

AT THE TABLE

BEYOND STEP
EQUITY

BARGAINING IN THE
BLUEPRINT ERA



A BARGAINING BULLETIN

TAAAC and AACPS bargaining teams returned to the table, but with a renewed commitment and focus on narrowing the outstanding language issues and finding resolution on those same items. Because TAAAC anticipates that the County Executive, who will present his budget at the end of this week, will retain the proposed 4% COLA and step advancement, the bargaining team only briefly addressed salary proposals during this session believing that next time we would be armed with more information and able to address the topic more fully.

Overall, however, negotiations were productive, and the discussions focused on items that would move the County in a direction that is consistent with the vision laid out in the Blueprint. The AACPS bargaining team responded to TAAAC's proposals, and TAAAC's team responded to the Board's packet. There were lengthy discussions around the respective proposals involving limits on non-professional duties as well as the need to include explicit language protecting individual planning time - time that everyone already enjoys. With Blueprint implementation, the need to protect individual time is increasingly necessary. The statute calls for increased non-teaching time to perform other "teacher activities" defined as improving instruction, tutoring students who are identified as requiring help, working with the most challenging students, working with students living in concentrated poverty, and leading or participating in professional learning. Nowhere in the statute is there a reference to simply providing or guaranteeing individual planning or preparation time, which is why every collective bargaining agreement requires strong, enforceable language. Anne Arundel County currently lags behind surrounding counties in the amount of planning time provided, which negatively impacts recruitment because of such poor working conditions.

We also deliberated over the increased workload of special educators and related services providers due to the continued necessity to address COVID-related learning loss. Given that AACPS still possesses a large amount of unexpended ESSER funds, we have sought to increase the hourly stipend rate for those who provide direct COVID-19 instruction, special education recovery activities, and COVID-19 related mental and social/emotional counseling and supports with students and families during the summer months or extended school year programs (summer 2022) and for similar services conducted beyond the regular duty day in the 2022-23 school year.

**YOUR
BARGAINING
TEAM**

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As discussed, the staff shortage, which is not going to be resolved in the immediate future, continues to be of primary concern. We continue to advocate for the inclusion of language in the collective bargaining agreement to provide compensation for class coverage when substitutes are not provided or vacancies persist. Ideally, we want to attract qualified educators to provide employees with time during the workday, but until that occurs, we fully intend to ensure compensation for that lost time that results in long hours beyond the negotiated workday.

Finally, we continue to express a desire and need to be included in the development of the County's Blueprint local implementation plan, which is due to the State Department of Education in March 2023. The County has put out a request for a vendor to assist in the development of its plan as well as the career ladder. Both the plan and career ladder require negotiations, therefore, TAAAC must be included in the ground-level discussions. Top-down implementation of such a comprehensive plan guarantees failure, which is why TAAAC's involvement in the initial phases of development is essential as well as consistent with the Blueprint's statutory provisions requiring collective bargaining. We need to reverse the unfortunate trend of top-down implementation that has existed in Anne Arundel County, and it must start with the Blueprint as we need to get this right for the students.

We are scheduled to meet again on May 11, 2022. The team remains optimistic that an agreement will be reached.

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MSEA General Council

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