

# AEL Leadership Forum

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 2

MAY 2015

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**May 14**  
**AEL Spring Social  
& Membership  
Meeting, 5pm-7 pm**  
Severn Inn, 1993  
Baltimore-Annapolis  
Blvd., Annapolis  
RSVP to Bob at  
leafman65@gmail.com

**June 21**  
**AEL Executive  
Board Meeting,  
5pm**  
AEL HQ,  
2521 Riva Road,  
Suite L-2, Annapolis

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## The cost of doing business

*By Will Myers, AEL President*

AEL has been able to make great strides over the last five years. The efforts of AEL's dedicated volunteers have helped your organization gain salary increases, step increases and other concessions. The addition of an office and the upgrades to the newsletter have helped the organization gain a new level of professionalism and respect.

AEL hopes to continue to improve service to its members. Improved communication and innovative ideas such as an e-newsletter and

an AEL App are among the ideas being considered. Development of these and other projects come at a cost. Although AEL is financially solvent, its current budget does not allow for any growth.

The Executive Team has proposed an increase in bi-weekly dues in the amount of \$1.25. This would total a \$33.00 annual increase per member. Our last increase came in 2008

when we moved from \$15.38 per pay to our current \$19.25. This modest increase would allow AEL to move

forward with new and future improvements. The proposal for the increase will be formally introduced at the spring

meeting, which is scheduled for May 14th at 5:00 p.m. at the Severn Inn. If adopted, the increase would become effective on July 1, 2015.



## The obligation of representation

*By Rick Kovelant, AEL Executive Director and General Counsel*

It is generally recognized that a union provides representation in the areas of Wages, Work Hours and Working Conditions. While the areas of Wages and Working Hours seem to be eas-

ily defined and encompass more limited items clearly falling within the negotiation process, the term, "working conditions" extends well beyond negotiations and is subject to far

greater interpretation. In this area, the responsibilities of a union, and in this case AEL, are somewhat amorphous. There is, therefore a need for the mem-

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*A loss of \$4.8 million makes it a virtual certainty that those enhancements would not be fully funded.*

## GCEI Update from Dr. Arlotto

At this writing the Governor has not committed to allocate anything more than the 50 percent GCEI level. If that stance remains, our school system stands to lose about \$4.8 million in anticipated funding.

In a county that has provided the minimum legally required level of operating budget funding since Fiscal Year 2009 and grown by 4,736 students over the same period, we have come to count on GCEI funding as a means to help launch and maintain programs to address an increasingly diverse student population. As most school systems would do, we would look to the County Government to make up for a shortfall in anticipated state revenue. However, we have every indication that once again this year, the County will

provide only a Maintenance of Effort (MOE) level of funding.

Given the MOE circumstance alone, we would have a difficult time funding the nearly \$11 million in enhancements for student

achievement contained in the Board of Education's Fiscal Year 2016 budget request. A loss of \$4.8 million makes it a virtual certainty that those enhancements would not be fully funded.

Those enhancements, it is important to note, include teaching positions for continued enrollment growth (an item that went unfunded last year as well and meant that average class sizes

rose), the addition of critical positions to address the needs of English Language



**Dr. George Arlotto**

Learners, and the funding of initiatives aimed at improving early literacy and elementary education. All of these things are critical in addressing issue related to closing the achievement gap.

Even full funding of GCEI alone would not allow for full funding of the enhancements for student achievement in the Board's budget. However, while it is too early to say what specific initiatives may suffer from a loss of \$4.8 million, this much is sure: Our mission to elevate all students and eliminate all gaps would be adversely impacted in a significant way should this funding not be allocated.

## Spring Meeting & Social: May 14

Please join your colleagues for the **AEL Spring Meeting & Social** at the Severn Inn, on Thursday, May 14, 5 pm–7 pm. We will honor retirees, meet newly elected Executive Board members and vote on new business. Enjoy complimentary hors d'oeuvres and beverages.

