

MTA Today

*A publication of the Massachusetts Teachers Association
Volume 43, No. 1/Summer 2012*



**MEMBERS GEAR UP TO ELECT
PRO-EDUCATION CANDIDATES**

TONER AND SULLIVAN DISCUSS SECOND-TERM PRIORITIES



SAVE THE DATE!

MTA ETHNIC MINORITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE CONFERENCE

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30 — SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1
SHERATON FRAMINGHAM HOTEL

The MTA Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee is hosting its annual conference for MTA members on Friday, November 30, and Saturday, December 1, at the Sheraton Framingham Hotel. The conference will kick off at 6 p.m. on Friday and conclude at 5 p.m. on Saturday. Former NEA President Reg Weaver will deliver the keynote address on Friday. Details will be posted in the coming weeks at www.massteacher.org. Have questions? Call MTA staff member Linda Ferrari at 800.479.1410 or e-mail lferrari@massteacher.org.

MTA Today

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This issue of MTA Today also features the association's guide to the 2012 primary election, which will be held on Thursday, September 6



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MTA TODAY, ISSN 08982481, is published quarterly by the Massachusetts Teachers Association. Subscription: \$3.04 of MTA members' dues is designated for MTA Today.

Periodicals postage rates paid at Boston, MA, and at additional offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: MTA Today, 20 Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108.

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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.

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On the cover

Members involved in the MTA's grassroots political efforts are committed to helping pro-education candidates achieve victory in both the primary on September 6 and the general election, which follows two months later. Representatives of the association's Legislative and Political Action Teams showed their enthusiasm during a photo session with local political action leaders and some of the staff members working on the campaign after spending several days honing their plans and skills during the MTA's recent Summer Conference in Williamstown. A story on their efforts begins on page 7, and photos of the conference appear on page 8. A primary election guide is also featured in this edition of MTA Today. Meanwhile, MTA President Paul Toner and Vice President Tim Sullivan are prepared to lead the association through the challenges that will arise in the days ahead. They discuss their second-term priorities in a Q&A that begins on page 3.

Photos by Christine Peterson and Laura Barrett



Quote-Unquote

"Good public schools, good community colleges, good public universities, and good technical training can give us a workforce better than any in the world. Well-trained workers are cost effective, and they can give us a powerful competitive advantage in world markets. Investments in our people pay the highest dividends and must become one of our highest priorities."

— Excerpt from the education section of U.S. Senate candidate Elizabeth Warren's website

Leaders discuss second-term priorities

Paul Toner, a Cambridge middle school teacher, and Tim Sullivan, a Brockton middle school teacher, were re-elected as MTA president and vice president, respectively, at the Annual Meeting of Delegates in May. They began serving their second and final two-year terms in those offices on July 15. MTA communications specialist Laura Barrett interviewed them together on a recent afternoon about their experiences as MTA leaders and their hopes for the future.

Q: Who was one of your favorite teachers and why?

PT: A lot of who I am today and the career choices I've made are a result of my teachers. Cornelius McGreal, the principal of the Powder House School in Somerville, suggested that maybe I'd want to consider being a lawyer, so that was an idea that stuck with me. My eighth-grade teacher John Schmidt was the one who told my mother that I'd be a good social studies teacher someday. I ended up following both of their advice.

TS: I was educated in the Braintree Public Schools. I had a lot of great teachers over the years. One was a high school teacher, Mr. Ken Clinton. He encouraged me to try out for a select music group, the Madrigal Singers. I was selected and became more and more involved in music through school. I started out my college career as a music education major. I eventually switched over to elementary education, but as my career developed, music was always an important component of what I did, including going on tour with the Brockton High School Chorus for at least 10 years in a row. I still sing regularly.

Q: What have you been reading lately?

TS: One thing that has kept me grounded in this position is the fact that I have an 11-year-old son who just finished fifth grade. He had a whole series of book reports due this past year. The teacher in me likes to sit down and have him read orally or I'll do some of the reading and it allows me to ask questions along the way to continue to be a part of his growing up and also to keep me grounded in the work I was trained to do. Tim and I sat down over a couple-of-week period and read one of the "Sherlock Files" books together. The experience of being able to read with your child shouldn't be underestimated. Given the amount of hours you have to put into this job, those are the kinds of moments you need to share with your children.

PT: I'm currently reading "Tip O'Neill and the Democratic Century." It's the 100th anniversary of Tip O'Neill's birth, and I'm on the celebration committee in Cambridge. I'm enjoying it so much because I live in my great-grandfather's house in Cambridge and many of the people referred to in the book were friends of my grandparents and great-uncles. It's interesting reading stories about the neighborhood



Photo by Laura Barrett

MTA President Paul Toner, left, and MTA Vice President Tim Sullivan have a full agenda.

haunts, like a well-known local restaurant that apparently used to be a big bookie joint.

Q: What were some of the biggest challenges of your first term?

PT: The municipal health insurance issue was the most challenging. Even though it came to conclusion during our first year as president and vice president, we had been leading up to it for seven or eight years. It was happening during a period of major national upheaval with Wisconsin and the 2010 election, where there was a major shift in legislatures throughout the country. And we had a major recession. Community leaders, political leaders and union leaders were struggling to figure out how to keep this economy going and provide people with good health insurance benefits without sinking municipal budgets. This chicken came home to roost during our first year. It was a major internal issue in relation to collective bargaining and wanting to do what was best for our members while at the same time wanting to do what was best for our communities. But I think the most challenging thing about the first term was all of the things that came up. In addition to municipal health, we had Race to the Top, evaluation frameworks and most recently the Stand for Children ballot initiative. The world is changing around us. There are many different players involved in the discussion. We are doing our best to maintain our core values while being pushed and prodded by people both inside and outside the organization. Trying to balance all that is the toughest part.

TS: I think the two of us faced more in our first two years than many MTA officers face in their entire eight years. When I did my dissertation in 2009, the title was "The Changing Attitudes of Union Membership." I took an in-depth look at new unionism and what it is we have to address. We are very good at the bread-and-butter issues — wages, hours and working conditions. And that's what our

people have known for decades. The attitudes about what our union membership wants from us have shifted. It hasn't shifted exclusively away from the bread-and-butter issues because that's important to all. But it has shifted to more of an emphasis on professionalism — having more control over our own destiny in our classrooms. We saw that play out in issues around seniority. What is the proper role for seniority? What is the proper role for salary incentives? Should we be taking a look at peer assistance and review? I think if you look at those in the profession for 10 years or less, they want to see many of these things. Is that new? It may be new to us, but if you look back in history at the guilds from years and years ago, they controlled entry into the profession. They knew what was involved with being successful in the trade. You didn't last if you didn't meet the standard. It was unions that took control of quality versus some outside management group.

PT: Along with what Tim is saying, while we've been dealing with the urgent and the necessary, we're also having to deal with the longer-term issue of how we take charge of quality — the United Mind Workers idea, the ideas of former NEA President Bob Chase, new unionism, the concept expressed by former AFT President Al Shanker of being, yes, a tough union advocate but also being tough in demanding quality. Going forward, I want the MTA to be the voice of the profession. We also have to be willing to listen to the voices of those outside our professional world. I do want to express that we have to stop the demonization and demagoguery on our part. The conversation on how we move forward in public education has to be more civil.

