

AEL Leadership Forum

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2018

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan. 18, 2017
AEL Executive Board Meeting
5 pm
AEL HQ,
2521 Riva Road,
Suite L-2, Annapolis

Feb. 15, 2017
AEL Executive Board Meeting
5 pm
AEL HQ,
2521 Riva Road,
Suite L-2, Annapolis

March 15, 2017
AEL Executive Board Meeting
5 pm
AEL HQ,
2521 Riva Road,
Suite L-2, Annapolis

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Einstein Had It Right

By Will Myers, AEL President

Negotiations over the past three years have run the gamut from highly contentious to very congenial.

Regardless of the temperament, the results have been the same. Unit II members have remained at the bottom of any compensation increase offered to educators in our county as illustrated by the chart below.

To continue to do what we have always done and expect different results – well, you know the punch line – Insanity.

Negotiations this year should be simple. We

have one economic opener and two non-economic items. Obviously, compensation will be our main consideration. Thus far, there have been no discussions concerning the County Executive's or the Superintendent's thoughts regarding compensation. Rest assured, we will be seeking parity with other units in our county. Preliminary talks have just started.

Our goal this year is to keep you informed of our progress.

The Negotiation Team has agreed upon two non-economic issues. Please remember, everything has a cost. The first is the incorporation of administrator professional days into contractual language. These professional days may be used for holiday leave, code blue days and summer Fridays on the four-day work week. Currently, the pilot negotiations allow five compensation days for high school administrators, four for

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	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	TOTAL
Unit 1 – TAAAC (Teachers)	2.00%	2.00%	2.36%	6.36%
AACC	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	6.00%
Unit VI	2.00%	2.00%	2.00%	6.00%
Unit II	1.00%	0.97%	1.00%	2.97%

Einstein Had It Right...

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middle school administrators, and three for elementary school administrators. As part of our negotiations, we will request five professional days for all levels.

The second non-economic issue is administrative ac-

cess to the school system's WiFi. We are requesting the Board choose to allow personal cell phone access or decide to provide administrative cell phones for school business. Personal cell phone use would include a request for a monthly stipend.

Perhaps the voice of fair play will be heard this year and reason will prevail. In any event, we are ready to take as long as necessary in order to reach an agreement which is acceptable and advantageous for our membership.

...And We're Off ... Again

By Nelson Horine, AEL First Vice President

Yes, we are off and running the annual race of negotiations, and this year there are some twists.

"The responsibilities of administrators have far outgrown a pay grid based on 1% steps and the number of students in a school."

First, several people on the Negotiations Team are new. Will and I welcome: Tammy Scott, Becky Blasingame-White, Ryan Sackett, Kevin Wajek and Jason Williams. Second, and most importantly, we are also restructuring our salary scale—or as we prefer, our salary grid. So far, we have had only one negotiation session and there is nothing to report. This year, however, before we agree to anything we will seek approval of our AEL

executive team.

As mentioned, the most important issue this year is salary grid restructure. This job has been entrusted to our Negotiation Team. Our current salary grid was designed years ago when philosophies about the operation of a school, and an economy that could support STEP and COLA raises each year were appropriate. Schools are no longer as they were 40 years ago. The responsibilities of administrators have far outgrown a pay grid based on 1% steps and the number of students in a school.

A 40 STEP grid before an administrator can reach his/her maximum salary is no longer viable considering the length of time employees plan to remain in the job. Times have changed, so our present salary grid needs to change. I encourage AEL members to come to our monthly meetings at the office to learn about our progress with this venture. I also encourage you to email me with your suggestions as to how our salary grid can better provide for the compensation you deserve for the work you do.

Thank you very much for your continuing support.

A Christmas Carol of Sorts

By Rick Kovelant, AEL Executive Director and General Counsel

Although I was not an English major, I have come to the conclusion that Charles Dickens did not intend his epic novel, *A Christmas Carol*, to be about the relationship between the BOE and AEL. Unfortunately however, after re-reading the tale, I could not help but see certain parallels in the storyline applicable to the BOE and the Unit II employees represented by AEL.

In the Christmas Carol, when Scrooge was visited by the Ghost of Christmas Present, he viewed the dismissal result of the value he placed on his employee Bob Cratchit. Cratchit, as you may recall, was a dedicated employee who worked long, hard hours for his employer Scrooge, with no “enhanced compensation” and with no ability to cover medical expenses for Tiny Tim’s medical condition. Sound somewhat familiar? I am certainly not suggesting that Unit II employees are in quite the same economic dilemma as Cratchit, but a contemporary Ghost of Christmas Present could show that Unit II employees, like Cratchit, have been continuously undervalued the last three fiscal years. In this Newsletter, Will has cited a finding showing that Unit II employees re-

ceived the lowest pay enhancement of all County employees and, in particular, the lowest pay enhancements provided to all BOE employees, including the Superintendent and his staff. This cannot be allowed to continue. Clearly, Unit II employees’ salary compensation should be brought in line with the enhancements received by their colleagues and supervisors. The total 2.97% compensation for FY 2016-2018, as compared with the total 6% received by Units V and VI and the 6.36% received by Unit I for this same period is outrageous. I doubt even Scrooge would have considered this appropriate.

It is our goal to bring compensation in line with these groups and assure that future compensation is on par with all BOE employees. Now that we are awaiting the Ghost of Christmas Future and negotiations have once more begun, are Unit II employees to be undervalued for the fourth year in a row or will the BOE, like Scrooge, see fit to provide a brighter future? Time will tell whether “Valued Employees”, that is, Unit II employees are really valued at all. The most recent survey conducted by AEL captured the feelings of

a very significant majority of Unit II employees who have come to believe that undervalue has become the norm and that the Ghost of Christmas Future will only be a continuation of what has occurred in the past.

