

The EASMC Extra!

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Negotiations Update

By: Brian Rose, EASMC Negotiations Chair

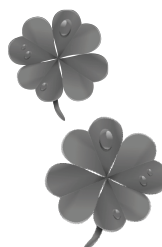
We met on February 2nd for a second work session with the BOE team. Our work was less productive because we still didn't know how much federal, state, or county money would be available during this time of tough economic challenges. We cancelled our remaining negotiations meetings for February and, instead, decided to ask the February Representative Assembly on February 10th to go to the County Commissioners meeting. There, we voiced our opinion about where the county should invest its money: education. Thank you to all who attended and who continue to write, call, and e-mail the County Commissioners. We know they are able to use money from the "Rainy Day" fund to help open Evergreen Elementary, which would enable them to increase the SMCPS overall budget for next year. Keep up your phone calls, letters, and e-mails.

Since the February 10th Commissioners meeting, we have received good news. The economic stimulus bill has passed and been signed by President Obama. According to Representative Steny Hoyer, Maryland will receive roughly \$1 billion to invest in education. How much of that \$1 billion will come to the St. Mary's County Public Schools remains to be seen. But even 1% would be \$10 million. Imagine! Hopefully, this means we can begin negotiating in earnest for all the items having a cost associated with them. Before we do, we have scheduled a negotiations meeting for all the EASMC negotiations subcommittee members on March 4th at 5 PM.

Stop what you are doing right now and contact the St. Mary's County Commissioners. Ask them to use the "rainy day fund" to help open Evergreen Elementary School while increasing the percentage of the county's budget to go to education.

Their contact information is:

e-mail address: bocc@co.saint-marys.md.us
Regular mail: Governmental Center
Attn: (The Commissioner's Name)
PO Box 653
23115 Leonard Hall Drive
Leonardtwn, MD 20650
Phone number: 301-475-4200 and extension:
1359 Francis "Jack" Russell
1353 Kenneth Dement
1351 Lawrence Jarboe
1355 Thomas Mattingly, Sr.
1354 Daniel Raley



Inside this issue:

MSTA's Labor Bill	2
SPARKS!	3
Attorney Referral Program	4
The Right To Strike	4
TELL Survey	5
Rep Assembly	5
Just Ask Liz	6

BOD Contacts:

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- Don Asher- MAL-A&S dfasher@smcps.org
- Harold Siskind-MAL Retired siskind@verizon.net
- Jennifer Tippet, Admin. Assistant, jtippet@mstanea.org

Lobby Your Legislators EASMC/CEASMC Bus Trip to Annapolis!

Date: Monday, March 9, 2009

Time: Pick up at 4:15pm from So. MD Higher Ed Center and arrive back at 9:15pm

Sign up with your building rep or contact Jen Tippet at 301-737-2500 ext. 300 or jtippet@mstanea.org

Talking Points & Major Issues:

- Bargaining Bill
- Pension Costs
- State Budget
- Fair Share

It's not too late to sign up!



"One Voice for
Public Educators"

MSTA's Labor Bill

The Fairness in Negotiations Act (SB 673) will be heard in the Senate Finance Committee on March 5 at 1PM. The House version of the bill, HB1243, will be heard in the House Ways and Means Committee on March 10th at 1pm. This bill will allow for a third party neutral arbitrator to resolve negotiations impasse proceedings. There would be no cost to the state for this process as the local Association and the LEA would split the cost of the arbitrator. The bill would allow the arbitrator's decision to be binding which would force both parties to come to the table and bargain in good faith as the last best offer of each is all that could be mandated by the arbitrator. Currently, non-binding arbitration allows that either side can refuse to accept the recommendations of the arbitrator, and often this leads to further conflict. The proposed bill would not change the fiscal relationship between the school board and the county. The arbitrator could not decide anything that was not presented in the last, best, and final offer of each side prior to impasse.

