

Special Edition - Election 2020

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Cindy L. Sexton

The New Normal



“I can’t wait until things get back to normal” is a sentiment we have heard many times. It has been eight months since that day in March when schools were closed. And nothing has really been normal since then. And given the unfortunate trends in Baltimore County, Maryland, our country, and sadly the world, ‘normal’ won’t be back anytime soon. But let us focus on our ‘new normal’ for a moment. We have all had to figure out ways to juggle our professional lives and our personal lives. We have not been able to see our elderly parents, grandchildren, or friends. We work harder than we ever have. We wonder when it will be ‘normal’ again. It won’t be and we don’t really want it just like it was in early March. Let us work to shape what

the new normal, the post COVID normal, looks like. While we are juggling all the demands on us, all the stressors of just being in this global pandemic, we are still facing all the challenges that teaching presents – they are still present on top of everything else... the disengaged student, technology that doesn’t cooperate, SLOs, teacher development plans, calling parents, observations, and on an on. That ‘normal’ never left.

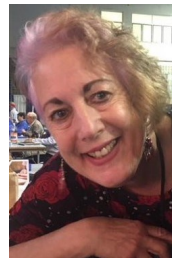
And I know it is hard work. It was hard before COVID. While we want a safe and sustained return to schools based on the science, we also want to be back in schools with our students. As hard as we worked then, somehow it was easier... and we miss our students and our coworkers. We are all feeling the effects of COVID fatigue, especially the mental health challenges it brings.

See “President” page 2

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

by Billie H. Muñoz

True Democratic Representation



I heard something on the news recently that, frankly, shocked me. Angry parents were standing on a corner in Towson with placards. They said that the teachers wanted to reopen the schools but that TABCO wanted to keep them closed. Parents, politicians, community! The teachers, related service providers, special educators, and nurses ARE the union! First of all, this assumption defies logic. What good can it possibly serve TABCO to keep the schools closed? I mean apart from the obvious, that it will save children’s and, yes, educators’ lives. Let’s take a closer look at both the numbers and the power structure of the union. TABCO currently has over 8,500 members. That means that 88% of educators feel it is important enough to invest their hard-earned dollars in union membership. TABCO itself is run as a democracy. It has a Board of Directors who meet regularly in order to make decisions about how the union is run. It has an elected President who is the face of the union for the employees and the public. It has an Executive Director whose job it is to be the chief negotiator and take charge of the UniServ Directors (the MSEA people who help educators when someone tries to mess with their contractual rights).

See

“Editor” page 2

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- ◆ What to Read Next?
- ◆ MSEA Virtual RA
- ◆ Up, Down, In-OUT!
- ◆ Educate at 8:00
- ◆ Loss of Dedicated Personnel from COVID 19



Kamala Harris - So Many Firsts!

There was a little girl in California who was part of the second class to integrate her public schools and she was bused to school every day. That little girl was me.

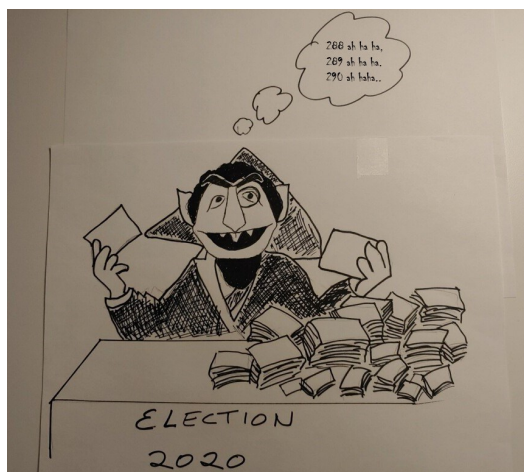
(Thanks to Martha Kent Jacobs of Franklin High School for the portrait of the next Vice-President of the United States)

“President,” (from Front Page)

Please take care of you. If you need help or support, reach out to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for counseling (1-888-431-4334). While we are all in this together, it certainly does affect us differently. It’s okay to reach out. It’s not okay to suffer in silence. Let’s try not to stress about all the ‘what ifs’. Whatever normal is or was or will be, let’s focus on making our ‘now’ as stress-free as we can. We are doing the best we can, and we need to let that be enough. Slow down. Inhale peace. Exhale stress. You’re doing great. We appreciate you.

