

Bulletin Board

Association Events HIGHLIGHTS

(For a complete listing of Association events, see the TABCO website)

- November 5: Retirement Workshop, Loch Raven HS
- November 5: Cadre Meeting—42nd District
- November 10: Classroom Management Workshop, Loch Raven HS
- November 12: TABCO REPS meet in District Meetings
- November 13-14: SPARKS Training, Annapolis
- November 16-20: American Education Week
- November 18: TABCO Board of Directors Mtg.

TABCO & BACE Annual Legislative Breakfast— January 9, 2010

All TABCO members are invited to join us to meet and talk with state Senators, and Delegates, County Councilmen, the County Executive, Board of Education members, and other school system representatives. This is a great time for members to share concerns they have as educators one-on-one with elected officials.

To attend, contact Lisa Churchman at lchurchman@mseanea.org.

Save \$\$ on food & entertainment while helping our kids...buy Entertainment Books from TABCO for \$25—all profits go to KidCare



Thanks to caring educators, KidCare has disbursed \$6,240 to 156 needy students so far this school year.

Association current events, news and information

www.tabco.org



ASSOCIATION WEBSITES:

NEA www.nea.org
MSEA www.mseanea.org
TABCO www.tabco.org

Outstanding educators to be nominated by colleagues

Planning for the annual Retirement & Recognition Dinner and awards program for 2009-2010 is underway. Retirees will be honored and awards will be presented to educators who have been nominated by their colleagues for either:

☛ a **Rookie Recognition Award**, for outstanding new teachers with five or fewer years in teaching, or

☛ a **TABCO Recognition Award**, presented in acknowledgment of outstanding persons in the field of education, or from the community, who consistently display dedication to education in Baltimore County, and whose contributions go "above and beyond."

Now is the time to think about those educators (or friends of education) that you want to nominate for recognition at the spring event. Our next Bulletin will include a nomination form, and it will also be available on our website.



JOB OPPORTUNITIES

TUTORS: Subject area teachers needed to tutor secondary math, chemistry, physics, biology, SAT prep., English, reading, Spanish, French, Latin, special education, and elementary subjects. Please contact professionaltutoringservice@comcast.net or 410-486-3464.

TABCO TUTOR REFERRALS: The Association is often contacted by parents seeking tutors. To have your name included on the TABCO list, email Stacie Strickland, sstrickland@mseanea.org. Include your name, school, contact number and subjects that you wish to tutor.

Needed: Retired or Other Certified Teachers

To work two days a week in private schools with Title I academically needy students. Teachers are needed in the areas of reading and math during the school day. The current rate of pay is \$27.30/hour.

Please contact Katie Filling at the Office of Title I for more detailed information 410-887-3487.

DISCLAIMER: TABCO assumes no responsibility for representations made or services performed in advertisements published here.

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TABCO Office Hours: MONDAY—THURSDAY, 9:00 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. ~FRIDAY—9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.



BULLETIN

OCTOBER 2009

UNITY...NOW MORE THAN EVER

Association pursues justice in Master Agreement violations



Next stop, the Twilight Zone

Angela Leitzer, Bulletin Editor

Imagine this scenario: You have entered into a business partnership. Both you and your counterpart have signed a contract agreeing to share responsibility for making a success of your business endeavor. To that end, you have scheduled meetings in which you will work out the details for accomplishing the vision and goals for the company and how it will operate.

At your meeting, your counterpart responds to all of your suggestions with an emphatic "No," presents a list of changes that will effectively reduce you to a silent partner and declares that these items are non-negotiable.

"You are about to enter another dimension...You've just crossed over into the Twilight Zone."

Witness, if you will, the situation in which John Q. Teacher and his Association find themselves. In a state which, despite attempts to deal with the situation, failed to pass legislation that would make arbitration over labor negotiations binding on both parties, resulting in a time-consuming process of meetings in which school system representatives refuse to consider association items and insist on contract items that are clearly unacceptable (and sometimes hostile). Despite the earnest efforts of association negotiators, the school year ends without resolution.

Enter the Labor Negotiations Bill. MSEA has made it a priority to get this bill through both houses in a timely manner this year. Last year, it vanished into another dimension after passing the

See "the Twilight Zone," page 2

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Arbitrators declare Faculty Councils in the right in school disputes



Cheryl Bost
TABCO President

Every school site has been encouraged to form a Faculty Council to serve as a constructive communication vehicle between the staff and the administration. The major goal is to work collaboratively with the administration to bring about a positive and effective learning and working environment. The commitment to faculty councils is so strong on the part of both BCPS and TABCO, that there are many areas of the Master Agreement providing rights and responsibilities for the operation of the council in order to meet these collaboration goals.

Recently, the Faculty Councils (FC) at two schools took stands for the contractual rights of the members at their sites

and, in principle, for all members throughout the county. The staffs at these two schools tried to problem solve through the FC process, but unfortunately they were met with administrators who interpreted the Master Agreement language differently from its true meaning and intention. These administrators were supported by BCPS officials in their interpretation.