TS: Our comfort zone is being challenged. We have been about the bread and butter. Public opinion is such that we need to go beyond that.

PT: Our comfort zone has also been who we deal with: school committee, superintendent, principal. Guess what? There's a whole host of new players in town, some we can work collaboratively with and some who are going to challenge us. We need to understand them better and figure out if they are people we can work with.

Q: What do you think we'll look like 10 years from now?

PT: I hope that on important issues we can maintain a unified front in advocating for the best interests of our children and our members. But we need to do a much better job of reaching out to our membership and our locals and having a discussion about what that looks like. If we are going to continue to have local decision-making and control, we are going to have to be flexible enough to meet the needs of different kinds of students. We even have to be flexible neighborhood by neighborhood.

Please turn to **Toner**/Page 14

An enormous opportunity to shape change

During my presidency I have adopted a quote from President John F. Kennedy as a motto: *Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.*

Based on my own 20 years of experience as a middle school teacher, local president, MTA Board member and now state officer, I most certainly agree with Kennedy's viewpoint and would argue that the pace of change in education has drastically increased over the past decade. This is why I believe there is an enormous opportunity for educators — along with parents, students and community partners — to take on the mantle of educational leadership and reform.

During my years of teaching and union involvement, I have always proclaimed that the MTA is a union of professional educators and that teachers and their unions must be the voice of public education and the profession.



Paul Toner
MTA President

Yes, we absolutely should continue to advocate for good salaries, working conditions and benefits, but we also must be the leading advocates for the profession and for taking charge of quality. We must put forward our best ideas for improving

our schools and profession, even if we don't have 100 percent consensus as an organization.

In poll after poll done by the MTA, the NEA and MetLife — and even in our two rounds of TELL Mass surveys, which drew responses from over 40,000 educators in the Commonwealth — teachers say they want more time to work with their colleagues and more control over their profession. These results are regularly corroborated by my own conversations with local leaders and members, both veteran and new. Our members want less top-down and more shared decision-making over policy and practice in their schools and classrooms. They want to be the architects of reform and not continue to be the objects of reform. They want to be treated as the professionals they are.

On this issue I have been heavily influenced by the ideas of other educators and union leaders, including Dennis Van Roekel, Al Shanker, Adam Urbanski, Bob Chase, Susan Moore Johnson and Randi Weingarten. All have advocated for teacher-led reforms.

Governor Deval Patrick and Secretary of Education Paul Reville have as well. They believe that by increasing teachers' voices and working toward strong labor-management collaboration, we can bring about lasting and meaningful change in our schools for the benefit of our students. This is why they encouraged Horace Mann charter schools and made Innovation Schools an option in their 2010 Achievement Gap Bill: to give educators

Teachers' unions must play an important role in shaping change by focusing far more on the quality of education, which includes taking part in setting academic standards, promoting strong evaluation systems, designing better preparation and professional development programs and, most importantly, demanding shared decision-making authority in exchange for shared accountability for the results.

and community partners an opportunity to lead by creating teacher-led schools and to provide an alternative to Commonwealth charter schools. I believe that teachers and their unions need to take this opportunity and run with it or else others will.

One of the best sources available on the topic of teacher-led change is *Taking Charge of Quality: How Teachers and Unions Can Revitalize Schools — An Introduction and Companion to United Mind Workers*, by Charles Taylor Kerchner, Julia E. Koppich and Joseph G. Weeres. It was published in 1998, but it could have been written yesterday. I hope it is not too late for us to capitalize on the recommendations it includes.

The authors point out that American schools are being asked to do something they have never been asked to do before and were not designed to do — to educate all students to a very high academic standard and make them career- and college-ready. We have entered a world of profound change in which knowledge, not industry, is the future. Thinking for a living is the norm, not the exception.

As the demands for change continue to increase, teachers and schools are being criticized for perceived shortcomings. We are locked in an either-or debate. One side says our schools are great and there is no need for change. Others argue our schools are failing and we need to blow up the system. This is not a black-and-white debate; there are many shades of gray.

Lots of people on the outside are telling the teachers, administrators and superintendents on the inside how to do their work. Some of these outsiders support public education as an institution, but believe they know what is best. Others are entrepreneurs who believe they have found a better way to organize schools and make money at the same time. Some question the value of "public" education altogether and would like to privatize us out of existence.

Teachers' unions must play an important role in shaping change by focusing far more on the quality of education, which includes taking part in setting

academic standards, promoting strong evaluation systems, designing better preparation and professional development programs and, most importantly, demanding shared decision-making authority in exchange for shared accountability for the results.

I believe that all of this can best be done at the school level. Central administration officials, school committees and district unions are still necessary and vital partners, but mainly as providers and bundlers of services and as advocates for resources and supports for the educators and schools they serve. The educators, parents and community partners at the school level must be given much more site-based control and flexibility to meet the demands and needs of their students and communities.

I believe that we need to focus on developing schools that are much more student-centered and meet the challenges of a 21st-century knowledge-based economy. Such schools can only be successful in the long term where there is a trusting and respectful labor-management relationship and a true partnership with educators and their unions.

This is why the MTA is participating in the Massachusetts Education Partnership, which also includes the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, Northeastern University's Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy, MIT's Institute for Work and Employment Research and the Collins Center for Public Management at UMass Boston. The goal of this partnership is to support local school districts and unions that want to develop collaborative models of school-based reform to advance student success.

I have heard from some members who believe that the MTA should not be taking the lead on these kinds of ambitious school improvement efforts and instead should stick to advocating strictly for members' economic interests. Respectfully, I disagree. I believe we must do both — in order to faithfully represent our members, for our future survival as an organization and to be true to the last line of our official mission statement: "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."

Letters policy

MTA Today welcomes letters to the editor from MTA members. Letters should be no longer than 200 words. Each letter submitted for publication must address a topic covered in *MTA Today*, must be signed and must include the writer's telephone number for confirmation purposes. Opinions must be clearly identified as belonging to the letter-writer. We reserve the right to edit for length, clarity and style. To submit a letter, mail it to *MTA Today*, 20 Ashburton Place, 8th floor, Boston, MA 02108 or e-mail it to mtatodayletters@massteacher.org. For additional information, please refer to the guidelines posted on www.massteacher.org.

DESE approves new ELL training requirements

An estimated 26,000 current teachers will have to participate in extensive training in how to educate English language learners over the next four years, and all teachers will have to participate in some ELL training in order to relicense.

The first trainings are supposed to be offered starting this fall. As of the *MTA Today* deadline, no details on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's training schedule or final course syllabus were available.

The training is required under new regulations approved by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education on June 22. It is part of the DESE's Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners — RETELL — initiative, which was prompted by a U.S. Department of Justice finding that Massachusetts failed to ensure that teachers of ELL students received adequate training.

The MTA continues to be actively involved in advocating for a program that is effective at providing the needed training, is not overly burdensome and recognizes the prior training many teachers have received.