“Editor,” (from Front Page)

Perhaps at the heart of this democracy is the fact that every school building elects an educator to be a pro bono Association Representative. This means that these Reps take the concerns of their building to a monthly meeting. These often-lengthy meetings are well attended. The Reps vote on the issues of the day such as the budget, political stands and by-law changes. They then report on everything that happened at said gathering to their peers at something called a *Ten-Minute Meeting*. The minutes of that meeting are available for educators to view if they want further clarification or if they simply cannot attend. Before considering an issue as large as “To Return or Not



The Other Count-cartoon by Luis Muñoz

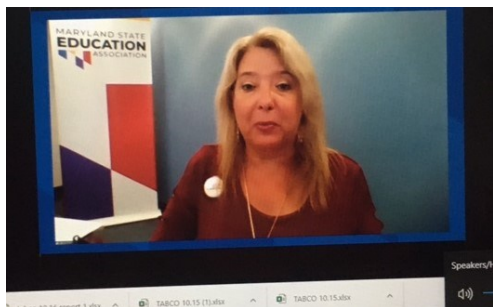
to Return” (apologies to William Shakespeare), a survey is taken to get an idea of the feelings of the membership. So, the notion of a rogue TABCO person sitting on a hill and making decisions that affect parents, students, educators and the general public is a ludicrous one. That being said, these are trying times. Nerves are frayed. And this editor doesn’t feel it is wrong to find someone to blame. They just won’t find it at TABCO Headquarters.

First All Virtual RA of the MSEA, October 2020

Once more before your screens and with your microphones muted, dear Union Brothers and Sisters, once more!

This year, for the first time in its 102 year history, the annual MSEA Convention was held virtually. Representatives had been elected with the idea of going to Ocean City as is customary. Of course, COVID 19 had other ideas.

But still, the over 540 educator- delegates who were elected gamely agreed (it is pro-bono work) to sit in front of a screen on Friday Oct 16 and Saturday Oct 17 in order to listen to inspirational speakers such as the Maryland Teacher of the Year and vote on TABCO’s position on two state-wide Ballot Measures. The RA was also tasked with adopting the budget and debating two by-law amendments. *See “Virtual RA page 3”*



The assembly was opened by MSEA President (former TABCO President) Cheryl Bost



Union members were welcomed by some of the most familiar faces among Maryland teachers; Adam Mendelson, Cheryl Bost, Sean Johnson, Doug Prouty, Joe Coughlin and Meighan Davis photos by editor

“Virtual RA” from page 2

The first was about the state legislature and their budget. The budget had been postponed due to the pandemic. Did the Union want to follow the recommendation of the Board of Directors to support giving the State Legislature more power in determining the budget? That passed. The second was the proposition to direct profits from sports betting to education. It also passed but only after some passionate and heated discussion. In addition, the delegates heard a speech from the Maryland Teacher of the Year, Wyatt Oroke of Baltimore City Public Schools. He inspired the RA to continue teaching for the long term development of the students, saying that we are “gardeners, not florists.” We cultivate, we do not reap.

TABCO received the prize of union with the largest increase in membership during the 2019-20 academic year.

TABCO also received a clean bill of fiscal health during a recent audit. According to Treasurer John R. Wilkins, “a clean audit opinion means that the auditor has not identified any material misstatement as a result of his or her review of the financial statements.” This may not have been an ideal assembly but the important jobs were accomplished.



Please send your own stories and pictures of special virtual events at your school to profe0903@yahoo.com. Include “TABCO Bulletin” in the heading. We’d love to publish your attempts to connect with your students!