RSVP to Bob Ferguson at [leafman65@gmail.com](mailto:leafman65@gmail.com) before May 11.

# The obligation of representation...

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bership to understand the parameters of AEL's responsibilities to the employees it represents within the meaning of "working conditions".

Recently, several situations have occurred that warrant a discussion of what services AEL is obligated to perform in the course of providing representation to Unit II employees who believe their issue impacts on their "working conditions." Since conduct and performance impact an employee's employment in the sense it has an impact on his/her position, compensation and working condition, AEL provides representation to an employee. The following should provide an understanding of AEL's role in each of these areas.

In the area of grievances against an employee's supervisor, a violation/breach of the Negotiated Agreement, AEL, through the grievance process will, when appropriate represent the grievant. The supervisor, who is the subject matter of the grievance, is represented by the school system's counsel and eventually by the Board's attorney should the matter proceed to the State Board of Education appeal level.

In the event a Unit II employee is the subject of an investigation for misconduct, arising out of a viola-

tion of BOE policy or regulation, AEL will represent the individual through the investigatory process, the discipline phase, and appeals through the State Board of Education level.

Evaluations and resulting personnel actions associated with the evaluation are matters where AEL provides assistance in preparing the Unit II employee for an Evaluation Appeal and thereafter, representing a Unit II employee who is demoted or reassigned based on a finding by the Appeal Review panel that an incorrect evaluation occurred and the subsequent transfer, demotion or reassignment was in error.

Two cases have been brought to AEL's attention that have questioned the role of AEL in providing representation to Unit II employees. In both of these situations, threats were made against Unit II employees, by parents in one case and by an anonymous individual in another. In the latter case, the threats and derogatory comments which could be defamatory were posted and distributed via the Internet. While these cases clearly impact on a Unit II employee's working conditions, the role of AEL is secondary to the responsibility of the school system in providing the employee with a safe work environment by taking all appropriate actions to protect the physical and emotional well-being of the employee. AEL's role

is to ensure that the BOE becomes engaged in this process and extends aid and assistance to its employees. The primary role of AEL is not to engage the responsible perpetrators. Rather, AEL's role is to engage the school system and to challenge the school system if it declines to become engaged on behalf of the employee or once engaged ineffectively provide the required support.

Independent legal problems encountered by a Unit II employee are not in and of themselves subject matters that require union representation. Domestic cases, criminal activity, traffic citations and the like may impact on a Unit II employee's job, but standing alone, are not areas where AEL provides legal assistance. To the extent that these areas become a subject matter of a potential adverse job action, AEL, will at the school system level, provide legal assistance.

As a final caveat, AEL may, in certain circumstances, decline representation through its Legal Counsel, should a conflict of interest issue or a potential lawyer confidentiality issue exist. In those cases, alternative representation will be considered.

**The AEL Representation Policy can be found on the AEL website, [www.aelaacps.org](http://www.aelaacps.org).**

***"AEL's role is to ensure that the BOE becomes engaged in this process and extends aid and assistance to its employees."***

*Rick Kovelant*

# Sharon Stratton: For the love of it

*“Do not sit on the sideline to supervise. Participate! Take an interest in teachers and kids! Once they both know you care about their work, they will go to the moon and back for you!”*

*Sharon Stratton*

Simply put, school administration is hard work. There aren't cushy jobs where you can enjoy long lunches and an occasional afternoon of golf. It is a profession that demands passion, persistence and dedication, according to former AEL Member Sharon Stratton. Few know that reality better than Sharon who began her career 35 years ago in this county and this year was promoted to AACPS Director of Instruction.

