

# AEL Leadership Forum

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 4

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2020

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Oct. 14, 2020**  
**AEL Executive  
Board Meeting**  
5 pm  
via Google Meet

**Nov. 11, 2020**  
**AEL Executive  
Board Meeting**  
5 pm  
TBA

**Dec. 9, 2020**  
**AEL Executive  
Board Meeting**  
5 pm  
Via Google Meet

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

**Rolling** 1

**Hey Mom** 4

**Mission  
Statement** 6

**AEL  
Leaders** 7

## Rolling With the Punches

*By Edie Picken, AEL President*

We have somewhat survived the opening of the new school year. I say that tongue and cheek since we all know that the workload has monumentally increased, and it is not letting up. Every day there is a new trail of communication from the Board that brings another “change” to what was changed five times the previous week, and in some cases contradicts what you just received five minutes ago. The left hand and right hand have a communication disconnect making our days and lives challenging, frenetic, and exhausting. We are on extreme overload, unfortunately requiring us in

many cases to overload the teachers and other staff with the latest and greatest.

Not only is this not healthy, but it sends the message that we are not cared

about. Regardless of the circumstances we are in, the overwhelming feeling that we are not cared about is there.

As school-based leaders, we have to work to keep that stiff upper lip and support our teachers before they implode. We know they are working so

hard to provide outstanding instruction. They are working 70 – 80-hour

weeks and we are right there with them, sometimes longer.

Then, there are the “required” professional developments—the first one in the

second week of school. Who thought that would be a good idea, especially after teachers spent their summer completing 20 plus hours of professional development to make up for the time during those



*Edie Picken, AEL President*

*Continued on page 2*

## Rolling with the Punches ...

*Continued from page 1*

first two weeks when schools closed due to COVID? Plus, administrators had to complete it.

All we should have been doing was making sure that all stakeholders were able to settle into this new, structured schedule helping parents and students get into the necessary routines for success. How can we possibly do our work with the utmost quality if we are consistently being put into overdrive?

Hopefully, you have learned the Coalition of Educational Employees (CEE) has come alive again. For those who have not been in administration for some time, this is AEL, TAAAC, and SAAAAC working together on common ground where we are all affected. CEE has been around for years.

When I first joined AEL back

in 1995 and Bill Wentworth was president, CEE was active. The coalition went into hibernation and then resurfaced when Bob Ferguson was president and even in between. Working together brings a larger and louder voice to the fore; and, with the current state of affairs in AACPS we have brought it back.

The CEE already has published two articles in [The Capital](#), and we will continue to do so to bring awareness to the public on critical issues. In fact, workload has made it to the top of the list as the next focus. This is a great partnership that hopefully will be able to bring about some change for the good. There is strength in numbers and a larger and louder voice is heard more often.

With respect to negotiations,

you should know that we have made several attempts to get dates before the Superintendent strikes the part of the budget that would allow us to negotiate our “placeholder” before he presents it to the Board. In essence, the ability to negotiate for raises.

As of now, the sound of crickets has become louder since there has been no movement to provide the timeframe we have requested. It is clear that by ignoring our requests they want to strike a budget again that then leaves the bargaining units fighting for what is left in the coffer, while others get their “me too” and then some.

The Superintendent’s placeholder has become the “first, best and final

**“It is clear that by ignoring our requests they want to strike a budget again that then leaves the bargaining units fighting for what is left in the coffer...”**

*Continued on page 3*

## Rolling with the Punches...

*Continued from page 2*

offer". This is not collective bargaining, rather a singular effort to impose a financial outcome on our membership. Why should we have to be forced to accept rather than negotiate for what we deserve? Considering the workload, one would think that the higher ups would want to recognize the incredible work school-based personnel were performing and provide compensation commensurate with

that extraordinary effort. You know the answer to that.

As we forge ahead through this difficult time, please know that AEL is doing whatever it can to get the compensation we so justly deserve in addition to important language regarding times when schools have to be closed due to situations such as a pandemic. We are tak-

ing the health and safety of all our members and Unit II seriously wanting to make sure that any return to school is being done safely, gradually, and takes every single person who enters a school building seriously. I want to believe that is the plan for AACPS. We strive to work hard on your behalf.

