

# ASSOCIATE

## Frederick County Teachers Association



Phone: 301-662-9077  
www.myfcta.org

### Presidents Message: Public Comment on the FY13 BOE Operating Budget

I am asking the Board to adopt a budget with sufficient funds dedicated to the salary resource pool. Based on the feedback we have received from teachers and the priorities set by our representative assembly, this is a necessity for your employees.

However, unlike previous years I am not going to beg for a raise based on the fact the employees have earned one. They have, but we have gone beyond making this decision based on how hard teachers work and what is owed to them. We are now at a point where we have to look at the issue of salary from a different angle. The fact is FCPS cannot afford to go another year without funding employee raises because the effect of having increasingly non-competitive compensation is undermining the ability of this system to achieve its stated mission of 'reaching our students with exceptional teaching and caring support'. FCPS is losing the ability to recruit and retain the best teachers. We are particularly losing the ability to attract a diverse teaching staff at a time our students population is becoming more diverse. The options for minority teachers, who are underrepresented in Frederick County, are too lucrative elsewhere. We need a diverse and effective teaching staff but we will not succeed in having one in the future with what is currently offered.

The fact is that Frederick County is not competitive with the school systems around us when it comes to attracting and retaining teachers;

Montgomery and Howard Counties, Fairfax County in Virginia and even Washington County to the West offer salary packages that lure teachers away from Frederick. Facts are facts; Frederick County ranks 8th in wealth in Maryland but 22nd for starting teacher salaries (which now includes all teachers with 1 to 4 years of experience). A teacher on step 10 with a Bachelor's degree fares only slightly better, ranking 20th in the state.

Teachers operate under the same economic realities as other professionals; other things being equal, they will take their skills and abilities to those employers that offer the best compensation. This means that FCPS is trending in the direction of selecting candidates for teaching positions who were not hired or even considered for interviews in other school systems. As the large bubble of baby boom teachers begins to retire competition for younger teachers is only going to get fiercer. FCPS will not be able to convince teachers not already connected to our wonderful county to come here when they have opportunities elsewhere that pay, in cases like Montgomery, Fairfax and Howard, much better than we do. Right now the National Teacher of the Year, Michelle Shearer teaches at Urbana High School. She teaches in a subject area of critical need and, as we all know, could get a job in any school system in this country. If she was just starting out today and had no roots in Frederick County would she choose to work here? I hate to think of other teachers of Michelle's caliber and accomplishments who are currently looking for a job. Can we truly say with confidence that they are going to apply and consider coming to Frederick County. I can't. I also hate to think of all the starting teachers currently working in our schools who are incredible, talented and passionate educators. Will they stay in Frederick County, or are we just training them for jobs in Montgomery, Fairfax, Howard or even Washington County? Cont. page 2

### Issue Highlights

Lobbying in Annapolis	3
Pension Shifts	4
Voting	5
Black History Month	6
Elephant Educators	7
NEA Academy	8



## President's Message (Cont.)

I have heard it said that as long as we can find a person to put in front of a classroom our salaries are good enough. I don't buy this. When Apple Computers is looking for computer programmers or product development experts do they say they will just hire the people Microsoft doesn't want. Does Pixar Animation say as long as they have someone that knows how to run a computer graphics program it doesn't matter how creative or talented they are. I doubt they do. Like all employers you need to compete for the best employees with a wage that is competitive. What you cannot do at this point is allow FCPS to fall further behind. I understand there are many competing needs you are being asked to meet in this budget. However, you have balanced the budget for the last three years by putting nothing into the salary schedule. This approach is no longer feasible. The cost to the quality of education in Frederick is too high.

