

MTA Today

*A publication of the Massachusetts Teachers Association
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FARM-TO-SCHOOL CONNECTION PROMOTES HEALTH AND LEARNING



MEMBER ACTIVISTS
HELP INFORM COLLEAGUES
ABOUT CRITICAL ISSUES



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Massachusetts students keep top NAEP spot

Massachusetts fourth- and eighth-graders once again led the nation in reading and mathematics performance on the recent National Assessment of Educational Progress exams, Governor Deval Patrick announced on Nov. 1.

This is the fourth set of NAEP tests in a row on which Massachusetts students have scored first or tied for first place. Since 2005, Bay State fourth- and eighth-graders have led the nation in performance on NAEP exams in both reading and math.

"I want to congratulate our educators and our students for continuing to produce such great results year after year," MTA President Paul Toner said after the new results were announced. "I am incredibly proud of the MTA educators who give so much every

day to give our students the knowledge and skills they need to succeed, despite the challenges they face in their classrooms."

According to the 2011 NAEP results announced by the governor, Massachusetts students ranked first alone among states in fourth-grade reading and in eighth-grade mathematics. The Commonwealth tied with New Hampshire for first in fourth-grade math and tied with Connecticut, New Jersey, Montana and Vermont in eighth-grade reading. Massachusetts fourth-graders scored higher in reading since the last test in 2009, and scores held steady for fourth-graders in mathematics and for eighth-graders in reading.

"These promising results reaffirm our position as a national leader in education," said Governor

Patrick. "I am extremely proud of the work our students and teachers put in to achieve these results and remain committed to ensuring that every child is prepared for success in the classroom and beyond."

Known as "The Nation's Report Card," the NAEP is the federal government's official measure of what American students know and can do in core academic subjects.

Governor Patrick, joined by Education Secretary Paul Reville and Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Mitchell Chester, announced the latest NAEP results with students and teachers at the Cobbet Elementary School in Lynn.

MTA Today

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MTA's Mission Statement

The Massachusetts Teachers Association is a member-driven organization, governed by democratic principles, that accepts and supports the interdependence of professionalism and unionism. The MTA promotes the use of its members' collective power to advance their professional and economic interests. The MTA is committed to human and civil rights and advocates for quality public education in an environment in which lifelong learning and innovation flourish.

MTA President

Paul Toner

MTA Vice President

Timothy Sullivan

Executive Director-Treasurer

Ann Clarke

Communications Director/Editor

James Sacks

Staff Assistant

Janice Morrissey

Publisher

Ann Clarke

Graphic Arts Assistant

Jacqueline Feng

On the cover

Throughout Massachusetts, educators are working to help students lead healthy lives by promoting locally grown food and using agriculture in their classroom activities. Jessica Ouimet, who teaches in West Springfield and has a farm in Westfield, is pictured working with children in the garden at the Coburn Elementary School. For coverage, turn to page 6.

Meanwhile, more and more

MTA members

— including Attleboro teacher Jeanne Dyer, who presented information on the campaign for adequate revenues

at a recent meeting of local presidents — are playing active roles in informing colleagues and conducting training. A story appears on page 3. Interested in an easy link to the MTA website on your smartphone? Just scan the blue QR code or visit the link printed on the lower right portion of the page.



Photos by Bob Duffy and Laura Barrett
Cover design by Jacqueline Feng



The Massachusetts Teachers Association
20 Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108
800.392.6175 or 617.878.8000
FAX: 617.742.7046
www.massteacher.org



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Quote-Unquote

"Tonight, we are all Ohio. The good people of the Buckeye State sent an unequivocal message to those who play politics with the lives of teachers, nurses and firefighters: We got your back."

— NEA President Dennis Van Roekel, commenting on the vote to repeal Ohio Senate Bill 5, which attacked public employees' collective bargaining rights

Member activists take the initiative

By Sarah Nathan

For some, the path to activism is clear early on. Others need more time to find their way.

Take Jeanne Dyer, for example. Today, the longtime Attleboro High School Spanish teacher is very “out there.” She is an MTA Board member and a delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly, and she is active in local, state and national politics. She recently has taken a lead role in the MTA’s campaign to create new state revenue streams to protect critical services for our communities, including public education.

In mid-September, Dyer outlined the goals of the revenue campaign to more than 200 local association presidents at an All Presidents’ Meeting hosted by the MTA in Natick.

“If you told me in 2003 that I was going to lobby on Beacon Hill or speak to more than 200 people, I would have told you that you were out of your mind,” Dyer said in an interview. “But after I got started and became more informed, I gained more confidence and became eager to get involved.”

Dyer, who initially learned about the revenue campaign at an MTA training for activists, is now well versed on the intricacies of the Campaign for Our Communities, the coalition spearheading the effort, and is working hard to educate, engage and mobilize members so they, too, will get involved.

“The campaign is based on the premise that we must all work together to ensure that Massachusetts continues to support the quality of life we all depend on,” she said. “We need towns and cities with great schools and public higher education institutions, clean air and water, and first-rate local services and health care. All of these things are hard to come by without adequate resources.”

Since giving her presentation at the statewide MTA meeting, Dyer has been lining up visits to MTA local associations. Her mission is twofold: to build support for the revenue campaign and also to encourage others to join the growing network of MTA activists playing key roles in the implementation of the MTA’s Strategic Action Plan.

“There are so many ways to take part,” Dyer said. “Activism doesn’t



Photos by Bob Duffy, Christine Peterson and Meg Secatore

Many MTA members are helping to inform their colleagues, as called for in the Strategic Action Plan. Above, Attleboro teacher Jeanne Dyer, left, provided revenue training at a meeting of local presidents in September. In May, Amherst education support professional Jean Fay, right, addressed a crowd of several hundred activists at the MTA’s Rally for a Better Commonwealth, which was held in Boston. Marc Lewis, president of the Acton Education Association, below, made his sentiments clear at a State House rally in February.

mean that you have to be MTA President Paul Toner on the phone addressing an issue with a *Boston Globe* reporter. Activism takes so many different forms — holding a sign for a candidate or attending a union meeting. It’s really about giving voice to things that matter to you.”

Dyer’s own path to activism began with an hour-long workshop on getting out the vote held by the MTA about six years ago. From the GOTV effort, she went on to other local efforts — holding signs for candidates and issue campaigns around election time and doing some phone banking. Things took their course, and Dyer went door-to-door for two candidates running for the Legislature and started lobbying her elected officials. Last summer, she represented the MTA at a protest outside U.S. Senator Scott Brown’s Boston office after Brown voted against federal funding for vital services for Massachusetts residents.

“I’m not one of those folks who participated in sit-ins in college,” Dyer said. “I have always been an introvert, and I took baby steps that naturally led me to getting involved with issues that we all care about.”

Marc Lewis, president of the Acton Education Association, is the opposite of Dyer in some respects. He was a full-time political operative and campaign staffer before he began teaching and can barely remember a time when he wasn’t intrigued by politics.

In fact, one of Lewis’s earliest memories is of a mock election in preschool in which he and his



classmates were asked to vote for their favorite cookie at snack time. He argued vehemently for Oreos, and his choice won by a landslide, leaving chocolate cookies in the dust.

Notwithstanding their different backgrounds, both Lewis and Dyer approach recruitment the same way. They are careful not to overstep or ask for too much too soon.

“When you first approach someone, you have to have a relationship with that person, and you have to help that person get started,” Dyer said. “Don’t ask for a major commitment right off the bat.”

Lewis, also an MTA Board member, said he might provide people with up to six different entry points — from speaking to the media or addressing a public forum to helping to fill the seats at a town meeting

or making the signs to be held at a standout.

“It’s not about creating worst-case scenarios to frighten people,” he said. “At first, it’s about engaging them at whatever level feels comfortable to them.”

Amherst education support professional Jean Fay, who is also on the MTA Board, is active on several fronts and makes a point of bringing prospective activists to campaign or union events so they can get first-hand experience.

“It’s always exciting the first time I introduce someone to a legislator and the legislator actually listens to them,” Fay said. “It’s a good way to get them hooked, and it’s empowering.”

“It’s all about getting people beyond the notion that no one will listen to them and that they are somehow insignificant,” she added.

Dyer believes wholeheartedly that every small thing that you do for an issue or a candidate matters in the long run. She believes that more than ever after working on a state representative race for a candidate who was elected by just 23 votes.

“I know that I made a difference,” Dyer said. “I knocked on doors all summer for that candidate — there is no doubt in my mind that I made a difference.”

If you are interested in joining one of the MTA’s Legislative and Political Action Teams, please e-mail nstolberg@massteacher.org. Training dates for revenue campaign activists will be posted on www.massteacher.org.

A positive force for student achievement

There is a popular button out now with the slogan: “You can’t put students first if you put teachers last.” That is so true. At the MTA, we find it is easy to defend the interests of both teachers and students because they are so connected. Teachers who are treated well, respected and compensated fairly are happier, more productive and more effective, just like employees everywhere.

That is why it is no surprise that in Massachusetts, the most highly unionized state in the country, our students once again

have ranked first in the country in math and reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. This is the fourth time in a row we have achieved that milestone.

Here are just some of our initiatives to improve teaching and learning in our schools. Links to our reports and positions can be found



Paul Toner
MTA President

on the MTA website, www.massteacher.org.

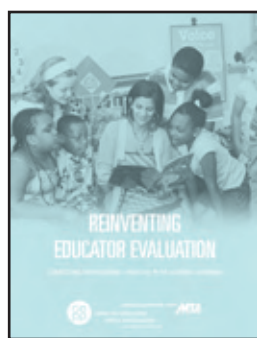
More time for learning: The MTA was an early and consistent supporter of the Expanded Learning Time initiative, which is now a state grant program. We strongly support the program’s requirement that the extra time be used for increased academics, enrichment and more time for staff collaboration.

District-union collaboration: The MTA has fostered several initiatives encouraging collaborative approaches to problem-solving. One notable example is a union-district partnership in Springfield that includes teacher visits to the homes of students attending several of the city’s elementary schools. The MTA has helped the Springfield Education Association obtain sizable grants from the National Education Association Foundation to implement the program. The MTA is also working with the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy on labor-management initiatives and training, along with several MTA and AFT districts.

Educator evaluations: The MTA is a leading voice for improving evaluations. An MTA plan called *Reinventing Educator Evaluation* was the basis for many of the changes now being implemented. Among

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other measures, this plan calls for educators to conduct self-assessments and for evaluators to perform multiple observations of practice in order to identify strengths and weaknesses and



guide improvements. The MTA’s Center for Education Policy and Practice is now a state-approved provider to help Level 4 schools implement the new evaluation system. The CEPP is now working with two Level 4 schools in Holyoke.

TeLL it like it

is: The MTA was the leading sponsor of the Massachusetts Teaching, Learning and Leading Survey — MassTeLLS — in 2008. More than 40,000 educators in the state answered detailed survey questions designed to help identify strengths and weaknesses in their schools and jump-start a conversation about how to improve. The survey will be administered again in 2012. The MTA also helps local associations develop local surveys and works with districts that want to administer NEA’s KEYS survey.

Professional development: The CEPP provides professional development to schools and districts and to individual teachers on a wide array of topics, including differentiating instruction, preventing bullying, using student assessments to improve instruction and developing quality mentoring and induction programs for new teachers. The CEPP also helped Cambridge develop an in-district licensure program, with funding from the state.

Fulfilling education reform’s promise: An MTA report titled *Fulfilling the Promise of Education Reform*, released in 2006, makes dozens of recommendations aimed at narrowing the achievement gap, closing staffing gaps and reducing funding gaps, including:

- Offering incentives for experienced teachers to work in high-poverty or hard-to-staff schools.

- Providing teachers with more “career ladder” opportunities for growth on the job.

- Providing better induction and mentoring programs for new teachers.

- Increasing Chapter 70 state aid to local public schools and establishing an Education Reform Study Commission to determine how much state funding is needed to provide all students with an excellent education.

- Replacing the state’s centralized school and district inspection system with regional technical assistance staff.

- Providing more state aid for early childhood education and full-day kindergarten.

Promoting reading, math, music and more: The MTA has teamed up with the Boston Red Sox, the Boston Bruins, the Boston Celtics, The Hanover Insurance Group Foundation, WGBH and others to sponsor a series of programs promoting public education and encouraging students to work hard in school. These include the MTA Red Sox Reading Game, the MTA Red Sox Most Valuable Educator program, the Boston Bruins “I Can Excel”



school program, the MTA Boston Celtics Honor Roll program, *High School Quiz Show* and *As Schools Match Wits*.

We are also proud supporters of Strategies for Children and its efforts to have all students reading at the proficient level by third grade.

Helping students in need: The MTA supports the Massachusetts Child program, which offers grants to MTA preK-12 locals to help low-income students who need special kinds of assistance, such as a warm winter jacket or school supplies.

These are just some of the ways the MTA supports quality teaching and student success in our schools. In a more global sense — through our day-to-day lobbying, advocacy and contract negotiations — we support excellent teaching and learning in Massachusetts by seeking adequate funding for public education, fair compensation for educators and good working conditions in our schools. Teacher working conditions really are student learning conditions.

Teaching assistants fight unfair layoffs

By Laura Barrett

The role of experience and seniority in educator layoffs will be debated statewide if the Stand for Children initiative petition moves to the ballot next November. Meanwhile, it is already a contentious issue in Taunton and has become the subject of an upcoming arbitration.

The Taunton Public Schools broke with past practice last spring by establishing a new process for laying off teaching assistants after the district restructured how special education services would be provided.