To all of you, stay safe, healthy, and positive. Things have to get better and it starts with us.

***“As we forge ahead through this difficult time, please know that AEL is doing whatever it can to get the compensation we so justly deserve...”***



### When in Doubt, Call Rick

If you need help, advice or just need to ask a question, please remember to contact **Rick Kovelant**. He is AEL's legal counsel and has a wealth of experience in assisting our members. He is a valuable resource and **available to you as part of your AEL membership**. He can be reached at 443-848-8022 (Pacific time).



# Hey Mom, I Want to Join a Union!

By Rick Kovelant, AEL Executive Director and General Counsel

**“...the query becomes how we can convince those 20 percent of Unit II individuals who remain apart from this group to become members.”**

As most of us have all come to recognize, AEL is a union. There are still some who believe that it is a professional organization and there are some who harbor no understanding whatsoever.

Assuming for a moment, that AEL's status is a union and is responsible for representing all Unit II employees, the query becomes how we can convince those 20 percent of Unit II individuals who remain apart from this group to become members. Admittedly, membership has never been one of my high priority concerns because back in the “old days” union activity was not something many Unit II employees feared would impact their standing with management. I am not suggesting that non-

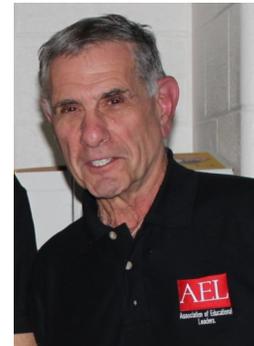
member employees now fear intimidation by management because of an AEL affiliation and this fear is the only reason they elect to forego membership. I am sure, however, that it is a contributing factor. I am also sure that many are afraid that promotional considerations would be lost if they were identified as actively participating in AEL.

Some probably remain independent for economic reasons, some may be philosophically opposed to unionism, some may feel there is no need to pay for a service they can receive the benefit of at no cost and some, and I believe most importantly, don't understand what AEL has to offer.

While I cannot offer a re-

buttal to most of this reasoning, I certainly can address the issue of what AEL has to offer. Most of you reading this article have already become members (“believers”), but perhaps this will help move you into becoming engaged participants or, at the very least, actively recruiting others to join.

To be certain, AEL is responsible for negotiating collective bargaining agreements with the BOE. This time consuming and clearly frustrating task has become an annual event. It is critical to AEL's existence and it is the foundation of all other services AEL provides



# Hey Mom...

*Continued from page 4*

to Unit II employees. Contractual negotiations result in agreements on wages, other forms of compensation and benefits. The resulting Negotiated Agreement also addresses working conditions, promotion and demotion procedures, grievance rights, and participation in school system committees, to name a few areas that impact Unit II employment. Membership help is needed in these areas. Package writing, assistance on the negotiation team and workload/salary scale revision committee all require commitment and participation. Right now, very few serve to assist the many.

Perhaps the most labor intensive matters involving AEL are those providing representation in in-

vestigations and disciplinary proceedings. It is in these areas that an AEL member can actually help him/herself. These tasks can be greatly improved if any affected member timely contacts AEL regarding a potential disciplinary inquiry. Quite frankly, the Office of Investigation has taken on the responsibility of notifying AEL, in general, and me, in particular, of scheduled interviews. The interview stage, the first formal contact involving charges against the Unit II employee generally takes place after the internal investigation has already traveled down the road to completion, that is before the Unit II employee has an opportunity to present his or her side of the story. Clearly, once becoming aware there is a potential matter pending, timely notifying AEL would allow for better

preparation and establishing a defense. It would also allow time for potential witnesses to be interviewed prior to the Office of Investigation becoming involved in its interview process. There are distinct advantages to getting ahead of the curve.

Adjusting to this new learning environment is a challenge. It is time consuming and sailing in uncharted waters is unnerving. Participation in AEL is, perhaps, the furthest thing from your mind. Understood!! Unfortunately, however, the strength of this union cannot be weakened. There needs to be room in the virtual world for participation, either on behalf of the group at large or simply by participating for one's own benefit.