Case One: At Lansdowne HS, teachers received a calendar of Parent-Teacher Conference Nights in the fall and were encouraged, but not required to attend, until the March conference night. At that time the administration sent out the message that teachers were required to attend.

Case Two: At Stoneleigh ES the Faculty Council and the administration met each August to plan the number, type, and time of the Monday meetings

clearly states, "Meeting with parents and other staff members as professional responsibilities require with the time for such meeting being established by mutual agreement between the teacher and the other person(s) involved."

The Lansdowne FC, with the help of their TABCO UniServ Director, tried to work with the administration, to no avail. So following the March two-hour Parent-Teacher Conference Night, the FC filed a grievance.

This grievance met with denial at each level until it progressed to the level of arbitration. At that time MSEA Attorney Damon Felton took the case before Arbitrator Strongin. On July 2, 2009, Arbitrator Strongin released his findings, stating that the requirement for teachers to attend the Parent-Teacher Conference night set on the calendar is a violation of the negotiated Master Agreement. Currently, we are working to account for all teachers who were impacted at Lansdowne HS so they can receive back pay at their hourly rate for the time they stayed that evening.

Clearly, TABCO encourages teachers to conduct parent-teacher conferences; teachers may choose to set up conferences during the evening Parent-Teacher Conference Nights. However, the scheduling of parent-teacher conferences is to be accomplished through mutual agreement between teachers and parents.

Case Two: At Stoneleigh ES the Faculty Council and the administration met each August to plan the number, type, and time of the Monday meetings

Master Agreement section 10.7.8 See "Faculty Council wins," page 2

“Faculty Council wins,” from page 1

and mutually determine the agenda of the meetings for the first half of the year. It was agreed that the length of faculty meetings would be one hour in duration. Despite this agreement, last October the principal sent a message to the staff late on the preceding Friday notifying them that Monday's meeting would run longer for intermediate teachers, to go over AssessTrax. When the FC tried to resolve the issue, they were told that BCPS was interpreting the language in the Master Agreement section 10.13, to mean that the FC “mutually determines” only the *starting time* for faculty meetings and that the administration can keep teachers as long as they choose on Mondays. Additionally, BCPS said that the administration sets the agenda for faculty meetings. The FC sought guidance from their TABCO UniServ Director, the grievance process was initiated and it continued through each level with no resolution until arbitration. In June, the hearing was held and the two teacher representatives came in during summer break to represent the FC. On September 29, Arbitrator Barrett sent out his finding, ruling in favor of the Stoneleigh Faculty Council. The ruling clearly states that each party is equal in the mutual determination of time (start time and duration), type, and number of non-emergency Monday meetings and shall be mutually involved in the development of the agenda.

We are proud of the perseverance of both of these strong Faculty Councils. They protected not only their own rights, but the rights afforded to all teachers in every school. These two Faculty Councils tried to work collaboratively and were willing to participate in problem solving efforts, but unfortunately the other side, at various levels, was not willing to collaborate to resolve the issues. The grievance process is engaged, and the TABCO Board of Directors is willing to fund and carry out arbitrations when the contract is clearly violated and misinterpreted. This is just one reason why membership in our strong association is important to all eligible employees.

Each week, Faculty Councils all over this county are working with administrators to foster positive communication to improve the working and learning environment. Faculty Councils help to develop teacher leaders and can serve as a great communication tool for administrators. Faculty Councils are the front line problem solvers and we commend those serving on their school's Faculty Council. Additionally, we commend those administrators who truly value and communicate with their staff's Faculty Councils.

NOTE: You can learn more about the impact of these two arbitrations by going to www.tabco.org and reading *Hot Topics* #32 and #33. If your school would like to be trained in starting a Faculty Council, contact your TABCO UniServ Director.

“the Twilight Zone,” from page 1

State Senate...then time ran out and the bill did not make it through the House.

As explained by MSEA, “The bill establishes a process for a neutral third party—a public employee labor relations board—to decide labor negotiations disputes between local public school employers and local public school employees within a specific time frame with a decision that is binding on both parties.”

Not surprisingly, employers are not keen to see this legislation passed. In a world where negotiation is not always (or even frequently) conducted in a spirit of “win-win” or even good faith, it benefits them to operate without enforcement from an objective third party.

Recently, President Bost testified about the mind-boggling consequences of a system without reasonable parameters. She related that she “spoke to those in attendance about how the current impasse law allows school systems to drag out the process. In Baltimore County we started negotiating in November, and asked to be declared at impasse in January. After being asked to go back to the table [by State Superintendent Nancy Grasmick, currently the next level in the process] we were finally declared at impasse in May and the hearings weren't scheduled until mid-July, with the ruling in September. Almost an entire year's process—only to allow the school system the right to turn down everything.”

Isn't this against logic, against fairness, even against honor? I guess that's why, when I sat down to write about this tonight, the Twilight Zone connection came to mind. Things that just aren't the way they are supposed to be, that run against reasonable expectations tend to bring the TZ metaphor to mind. Since we cannot depend on a reign of reason to produce results, we must move this problem out of the twilight zone and into the realm of law.