As I finish my comments I would like to read from an email I received from Heather Smith, a third grade teacher in Howard County who lives in the city of Frederick. Ms. Smith writes:

I have been teaching in Howard County for five years now. I live in the city of Frederick. I am also currently a Master's degree student at Hood College. I am being educated by a Frederick college and taking what I learn to Howard County students. I commute a total of 50 miles each day to and from the school where I teach. I have calculated that I spend at least \$2,000 a year in gas alone. I would love to have the opportunity to come teach in Frederick County. I would like to use what I am learning at Hood to help the diverse learners in Frederick County. However, the difference in salaries at the Masters level between the counties is too large for the move to be worth it. ... I have no desire to move to a county where salary increases have been stopped altogether. It sends the message to me that you do not value your teacher's hard work. While Howard County has had financial issues, we still received a half step increase this year in our salaries. I want to come to Frederick County, but not if the general situation in the county is one where teachers are not appreciated and are not rewarded for their hard work with salary increases. ... I urge the Frederick County Board of Education, to take this opportunity to stand up and make it clear that you support your teachers and other education professionals. Send the message that you want to have the best teachers come and stay in Frederick County and that you are willing to make their livelihoods a top priority. Hopefully the next time you hear my name will be when I am an active education professional in the Frederick Public School System

I urge this board to advocate to the County Commissioners for the needs of this great school system. The BOCC has surplus funds that if used thoughtfully and creatively could help the school system meet the needs of our students and become more competitive in the luring great educators to our system. You can't get where you need to be by cutting the pieces of the pie into ever smaller slices, at some point you just need a bigger pie.

Effective labor unions are still by far the most powerful force in society for the protection of the laborer's rights and the improvement of his or her condition. No amount of employer benevolence, no diffusion of a sympathetic attitude on the part of the public, no increase of beneficial legislation, can adequately supply for the lack of organization among the workers themselves.

Monsignor John A. Ryan, in *Organized Labor and the Church*, 1993

**“Get On the Bus”  
Lobby Night in Annapolis  
February 27, 2012**

**FCTA will be heading to Annapolis Monday evening, February 27,  
to meet with our delegates and senators.  
Bus leaves the Fredericktowne Mall parking lot (in front of Boscov’s) at  
4:30.**

**Join us ..... make your voice heard.....  
Contact [gbrennan@mseanea.org](mailto:gbrennan@mseanea.org) to sign up!**



**MSEA’s Legislative Priorities for 2012**

- Fixing the Broken Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Law**  
A broken MOE law puts our children’s education at risk by opening the door to \$2.6 billion in local education cuts. We need to strengthen the law by ensuring it has accountability, flexibility, and fairness and that the state/local partnership to fund our schools remains well-defined, intact, and dependable.
- Rejecting the Irresponsible Shift of Teacher Pension costs to Local Governments**  
This much debated shift is tantamount to a huge cut in education funding – creating far more problems than it solves. We must reject such an irresponsible shift and instead lead the charge for the continued investment in our students.
- Supporting a Balanced Approach to Restore the Fiscal Health of Maryland**  
Solving budget challenges cannot be done on a continued diet of cuts. We need sensible solution, including new revenue, that will keep our schools great, our quality of life secure, and our jobs here.

**Go to [www.marylandeducators.org/activate](http://www.marylandeducators.org/activate) to learn what you can do to help protect the investment in our public schools!**

## Pension Shifts and Maintenance of Effort: Big Issues in Annapolis

After years of talk and speculation, it's finally happened. The state budget proposed by Governor O'Malley includes a shift of educator pension costs to local governments. The proposal—a 50/50 split of retirement costs—credits locals with what they already pay in Social Security and then adds in a percentage of pension costs to create an equal sharing of total retirement costs. In FY13, this amounts to \$239 million in extra liabilities that counties would have to shoulder.

This additional burden of \$9.1 million dollars to our county budget couldn't come at a worse time. Even if all the relief the Governor proposes to cover some of the increased costs, comes to fruition, the county would still owe an additional \$1.4 million. Costs to the county would increase in future years. With an outdated maintenance of effort law leaving the door open to \$105 million in local school funding cuts, the progress our students and schools have made thanks to Thornton funding will be compromised by increasing class sizes and workloads, layoffs and cutbacks, and outdated classroom resources.

This proposal deepens FCTA's growing concern about education funding and meeting the needs of our students and the expectations of our families and communities. "We know Frederick County can't take any more hits to education. We see it in our schools and classrooms, our growing workload, and our stagnant paychecks," said President Gary Brennan.

"Our county commissioners and our elected officials in Annapolis need to hear from us—and our families and communities. Those responsible for school funding in Frederick County need to know that we just can't keep up without their support. They need to do their part," Brennan added.