A true product of Anne Arundel County Schools, Sharon was raised in Brooklyn Park, attended Brooklyn Park Elementary and Park Elementary and graduated from Brooklyn Park Junior/Senior High School. After graduating from Towson State University, she began working for AACPS as an evening high school teacher and summer school social studies

teacher in 1980. She taught at St. Mary's High School full time 1980 to 1985 then began teaching full time for AACPS at Crofton Junior High School. She transferred to North County High School where she taught social studies, served as department chair and completed an administrative internship. After 10 years she was transferred and promoted to Assistant Principal. She arrived as an AP at Arundel High School in 2001. In 2003 she was named Principal at Arundel and served there until this January 2015.

We recently had a chance to ask Sharon about her career and to share her unique perspective on educational leadership in our county....

*What made you want to go into education?*

Sharon: As a young girl, I loved playing teacher with my dolls and my little brother. My uncle worked

for a trucking company and whenever there was damaged freight that were books, he would bring them to me. My dad also brought home a large chalkboard from his office for me to use.

*When and why did you go into leadership/administration?*

Sharon: In 1991, Joyce Coleman was assigned as the first Career Connections facilitator in the county. She offered many opportunities to learn about school culture and changes to smaller learning communities. I loved learning about high school restructuring. I became a department chair person after serving on the school improvement team at North County High School. Once I was a department chairperson, I started to work on my master's degree. I began my graduate program in school counseling but quickly realized that I was more interested in school leadership due to my interest in school reform. As a department chair, I substituted for administrators who were out

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# For the love of it....

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for surgery or other emergencies. I love the work I was doing with students and their families. I quickly got the master's degree, passed the licensure test, and became an administrative trainee.

*What was the most significant change you experienced during your tenure as an administrator?*

**Sharon:** Changes in the demands on my time due to changes in regulations. Specifically, No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top squeezed time from my classroom visits to data crunching meetings and SLO conferences. In addition, the growing number of students who lacked motivation and parents who did not support education. Many par-

ents enabled student misbehavior and lack of academic success by blaming everything on the teacher or school.

*Why did you join AEL?*

I became a member of AEL for the professional liability coverage and membership to professional organizations. On more than one occasion I needed the legal services that were provided by the association!

*What advice would you give newly minted administrators?*

**Sharon:** Remember it is always about the kids! Each staff member must accept this and work to make the teaching

and learning in the school the priority! It is easy to get caught up in the office work but you must keep instruction as the focus. Attend department and content planning meetings. Participate in the school professional development. Do not sit on the sideline to supervise. Participate!



**Sharon Stratton (left) chats with a colleague at the Winter Social.**

**Take an interest in teachers and kids! Once they both know you care about their work, they will go to the moon and back for you!**

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## 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.

# For the love of it...

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*If you could change one thing about our school system as it is today, what would you change?*

**Sharon:** Increase the resources dedicated to education so that all teachers have time to plan collaboratively during the school day, provide job embedded staff development for administrators and teachers, and provide the social services for students needing them so that they can attend to learning.

*Is there anything in your career you wish you had done?*

**Sharon:** Nothing! I worked hard at every job I had in the education system. As a teacher, I supported students and worked hard to make sure they succeeded. As an administrator I did the same. The many successes of Arundel High School are evidence of my hard work with teachers and students. Arundel is a comprehensive high school with a very diverse population. Over a time period, we (the faculty and students) worked to become one of the top three high schools in the county. I have nothing that I wish I had done. In fact I am extremely grateful for the ability to stay at Arundel High School for as long as I did. We made huge gains in student achievement and the faculty will continue to work hard to close the gaps and make the school the first to do it in the county!

**“Increase the resources dedicated to education so that all teachers have time to plan collaboratively during the school day, provide job embedded staff development for administrators and teachers...”**

*Sharon Stratton*

## AEL Meeting & Social to honor retirees

**Be sure to attend the AEL Spring Meeting & Social on May 14 as we honor this year’s retirees. The event is free to AEL members. RSVP to Bob Ferguson at leafman65@gmail.com by May 11. Those being honored include:**

**Rocco Ferretti**

**Nancy Galetsky**

**Beverly Saunders**

**Sara Sekinger**

**Veronica Williams**

# Sandy Blondell honored

AEL Member Sandy Blondell has been named a recipient of the Distinguished Educational Leader Award (DELA) by *The Washington*

*Post*. Sandy, who is the Principal of Park Elementary, is one of 20 principals representing Washington-area school districts to receive the award.