The district originally tried to lay off all teaching assistants in the district — more than 200 members of the staff — and require them to reapply for their jobs. When this move was challenged by the Taunton Education Secretaries and Assistants Association, the district made up a new process, assigning each of the assistants to one of three columns: “A” for those deemed excellent (retained); “B” for those who were considered fairly good (may or may not be retained, but placed on a recall list if laid off); and “C” for those who were considered inadequate (not retained and not eligible for recall).

The district then laid off 72 assistants from the B and C columns, regardless of seniority and without providing them with any information about how column placement decisions were made. In some cases, placement in the C column came shortly after assistants received favorable evaluations from their supervisors.

The TESAA urged all of the laid off assistants to file grievances. Eight of those grievances reached the Level 3 phase this fall. In October, some of the eight were moved from the C column to the B column, but as *MTA Today* went to press, none had been recalled. They have now filed for arbitration.

Karen Lasser, president of the TESAA, said that the treatment of the laid off teaching assistants has been “unfair and disruptive” and is having a negative impact on both teaching assistants and students.

Kathy Frye and Marjorie Dexter, two of the eight, agreed and were willing to be interviewed about the process.

Frye, an 11-year veteran of the district, wrote in a letter to the School Committee, “The travesty of my layoff is the manner in which the City of Taunton, this elected School Committee and the management of the school department have instituted this layoff.”

Frye was shocked that more junior staff were recalled ahead of her since she had received glowing evaluations from her principal, her supervising teacher and the mother of the autistic boy she worked with for several years.

MTA Today was given a copy of her evaluation, which was completed and signed by Principal Megan



Karen Lasser



Photos by Laura Barrett

Marjorie Dexter, left, and Kathy Frye are among the members who have filed for arbitration.

Bennett on May 31, just days before Frye learned she would not be recalled.

“Kathy has done an outstanding job with her first grade student,” Bennett wrote, referring to one of the two children Frye assisted last year. “She has taught him to own his actions and allowed him to remain in a regular education classroom. It has been a true joy to watch Kathy connect with students.”

The mother of one of her other students, who finished fourth grade last year, also wrote her a glowing recommendation.

“Kathy very quickly stepped up to the task and was eager and willing to learn about autism and how she could best help (our child) to function in his classroom setting,” the parent wrote in a letter dated Sept. 19.

“It was always important to us that (our child) be treated like every other child and not be treated differently because of his disability, but that he be given tools to be able to be independent and share in the same experiences that every other child has in elementary school,” she continued. “Kathy was able to find that perfect balance of when to assist and when to let (our child) figure things out for himself.”

She went on to note that it was “with great pride” that she shared “that he went on to middle school without the assistance of a one-to-one aide.”

“I can say for certain that Mrs. Frye was such an important part of our team,” she wrote.

Dexter, a teaching assistant at the Martin Middle School for nearly 25 years, said she is looking for basic fairness. She lost her job despite being near the top of the seniority list.

“If they didn’t think I was doing a good job, they should have told me,” she said. Dexter worked

in a substantially separate classroom and has been at the middle school. She said she has gotten along well with her supervising teachers.

At issue is a clause in the contract that states: “Within the teacher assistants’ classification only, the School Committee may deviate from recalling on the basis of seniority if the School Committee can demonstrate that a person who is not next to be recalled has qualifications which are substantially superior to any assistant who is senior to that junior person on the recall list. The decision of the School Committee to exercise this exception to seniority will be subject to a reasonableness standard.”

Lasser said that the district has yet to provide any evidence that the staff members who were retained in place of those with more seniority who were dismissed are “substantially superior.” She also said there is no provision in the contract for dividing staff into the A, B and C columns and that the district has yet to explain what criteria were used for this sorting mechanism.

The hurt runs deep. Frye said she is very disheartened about how she was treated after the efforts she made to help the district when she was diagnosed with cancer three years ago. She applied for and was granted a one-year unpaid leave of absence.

“I could have stayed and simply taken sick leave when the chemo made me sick,” she wrote to the School Committee. “I could have availed myself of the sick bank and taken paid time off, but I did not. I was trying to put the children and this city in a fair position and not take any advantage. And this is how my career in Taunton ends.”

No arbitration date has been scheduled yet.

Farm-to-school connection promotes health and learning

By Bob Duffy

Jessica Ouimet, a fifth-grade teacher in West Springfield, calls the current effort to encourage young people to lead healthier lives “a dream come true.”

Ouimet is part of a growing group of educators across the Commonwealth who are working to promote local agriculture and make connections between the food that students eat and everyday lesson plans and activities.

Ouimet and her husband, Allan, have a working farm in Westfield that she incorporates into her curriculum to help create a dynamic learning environment. Her students at the Coburn Elementary School go on field trips, hear from guest speakers and engage in hands-on learning activities to give them a better appreciation for agriculture.

They operate a school garden, and last year her students wrote the West Springfield superintendent asking to have the district provide more fruits and vegetables on cafeteria menus.

The children incubate eggs and hatch turkeys and chickens. They learn about pollination and the importance of insects to biodiversity through the farm’s beehives. They explore how to tap trees for maple syrup.

In fact, educators are finding that agriculture-related activities provide opportunities for lessons that can meet just about every curriculum framework while also inspiring hands-on learning. In the future, Ouimet hopes to use her farm to show other teachers how they can use such approaches to engage their students in everything from math and science to language arts and nutrition.

And she is far from alone.

Throughout the Bay State, an increasing number of educators and public school districts are becoming involved in “agriculture in the classroom” activities that teach students about healthy eating, the importance of small farms and knowing where their food comes from.

The enthusiasm for these programs is growing not only among educators, but also among parents and community organizations, as more and more people recognize that they represent a good way to address student health concerns and increases in childhood obesity and hunger. Good eating habits do more than encourage health, those involved point out, since there is also a link between nutrition and academic performance.

The Massachusetts Farm to School Project, which was established in 2004 and is based in Amherst, provides technical help and other forms of assistance to create sustainable purchasing relationships for local foods.

“My role is that of a matchmaker,” said Simca Horwitz, the project’s eastern Massachusetts



Photo by Bob Duffy

Students work in the Coburn Elementary School garden with teacher Jessica Ouimet.

technical coordinator. “What I am trying to do is make the connections between local farms and schools by figuring out what it is that the schools are really looking for and which farm can meet those needs.”

There are many ways for schools to get involved in making the connection between the farm and the fork. In addition to the Farm to School Project, which is run by the state, there are nonprofit organizations around the Commonwealth that are dedicated to providing educators with sample lesson plans, professional development and other resources to help integrate agricultural themes into a variety of curriculum areas.

The Worcester Public Schools, for example, worked with the Farm to School Project and the Seeds of Solidarity Education Center to create a kindergarten initiative that offers locally grown snacks, nutrition education and farm visits to hundreds of Worcester students in four different schools.

“It’s been a great experience for our children and for the teachers,” said Karen Maney, a kindergarten teacher at the City View School. “When you see the kids get excited about eating healthy, it really motivates teachers to think about ways to tie the curriculum to agricultural themes.”

Changes in both federal and state laws and the ever-growing concerns about the impact of childhood obesity have helped to spur increased interest in agriculture-related educational activities.

“We try to create meaningful collaborations on a small scale and a small budget that’s sustainable after we leave,” said Catherine Sands, director of the Fertile Ground community gardening program and a lecturer on community food systems at UMass Amherst.

Fertile Ground worked with the Williamsburg Elementary School to build in 24 weeks of garden education linked to the Massachusetts Curriculum

Frameworks. Photosynthesis, decomposition, composting, plant parts, world cultures and other subjects are all learned hands-on by having students plant seeds, cultivate seasonal vegetables, harvest foods and eat garden produce.

Students at the school collect and graph data, work through fractions and geometry to decide how much of a garden bed to use and work on addition in figuring out how many seeds have been planted. They visit working farms, and members of the food service staff cook with vegetables grown in the school garden and purchase fresh produce from local farms.

When Greenfield Community College decided to renovate its main building, its Green Campus Committee saw an opportunity to make a variety of environmentally friendly changes with the establishment of a brand new cafeteria and food service contract.

The committee worked with the administration to make sure the college’s new food service contract includes provisions that require at least 20 percent of produce to be sourced locally. It also calls for produce to be labeled with the farm name and town of origin.

“I think the most important predictor of success is buy-in from key administrators,” said Montserrat Archbald, a Peer Tutoring Program staff assistant. Archbald, who serves as chair of the Green Campus Committee, advises others embarking on similar efforts to be patient.

“We have found that change comes slowly, especially when so many players are impacted,” he said.

In June, the MTA’s ESP Committee held a forum to strategize on ways to improve and expand the farm-to-fork programs in Massachusetts and discuss the health and economic benefits resulting from using local foods in the public schools.

“We are committed to helping find new ways to get healthy, locally sourced foods within the reach of every student in Massachusetts,” said ESP Committee Co-Chair Donna Johnson, who serves as president of the University Staff Association at UMass Amherst and is a member of the MTA Board.

The forum brought together farmers, state agriculture officials and education support professionals to discuss the benefits associated with serving local food in schools and establishing more farm-to-school programs.

Some school-based programs combine eating, farming, parent involvement and nutrition education into integrated efforts that affect how children think about and enjoy food even when they are not at school. If students are encouraged to eat carrots over cookies at school, the initiative is also promoting healthy communities by teaching young children and their parents about food, farms and good nutrition.

“We teach the children about the nutritional value

Continued on next page



Photo by Bob Duffy

Teacher Jessica Ouimet runs Russell Mountain Farm and Orchard with her husband, Allan.

Agriculture seeds school programs

Continued from previous page

of the fruits and vegetables that they receive here at school, and we give our kids as much fresh produce as we can to take home with them,” noted Liz Wheeler, the cook manager at the Stefanik Elementary School in Chicopee. “Our students get to eat a lot of different fruits and vegetables at school that they may have never been exposed to at home.”

The school — at which about 85 percent of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches — works hard to get students to prepare healthy snacks with their parents. While being interviewed over the phone by *MTA Today*, Wheeler was in the process of packing 400 harvest bags for children to take home. Each bag included a bookmark featuring a local farmer, puzzles and information on the nutritional value of fresh produce, along with a pear, an apple, carrot sticks, celery sticks and ranch dip.

Wheeler noted that a lack of nearby grocery stores can make it difficult for parents to provide nutritional foods, since many have to take public transportation to supermarkets to stock up on fresh produce.

Beyond encouraging healthy lifestyles for students, Wheeler said, another goal of agriculture-in-the-classroom initiatives is to educate students on the economic, social, historical and scientific importance of farming in American society. Another benefit, she said, is that the programs help students

“recognize the connection between agricultural production and the food they eat every day.”

With studies indicating that students served locally grown items tend to eat significantly more fruits and vegetables, the farm-to-school connection is clearly making a difference, improving students’ health while also providing economic opportunities for Massachusetts farms.

Today, Ouimet’s Russell Mountain Farm and Orchard is just getting off the ground. But Ouimet has dreams of making it both a sustainable farm and a working laboratory for educators interested in incorporating agriculture-related topics into their curriculums and providing locally sourced meals in school cafeterias.

She and her husband also hope to turn a portion of their land into a professional development facility where workshops can be conducted that show educators how to weave real-life agricultural activities into their classrooms.

“Many of my students have no idea where food comes from, and with childhood obesity such a major problem, getting kids to enjoy locally sourced produce is part of the solution,” Ouimet said. “As we encourage healthy lifestyles for students, it’s crucial for them to understand the importance of agriculture in our society and recognize the connection between agricultural production and what they eat every day.”

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UMass Lowell’s Graduate School of Education offers several 10-course master’s and advanced Ed.S. degrees that are available online for experienced educators who are looking to advance their careers and/or specialize in a particular area.

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- **Ed.S. Degree in Curriculum & Instruction**
- **Ed.S. Degree in Reading & Language**
w/ Teacher of Reading Licensure Option

Please note: The licensure options mentioned above are only open to teachers working in Massachusetts schools who hold Massachusetts initial or professional teaching licenses and may have some courses that include on-campus components. Additionally, “online only” options are also available for non-Massachusetts teachers who are not seeking licensure.

Students may take up to two graduate-level courses on a non-matriculated basis after consultation with a program director. Please email questions to edoffice@uml.edu.

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is accredited by the National Council for
Accreditation of Teacher Education.



Higher ed event focuses on combating challenges

By Sarah Nathan

The challenges confronting public higher education and unions in Massachusetts and beyond were the focus of a recent conference that drew MTA members from across the Commonwealth.

The event — sponsored by the MTA and the Higher Education Leadership Council — took place at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Natick on Oct. 28 and 29, just ahead of the historic nor'easter that hit the state. It featured workshops and plenary sessions covering a range of topics and providing those who attended with a forum to learn, discuss issues and exchange ideas.

Participants heard from NEA President Dennis Van Roekel and MTA President Paul Toner, who offered updates and insights about union efforts at the state and national levels, as well as Jim Rice, a Quinsigamond Community College professor who heads the National Council for Higher Education, and NEA staffer Brian Dunn of the association's Campaigns and Elections Division.

Rice offered an overview of the NCHE, which is the higher ed caucus of the NEA, and various NEA functions and services provided specifically to the higher ed community. Dunn briefed members on the national political scene.

One theme that was predominant throughout the conference was the need for a targeted strategy to overcome the orchestrated attacks on organized labor that are happening now in many states, including Arizona, Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan and New Hampshire. Van Roekel stressed the need for members and their allies to be unified and flexible — and to “play a good defense” — in seeking to combat the many challenges ahead.