"A pension shift is poor policy on its own," said MSEA Director of Political and Legislative Affairs Sean Johnson. "But without a comprehensive fix to maintenance of effort, it's a disaster for our schools.

"Our Do Your Part for Great Public Schools campaign is focused on bringing local and statewide friends of education together to oppose a pension shift that threatens funding for our schools and to call for an urgent, comprehensive fix to maintenance of effort that protects the investments we've made in our children," added Johnson.

NOTE: Sidebar next to the article

How can you do your part?

- Learn more about how our county can exploit a broken maintenance of effort law to reduce their funding and shortchange Frederick County schools.

Visit [www.marylandeducators.org/doyourpart](http://www.marylandeducators.org/doyourpart) to get more information. While you're there, send an email to Gov. O'Malley and your representatives in Annapolis!



# For the Primary Election, the First Choice You'll Make is Which Day to Vote



*Primary Election Day:* Tuesday, April 3, 2012

*Early Voting:*

*March 24<sup>th</sup>-March 29<sup>th</sup> 2012, 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.*

*Sunday, March 25 early voting centers will open 12:00-6:00*

*p.m.*

*Frederick County Early Voting Center:*

*Frederick Senior Center*

*1440 Taney Avenue*

*Frederick, MD 21702*

*Independents as well as Democrats and Republicans are allowed to vote in  
the primary election for the Board of Education!*

**Power concedes  
nothing without a  
demand. It never  
did and it never  
will.**

**Frederick Douglass**

## **Insurance Council Begins Premium Setting Discussions for FY 2013**

The FCTA Insurance Council will begin to discuss insurance premiums for FY 2013 at their February meetings. As you are aware, there has been no increase in premiums for the past three years for active employees or retirees. Please understand that the cost of the FCPS health insurance plan has actually increased even though out of pocket costs to the employees have not. The reason that the school system and the employees have not had to pay for increased costs is that the surplus in the self-insurance fund has been used to defray the increased cost. It is not possible to predict what will happen with 2013 premiums, but the Association representatives will be advocating for both the financial health of the insurance plan and the economic needs of our members, who have not seen salary increases during the same time period rates have remained stable.

## Black Women in American History and Culture The 2012 Annual Black History Theme

From the American Revolution to the present, African American women have played a myriad of critical roles in the making of our nation. Their labor and leadership, their motherhood and patriotism, and their intellect and artistic expression have all enriched both the African American community and the nation at large. In slavery and freedom, their struggles have been at the heart of the human experience, and their triumphs over racism and sexism are a testimonial to our common human spirit.

In American culture today, many know of the accomplishments of a few prominent figures. From Phillis Wheatley, the unlikely American patriot during the Revolutionary War, to Harriet Tubman, the leader of the Underground Railroad from slavery, to Ida B. Wells, the unyielding opponent of lynching, to Rosa Parks, the mother of the modern Civil Rights Movement, black women have been notable for standing against oppression. From Gwendolyn Brooks to Toni Morrison to Rita Dove, they have distinguished themselves in American letters, and in recent years they have been recognized as actors and recording artists with Academy Awards and Grammys.

The accomplishments of these exceptional women are the expressions of a vibrant culture in which African American women play a singular role. The labors, struggles, organization, and sacrifices of common women have made possible the prominence of heralded individuals. In churches, community groups, literary societies, sororities, and advocacy organizations, African American women have been the core of organized black life, but here their strivings have often escaped the gaze of the public and hence their history is too little known.

Their story is unique in the annals of American history. Black women were held as slaves and middle-class black women labored while their counterparts were housewives. Subjected to a long history of stereotypes about their sexuality, morality, spirituality, and intellect, African American women have never succumbed to victimhood and have pressed forward to uplift themselves, their families, and their community.

To gain an understanding of the history of African American women is to broaden our understanding of a people and the American nation. The Association for the Study of African American Life and History dedicates the 2012 Annual Black History Theme to exploring African American women's roles in and contributions to the making of America. Go to [www.asalh.org](http://www.asalh.org) to learn more.