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The newsletter of the Teachers Association of Baltimore County, an affiliate of the Maryland State Education Association and the National Education Association

Teachers Association of Baltimore County 1220 C E. Joppa Road Suite 514

Towson, MD 21286

President: Cindy L. Sexton

Vice President: Marcie Cooke Treasurer: John R. Wilkins

Secretary: Frank Soda

Board of Directors:

District I ~ Shae Savoy, Beverly Folkoff, Seth I. Rich

District II ~ Vernon Fains, Charles Fluharty

District III ~ Lisa Norrington, Crystal Collins, Katherine Mullen

Bulletin Editor: Billie H. Muñoz, profe0903@yahoo.com

The Bulletin is now published four times a year. **Ideas and articles welcomed** but subject to editing. Names withheld upon request. (Please put **TABCO Bulletin** in subject in an email to the editor)

Who Put the “Van” in CaraVAN? (hint, it’s educators and families who care)

On October 13, TABCO members along with BCPS families got together where the shoe leather meets the road in Towson, Maryland. They were there to democratically and peacefully express their opinion that it was not yet safe to send children and their educators back to school. As TABCO Board of Directors member and teacher, Katherine Mullens said, “As a person whose age and race place me in a cohort disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, I participated in the caravan and will continue to resist a premature and irresponsible return to the classroom. My life and all of our lives depend on it.” She added, “I was encouraged by the number of teachers that participated in the caravan. We **must** continue to resist being forced into a premature and irresponsible return to the classroom.”



Signage calls for listening to the science before re-opening



Dr. Tim Tooten (right), Education Reporter WBAL TV

Dan the Man Chambers Explains What’s Up

Dan Chambers, UniServ Director for MSEA recently sat down to answer our questions about sports betting.

Q: What is State Ballot Question 2?

A: Question 2 would allow the Maryland General Assembly to pass a law authorizing the Gaming Commission to issue sports betting licenses. The revenue from those licenses would have the primary purpose of funding public education.

Q: Why should educators vote yes?

A: The MSEA Representative Assembly took a supportive position on Question 2 because the revenue it would raise is important to fully funding the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future and the Kirwan Commission’s recommendations for our schools. Projections from the Department of Legislative Services indicate that sports betting could generate millions of dollars in revenue which can be used to invest in education.

Q: What about the historical problems with casino revenue actually going to increases in school funding? Would we have the same issue again?

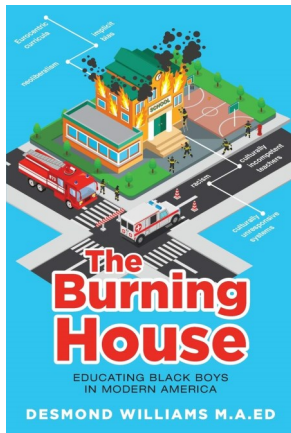
A: Voters fixed the fund in 2018 with the passage of Question 1 to ensure that gaming revenue (which is sent to the state’s Education Trust Fund) would go to increases in school funding, rather than supplanting existing funding. That casino gaming revenue is already funding increased resources for our schools and helping to cover significant parts of the projected phase-in of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. Similarly, new revenue generated from sports betting that goes to the Education Trust Fund will be new dollars to education and not just part of the old shell game of supplanting other spending.

Retirement Fair by Angie Leitzer

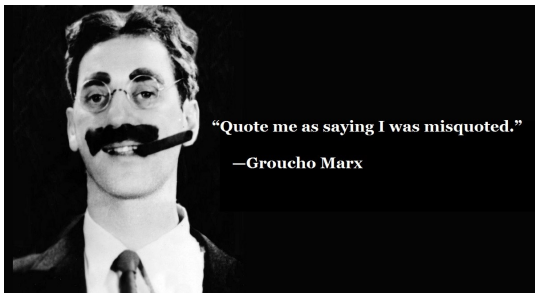
The TABCO-Retired “Fall Forum” has been bringing retired members together since 2014. It was conducted via Zoom this year. Traditionally, it provides a speaker on a relevant topic, lunch and updates on the Association for a chance for retired educators to reconnect. The virtual format made it possible for members who live all over the country to attend—from as far away as Oregon. The title of the meeting was “Your Healthcare Benefits Explained: Changes & Updates.” Thanks to the close relationship with TABCO leadership, members of the TABCO-Retired Steering Committee were brought into the discussion process when Baltimore County government and BCPS proposed changes to retiree benefits. After several months of identifying concerns, posing questions and seeking answers, the county’s initial proposal to automatically “flip” all retirees into a new Cigna/Medicare plan, which TABCO-Retired strongly opposed, was abandoned. Instead, retirees will be given a choice between the current plan and the new Medicare Advantage plan until the current contract expires in December 2022. A retiree healthcare management company, “Labor First,” has been engaged by the county to manage the new Advantage plan. It is clearly their goal to convince retirees to enroll in this new plan, reportedly saving perhaps millions for the county. Other groups that are using Labor First and the Advantage plan have stated that their service has been good. However, during the Fall Forum, Labor First representatives revealed that they will not be servicing clients who remain with the current “Medicare Surround.” *See “Fair” page 12*

