

# AEL Leadership Forum

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 4

BACK TO SCHOOL 2018

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Sept. 19, 2018**  
**AEL Executive Board Meeting**  
5 pm  
AEL HQ,  
2521 Riva Road,  
Suite L-2, Annapolis

**Oct. 17, 2018**  
**AEL Executive Board Meeting**  
5 pm  
AEL HQ,  
2521 Riva Road,  
Suite L-2, Annapolis

**Nov. 21, 2018**  
**AEL Executive Board Meeting**  
5 pm  
AEL HQ,  
2521 Riva Road,  
Suite L-2, Annapolis

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## “Danger Will Robinson, Danger”

*By Will Myers, AEL President*

If you haven't taken notice, look closer at how the Board of Education is slowly eroding your bargaining rights. One need only look at negotiations in regard to salaries. Over the last four years, we have not received one penny more than was originally offered by the Board's negotiating team. Their offer was predetermined by the Superintendent as a placeholder in his budget. In a good year, the Board would add to his offer a step or a COLA. No amount of negotiating on AEL's part even changed the initial offer. We have even gone to impasse with the same result.

This change in negotiating tactics crosses all union lines. TAAAC, AFSCME,

and SAAAAC are all held to a predetermined amount regarding salaries and other financial benefits.

The Board's negotiating team effectively uses steps and COLAs to its advantage. This is especially true when senior AEL members are denied salary enhancements. At one time, all AEL members without steps were given an equivalent amount for a step when this occurred. Lately, the Board's team has been renegeing when it comes to this former practice. If you

believe the Board's and County Executive's finance offers haven't calculated how much money they will save, you need to turn up the

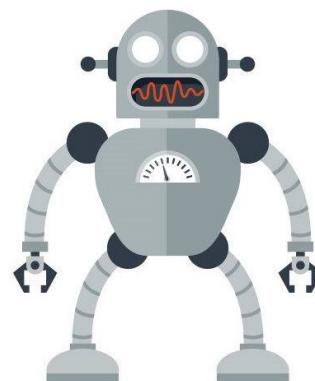
pressure on your oxygen tank.

We should all remember the fiasco over healthcare

which resulted in higher prescription costs and healthcare benefits. I am proud to say through a combined effort of all union groups we actually bargained for lower costs than were initially offered by the Board.

The healthcare costs have

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## Danger...

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**“This will result in a substantial reduction in your take home pay.”**

been mitigated by a \$7,500,000 offset fund which has been utilized to give all employees a healthcare holiday since January 1<sup>st</sup>. This holiday came to an end by the July 18th pay period. This will result in a substantial reduction in your take home pay.

As you read many articles and editorials that are to be written in the near future concerning school funding, you will find requests for more psychologists, counselors and social

workers. You will read about the need for more teachers to reduce class size. You will also read many requests for capital projects, school by school by school. What you will not read or hear is an outcry for increased salaries. You definitely will not find a request to raise administrative salaries. We are on our own. Without a major ground swell of support for higher taxes, the circle of insane bargaining will not be broken.

The County Executive will be clever in how he crafts his budget. He will always seek a win-win situation for himself. The Board will offer what they want and then wait for the County Council to fund the full budget requested. In the end, we will find ourselves back at the negotiating table being offered less than originally offered. Much like the Robinson family of “Lost in Space” fame, we never seem to get to where we want to by using the current negotiating process: “Danger, Will Robinson, Danger!”

## The Dinner Table/Bargaining Table

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

AEL’s participation in the annual negotiation process has become increasingly more difficult over the last several years. Upon reflecting upon this process, I concluded that although the process itself is flawed, it is the lack of institutional integrity

that is the real cause of the difficulties. I’ll explain.

As we are all aware, Unit VI, consisting of the executive staff, has over the last four bargaining cycles/fiscal years, received salary in-

creases at the rate of 2% per year. Compounded over the last four years this amounts to approximately a 10% pay increase. This does not take into account title changes within that group that have also added to additional pay.

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## The Dinner Table...

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Also, keep in mind that Unit VI compensation has no relationship to longevity of employment in years of service. By contrast, Unit II employees have received a little more than 1% pay increases during this same period. Regardless of step movement or COLA, the compensation increases, pay raises if you will, received by Unit II employees do not come close to replicating those received by the Executive Staff and, in fact, the Superintendent. As to consideration of longevity of service, except for this last round of renegotiations, those Unit II employees whose employment years exceeded the salary scale are deemed ineligible for further increases in their pay checks unless the remaining Unit II employees agree to share a portion of their own increases with their elder ineligible colleagues.