**H&R BLOCK®**

### **Special Discounts for NEA Members from H&R Block**

During February 2012, download a coupon for special NEA member discounts! File a federal form 1040EZ for FREE (through February 29, 2012) or save \$20 to \$99 on tax preparation at a participating H&R Block tax office or online at Block Live™. Visit [www.neamb.com/hrblock](http://www.neamb.com/hrblock) or call 1-800-786-3429 for details!



Your tax deductible FCTA  
dues for tax year 2011...  
**\$578**

*FCTA President Gary Brennan and Oakdale High teacher and FCTA Government Relations Committee member Jenica Gill talk to State Senator Ron Young at the MSEA Legislative Reception held in Annapolis on January 11th.*

*The event marks the start of the General Assembly legislative session and provides MSEA and local leaders a chance to meet with legislators to discuss our members concerns.*



## Are You an FCTA Member and a Republican?

The Elephant Educators Forum serves as the official website for the NEA-Republican Educators Caucus, a diverse group of dynamic teachers & education support professionals who are organizing nationwide to promote the great public schools agenda. Information about events, controversial issues, ideas and regional activities of the NEA-Republican Educators Caucus is openly exchanged here on the forum.

The Elephant Educators Forum is an on-line advocacy group dedicated to improving American public education through increased cooperation and understanding between Republican Party Organizations and the Teacher's Unions.

As MORE THAN ONE MILLION loyal registered Republicans who are also proud active NEA & AFT professionals, we are all devoted to creating excellent public schools.

Elephant Educators genuinely respect political diversity and believe in honest debate; therefore we invite conservative, moderate and liberal NEA & AFT Republicans to find a common home here on our forum. We understand that our engaged involvement in the political process will assist in changing the dynamics surrounding public school improvement. Elephant Educators will help both the Republican Party and our Teacher Unions to find common ground around our shared values and vision, recognizing the vitally important role that both the GOP and the NEA & AFT play in achieving educational progress.

Our primary goal is to improve the relationship between Republican Party organizations and Teacher's Union affiliates at all levels. Certainly, our on-line forum will expose both positive and negative examples from both sides as well as carefully monitor current issues, events and controversies. Our lively on-line postings will encourage extensive conversations between pro-public education GOP political leaders, Republican NEA & AFT activists and friends who wish to contribute to our healthy dialogue.

Ultimately, an essential purpose of our forum is to make both the GOP and the NEA & AFT better organizations. Elephant Educators hope that both the Republican Party and the Teacher's Unions will become more effective partners in advancing the quality public schools agenda.

As "Horace" our mascot illustrates, the Elephant Educators Forum enthusiastically welcomes you to join with us under the Big Tent. Go to [www.elephanteducators.org](http://www.elephanteducators.org) to learn more!

Trunks Up!



## Adopt-A-Classroom

Raise funds for classroom supplies and materials through donations from parents, friends, and local businesses. Register for Adopt-A-Classroom and see how fast money can add up! Learn more at [http://www.neamb.com/xchg/neamb/xsl/hs.xsl/-/home/1209\\_4734.htm](http://www.neamb.com/xchg/neamb/xsl/hs.xsl/-/home/1209_4734.htm)

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### Teacher Support Tool Gives Instant Access to Professional Development

The NEA Academy and Learning Bridges, a provider of research-based, online professional development programs, are now offering NEA members a new tool designed to increase teacher effectiveness and improve student outcomes.

The Teacher Support Tool comprises five powerful resources drawn from the Learning Bridges system:

1. **Instructional Strategies:** Research-based instructional strategies organized by grade level standards and Common Core State Standards.
2. **Lesson Plans:** Teachers can review and choose from proven, high-quality lesson plans for grades K-8 in a variety of subjects.
3. **Parent Activities:** Ideas for engaging parents in their child's learning—available in English and Spanish.
4. **Professional Development:** Unlimited access to just-in-time learning on instructional strategies and teaching standards.
5. **Online Community:** A national online learning community allows teachers to ask and answer questions in an online forum.

NEA members can subscribe to the Teacher Support Tool for only \$95 per year (a savings of 40%) and get unlimited access to professional development courses along with an online community for collaboration.

For more information about the Teacher Support Tool and how to sign up, visit the NEA Academy Online at [www.neacademy.org](http://www.neacademy.org)!

*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.*

*Nelson Mandela, South African statesman and Noble Peace Prize Laureate*