

TAAAC ACTION REPORT

Your Professional Organization

“Empowered Educators, Successful Students, Connected Communities”

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Teachers Association of Anne Arundel County, An MSEA/NEA Affiliate

January 2021

Happy New Year TAAAC Family

Hopefully, the well-earned winter and holiday break allowed everyone time to relax, recoup and enjoy your loved ones in the best manner possible under these trying pandemic circumstances, because it is now again time for AACPS to know we insist on R-E-S-P-E-C-T! Dr. Arlotto and AACPS did their best to play scrooge and push us in the holiday season with additional stress and uncertainty, with their instructional schedule change and accommodations’ staff-wide memos that they sent out just before the last day of school for 2020.

They will be hearing from TAAAC very soon as we insist on safe schools and a fair contract.

With the new year and the restart of school, we are certain educators will continue to provide world class instruction and support. The many challenges and whatever plans AACPS may surprise us with, will require TAAAC — all of us together— to make certain that our collective health, mental well-being, along with the best interest of students, and the broader community is included within any grand plans coming from the Board of Education and the AACPS Central Office.

But before we begin the work and planning of our joint response for the challenges that await us this calendar year – it is important for the entire membership to take just a quick moment to acknowledge our important successes and wins since March of last year:

- 1) Parents, students, Dr. Arlotto and his team have all noted educator commitment and the impressive manner TAAAC members have adjusted on the fly to providing the highest standard of virtual education possible.
- 2) TAAAC, along with community allies through a successful “Safe Schools Campaign,” stopped in-person instruction mandates for the fall.
- 3) TAAAC and AACPS are near a written understanding around safety protocols that now includes input from our colleagues in SAAAAC, AEL and AFSCME. (TAAAC had its most recent bargaining sessions on 12/16/20 and 12/22/20 to discuss safety protocols.)
- 4) AACPS had been more accessible, transparent and communicative, prior to sending out the staff-wide memos detailed above.
- 5) Through Zoom and other video conferencing tools, TAAAC has continued and in some circumstances grown member participation and communication.

Yes, these are TAAAC member-wide accomplishments that must be acknowledged and celebrated even if just for a moment, becoming part of our institutional memory and bolstering our collective confidence that we will be heard and can impact how we are treated, by acting in unison against plans to **again** try to direct us back into school buildings before it is safe and there is agreement on the final safety protocols.

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Commentary



Russell Leone

Welcome 2021! As of this year, TAAAC turns 100. As an Association, we have grown tremendously from the organization that started meeting in small numbers. But looking back at our historical documents, so much of our fight and our struggle as educators has been consistent. Salaries, ratings, and working conditions have been central themes in TAAAC advocacy throughout the years.

As we begin a new calendar year and a new century for TAAAC, these issues will still need to be addressed. On top of that, the impacts and effects of 2020 will continue to linger. COVID-19 has certainly dictated much of the work that TAAAC Leadership and members have undertaken. In the face of adversity, we continue to be strong for our students and adapt to provide the best possible environment. But now more than ever, we must look to the future and prepare for the next stage in supporting our students.

This will include an eventual return to schools and to our students in-person—when the time is right. The work we have done with AACPS has helped to keep our members healthy and provided safeguards in the workplace. We have collectively pushed AACPS for clearly determined protocols and they have responded because of your voice. While it's not perfect yet, we will keep pushing for consistent protocols and enforcement of the policies that will protect every person in our buildings. This will require all of us to be vigilant about reporting concerns and demanding the protocols are followed. TAAAC Leadership is here to support you, but we must be made aware of any and all issues. Please rely on your Building Representative to help you.

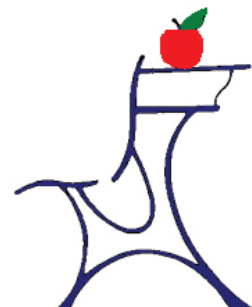
Looking forward also requires a pause to reassess our “business as usual” thinking of the past. I don't want us to think a reopening of schools will be a return to the “good old days” or a return to “normal.” There were many things that needed to be fixed before COVID-19 ever arrived. Therefore, we must not pretend the way it was is acceptable. Our students and staff deserve buildings that are maintained at high levels of quality regardless of where in the county

they are. Our students and staff deserve equal access to resources, so every child is getting the best education. Every one of our schools should look like, feel like, and be the best school in the county.