This curious phenomenon

leads to question as to why and how Unit VI has received these most favorable results, while the remaining rank and file are treated in a far different manner. The answer may be in how the decision is reached by the Superintendent as to how to formulate employee compensation as part of his budget, present it to the Board of Education, and have it processed and accepted without question by the Board of Education.

Paragraph 3 A of the Employment Agreement between the Board of Education and the Superintendent not only sets the Superintendent's annual salary at \$269,000.00, it even more importantly provides, in part, "The annual salary for each subsequent year beginning July 1, 2019, shall be increased by an amount equal to the increase, if any, granted to 12-month executive staff

(Unit VI) employees...". This "me too" language also existed in prior employment agreements. To be fair, the contract also provides that should there be a salary reduction across the board for staff, the Superintendent's salary will be reduced by the largest decrease that is applied to any employee unit. Linking the Superintendent's salary increases to Unit VI salaries, which salaries are recommended by the Superintendent in his budget presentation sets up the clear potential for a conflict of interest. In short, whatever the Superintendent recommends for Unit VI, is, in effect, a recommendation for himself and is a cause for serious concern. It is hard to accept that the Superintendent establishes compensation placeholders for Unit II and the other bargaining groups, pending negotiations, only after he has considered, as part of the total compensation

***"...why and how Unit VI has received these most favorable results, while the remaining rank and file are treated in a far different manner. "***

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## Dinner Table...

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**“...you are invited to a dinner table where the food was prepared for favored guests...”**

piece, the amount Unit VI and he shall receive.

I liken the negotiation table to a situation where you are invited to a dinner table where the food was prepared for favored guests who arrived early and, along with the host, had already consumed most of the meal. Those who arrived later were not only unaware

of what had been consumed but, also found little or no food available for them. In order to return some integrity to this negotiation process, there must be an intermediary involved to ensure the rest of the employees receive the benefit of the same “meal.” Applying this analogy to the current situation, perhaps the Superintendent, as an alternative solution should be required

to receive a salary increase equal to the lowest percentage increase agreed to and received by any bargaining group. At least a better portion of the “meal” may remain on the bargaining table once we are invited to the “dinner.” Thus, there would not be an appearance that the Superintendent had a conflict of interest and perhaps all his valued “guests” were better fed.

## Thoughts on Retirement

*By Susan Sergeant, AEL member (retired)*

*Editor’s Note: Many thanks to our retirees who have shared their thoughts on retirement.*

I did not know I would retire this past school year. Happily, I was open to feeling a shift. My research was rewarding, my family was calling to me, and I knew that a change was coming. I am not running from anything but moving toward something, a new me.

Maxine Green, a renowned modern philosopher was heard to say, “I am who I am not yet.” We are in a constant state of becoming. She also wrote that it is society’s responsibility to make space for its citizens to become who they need to be. The school house is especially tasked with creating environments that are safe emotionally, physically and

intellectually. This has been my mission as a teacher, teacher leader, and school based administrator.

It has been a privilege working with the teachers and staff in Anne Arundel County Public Schools. I have appreciated the commitment and dedication to the mission of meeting ALL students in the school house.

# Leading Change in Education

By Christopher Wooleyhand, Principal, Pershing Elementary

The process of leading change in education is complex and challenging. John Kotter is recognized as an expert on the topic of leadership and change. He wrote *Leading Change* in 1996, which *Time* magazine selected as one of the 25 most influential business management books ever written. Kotter’s work has been adopted by many graduate schools of education. The use of business strategies when training future educational leaders can be problematic. We should be cautious when extending the

values of business to the field of education. Not all business practices translate well to teaching and school leadership. Schools exist to serve children and families. We should never look at students in the proprietary way that businesses do their products. Many would argue that the seminal work on leading change in education has yet to be written. Until that happens, let’s consider Kotter’s 8-step process for leading change and apply it to education. Can his business-based ideas on change leadership be translated to education?

## 1. Establishing a Sense of Urgency

Our children don’t have time for us to decide to act on their behalf. Urgency should be a catalyst for the change needed in our schools. Urgency, however, should never lead to people feeling like they have been run over. New leaders have to assess what is truly urgent versus what can be done over time through partnering and collaboration.