Being the “optimist” that I am, I can only hope that the BOE will understand that being in last place in the County for compensation enhancement is not an appropriate position for its “Unit II Valued Employees,” and not in the best interest of the school system. While Bob Cratchit and his family had to rely upon Scrooge’s good will in improving their lot, AEL will continue to negotiate and challenge the BOE to improve the financial position of its Unit II family. AEL is striving for financial improvement at the bargaining table, while the Cratchits were only looking for a better Christmas meal. At this point, I would like to interject another Dickens’ classic, *Oliver Twist*, for your consideration. When given a small morsel at an orphanage meal, Oliver requested, “Please sir, may I have some more?” Just like Oliver, AEL will continue to ask the BOE for a larger share. Let’s hope the BOE’s response is better than the one received by Oliver.

“...a contemporary Ghost of Christmas Present could show that Unit II employees, like Cratchit, have been continuously undervalued the last three fiscal years.”

Surviving ‘Constructiongeddon’

By Isaphine Smith, Principal, Millersville Elementary

“By working diligently to develop relationships and common understandings, (along with the occasional apologetic breakfast), we were truly able to build a cohesive team...”

Editor’s Note: We asked some of the our county’s educational leaders to discuss the challenges of managing a school and a construction project simultaneously. Several AEL agreed to share their insight.

With every culminating year, there is an opportunity to reflect upon the challenges and successes from the previous year. As I reflect on the 2017 year, one word comes to mind as it relates to my school year: CONSTRUCTION! This year, at Millersville Elementary School (MES), we’ve undergone two concurrent construction projects (HVAC and Window Project alongside the construction of a new gymnasium). Both projects presented a unique set of challenges and opportunities for creative problem solving. Please indulge me as I share the challenges as well as the creative solutions we discovered to support our students and staff as we survived Constructiongeddon.

Challenge 1: I realized that contractors and schools have

competing, and at times, conflicting interests. Contractors have one goal, project completion; whereas, schools have a myriad of goals, two of them being, instruction and safety.

Solution 1: Attend the construction meetings to vocalize the needs of the school and reach consensus with all contractors.

Challenge 2: Too many visitors! Contractors bring a host of guests. On any given day, we had as many as 30 extra guests in our building. My secretarial staff became overwhelmed with the sheer volume of badges printed via Raptor and our custodial team was on constant high alert.

Solution 2: We instituted a “30-day” badge policy. All contractors, sub-contractors, and non-AACPS employees were required to check-in with the office every 30 days to collect a badge. All badges were to be displayed every day. We kept a detailed record of each friend’s 30-day cycle. My chief and I were vigilant to ensure every person had a badge, and if not, reiterated the protocol at sub-

sequent construction meetings.

Challenge 3: Developing a school culture in which flexibility is the norm! Due to the multiple construction projects, it was imperative that my staff, students, and parent community adapt to noises, smells, dust, and other “out of the norm” scenarios.

Solution 3: Relationships, relationships, relationships! The project managers and contractors for both projects regularly attended PTA meetings, staff meetings, and visited classrooms to truly gauge the repercussions of the construction projects. By working diligently to develop relationships and common understandings, (along with the occasional apologetic breakfast), we were truly able to build a cohesive team and move forward in a productive manner.

Hopefully, you found these tips to be helpful if you must brave the perils of your own Constructiongeddon!

Tip #1: Never Sacrifice Your Own Judgement

By Jason Williams, Principal, Northeast High

My top three tips for dealing with a school construction project are:

Never sacrifice your own judgement. The construction management team and sub-contractors all have their experts, but trust yourself to know your school. If something doesn't feel right, let

your concerns be known and insist on exploring solutions.

Go to the weekly "owners meetings." This is where all the important decisions are made.

Take copious notes. Decisions can be undone in the blink of an eye, and are done so in favor of expediency.



Northeast High School Newsletter

Details, Details, Details

By Patrick Bathras, Principal, Severna Park High

Pay attention to the details of the architectural plans. Meet regularly with architect and construction teams to discuss/review the plans. Be mindful of how the design and actual construction will have an effect on the day-to-day operations of the school.

Remain highly organized with the FFE order, along with follow up with vendor to ensure order and deliver of product is accurate. Keep accurate and up-to-date records to closely monitor the latter.

"New doesn't always equal done!" ...When the project is complete, there are still a lot of punch list items that need to be followed up with to ensure the

project is truly complete. It is also good to prepare the faculty/staff with this idea, so they don't expect things to be perfect once the project is done or once they move into the new school. Punch list items can take up to six months to one year to finish.

In the end, all of the hard work, countless hours, attention to detail and every stressor associated with the project is worth it, because having a new school is a blessing for the students, faculty/staff and community.



AEL Fall Social Brings Colleagues Together



Get Your *Free* AEL Polo Shirt

The AEL polos have arrived!

If you have not received yours, please email Bob Ferguson, leafman65@gmail.com, and let him know what size you would like to have.

Thanks Lou Anoff for spearheading this promotional effort.



AEL Fall Social...

AEL members enjoyed catching up with old friends and colleagues at the AEL Fall Social in October. The food was free and the conversations were lively. AEL President Will Myers took a few moments to update everyone on the upcoming negotiations and other happenings with AEL.



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.

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2017-18 AEL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE/BOARD/STAFF

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

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