After June 1, 2016, districts may only assign ELL students to "core academic subject" teachers who have a Sheltered English Immersion endorsement or who will get the SEI endorsement within a year. Targeted first will be teachers in districts with a high number of ELL students and low test scores.

For purposes of the SEI endorsement, core academic teachers are defined in the regulations as those in the following education areas: early childhood, elementary, English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, civics and government, economics, history and geography, as well as those with students who have moderate and severe disabilities.

The DESE has described the required training as equivalent to a three-credit graduate course and released early drafts of a syllabus that would require 45 hours of instruction and likely an equal or greater number of hours in assigned reading and writing.

The MTA still has many questions about the RETELL plan, including when a test will be developed that experienced SEI teachers may opt to take in lieu of the course, when information will be available about the specific course requirements, how those requirements will be modified for those who completed the so-called Category Training in ELL education, and how many of the professional development points obtained in getting the SEI endorsement may be used toward fulfilling a teacher's Individual Professional Development Plan.

More information is available on the MTA website at [massteacher.org/ell](http://www.massteacher.org/ell) and on the DESE website at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/retell/>.



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Friday, November 30
Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel, Marlborough

WORKSHOP TOPICS WILL INCLUDE:

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- Classroom Management
- Response to Intervention
- Legal Basics for New Teachers
- Licensure
- Working with Parents
- Working with English Language Learners
- And more! Full program details at www.massteacher.org after October 1.

WHO CAN REGISTER?

Teachers may register online at www.massteacher.org after October 1. Districts may register individuals or groups by calling 800.392.6175, ext. 8300. District payment should be made by check or money order to the Massachusetts Teachers Association. There is no on-site registration available.

NOTE:

This conference is appropriate for school districts and teachers to use as part of induction programs for all new teachers (603 CMR 7.00). The MTA will provide all conference participants with a record of attendance.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

The registration fee of \$60 includes all sessions, materials, morning refreshments and lunch.



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Students reflect on the skills they want teachers to have

Reflecting on one's practice has become routine; it's now even part of the new Department of Elementary and Secondary Education evaluation tool. Teacher evaluations by students and administrator evaluations by educators will also be an integral part of the tool as of the 2013-2014 school year.

Because the new evaluation process has been a serious component of my life this past year, I was fascinated by a prompt from the March 2012 *English Journal*, which asked students to specify what skills and attitudes were important for a teacher to possess in order for them to learn best.

So I asked students in my writing class, composed of sophomores through seniors, what they thought. The students brainstormed with pleasure, then offered their recommendations and suggestions. First, they individually listed the top five skills and/or attitudes a teacher just had to have if students were to really learn and enjoy being in that classroom.

As the students busily wrote in their journals, I watched their faces. All concentrated on communicating their opinions, but many would often stop just to think — a significant aspect of any writing class. Their eyes glazed over as they returned to earlier occasions. Smiles and frowns both emerged.

A few tried to share unusual or incredible memories early in the discussion. The students' excitement could be felt reverberating off the walls as their thoughts found comfortable homes on paper. After all, these young people are experts on this topic after 10 to 12 years in front of numerous teachers and were gratified that someone finally wanted *their* input.

Next, volunteers were asked to share just one top skill or attitude. Hands shot into the air. Each student was allowed one turn, but 25 responses later and an easel full, they were still offering additional recommendations. The top responses show how perceptive students are. They could

have been teaching that "Fundamentals of Education" course. The class couldn't agree on a top five, but did eventually narrow it down to 10. All are home runs and could easily make the difference between a satisfactory teacher and an exemplary one.

All teachers, including those new to the profession, should consider these suggestions and work as many as possible into their own repertoire. It's always important to reflect on one's teaching habits, and some of these student recommendations could easily be incorporated into this year's routine.

Key attributes

Respect for their students and a passion for their subject tied as the top two skills and attributes for teachers to have. Close behind was class control. Almost every student heartily agreed that without control, very little is learned. Students considered it extremely important that teachers

Please turn to **Students**/Page 13

TOP 10

STUDENTS' PRIORITIES FOR TEACHER SKILLS AND ATTITUDES

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Has respect for students (the number 1 opinion) | or zany, thinks outside of the comfort zone and jokes around |
| ☐ Has extensive knowledge and passion for the subject | ☐ Is interactive, asks and answers questions and allows students to act out scenes |
| ☐ Controls the class | ☐ Is approachable, encourages students to ask questions or share opinions and listens to their opinions |
| ☐ Friendly, laughs and is personable | ☐ Is challenging and pushes students but still helps them; is motivational |
| ☐ Differentiates instruction, has unique teaching strategies and uses a variety of teaching methods | ☐ Is creative and makes learning fun |
| ☐ Isn't a cookie-cutter teacher — tries being slightly eccentric | |

ALSO IMPORTANT, IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER

Is technology literate, is understanding when things happen in a child's life, is organized and stays focused, is kind-hearted and caring, allows students to listen to music when doing independent work, is inspirational, is able to translate difficult material, connects humor to lessons, is flexible, is able to go into more depth on a lesson and is not too abstract, teaches lessons at an acceptable pace, provides hands-on work, is patient and ensures that student work is completed, connects the topic to daily ideas and problems and relates to it personally, engages in "physical teaching" — using the body to shed light on an idea, shares excellent exemplars, is down to earth, believes all students can learn, acts with maturity and does not allow temper tantrums or throwing of objects, doesn't cross the line between friend and student, gives advice, does not engage in favoritism or judging, keeps his or her word, is not easily frustrated, takes criticism.

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MEMBERS GEAR UP TO ELECT PRO-EDUCATION CANDIDATES

By Sarah Nathan

MTA activists from throughout the Commonwealth mapped out a plan of action for the 2012 election season during the association's recent Summer Conference.

Educators leading the grassroots initiative to turn out the pro-education vote in the upcoming primary and general elections spent three days in Williamstown sharing ideas, networking and honing their skills. The participants in the training program — both Legislative and Political Action Team coordinators and local political action leaders — are involved in campaigns and member engagement across the state.

The teams, known as LPATs, have been established in state Senate districts to help ensure that the voices of teachers, faculty members and other educators working in public schools and our public higher education system are heard by elected and appointed leaders. The LPAT members and PALs work to inform, organize and mobilize fellow MTA members and other people in their communities around a pro-public-education agenda. To date, 29 LPATs have been established in the 40 state Senate districts.

"If we want to have any kind of voice in our schools, it is imperative that we elect pro-education, pro-labor candidates to office," said Zachary Chase, a special education aide at Dedham High School who heads up the LPAT in the Norfolk and Suffolk Senate District, which is represented by Sen. Michael Rush (D-West Roxbury).

During the school year, Chase was among the many MTA members who met with state legislators to help put names and faces on issues that are important to educators and students. Over the summer, Chase — along with other LPAT coordinators, political action leaders and members — worked to prepare for the election season. They focused on expanding their ranks to ensure a large turnout for pro-education candidates running for state and federal offices in the primary, which will be held on Thursday, Sept. 6, and on Election Day, which is Tuesday, Nov. 6.

