

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb. 11, 7:00 pm  
AEL Executive  
Board Meeting,  
via Zoom

March 11, 7:00 pm  
7:00 pm  
AEL Executive  
Board Meeting,  
via Zoom

April 12, 7:00 pm  
AEL Executive  
Board Meeting,  
via Zoom

June 10, 7:00 pm  
AEL Executive  
Board Meeting,  
via Zoom

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## A Season of Change

*By Tracey Ahern, AEL President*

As we reflect on the first part of the school year, August through December, I am filled with a sense of growth and determination. This has been a season of change — new curriculums to navigate, new faces in leadership positions to collaborate with, and challenges that have pushed us to grow as educators and as an organization. Despite these challenges, your resilience and dedication to fostering positive learning environments for our students have been inspiring.

Building connections within our community has been a priority for us. On November 16th, we hosted our first social event of the year at the Navy Game. Those who



*AEL Members enjoyed time together with their families at a Navy Football game in the fall.*

joined had a fantastic time connecting beyond the workplace. Similarly, the December 3rd Social at Blue Dolphin allowed members to come together, share work stories, and enjoy laughter and camaraderie—reminders of the importance of building strong relationships.

Looking ahead, there are

exciting developments on the horizon for AEL. We are:

- Launching a new and improved AEL website that will serve as a valuable resource for all members.
- Welcoming Dr. Dawn Lucarelli to our team as a consultant to support us in

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## Season of Change...

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*“...the prevalence of these issues underscores the need for fair treatment, transparent expectations, and clear communication across all levels.”*

*Tracey Ahern,  
AEL President*

negotiations and our relationships with central office and the Board of Education. Dr. **Lucarelli's expertise will** be instrumental as we engage in negotiations in the coming weeks.

Negotiations are already underway, and we are anticipating a robust process. In the new year, we will establish committees for the Career Ladder, Work Conditions, and Pay Band Structures. These committees will play a critical role in shaping the outcomes of our negotiations, and we encourage members to get involved.

Dr. Bedell has expressed his commitment to ensuring fair and equitable compensation for AEL members, consistent with comparable Local Education Agencies (LEAs). While we recognize the funding challenges ahead, we remain steadfast in advocating for positive advancements in compensation and other key

areas. The AACPS Superintendent's Proposed Budget highlights critical needs that directly impact our work and our students' success. It is essential that we, as AEL members, actively advocate for adequate funding to address these priorities. We need members to stand up and speak at County Council meetings and other public forums to ensure our voices are heard and our needs are met. Your participation in these opportunities can make a significant difference in shaping outcomes that benefit our schools and communities.

Another focus of our work is improving workplace culture and climate—both the physical conditions and interpersonal dynamics that define our daily experiences. A supportive atmosphere is essential for our collective success, and we continue to advocate for meaningful changes that enhance our working environments. However, we are concerned

about the frequency with which members have had to seek support from Rick Kovelant for challenging **situations. While Rick's** advocacy has been invaluable, the prevalence of these issues underscores the need for fair treatment, transparent expectations, and clear communication across all levels.

Your AEL Executive Team is deeply committed to ensuring that each of you feels supported and empowered to focus on what we do best—supporting students. We understand that the uncertainty of navigating tough situations can be overwhelming, but together, we are working toward a stronger, more equitable future for all members.

Thank you for your dedication and partnership. Let us continue to support one another, advocate for change, and move forward with hope and determination.

## *“What We Learn From History Is That We Do Not Learn From History”*

# This Year, Let’s Prove Friedrich Hegel Wrong!

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

Thinking about the great philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, Kierkegaard (properly spelled), Hegel, and Rousseau, to name a few, my thoughts keep returning to one of the foremost philosophical minds and his profound wisdom and insight.

Who, you might ask, warrants this consideration and place among these great thinkers? Walt Kelly! For those of you who are unaware of the genius of this individual, I call your attention to the fact that he is the creator and voice of that most famous possum - Pogo. The most memorable Pogo quote that has application today is, **“We have met the enemy, and he is us.”** In other words, we are our own worst enemy! Applied to the

present state of disciplinary matters and the **“negotiation process,”** I suggest never have truer words been spoken.

