

Arlington Education Association



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ACTION REPORT

Be a fan! The Arlington Education

March 2010

The Proposed Budget Affects YOU!

Learn more about the budget and help AEA advocate in your interest. Attend the following APS Board meetings and Budget Work Sessions:

APS School Board meetings—Thursdays, April 8, 22 & 29. All meetings begin at 7:30 pm in the Ed Center Board room.

April 8—School Board presents its budget to the County board.

- ◆ **April 22 Public Hearing on proposed budget. Be there!**
- ◆ **April 29 School Board votes to adopt budget.**

APS Budget: What You Don't Know

Members know the proposed FY 10-11 APS budget contains no step increase or salary adjustment (aka COLA) for staff, but here's some information you may not know—and what to do about it: **VRS**

The Delegate Assembly passed a budget awaiting the Governor's signature that gives school boards and localities the option of requiring current employees to pay a portion of the 5% employee retirement contribution. It allows your school board to elect any whole % up to 5%. In the '90s we employees gave up step increases so the Board would

pay our contribution to VRS. Now the Board may break its promise. What YOU can do: Write Governor McDonnell urging him to negate this part of the budget. Go to www.neavea.org and click on "Take Action Now!" link located beneath the picture of the capitol building. Send the letter written for you or modify it. Let the Governor know—"We're not gonna take it!" Step 2: Write the APS school board schoolbd@arlington.k12.va.us. Tell how you can't afford to pay a VRS contribution when your salary is frozen, and ask them not to increase health insurance co-pays.

Paying VRS and higher co-pays is a cut to our take-home pay! Help AEA help you. AEA is working very hard to advocate for you—read President Jennings' remarks to the school board: www.aeava.org.

The CAP program is suspended. This means those of you who worked to achieve NBCT or another CAP domain this year may not—if the suspension is approved—get your additional compensation. In anticipation of severe budget cuts, since October

(cont'd on page two)

IS THE SITE-BASED SURVEY ANONYMOUS?

Yes, the survey is anonymous; but perhaps you are wondering how the school system knows the number of staff who respond. The contractor who conducts the survey and collects the data, counts the number of respondents. The contractor does not provide APS with anything other than the resultant data and number of participants. Staff participation in the survey is essential, and AEA urges you to take the survey and to be honest in your responses. Why? The more respondents at each site,

the better the data. Since the survey focuses on schools, the system needs almost 100% of a school's staff to respond—especially at smaller sites such as elementary schools and special programs (e.g. Stratford).

The school system knows how many staff responded but the contractor does not reveal WHO responded. Be candid in your responses. The only way we can

improve our schools' climates is by honestly responding to the survey. The AEA President has taken the survey many times without repercussions. Be fearless. Tell APS what you really think. This may be your only opportunity!



LEGAL BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP for YOUR PERSONAL LIFE

Presented by VEA Attorney Dena Rosenkranz, April 20 at 4:30pm at Kenmore Middle School. Learn what AEA/VEA/NEA Legal Benefits are available to you and how to best utilize these resources beyond your professional life.

Registration is required for all workshops
E-mail page@aeava.org



THE APS BUDGET AND YOU (CONT'D)

AEA has advocated senior staff and recommended to CPST the immediate suspension of the CAP program. AEA did not want CAP candidates to work diligently to succeed in CAP only to be told their efforts would not be rewarded. Currently AEA is working to persuade the school board to reconsider the proposal not to award the current cohort of CAP graduates. Terminating the program for future candidates would be just. AEA was never convinced the CAP program was sustainable, and the current budget crisis proves us correct.

Mentors for experienced teachers-Out. In a budget crunch, this item is logical. Teachers with zero experience will receive mentors, but experienced teachers who are new to APS will not. Be aware mentors will no longer receive a cash stipend for mentoring. Ninety recertification points will be your sole reward. AEA and CPST recommended additional planning time for mentoring as one incentive to maintaining mentors, but has heard nothing from senior staff in this regard. Remember, mentoring is voluntary, and one can use a maximum of 90 recertification points for license renewal.

Planetarium-Citing the need for capitol improvement at an estimated cost of \$500,000 the proposed budget closes the planetarium. However the real savings is \$218,323. School board member Abby Raphael

claims the Planetarium equipment is so old it could break down without notice. Same thing applies to my car, but meanwhile I'll keep driving. Why not keep the planetarium open as long as possible?