One major key to victory? One-on-one conversations with fellow MTA members, other colleagues, friends and family members. These conversations help pave the way for "yes" votes for NEA- and MTA-recommended candidates, including President Barack Obama and U.S. Senate candidate Elizabeth Warren. Warren thrilled members by visiting an outdoor barbecue held early in the Summer Conference.

Such discussions also help recruit volunteers to take part in a host of activities — from attending rallies to phone banking for a couple of hours to talking to their own network of friends, family members and co-workers.



Photo by Christine Peterson

Some of the Legislative and Political Action Team coordinators working on the MTA's 2012 campaign — each of whom plays a key role in organizing in a particular Senate district — gathered recently at the State House. From left to right are Jacqueline Coogan, Middlesex and Suffolk; Andy Daitsman, Bristol and Norfolk; Kathi Rogers, First Bristol and Plymouth; Adam Snodgrass, First Middlesex; Robert Kostka, Plymouth and Norfolk; Marguerite Gonsalves, Fifth Middlesex; and Mary Cummings, Fourth Middlesex.

"Elections are about choices. If we are able to do a good job of informing our members about the real contrast between the candidates running for office, we can make a real difference," said Andy Daitsman, who heads up the LPAT in the Bristol and Norfolk Senate District. "If we — MTA members — get out and vote, we can elect our candidates, people who will help to bring about a transition back to the kind of country where everyone has an opportunity to make something out of their lives."

Daitsman, a high school Spanish teacher in Plymouth, notes that the election will have serious consequences not just for those working in public schools and public higher education and their students,

but for the entire country. "This election could determine not only where we are headed for the next four years — but much longer," he said. "Are we going to elect candidates who will fight for the middle class or candidates who are trying to make sure that wealthy people continue to get all the tax breaks that they want?"

Maryelen Calderwood, a graduate student and education support professional at UMass Amherst and coordinator of the LPAT in the Hampshire-Franklin District, which is represented by Democratic Senator Stan Rosenberg, approaches organizing from a personal perspective.

Please turn to **Grassroots**/Page 9



Summer Conference focuses on activism

The MTA Summer Conference, which was held in early August, brought almost 600 members from across the state to Williamstown for five days of programs, workshops and social events. There were several tracks designed to inspire engagement and empowerment. They included multi-day sessions for new members (top left), emerging leaders (top right), new and experienced presidents and other association activists. Also featured were presentations on evaluation, collective bargaining, Full Capacity Local assessment and many other subjects. Much of the focus of the conference was on meeting the priorities of the MTA's Strategic Action Plan. But there was time for fun and deep discussions on other topics as well. Comedian Jimmy Tingle (center above) had members on their feet at the Opening Session, and teacher Maureen Devlin of Wayland (at right in bottom photo) had a chance to talk to state Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester, who held a conversation with members one evening. For more photos, please visit flickr.com/mtacommunications.

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Grassroots effort aids pro-education candidates

Continued from Page 7

"I think a lot of people are activists, but don't know it," she said. "I try to get people to realize that activism can take on many different forms and get them to relate it to their own lives. I'll ask, 'Have you ever been in a situation where you witnessed injustice? Has something moved you enough to complain or speak out?' In situations where you are acting upon a wrong, you are an activist."

Once the ice is broken, Calderwood is able to delve a little deeper and bring up the subject of volunteer opportunities.

First Bristol and Plymouth Senate District coordinator Kathi Rogers makes an effort to talk to as many people as she can — in every possible situation. "Recently, I spoke to a repairman who came to my house on a service call," said Rogers, who is a retired Norton teacher. "For me, it clarifies why I'm doing this work. I haven't always been an activist; when I was teaching, I had to work a lot of jobs to support myself, and I didn't have time to do more than correct papers."



Photo by Laura Barrett

U.S. Senate candidate Elizabeth Warren, left, attended an event during the MTA Summer Conference in Williamstown.

This summer, Rogers canvassed for the first time. In July, she hit the streets of Taunton, her hometown, for MTA-recommended congressional candidate Joe Kennedy, who is running

for the seat currently held by retiring U.S. Rep. Barney Frank.

"It wasn't at all difficult to do and I liked meeting and talking with people," she said. "Is it something I

will do again? Absolutely. I am hoping to have more MTA members join me the next time I head out."

A key part of the training at the MTA Summer Conference focused on how to have persuasive conversations with others. "The biggest thing is getting the discussion going," said Jeremy Royds, a librarian in Bedford who serves as the LPAT coordinator for the Third Middlesex Senate District. "I think it's really important not to preach, but to discuss and also listen. Convincing people that they can make a difference — whether it is by talking to a colleague for a few minutes about a specific candidate or urging someone to take the time to vote — is important. People need to know that their votes do matter in the big scheme of things."

Calderwood added, "If you talk to one member and then that member hooks on to another member, we create a very powerful link. Right now, there are parts of our union that are not yet connected. If we are able to link together, we'll be stronger and better — and it will be very difficult for legislators to ignore our voice and our message."

For information on primary recommendations, please see the guide at the center of this issue of MTA Today. To get involved in the 2012 election effort, call the MTA's Grassroots Campaign Team at 617.878.8190 or e-mail grassrootscampaign@massteacher.org. Information is also available at massteacher.org/vote.

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School survey results now available to participants

Do you want to know what teachers and administrators think about working conditions, class sizes, community support, student discipline, the quality of professional development, the atmosphere of trust and a whole host of other issues involving your school? Do you wonder how your school's results compare to results in other schools in your district or in neighboring communities?

This information is now available to all schools in which at least half of the licensed instructional staff filled out the online Teaching, Empowering, Learning and Leading Massachusetts — TELL Mass — survey last spring. Detailed reports with anonymous survey results went live in early July and are available for anyone to view at www.tellmass.org. Click on "View 2012 Survey Results" for district and school results.

The MTA is urging members to study the results carefully and encourage dialogue with school and district administrators about them. Positive findings should be honored and replicated, while problems should be identified and addressed.

"Teachers tell us they want their voices to shape practices in their schools. The TELL Mass survey is one way to express that voice and give teachers and administrators a tool to use in driving improvements in their schools," said MTA President Paul Toner.

The MTA and the NEA, along with the governor and other supporters of public education, sponsored a similar survey four years ago. The state Department of Elementary and

Secondary Education took over the survey this past year under the federal Race to the Top grant, contracting with the New Teacher Center to administer it.

In both cases, more than 40,000 teachers and administrators participated, or a little more than half of those currently employed. The MTA received reports indicating that

in some schools, participation was stymied because principals did not distribute the codes needed to log on to the secure survey site.

Both the MTA and the DESE established help desks to aid members in participating.

"If your school didn't reach the 50 percent mark, you need to figure out why," said Toner. "If the reason was

that the principal did not encourage and facilitate participation, that could be a sign of a serious problem. If you believe that is the case, we recommend you work with your MTA field representative to explore other ways that teachers and other staff can voice their views on important educator working conditions and student learning conditions."



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A career-changer's challenges and joys

Fifteen years ago, Christopher Barbosa's path into teaching would have been unusual. He had a career in accounting and managed his family's liquor store, but he didn't find the work satisfying and decided to follow his wife into teaching. Barbosa completed his first year of teaching mathematics at Methuen High School in June and is looking forward to returning to the classroom.