Currently, Maryland is the only one of 34 states with collective bargaining agreements to allow the State Board of Education to solve labor disputes between school boards and local Associations. With all due respect to the State Board of Education, it is our position that they should decide education policy issues and a third party neutral should decide labor issues.

Please contact the members of your state delegation by email or phone and ask them to support SB 673 when it comes to the full Senate and House. The delegation's addresses and phone numbers are listed below.

SAVE THE DATE!
**The Public Hearing on the County
Commissioner's budget will be
held on Tuesday, April 21, 2009 @
6:30 PM at Chopticon High
School.**
Please plan to attend!

Contact Your Legislators!

ROY P. DYSON

Democrat, District 29

1-800-492-7122, ext. 3673 (toll free)
e-mail: roy_dyson@senate.state.md.us

JOHN F. WOOD, JR.

Democrat, District 29A

1-800-492-7122, ext. 3170 (toll free)
e-mail: john_wood@house.state.md.us

JOHN L. BOHANAN, JR.

Democrat, District 29B

1-800-492-7122, ext. 3227 (toll free)
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ANTHONY J. O'DONNELL

Republican, District 29C

1-800-492-7122, ext. 3314 (toll free)
e-mail: anthony_odonnell@house.state.md.us

MSTA ACCESS!

As a member of MSTA you have ACCESS to discounts on hotels, golf courses, ski resorts, travel, services, entertainment, movies, and recreation packages through the internet-based ACCESS program. It's free and especially designed for MSTA members!

Visit MSTA OnLine, www.mstanea.org, click on the ACCESS banner and enter the 10-digit Member ID located on the front of your MSTA membership card.

If you have lost your membership card, don't worry. The process of obtaining a replacement card is easy. Visit MSTA OnLine, www.mstanea.org, or call MSTA Membership, 800/448-MSTA, to have a new card mailed to you.



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The FIRST EVER EASMC SPARKS! Training

The First ever EASMC SPARKS! training was held in Annapolis at MSTA Headquarters on Friday and Saturday February 20 to 21. SPARKS! training is designed to encourage greater participation in the Association in our new members. Participants chose the topics for the professional development that they received. Topics included unionism, collective bargaining, classroom management, legal and liability issues, financial planning, member benefits, and certification requirements including National Board Certification. The SPARKS! also completed research projects of their choosing and did presentations to the group on Saturday. Some of the topics researched were the role of the Association Representative, political action and the Fund for Children, what the Association can do for you, and others. Thanks to the presenters: Liz Purcell Leskinen, Damon Felton, Richard Smith, Sarah Osche, Dawn Pipkin, and Wanda Twigg. They all did a great job!

SPARKS! participants also got a tour of MSTA Headquarters, met many of the MSTA staff and the MSTA Board of Directors, did a scavenger hunt in the city of Annapolis, and had an over all fabulous time!

Many thanks are owed to Jennifer Tippet, the EASMC Administrative Assistant for all of her work organizing, ordering, copying, and collating behind the scenes. Thanks to Bonnie Skinner, FCTC and Dawn Pipkin, LMS for their dedication to making this first ever training happen and for their diligence in pulling everything together. EASMC also thanks the MSTA staff that helped the two days go smoothly: Clay Rutkukas, Randolph Satchell, Herman Whitter, and Penny Kafka.

EASMC is tickled pink that these SPARKS! were willing to give up part of their weekend to learn about the Association and be so genuinely interested in what we do, why we exist, and the role we play in making the life of the educator better every single day. Our first ever SPARKS! are: Melissa Lawrey Kiernan, Lindsay Littleton, and Stephanie Feldhausen, LHS; Allison LaSota, Sarah LaSota, and Ashley Propkop, LMS; Meddo Swaby, Fairlead; Michelle Kozak and Gabby Sivak, EMS; Jessica Yohe, CHS; Jessie Delorme, PHES; Bonnie Kelly, FCTC; Courtney Mohammed, Central Office; and Michelle Price, WMES.



