

AEL Leadership Forum

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 6

OCTOBER 2017

UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct. 26, 2017
AEL Fall Social
4:30-7:30 pm
Hellas' Restaurant
Millersville
RSVP to
leafman65@gmail.com

Nov. 16, 2017
AEL Executive
Board Meeting
5 pm
AEL HQ,
2521 Riva Road,
Suite L-2, Annapolis

Dec. 21, 2017
AEL Executive
Board Meeting
5 pm
AEL HQ,
2521 Riva Road,
Suite L-2, Annapolis

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

See, Hear 2
& Report

Challenge 4

Challenge 5
of Change

A 6
Solution

Guilty Until Proven Innocent

By Will Myers, AEL President

In today's climate, Administrator beware. With so many opportunities to make a mistake, our jobs are always at risk. I believe most of us have adopted the philosophy of ignore nothing, report everything. Busy does not even come close to describing a typical day. The distractions are constant and the responsibilities endless. Our interactions with students, staff and parents are constantly monitored. Our actions are questioned with simple emails or phone calls. Others are investigated with a threat of disciplinary action if we are found at fault. Never believe, because you "know" people, you have a pass when alleged mistakes are made. There is an assumption of "if you could have done it, you might

have done it." The burden of proving your actions were appropriate falls on your shoulders.

Here is where "membership has its advantages." As a member of AEL, you are never alone in defending your actions. We have the advantage of having Mr. Rick Kovelant as our Executive Director and legal counsel. Rick has years of experience and a wealth of knowledge dealing with investigations. He has successfully helped many of our members over the years. I strongly urge you to seek representations in all pre-disciplinary matters. Recently one of our members, with Rick's assistance, had a "no ac-

tion required" stamp after a lengthy investigation. Although this is not always the outcome, your chances of success are greatly enhanced with representation.

I do not want to conclude with the impression someone at the Board is out to get you. However, remember their investigations will be thorough and will seek to substantiate the allegation(s) against you. It is my hope you will nev-



er need our assistance. However, take some comfort in the fact we are only a phone call away.

See, Hear and Report

By Rick Kovelant, AEL Executive Director and General Counsel

The failure to report an incident has, rightfully or wrongfully, become as important as the incident

itself.

At some point in our lives we have all been taught to “stop, look, and listen.” This little phrase was designed to instill in us a sense of caution when approaching an intersection or train tracks or before crossing the street. I recommend a new twist on this cautionary phrase for administrators, appropriate for preventing disciplinary mishaps: “see, hear and report.”

Over the last several years, the largest majority of disciplinary matters related to

performance (as well as performance evaluations) have involved the failure of an administrator to timely report, or in some cases, not report incidents regarding child neglect or violations of AACPS policy, rules and regulations. In most cases, the failure to report was based on the mistaken belief that the matter was handled and resolved at the school level and therefore, there was nothing further to report or an independent judgment was made that a particular incident did not require re-

porting at all. In these particular situations, administrators have been the subject of investigations and subsequent disciplinary actions. The failure to report an incident has, rightfully or wrongfully, become as important as the incident itself. As indicated in Will’s article (page 1), there is a preconceived notion regarding discipline, that is, “one is presumed guilty until proven otherwise.” It is further assumed that building administrators have been imbued with the super powers of vision and hearing which enable them to

Continued on page 3

AEL Fall Social

at Hellas Restaurant

October 26th, 4:30- 7:30 pm

Veterans Highway, Millersville, Md.

Your best chance this fall to connect and catch up with friends and colleagues.

**RSVP by Oct 23 to Bob Ferguson,
leafman65@gmail.com**



See, Hear and Report...

Continued from page 2

immediately observe and report all incidents. In judging the timeliness or the necessity of an administrator's report, supervisors are not burdened with the spur of the moment decision making to which administrators are expected to adhere.