Saving for Your Retirement-The proposed state budget reduces the school board's contribution to VRS by 6.56%. VRS has been traditionally underfunded and this doesn't help employees. Anticipating increases in FY 12 of 10.16%, the contributions would require another \$2.8 million. AEA applauds the board for attempting to reserve funding for this future liability.

Unfunded Liabilities-Depending upon an employee's years of service with APS, the school system will pay up to 72% subsidy for your retirement health insurance. The school system must plan for this liability and so it sets aside revenue for this purpose. Based upon staffing and forecasts, APS needs 18.9 million to fund this benefit. When balancing the budget items such as VRS contributions and retirement health care must be taken into consideration.

The proposed three-year budget forecasts DO NOT include step increases in the baselines! Dr. Murphy and some board members agree step increases are an expansion in a budget and don't belong in the baseline. *AEA strongly disagrees.* AEA successfully advocated for Policy 35-8.1 Salary. Section "C- Advancement on the Salary Schedule" provides annual step and longevity increases based on satisfactory performance. The policy also allows the superintendent to make exceptions. Suspending step increases for one year is very different from making exceptions in a 3-year forecast. Not including step increases in the 3-year forecast tells AEA they are an "afterthought" in the budget process. AEA is addressing this issue and needs your help persuading the board and senior staff to work in the spirit of this policy.

A VERY BIG PROBLEM

TAX TIME!

Don't forget to collect your receipts for unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses for your 2009 income tax return.

Your AEA DUES may be eligible for a partial deduction on your income taxes. Your calendar year payroll dues deductions for tax purposes are:

- T-Scale full time \$672.20
- T-Scale Half time: \$336.10
- ESP Full-time \$336.10
- ESP Half time: \$168.05

Consult your tax advisor for specific advice. Don't forget to deduct your unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses on your income tax. **Tax Day is April 15th!**

H&R Block and NEA Member Benefits make tax time less stressful!

H&R Block is the nation's largest tax preparation company and a name that millions of Americans know and trust. NEA Member Benefits and H&R Block have again joined forces to offer discounts and special pricing on tax preparation for NEA members. Receive \$20 off tax preparation at an H&R Block retail office or \$40 off in an H&R Block Premium office.* H&R Block has over 12,000 offices nationwide, so there's always one close to you. Learn more at: Save on a variety of H&R Block At Home™ online and software tax preparation products

LONG TERM CARE INSURANCE

Long term care insurance covers expenses for covered in-home, community, and facility care, including assisted living and nursing home care up to the benefit maximums you select. If you are considering the purchase of long term care insurance, you may wish to take advantage of an enrollment opportunity with the Commonwealth of VA Voluntary Group Long Term Care Insurance program. Insurance representatives will meet with APS employees on March 31 from 5-6pm at the Ed Center. Members should also check out **NEA's Long Term Care Insurance**. The services and rates are *extremely competitive* and may best-suit your needs. For information about NEA's Long Term Care Insurance go to <http://www.neamb.com>

BUDGET HEARING: AEA MEMBERS SPEAK UP FOR STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS!

Thanks to AEA members who advocated for students and educators at the March 18 APS Budget Hearings. Most notable were remarks by Arlington Mill teacher **Juan Polo**. He brilliantly articulated the plight of Arlington Mill students who may experience disadvantageous changes in their school schedules. Kudos also to **Danielle Anctil** who contrasted the greatness of our school system with proposed changes that could affect the teaching, learning and well-being of both students and staff. ITC Rajid Singh explained the key role of technology in the classroom and how diminution of technology services would hurt students and teachers alike. **AEA President Shelley Jennings** addressed various components of the proposed budget. To read members' remarks go to www.aeava.org.

VEA Board Confirms Officers

VEA President Kitty Boitnott, Vice President Meg Gruber and NEA Board of Directors member Lee Dorman ran uncontested for the VEA state offices of president, vice president and NEA Director. They were recently confirmed by the VEA Board to serve an additional term in each of the respective positions.

Be a fan! The Arlington Education Association is on **FACEBOOK!**