As an Association, TAAAC Leadership also recognizes that business as usual must evolve. We are seeking to incorporate what we have learned in this virtual space to continue to provide all members different ways to be active and contribute. This includes holding some of our committee and workgroups in formats that allow members to join virtually.

Our first TAAAC President, W.R. Irving, wrote in a letter to members: *“It will be many years before we cease having to fight for better schools. That is the job of the Association. Do your part.”*

I know that we will begin the second 100 years for TAAAC doing our part.



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From Contentia this month . . . *AACPS Progressive Discipline*

Your TAAAC staff spends a considerable amount of time advising and representing members on disciplinary issues. Although the BOE has not put their progressive disciplinary practices in writing, this is the structure that is generally followed as well as your rights and the role of TAAAC:

1) The progressive discipline ladder

- Counseling letter: This is the lowest level on the progressive discipline ladder and is defined as a non-disciplinary action. A counseling letter is subject to appeal and may be removed from your personnel file upon request after three years.
- Warning letter: A warning letter can be challenged through the grievance process. Unless removed as a result of a grievance settlement, these letters remain in your personnel file forever.
- Reprimand letter: A reprimand letter can be challenged through the grievance process. Unless removed as a result of a grievance settlement, these letters remain in your personnel file forever.
- Unpaid suspension: The length of a suspension can vary. A suspension is subject to appeal. Documentation of a suspension will remain in your file forever.
- Termination: Termination is also subject to appeal.

2) Investigations

- Except for a counseling letter, all other disciplinary actions require a pre-disciplinary meeting with you. You are entitled to representation at any and all pre-disciplinary meetings.
- Sometimes allegations of employee misconduct are investigated by the AACPS Office of Investigations. You are entitled to representation during any investigative meeting you are directed to attend.
- If the allegations of misconduct involve a student, you may be subject to an investigation by Child Protective Services (CPS). You are entitled to representation during any investigative meeting you are directed to attend with CPS.
- If the allegations of misconduct involve a criminal act, the police or other law enforcement agencies may be involved. Once again, you are entitled to representation during any investigative meeting you are directed to attend with the police or any law enforcement agency.
- An administrator may direct you to submit a written statement describing an event. Albeit you should do so in a timely fashion as directed by your administrator, you should review your statement with your TAAAC UniServ Director prior to submitting it.

3) Appeals and rebuttals

- You have the right to attach a rebuttal to any counseling letter or disciplinary document placed in your file. There are not time limits on submitting a rebuttal.
- Grievance and appeals are governed by strict time restrictions. All appropriate appeals and grievances must be written and filed soon after any disciplinary action is taken.

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Candidates for Secretary-Treasurer



Maureen Liakos

As secretary, I will acknowledge and respond to all correspondence without delay and regularly communicate with members to keep them informed. As treasurer, I will advocate for strong financial controls with responsible spending according to members' priorities. I will oversee all spending and propose cuts where possible. You should determine where every penny of your union dues goes. As an experienced leader with an MBA and M.Ed., I believe in transparent, responsible, and accountable leadership. I am a third-generation teacher from a strong union family who is deeply committed to members. Forward Together: Your Voice, Your Union.

<http://bit.ly/forwardtogetherslate>



Tamara Thumbtzen

Thank you to everyone who has previously supported me. I am humbly asking for your support again to continue as your Secretary-Treasurer. With the endless county budget constraints and the increased workload for educators someone with the training, experiences, and know-how to communicate in order to represent all of you, my colleagues is what's needed. I have worked diligently and with fidelity, showing up for a myriad of meetings and various events to be a respectable and respected representative for you. I remain committed to continuing my dedication to serve as one of your elected leaders. Thank you!

<http://bit.ly/TamaraThumbtzen>

Candidates for Board of Directors



Jorge Cordoba

I was there for you at the car caravan, the live testimony, and the candlelight vigil. I want to continue helping our union with a progressive mindset so as educators We can shape the story of who we are and who we can be. Forward Together: Your Voice, Your Union

<http://bit.ly/forwardtogetherslate>



Jan Deph

It has been an honor representing you at the local and state level. After rallying to Fix the Fund, passing legislation for the Kirwan Report, and electing education friendly BOE and County Council officials, I ask for your support and vote as we advocate for the equity of our students.