MSTA Attorney Referral Program

One of the benefits of membership in the Association is access to the Attorney Referral Program. Our local participant in the Attorney Referral Program is Dorsey & Associates, P.C., 22835 Washington Street, Leonardtown, MD 20650, phone 301-475-5000. There are also participating attorneys in Calvert and Charles' Counties if you prefer or live out of county.

"Each eligible member is entitled to one free consultation session of up to 30 minutes twice each year on any topic not arising out of the employment relationship between a member and the school district (except income tax preparation)." So, if you need to see an attorney please remember that as an EASMC/MSTA member, you are entitled to this discounted service. Membership pays!

NEA Click & Save "Buy-lights" for March 2009

NEA Click & Save, the online discount buying service for NEA members, highlights select retailers and merchants each month. These featured "Buy-lights" are available throughout March.

Target:	10% off
Panasonic:	Up to 40% off
JC Penney:	Save up to 70%
Brooks Brothers:	15% off
Dell:	7% off



Join the more than 72,000 NEA members already registered for NEA Click & Save. Go to neamb.com/clickandsave today!

Mark Your Calendars!

- March 2- Dr. Seuss's Birthday NEA/RAA
- March 3- EASMC BOD
- March 6- Interims distributed
- March 9- EASMC RA and Lobby trip to Annapolis
- March 11- SMCPs BOE
- March 20- MSTA NBCT Dinner
- March 25- SMCPs BOE
- March 27-28- MSTA BOD
- March 28- MSTA Membership workshop
- March 31- EASMC April BOD
- April 3- Report cards distributed
- April 5-13- Spring Break
- April 14- EASMC RA

The Right To Strike: Just How Important Is It?

By Courtney Dowling, MSTA UniServ Director

There seems to be a perception out there that Pennsylvania teachers have it much better than their Maryland counterparts. Its adherents say that our Keystone State neighbors are better paid and have a stronger union because they have the right to strike, but is that really true? The right to strike is a very useful tool but it is not a substitute for the power of an organized and mobilized membership.

The teachers and education employees in Maryland may not have the right to strike but that certainly did not stop us from building membership, improving salaries and pensions, and successfully winning increased education funding at a time when our colleagues in neighboring states such as Pennsylvania were struggling to hold on to benefits.

State legislators recognize MSTA as the most influential lobbying force in Maryland. Few other state associations can claim that distinction. We advocate for better retirement benefits for our members (and we succeeded in getting an improved pension at a time when most states were trying to cut or eliminate pension benefits for teachers), for education funding (we fought to create and preserve the Thornton state funding formula each year since it was conceived), for additional school construction funds (recently increased), and for legislation that affects our members (e.g., Collective Bargaining reform) and our students (e.g., Student Discipline Bill).

Maryland is the first and only state in the nation with all school systems paying starting teachers at least \$40,000. Many school districts in Pennsylvania still pay starting teachers less than \$30,000. The Maryland State Teacher's Association and the local associations around the state played a huge role in negotiating these salaries and reaching this notable milestone.

The Pennsylvania State Education Association does have a fair process for resolving impasses in negotiations. It includes binding arbitration and a neutral third party to resolve disputes between the school boards and the local associations. PSEA tends to use this technique far more than striking. We are working for the same benefits in Maryland. MSTA and EASMC's top legislative priority for this coming legislative session is a new labor bill that will give us binding arbitration and neutral third party to resolve disputes. It will not give us the right to strike, however. We know that this proposed legislation, along with the power of our organizing abilities will add to our already significant progress.