While I have commented on the **“negotiation process”** and AEL membership participation in past missives, considering this is a **New Year’s article, it is worthy of further consideration.**

The school system budget is presently being considered following its prior submission to the Board by the Superintendent. As in the past, negotiations are dormant. Once again, the Superintendent has established a compensation **“placeholder”** in the proposed budget, without any input from AEL through the negotiation process. To

avoid the prophetic statement of Pogo, by not meeting your worst enemy (**“You”**), **AEL has** simply chosen to follow instead the advice of Soren Kierkegaard (I had to **sneak that in**), **“There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what isn’t true; the other is to refuse to believe what is true.”** Do not believe that this budget fairly provides adequate compensation for Unit II, when it truthfully does not.

Public hearings on the **Superintendent’s budget** request have been scheduled. Without a negotiated compensation package, Unit II employees should not be encouraged to support the proposal. In fact, Unit II employees are

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**“We have met  
the enemy, and  
he is us.”**

*Pogo, famous possum*

## Proving Friedrich Hegel Wrong...

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**“The continued attrition of valued school-based and central office personnel,... is directly attributable to inadequate compensation and fueled by excessive workload.”**

*Rick Kovelant, AEL  
Executive Director and  
General Counsel*

encouraged to attend these budget hearings and support only a significant compensation increase. The continued attrition of valued school-based and central office personnel, as well as the impact on recruitment and promotion of Unit II employees, is directly attributable to inadequate compensation and fueled by excessive workload.

This can only be adequately communicated by your participation, either in person or at the very least by writing to the Board of Education and voicing your concern.

Clearly, the failure to participate would be **acting as your “worst enemy.” It is time to step up and step out.** This is, after all, a key part of being a dues paying member of a UNION!

Starting the last school year and continuing into the current school year, there has been a significant and troubling increase in the number of investigations involving **the “conduct” of Unit II employees.** Putting aside the issue of procedural concerns, which are, at least, being discussed

with the Executive Staff with a chance of resolving these systemic problems, there are issues that each AEL member can individually address. Clearly, one must adhere to legally required mandatory reporting requirements. Unfortunately, a majority of the investigations involve interpersonal issues, performance-based problems, and program protocol deficiencies. If you are a potential charging party with respect to one of these issues, it would be helpful to take a moment to consider whether the issues can be resolved without the need for an investigation.

For those that are the subject of an investigation, there are steps to be taken before becoming your **“worst enemy.” Consider the following:**

### Free Help When You Need It: 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.

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## Proving Friedrich Hegel Wrong...

- Always being defensive when told about a potential disciplinary problem may not be the best way to solve it. Asking for help may aid in working towards a resolution. If that fails, the fact an attempt was made may help in the end.
- Seek advice from AEL first, not last. It is confidential and best of all, free. Asking those that may be part of the office of investigation has generally not proven to be very helpful.
- Do not interview witnesses or share your problems with colleagues.
- Take a moment to write out your side of the “story,” list witnesses, and provide written material that supports your position. You need not editorialize the facts. This will help you focus and provide AEL with a starting point for your defense.

As I noted, this Article is **part of a New Year’s** message. It is time to make resolutions, but unlike resolutions that are promises that are generally not kept, resolve to promise to become involved in AEL.



## New Members

**Tracy Dunn**, Assistant Principal, Monarch Academy - Annapolis

**Brandon Haslun**, Principal, Quartefield ES

**Tuesdai Ingulia**, Assistant Principal, Chesapeake Science Point

**Anne Pittman**, Principal, New Village Academy

**Greg Ryan**, Principal, Crofton HS

**Shakiyla Shockley**, Assistant Principal, Hilltop ES

**Ryan Walker**, Assistant Principal, Annapolis MS

**Melissa Wallace**, Assistant Principal, Old Mill MS North

**Melissa Johnson Warner**, Assistant Principal, Brooklyn Park MS

**Chelsea Wenzel**, Assistant Principal, Bodkin ES

# Time Management

*By Mike McNeill*

Every leadership training program should include time management tips as one of the topics to teach.



Time management plays such a vital role in the ability of your leaders to assign, delegate, and complete tasks without becoming overwhelmed and falling behind schedule. It is important to establish a pace that staff can realistically maintain without rushing to complete their tasks or taking too long.