He also noted that he is not depressed, but rather is optimistic about the future. While opponents of public education seem to have unlimited funding, Van Roekel said, the NEA has the collective power of 3.2 million members. “It’s important to remember that none of the things we have accomplished just happened. The reason we have five-day work weeks, paid vacations and health care benefits and pensions is not because someone gave it to us,” Van Roekel said. “It came through collective action, and it is in all of us. And it is going to take

collective action to play defense and also to play offense.”

Van Roekel added, “It’s about each and every one of us coming together for something we believe deeply in for collective action.”

Toner introduced Van Roekel and updated members on a variety of legislative and political issues in play on Beacon Hill, including educators’ pensions and MTA’s efforts to create new revenue streams to support public education at all levels.

First-time attendee Sue D’Amore, who is a member of the Grant and Contract Funded Employees Association at UMass Lowell, said she benefited from hearing about the issues covered during the conference.

“I got a lot of good information. I found the workshop on bullying especially useful, as this is a growing area of concern,” D’Amore said. “I think the more people realize that they are not alone and get educated on what bullying is about, the more we can work together on this issue.”

Aside from workplace bullying, the workshops covered a wide range



NEA President Dennis Van Roekel, left, is seated next to MTA President Paul Toner during the higher education conference. Van Roekel’s address — which focused on unity, flexibility and “playing a good defense” — was well received by those in the audience, including the members pictured above. The conference, sponsored by the MTA and the Higher Education Leadership Council, was held in late October.

Photos by Sarah Nathan

of issues, including accountability and student outcome measurements in public higher education, the legal

realities of electronic communications and the Internet and the public/private partnership trend.

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Members endorsed for MTRB seats

Educators are urged to support Mitchell and Naughton

Two MTA-endorsed candidates — longtime educators Karen Mitchell and Dennis Naughton — are running for seats on the Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement Board.

And anyone who has not yet returned a ballot supporting them is reminded that time is growing short, since the deadline to send in votes is Dec. 5. Ballots have already been distributed to all active and retired members of the Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System.

The board is made up of seven members, two of whom are elected by the members of the MTRS for four-year terms. Mitchell, a teacher in Plymouth, and Naughton, an MTA Retired member, are among five candidates running for two seats this year.

The MTRS is the largest of the Commonwealth's 105 contributory retirement systems. It provides retirement, disability and survivor benefits to more than 88,000 active educators and 55,000 retirees and survivors.

Mitchell has been a teacher in the Plymouth Public Schools since 1986. She currently teaches seventh grade at the Plymouth South Middle School. She has been highly active in her union; she has held every office locally, including president, and has served on the MTA Board of Directors.

"It is my belief that we have a responsibility to each other and to our students to actively stand up for public education. This is what motivated me to pursue a position on the Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System board five years ago," Mitchell said. "It has been a wonderful experience, and I truly hope to continue working for the preservation of our retirement system and the improvement of our cost-of-living allowance in Massachusetts."

Mitchell believes that having the voice of an active teacher on the MTRB is important, noting that she has brought a greater understanding of the current conditions of public education to the conversation.

Naughton retired from the Millis Public Schools in 2004 after 36 years of service. During that time, he served in a number of offices in the Millis Teachers Association and was local president for 19 years. Naughton also served on both the MTA Board and Executive Committee.

"I am only too aware of the unfair attacks on teacher benefits that have been taking place across the

country — including right here in Massachusetts," Naughton said. "I am committed to defending our existing defined-benefit retirement system and to increasing the dollar amount of our retirement benefit upon which our COLA is calculated. I am also committed to making the MTRS just as responsive to your questions and concerns as it can be.

"You're the reason I'm a candidate," Naughton added in a direct appeal to MTA members.

MTA President Paul Toner said it is crucial for the thousands of MTA members eligible to participate in the election to support both Mitchell and Naughton — and to get their ballots in on time.

"Karen has made a huge difference for our members, and Dennis will do the same," Toner said. "The MTRB makes decisions that have a big impact on the lives of people who have dedicated their lives to public education, and it is vital for us to have the most effective representation possible in its deliberations."



Karen Mitchell



Dennis Naughton

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Save the Date

Commitment to students' wellness is recognized

By Sarah Nathan

Ask educator Mary Ellen Kirrane about any of the subjects being taught in the Brockton Public Schools and she'll immediately find a connection to health and wellness.

Consider the classic children's book *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, by Judith Viorst. Is this a fictional account of a child's day? Sure. But it's also about decision-making, coping skills and emotional health.

Kirrane, who heads up Brockton's K-8 health education/wellness department, has spent much of her career helping educators find ways to incorporate wellness into their classroom work. She approaches wellness with a big-picture perspective.

"Our theme in Brockton for the last 10 years has been that every teacher is a teacher of wellness," Kirrane said. "Our work has been about considering wellness in everything we do, and we spend a lot of time tying the two together."

Kirrane's passion and commitment to wellness recently earned her national recognition. In October, the longtime health educator and member of the Brockton Education Association was named Health Coordinator of the Year 2011 by the American School Health Association.

Kirrane, who joined the Brockton Public Schools in 1986 as a health teacher, welcomes the recognition for not just herself, but also for her district — and, most importantly, her profession.

"What's really exciting about this is that I'm the first person to receive this award in this category," Kirrane said. "I'm very proud of the work that people in my field are doing all over the country. After so many years, it's wonderful to see that this area is finally being recognized."

Kirrane gives a great deal of credit to the district's administrators. She says she wouldn't be able to be successful in her job if she didn't have their support. Kirrane said that in 2001, when the state cut public health funding, very few school districts continued to fund positions such as the one she holds.

"I feel like this award is as much about the commitment of our district as about what I do. Yes, I implement



"Our theme in Brockton for the last 10 years has been that every teacher is a teacher of wellness," says Mary Ellen Kirrane, who has been named Health Coordinator of the Year 2011 by the American School Health Association.

it, but someone has to buy my wares and support these efforts," Kirrane said. "There are so many academic demands, yet Brockton continued to support this program."

As part of her daily work, Kirrane chairs the Brockton Public School

District Coordinated School Wellness Team, which utilized the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's model approach to connecting school wellness initiatives to community resources. Over the past four years, the district team has established

school-based teams that meet regularly to assess the wellness needs of their buildings and to create yearly goals and objectives. Through the coordination of the district team, each school is provided with resources and support to achieve its goals.

Kirrane pointed out that health education has evolved over the years. Traditionally, health meant being sick or not being sick.

"Wellness is now much more comprehensive," she said. "It includes seven dimensions — physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual, occupational and environmental wellness."

When asked to give advice to other educators interested in incorporating more wellness themes into their own classrooms or districts, Kirrane suggested doing an assessment of what's already being offered and going from there. "Use the resources that you have and give people the opportunity to build things up and make change," she said. "Sometimes you'll get a yes and sometimes you'll get a no, but keep trying."

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MTA to challenge Stand for Children initiative

By Laura Barrett

The MTA is moving ahead with a legal challenge to an initiative petition filed by the advocacy organization Stand for Children for the November 2012 ballot.

Stand for Children Executive Director Jason Williams announced in October that the organization had collected more than 100,000 signatures, which is more than enough to move to the next stage of the process.

The MTA challenged the petition when it was first proposed on the grounds that it did not meet all of the constitutional criteria established for ballot questions. The MTA lost that argument before the attorney general, but will file a challenge with the Supreme Judicial Court.

Stand for Children is a national organization with a chapter in Massachusetts that is mainly funded by wealthy individuals, private foundations and corporate executives from companies such as Bain Capital,

‘Instead of imposing unwanted and unnecessary rules on local systems, Stand for Children should be working with us on behalf of policies that teachers and parents alike agree are needed to help students succeed in school.’

— MTA President Paul Toner

a private investment firm where Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, a former governor of Massachusetts, used to work.

MTA President Paul Toner was highly critical of Stand for Children for using the ballot process to pursue complex changes to laws affecting collective bargaining rights governing teacher evaluation, transfer and layoff policies, especially after more than 40 individuals representing many education stakeholders worked for months to develop new evaluation regulations that were passed by the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education on June 28.

The decision to pursue the ballot initiative was made without seeking

input from education organizations and without even trying to file a bill in the Legislature.

“Unfortunately, Stand for Children is trying to impose its vision of teacher evaluation and reform on public schools without having to confer with the people who will be most affected — the educators and administrators who will have to implement the new law. This is what educators are most upset about: having reform done to them as opposed to being treated as partners in improving our schools and outcomes for students,” Toner said.

“The people I have talked to about this issue in public education, the Patrick administration and the Legislature have said they believe the

ballot process is a blunt instrument that is not at all helpful in addressing these very complex issues,” Toner said.

“The MTA and other education stakeholders came together and developed a new educator evaluation framework that emphasizes the importance of having excellent teachers in every class. Student outcomes are at the center of the process,” Toner added. “We need to give districts time to put the new framework in place before we consider imposing any additional requirements on already overburdened educators and administrators. Stand for Children has been urged by the MTA and others to reconsider its position and to drop the ballot initiative rather than proceed with this divisive strategy.”

Massachusetts Education Secretary Paul Reville told the State House News Service in August that it is premature to use the new evaluation system in the way envisioned by the initiative.

“For the first time ever we’re including things like student performance and student voice in the evaluation process,” Reville told the SHNS. “I’m not ready yet to talk about all the consequences that will flow from this until I have confidence that the instrument is effectively implemented.”

Toner called on Stand for Children to refocus its efforts. “Instead of imposing unwanted and unnecessary rules on local systems, Stand for Children should be working with us on behalf of policies that teachers and parents alike agree are needed to help students succeed in school,” he said.

“Stand members should join the MTA in putting their energy into finding resources for smaller class sizes, more enrichment activities and a longer day for low-income students or better professional development for teachers who work with high-need students,” Toner continued.

“We’re already the highest performing state in the country, in part because we have a collaborative system that gives educators a voice in the process of school improvement,” he said. “A better system of evaluation and support for teachers could help our students do even better. We should all be working together to implement what has already been approved rather than coming up with a whole new set of mandates.”

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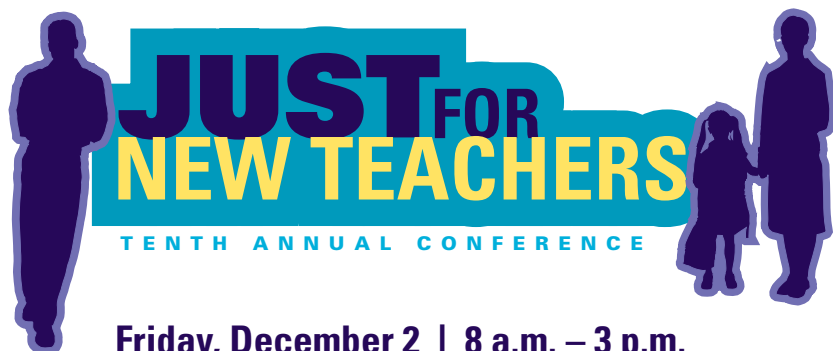


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MORNING WORKSHOPS:

Select one Workshop from Group A
OR

Select one Workshop from Group B
AND one Workshop from Group C

GROUP A (9 A.M. – 12:15 P.M.) –

Select one

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT – MANAGING THE INSPIRED CLASSROOM

AM1 – ELEMENTARY

This workshop will use a case study approach and focus on the kinds of self-control students must master in order to work effectively in a high-stakes environment.

AM2 – MS/HS

Same as AM1 except targeted to middle and high school teachers.

AM3 – DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION – EVERY CHILD CAN LEARN – ELEMENTARY

This workshop will provide information on differentiating instruction, especially to address specific learning styles, academic readiness and common special needs, such as ADHD.

AM4 – ASSESSING STUDENT PROGRESS – ALL LEVELS

We will examine a wide range of strategies to assess student progress, not only *after* we've taught a lesson or unit, but *as* we teach. The goal is to use assessment as continuous feedback, to know when and why a student didn't "get it," to intervene appropriately, *and* to do all this fairly and equitably.

AM5 – "VISUALIZE" A GREAT LESSON

Visual communication is an important skill for teachers and presenters. Research suggests we educate best when we use pictures and text. Participants in this workshop will explore new whole-brain approaches to using tools such as PowerPoint in more powerful and effective ways in their classrooms.

GROUP B (9 – 10:30 A.M.)

Select one from Group B
AND one from Group C

AM6 – SINK OR SWIM – ELEMENTARY

There's a lot we didn't learn in our ed prep programs! There are progress reports and report cards, IEPs, working with your team, working with your mentor, surviving parent conferences, getting through the winter doldrums, being ready for the end-of-the-year barrage of paperwork and much, much more. This session is packed with tips and tricks for anticipating and managing the many unknowns.

AM7 – WORKING WITH PARENTS – ALL LEVELS

Student learning needs to be the focus of home-school communication. This workshop will use case studies to present solutions to common challenges. With the first round of open houses and grades behind us, participants will reassess their interactions with parents and guardians and leave with new strategies for immediate use.

GROUP C (10:45 A.M. – 12:15 P.M.)

Select one from Group B
AND one from Group C

AM8 – SINK OR SWIM – MS/HS

There's a lot we didn't learn in our ed prep programs! There are progress reports and report cards, IEPs, working with your team, working with your mentor, surviving parent conferences, getting through the winter doldrums, being ready for the end-of-the-year barrage of paperwork and much, much more. This session is packed with tips and tricks for anticipating and managing the many unknowns.