To mitigate this reporting problem, whenever you see or hear what "appears" to be a violation of policy, rule or regulation, simply report the same and ask for guidance as to how the problem should be handled. This is called "sharing the problem." The decision to not formally report or, at the very least, make a supervisor aware of an issue is sometimes based on the fear that the supervisor will believe that the administrator is not capable of handling a matter at the lowest possible level. I can attest that there has not been one disciplinary case I have handled that involved an indi-

vidual for "over reacting" or "over reporting" an incident. Admittedly, common sense dictates that some initial screening is warranted before one picks up the phone to Riva Road. That said, whenever there is any doubt whatsoever as to the magnitude of a particular issue, call your area superintendent or supervisor and bring him or her into the equation. At that point, the supervisor becomes part of the solution and not a part of your problem. It is extremely important that you document your timely call to your supervisor or the office of investigation as the case may require. Send an email, hard copy a letter, or keep a contemporaneous note of your call. By all means, follow up to see if it was received and keep a record of the response. When in doubt, call AEL for its input.

The reporting requirement is mandatory in some par-

ticular cases, especially those involving student issues. In addition, you should also make your supervisor aware of cases involving personnel disciplinary measures and proposed counseling letters. Learning of these matters after the fact from a third party cannot serve you well. In the end analysis, it is easier to defend over reporting than the failure to report at all. In the past, the position has been that it is best not to allow the phone to ring at Riva Road.

As building administrators, you have a responsibility to handle matters at the school level. The new position should be to make sure you are the individual who makes the phone ring at Riva Road rather than have the phone ring at your school calling you in for a disciplinary hearing.

...there has not been one disciplinary case I have handled that involved an individual for "over reacting" or "over reporting" an incident.

The Joys and Challenges for the Upcoming year

By Stacy Gray, Principal, Brock Bridge Elementary

Editor's Note: We asked AEL members to describe what they envision as their biggest challenge of the year and how they intend to tackle it. As always, thank you to those who were willing to share their thoughts.

Every educator was excited to have a longer summer and enjoy time with family and friends. I certainly enjoyed this summer like no other! With the longer summer, came a quick-ending month of September and a demanding curriculum where new PARCC results were in the media for all to see.

As a principal, you want to be sure to have everyone welcomed to the start of the year with realistic, but high expectations for performance. I also want the children to love learning and want for the teachers to love teaching and the children they teach. It is easy to be part of a team where love and care is given to all children; however, it is challenging to see their energy zapped with long days of

teaching and preparing students for the demands of standards and curriculum that aligns with PARCC and other local assessments. Teachers have to take professional development during the school day and create lesson plans for subs, and this requires additional work alongside the daily planning. My challenge is finding a way to help with workload, and my pleasure is helping teams work smarter and support one another through the challenges.

One of the challenges at Brock Bridge is working through a year-long construction project. During our opening week, I noticed how all of the staff worked together to put up bulletin boards, move furniture, unpack boxes, and prepare for students to learn in a caring school environment. After seeing the teamwork characterized during the opening week, I

knew the Brock Bridge team could get through the year by supporting one another.

My joy is being part of a team that can see challenges as opportunities!

I am in awe of how my team meets the daily demands in a

work environment where teamwork is at the core of getting the work done. I am so fortunate to work with and for a smart and caring group of adults who are child-centered! I am humbled to be able to be a principal in a school community where our work is appreciated and acknowledged by families and students. With the many personal and professional challenges that will be endured throughout this school year, I have no doubt that the joys will come from the camaradery and support of leading the great team at Brock Bridge Elementary School!



Stacy Gray

“I am so fortunate to work with and for a smart and caring group of adults who are child-centered!”