## 2. Creating a Guiding Coalition

Team-building is an essential skill for the modern school leader. Not much will be



Chris Wooleyhand

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## Welcome new members

- Jessica Berner, AP, Northeast High
- Ryan Biebirt, AP, Southgate Elementary
- Lyndsey Huerbin, AP, Old Mill High
- Rebecca Donovan, AP, George Fox Middle
- Josh Jacoby, AP, Broadneck High
- Teri McCalpin, AP, Windsor Farm Elementary
- Mellisa Pfisterer, AP, Severn River Middle



# Leading Change in Education...

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accomplished if stakeholders are not part of the change process. School leaders will have to possess strong skills when assembling their team. Unlike businesses, however, schools need to be inclusive in their team-building efforts. Without a broad base of support, change efforts are less likely to succeed.

### **3. Developing A Change Vision**

For Kotter, vision is the product of an individual. You possess the vision and then you share it. In education, vision should be the product of collaborative efforts. The model of a heroic leader swooping in and saving a school diminishes any prior efforts made toward improvement. When vision is developed collaboratively it is also more comprehensive.

### **4. Communicating the Vision for Buy-In**

The concept of “selling” a vision is a business-like approach that leaves others out of the equation. If we develop the vision together, then no one needs to sell it to me. I am already in. The more people included in the development of the vision, the more who will learn about it through word-of-mouth. A

cooperatively developed vision sells itself.

### **5. Empowering Broad-based Action**

Kotter’s views on empowering action blend well with current school reform efforts. Once the vision is set, school leaders need to work to remove any of the obstacles that stand in the way of progress. They should create structures that foster the vision while encouraging risk-taking and “no box” thinking among their teachers.

### **6. Generating Short-term Wins**

Short-term victories are important in education, especially when they lead to long-term wins. School leaders should celebrate their short-term wins while continuing to articulate the long-term goals. Celebration is even more important in education than in business. Sometimes, celebration is the only positive our teachers experience, particularly in these times of fiscal austerity.

### **7. Never Letting Up**

Education is the one profession that renews itself every year. A new school year brings with it great hope. For

schools with a clear long-term vision, the new school year is also an opportunity to continue focusing on key initiatives. If schools are truly seeking to improve, their plans and strategies must focus on enduring goals. “Dripping water hollows out a stone...”

### **8. Incorporating Change Into the Culture**

School leaders rarely stay in one place for very long. Is the change that you are fostering dependent on you? If you left your school today, what would continue? These are questions you should ask yourself every time you consider new initiatives. If the change you are seeking is dependent solely upon your leadership, then it might not be as important as you think. Change for the sake of change undermines effective school reform efforts. Developing a culture of change and innovation leaves your school with a natural succession plan. Isn’t that what change leadership is all about?

To read more from Chris Wooleyhand’s blog: <https://christopherwooleyhand.edublogs.org/>

*“If we develop the vision together, then no one needs to sell it to me. I am already in.”*



# Note to Self: Change Happens, Get Used to It

By Lisa Wild, AP, Piney Orchard Elementary

So, I was watching an “Ellen” rerun, as you do when you happen to have a summer afternoon off and it’s pouring rain, and I saw an interview with Gayle King from “CBS This Morning”. She was talking about a feature they have on the morning show that is called “Note to Self”, where famous people comment on what advice they might have for their younger selves.

It got me to thinking about what advice I might give to myself, not that I’m any great philosopher. The first thing that came to mind was “change happens, get used to it.” This is not something my younger self would want to hear, because that young lady was not a fan of change and would do whatever she could to resist it. Fortunately, with age comes wisdom, and upon more reflection, I concluded that there’s a little more to change than just “get used to it”.

Through my experiences I’ve learned that whether

the change is one you’ve chosen for yourself or one that is thrust upon you, there are challenges and sometimes blessings in disguise.

Change comes with opportunities to grow and learn more about oneself and about the world. And I have learned a lot! Working with a new supervisor who didn’t have confidence in my abilities helped me learn that with hard work and perseverance one can sometimes change another’s mind.

With the untimely death of a beloved nephew I learned how strong and resilient my family is and how love and a caring community can get you through hard times and draw a family even closer together.

Working with others and sharing my teaching practice through the National Board Certification process, I learned that reflecting with others and listening to their

experiences exposed me to different perspectives and new ways to think about teaching. Change also brought experiences and opportunities I would never have had, had I not embraced it. For instance, taking the opportunity to work with a cherished mentor in a new position helped me learn that I have gifts and talents and confidence I would never have imagined I have.

Changing, growing and learning to stretch is challenging, but change is the only constant, and if one looks for the good in it, wonderful things can happen.

**So, note to self: Change happens, but if you keep an open heart and mind, maintain your sense of humor, and are willing to learn from your experiences, amazing things can happen.**



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Open	Director at Large			

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

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