



Allegany County Teachers Association
an MSEA – NEA Affiliate

Reporter

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I hope the holiday season was a healthy and happy one for you and your loved ones. It is hard to believe that a new year is upon us and I'm still trying to figure out where the last decade went. It seems like only yesterday that we were approaching Y2K.

Now we are back at school and ready to do business as usual. Not much time to reflect on the last 12 months of economic distress, wars on two fronts, or proposed education reform, as we prepare our students to learn a solid year's worth of their grade level curriculum and master the material necessary to perform well on state tests.

I know I may be starting to sound like "a broken record" (if those of you under 30 know what a "record" is) but I am again requesting your support during the upcoming Maryland Legislative Session.

The support I am referring to would be in the form of calling or emailing our delegates when a timely reminder on education centered legislation is necessary. I know that teachers are not, by nature, political activists, and you may be unsure of the impact you can make on legislators as a teacher at the "grass roots" level. I think the article I have included in this issue of our newsletter will give you some food for thought -- and is free of calories in case your New Year's resolutions have put you on a diet! Let's resolve to make our voices heard in 2010, on behalf of our colleagues and the students we teach.

Debbie Pappas

Debbie Pappas
President, ACTA

NEED PENSION UPDATES?

Bill Brown, educator trustee on the Maryland State Retirement and Pension Board will be speaking at our Annual Membership Meeting on Monday, January 11, 2010. The meeting will be held from 4:00 – 5:30 p.m. in the large auditorium at the Career Center in Cresaptown.

All members are invited to attend and ask questions about the future of our pension system. Kim Rowley from the American Cancer Society will also speak on cancer screening; free lesson plans on health and nutrition to use with your classes will be available. Join us for a very informative meeting.

NEA MEMBER BENEFITS HAS YOUR BACK!

According to a recent communication from David Helfman, MSEA Executive Director, when Bank of America decided to change its existing Personal Loan Accounts from fixed to variable interest rates, NEA Member Benefits "went to bat" arguing against the unilateral change. The decision was particularly troubling because many NEA members purchased this type of loan to consolidate debt through a fixed-rate program. Due to NEA Member Benefits' strong and persistent advocacy, Bank of America listened to their customers' feedback. The Bank now plans to restore the fixed rate accounts for NEA Personal Loan applicants. This is a great example of the power of NEA Member Benefits to protect members' interests. For more information, contact neamb.com.

January 2010

POLITICS: A MATTER OF SURVIVAL

When you are born, someone appointed by an elected official registers your birth; and when you die, someone else appointed by an elected official records your death. In between the cradle and the grave elected officials and their appointees determine:

- The quality of air you breathe,
- The nutritional value of the food you eat,
- The cost of your health care,
- The education you receive,
- The effectiveness and safety of the medicine you use,
- The safety of the streets and the quality of the highways,
- The interest rates you pay,
- Your unemployment benefits,
- The cost of the fuel for your car,
- The cost of gas, electricity, water and phone service,
- The speed you can drive,
- The qualifications and certification you need to teach,
- The size of your class,
- Whether you can have a union represent you,
- The amount of your pension,
- Whether you have tenure,
- The textbooks you may use,
- The salary you earn, and
- Whether you will have a job in the future.

ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS TRAINING

The MSEA Women's Leadership Cadre' is offering the Organizational Analysis Skills Training on January 29-30, 2010 at the Hyatt Regency Resort in Cambridge, MD. Training begins at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, January 29. OAS training provides an in-depth look at how the association works at the state and national levels. Participants learn about decision-making roles related to budgets, governance matters and association leadership. ACTA will pay the \$35 registration fee and all travel costs for local members who participate. Contact dpappas@mseanea.org by Tuesday, January 12, 2010 if you are interested in attending this training.

I CAN DO IT TRAINING

MSEA School Quality is offering a free I Can Do It! Workshop on Saturday, February 6, 2010 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at MSEA headquarters in Annapolis. This training presents strategies for classroom management and is ideal for teachers with one to five years experience. Participants will learn how to create a positive learning environment and how to construct interventions for selected difficult behaviors. Practical tips on how to improve student learning will be provided.

Register on line at www.marylandeducators.org/ICDI. ACTA will pay for travel expenses for local participants. Deadline to register is Friday, January 27, 2010. Please contact dpappas@mseanea.org if you plan to attend.

Next page→

SCHOOLS OF DISTINCTION

Three Allegany County schools were recently named as 2009-10 Schools of Distinction: Frost Elementary, West Side Elementary, and Westmar Middle School. Westmar Middle School students (having a 40% economically disadvantaged pupil population) scored in the top 10% of Maryland schools on MSA, with 100% of all 7th graders scoring proficient or higher on the 2009 math test.