<https://bit.ly/2N4DnN3>

Candidates for Board of Directors Continued



Jill Grimm

I'm Jill Grimm, a Social Studies teacher & department chair at Crofton Middle School. I am an experienced building representative, ten + years. I faithfully attend Representative Assemblies, TAAAC rallies, key BOE meetings, MSEA's Summer Leadership programs, and am on TAAAC's Negotiations team. Please elect me for Board of Directors.

<http://bit.ly/JillGrimm>



Allison Heintz

I've worked hard for you for multiple years, now, as a member of the board, as your government relations liaison, as a GO Team leader, and a member of our internal TAAAC reopening committee. I look forward to working hard towards continuous improvement during another term. Thank you!



HyoYoung Minna Kim

In an education system that exploits our labor and dehumanizes us, I will continue to advocate for equitable decision-making and working conditions that reflect our professionalism and humanity through the lens of transformative justice, mindfulness, and critical thinking -- everything I want for our students. Forward Together: **Your** voice, **Your** Union.

<http://bit.ly/forwardtogetherslate>



Kristina Korona

As an experienced, committed activist, I'll ensure that TAAAC is strategically building our political power to win on salary equity, safety, and workload. Returning to the Board, I will once again critically examine policies and practices rather than just passively accept the status quo. Forward Together: **Your Voice, Your Union.**

<http://bit.ly/forwardtogetherslate>



Elizabeth Ruddy

As a member of the board it has been my pleasure to work with members through the GO Team and other organizing efforts. I am inspired by the passion and commitment of our members to our students and each other. I look forward to the possibility to continue to serve.

<http://bit.ly/ElizabethRuddy>

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Sydni Adu
Austin Altizer
Katie Brown
Rhonda F. Brown
Renee Cornelius
Christa N. Curry
Richard F. Davis
Kristen A. Evans
Richard H. Hall
Janetta Mason
Teresa J. McCloud
Cameron Nugent
Toluwalope A. Ogunrinde
Panayiotis Papaleonti
Shannon Pedersen
Brian Petruski
Jennifer R. Pittman
Jessica Raskin
Kimberly Risley
Lauren Talley
Curtish Watts

TAAAC All-Member Meeting

TAAAC Leadership will be hosting an all-member meeting on January 20 at 5-7PM. All members are welcome to attend and hear the latest updates on TAAAC structure, long and short-term goals, work around school reopening and safety, and negotiations. This will be on a Zoom webinar and pre-registration is required. <https://bit.ly/TAAACall-membermeet>



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Further, we must insist that the BOE and AACPS openly detail what safety metrics they now are relying on as they hint at current plans to mandate staff back into buildings. We all know and saw the Chief Medical Officer detail that any rate of infection over 15 per 100k is unsafe and within the “red” or danger zone. As of this writing (12/23/20) the County infection rate has soared to over 37 per 100k and clearly beyond what Dr. Kalyanaraman has recommended as safe. TAAAC rejects any *on the fly adjustments* to these guidelines not transparently and rationally based on science.

TAAAC will also quickly be back at the bargaining table for negotiations around FY22 wages and for a new collective bargaining agreement. Members will need to quickly be prepared for BOE budget hearings and potential adjustments to Dr. Arlotto’s recently released FY22 budget that currently includes a request to the County for funds to cover 1 step and a 1% COLA.

No question in my mind, we can meet all these challenges if we can continue to energize and activate our amazing membership. TAAAC leadership and our differing committees will be reaching out to all of you soon. We are ready!



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4) Representation

- You have the right to representation at any meeting that is disciplinary or could lead to disciplinary action against you.
- You do not have the right to representation during non-disciplinary meetings.
- If you are unclear on the purpose of a meeting you’ve been directed to attend, ask for an explanation. Be explicit – “Is this meeting disciplinary in nature, or could it lead to disciplinary action against me?”
- There is no harm in asking for your TAAAC representative to attend a non-disciplinary meeting with you. Sometimes you simply need someone to sit next to you for support.

5) Finally, you should consult your TAAAC UniServ Director throughout any of the actions described above. Contact TAAAC immediately as soon as you believe any type of disciplinary investigation may be initiated involving you.