Barbosa, 38, is one of a growing number of teachers who did not enter the profession after completing a traditional undergraduate program that included teacher preparation courses. According to the National Center for Education Statistics at the U.S. Department of Education, more than one-third of new teachers are like Chris, so-called "delayed entrant" teachers who worked in another type of job for at least a year before changing careers.

In Massachusetts, "delayed entrant" and other alternatively licensed teachers must have bachelor's



Photo by Laura Barrett

Math teacher Christopher Barbosa is beginning his second year in the classroom. Before joining the education field, he worked for several companies and managed his family's package store.

degrees and pass the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure in order to obtain a preliminary license.

The number of career-changers who become teachers has exploded in Massachusetts and across the

country. Most of them are alternatively licensed. In the 2008-09 school year — the most recent year for which data is available — 59,000 new teachers nationwide were certified through alternate routes, while a decade

earlier the number was less than a quarter of that: 12,283.

Policymakers have to address the needs and aspirations of these teachers, some of whom never student-taught or took a course in teaching methods before facing their own classes. The MTA and local associations must also address their needs — for example, by making sure they are given the induction and mentoring services to which they are entitled.

Barbosa spoke with MTA communications specialist Laura Barrett in August about his experiences as a career-changer. His comments are edited for brevity and clarity.

I graduated from UMass Lowell in 1998. After that I began my career in accounting at a company named RSA. It was a red hot company at the time. They make a mechanism called Secure ID, allowing people to securely access a network remotely.

I liked it but I wanted to work for a dot-com. I changed jobs and worked for *Essential.com*. I remember driving home one day and hearing how the Internet bubble had burst. I went to work the next day and I saw how things were going. I knew it was time to leave.

My next job was with LeMaitre Vascular. It was a very small company, and I had a chance to wear a lot of hats. I stayed there for two years. I went there as a low-level staff accountant and left as a senior-level accountant. I learned a lot. It was a pretty cool experience.

The whole time while I was doing those jobs, my family had a package store in Lawrence. In 2002, I was getting ready to get married and my father was getting ready to retire from the store. I was doing accounting during the day and managing the package store at night. I was working seven days a week, putting in crazy hours. I decided I needed to cut that out.

I made a move and went into my father's package store business full time. It was good, but I knew I didn't want to do that forever. I got bored because it wasn't mentally challenging.

Teaching was something I had been interested in, but I wasn't sure. At the same time, I was watching what my wife was doing. She really enjoyed

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'I'm my own worst critic. I'm looking to improve.'

Continued from Page 11

her job as an elementary school teacher. Money started not becoming my sole objective. I wanted to make my family and myself happy.

I have three girls, 7, 4 and 2. When my first one was born in 2005, the thought came into my mind that I'd like to provide her with something to say about me besides, "My dad works in a package store." Later, when my wife was pregnant with our second daughter, I said to myself, "It's time to go," so I sold the store in December 2007.

I took the MTELs and passed them. I started to take prerequisite courses I would need to get a master's degree in mathematics at Salem State. It had been a long time since I had taken math courses. I was a stay-at-home Dad while taking courses and we wanted to have three kids. I was taking a graduate course, and I needed to observe teachers so my professor put me in touch with Debbie Thomas, the math department head at Methuen High School.

When I met with her to talk about the observation, she asked if I had passed the MTEL exams and she told me the high school was hiring. I did some observing and some tutoring, but no student teaching — though I did have a chance to teach a class as part of the hiring process. I guess they liked me because they hired me.

When I had to face my first class of students, it was pretty intimidating. Luckily for me, I knew I could do it. My wife was an excellent resource. Even though she teaches elementary school and I am in high school, kids are kids. She was able to help me and give me good advice.

I had two teachers who provided some mentoring as well as a CIA (Curriculum Instruction and Assessment) coach. Her role was to guide me through areas specific to what I'm teaching.

The most challenging part was not teaching mathematics — it was student behavior and discipline. (Barbosa's colleague Cathy Saba said that he had some students who were so difficult that even veteran teachers had trouble managing them.) Fortunately, Methuen High has a great bunch of people. I sat in that lunchroom and I got a lot of helpful information out of that 15 minutes

'It's one thing to know how to do math, but when you are a teacher you *really* need to know it. I am thankful I took all those courses at Salem State. It was a great foundation. I was fortunate to be able to stay home and do it.'

— Methuen teacher Chris Barbosa

eating lunch every day. Everyone was willing to help.

It is very different in the business field. In business you have to watch out for the people below you because they want to be where you are, and the people above you fear you because they think you want their job. It's much more competitive. I found teaching more supportive.

It's one thing to know how to do math, but when you are a teacher you *really* need to know it. I am thankful I took all those courses at Salem State. It was a great foundation. I was fortunate to be able to stay home and do it.

I also took a couple of education courses that were helpful. One was

Diversity in the Secondary Classroom. That helped me with the different learning styles. Another was Instruction and Assessment. I think those two are the foundation of a lot of education courses. I took them very seriously. I felt pretty prepared.

I was used to working under stressful situations. I had a good work ethic. I had no problem staying after school to get everything done that I needed to do. I always made sure I was prepared for the next day. That's just the way I am. I would say on average I probably put in about nine hours a day.

There was less stress in the family business than in teaching, but there was also less enjoyment.

After January, the stress decreased.

I had some really good observations. That helped. I felt I was on the right track. I had kids thanking me at the end of the year, shaking my hand. That felt great.

I taught 10th grade last year, but this year I was asked to teach ninth. It was a big confidence booster for me that they have me teaching in a pilot program, which includes using an iPad for instruction. Also, this summer I worked on a curriculum development team for my school. We're aligning the curriculum with the Common Core. I was elected to be a member of the Faculty Senate representing the mathematics department. It was a tough vote to win. The election was between me and myself.

I'm my own worst critic. I'm looking to improve. I always want to have that ability to continue to improve.

This is the right job for me. I'm glad I'm a math teacher. I know some other people who want to go into teaching who are still looking for work, so I feel really lucky I got this job.

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Students reflect on teachers' skills and attitudes

Continued from Page 6

be friendly and laugh; that they differentiate instruction because every student learns in a different way and comes from a different background; and that they be a little eccentric or zany. Teaching outside of the box and outside of a teacher's comfort zone were hailed as first-rate techniques.

Past interactive classroom assignments were referred to, both the excellent and the boring ones. Students said they enjoyed acting out scenes

or working in small groups, thus remembering the lessons longer.

Being encouraged to ask questions in class is vital, they said, but having a teacher actually *listen* to the answers and respect the students' opinions is crucial. "Approachable" was the buzzword that put smiles on their faces and brought out tales concerning previous teachers they could all relate to.

The final top two, but definitely not the last of the extensive list, will

Being encouraged to ask questions in class is vital, they said, but having a teacher actually *listen* to the answers and respect the students' opinions is crucial.

make teachers and parents nod their heads proudly in the affirmative. Students want their teachers to challenge them, to push them and, yes, to believe in them, but they also said

the lessons need to be creative and fun. Think back to your own school days; isn't this exactly what every student wanted, including you?

