

THE LAMPLIGHTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE VINELAND
EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

FALL 2014

ELECT A BETTER BOARD ~ MCCARRON & RIOS !



Fellow members,

A Screening Committee formed at our September Rep Council has **endorsed Sean McCarron and Diamaris Rios for election to the Vineland Board of Ed.** The Committee considered all candidates written position statements, in-person interviews, voting records (incumbents), and the needs of our members and students. The NJEA Political Action Committee's endorsement guidelines were used and we came to clear consensus that **Sean McCarron and Diamaris Rios share our goals and have the experience to carry them out.**

Sean McCarron taught with us for 6 years and served as a Building Rep before becoming an Assistant Principal in Fairfield Twp. We heard only good things

from other NJEA members there. He is now a School Business Administrator / Board Secretary and Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction in Runnemede. Never has a Board candidate had this much experience and knowledge to benefit our kids and members. Sean said it best, "I'm not running to be Freeholder or to get someone hired or fired, I'm here because I love education and want to make sure Vineland's is the best it can be."

Diamaris Rios has served tirelessly to involve parents and advocate for our students and members. She is against privatization and was instrumental in helping us reach a contract agreement two years ago. She rises above other candidates with

her recognition that the Board and central administration must *work together and compromise in the best interests of the students and staff.* Diamaris understands the need to increase revenue and raised the possibility of putting this to the voters. This is long overdue and may help defuse an expected budget shortfall and its impact on the bargaining table, program cuts and staffing, and supply shortages. The other candidates are sincere, good people. However, none are able to bring the level of experience and shared vision to the Board like **Sean McCarron and Diamaris Rios.** **Be part of the solution - work to get family, friends, and co-workers to vote McCarron / Rios on Tuesday!** Your job may depend on it.

BOARD SCREENING COMMITTEE:

Thank you to those who were nominated and volunteered to serve on the Committee. Special Thanks to Shirley Santos for organizing and being the driving force to make it happen.

Serving on the Committee:
Shirley Santos, Legislative Contact and Committee Chairperson (Sabater)

Glenn Muller, Vice-President (Wallace)

Rita Myers, Building Rep. (Durand)

Alexis Cartegena, Building Rep. (Mennies)

Karen Kreck, Building Rep. (Mennies)

Valerie Carbonara, Treasurer (Sabater)

Louis Russo, President (VHS-South)

Charles Griffiths, Retiree Liaison (formerly VHS-S)

Questions included: Board member roles, privatization, motivation for running, experiences that will help to make educational and operational decisions, budget and communication.

REMINDERS:

- Pay dates changed to every 15th and last day of the month. Salary will be divided equally over 20 paychecks.
- Adjust the timing of any automatic withdraws like mortgage and car payments as necessary.
- SGOs due on Oncourse by October 31.
- We are in Tier 3 of health insurance premium sharing. See our website to calculate your contribution.
- **Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 4.** Polls open 6am-8pm. Vote ~ no excuses!

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PRIDE CHAIRPERSONS HONORED BY NAACP



V.E.A. Pride in Public Education Committee Chairs Stephanie Armstrong (left) and Daisy Mercado (right) were recently honored by the Greater Vineland Area Chapter of the N.A.A.C.P. at their annual breakfast awards program for their work in writing and facilitating the V.E.A.'s extensive grant programs across the Vineland Public Schools. Stephanie and Daisy distribute grant information, assist members in writing grants, review grants and file the necessary paperwork and claims with the N.J.E.A. They also help process the reimbursement of grant recipients for

their costs and supplies.

The V.E.A. funded over \$43,000 to over 40 member programs during the 2013-14 school year! These programs are designed to bring parents into greater involvement with their children's education and enrich the experiences of our students. Daisy explained, "As budget cuts reduce the enrichment programs, supplies and activities for our students and parents, the Association is proud to step up and fill the void."

Contact Daisy or Stephanie at Sabater for more information in the V.E.A. Pride Grant program: dmercado@vinelandea.org

C.C.C.E.A. AND N.J.E.A ENDORSEMENTS

MOST PROBLEMS IN THE LAST 5 YEARS HAVE BEEN POLITICAL—THE SOLUTION IS INCREASINGLY AT THE BALLOT BOX, NOT THE BARGAINING TABLE...

VOTE NOV. 4!

C.C.C.E.A. Endorsements:

Carlos **MERCADO** and Jim **SAURO** for Cumberland County Freeholder.

