

# THE LAMPLIGHTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE VINELAND  
EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

WINTER 2015

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ON NEGOTIATIONS

Dear Members,

Greetings to you and yours! As you probably already know, our current Agreement expires on June 30, 2015. We have already begun a new round of collective bargaining for a successor Agreement with the Board. See the VEA website for updates on the negotiations process. Thank you to all members who returned their negotiations survey. We are in the process of tallying the results and we will share them with you at a General Membership meeting in the Spring.

The Negotiations Committee will take your priorities to the bargaining table and use them to inform their decision making. Because it is the membership's contract, we need the membership's input.

The results also give the Negotiations Committee supporting evidence with which to answer the Board's proposals. The overall financial health of the district will undoubtedly factor heavily in to negotiations. As you should know, the district has refused to budget up to the 2% cap every year since the School Finance Reform Act (SFRA) passed in 2007. This, as well as the Board's refusal to raise any meaningful local tax revenue for nearly two decades, and the Governor's taking of school district surplus has put the district into a structural deficit. The district has forecast a budget deficit of approximately \$6 million dollars for the 2015-16 school year. The high and middle school levels' nine

period day will also factor in to the Board's proposal as a cost-savings measure. Both of these scenarios count on a reduction in teaching staff to save money. Please realize that due to state law we cannot bargain the educational program. Regardless of any settlement, the Board has the legal right to reduce staff. The current state average for settlements is approximately 2.4%. However, the Cumberland County average is lower as is to be expected in NJ's poorest county.

Another important issue will be the status of health insurance premium sharing after 2015-16, our 4<sup>th</sup> and last year of mandatory premium sharing under Chapter 78. After year 4, which will be the first year of the new contract, health insurance again

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## 30 MINUTE LUNCHES FROM OUR VICE PRESIDENT:

30 Minute Lunch on Early Dismissal Days... Why? During Superintendent Dr. Maryann Banks' administration, a request was made to then-V.E.A. President Sal Emburgia to help bring the school day into compliance with the State-mandated 240 minute, minimum daily

requirement for student instructional time (lunch and passing time do not count). In order to bring the district into compliance, the half-day instructional time was increased, which reduced the amount of time for parent-teacher conferences. Dr. Banks requested

a side agreement, in which the V.E.A. would agree to reduce lunch from 40 minutes to the length of the student lunch period (30 minutes) on early dismissal, parent/conference days.

A side bar agreement is a collective bargaining agreement

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### REMINDERS:

- Keep track of all sick days and personal days—Aesop is not reliable
- Pay dates are the 15<sup>th</sup> and last day of the month. We are paid earlier only if those dates fall on a BANK HOLIDAY (a day in which banks are closed for business) or Sunday. We are not paid on the last working day prior to a SCHOOL HOLIDAY. Since State-mandated direct deposit made payroll all electronic, it is not necessary to be at work to receive our paychecks.
- The VEA does not recommend that any member sign a petition concerning paydates. The pay schedule was negotiated and ratified by our members in 2013. This petition is not endorsed by the VEA.

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# PRIDE EVENTS

V.E.A. Pride Grant programs have taken place in the following elementary schools:

**Max Leuchter's Family Craft Night** Max Leuchter Elementary School held its first Craft Night sponsored by Vineland Educational Association on Thursday, Nov. 20. This was a night where parents or grandparents were able to spend some quality time with their children or grandchildren.

**D'Ippolito Elementary School's Parent Appreciation Night** More than 450 parents and students of D'Ippolito Elementary School participated in the school's annual Parent Appreciation Night, entitled "Parents,

Potions and Potter" on Nov. 21. The evening was funded, in part, by the Vineland Education Association, through a Pride Grant. This event was designed to recognize our parents and celebrate their dedication to our school and their children. This evening event provided families with a magical, educational and fun-filled Harry Potter themed experience

**Dane Barse's Schools Character Ball** We had over 200 people in attendance. The students participated in a costume fashion show, took pictures in a decorated photo booth, and ate delectable treats while in the cafeteria. When the students rotated to the classrooms they were able to decorate a pumpkin, listen to an age appropriate story, and work on fall themed computer games. The students and families were entertained and enjoyed the many different elements of the night. Students from Mrs. Pantalione's class shared that seeing their friends dressed up in costume and decorating a pumpkin was their favorite part of the night!