To hear a student shriek, "Is that the bell? We just got here. Where did the time go?" brings a smile to a teacher's lips, and he or she knows the students have been motivated by a creative lesson.

More food for thought

Additional recommendations included teachers being technology literate so they can prepare a student for college, being understanding when bad things happen in students' lives, staying focused and organized and being a kind, caring person.

Following the brainstorming session — which took longer than expected thanks to so many stories being shared, laughter erupting, and collective memories emerging — the students wrote essays focusing on their own ideas about crucial skills and attributes for teachers to have. Peer critiquing followed. Afterward, students revised and edited their work to meet the prompt criteria.

Reading through their compositions gave me food for thought. Reflecting on my own practice through their words showed areas where I could improve my communication in order to reach *every* student more fully. All in all, I was very proud of their insights — and I'm now not so worried about student input when the time comes for them to evaluate their teachers.

If each student takes teacher evaluations as seriously as these students did, teaching practice can only become better informed.

Adeline Bee is an English and journalism teacher at Attleboro High School. A longtime political activist, she is president of the Attleboro Education Association and runs workshops on union-management relationships. She is a certified teacher and principal/assistant principal.

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Toner and Sullivan discuss second-term agenda

Continued from Page 3

TS: You go back to the Teachers' Blueprint for Education Excellence (an MTA report in the late 1990s), and some of the ideas were in there. There was one asterisk in there that said something to the effect that if the teachers and staff in one school in one district want to do something differently, we should be flexible enough to help them do that.

PT: We as a state association need to provide the supports to our locals to support their members at the building level. I feel we need a strong district-level contract with basic bread-and-butter issues covered — salary, family medical leave, health care, those kinds of things. But then we need to be training our members to be the voice and advocates for themselves and for their students and communities in their own buildings.

Q: *If the national election goes badly this fall, is there a risk that unions won't exist with collective bargaining rights?*

PT: I'm very concerned we'll have a national Right to Work law. It would certainly challenge us in terms of membership and how much of a voice we have.

TS: I believe we're a strong association. My hope is that we will become much stronger than we are now through all of our grassroots efforts. That goes back to dealing with our Full Capacity Locals and our Legislative and Political Action Teams. It all goes back to what's essential in everything we do, which is building relationships — relationships with our locals, with our school committees and with our legislators and policymaking bodies. I think we're working hard at that. Hopefully, if the attacks continue, maybe we'll be able to halt that at our state. That will be seriously jeopardized if there is a national Right to Work law.

PT: I hope we will be stronger because members are more engaged with us — they recognize their ideas and voices in the policies we're promoting. And I hope that the Legislature and other policymakers recognize the MTA as a major player that has a positive influence on good educational policy and helping to build and maintain a strong middle class in Massachusetts.

Q: *You both have kids in the public schools. What would you say to a parent who was concerned about sending a child to a public school?*

TS: I'd tell them to ignore the right-wing propaganda about our schools. I would tell them to look at how well we've done in this particular state. We're number one for a reason. I would not hesitate to send my child to a public school. Although this has been challenged in recent years because of test-manias, I still think the public schools offer the best well-rounded education out there.

PT: I'd say please talk to your fellow parents and the district if you have concerns. Don't just give up on it. Be an active parent to bring about change. But I would say as the parent of two children, one in middle school and one in the primary grades, I am happy to have my children in their neighborhood public school. In addition, public schools offer far more services than any private or parochial school I know of, especially if your child is having any learning difficulties. They often offer more sports and enrichment activities, as well.

Q: *What would you say if a parent asked, "What does the teachers' union do for me and my child?"*

PT: When I was a local president in Cambridge, the union was fighting for clean, safe buildings and good air quality. We were advocating for the best curriculum and the best training for teachers. Special ed teachers were always putting themselves on the front lines advocating for services for their students, and the only way they could do that is because they had a teachers' union protecting them when their advice was different from the administration's advice. We also advocated for the best salaries in order to attract great teachers. We, the MTA, have advocated for many initiatives that improve quality, most recently a new evaluation system that is a much more open and comprehensive process, not just a checklist. In the future it will include student and parent feedback.

TS: As we always say, students' learning conditions are teachers' working conditions. We want the best possible conditions for both the teachers and the students.

Q: *It's no surprise that the highest-performing states are unionized while the lowest performing are typically the Right to Work states. There has to be a connection.*

TS: I agree.

Q: *What's the hardest part of the job?*

PT: The time commitment. I think Tim and I are the first president and vice president in a long time to have young children. It's hard to find the time to get to the hockey games and the baseball games and to have family time.

TS: The time commitment is significant, but one of the most difficult things for me is having my own beliefs challenged. I very much had a traditional orientation — this is what the union is, this is what we work on. We didn't get off into other realms of what has now become "new unionism" when I was first involved. The progression over the last 10 years has been very difficult to work through. It does challenge your core beliefs but also opens up a new world of possibilities, and I think that's exactly what we're going through right now. While we're trying to work through this, there are other association leaders out there who are willing to follow and others who aren't. One of Bob Chase's articles was called "Lead, Follow or Get Out of the Way." We have that challenge in our association.

PT: Leading an organization of 110,000 different individuals, knowing the proper balance between getting feedback and input and when you need to make a decision is difficult. Leading while not getting too far ahead of your members is one of the biggest challenges we face.

TS: The easy part for me is I can say, "The buck stops there." (Points to Toner and laughs.) On the positive side, though, other than working in a classroom with kids, I can't think of anything else I would rather do than this job. I have a passion for this.

PT: I agree. I would encourage new leaders to step up. We do have a generation gap in our leadership. We need more members involved. That's essential.

MTA president is elected to leadership position in national association

MTA President Paul Toner has been chosen to serve as president-elect of the National Council of State Education Associations by his fellow state affiliate leaders. He began his one-year term as president-elect on June 30 and will begin serving a one-year term as president on the same date next year.

The NCSEA is composed of all elected state presidents and executive directors. It was founded in 1966 and provides a forum for leaders of NEA state affiliates to discuss the challenges that all

'It is extremely important for us to share ideas and strategies with one another so that we can evolve into a more powerful and effective association.'

associations face and to exchange ideas. It also provides a mechanism for state affiliates to develop a stronger working relationship with the NEA.

"I am honored to have been elected to this position," said Toner.

"The NEA and many state affiliates are facing very difficult times, both politically and financially," he added. "It is extremely important for us to share ideas and strategies with one another so that we can evolve into a more powerful and effective association."

Toner said that the biggest challenge facing many state affiliates right now is figuring out how to protect essential member rights and benefits during a time of fiscal austerity while also being strong advocates for quality education.

A monster endorsement for summer reading

Boston Red Sox mascot Wally the Green Monster signed posters to promote summer reading while visiting the MTA's booth at the WGBH FunFest. More than 3,500 children and members of their families attended the event, which featured music and a wide variety of ice cream, along with attractions such as appearances by characters from the station's children's programing, face painting and carnival rides. The MTA was among the sponsors of the festival, which was held on July 14 at the WGBH studios. The event took place during another successful season of the MTA Red Sox Reading Game, which encourages students in kindergarten through eighth grade to read tens of thousands of books each year. The contest will come to a close with a literacy night at Fenway Park in early September.