At Frost Elementary students also scored in the top 10% of schools statewide on MSA. For the first time in any of the Allegany County Public Schools, 100% of all students in grades 3, 4, and 5 who took this test scored at proficiency or above in both reading and math at Frost Elementary. West Side Elementary has over 40% of its student population designated as economically disadvantaged, yet has demonstrated significant gains in reading and math MSA scores over the last 3 years. Reading scores at West Side rose from 59.3% proficiency in 2003 to 89.7% proficiency in 2009. MSA math scores rose 47.2% at West Side since 2003.

Congratulations to all three schools and best wishes in becoming eligible for a Blue Ribbon School nomination.

ACTA ACHIEVES \$5,000 NCUEA GRANT

The ACTA has been awarded a \$5,000 NCUEA (National Council of Urban Education Associations) grant to fund a wellness project in the spring of 2010 and a Wellness Fair in the fall of 2010. ACTA will partner with the Allegany County Educational Services Council and the Garrett County Education Association to provide women members an opportunity to attend the National Ovarian Cancer Connection Rejuvenate Workshop at the Annapolis Double Tree Convention Center on Saturday, March 20, 2010. Registration for the event will be completed on-line and flyers identifying the website will be sent to members. The first 40 registered participants from the local associations will be accepted. For the registered participants, \$20 of the \$40 fee required to register on-line will be refunded by ACTA. All travel expenses will be paid for through the NCUEA grant. This is the fourth grant to be awarded to ACTA by NCUEA in the last 7 years, amounting to over \$18,000.

A meeting to discuss the event will be held on Thursday, January 21, 2010 at 4:00 p.m. at the Queen City Creamery. All interested members are invited to attend. Contact dpappas@mseanea.org for reservations.

TOYS FOR HAPPINESS

Employees of the Allegany County Public School System donated over \$4,000 and over 150 toys to the Toys for Happiness Fund Drive. Special thanks go to Mt. Savage Middle School staff and students for donating \$400 in proceeds from a school dance. The donations received for this holiday season were given in memory of Dr. Fred Sloan who, as a member of the Board of Education, was always a strong supporter of this fund raiser.

The generosity of all who participated is deeply appreciated.

DO YOU NEED A DOCTOR'S NOTE?

You do not have to provide a note from your physician to document an appointment that you complete on a personal illness day.

IN MEMORY

The ACTA donated \$25 to the George's Creek Public Library to honor the memory of our colleague, Dr. Fred Sloan. Fred's service to Allegany County students will long be remembered.

WHO COUNTS?

With the 2010 U. S. Census just around the corner, educators should be aware of their very important role in making sure that families are informed about the importance of the count and that Census-takers get accurate information, especially in "hard to count" areas.

Your school will be sent information from the Census about its 2010 count and "Census in Schools" (CIS) program. Inside the packets are materials to be shared with families, as well as lesson plans. Educators can make sure that those materials are actively promoted and distributed.

You might already know that Census figures are used to draw congressional and state legislative districts. The Census numbers also impact more than 50 federal programs, especially Title I and special education grants, and college tuition grants and loan programs. Although the actual count doesn't begin until March, when the Census mails 130 million forms to every household in America, work already is underway by the Census and its partner, NEA, to publicize the need for a fair and accurate count.

In the meantime, check out the [Census in Schools Website](#) where you can learn more about the Census, but also find lesson plans, maps, historical data, plus coloring pages, quizzes, word finds, and more. Information is also on the [nea.org](#) website.

PRESCRIPTION ISSUES

The continuing effort of the ACTA to resolve the prescription drug issues regarding brand name drugs has been successful. Those individuals who have suffered financial loss due to out-of-pocket expenses beyond the copay will be reimbursed. Please contact Mr. Steve Wilson of the ACPS Human Resources Office at 301-759-2033 regarding reimbursement.

Anyone continuing to have unresolved problems with brand name prescriptions should contact the ACTA office. Further information regarding use of the Care First website to locate brand name and generic drugs and local prescription prices will be forthcoming.

INPUT TO MSEA BUDGET COMMITTEE

The MSEA Budget Committee will begin meeting this month to project a budget for the years 2011-2012. The budget will be finalized at the Spring Rep Assembly on May 23, 2010. As a member, you can provide recommendations for the budget. Contact MSEA Treasurer, Terry Borneman at tborneman@mseanea.org before January 15, 2010.

TIMELINE FOR ELECTIONS

The ACTA elections for 2010 will include the offices of president, first vice-president, second vice-president, secretary and treasurer as well as delegates to the NEA Convention (July 1 – 6, 2010 in New Orleans) and the MSEA Convention in October, 2010. Nomination forms will be distributed to members during the week of January 19, 2010 and need to be returned to the ACTA office by Friday, February 5, 2010. Nominations for office will also be accepted on the floor of the Rep Assembly meeting on February 8, 2010. The actual ballots will be out during the week of February 15, 2010. Please exercise your right as a member to select your leadership.

We're on the web!

acta@mstane.org