This is the first time our county association has screened and endorsed candidates for county office. Both pledged their support for public education. **MERCADO** is a former VEA-endorsed Board of Ed. mem-

ber and active leader in the firefighter's union.

N.J.E.A. PAC:

Frank **LOBIONDO** (CD2), Donald **NORCROSS** (CD1), Aimee **BELGARD** (CD3) for U.S. House of Representatives. **LOBIONDO** represents most of South Jersey and is a reliable vote on our side of federal education and labor issues. He even bucks

the party line when necessary.



Corey **BOOKER** for Re-Election to the U.S. Senate. Now that he represents the entire State, he has gained experience beyond Newark, charters, and merit pay. He's learning from us and opened good dialogue with NJEA.

BREAKFAST...

Although we believe every child should have access to a healthy breakfast and applaud the district's efforts to secure a federal grant to pay for it, we are disappointed with the district's decision to require teachers to track and report student breakfast program usage. *Like you really need another thing to do in homeroom?! Why privatize if we do the work and not Sodexo?*

When this issue was first reported, we were told that teachers

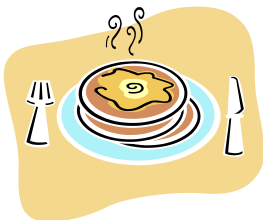
had to monitor student food allergies and would be responsible for making sure allergic foods were avoided and that teachers had the added homeroom responsibility to tally on paper which students took breakfast. I immediately met with Dr. Grucio and Purvesh Patel of Sodexo in early Sept. and outlined the V.E.A.'s position:

- We will not be liable for ensuring foods do not conflict with student food allergies because we have no

way of knowing ingredients and allergies.

- We will not handle breakfast delivery or cleanup; it is food service and maintenance's work.
- It is Sodexo / Food Service's proper role to serve and track student breakfast usage for audient and grant purposes.

Continued on page 4...



SICK TIME USAGE

During the last year or two the district has taken a much more serious stance with employee attendance. Dr. Rossi is following a three-step process of progressive discipline for repetitive, high sick day usage. Step 1 is a “verbal warning” (which is written). Step 2 is a “written warning” (which we call a reprimand). Step 3 is either a suspension or the recommendation to withhold a salary increment for the following school year. These are serious penalties which will cost you money.

Please realize that while we receive 13 sick days each year, they are not an entitlement. They are an insurance policy of income protection for instances in which you are ill an unable to work. It is

against state law for certificated staff to use a sick day for anything other than their own, personal illness or medical appointment. If you are out for a family member’s illness, religious holiday, or home emergency, you must use a personal day. Except for emergencies, which must be documented, personal days need at least 3 days prior notice. On Aesop, the option, “Illness – Illness in Family” should NOT BE USED BY CERTIFICATED MEMBERS. The only VEA members who CAN use this option are secretaries because they have this right as Civil Service employees. Anytime any member uses a sick day on the day before or after a holiday or scheduled school closing, we highly recommend that you secure a physician’s note to document your absence. A \$10 copay is much cheaper than the loss of a day’s pay! We understand that not

all illness requires a doctor’s visit, however, state law gives public employers the right to request documentation of ANY sick day usage (even a single day). See law at right.

Obviously, the VEA will advocate for any member who receives discipline for any legitimate use of sick time. There is no number of days in which you are considered to have poor attendance. Under NJ law, each employee’s case must be treated on its own, unique facts. In summary, don’t use sick time for anything other than your own, personal illness. Don’t be afraid to use sick time for legitimate health conditions or illnesses which impair or make it impossible to do your job. Stay home and recover. If you need more than 5 days, you must request a medical leave of absence in writing from the Personnel Dept.



18A:30-4. Physician's certificate required for sick leave

In case of sick leave claimed, a board of education may require a physician's certificate to be filed with the secretary of the board of education in order to obtain sick leave. L.1967, c.271.



VACANCIES— SUBSTITUTES

In a money-saving move, the district began the school year with “long-term subs” in many teaching vacancies. *This is illegal.* Glenn and I met with Dr. Gruccio and Dr. Rossi to share our expectation that the district must follow the law regarding vacant positions and the amount of time a substitute may work in such a vacancy. They agreed to hire all fully certified substitutes with CEs or CEASs who were working within their own certificate field, provided building administration approved in retaining them.

In short, the VEA will not allow colleagues to be underpaid as substitutes and full-time, full-salary positions to be privatized out to underqualified substitutes. Students deserve a fully certified teacher and that fully-certified teacher deserves the contractually guaranteed salary and benefits. Those working in these positions as substitutes were also being denied their pension accrual.