**Sabater Elementary School** recently hosted "Viva la Cultura", an evening for celebrating Hispanic culture. The event included typical Hispanic food provided by local restaurants, arts and crafts, music, learning about World Cup soccer and how to play the game, and dance/fitness and its connections to the Spanish language.

**The Dr. William Mennies School** kindergarten classes visited their Senior Penpals at Spring Oak Assisted Living Center on 12/3,

12/4, and 12/10/14. The Seniors helped the boys and girls make reindeer, gingerbread and penguin ornaments to decorate Spring Oaks. Everyone had a great time. Some of the Seniors commented that the kindergartners made them feel young. The boys and girls told their Penpals how they were so good this year and what they wanted for Christmas after they found out that their Penpals were friends with Santa Claus. We are grateful to the Vineland Education Association for providing grants for both Senior Penpal trips (December and March) and for the Grandparents' Thanksgiving Feast.



## NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUED...

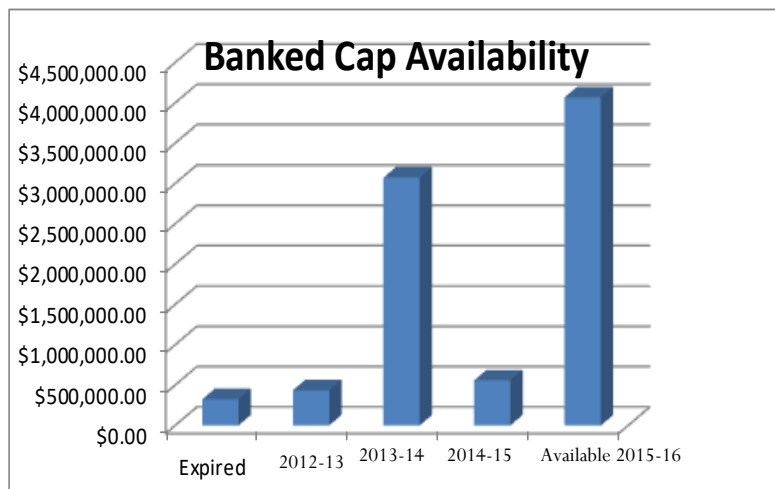
becomes a negotiable item. Negotiations begin at the level established by year 4. This allows the Association and the Board to bargain what will happen with premium sharing during years two and three of the next contract. Some Boards of Education across the state have taken the position that they cannot bargain premium sharing changes until the expiration of a contract. That is, if year 4 falls within a contract, the Association is stuck with those terms until the contract has expired. NJEA believes this is a misinterpretation of the law. In fact, about a dozen districts in the state have successfully negotiated contracts that create new terms after year 4. We'll see what position our Board takes.



Our Goal—A Ratified Contract!

Another factor to consider is the amount of property tax revenue that the district could raise by utilizing its banked cap availability. Each year, when a district does not budget to cap, that amount is available for use

(without a vote) for three years there-



after. So, Vineland has \$4,067,966 available to use for next year's budget. That is roughly enough to fill 2/3rds of the district's budget deficit. See the chart above to see the dollars of unused cap space the district has let expire and has available for each year. The large increase in 2013-14 was due to the increased cost of health insurance.

# V.E.A. Elections



Three (3) positions are up for election: Vice-President, Recording Secretary, and Delegates to the N.E.A.-R.A. All members are entitled to run for any office. If you are interested, self nominations for V.E.A. offices of Vice-President and Recording Secretary must be submitted in writing and received prior to 12 noon on March 31, 2015. Self nominations can be emailed to our Office Assistant, Kathy Serrano at [kserrano@vinelandea.org](mailto:kserrano@vinelandea.org) or sent by regular mail to the VEA Office at 727 Elmer Street, Vineland, NJ 08360. The duties of each office are listed below. Regina Merkel (Petway) is the chairwoman of the Elections Committee and will oversee the reporting of nominations in April, the publishing of statements, and the balloting, if necessary. Please direct any elections questions to her, care of the VEA Office.