Rushing causes work quality to suffer and can lead to your staff feeling stressed or overworked. Taking too long to complete tasks can lead to customer dissatisfaction or an uneven distribution of work among the team.

Implementing better time management tactics increases the efficiency and productivity of your leader and their staff.

Some time management tips you can include in your training program are:

- **Prioritize Tasks:** Assign tasks in the order they need to be completed and give them reasonable deadlines.
- **Communicate Goals and Expectations Clearly:** Do not leave room for assumptions. Your staff should never have to guess what they need to do, how it needs to get done, or when it should be completed.
- **Get Organized:** Messy desks and clutter are not conducive to productivity. If you have to spend 30 minutes searching for that little sheet of paper you wrote notes on to get started, you've just wasted 30 minutes you could have put toward your work.
- **Limit Nonproductive Tasks:** This is any task that hinders the completion of a more relevant assignment.

## AEL Highlights 5- Star Recognition

AEL's 5-Star Recognition program allows AEL members to recognize colleagues who go above and beyond the call of duty.

### **Linda Chandler -- Old Mill Middle School South**

I am grateful for the opportunity I had to learn and grow under Linda Chandler's guidance during my year as Assistant Principal at Old Mill Middle South. Linda exemplifies strategic leadership, consistently formulating clear plans and effectively communicating them to all involved parties. Her leadership was particularly evident during the transition to hybrid learning, where she successfully built positive relationships with both students and staff, even in a virtual environment. As I stepped into the role of Principal myself, Linda served as a mentor to me. Whether brainstorming innovative approaches to modify the master schedule or navigating the complexities of COVID protocols, her insights and support were crucial in my first year. Linda's mentorship extends beyond my personal experiences, as she has been instrumental in guiding many first-year principals within our middle school network. Her willingness to share her time, answer questions, and impart effective middle school strategies is a testament to her dedication to educational leadership. Beyond her administrative acumen, Linda is a passionate advocate for our diverse student body. She shows particular care for students whose parents do not speak English as their first language and those enrolled in her autism program, ensuring their unique needs are met and voices heard. I extend my heartfelt thanks to Linda Chandler for alleviating the solitude often felt in the role of a Principal, and for being a steadfast ally in our shared journey of educational leadership. Her impact is immeasurable, and she is undoubtedly deserving of this recognition. ~ **Kelly McVey**

### **Stacey Smith—South River High School**

From working on the Negotiations Team, to planning our AEL social events, Stacey Smith goes beyond the call of duty both with AEL and her principalship. While all Principals have a plethora of responsibilities in their buildings, Stacey even has taken on teaching classes when vacancies occur in her building - and not just teaching but also grading! She is a true leader as she willingly steps in to support her staff by being in the thick of the classroom. She leads collaborative planning to model for team leaders on how to facilitate effective CP, while supporting teams with her insight in both content and pedagogy. And with all that she gives to SRHS, she continues to lead and serve to support us in AEL. ~ **Ruth Goldstraw**

### **Colleen McFarland--- Glen Burnie Park Elementary School**

I would like to make a shout out to Colleen McFarland at Glen Burnie Park. She does amazing things in that school every day. Even though I am no longer working with her, she continues to be a wonderful mentor and lends an ear, and a hand whenever needed. ~ **Stephanie Seidl**

To nominate a Unit II member, please complete the google form- [AEL Highlights- 5 Stars](#)



# Is there a conference you would like to attend?

AEL will sponsor **5 members** who attend a conference by reimbursing personal funds for the registration fee up to \$500!

September 1, 2024-June 30, 2025

If you are selected, the following will need to be completed prior to your reimbursement:

- ⇒ Submit proof of attendance to the conference
- ⇒ Write an article for the next AEL Newsletter sharing information with your colleagues.

To be considered for this opportunity, please complete the link below. All submissions should be received at least 45 days in advance of the conference start date. Notification of decision will be made 15 days from the submission date.

Link: [Conference Link 2024-25](#)

Questions- contact Stacey Smith, [smsmith1@aacps.org](mailto:smsmith1@aacps.org)

[AEL Executive Board will determine eligibility for reimbursement.](#)



## 2024-25 AEL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE/BOARD/STAFF

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