AM9 – KEEP THEM ENGAGED

Many traditional classroom practices engage one student at a time and risk the inattention of others. We'll share easy-to-use tips and tricks for keeping *all* of your students engaged *all* of the time.

Leave with ideas to use in your classroom tomorrow and in the future.

AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS: (1:30 – 3 P.M.)

Select one

PM1 – LICENSURE AND "HIGHLY QUALIFIED"

This workshop will review Massachusetts' educator licensure requirements and procedures, as well as the federal "Highly Qualified" requirement.

PM2 – LEGAL BASICS FOR NEW TEACHERS

This workshop will explore how the many informal roles required of teachers, from surrogate parent to counselor, affect our obligations and liabilities.

PM3 – TEACHER EVALUATION: WHAT DOES EFFECTIVENESS LOOK LIKE?

By now you know that your teaching performance will be formally evaluated at least once this school year, for non-PTS teachers, or every other year for PTS teachers. In the spring of 2011, Massachusetts created new rules on how teacher effectiveness should be assessed. Do you know what effectiveness looks like? Are you an effective teacher? In this workshop, we'll use a case study to explore the variables and challenges in answering those questions.

PM4 – KEEP THEM ENGAGED

Many traditional classroom practices engage one student at a time and risk the inattention of others. We'll share easy-to-use tips and tricks for keeping *all* of your students engaged *all* of the time. Leave with ideas to use in your classroom tomorrow and in the future.

PM5 – ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELL) – FOR NON ESL/ELL LICENSED TEACHERS

Do you have English Language Learners in your school? Your classroom? This informational workshop for non ESL/ELL teachers will review legal requirements and discuss where to turn to become an effective teacher for your ELLs.

PM6 – DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION – EVERY CHILD CAN LEARN – MS/HS

This workshop will provide information on differentiating instruction, especially to address specific learning styles, academic readiness and common special needs, such as ADHD.

LUNCHEON SPEAKER: ANNE WASS

FORMER MTA PRESIDENT



Anne Wass, former president of the 107,000-member Massachusetts Teachers Association, is a champion of students, public schools and public higher education.

Wass was MTA president from July 2006 to July 2010, when she was on leave from her job as a sixth-grade teacher in Hanover. She taught at the Hanover Middle School for 31 years. She has also served in many association capacities aside from MTA president, including president of her local association and MTA vice president.

Teaching is Wass's passion, and she has won a number of awards honoring her abilities as a teacher. She is a recipient of the Plymouth County Education Association's Loretta Quinlan Award, the highest honor bestowed by the PCEA. It is named for a former MTA president and longtime teacher. Wass also won the first MTA Friend of Labor Award and the Louise Gaskins Lifetime Civil Rights Award. She continues to represent the MTA on the Massachusetts Early Childhood Educators Union Advisory Board and its Legislative Committee. She is also an appointed member of the Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement Board.

The Just for New Teachers conference is honored to have Wass attend and share her thoughts, both from the perspective of her classroom experience and as a voice for all public school educators in Massachusetts.

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1:30 – 3 p.m.	Afternoon Sessions



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EMAC event seeks to build leadership skills

By Laura Barrett

Fun, social networking and development of leadership skills are all on the agenda for the upcoming MTA Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee Conference.

All MTA members are welcome, both minority members and non-minority members with an interest in minority concerns.

The conference, which is set for Dec. 2-3 at the Sheraton Framingham Hotel and Conference Center, is aimed at empowering ethnic minority preK-12 and public higher education members to become more active in the MTA and in their own school and campus organizations.

EMAC Chair Susan Baker, who teaches in Falmouth, said she is hoping for a great event.

“This will be my last year as EMAC chair, and I hope this conference will be the best ever,” Baker said. “We have worked hard in the past few years to communicate to our minority members that their involvement is key to the success of this organization. Being involved at all levels — local, state and national — is important!”

Baker added that the conference provides minority teachers, higher education faculty and staff and education support professionals with a chance to network with peers and share both expertise and camaraderie.

The Friday evening portion of

the conference includes dinner and a keynote address by Newton Mayor Setti Warren. Warren has spent more than two decades in public service, holding jobs in the Clinton White House and as a state deputy director for U.S. Senator John Kerry. He is the first popularly elected African-American mayor in Massachusetts.

Dinner will be followed by dancing and socializing to the music of the Never Say Never Jazz Band, led by MTA member Bobby Tynes and his wife, Tracy Rose.



Setti Warren

On Saturday, Dec. 3, workshops begin at 9 a.m. Topics include workplace bullying and creating change through social justice. One session features the screening of a movie on the benefits and challenges of being different from the majority of people around you.

Also on Saturday, MTA President Paul Toner will address the conference.

To see if space for the conference remains available, members should call Linda Ferrari in the MTA’s Braintree office at 800.479.1410 as soon as possible or e-mail her at lferrari@massteacher.org. The fee is \$50 for commuters, \$100 for shared accommodations and \$175 for a single room.

MTA suggests revisions to NCLB waiver application

The MTA was one of several organizations asked to respond to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s recent proposal seeking a waiver from certain requirements in the federal Elementary

and Secondary Education Act, also known as the No Child Left Behind act.

The Obama administration established the waiver option in light of Congress’s failure to amend

and reauthorize the law, which has been widely criticized for identifying too many schools as failing. In Massachusetts, the highest performing state in the country, four out of five schools fail to meet the federal test

score standards, and the number is growing every year.

The MTA supports the state seeking a waiver from the U.S. Education Department, but objects to several key provisions in the DESE’s accountability plan that would replace the current requirements. Below are the opening paragraphs of MTA’s comments on the DESE’s proposed waiver request.

The MTA has long been a critic of the unrealistic, unattainable and ultimately punitive nature of the accountability measures contained in the No Child Left Behind act. We and other members of MassPartners for Public Schools warned years ago that the number of schools identified as failing to make Adequate Yearly Progress would grow dramatically each year. Those predictions have come true, with more than 82 percent now failing to meet AYP this year — in the highest performing state in the country. The designation has become meaningless. Fortunately, federal and state education authorities are now acknowledging that reality and have offered states a chance to apply for a waiver from NCLB’s goal that 100 percent of students must score Proficient by 2014.

We applaud the president’s decision to establish a waiver process, absent a rational reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In addition, we have long criticized NCLB’s requirement that

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Please turn to MTA/Page 17

Retired Gathering draws record crowd

By Laura Barrett

Members attending this year's MTA Retired Gathering were greeted at the front door by Paul McLaughlin and Paul Mazut, who asked them to do something very familiar to educators and retirees — help students in an under-resourced district.

And give they did, filling eight large boxes with books for students in North Adams. That was just one way those attending the gathering were reminded that they have the power to inspire positive change.

"As we move forward, we must remember that our voices do make a difference, especially in the political arena," Kathleen Roberts, co-chair of the MTA Retired Members Committee, told the group. Becoming or remaining politically active in these financially challenging times was a theme repeated throughout the day.

This year's gathering — which marked the event's 10th anniversary — was the largest ever, drawing 249 participants for a full day of workshops, awards, raffles, opportunities to socialize and a rousing rendition of "Happy Birthday" to Roberts, who had recently celebrated her 97th birthday.

A second record was also broken at the gathering. The VOTE Giveaway raised \$1,343 — the highest amount ever — to support political candidates recommended by the MTA.

Several MTA leaders spoke as the gathering opened. Richard Liston, who co-chairs the committee with Roberts, talked about this year's Honor Our Own Award recipient, Holly Schjolden, a teacher and former administrator in the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District. She was honored in absentia because she was recovering from injuries sustained in a fall.

"She has a way of creating not only a community of learners, but a community of children who delight in each other's accomplishments," Liston said, reading from the nomination form. "The children in her classroom had to choose a 'hero' for an assignment. No surprise, many chose Mrs. Schjolden. Holly has the same effect on the adults at Duval School. She is a role model to staff and a wonderful liaison between staff and administration."

Another honoree was attorney Deborah Blum-Shore of the Shore Law



Firm. She was given an appreciation award for the many years she has provided useful and timely elder-law advice to retired MTA members.

"I grew up in a family of teachers," Blum-Shore said upon accepting the award. "Even though I have a law degree, ultimately I am a teacher."

Blum-Shore's workshops on trusts and estate planning were well attended this year, as in the past. She provided sobering statistics about how many retirees eventually need long-term care and described the need to do life-care planning. Other workshops offered information on health care, repeal of the Social Security offsets, training for the Legislative and Political Action Team Senate district coordinators and retired liaisons, finances, travel, and ways retirees can improve their communities through food banks and other volunteer activities.

MTA President Paul Toner encouraged retired members to be politically active.

"We are here to ask you to keep up the good work," Toner said. Retirees are often among the first to respond when MTA puts out the call to members to contact their legislators about an issue, and they are sometimes among the only members available to lobby in person during the workday.

Retirees participated in the recent debate over pension reform. Although the proposed changes had no impact on current retirees or employees, retirees sent e-mails, made phone calls and lobbied legislators in defense of pension benefits for future employees.

"The heart of all our problems is that we need to be talking about taxes," Toner said. "We can't be demanding more of a COLA and not support more revenue," he added, referring to the cost-of-living adjustment for retirees.



Richard Liston, left, applauds fellow Retired Members Committee Co-Chair Kathleen Roberts, who recently celebrated her 97th birthday. This year's Honor Our Own Award recipient, teacher Holly Schjolden, is pictured in her classroom. She was unable to attend the event. The gathering was held in Marlborough on Sept. 27, with 249 members participating.

Toner also noted that the NEA has already recommended Barack Obama for president in the 2012 election.

"We need a strong champion in Washington," he said.

MTA Vice President Tim Sullivan urged the retirees to help identify a retired liaison for every local.

"For the most part, our local presidents have no release time," he said. "We hear them say, 'I just don't have the time to do what I need to do for my members.' There's got to be a

retiree out there who can help them."

Louise Hammann, a retired Franklin County teacher, summed up her reason for participating. "It's an opportunity to socialize, and you learn a lot," she said.

In addition to Co-Chairs Liston and Roberts, McLaughlin and Mazut, the MTA Retired Members Committee includes Eileen Cleary, Kerry Costello, Gladys Durant, Mary Gilmore, Stephen Gorrie, Margaret Kane, Robert Lague, Nancy Mickunas and Louise Russell.



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Pension bill changes rules for future educators

The Legislature approved a major pension overhaul on Nov. 15 that will reduce retirement benefits for public employees hired after April 2, 2012, by requiring them to work longer for their benefits, increasing the minimum retirement age and reducing annual pension benefits by about 3 percent.

As *MTA Today* went to press, Governor Deval Patrick was expected to sign the bill into law.

The final bill did contain several amendments supported by the MTA, including allowing higher education members who participate in the Optional Retirement Program to transfer to the state retirement system, allowing creditable service for part-time release union representatives, reducing pension cuts for future long-serving public employees and increasing the base on which the annual cost-of-living-adjustment is calculated from \$12,000 to \$13,000.

MTA President Paul Toner said that good pension benefits are important for attracting and retaining high-quality education employees.

"We strongly opposed reducing pension benefits for future employees from the start," Toner said. "Thousands of MTA members contacted their legislators, arguing that public employees in Massachusetts already pay the vast majority of the costs of their own pensions. We maintained that future employees should not be responsible for paying down an unfunded pension liability that was created by municipalities and the state, not by them."

"We lost those arguments," he continued. "The recent volatility in the stock market and the weak economy persuaded legislators to limit the state's exposure and costs by reducing future pension benefits."

The pension bill is designed to save the state \$5 billion over the next 30 years.

After the Senate approved the bill by a wide margin on Sept. 29, it became clear that the House was going to pass a similar measure. While continuing to oppose cuts in benefits for future members, the MTA also worked hard to win amendments

that are important to certain current members and to long-serving future employees.

The bill reduces retirement benefits for future employees in several ways. It increases the minimum retirement age by five years, from 55 to 60, for teachers and other Group 1 employees, including MTA's higher education members and education support professionals. The bill also changes the formula used for calculating benefits. As a result, most future MTA members will have to work about two years longer to receive benefits similar to what current employees will receive.

In addition, future pensions will be based on a five-year salary average rather than the current three-year average, typically reducing pensions by about 3 percent.

The Legislature agreed to amendments fought for by the MTA to reduce the impact on future employees with more than 30 years in the system. The formula changes will enable them to reach their maximum benefit levels earlier than employees with less than

30 years of service. In addition, the contribution rate for future Group 1 members will decrease after 30 years of service, from 11 percent to 8 percent for teachers and from 9 percent on the first \$30,000 in income and 11 percent on the portion over \$30,000 to a flat 6 percent for other future Group 1 employees.

The MTA fought hard for the ORP amendment. The ORP gives higher education members the option of participating in a defined contribution plan, similar to a 401(k) in the private sector, rather than in the state retirement system. Under the new bill, ORP participants will be able to transfer into the state retirement system and "buy back" prior public service.

The other significant win for the MTA was a no-cost amendment that will allow employers and unions to agree on part-time leave time for presidents and other union representatives without any loss of creditable service, provided they contribute into the retirement system at the same rate as other full-time district employees. Full-time release presidents already receive this benefit.

The bill contains other amendments that will benefit a small number of members, including revisions pertaining to creditable service for maternity leaves taken before 1975, an increase in the amount of salary a retiree can earn while collecting pension benefits and an increase in the minimum retirement benefit.

Further details about the pension bill will be posted on the MTA website, www.massteacher.org.

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Save on your holiday shopping by using the *MTA Benefits & Discount Directory* and Access, a new discount program available through MTAB. Shop in local stores or at online retailers nationwide. You'll find gifts to please everyone on your list — from books and jewelry to clothes and computers — all at MTA discounts.