To be clear, the law allows a substitute to work in a VACANT position for only 20

days per year if they only hold a county substitute certificate. If the substitute holds a teaching certificate (CE or CEAS) and is substituting in a vacancy for which they are NOT certified for, they can cover that position for only 40 days. If they are substituting in a position for which they DO hold the appropriate certificate, they may cover the position for up to 60 days. In essence, the law mandates that teaching vacancies are filled with certified, full-time replacements within 60 days. The 60 day limit is in mid-December. Many have already been Board-approved as of Nov. 1, so the district has

been working in good faith to remedy the situation. Note: this law applies to vacant positions, not positions in which the regular employee is on a long-term leave, such as maternity leave. If it is still someone else’s position, a sub may be used the entire year. We don’t make up the law, we just follow it! *Glad to know that well over 20 ‘long-term substitutes’ will now become full-time teachers and members.* If you are affected by this and have questions, please contact Lou Russo at the VEA office. See page 4 for contact info.

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WE'RE ON TWITTER
[@VinelandEA](https://twitter.com/VinelandEA)

CHECK IT OUT FOR EMERGENT ITEMS
AND NEWSFEEDS TO STAY INFORMED

Representative Council Meeting Schedule

(All meetings begin at 4:30)

Nov 17 - New Member Orientation / Cosmopolitan (Dinner Included)

Dec 15 - Cosmopolitan (Dinner Included)

Jan 26 - Memorial School Cafeteria

Feb 23 - Memorial School Cafeteria

Mar 16 - Memorial School Cafeteria

Apr 27 - Memorial School Cafeteria

May 18 - Memorial School Cafeteria

June 8 - Cosmopolitan (Dinner Included)

Give your questions TO your Building Reps prior to each meeting.

Look for important information FROM your Building Reps after each meeting.

Ask Building Reps for copies of information distributed, meeting minutes, and Treasurer's reports.

Reps: Please RSVP to Kathy by noon Thursday prior to mtg.

BREAKFAST

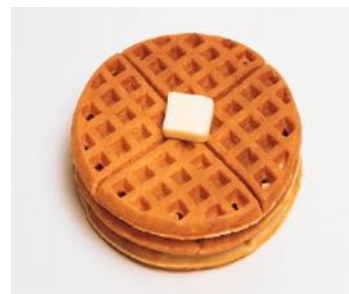
CONTINUED...

Mr. Patel was knowledgeable and cooperative and shared the state auditor's recommendation (and Sodexo's preference) that this information (allergies and usage data) should be tracked by the food service staff at the point of service (where the food is given out). We all agreed that the best policy would be for students to travel to the cafeteria to pick up breakfast, enter their pin into Sodexo's computerized system for grant data and allergy alerts, and then students would go to homeroom to eat. Sodexo, the corporate experts in food service, would handle it. Makes sense, right? After two weeks went by and no changes were observed, I again spoke with and met with

Dr. Gruccio and Nathan Frey. The result of this meeting was that it was redundant to make teachers take breakfast tallies on paper and that even elementary school students were capable of traveling to and from the cafeteria with their breakfast. Again it was agreed that teachers would not need to monitor or track student breakfast usage and teachers would be released from liability over food allergies since the district/Sodexo computer system in the lunchrooms was set to track both. Dr. Gruccio asked us to wait until her district administration meeting on October 16 before changes were to be made. Evidently, some district principals complained that they did not want students to travel to the cafeteria. Without any prior consultation with the VEA, the central administration decided to create a breakfast reporting system on Genesis. We checked with NJEA-Uniserv

to see if we can challenge this as improper unit work, *but unfortunately the answer is NO*. Since we take attendance anyway, recording this student data is a normal part of our job responsibilities. *While we have to comply with the directive, you should still feel free to report any issues or problems you see with the program to your building principal.* Dr. Gruccio reported that principals claimed that there were no complaints or issues over breakfast in their buildings and that it works fine as is. The VEA believes otherwise, so when you send any issues or complaints to your principal, please document them by sending a copy to us as well at kserrano@vinelandea.org.

Why bring in a multi-national, billion dollar corporation whose expertise is food service if you are going to ask teachers to do part of the work for them? That doesn't make any sense to me. How about you?



There was a lot of 'waffling' by central administration over breakfast procedures!

MEMBERS ARE
REMINDING THAT
WE ARE IN THE
LAST YEAR OF
OUR CONTRACT
AND WE WILL
BEGIN
NEGOTIATIONS
FOR A NEW
CONTRACT THIS
WINTER