***“There needs to be room in the virtual world for participation, either on behalf of the group at large or simply by participating for one's own benefit.”***

# Welcome New Members

Erin Brady, AP, Marley Elem

Mark Brown, P, Phoenix Academy

Charity Crawford, AP, Solley Elem

Ruth Goldstraw, Coordinator BOE

Rebecca Hutchinson, AP, CAT South

Allisson Johnson, AP, Moss/Adams

Rachel Kennelly, P, Broadneck High

Erin Lange, AP, Glen Burnie High

Kristyn Madeja, AP, Broadneck High

Tamika McPherson, AP, Southern High

Arthur Murphy, Severn River Middle

Christian Riley, AP, Old Mill Middle S

Leanne Riordan, Coordinator, BOE

Michelle Sanders, AP, Severna Park Middle

Amy Shinn, AP, Central Elem

Andrea Sporre, Chesapeake Bay Middle

Heather Stalker, AP, Ridgeway Elem

Heidi Taylor, Coordinator, BOE

Aaron Vachon, AP, South River High

Marcus Williams, AP, Brock Bridge Elem

## 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



**2020-21 AEL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE/BOARD/STAFF**

Edie Picken (2020-24)	President	(AP, South River HS)	(o)956-5600	epicken@aacps.org
Gene Summers (2020-24)	1st VP	(Coordinator, World/Class Lang.)	(o)222-5424	esummers@aacps.org
Becky Blasingame-White (2019-23)	2nd VP	(P, Hebron-Harman Elementary)	(o) 859-4510	<a href="mailto:rblasingame-white@aacps.org">rblasingame-white@aacps.org</a>
Natalie Marston (2020-24)	Secretary	(P, Central Special School)	(o) 956-5885	<a href="mailto:nmarston@aacps.org">nmarston@aacps.org</a>
Ryan Sackett (2020-24)	Treasurer	(AP, CAT North)	(o)969-3100	<a href="mailto:rsackett@aacps.org">rsackett@aacps.org</a>
David Kauffman (2020-XX)	Director at Large	(AP, Crofton HS)	(o) 451-5300	dmkauffman@aacps.org
Tracey Ahern	Director at Large	(P, Odenton, Elem)	(o) 222-6514	tahern@aacps.org
Open	Director at Large			
Will Meyers	President Emeritus(Retired)			wtm1588@gmail.com
Jazmin Lawhorn	Annapolis Cluster	(P, Rolling Knolls Elem)	(o)222-5820	jlawhorn@aacps.org
Tracey Ahern	Arundel Cluster	(P, Odenton, Elem)	(o) 222-6514	tahern@aacps.org
Nicole B. Howard	BOE Cluster	(Coord. Secondary Math)	(o) 222-5464	nbhoward@aacps.org
Arthur "Trip" Murphy	Broadneck Cluster	(AP, Severn Rvr Middle)	(o) 544-0922	aemurphy2@aacps.org
Cortney Disalvo	Chesapeake Cluster	(AP, Chesapeake Bay Middle)	(o)437-2400	cdisalvo@aacps.org
OPEN	Crofton Cluster			
Edmund "Jed" Kling	Glen Burnie Cluster	(P, Oakwood Elem)	(o)222-6420	epkling@aacps.org
Troy Hermann	Meade Cluster	(AP, Meade Middle)	(o)674-2355	thermann@aacps.org
B. Jeremy McNeil	North County Cluster			bjmcneil@aacps.org
John Wojtila	Northeast Cluster	(P, Riviera Beach Elem)	(o)222-6469	jwojtila@aacps.org
Tracy Prater	Old Mill Cluster	(P, Ridgeway Elem.)	(o)222-6524	tprater@aacps.org
Patrick Bathras	Severna Park Cluster	(P, Severna Park High)	(o)544-0900	pbathras@aacps.org
Bret Wescott	South River Cluster	(AP, Central Middle)	(o)956-5800	bwescott@aacps.org
Kevin Buckley	Southern Cluster	(P, Southern Middle)	(o)2221659	khbuckley@aacps.org
Olu Banmeke	Special Centers	(AP, Phoenix Academy)	(o)222-1650	obanmeke@aacps.org

**STAFF**

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