Working to get this law passed may be the most important thing you do this year for yourself and your colleagues: take the time to contact your state legislators NOW (email, snail mail, telephone, face-to-face) and tell them that you are counting on them to get this bill through the session this year—the **new 2010 Labor Negotiations Bill**.

A few helpful hints: use the MSEA website to contact your legislators—click on “Legislative;” use the TABCO website to obtain email addresses and phone numbers for your legislators (click on Politics); and above all, don't think that it is OK to let the other guy do it for you. He is probably thinking that *you* are taking care of it.

This bill is also known as the *Fairness in Negotiation Bill*. Fairness—a concept that looms large in the list of ethical behaviors that educators seek to teach and model—even though we cannot always count on being on the receiving end of fairness—in spite of our Association's best efforts to negotiate it for us.



NOTES & news briefs

TABCO reaches out to Towson Tigers

TABCO and MSEA co-sponsored an Education Day Tailgate at the October 3rd Towson University football game. The event was open to student teachers, their families, and cooperating teachers and provided discount tickets to the football game. President Bost



Barb Tyler, Ray Suarez, Cheryl Bost, and Jaime Julis, a TU student teacher in BCPS

was recognized on the field between quarters as an Education Day sponsor. Even though the Tigers did not win, the marching band was great!

Towson University's education program works closely with many of our BCPS teacher members through their connection as Professional Development Schools (PDS) serving student interns and student teachers. Towson University also has an NEA Student Education Association (SEA) with an elected president and student advisor. Help us grow this SEA by encouraging your student interns and student teachers to join the Towson University SEA.



TABCO delegates sing out with MSEA Connection Band

Delegates take care of business in OC

Neither stormy weather, cold temperatures, nor flooding could dampen the spirits of the TABCO Delegates to the MSEA Convention. The 2009 MSEA Convention went down in the history books as the first ever under the new name of the Maryland State Education Association.

“We are MSEA” was the theme throughout the convention that offered many different venues for delegates and guests. The weekend started with the MSEA President's Reception where Lt. Governor Anthony Brown was our distinguished guest. Friday morning delegates were welcomed to the Representative Assembly by the MSEA Connection Band with our very own Cheryl Vourvoulas, Riina Naumann, Leo Weems, and Winston Gray as featured singers.

Business covered Bylaw Amendments that will provide a Student Advisory Council enabling our student members to meet and share their ideas with MSEA leadership, along with

another amendment providing for students to elect delegates to future MSEA Conventions. New Business Items included providing that MSEA lobby to make attendance part of the graduation requirement; that Bridge to Excellence projects and other approved alternatives to HSA be counted in AYP calculations; MSEA to lobby for a short term fix through MSDE to increase each subgroup size to 20 rather than the current size of 5 and to lobby nationally to ensure that a reasonable range is provided in the reauthorization of NCLB; to work with MSDE to require that modular classrooms (trailers) are maintained to higher standards; to make the MSEA Board of Directors take referendum decisions to the Representative Assembly, and more.

Additionally, delegates approved the early endorsement of the re-election of Governor O'Malley based on his commitment to funding K-12 education, his initiative and perseverance in administering the TELL Maryland Survey, and his commitment to refrain from cutting state pensions, among other positions that benefit public education. Delegates were addressed by both Governor O'Malley and Congressman Frank Kratovil, who also received an early endorsement from NEA. Delegates were urged to send email messages to their state senators and delegates in support of the Fairness in Negotiations Bill.

Guests and delegates had time to participate in professional development workshops, vendor exhibits, Apple-A-Day Health Fair, and much more! Baltimore County also hit a high note by winning the “We are MSEA” jingle contest. In the wrap up of the convention, many Baltimore County delegates took home the big prizes from the Fund for Children and Public Education drawing and many other drawings. It was a great convention and we hope to see many of you next year at the MSEA Convention.

NOTE: MSEA Fall Convention Delegates will also serve as delegates to the Spring Representative Assembly in May.

BEST PRACTICES TEACHERS HELPING TEACHERS

Collaborating, mentoring, sharing: Educators are constantly working together to solve problems and achieve better results. This segment will periodically report on “best practices” developed by our colleagues. This first installment addresses STUDENT CELL PHONE USE.

Students who use cell phones and other electronic devices while in school has become an increasing disturbance at school sites, mostly at the secondary level. A local high school faculty experiencing this problem addressed the issue collectively and is supported by the administration in their efforts. Upon the first offense, the phone is confiscated and the parent must retrieve it. At the second offense, the phone is confiscated, the student must attend Saturday detention, and a parent must retrieve the phone. At the third offense, the phone is confiscated, the student is suspended, and the parent must attend a suspension conference to retrieve the phone. The school has experienced a dramatic decrease in offenders; especially repeat offenders. In addition, the Faculty Council worked to assist teachers in modeling the desired behavior for students by having teacher agreement in using phones in the faculty room or when students are not around.

Help all of us by sharing a best practice with others; please send your ideas to President Bost at cbost@mseanea.org.

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