Of the 511 school districts in Pennsylvania, slightly over 21% percent have experienced teachers' strikes. Only 3.6 percent have had more than one strike since 1992. Seventy-seven percent of the school districts have not experienced a teachers' strike during this 15-year span. The drop in strikes in PA is evident because of the toll it takes on everyone involved. According to PSEA, "The best negotiated settlement is one that the parties work out themselves through discussion, joint problem solving, and compromise. For 90-95% of Pennsylvania school districts, this time tested process works and has actually improved, as indicated by the drop in strikes over the past two decades." (Taken from PSEA.org)

With your help and involvement, MSTA has accomplished as much or more for our members and the students they serve as any other state association in the country. The grass may **seem** greener across the Mason-Dixon Line, but the facts show clearly that we continue to produce great results for our members right here at home. Please sign up for *Frontline*, MSTA's weekly email newsletter by going to www.mstanea.org. This newsletter will keep you up to date on the progress of the legislative session. We're heading to Annapolis on March 9 to lobby in support of the labor bill, in opposition to putting the costs of pensions back to the counties, and to support the legislature and governor for restoring most of the money to education that was cut.

Join MSTA and the Governor as we ... Read Across Maryland!

March is Read Across Maryland Month! We're celebrating with a new statewide literacy initiative jointly sponsored by Governor O'Malley and MSTA.

Next up for Marylanders?

- Feb. 27: The Cat's annual State House visit and legislator book drive
- March 2: The Governor joins Annapolis school children for MSTA's annual Green Eggs and Ham Breakfast, makes his official Read Across Maryland proclamation and announces plans for special reading events throughout the state



Welcome New Members

- Sara Quinn at PPES
- Patricia Guisewhite at CHS



May your pockets be heavy and your heart be light,
 May good luck pursue you each morning and night.
 ~Irish Blessing

TELL Maryland What You Think! A short, anonymous school employee survey



All teacher, principals, and other certificated school-based personnel are invited to participate in TELL Maryland, a 30-minute online survey designed to provide you and your colleagues, as well as state and local decision-makers, with valuable data about teaching and learning conditions.

This confidential survey has been used in other states to generate important education policies and improvements. In Maryland, it's sponsored by Governor O'Malley, MSTA and a broad coalition of individuals and organizations.

You should be receiving a secure access code at your school, which you can use to take the survey on a computer at any location with Internet access anytime between February 18 and March 18. The TELL Maryland (Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning) survey asks for your input on the teaching and learning conditions in your school, in areas including Facilities and Resources, Student Conduct, Community Engagement, Empowerment, School Leadership, Professional Development, Student Learning, and New Teacher Support and Mentoring.

Your *anonymous* voice will influence state and district policy affecting public education. And you and your colleagues can use the data to make real changes to benefit everyone in your school and worksite.

Don't have a code? Need more information? Contact your building representative for details.

MSTA was instrumental in making this survey happen! As a result of a new business item at the 2007 MSTA Convention, MSTA supported legislation that would study the teacher workload. This legislation resulted in this evaluation which is supported by the Governor's office. Former MSTA President Pat Foerster, who works as the Education Policy Advisor for Governor O'Malley, headed the committee of educators who developed the survey. Please take the opportunity to share your opinions on this survey as the results will be shared with your school, the school system, and even the legislature and governor. Remember, at least 50% of the teachers in your school have to complete the survey in order to get the results!

Upcoming EASMC RA Meetings

- ◆ Monday, March 9, 2009 (Rolling RA to Annapolis)
- ◆ Tuesday, April 14, 2009
- ◆ Tuesday, May 12, 2009 (Annual Meeting, Potluck Dinner)



EASMC Representative Assembly:

Do you know what's really happening in EASMC & SMCPs?

Is your school or site represented at the monthly RA? Is your building getting all the latest information and updates about what's happening across the system and within the Association? Would 3 or 4 of you be willing to share the responsibility of attending the RA on the second Tuesday of the month? It's work to get representation at every meeting, but the benefits are well worth the effort! Let us know how we can assist you in getting representation for your site!

Was your site represented at the RA on February 10th?