Section 2: The Vice-President shall:

- A. Perform all duties belonging to the President in his/her absence, including signing of all checks.
- B. Be an ex-officio member of all committees and see that they function properly.
- C. Serve as Professional Rights and Responsibilities (Grievance) chairperson.

Section 3: The Recording Secretary shall:

- A. Keep a permanent record of all meetings of the Association, the Representative Council, and the Executive Committee.
- B. Maintain a current list of the membership of the Association, along with the Membership Chairperson.
- C. Prepare the Representative Council minutes for distribution to the representatives and chairpersons. These shall be received at least seven days prior to the next council meeting. The Secretary may cast a ballot if an office is uncontested in favor of the candidate nominated for an elected office.

## Delegates to the National Education Association Representative Assembly (NEA-RA)

Seven (7) delegate seats are available to members who wish to attend the July 1—July 6 N.E.A.-R.A. in Orlando, Florida. If more than 7 self-nominations are received we will proceed with an election. The V.E.A. provides partial funding prior to for airfare. N.J.E.A. provides the other half of the funding at the conclusion of the Assembly to pay for hotel costs. Delegates are responsible for making their own flight reservations. Delegates must attend and vote at all Assembly sessions and early morning (7am) N.J.E.A. caucus meetings. Lunch and one dinner is typically provided by the CCCEA. The V.E.A. reimburses our delegates for one dinner. Delegates must also attend a NJEA Caucus meeting on June 6 at the East Brunswick Hilton.

**Self-Nominations for N.E.A.-R.A. delegates must be received via email to [kserrano@vinelandea.org](mailto:kserrano@vinelandea.org) or by regular mail to V.E.A., 727 Elmer Street, Vineland, NJ 08360 by 4:00 pm on March 10.**

30 MINUTE LUNCHES CONTINUED....

that is not part of the primary collective bargaining agreement (PCBA). The purpose of side agreements is to modify a PCBA, until such time as the issue can be bargained into a PCBA. Typically, side agreements are temporary.

Our current workday is 7 hours in length. Bringing the district into compliance with instructional time would result in 1 hour and 30 minutes available for parent/teacher conferences. The request to reduce lunch to 30 minutes would permit conferences to be extended by 10 minutes. This would, in effect, result in an early dismissal work day of 5 hours and 20 minutes, leaving 1 hour and 40 minutes for

conferences.

Dr. Banks' side agreement request was brought before the VEA Representative Council by president Sal Emburgia. After discussion, the Rep Council authorized Sal to enter into the agreement.

An unintended result is that the agreement carried over to every early dismissal day. The district provides 3 early dismissal days before Thanksgiving, Winter, and Spring breaks, in which staff are permitted to leave early. VEA members benefit from working a reduced day (5 hr & 20 min.) on these early dismissal days. The time benefit for these days is 5 hours. For the

2014-2015 school year, the time cost of the reduced lunch for all early dismissal days is 1 hour and 50 minutes. The resulting benefit time for members is 3 hours and 10 minutes.

One of the goals of the V.E.A.'s leadership is to provide a contract that benefits members. The issue of reduced lunch on early dismissal days has been raised by some members. It is our intention that this explanation helps members understand the purpose of entering into the side bar agreement. However, the negotiations team will address this formally during contract negotiations.

VEA Retirement Gala is May 15 at the Savoy

\$35 per ticket

See building rep for tickets



VINELAND EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

727 E. Elmer Street  
Vineland, NJ 08360

[Www.vinelandea.org](http://www.vinelandea.org)

Visit the website often for news, workshops, and information.

Phone: 856-696-9200

Fax: 856-696-8610

E-mail: [lrusso@vinelandea.org](mailto:lrusso@vinelandea.org)  
[kserrano@vinelandea.org](mailto:kserrano@vinelandea.org)

Representative Council Meeting Schedule

(All meetings begin at 4:30)

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.