the Board to

receive advance notice of administrative vacancies. This will give our qualified Unit II employees an advantage in applying for positions.

I hope you will share my enthusiasm for this new technology and use it frequently and wisely. I want to again acknowledge the hard work and effort of Larry Lorton and Denise Hofstedt who coordinated this development of this site.

by Bob Ferguson
AEL President

It also deserves mentioning that AEL has had productive discussions with the Superintendent and staff on a number of issues. Rick and I have been called upon for our opinions on issues that have impacted on AEL. This more open dialog is refreshing to say the least. While there will be areas of disagreement, I am pleased that there is a new beginning of sorts where an administrator's position is being sought and considered. As we are at the bargaining table, I can only hope this attitude continues in that forum as well. Special thanks need to be extended to our bargaining team (Louise DeJesu, Linda Ferrara, Sharon Morell, Will Myers, Charles Jansky, Rocco Ferretti, Rick Wiles, Larry Lorton) and Rick Kovelant, our Executive Director. This is a formidable task that has required a lot of time and effort. We await your recommendations. ■

I hope you will share my enthusiasm for this new technology and use it frequently and wisely.

New AEL Partner: The Maryland Real Estate Team

At its Oct. 5 meeting the AEL Executive Board unanimously approved a partnership with The Maryland Real Estate Team. The MRET has developed a quality and reliable track record of delivering below market costs or fees for a broad range of real estate transactions. These advantages and benefits are available to AEL members only. Any BOE designated Unit 2 employee not a member of AEL cannot access these

services.

Mortgage rates, building inspections, lender fees, settlement costs, title service fees, and pest inspection costs are among the services offered at discounted rates. Also, with some limitations these services are available to AEL members' families.

For details, contact Edward Robinson, 866-643-0206 (toll free) or Ed@TheMDRealEstateTeam.com. ■