BBES	Brian Rose, Jeanne Taylor	LPES	Beverly Scroggins
Bethune	Don Asher	MES	Pam Hammer
CHS	Nancy Lewis, Alice Willingham, Linda Butters	OES	Betsy Hundert, Mary McNey, Connie Zitzelman
DES	Melinda Kearns	PPES	Renee Campbell
FCTC	Bonnie Skinner	RES	Sheila Coon
GKES	Kathy Shubert	TCES	Linda Richardson
HES	Kimberly Schrader	WMES	Michelle Price
LMS	Rick Condle	Retiree	Don O'Neal
LHS	Melissa Lawrey		





Liz Purcell Leskinen
UniServ Director

Just Ask Liz



Question:

My partner lost his job and we are having great difficulty making ends meet on my salary. I struggle daily to arrive at school in a positive frame of mind when I have so much stress at home due to the economy. Does the school system offer any programs to assist me?

Answer:

The SMCPS Department of Human Resources refers employees like you who are being adversely affected by the current economic situation to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP is a professional service for help with a wide variety of problems, is available at no cost to you, and is completely confidential. Pamphlets are available at HR or through EASMC. Although the EAP does not lend money, this program does work with individuals who are having financial difficulties and Dr. Weiland said that he too has been working with individuals on a case-by-case basis. You should also contact the St. Mary's County Department of Social Services to find out what county programs are available to assist people facing financial hardships.

If you are having trouble making your mortgage payments or if you're facing foreclosure, DON'T WAIT. Contact your lender immediately as well as the following resources for advice and assistance.

- Employee Assistance Program, 1-800-778-3277
- Dept. of Housing and Community Development Hope Hotline, 1-877-462-7555
- Home Owners Preserving Equity (HOPE), www.mdhope.org
- NEA Member Benefits Site, http://www.neamb.com/money_articles/100107A.jsp
- HUD-approved Counseling Agency, 1-800-569-4287 to find one near you
- Federal Housing Administration, www.fha.gov
- EASMC Attorney Referral, Dorsey & Associates, 301-475-5000

Question:

How long do we have to stay after the students are dismissed due to inclement weather and can we be required to come in early on a day with a weather delay?

Answer:

Chief Operating Officer Brad Clements distributed a memorandum on September 5, 2008 to all employees entitled Employee Codes for School Closings, Delays and Dismissals, which explains the codes and how they are to be implemented. According to Dr. Martirano, it is his intent for site administrators to use good judgment and let folks

leave as soon as the students have left. As for late arrivals, the September 5 memorandum clearly specifies the timing and site administrators do not have the authority to supersede the direction from Mr. Clements, as Dr. Martirano's designee. In addition, Kelly Hall, Scott Smith, and Linda Dudderar each follow up with administrators during regular meetings and whenever there is an early dismissal or a delay to supplement the memorandum's guidance and to answer any related questions.

Question:

I signed up for several CEU courses and the Department of Human Resources is saying that they will not reimburse me for the cost of tuition although I successfully completed the courses and submitted the receipts. Can they do this?

Answer:

Yes. There appear to be two issues. The first is that you must seek and receive approval IN ADVANCE of registering. The second is that the negotiated agreement clearly states, "Tuition reimbursement will be provided for appropriate courses leading toward (1) initial certification, (2) renewal of Standard Professional Certificate, (3) Advanced Professional Certificate, (4) Master's Degree or any other approved course work." CEUs do not meet this definition.

EASMC Dues for Taxes

For your 2008 tax purposes, EASMC/MSTA/NEA dues was \$598.08. You may find this amount on your last pay stub for 2008. Remember if you itemize, this is an important deduction!

Hot Deals and Discounts from NEA Member Benefits



NEA members get a five percent (5%) discount and free shipping on all orders, regardless of size, from SmileMakers, an online supplies discounter and a division of Staples. Members may also sign up for "Teachers' Club," which awards one point (worth 10 cents) for each dollar spent. First-time orders qualify for 25 extra points. Points may be applied toward future purchases.

Access SmileMakers at www.neamb.com/smile.



Happy St. Patrick's Day!