The Challenge of Change

By Jennifer Hernandez, NBCT Coordinator and AEL Director-At-Large

When I was first presented with the idea of contributing an article relating to my biggest challenge this year and how I plan to approach that challenge, the timing for this topic couldn't have been better. I am facing a great change in the very near future, and it involves a significant personal and professional shift for me. For the past 10 plus years I have had the distinct privilege of serving as the district Coordinator of World and Classical Languages, and for nearly two years, I have had the honor of serving as AEL Director-at-Large. Both positions have presented me with numerous challenges, successes and opportunities to grow both personally and professionally. My journey in AACPS has given me the good fortune of working with passionate and talented teachers, administrators, and wonderful colleagues who have made my decision to leave AACPS exceedingly difficult.

My biggest challenge this year is saying goodbye to a languages program I am passionate about, leaving my teachers, and leaving dear friends in a district

where I came in as an outsider, but developed deep roots and a deep love for the county. It is a challenge to leave what we know and are comfortable with, but change often inspires us to grow and apply the skills we have developed to date to succeed in a new challenge.

I will be leaving AACPS for a position as a Director in a neighboring district, and I plan to approach this new role by applying much of what I have experienced during my career in AACPS. I take with me what I have learned from many AACPS leaders, and for that I am exceedingly grateful. Though I cannot mention everyone, I would like to recognize a few very special colleagues who I will miss deeply. From Mr. Will Myers I have learned the art of negotiation and have marveled at his dedication to AEL and our membership. From Mrs. Sharon Stratton I have learned how to lead as a Director with a strong focus on instruction and with great support for the work of Coordinators, and advocacy for exemplary curricular programs. From Mr. George Lindley and Mr. Mike Dunn I have learned that World Language advocacy

and partnerships create lasting friendships, great respect for new ideas, program growth and exceptional results. From my fellow coordinators I have learned how to balance many responsibilities and always trust and support each other in any way possible.



I plan to approach my big challenge of a new district, a new role and new systems by observing, building relationships and setting realistic goals for my staff and myself. I plan to approach it with the same passion and enthusiasm I felt developing language programs here, and most importantly, I plan to approach my new challenge with fearlessness and drive, knowing that our work as administrators is critical to changing students' lives. I would like to thank each of you for your collegiality, dedication, professionalism and for giving me the great fortune of serving as Director-at-Large of AEL. I wish each of you the very best in the coming year and in the future, and I will miss AACPS dearly.

“From Mr. Will Myers I have learned the art of negotiation and have marveled at his dedication to AEL and our membership.”

All Challenges Have a Solution

By Bonnie Myers, Principal, Southgate Elementary

When I was first asked to write about a challenge and how I plan to handle it in my role as a Principal of Southgate Elementary School I thought to myself, "That's an easy topic." But as I began to brainstorm the situations I thought were challenges, were really just problem solving. So why did Faculty Council cause me so much angst? This committee is built around problem solving.

Every third Wednesday of the month when we unlocked the Faculty Council comment box and there was a concern it was challenge for me. School-related, but ultimately it was a personal challenge. Even the many times that

we opened the secret box and there were no concerns, I still dreaded the moment, but felt very relieved. Many years went by and the challenge didn't get any better somehow I felt like it was getting worse. It didn't matter how big or small the complaint I would actually get my feelings hurt because I felt like I was approachable and had an open door policy. I'm sure every principal in our county has similar feelings, but every meeting I left feeling a little bit like it was "them against me." This is not the Southgate way, but each 3rd Wednesday of the month came and went and nothing changed.

Until one day when a teach-

er asked me if we could use the Faculty Council time to brainstorm how to get more



Bonnie Myers

participation at PTA. The meeting was powerful. The teacher had reached out to colleagues and said we need your opinions and ideas and teachers volunteered their time to help the teacher. I thought to myself, "Why can't I do that?" I

Continued on page 7

Easiest way to stay connected to your colleagues?

AEL Fall Social, Thursday, Oct. 26 4:30-7:30 pm

***Free for Members. RSVP to Bob Ferguson by Oct. 23rd
leafman65@gmail.com***

All Challenges Have a Solution...