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The valuable services of the MTA's retirement consultants are available to MTA members without charge. You only retire once and should not be expected to be an expert on something you will never do again. Individual consultations are available in locations across the state.

[HTTP://MASSTEACHER.ORG/MEMBERSERVICES/RETIREMENT](http://massteacher.org/memberservices/retirement)

Better auto insurance choices for members

MTA members can choose from two packages that bundle some of the most desirable additional coverages at attractive prices. Called DriveSmart and DriveSmart Advantage, these packages extend the base coverages provided by Hanover's Connections® Auto insurance.

DriveSmart includes:

■ **Second Accident Forgiveness.**

No surcharge for the first accident you have, in most circumstances.

■ **Ultimate Towing and Labor.**

Goes beyond typical coverage to pay towing and labor costs when your keys are lost, broken or accidentally locked in the vehicle, as well as reasonable towing costs after an accident.

■ **Ultimate Rental.** Reimburses for the expenses to rent a comparable auto when your vehicle is being repaired after an accident.

DriveSmart Advantage includes all of the above, plus:

■ **New Car Replacement Guard.** Should your new vehicle be totaled within one year or 15,000 miles of purchase (whichever is sooner), this coverage provides actual replacement cost for the same vehicle — without any deduction for depreciation.

■ **Deductible Dividends.** Drive safely and for each year without a surchargeable accident, your deductible will be reduced by \$100, up to a maximum of \$500 at any one time.

The Hanover also provides additional options for coverage of customized equipment added to your vehicle and loan/lease gap coverage to pay the difference between the cash value of a vehicle and the amount owed on a loan or lease.



MTA members may be able to save big through a number of account credits and discounts, such as:

■ **Multi-policy credit.** Insure both your home or condo and auto through EIA.

■ **Low annual mileage.** Drive less than 7,500 miles per year and get another discount.

■ **Anti-theft devices.** Install LoJack, OnStar or an engine immobilizer and save again.

■ **Driver skills course.** Take an In Control training course and save 10 percent on your insurance for up to five years.

■ **Multi-vehicle discount.** Put more than one vehicle on the same policy and apply a discount to both.

■ **Passive restraints.** Airbags and seat belts save lives and reduce insurance costs.

■ **Public transit.** Take the bus or subway regularly (which reduces time behind the wheel) and get a discount.

■ **Senior driver.** Members and retired members aged 65 or older

tend to drive less and therefore get a discount, too.

Providing members with discounted auto insurance is an important element of the MTA Benefits mission. Members who are good drivers are among those who are in a position to save the most.

If you're not currently insured through Educators Insurance Agency (EIA — MTA's preferred partner for auto, home and other property and casualty insurance), be sure to call a representative for a quote at 888.908.6822. The hours are Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. There are more ways than ever to save and customize coverage to suit your specific needs. Members can also find a wealth of insurance information by visiting the EIA website, www.educatorsinsuranceagency.com. The site makes it easy to request a free quote on any of the coverages available to members through EIA.

DRIVER TRAINING SAVES MONEY — AND LIVES

A driver skills development course is an excellent way to save money on your auto insurance — and also one of the best educational investments you'll ever make.

Many severe crashes can be avoided with the right training, and that's exactly why MTA members can get a 10 percent discount after completing such a course. (Even better, that 10 percent discount stays on the policy for up to five years.)

Preventing or minimizing crashes saves lives and reduces the severity of injuries. So MTA's insurance partner, The Hanover, has teamed with In Control Crash Prevention ("In Control") to help members avoid accidents through actual experience with high-speed panic stops, loss of vehicle control on the highway, tailgating drills, hazardous conditions, proper emergency braking techniques and more.

Crash-prevention training is particularly important for first- and second-year drivers, who have accident rates as high as 43 percent. These courses have been shown to lower this rate to just 4.6 percent among this most accident-prone group. Experienced drivers, of course, also benefit by improving skills and learning new survival techniques.

In Control operates year-round at its real-world driving courses in North Andover, Worcester and Westport. For more information, visit www.driveincontrol.com or call 888.301.SAFE (7233).

THE MTAB PAYBACK



'I LOVE MY MTA MEMBERSHIP AND ALL THAT IT OFFERS.'

— Diane Repaal,
Groton Dunstable
Education Association

Diane Repaal of the Groton Dunstable Education Association saves year-round with MTA Benefits.

"I think it's great to get money back with my MTA membership," said Repaal. "I also want to support businesses that support education by partnering with MTAB."

Repaal and her husband financed their first home through Greenpark Mortgage.

"We were very, very happy with the process," she said. "Pre-approval made it easier to look for a home. We also received

a low rate, excellent service and the MTA discount. Everything was perfect."

Repaal loves the ability to save on school supplies at Michaels and Barnes & Noble and also takes advantage of free admission to museums and other savings listed in the Discount Directory and through Access.

The savings can add up to hundreds of dollars a year.

"I love my MTA membership and all that it offers," she said.

Stanley Cup goes to school



Photo by Bob Duffy

Teachers and students who participate in the Boston Bruins' I Can Excel school program have the chance to receive prizes and classroom visits. In October, the Stanley Cup made an appearance at Haverhill's Bradford Elementary School. Teacher Matt Castonguay, who is pictured with the trophy, works part time for the Bruins and was one of the educators who helped create the I.C.E. school curriculum, which uses lesson plans connected to the state's Curriculum Frameworks. For more information, visit <http://bruins.nhl.com/club/page.htm?id=41489>.

MTA suggests changes to NCLB proposal

Continued from Page 13

a large percentage of Title I dollars be spent on Supplemental Education Services, with the explicit mandate that states may not restrict the providers of those services to licensed teachers. While some of these services are no doubt helpful, we hear complaints from across the state about the weakness of these services and the lack of accountability for them. We strongly support the waiver provision that will give districts and schools more latitude in how they provide additional services to struggling students, including using funds to expand the school day, if needed.

Despite these benefits from the waiver program, we oppose portions of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's waiver proposal to the USED. The accountability system envisioned is very complex and cannot be easily explained to or understood by educators and parents.

It fundamentally lacks the transparency required by the federal waiver application. If teachers and administrators in a school don't understand what their "score" or "level" means or how it was calculated, then they will have no useful information about how to improve.

After comments from the MTA and others were reviewed, the DESE submitted a revised proposal to the federal education department on Nov. 14. The MTA is analyzing this plan to determine if it adequately addresses earlier concerns about:

- Whether the goals are attainable.
- Whether the number of schools to be labeled will be significantly lower than under NCLB.
- Whether the support mechanisms for low-performing schools are available.
- Whether the accountability criteria are transparent.

For updates, please visit www.massteacher.org.

Education votes

www.educationvotes.org



News you need to know!

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Institute will promote civic understanding

By Laura Barrett

The MTA and the NEA are among the major supporters of the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate, an ambitious project to promote understanding of civic life and the role of government in the U.S. that will be located on the UMass Boston campus, adjacent to the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

The site is currently being prepared for construction of the institute, which is scheduled to open in 2013. Plans are well under way for designing programs that will serve teachers, students, scholars and members of the general public.

"The MTA is a proud contributor to the Edward M. Kennedy Institute," said MTA President Paul Toner. "Senator Kennedy was a champion of public education, labor unions and a strong middle class. He was one of the longest-serving senators in the United States Senate and one of the most prolific legislators in our nation's history."

The 40,000-square-foot facility that will house the EMK Institute will include space for museum exhibits about the Senate and Senator Kennedy's career, a representation of the Senate chambers for public forums and educational programs, classrooms, conference facilities and archives.

Jack M. Wilson, who served as president of the University of Massachusetts from 2003 to 2011, became interim president and CEO of the institute on July 1.

"There has been a lot of research about the big deficit in civics education for U.S. students," Wilson told *MTA Today*. "Our goal is to help people understand how the U.S. government works, and how it has solved problems in the past."

The plan calls for teachers to work closely with the institute to create courses and programs to enhance the study of history and government. "We want to have activities for every age level," Wilson said. "This should be a kind of living organization. We will be looking for wonderful ideas from teachers." Wilson added that he will be reaching out to the MTA to seek members willing to join committees and contribute ideas in other ways.

The institute will be a destination for Massachusetts students and their



Rafael Viñoly image courtesy of the Edward M. Kennedy Institute

A model depicts the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the U.S. Senate.

counterparts from across the nation. Among other offerings, the institute plans to hold a Summer Senate program in which 100 students, two from each state, will come to hold mock hearings and draft legislation.

"Civilians are not allowed to go into the U.S. Senate," Wilson explained. "The idea is for us to recreate the well of the Senate, where students can sit in the seat of a senator

and learn the positions of the senator who sat there."

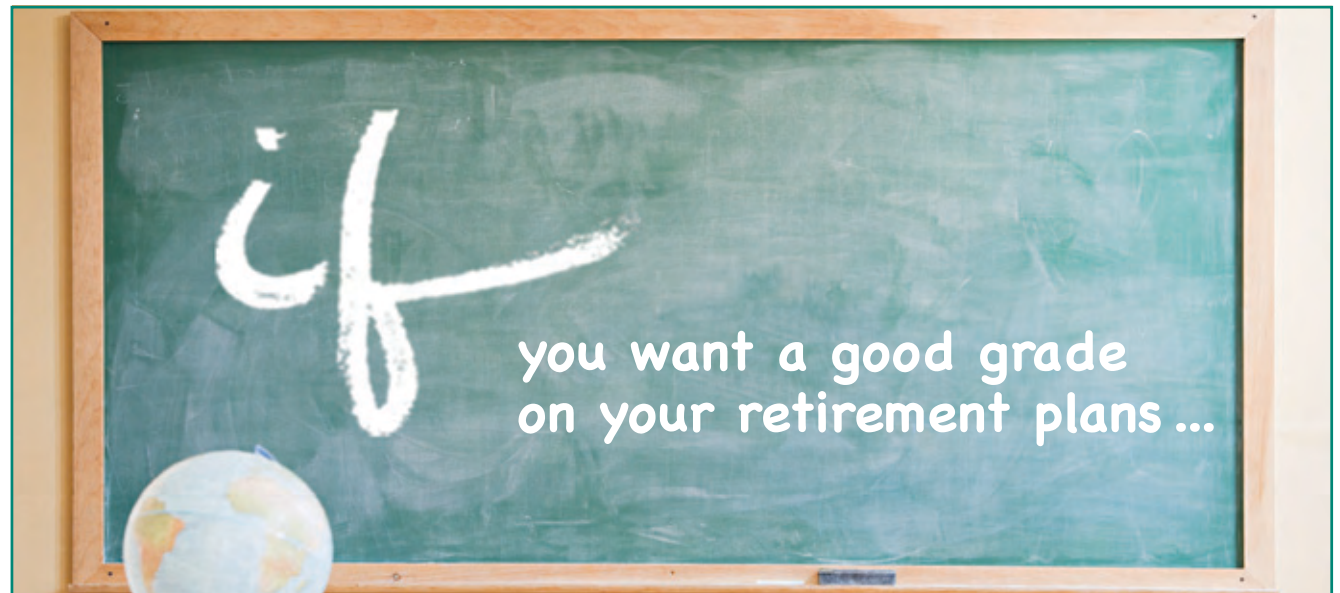
Wilson said the seats and desks will look just like the actual U.S. Senate seats and desks, except each will be equipped with a computer from which students may call up speeches and other documents relating to the senators who sat in that particular location. For example, a group of students will have the ability

to re-enact debates from the Civil Rights era, and information about the position of each senator serving during the period in question will be available.

The EMK Institute will also welcome college students and scholars who are involved in research projects. The public will be invited to visit the institute and participate in interactive programs.

Toner said that the institute is a fitting tribute to Senator Kennedy, one of the most influential political figures in the history of the nation.

"In these very trying times, his style of practical leadership and willingness to work across party lines to do what is best for our country are sorely missed," Toner said. "It is my hope that the institute will serve as an inspiration to all Americans as they come to visit what will be a living and breathing museum that honors the men and women of all political persuasions who have served in the United States Senate. I can think of no greater tribute to Senator Kennedy, the Lion of the Senate."



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Nomination papers available

MTA members who intend to seek election to MTA office at the 2012 Annual Meeting of Delegates or to run for NEA Director may now apply for nomination papers.

Annual Meeting elections will take place in May for vacancies in the offices of President, Vice President, At-Large Director to Represent Ethnic Minority Membership and District Director.

There is one NEA Director vacancy. The director will be elected by direct-mail ballot. Ballots will be sent to the entire membership.

Applications for nomination papers for MTA office must be submitted in writing to the office of the Executive Director-Treasurer, MTA, 20 Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108. Although there is no deadline for requesting them, nomination papers for MTA office must be filed with the Executive Director-Treasurer *by 5 p.m. on March 2*, regardless of postmark.

Nomination papers for the NEA Director post may be requested in the same manner, but must be filed no later than *Friday, Jan. 13*.

No person may be a candidate for more than one office. Each candidate must specify the office sought, the term of the office, his or her MTA membership individual ID number (which can be found on the MTA membership card), home and school addresses, telephone numbers, fax numbers, e-mail addresses and local association.

All candidates must comply with the nomination and election provisions of the MTA Bylaws, which will be made available to candidates.

President and Vice President*: The President and Vice President will be elected for two-year terms commencing July 15, 2012. A candidate must be an active MTA member** or a retired MTA member within the statewide retired district. A local affiliate shall not be represented on the MTA Board of Directors by more than one officer (President or Vice President).