The DELA recognizes “those principals who go beyond the day-to-day demands of their position to create an exceptional educational environment.” From managing a stressful student redistricting situation to ensuring that advanced technology is available to students, Sandy assumed the principal position at Park in 2012 and has overseen the integration of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) instruction throughout all grades.

“Sandy is a passionate and committed leader who is able to get students, teachers, staff, and parents to rally around a vision of excellence,” said Regional Assistant Superintendent Kate Gilbert, who oversees all of the schools in the North County Cluster, including Park. “She has had – and continues to have – an incredibly positive impact on the school and its community.”

Sandy has spent 35 years in Anne Arundel County Public Schools. Before becoming principal at Park, she was assistant principal at Park and Hilltop elementary schools, and taught at Hilltop Elementary, the Mary Moss Academy, and Old Mill High School.

“I am so fortunate to be able to walk into a school where everyone works together to help every one of our children succeed,” she said. “I am thrilled and humbled by this recognition, but it is truly a reflection of what we as a team do for our children every day.”



**Sandy Blondell**

Eight of those honored by the newspaper are from Maryland schools.

## Welcome new members

**John Thompson**, Principal, Phoenix Academy

**Douglas Schreibe**, Asst. Principal, Brooklyn Park Middle School



The Association of Educational Leaders  
 2521 Riva Rd., Suite L-2  
 Annapolis, MD 21401



**2014-15 AEL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE/BOARD/STAFF**

Will Myers (2013-15)	President	(P, South River HS)	(o)956-5600	wtmwants@aol.com
Nelson Horine (2013-15)	1st VP	(P, Anne Arundel Evening HS BOE)	(o) 222-5384	linnea.horine@gmail.com
Amy Hussey (2013-15)	2nd VP	(AP, Chesapeake Bay MS)	(o) 437-2400	ahussey@aacps.org
Louise DeJesu (2014-16)	Secretary	(P, Hilltop ES)	(o) 222-6409	louisedejesus@yahoo.com
Paul DeRoo (2014-16)	Treasurer	(P, Bates MS)	(o) 263-0270	pderoo@aacps.org
Patrick Bathras (2014-16)	Director at Large	(P, Severna Park HS)	(o)544-0900	pbathras@aacps.org
Jessica Tickle (2014-16)	Director at Large	(C, Office of Student Data)	(o)222-5153	jtickle@aacps.org
Edie Picken (2014-16)	Director at Large	(AP, South River HS)	(o)956-5900	epicken@aacps.org

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

Mary Poisson	Central Office Representative	(o)222-5440	Terrypoisson7@gmail.com
Patrick Bathras	Cluster Rep (P, Severna Park HS)	(o) 544-0900	pbathras@aacps.org
Edie Picken	Cluster Rep (AP, South River HS)	(o) 956-5600	rag_qb@hotmail.com
Shauna Kauffman	Cluster Rep (P, Arnold ES)	(o) 222-1670	shauna@yahoo.com
Sharon Ferralli	Cluster Rep (P, Four Seasons)	(o)222-6501	sferralli@aol.com
Rebecca Blasingame-White	Cluster Rep (P, Hebron-Harmon ES)	(o)626-9747	mybeckyb@yahoo.com
Troy Herman	Cluster Rep (AP, Meade Middle)	(o)674-2355	gino88@verizon.net
Brent Wescott	Cluster Rep (AP, George Foxx MS)	(o)437-5512	
Kevin Buckley	Cluster Rep (P, Marley MS)	(o)761-0934	

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

**STAFF**

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