Continued from page 6

started to put things in the box that I needed ideas on. I even invited stakeholders that I knew would have ideas to help “fix it”. Teachers came willingly and were happy to help make Southgate even better. It became a place where the staff made decisions that would positively affect Southgate students. Staff had the opportunity to have a voice and Faculty Council is now well received.

This year our staff did a “get to know you” activity that was two-fold. Teachers read messages and identi-

fied the message that “spoke to them”. Teachers gathered together to share why the message resonated with them. Little did they know they were choosing their committee. The members that chose this committee defined themselves as problem solvers who seek out ways to problem solve with others.

As every principal in our county knows that with strong leadership all of the

challenges have a solution. Using teacher leadership to support decision making has worked for me and our Southgate team.

“It became a place where the staff made decisions that would positively affect Southgate students.”

Bonnie Myers, Principal, Southgate Elem.

I never thought I would look forward to the 3rd Wednesday of the month, but good things happen when collaboration is among leaders that have a common goal.

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



2017-18 AEL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE/BOARD/STAFF

Will Myers (2017-21)	President	(P, South River HS)	(o)956-5600	wtmwants@aol.com
Nelson Horine (2017-21)	1st VP	(P, Anne Arundel Evening HS BOE)	(o) 222-5384	linnea.horine@gmail.com
Becky Blasingame-White (2017-21)	2nd VP	(P, Hebron-Harman Elementary)	(o) 859-4510	bblasingame-white@aacps.org
Edie Picken (2016-20)	Secretary	(AP, South River HS)	(o) 956-5600	epicken@aacps.org
Lou Anoff (2017-21)	Treasurer	(AP, Severna Park MS)	(o) 647-7900	lanoff@aacps.org
Patrick Bathras (2016-20)	Director at Large	(P, Severna Park HS)	(o)544-0900	pbathras@aacps.org
Jennifer Hernandez (2016-20)	Director at Large	(C, Div of Curriculum)	(o)222-5424	jhernandez3@aacps.org
Kevin Wajek (2017-2021)	Director at Large	(C, Secondary Mathematics HS)	(o) 224-5464	kwajek@aacps.org

REPRESENTATIVE DIRECTORS (14): CLUSTERS/FEEDER SYSTEMS

Stacy Herbert	(AP, Magothy Rvr Middle, Annapolis Cluster)	sherbert@aacps.org
Tracey Ahern	(P, Odenton Elementary, Arundel Cluster)	tahern@aacps.org
Open	(Broadneck Cluster)	
Amy Hussey	(AP, Chesapeake Bay Middle, Chesapeake Cluster)	ahussey@aacps.org
Dave Kauffman	(AP, Meade HS, Glen Burnie Cluster)	dkauffman@aacps.org
Troy Hermann	(AP, Meade Middle, Meade Cluster)	thermann@aacps.org
Ryan Sackett	(AP, North County HS, North County Cluster)	rsackett@aacps.org
Jeff Haynie	(P, Solley Elementary, Northeast Cluster)	jhaynie@aacps.org
Open	(Old Mill Cluster)	
Patrick Bathras	(P, Severna Park HS, Severna Park Cluster)	pbathras@aacps.org
Edie Picken	(AP, South River HS, South River Cluster)	epicken@aacps.org
Kevin Buckley	(P, Southern Middle, Southern Cluster)	kbuckley@aacps.org
Jennifer Hernandez	(C, Div of Curriculum, BOE)	jhernandez3@aacps.org
Kevin Wajek	(C, Secondary Mathematics HS)	kwajek@aacps.org

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

STAFF

Rick Kovelant (Executive Director, Legal Counsel)	(o) 897-0747, (c) 443-848-8022
Bob Ferguson (Administrator)	(o)410-224-3311 (fax)410-224-3345 (c)443-223-5645; leafman65@gmail.com
Connie Crouch (Executive Secretary)	(o)410-897-0747 or (o)410-224-3311 (f)410-224-3345

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