What to Read Next by Vernon Fains

Those educators who read *A Collective Bargain* by organizer and scholar Jane McAlevey may be wondering what to read next. Vernon Fains, a Visual Arts Content Leader at Pine Grove Middle School and TABCO Board of Directors for District 2 may have some answers. His words follow:



I recommend The Burning House. It examines the problems plaguing African American boys in a system that devalues them; it addresses special education concerns, discipline issues, and the school-to-prison pipeline. What strikes me as the best thing in The Burning House is the unique perspective brought by the author as a black male educator. Too often black men are not seen, heard and valued in the classroom whether as a student or an educator.



*Be sure to attend the ten minute meeting your building rep is holding each month. This is the best way to be kept apprised of all that is happening with TABCO. **President Cindy Sexton***

*This is really a story about sustained activism. **The guys on the Pod Save America** podcast*

*I may be the first woman of color in this office but I will not be the last. **Kamala Harris, Vice President Elect***

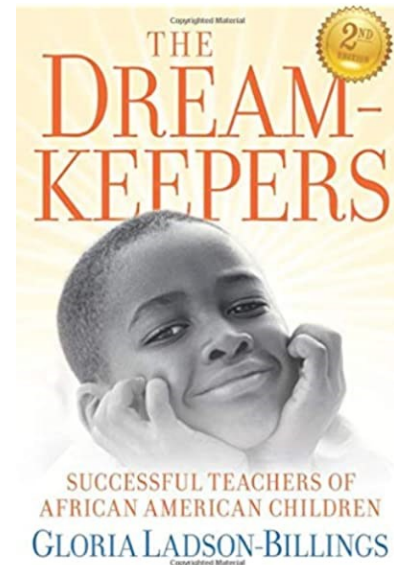
*The Veto (of the Blueprint for Maryland) was an incredibly short-sighted mistake. **Rob Ferguson, President of the Maryland Senate***

*Am I acting as a florist or a gardener? **Md Teacher of the Year Wyatt Oroke, Baltimore City***

*We realized the resilience and strength of educators. **Cheryl Bost, President MSEA***

*We've been stuck in a reactive space. That is going to change. **Ben Forstenzer, UniServ Director***

*Teaching is a tough job. But it's one where you can make the most impact on a student's life. **Randy Patterson, ESP of the Year, Howard County***



The Dream-Keepers is a must-read book that provides a pathway for educators to help all students meet success in the classroom. It shows how culturally relevant teaching helps celebrate the strengths every child brings to the classroom. I really loved The Dream Keepers because It is useful for anyone who believes in improving public education, the academic success of all students, and values multicultural

Want to Get More Involved—Here is Your Chance!

The Government Relations Committee

By Charles Fluharty

The Government Relations Committee recently chose a new mascot. This was indicative of their commitment to stay involved beyond the recent election season. Meet the Capybara! Capybaras are native to South America and are part of the rodent family of mammals. As most rodents are considered pests, pests get attention when around people, and the GR Committee will need to act as pests to Federal, State and County officials in order to get things done budgetarily, strategically and politically in Baltimore County. The HEROES Act was passed by the House of Representatives in May, and would have provided three billion dollars of relief to those affected by COVID 19. It would have

specifically provided funding for schools, and State and County governments among other ventures. That funding could have come in to our state in June, but the Senate refused to vote on the bill due to its price tag and the fact that, according to Senate leaders, “the economy is turning around because the pandemic is coming to an end”. The Senate has yet to come up with an alternative that will ameliorate the affects of COVID on schools’, State and County government’s budgets.