Photo by Bob Duffy



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Obituaries

Charles F. Angell, of Bridgewater and Maine. Was a professor emeritus at Bridgewater State University. Served as the first president of the MSCA chapter of MTA and chairman of the English Department. June 13.

Mary L. Bennett, 82, of Feeding Hills. Was a professor at Springfield Technical Community College for 20 years, retiring in 1997. June 21.

Domenic Frammartino, 83, of Danvers. Was a guidance counselor and taught history, science and Italian

for 40 years, retiring in 1992. June 4.

James M. Long, 75, of East Dennis. Was an educator and coach at Burlington High School and Belmont High School. Also served as an officer of the Burlington Educators Association for many years. July 24.

George A. MacArthur, 87, of Wakefield. Served as superintendent of schools in Wakefield. June 23.

C. Janet Maiellano Guzman, 70, of Kingston, formerly of Brockton and Duxbury. Taught in the Marshfield

Public Schools for many years. June 26.

Frances M. Oliver, 81, of Worcester. Taught for 28 years in the Worcester Public Schools. June 22.

Lawrence P. Queipo, 87, of Westfield. Taught industrial arts in the carpentry shop at Westfield Trade High School, now Westfield Vocational Technical High School, for 21 years, retiring in 1988. June 9.

Charles Renoni, 86, of Land O'Lakes, Florida, formerly of Attleboro. Taught graphic arts at

Attleboro High School for many years, served as president of the Attleboro Education Association and worked in the MTA's professional development division. June 11.

Maura Roberts, 68, of Concord. Taught in Dracut and Virginia Beach, Va., and taught English at Concord-Carlisle High School, retiring in 2002. May 29.

Charlotte A. Spera, 65, of Medford and South Yarmouth. Taught in the Revere Public Schools for more than 39 years until her retirement. Feb. 18.

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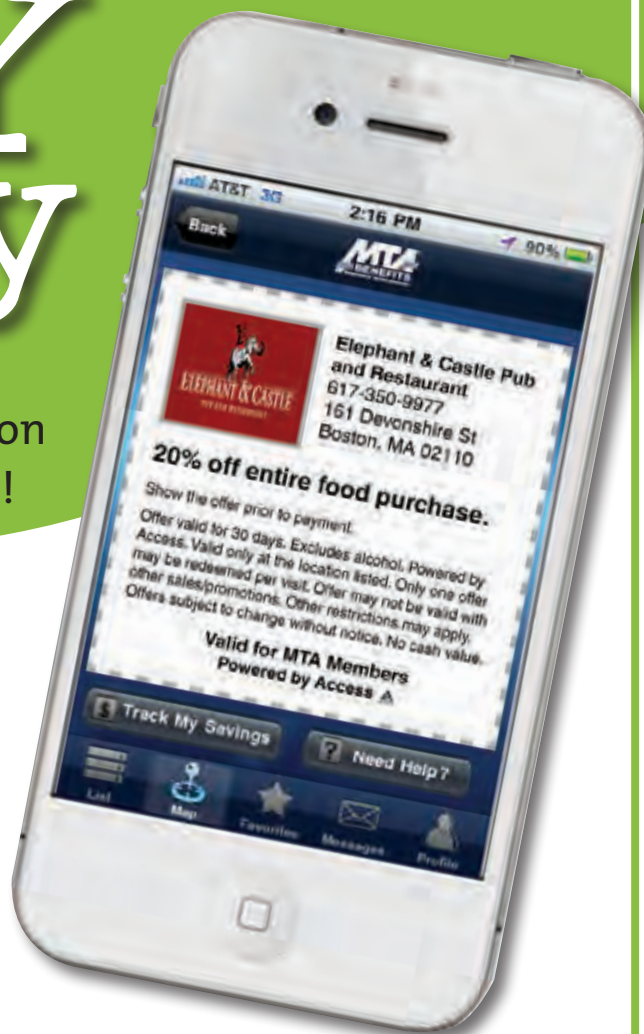
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This year's conference is being hosted by the Nichols College Student Education Association of Massachusetts chapter, the Nichols College Education Department and the MTA. "This event gives future teachers a chance to learn new skills and get good, practical information from those who are already in the field," said MTA President Paul Toner.

Participants will be able to attend sessions on classroom leadership, teaching English language learners, the legal realities of the Internet, closing the achievement gap and autism spectrum disorders.

The conference is for students in teacher preparation programs and is free for MTA student members. The registration fee for non-members is \$10. To view more information or register for the conference, visit www.massteacher.org. The deadline is 5 p.m. Oct. 19.

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REGIONAL RETIREMENT CONSULTATIONS AVAILABLE

The MTA conducts retirement consultations throughout the state to assist members. Proof of membership must be submitted when requesting retirement services. This schedule is in effect from September to June, except in the Boston office, which is staffed during the summer months and school vacations. In the event of inclement weather, it is advisable to call consultants in advance.

AUBURN — Louise Gaskins: first and second Saturdays of each month (walk in), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Central Office, 48 Sword St., Auburn; 508.791.2121, or at home, 978.448.5351.

BOSTON — Harold Crowley: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays (by appointment only), 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., MTA, 20 Ashburton Place, Boston; 617.878.8240 or 800.392.6175, ext. 8240.

BRAINTREE — Mary Hanna: second Saturday of each month (walk in), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Metropolitan Office, 100 Grandview Road, Braintree; 781.380.1410, or at home, 781.545.2069.

CAPE COD — Lawrence Abbruzzi: second Saturday of each month (walk in), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Barnstable Teachers Association (BTA), 100 West Main St., Suite #7, Hyannis; 508.775.8625, or at home, 508.824.9194.

FITCHBURG — Robert Zbikowski: second Thursday of each month (walk in), 4 to 8 p.m., Fitchburg Teachers Association office, 21 Culley St., Fitchburg; 978.790.8864, or at home, 978.297.0123; e-mail: zibstar702@verizon.net.

HOLYOKE — Ron Lech: third Saturday of each month (walk in), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Western Office, 55 Bobala Road, Suite 3, Holyoke; 413.535.2415, or at home, 413.566.3039.

LYNNFIELD — Mary Parry: third and fourth Saturdays of each month (walk in), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Northeast Office, 50 Salem St.,

Note: If you or your association would like to have a retirement workshop at your school, your local president should call Harold Crowley at 800.392.6175, ext. 8240. Please be aware that the MTA does not have a record of your service, so members are advised to bring that information along to meetings.

Building B, Lynnfield; 781.246.9779, or at home, 978.372.2031; fax, 978.372.2035.

PITTSFIELD — Ward F. Johnson: second Saturday of each month (walk in), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Berkshire Office, 188 East St., Pittsfield; 413.499.0257, or at home, 413.443.1722; e-mail: wardman33@aol.com.