At-Large Director to Represent Ethnic Minority Membership*: The

ELECTION TIMELINE	
NOMINATION DEADLINES	
December 30	Candidate Recommendation Committee
January 13	Statewide, Regional and Retired Delegates to the NEA RA
January 13	Regional Ethnic Minority Delegates to MTA Annual Meeting
January 13	Statewide Retired District Delegates to MTA Annual Meeting
January 13	NEA Director
March 2	President
March 2	Vice President
March 2	District Directors
March 2	At-Large Director to Represent Ethnic Minority Membership
March 2	Retired Members Committee
April 13	Student Delegate Election to the NEA RA (if Applicable)
FILING DEADLINES FOR PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	
January 13	Bylaws and Standing Rules
January 13	Resolutions

seat for At-Large Director to Represent Ethnic Minority Membership has a three-year term commencing July 1, 2012, and expiring June 30, 2015. Any candidate for this seat must be an ethnic minority member of the association. Ethnic minority means American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, African-American or Latino. Participation is required in the activities of the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee and the Equal Opportunity Council.

District Directors — MTA Board*: There will be 16 vacancies for District Director positions on the MTA Board. All terms will be for three years. The open districts are 1A, 7B, 9B, 10B, 35C, 42C, 14D, 28D, 32D, 30E, 23F, 25F, 19G, 44H, 46H and 47H. Each candidate must be an active MTA member** and must be employed in education within the

electoral district in which the candidate seeks office.

NEA Director*: The vacant NEA Director seat will be filled by direct-mail vote in March and April, in tandem with the NEA statewide and regional delegate elections. The term is three years, beginning Sept. 1, 2012, and expiring Aug. 31, 2015, in accordance with the NEA's fiscal year.

Each candidate must be an active MTA member** and an active or education support professional NEA member, as determined by the NEA Constitution and Bylaws, for at least two years immediately preceding the election, and a non-supervisor member as defined by the NEA. The policy procedure for the direct election of NEA Directors and Alternate NEA Directors is available upon request.

For information on nominations and elections, please contact Diane

Foley of the MTA Governance Division by calling 617.878.8217, e-mailing dfoley@massteacher.org or faxing inquiries to 617.742.7046.

*In accordance with Article IX, Section 2B, of the MTA Bylaws, all members of the Board of Directors (including officers; Regional Executive Committee Members; the Statewide Retired Region Executive Committee Member; the At-Large ESP Member; District, Statewide, and At-Large Directors; and NEA Directors) will be delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates. Election as delegates will occur simultaneous to, and by virtue of, election to the above-named offices.

**RIF'd members and members who have been granted leaves of absence by their employers may be considered active members employed in education.

2012 NOMINATION FORM FOR:

NEA DELEGATE ELECTIONS • REGIONAL ETHNIC MINORITY DELEGATES

● STATEWIDE RETIRED DISTRICT DELEGATES TO THE MTA ANNUAL MEETING

IMPORTANT MESSAGE: A CANDIDATE MUST FILL OUT A SEPARATE NOMINATION FORM FOR EACH OFFICE SOUGHT.

A candidate must file this nomination form or a facsimile with the Executive Director-Treasurer by 5 p.m. on Friday, January 13, 2012, regardless of postmark.

ADDITIONAL FORMS MAY BE REQUESTED OR THIS FORM MAY BE DUPLICATED. FORMS MAY BE FAXED TO DIANE FOLEY AT 617.742.7046.

NAME OF CANDIDATE: _____

MEMBER ID #: _____

(Listed on your MTA ID card)

E-MAIL: _____

HOME ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

WORK E-MAIL: _____

SCHOOL ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

LOCAL ASSOCIATION: _____

DISTRICT/REGION: _____

Please check the appropriate box that corresponds to the election.

NEA DELEGATE ELECTION

EDUCATIONAL POSITION:

(Check One)

- ☐ Teacher or Education Support Professional
- ☐ Administrator or Supervisor
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Retired Life

(See policy for definitions.)

I hereby declare my candidacy for:

(Check One)

- ☐ STATEWIDE – Non-Supervisor
- ☐ REGIONAL – Non-Supervisor
- ☐ STATEWIDE OTHER
(Administrator or Supervisor)
- ☐ RETIRED

MTA REGIONAL ETHNIC MINORITY DELEGATE TO THE MTA ANNUAL MEETING

ETHNIC MINORITY DESIGNATION:
(Check One)

- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ Cape Verdean
- ☐ Latino
- ☐ African-American
- ☐ American Indian/
Alaska Native

EDUCATIONAL POSITION

- ☐ **Teacher or Education Support Professional**
- ☐ **Administrator or Supervisor**

MTA STATEWIDE RETIRED DISTRICT DELEGATE TO THE MTA ANNUAL MEETING

Candidate Eligibility: (Check One)

- ☐ MTA Retired member
- ☐ MTA life member who is retired who holds NEA-R or NEA retired life membership

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **MTA Policy:** Each candidate may submit a headshot photograph and biography/statement containing no more than 50 words. Note: Only the first 50 words will be printed. ***The Credentials and Ballot Committee reserves the right to edit all bios.***
2. **Write out** your statement on a separate piece of paper first, and then fill out the grid.
3. **Type or print clearly**, using both upper- and lower-case letters, as you expect the final statement to appear.
4. Insert only **one word** per box.
5. **Do not combine words or numbers with hyphens or slashes.**
6. “An,” “a” and “the” constitute one word.
7. **Acronyms**, such as “NEA-RA” or “MTA,” count as one word.
8. **Insert punctuation** in the **same box** immediately after the word that you want it to follow.
9. Indicate intent to commence a **new paragraph** by inserting the paragraph symbol (§) in the same box immediately preceding the first word in the paragraph.
10. **A date** represented as “October 1, 2006” shall constitute three words. The same date represented as “10/1/06” is only one word.
11. Send this entire nomination form and photo to: MTA, Governance Specialist, 20 Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108. Only this form and photos received by **January 13, 2012**, will be published with the ballot. **PHOTO ON FILE MAY BE USED.** The Credentials and Ballot Committee may request a new or more recent photo.

BIO/STATEMENT GRID — PLEASE PRINT

Please select from the following and check the appropriate boxes:

- ☐ 50-word (maximum) bio/statement grid enclosed.
 ☐ Use photo on file.
 ☐ I am not submitting a photo.
- ☐ Photo sent via e-mail (high-resolution JPEG headshot, 300 dpi).
 ☐ Photo enclosed.
 ☐ Please return photo.
- ☐ I am not submitting a bio/statement grid.

My qualifications are in accordance with those of the designated position for which I am a candidate:

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

NEA RA delegates to be elected by mail

Statewide, regional and retired delegates from Massachusetts to the 2012 NEA Representative Assembly will be elected by mail ballot next March and April.

The election to choose an NEA Director will be held simultaneously and in the same manner.

The nomination period for delegates is now in process and will close at 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 13.

The election period runs from March 1 through April 27. Ballots for statewide and regional delegates will be mailed to eligible active MTA/NEA members and will be accompanied by bio/statements and photos of candidates who submit them.

Retired delegate ballots and bio/statements will be mailed only to retired and retired life NEA members.

The MTA will be notified by the NEA in February of the number of delegates allocated to Massachusetts. The allocation of statewide and regional delegates will be based on electoral regions A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H. A list of local associations by electoral region is available upon request.

The distribution of statewide and regional seats will be voted on by the MTA Board of Directors at its meeting Jan. 27-28; candidates will be informed of the final allocation plan and will be given an opportunity to alter the designation for the level they seek to represent.

Tentative dates for the RA are June 30 through July 5, and travel dates are June 29 and July 6. The RA will take place in Washington, D.C. The statewide, regional and retired delegates

from Massachusetts will attend, in addition to delegates elected by local associations.

The Credentials and Ballot Committee has adopted procedures for the election that call for ballots and other material to be sent directly to each NEA member in Massachusetts in a self-mailer that bears the notice: "Important: Ballots Enclosed."

Ballots will be returned directly to the Credentials and Ballot Committee at a post office box. Data from the returns will be tabulated and counted at MTA headquarters in Boston under the supervision of the Credentials and Ballot Committee.

Elected delegates are expected to comply with the accountability requirements set forth by the MTA. Funding will not be provided

unless accountability is met. The policy procedure for the election of MTA Delegates to the RA should be reviewed carefully by anyone considering candidacy.

The policy procedure for the election of retired delegates is available upon request.

It states that this election "shall be subject to all restrictions, procedures, and deadlines set forth by the NEA guidelines and MTA's statewide and regional election process."

Inquiries concerning procedures for the nomination and election of NEA delegates may be addressed to Diane Foley in the MTA Division of Governance. Her phone number is 617.878.8217, her fax number is 617.742.7046 and her e-mail address is dfoley@massteacher.org.

Regional ethnic minority delegates to be chosen

Regional ethnic minority delegates to the 2012 MTA Annual Meeting will be elected by mail ballot next March and April in conjunction with the NEA delegate/director elections.

The nomination period for regional ethnic minority delegates is now in process and will close at 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 13. Nominations are open to all eligible ethnic minority members through a self-nomination process.

The form appears on page 20 of this issue of *MTA Today*.

Regional ethnic minority delegates will be elected by mail ballots forwarded in the same self-mailer as the NEA ballots. The election period runs from March 1 through April 27. Ballots for regional ethnic minority delegates will be mailed to active MTA members, accompanied by bio/statements and photos of candidates who submit them.

The 2012 allocation of regional ethnic minority delegates will be based

on MTA electoral regions and equal to the number of district directors from each region. No more than one delegate from each district within a region will be elected, with the exception of 44H, which has two directors.

There will be 48 vacancies for regional ethnic minority delegates. All terms will be for one year. The regional vacancies are: Region A, seven vacancies; Region B, five vacancies; Region C, seven vacancies; Region D, five vacancies; Region

E, five vacancies; Region F, six vacancies; Region G, six vacancies; and Region H, seven vacancies. Each candidate must be employed in education within the region in which the candidate seeks office.

Inquiries regarding nomination, election and the policy procedure may be directed to Diane Foley in the MTA Division of Governance. Her phone number is 617.878.8217, her e-mail address is dfoley@massteacher.org and her fax number is 617.742.7046.

Bylaws and Rules Committee now accepting proposals

The MTA Bylaws and Rules Committee will soon begin reviewing proposed amendments.

A proposal to amend the Bylaws addresses the governance of the association or the primary characteristics and functions of the MTA. A proposal to amend the Standing Rules addresses the procedures of the Annual Meeting of Delegates, nominations and elections or governance documents.

Filing process and deadline: Proposed changes to the Bylaws must be received in writing by the MTA Bylaws and Rules Committee by 5 p.m. on Jan. 13.

Proposed changes to the Standing Rules only may be submitted in writing to the MTA Bylaws and Rules Committee up to the opening of the first business session of the May 11-12 Annual Meeting in Boston.

However, early submission by the Jan. 13 deadline provides an opportunity for a full hearing by the committee, by the Board of Directors and at the April pre-convention meetings.

It also allows advance publication in the April/May issue of *MTA Today*.

Submitters will be informed of hearing dates and will be expected to meet with the committee to discuss the language and intent of their proposals.

Proper format: Please use the following format for each proposed amendment.

1. Specifically cite all articles, sections and lines of the Bylaws or Standing Rules that are to be changed or affected.

2. Set forth your proposal in two columns, comparing the proposed text opposite the present text. In the proposed language, underline amended or added language. Enclose in parentheses language to be deleted. Indicate the location of completely new language.

3. Accompany each proposed amendment with a written rationale on its purpose, impact and intent.

4. Include at the end of all proposals the submitter's name and local association.

5. Provide your full name, address, telephone number(s), fax number(s), e-mail address or addresses and your MTA membership ID number, which can be found on your MTA membership card.

Who may submit proposals? Individual MTA members, groups of members and local associations are eligible to submit proposed amendments to the MTA Bylaws and Standing Rules. Members wishing to use an official title representing an MTA affiliate or committee are

Please turn to **Bylaws**/Page 22

MTA Resolutions Committee accepting proposals

Proposed revisions to MTA resolutions are now being accepted. Resolutions are the organization's statements of principle on issues relating to members, public education, the welfare of students and human and civil rights.

A proposal for a new resolution or revision of an existing one may be submitted by any member.

The initial deadline for submissions to the Resolutions Committee is Jan. 13.

To become the official position of the MTA, a resolution must be adopted by the delegates to the Annual Meeting.

Proposed resolutions may also be submitted by the end of business on Friday, May 11, at the Annual Meeting of Delegates. The committee may also propose resolutions.

All resolutions submitted are considered by the Resolutions

Committee, and those submitted by the January deadline are also brought before the Board of Directors.

To become the official position of the MTA, a resolution must be adopted by the delegates to the Annual Meeting.

The 2011-2012 committee members are Chairwoman Diana Marcus, JoAnn Evans, Susan Karb, David McGlothlin, Sandra Moriarty, Dorothy Scally and Deanna White-Hebert. Laura Barrett is the staff consultant, and Janice Morrissey is the staff assistant.

For a copy of the current MTA resolutions, please go to www.massteacher.org, and search for "Resolutions."

Nominations sought for Candidate Recommendation Committee

Nominations are now open for the election of members to the MTA Candidate Recommendation Committee.

The committee is responsible for the support of candidates for state and federal office. There is currently one opening in each of the following congressional districts: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. The terms are for three years. Each candidate and each committee member must reside in the congressional district to be represented.

