

# LEADERSHIP FORUM

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

Vol. 6, No. 5  
December 2010

## Negotiations to begin

In the past few years the word “transparency” has become the buzz word for what organizations and individuals should aim for in order to provide the appropriate support for the constituency they represent. Over the past weeks I have considered this very seriously. Has AEL provided the transparency that our constituents want? I have had numerous conversations with our colleagues regarding a number of issues that I know that we have covered

in our newsletters. For some issues, there is a proliferation of misinformation despite our efforts to clarify AEL’s position. For instance, a year ago Mr. Kovelant explained the coalition of unions and how it came to be. He explained that it came about as a response to the health care crisis during Dr. Smith’s tenure. It has been in existence since then. Also, there have been articles about the fact that we are the only union that has had a contract in place. Unfortunately, even the renegotiations that occurred in April 2009, were not honored. This was discussed in our Call to Action meeting on May 24, 2010. The invitation to renegotiations in June 2010 resulted in a Board offer of a 1% one-time salary enhancement. The offer was rejected outright by our negotiations team. There was no invitation back to continue negotiations despite the continued concern regarding the possibilities of furlough, etc. Therefore, no one on the executive board was sure what was going to happen until you received that first paycheck for the new fiscal year. According to what is printed on your paycheck, you are receiving a 1% salary enhancement that will end in July 2010. I wonder if you noticed it! Over the past year, I have also addressed the need for all of us to be visible and to make our needs known. This can be done professionally and within the parameters of our role in the school system. I have kept you informed of

*by Sue Errichiello*  
*AEL President*

where I have testified and what issues need your attention. I will continue to do so in our newsletters and via emails. The board members are your colleagues and they attend the monthly meetings. Email them if you have a question or ask them when you see them at your cluster or principal meetings. There will be a representative at each Principal’s meeting to share what has been discussed at the board meetings. And as I have said repeatedly come to the board meetings. Everyone is welcomed. Transparency = clearness. Help us achieve it through informed involvement.

To keep you informed I want to share that throughout the past year we have requested meetings with central office personnel to discuss AEL and its mission to represent our colleagues. Until last week (Nov. 18, 2010) there had been no response. At this time, a long sought after meeting has been set up with the Superintendent to discuss our shared vision and our involvement. We have also been given the opportunity to set up meetings for our new negotiations. The Negotiations Committee will be meeting over the next weeks to draft a first round of negotiation items. Now is the time to express your ideas and concerns. Read through the contract so that you are informed. Be aware that retirement and health benefits are guaranteed to be a heated discussion over the next months. We will need you to lobby for your needs. We will keep you informed through the email system so please make sure that you have sent your personal email address to Larry Lorton. We will not use the AACPS system to relay information related to negotiations.

In conclusion, I want to wish you all a wonderful holiday season. May you find peace in what you do and know that you are valued as colleagues and professionals. ■

## Upcoming Events

Dec. 8  
**AEL Holiday Social**  
4:30 - 6:30 pm  
McCormick & Schmick’s  
Annapolis Mall  
*Complimentary*

Jan. 10  
**AEL Executive Board Meeting**  
5:00 pm  
Belvedere  
Elementary School,  
Arnold

Feb. 7  
**AEL Executive Board Meeting**  
5:00 pm  
Belvedere  
Elementary School,  
Arnold

*Look for the next issue of Leadership Forum in February.*



AEL website  
[www.aelaacps.org](http://www.aelaacps.org)

## The 'right thing'

***Following the renegotiations AEL leader questioned the BOE about fund balances. We were told that the BOE had no significant fund balances to contribute to compensation short falls. We later learned that there were fund balances but the BOE still had no intention of funding the existing contract.***

The AEL Negotiated Agreement is scheduled to be renegotiated for the school year beginning on July 1, 2011. This ends a four-year agreement with the BOE. While the negotiating team prepares for this upcoming event, we now need, more than ever, the assistance of the membership in helping to define the parameters of this process. For many of you, this is nothing new and, in the course of your career, you have been the subject of many agreements. For others who have just joined the administrative ranks or have become part of the Anne Arundel County School System, the process may be something new, or at least different.