GRAS Update by Kelly Garrison

The GRAS (Government Relations, Advocacy, Solidarity) Committee is busy planning three major events! One is our first Community Engagement Meeting. Then there is the planning for our Budget Campaign. Finally, we are working out the details for the Legislative Breakfast. It will be virtual this year but we feel it is still important because politicians need to hear what we need to effectively teach!



Meet the Capybara! Because, according to Go Committee Chair Shae Savoy...

Pests get attention!

Back on Track with the DAWGS

By Sonja Floyd and Tammy Mills



DAWG has been hard at work continuing to address discipline concerns. Some of our members just saw the completion of the final draft for the revised positive behavior planning guide. We are happy to report that it includes many of the elements of the template previously developed. It also includes language supporting Master Agreement 11.1 and 11.1.2.

Recent discussions have focused on administrator accountability. Having a guide for writing a positive behavior plan is meaningless if schools are not held accountable for implementing one. We are looking to improve communication between levels of leadership – Principals, Executive Directors, Community Superintendents, and above. We had an informal discussion with a representative from CASE and found some common ground for moving forward with some of our initiatives. We still want to work for a uniform digital reporting system for data collection of behavior interventions. The County has agreed to a task force to develop this

but the work has not begun yet. Additionally, we would like to refine the personal digital devices policy so the guidelines surrounding uses and abuses would be more specific and more clearly stated. We also continue to discuss the need for training before trying to implement any type of restorative practices or PBIS and the like.

Even though we are remote right now, we will return to live instruction at some point. The more refinements we can have in place before that time the better. If you have behavior concerns, consider joining us at our next meeting on December 16th at 4:45pm.

More Opportunities to get involved on page 7

Minority Affairs Update

by Capathia Campbell, TABCO Minority Affairs Co-chair

The Minority Affairs Committee is an ongoing and motivated group of individuals committed to making the world a better place for everyone. We welcome, all TABCO members to join us for our **monthly check-in meetings** to listen to the concerns of educators. We invite all to join us on the **first Tuesday** of every month. Our next meeting will be held on December 1 between 4:30-5:30 PM.

The TABCO Minority Affairs Committee is conducting a survey to develop a better understanding of the needs and wants of educators. We encourage members to help in this endeavor by participating in the survey.

Right now, we are planning our second annual **Black Lives Matter** School Event. It is slated for the first week of February 2021. This is a work in progress. Send inquiries to Angenine Goode, Kelli Hickey or Capathia Campbell at bcps.org.

ECE Update by Taylor Boren

ECE Squad (Early Career Educators - first five years) continues to meet monthly and hold workshops. In the first quarter we held a well-attended workshop called TABCO 101. The workshop provided lots of helpful and important information for new members, potential members and early career educators. We also hosted our first self care workshop in October and have another one planned for December 15th. New members are always welcome! Our mission is to create a network of support among early career educators in order to recruit and retain life long educators. Join us for our next member meeting on December 5th at 5pm. Contact Taylor Boren for more information.

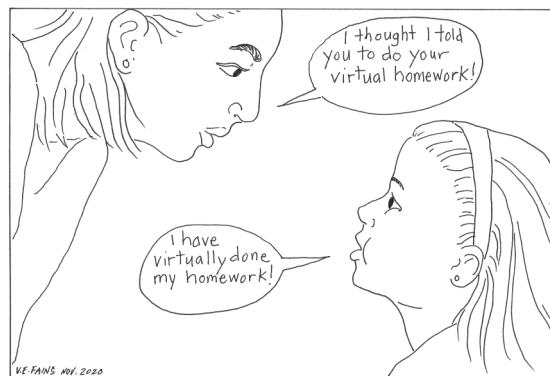


TABCO Wins State-Wide Membership Competition!

ECE Squad Continues

by Taylor Boren, Art Teacher Logan Elementary

The ECE (Early Career Educator or first five years) Squad continues to meet monthly and hold monthly workshops. In the first quarter we held a well-attended workshop called TABCO 101. The workshop provided lots of helpful and important information for new members, potential members and early career educators. We also hosted our first self care workshop in October and have another one planned for December 15th. New members are always welcome! Our mission is to create a network of support among early career educators in order to recruit and retain life long educators. Join us for our next member meeting



Cartoon by Vernon Fains



Lots of Learning Opportunities Still Open!