Those considering running should be aware that there may be changes because of the recently approved redistricting bill, which reduced the number of districts from 10 to nine.

Any MTA member interested in running for the CRC should contact Diane Foley in the MTA Division of Governance by calling 617.878.8217 or e-mailing dfoley@massteacher.org to request a nomination form.

The nomination form and a biographical statement of not more

than 100 words must be received by Dec. 30. Candidates will be provided upon request with lists of MTA Annual Meeting delegates for their respective congressional districts, along with names and addresses.

If the number of candidates is equal to or less than the number of positions to be filled, elections may be waived and the candidates declared elected to the positions in question.

Ballots including the candidates' biographical statements will be mailed

to the electorate on the first Friday in February (Feb. 3) and must be returned no later than 5 p.m. on the last Friday in February (Feb. 24). Candidates who are elected via the ballot process or the election waiver will start their terms on March 15. The terms are scheduled to expire on March 14, 2015.

Members of the CRC are eligible to be elected for two consecutive three-year terms. In no event can a person hold one of these positions for more than six consecutive years.

Statewide retired district delegates to be chosen by mail ballot

MTA statewide retired district delegates to the 2012 MTA Annual Meeting will be elected by mail ballot in conjunction with the NEA delegate/director elections.

The nomination period for statewide retired delegates is now in process and will close at 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 13.

Nominations are open to all eligible MTA/NEA retired members through a self-nomination process. The form appears on page 20 of this issue of *MTA Today*.

Statewide retired district delegates will be elected by mail ballots forwarded in the same self-mailer as the NEA retired delegate ballots. The election period runs from March 1

through April 27. Ballots for statewide retired delegates will be mailed to retired MTA/NEA members and will be accompanied by bio/statements and photos of candidates who submit them. The 2012 allocation of statewide retired district delegates and successor delegates will be based on the number of MTA/NEA retired members from the statewide retired district on record no

later than March 1. Terms last one year.

The policy procedure for the election will be mailed to any candidate who requests a copy.

Inquiries may be directed to Diane Foley in the MTA Division of Governance at 617.878.8217. They may also be e-mailed to dfoley@massteacher.org or faxed to 617.742.7046.

Bylaws and Rules Committee assistance available

Continued from Page 21

required to submit evidence that a vote was taken by authorized representatives of the affiliate or the committee.

Current document: A copy of the current document containing the MTA Bylaws, Standing Rules and Resolutions is available to any member upon request.

Assistance: The Bylaws and Rules Committee and members of the MTA

staff are available to discuss ideas for potential amendments.

Inquiries and proposals submitted for the Bylaws and Rules Committee should be channeled through Mary Ann Alfond, MTA director of professional services, at the MTA, 20 Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108. Her phone number is 617.878.8213, her fax number is 617.742.7046 and her e-mail address is malfond@massteacher.org.

Election waiver

If the number of candidates is equal to or less than the number of positions to be filled, elections may be waived and the candidates declared elected to the positions in question.

Retired committee has four seats open

Four members of the eight-member Retired Members Committee will be elected by statewide retired district delegates to the 2012 MTA Annual Meeting in May.

Please see the December/January issue of the *MTA Reporter* for details and the self-nomination form.

The deadline for nominations is March 2.

Election set to fill interim Candidate Recommendation Committee vacancy

A special interim election is being held for one seat on the MTA Candidate Recommendation Committee. The vacancy is in Congressional

District 2, which is represented by U.S. Representative Richard Neal. The committee is responsible for the recommendation of candidates for state and federal office. The member

must live in the district. The election procedure provides that interim vacancies may be filled by votes of the current committee members. The term is scheduled to begin immediately upon election and end on March 14, 2014.

Those considering running should be aware that there may be changes because of the recently approved redistricting bill, which reduced the

number of districts from 10 to nine.

Eligible members interested in running should contact Diane Foley of the MTA Division of Governance by calling 617.878.8217 or e-mailing dfoley@massteacher.org to request a nomination form/bio-statement grid. The form and statement of not more than 100 words must be received by Dec. 21.

Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation

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17. James P. Sacks, Editor

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Obituaries

Pauline A. Boardman, 67, of Westport. Was a teacher at the George H. Potter Elementary School in Dartmouth for 40 years before retiring in 2005. Had served as president of the Dartmouth Educators Association, vice president of the Bristol County Educators Association and a member of the MTA Board of Directors. Sept. 3.

Pamela Clark, 57, of Haverhill. Taught math at North Shore Technical High School in Middleton for 34 years. Sept. 20.

Laurette M. Danahy, 89, of Hopkinton. Was an elementary teacher at the Center and Elmwood schools for 31 years, retiring in 1987. July 30.

Margaret T. "Peggy" DeAngelis, 66, of Auburn and Southbridge. Was a librarian and taught at the Mary E.

Wells Jr. High School for 35 years. Aug. 26.

Robert B. "B.J." Johnson, 77, of Worcester. Taught in Shrewsbury and Worcester for 37 years, retiring in 1994 as principal of the Gates Lane School. Was a founding member of the Educational Association of Worcester and later served as president. Aug. 16.

Eileen C. Keane, 93, of Maynard. Taught middle school and high school in Lynn, Maynard and Framingham, retiring in 1972. Sept. 2.

Mary T. Lawrence, 63, of Monson. Taught in the Granby, Ware and Monson school districts. Was a foreign language teacher at Palmer High School for 10 years. Sept. 26.

Gerald D. Puccini, 65, of Hyannis. Taught in Taunton for 17 years and was principal of the James L. Mulcahey Middle School for 20 years, retiring in 2004. Sept. 19.

Claire R. Ross, 86, of Boston. Worked for the MTA Division of Communications. Oct. 3.

Stanley A. Roy, Sr., 88, of Worcester. Taught in Worcester for many years, retiring in 1986. Aug. 15.

Glen A. Shoesmith, 76, of Swansea. Taught in Gardner and Fall River, retiring as a special needs teacher at B.M.C. Durfee High School in Fall River. Served as president of the Fall River Educators Association and was a past president of the Bristol County Teachers Association. Sept. 5.

Principal's selection is welcomed by Swansea president

When Brian McCann was named the state's 2012 High School Principal of the Year by the Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators' Association, Larry Abbruzzi, the president of the Swansea Educators Association, was not surprised.

"We have been very lucky to be able to work with Brian because he always looks for our input," Abbruzzi said. "When it comes to working collaboratively, he is one of the best principals I have worked with in 40 years."

McCann is the principal of Joseph Case High School.

Each year the MSSAA selects elementary, middle school and high school principals to receive the honor. The criteria for being selected are demonstrating exemplary skills in leadership and providing professional growth and service to the community.

Since being selected over the summer, McCann, who is a 1980 Case graduate and father of three, has been involved in a number of recognition ceremonies. He called a trip to Washington to meet with members of the state's congressional delegation "a surreal experience."

"It's all good, and I think the award is more about how the entire school community works together than it is about me," McCann said.



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CONFERENCES

JANUARY 27-29 IN PROVINCETOWN — GLSEN Massachusetts (the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network) will hold its annual Educator Retreat. The retreat is open to LGBT and straight ally adults working in any school system. Topics include networking, coming out and strategies for building support networks. For more information, e-mail retreat@glsenmassachusetts.org.

EDUCATION / LICENSURE

ADMINISTRATOR LICENSURE PROGRAM — If you are looking for a district-based cost-effective program for licensure as an administrator, consult the website of The Education Cooperative (TEC), www.tec-coop.org, and click on "Professional Development and Licensure." Courses are offered in Dedham in cooperation with Boston University.

TEACHER LICENSURE PROGRAM — If you have Preliminary licensure at the secondary level and are seeking Initial licensure, The Education Cooperative (TEC) has a program for you. Go to www.tec-coop.org and click on "Professional Development and Licensure." Courses are offered on weekends and during the summer at our Dedham site.

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TRAVEL / STUDY

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Massachusetts Teachers Association

MTA Today

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Early ed organizing drive continues

By Sarah Nathan

Efforts to give early childhood educators a strong and organized voice at work continued through the fall with a State House hearing, visits to workers and ongoing outreach to legislators.

The MTA and the NEA have joined together with the American Federation of Teachers and AFT Massachusetts — both AFL-CIO affiliates — to help early childhood educators working in centers across the state form the Massachusetts Early Childhood Educators Union. The grassroots campaign to build the MECEU is running on two tracks: working to pass a bill that would pave the way for a non-traditional union and building a network of early childhood educators to join the organizing effort.

The early childhood legislation, House Bill 1671: *An Act to Improve Quality in Early Education Care Centers*, was the subject of a hearing before the Joint Committee on Public Service on Oct. 4. The room was packed with early childhood educators, child-care center directors and supportive parents, as well as many opponents from the business community. The session started out in one of the State House hearing rooms on the first floor and then was moved to a much bigger venue, Gardner Auditorium, after it became clear that there was not enough room for the crowd.

"This moment in the history of early education and care in Massachusetts couldn't mean more," testified Patricia Hnatiuk, who teaches early childhood education at Wheelock College. "We have the opportunity at last to create through House Bill 1671 a unified, stable and just adult work environment with and for some of the most unheralded yet invaluable people in the Commonwealth: our early education teachers."

Hnatiuk joined Pat Xavier, co-director of the Boston Alliance of Early Education, on one of several panels of center directors, representatives of large nonprofit organizations, early childhood experts and advocates who testified in favor of the proposed legislation, which is aimed at improving standards for early childhood educators working at centers throughout the Commonwealth.



Supporters of the early childhood organizing bill walked to Gardner Auditorium on Oct. 4 after the room in which a hearing was initially scheduled proved too small. The MTA, the NEA, the AFT and AFT Massachusetts have joined together to give early childhood educators a strong voice in their workplaces. High-quality early education is essential to help narrow the achievement gap.

Photo by Sarah Nathan

High-quality early childhood education is essential to help narrow the achievement gap that often separates students at a very early age. Research confirms that by the time children from families living below the poverty line enter kindergarten, the gap in math and reading is already present.

"I've had three children go through preschool, and I depended on the child-care centers to care for them while I was at work," said Jessica Heaton-Mercada of Whitman, who testified at the hearing. "But the centers they attended have difficulty retaining staff. They can't support the well-trained educators we need to teach our children."

Opponents of the bill argued that the creation of a non-traditional union would undermine local control of participating child-care centers and also have a negative impact on access to child care for families in need.

Former MTA President Anne Wass set the record straight.

"Compensation for early educators has been linked to two of the most important factors in determining the quality of the child-care program — teacher turnover and teacher education," Wass testified. She noted that the creation of a non-traditional union will not intrude on existing practices or employee-employer relationships. Nor will it interfere with access.

Instead, she said, the early ed bill will help to limit teacher turnover, which is a constant issue. In some centers, she said, up to 50 percent of the staff leaves annually.

The MTA has also been actively involved in efforts to reach out to early education workers who would be part of the new union. Weymouth education support professional Millie Ficarra was among the MTA members who volunteered for the outreach effort. Ficarra, who works in an elementary school and is a member of the MTA Executive Committee, said it is easy to identify which children have gone through preschool and which have not.

"I see children who start kindergarten without any preschool and a lot of times they lack social skills and are academically behind the kids who have gone to a good preschool," she said. "Providing early education to children gives them an earlier start on a healthy life."

As *MTA Today* went to press, no action had been taken on the legislation, which remained in the Public Service Committee.

MTA members are encouraged to send e-mails urging their legislators to support House Bill 1671 from the MTA's legislative messaging service by visiting <http://masstea.ch/vuL6on>. To view a video of the hearing on the MTA's YouTube channel, visit <http://youtu.be/0k3bwzSY-k0>.

The MTA Advantage is a publication of MTA Benefits, a subsidiary of the Massachusetts Teachers Association

HAPPY HOLIDAY SHOPPING!

'Access' a glittering array of gifts at savings of up to 50 percent

Shop top stores this holiday season with Access, the country's most extensive discount provider, now part of the exclusive savings program available through MTA Benefits. You can get discounts typically from 10 to 50 percent on everything from hot new fashions for her to cool computer accessories for him. Shop in stores or online at big-name retailers such as:

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Want to give something different to the person who has everything? Or maybe buy something special for yourself? Access offers savings with *Restaurant.com*, Regal Cinemas, Ramada and hundreds of other

name brands. Also consider gifts of groceries, car care, luxury items and more – all available with Access.

Start your holiday shopping by going to www.mtabenefits.com. Click on the "Access" image to discover all of the nationwide savings available to members.



More savings than ever before. Access represents more than 250,000 local and national merchant locations offering deals to the company's 20 million members. The continued Access expansion of its merchant network solidifies its place as the leading provider of discount programs in the country.

"Members can save more than ever now – during the holidays and all year long," said Maryann Robinson, president of MTAB. "In addition to more than one thousand places listed in the MTA Discount Directory, members can also now get discounts through this huge nationwide Access network. Our focus at MTA Benefits is our members. Our goal is to continually provide them with more high-quality discount programs from the most respected companies in the country."

Tim Sullivan ~ another fan of MTA Benefits

ASSOCIATION: Brockton Education Association

PROFESSION: Vice president, Massachusetts Teachers Association

AFFILIATIONS: Member, MTA and MTA Benefits boards of directors; vice president, Blue Hills Foundation

What he finds rewarding about his job: "I help represent the more than 107,000 members of the MTA – advocating on their behalf on the state and national levels and seeking to shape policy in a way that produces great results for both students and educators. I always keep in mind that our working conditions are students' learning conditions. Our schools, colleges and universities are national leaders because of their high-quality curriculum offerings and the excellence of their teachers, faculty members, education support professionals and other staff. It is rewarding to be able to support this kind of success."