As I thought about this article, I kept coming back to the concept of ethics and the part it plays in the negotiation process. Although I have been involved in negotiations for more than 20 years, I realized that I had never thought of the interplay between these two items. Because of the downturn in the economy and the unfulfilled commitments in our existing contract, I began to wonder if there is a need to incorporate an ethical component into the negotiation process so that the promises made and the agreements reached can be realized.

"Ethics" has been defined as "the basic principles of the right action". In other words, ethics require doing the right thing. But, just what is the "right thing"? The devil is always in the details. In this context, I would submit that the "right thing" is negotiating an agreement that not only both sides believe is fair, but also keeping the commitments that are made. This would be the "right action".

Negotiation is a process that through some collaborative effort, results in an agreement.

It should be based on trust, compromise and a willingness to honor the final outcome, whatever that may be, i.e., doing the "right thing". Looking back on the previous negotiations and the final agreement that was the product of these negotiations, I submit that the ethical component was lacking. For example, at the bargaining table, AEL was advised that furlough days attributable to Unit II employees would exceed those of the Unit I employees, because Unit II employees earn more than Unit I employees. AEL was also assured that those supervising Unit II employees who in turn earn more than Unit II employees would receive even more furlough days. Based on this promise, an agreement was reached. This has not been the case. At the negotiating table, AEL was advised that funding for all employee

raises was not available, yet the BOE reached an agreement with the school system's top administrator and found

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

the funding to significantly increase his salary and benefits. Why was one negotiated agreement honored and the other ignored? This was hardly doing the "right thing". Following the renegotiations AEL leader questioned the BOE about fund balances. We were told that the BOE had no significant fund balances to contribute to compensation short falls. We later learned that there were fund balances but the BOE still had no intention of funding the existing contract. Please keep in mind that, unlike TAAAC, Unit II employees had an existing agreement in place with two years remaining. In the case of AEL, the BOE took back that which it had promised. By contrast, Unit I employees had no contract at all and were not able to get a commitment. Our loss therefore, in many ways, was far more significant, as we had already bargained away four years ago other points to achieve an agreement that was subsequently not honored.

The ethical impact (not doing the "right thing") was not only felt in the area of compensation, it was prevalent in the BOE's failure to

*Continued on page 3*



## Preparing students

Guest Column by Arlen Liverman, *Deputy Superintendent*

Over the last couple of years, I have made it a priority to visit schools more frequently. A consistent and familiar theme has emerged: principals and their staff are heavily invested in the performance of their schools.

It is often said, and accurately, that teachers are a vital variable to student success. True, but I am quick to add that the leadership in a school building is that necessary variable that can unleash and harness incredible energy, direction, and purpose that empowers teachers and ultimately leads to student success. Among the many obstacles that exist in our efforts to bring about true reform, believing in the power of leadership will be certainly tested as we continue the journey of greatness our Superintendent has articulated so very well for the school system.

I am well aware of the competing interests and huge demands and expectations placed on principals. I wish it were possible that I could alleviate some of the heavy lift. But that would be wishful thinking. I have come to the inevitable

conclusion that expectations and workload issues will not abate; they will continue to be a formidable challenge to educational excellence; however, in spite of the increased expectations progress can happen as a result of strong leadership... leadership that realizes the value of prioritizing, holding staff accountable, and remaining focused on system wide goals. One such goal is the implementation of a structured plan replete with appropriate supports that pave the way for all student groups to meet and exceed standards of achievement. Additionally, it is important to remove artificial barriers that sometimes become roadblocks which prevent many of our student groups from having access to academically rich programs and courses of study. Leadership, at all levels, will allow us to achieve success.