Why he is a fan of MTA Benefits: "During my time as president of the Brockton Education Association, I promoted MTA Benefits to our members and let them know that working with MTAB could save them an amount equal to or greater than their union dues. Recently, I switched to MTA's endorsed auto insurance through Educators Insurance Agency (EIA) because of the MTA discount and other savings. I have also taken advantage of free admission to Salem museums, free visits to the Heritage Museums and Gardens in Sandwich, discounted trips to theme parks in Florida and Massachusetts, rental car savings nationwide and shopping discounts at a variety of local retail stores. Whenever possible, I buy from the member-owned businesses listed in the directory."

Why MTAB is a valuable resource for members: "It is important in these tough economic times to find savings wherever you can. MTAB offers the perfect opportunity for members to stretch their dollars with discounted programs covering everything from mortgages and auto insurance to travel and entertainment, including hard-to-get tickets for major sporting events. As a season ticket holder for the Bruins, I would enthusiastically recommend buying tickets to their games through MTAB. Discount tickets are first made available to members who subscribe to MTAB's e-newsletter, *Quick Takes*. Members should go on the MTAB website, www.mtabenefits.com, to subscribe and to see all the ways they can save and enhance the quality of their lives."



Seeing the forest and the trees

A new multi-dimensional exhibit at HMNH

The new multimedia New England Forests exhibit at the Harvard Museum of Natural History – free to MTA members – immerses visitors in a many-faceted environment. Using three different forest landscapes, the exhibit explores in fascinating detail everything from how they evolved to their impact on the environment.

‘I’m scheduling trips here for my students – some have never been to a real forest.’

Colleen Small, Burlington Educators Association



Rave reviews from MTA members “This exhibit brings together all the elements of the forests – including the animals, habitat and ecosystem – showing how each works and interacts with the other,” said Colleen Small, a second-grade teacher at the Francis Wyman Elementary School and member of the Burlington Educators Association. “I’m scheduling trips here for my students – some have never been to a real forest – so they can learn from this rich multi-dimensional experience. Kudos to HMNH for a wonderful exhibit.”

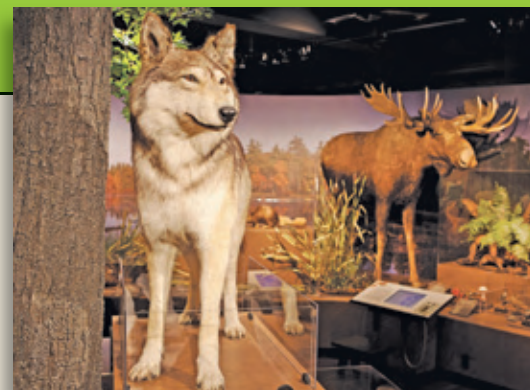
Displays bring to life the ecology of woodland caribou, wolves and other New England wildlife; lichen cities that cling to rocks; and the circle of life within and around a forest pond, from tiny aquatic insects to giant moose, as well as other facets of the forest.

Dan Jones, a seventh-grade science teacher and member of the Cohasset Teachers Association, liked the way the exhibit was

Once widespread throughout New England's old growth forests, the wolf is now regionally extinct, with only occasional sightings of wolves migrating in from Canada.

In the background, an impressive bull moose

dominates the woodland pond in the newly opened Harvard Museum of Natural History exhibition. Due in part to the reforestation of the region, moose are now found in every New England state. Photo by Patrick Rogers / www.hmnh.harvard.edu.



designed to “grab your attention and pull you in” to different levels of information.

“For example, one interactive station introduces general ideas about forests and presents a menu where you can choose from several researchers and go deeper into their projects,” he said. “One ongoing research project follows the hemlock wooly adelgid’s impact on forests as these pests spread and threaten the eastern hemlock. By the time I went through the exhibit, I assimilated a significant amount of information, much of which is incorporated into my teaching plans for life sciences and other classes.”

For more information on the permanent New England Forests and other HMNH exhibits – all free to MTA members – visit www.hmnh.harvard.edu.



Dan Jones, Cohasset Teachers Association, liked the way the exhibit was designed to “grab your attention and pull you in” to different levels of information.



Steve Humphrey, Groton Dunstable Education Association

From the corporate world to the classroom

“My passion is teaching,” said Steve Humphrey, an eighth-grade math and science teacher at Groton-Dunstable Regional Middle School. “I am energized in the classroom when I’m helping students realize they can ‘be somebody.’ This is a powerful, motivating discovery for them.”

It was his own discovery of teaching that changed Humphrey’s life. For more than 20 years, he had a successful career as a manager in the corporate world and might have remained there if he had not been asked in 2002 by his company to move to the West Coast. Humphrey declined, instead taking a generous retirement package and short-term position as a consultant.

“It was a natural transition to teaching,” said Humphrey. “I had worked for years with adolescents as a volunteer, including serving as a cubmaster and assistant scoutmaster for the Boy Scouts of

America and as a member of the Lincoln Minute Men, whose whole mission is historical education for children and adults. I also volunteered in a youth drug program in Cambridge while I was a graduate student at MIT.”

Encouraged by friends who felt he would be an ideal teacher, Humphrey took preliminary licensing exams for math, science, history and English, passing all of them. He began substitute teaching in schools around Massachusetts.

“It was my ticket into teaching,” he said.

After working for more than three years as a paraprofessional, then as a long-term substitute teacher in Lowell, Humphrey took his first full-time position at Groton-Dunstable this year. As a new MTA member, Humphrey plans to enjoy savings through MTA Benefits, such as discounted car rentals, hotels and other travel benefits.

“I look forward to every day in the classroom,” he said. “I love working with fellow faculty learning my craft. Teaching is much more ‘me’ than working in the corporate world.”



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20 Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108
Tel: 800.336.0990 • Fax: 617.557.6687
Web site: www.mtabenefits.com

No dues dollars are ever used to market MTA Benefits programs.

The Tip Sheet

Trips and other exciting adventures



Top ski areas – now at an MTA discount

Three of New England's most popular ski resorts have been added to the MTA Discount Directory. **Ski Bretton Woods**, New Hampshire's largest ski area, offers 464 acres of skiing and snowboarding on 102 trails and glades, four terrain parks and 30 acres of all new back-country glades. MTA members and their immediate family members get a \$10 discount on adult any-day lift tickets, with some restrictions. When you go, visit or stay at the elegant, historic Omni Mount Washington Hotel in Bretton Woods, a favorite retreat of presidents, poets and celebrities. For information on skiing and lodging, visit www.mtwashington.com. **Sunday River Resort**, located in Bethel, Maine, features 12-hour skiing and riding on weekends and most holidays, which means you don't have to rush to the slopes at sunrise or race for the last chair at the end of the day. MTA members get a \$10 discount on a regular-price one-day adult lift ticket. For information and restrictions, visit www.sundayriver.com. **Killington Resort** stretches across six mountains and features 140 trails served by 22 lifts. Its elevation advantage, its 600-acre snowmaking system – the world's most extensive – and its 250 inches of annual snowfall mean you enjoy the best ski and snowboard conditions every day of the season. Killington is known for its diversity of terrain, providing skiers and riders of all ability levels with plenty of choices. MTA members pay \$65 for a one-day lift ticket. For information, visit www.killington.com.

A private MTA tour to Puglia and Southern Italy

Join other MTA members on an exclusive 12-day trip with Go Ahead Tours starting Oct. 11, 2012, to Puglia and Southern Italy. Unfamiliar to many Americans, Puglia has long been a favorite vacation region for Europeans attracted by the bright blue seas, dazzling coastline, diverse art and architecture and sumptuous cuisine. You'll visit Lecce, known as the "Florence of the South" with its elaborate Baroque architecture, Matera and its 9,000-year-old cave dwellings and Ostuni's majestic cathedral, as well as many other unique sites. Optional side trips include Capri, Pompeii and Rome. As an MTA member, you and any of your guests each get a **special discount of \$150**. For prices and other information, call 800.438.7672 and give the group reference number **60701069**. Or visit mta.grouptoursite.com.



Discounted car rentals – a favorite among MTA members

Alamo, Hertz and National Car Rental offer MTA members unlimited mileage and discounts of 15 percent to 20 percent. Special offers now available include the new **Hertz Gold Plus Rewards Program**, the faster and easier way to earn points on every rental. Join Hertz #1 Club Gold for FREE, receive 500 points for signing up (equal to a free weekend rental) and earn 100 bonus points for every rental day through Dec. 15. Bonus points are in addition to one point per qualifying dollar spent at participating Hertz locations. Convert points into free car rental days and more. **National** and **Alamo** are offering a FREE day or a one-car-class upgrade, available through Dec. 31 and only when booking through www.mtabenefits.com. For specifics, visit the Car Rental section of MTAB's website.



Stay and save with Wyndham

Wyndham Group hotels and inns are waiting for you – in New England and all around the world. As an MTA member, you receive up to 20 percent off the Best Available Rate at more than 7,000 participating locations worldwide.

Wyndham Hotel Group includes such desirable brands as Wyndham Hotels & Resorts®, Days Inn®, Ramada Worldwide®, Super 8®, Howard Johnson® and Travelodge®, plus other well-known hotels and inns. To book, call 877.670.7088 and give the agent MTA Discount ID number **8000002648** when making a reservation. Members can join the Wyndham Rewards loyalty program free at www.wyndhamrewards.com or when visiting any of the hotels.

EASE WINTER PAIN WITH AN ENERGY SAVINGS GAIN

Heat USA offers big oil and propane discounts

That chill in the air is a reminder that winter, while not officially here yet, is on its way – and so are higher energy bills for MTA members and their families. While energy prices are no longer at the historic highs hit this past summer, they can still cause financial suffering. Heat USA can help ease the pain.

The Heat USA heating oil and propane buying program has been providing exclusive energy discounts to MTA members for more than a decade. The benefits it provides have never been better or more needed.

Propane discounts and no-fee service

Under a new program offered through partner company Propane USA, MTA members can receive impressive discounts – ranging from 30 to 50 cents per gallon on average – on propane used in cooking or heating a home. Propane USA members are not charged any fees by suppliers – no tank rental, delivery, environmental, line-testing, low-usage or any other fees – which means even more big savings. In addition, membership in the Propane USA program is free for MTA members.



Heating oil savings

Heat USA uses the combined buying power of its more than 80,000 member households to negotiate significant discounts on oil. On average, members can expect to save 10 to 25 cents per gallon, depending on their location. Since most consumers use more than 700 gallons a year, the savings are significant.

Additionally, Heat USA members receive a lifetime free full-service contract on their heating systems or a flat discount on all chargeable service. That includes 24-hour emergency service and a free cleaning and tuneup of the heating system for service contract holders. Those benefits translate into not only higher safety and comfort levels, but also potential savings of hundreds of dollars a year if a system requires maintenance or repair. (Most do – the average oil consumer gets 1.5 service calls per year.)

Membership in Heat USA is \$25 per year, but MTA members pay just \$15 for the first year.



How to get started

For oil, go to www.heatusa.com; for propane, visit www.propane.coop. Or call 888.HEAT.USA (888.432.8872). Make sure to mention your MTA affiliation since membership is not open to the general public.

WINTER TIPS FROM HEAT USA

What to do when the heat doesn't come on

Follow these easy steps:

- **Make sure your burner switch is on.** Although most switches stay in the “on” position at all times, you should still ensure the switch is in the right place.
- **Check your tank.** Are you out of oil? Check the gauge on the top of your tank if it is above ground. If you need a delivery, call your heating oil company and mention you might be “dry.” A technician might be needed to prime your system in case the filter or nozzle on your burner has become clogged.
- **Set the thermostat five degrees above the current room temperature** and make sure it is set at “heat.” If you have a clock thermostat, have it correctly timed.
- **Check your fuse box.** If a fuse is blown or the circuit breaker is tripped, replace the fuse or flip the circuit breaker to the “on” position.
- **Check the interior of your thermostat.** Carefully remove the thermostat cover, and if it is dusty or dirty, gently clean the components, especially the bimetallic coil, and switch contact surfaces if the thermostat does not have a mercury switch.
- **Make sure your thermostat is in the right place.** If it is installed in a drafty hallway or on a wall with a heat source, the thermostat will only react to the temperature of the wall, not the temperature of your house. In addition, if a thermostat is located near an outside door or window, it will be affected every time the door or window is opened or closed. Your thermostat should be on an inside wall in a frequently occupied space.

SIGN UP FOR THESE GIVEAWAYS

Mark your calendars to enter four upcoming online giveaways by MTA Benefits. A total of 12 \$100 gift cards – three each from American Express, TJ Maxx, Amazon.com and Visa – will be won by lucky MTA members between now and July 2. Following are the upcoming dates and gifts:

Nov. 28-Dec. 9	Three \$100 American Express gift cards
Feb. 13-24	Three \$100 TJ Maxx gift cards
April 16-27	Three \$100 Amazon.com gift cards
June 18-July 2	Three \$100 Visa gift cards

To enter, go to www.mtabenefits.com, click on “Members Only,” then “MTAB Giveaways” and follow the easy instructions. Check the What’s New listing on MTAB’s website to see if you’re a winner.

Online winners of \$100 Disney Gift Card:

- **Susan Scannelli**, Everett Teachers Association
- **Sharon Mattingly**, Marlborough Educators Association
- **Gail Twomey**, MTA Retired member

All program and pricing information was current at the time of publication (November 2011) and is subject to change without notice. To find out what may have changed, please call MTA Benefits at 800.336.0990.