Dr. Maxwell often speaks of having the right people on the bus to reach desired goals. I believe we have the right principals in place to meet the challenge of preparing our students for a world that is constantly changing.

Please enjoy the upcoming holiday season. ■

---

*I believe we have the right principals in place to meet the challenge of preparing our students for a world that is constantly changing.*

## The 'right thing'...

*Continued from page 2*

abide by the negotiated and thereafter agreed to promotional practices and out-of-county hires. Ethics were also abandoned when grievance procedures were unilaterally disregarded by the Unit II supervisors and, in some cases, the BOE itself. Time requirements were uniformly ignored, standards of proof were abandoned and harsh discipline was used as a substitute for corrective action for a performance issue. These became the rules not the exceptions. Ethics were never considered in any of these instances. While clear language was agreed to by the parties and an agreement was reached in "good faith", one can say that the negotiation process worked, but the performance of the contract failed. I believe that AEL has been let down by both components. Negotiations based on a continued belief that a

party does not have to perform the terms and conditions that were agreed to, is no negotiation at all. An agreement reached with no intention of being followed, is meaningless.

I did not want to turn this article into a philosophical discourse on ethics; however, as we begin the process anew for this coming year, I can only hope that we truly negotiate in good faith. This would include the timely submission of requested information from the BOE, an honest assessment of the financial strength and weakness of the school system, a promise that ALL employees will share the pain, if pain is to be shared, and that the BOE will adhere to the terms and conditions of the final agreement. If all that were to occur, perhaps it would be doing the "right thing". ■

## The Association of Educational Leaders

P.O. Box 74  
Severna Park, MD 21146

### AEL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE/STAFF/CONTACTS: 7/1/10—6/30/11

Susan Errichiello	President	(o) 975-9432	(P—Belvedere E)
Will Myers	1 <sup>st</sup> VP	(o) 956-5600	(P—South River HS)
Charles Jansky (2009-10)	2 <sup>nd</sup> VP	437-0464	(P—Bodkin E)
Louise DeJesu:	Secretary	222-6409	(P—Hilltop E)
Paul DeRoo:	Treasurer	263-0270	(AP—Bates MS)
Reginald Farrare (2010-12)	Director at Large	674-0032	(P--MacArthur MS)
Kurt Maisel (2010-12)	Director at Large	544-0900	(AP—Severna Park H S)
Donna O'Shea (2009-11)	Director at Large	222-5800	(P—Crofton E)
Bob Ferguson (2009-----)	Director Emeritus	974-0158	(Past President, Retired)

### REPRESENTATIVE DIRECTORS (14): CLUSTERS/FEEDER SYSTEMS

Nelson Horine	Central Office Cluster	224-5384	(Principal, Evening HS)
Ronald Chesek	Special Schools and Centers	956-5885	(P—Central Special)
Jeff Tillar	Annapolis Cluster	222-1639	(P—J. Albert Adams Academy)
TBA	Arundel Cluster		
TBA	Broadneck Cluster		
TBA	Chesapeake Cluster		
TBA	Glen Burnie Cluster		
John Noon	Meade Cluster	301-498-6280	(P—Brock Bridge E)
TBA	North County Cluster		
TBA	Northeast Cluster		
Tom Fitzgerald	Old Mill Cluster	969-9010	(AP—Old Mill HS)
TBA	Severna Park Cluster		
Steve Baran	South River Cluster	222-1666	(P—Mayo E.)
Colleen Harris	Southern Cluster	222-1695	(P—Deale E)

### STAFF

Rick Kovelant, (Executive Director, Legal Counsel)	897-0747	<a href="mailto:rkovelant@kovelantlaw.com">rkovelant@kovelantlaw.com</a>
Larry Lorton (Administrator)	647-5847	<a href="mailto:llorton@aelaacps.org">llorton@aelaacps.org</a>
Denise McGiffin Hofstedt (Editor, Leadership Forum)	443-223-0273	
Barbara Kovelant (Editor, AEL Advocate)	897-0747	