RAYNHAM — Sandra Stephenson: third Saturday of each month (walk in), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Southeast Office, 90 New State Highway (Rte. 44), Raynham; 508.822.5371, or at home, 508.747.2234; e-mail: rockowl@aol.com. Edward Nelson: fourth Saturday of each month (walk in), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Southeast Office, 90 New State Highway (Rte. 44), Raynham; 508.822.5371, or at home, 508.853.5769.

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The advantages of vacation planning

The end of summer and back-to-school season are fast approaching, but that is no reason to step completely into reality. Now is the perfect time to start planning your winter, spring and even summer vacations!

There are many advantages to planning early for your next vacation, whether it's just a visit to your family's place a few states over, to the white-sand beaches of the Caribbean or to Europe, Asia or Australia. Making the arrangements today will save you a lot of effort and money. Take a look at a few of the benefits of planning ahead!

Time. Going further into the school year means getting increasingly busy. Job demands and family responsibilities chip away at precious free time to pursue hobbies, enjoy activities with friends and plan vacations. But these things are important to maintain balance and stay fresh. Plan ahead now by researching and exploring your ideal destination. If you start planning early, you will have plenty of time to browse the widest range of choices and decide where you really want to spend your vacation.

Availability. Hotels and flights are often booked early for peak vacation times. Booking now will ensure that you have the travel dates you need as well as the greatest number of options within your price point to help keep you on budget. Having the initial basics booked will free you up to plan the more exciting parts of your vacation.

Having fun! Planning ahead will give you something to look forward to during the hectic days ahead. You can take a mini-vacation by daydreaming about cruising through the Mediterranean, bicycling through Europe or just lazing on the beach with a good book.



The MTA Vacation Center makes exploring your world and planning ahead easy, affordable and fun! Visit www.MTAvacations.com to take advantage of member savings on fun-in-the-sun vacations in the Caribbean, Mexico and Bermuda through TNT Vacations. If cruising is more your style, CruisesOnly allows you to research dozens of cruise lines and destinations, some with departures right from Boston! If adventure and exploration are beckoning, then take a look at the offerings through Go Ahead Tours and VBT Bicycling and Walking

Vacations. Both offer fully planned itineraries around the world with local escorts to take care of your every need and make all arrangements for you so you'll just need to go along and enjoy the journey!

And don't forget, the MTA Vacation Center can also save you money on rental cars, hotels and even Disney tickets! So make planning your next vacation a priority now and you'll be glad you did in the busy months ahead. Visit www.MTAvacations.com right away!

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of dollars a year. Planning a special trip that won't break the bank? Looking for affordable yet comprehensive life insurance? Interested in a ski weekend with discounted lift tickets? You'll find thousands of ways you can save in the Discount Directory.

And the list keeps growing. Here are two new discount programs for members:

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ALERT FOR LOCAL PRESIDENTS

MTAB can help you educate your new members on all of the benefits of MTA membership. Call 800.336.0990 for benefit program information or an e-broadcast you can easily forward. If you're having a member meeting, a representative can visit your local to speak with your group. MTA Benefits is ready to support your efforts in building awareness about the many benefits available to help members with life outside of work.

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Massachusetts Teachers Association

MTA Today

Volume 43, No. 1
Summer 2012

Official Publication of the Massachusetts Teachers Association

MTA members are honored for fighting for rights

By Sarah Nathan

MTA members and supporters gathered recently in Natick to honor four educators for making substantial contributions to human and civil rights.

The Human & Civil Rights Awards Dinner was held on June 22 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. The timing represented a change from previous years; in the past, the event took place on the eve of the MTA Annual Meeting in May. The annual banquet is sponsored by the MTA Human Relations Committee.

Kicking off the celebration, HRC Chair Dale Forest welcomed the enthusiastic crowd of MTA educators and supporters to the “start of a new tradition.”

Honored during the evening were:

- Natick High School Vice Principal Zach Galvin.
- Former Falmouth High School adjustment counselor Greg Gilbert, who is now retired.
- Julia Monteiro Johnson, a retired educator who formerly served as president of the Dennis-Yarmouth Educators Association and an NEA director.
- The late Douglas Riebesehl, who was a Falmouth High School graphics arts teacher.

The Kathleen Roberts Creative Leadership Award was given to Gilbert and Riebesehl for the “No Guff” anti-bullying program that they started at Falmouth High School more than 10 years ago.

While bullying is now a highly public issue, Gilbert and Riebesehl were ahead of the curve when they initiated their effort, which has grown into a week-long event that involves the whole district and the community. Earlier this year, Governor Deval Patrick established a “No Name Calling Day” — a statewide effort that replicates the “No Guff” vision that the two educators had over a decade ago.

Gilbert, a longtime member of the Falmouth Educators Association, described the work as “a very positive, emotional and all around great experience.”

Cathy Riebesehl, Douglas’s wife, accepted the award designated for her husband. Their son, Nick, has remained involved in the anti-bullying work started by his father.

Galvin was likewise given the award named



for Roberts, a former MTA president and 47-year educator whose strong commitment to service has made her a tireless advocate for public education, communities and her profession. At 97, Roberts continues to devote many hours each week to community and association work.

Galvin, who is a cancer survivor, devotes much of his free time to fund-raising for the Jimmy Fund and supporting children with cancer, as well as their families.

“Survivorship really becomes something of a responsibility,” said Galvin, who beat cancer 15 years ago. “That’s where my drive comes from, and the energy from that has stirred students and teachers and friends and family and people from all over the world to donate to children fighting cancer through the Jimmy Fund.”

Galvin, a member of the Education Association of Natick, said he truly recognized the value of his union when he was diagnosed with a serious form of cancer soon after accepting his first teaching job.

“I feel very blessed to be a survivor, and I feel the responsibility to help and do something about it, much like when I’m in a union and when you folks are helping me survive,” Galvin said. “It is a difficult thing for me to accept this recognition because I feel like it is something I’m supposed to do. I feel like it is why I’m here.”

Monteiro Johnson was given the Louise Gaskins Lifetime Civil Rights Award for her long-term efforts to promote public education, union activism, political action, equality and opportunity for all.

From left to right are Louise Gaskins, for whom an MTA civil rights award is named; honoree Julia Monteiro Johnson; honoree Zach Galvin; Cathy Riebesehl, who accepted the Kathleen Roberts Creative Leadership Award on behalf of her late husband, Douglas; Human Relations Committee members George Sowpel, Bonnie Page and Sharon DeCicco and HRC Chairman Dale Forest; longtime MTA activist Kathleen Roberts, for whom the creative leadership award is named; and Greg Gilbert, a retired Falmouth school adjustment counselor who co-won the award with Riebesehl.

Photo by Sarah Nathan

Monteiro Johnson, who was the first teacher of color in the Dennis-Yarmouth Public Schools when she was hired in 1979, said she knew early on that she had to do more.

“As females of color, my sisters and I knew we had to work harder, strive for more and that good wasn’t enough,” she said. “It was always about being better, being the best, because that is what it takes to level the playing field — that and a quality public school education.”

Monteiro Johnson called Gaskins “one of my heroes, my mentor, my role model and my friend.”

Since 1999, the HRC has recognized Gaskins — a pioneer for the involvement of women and people of color in education, the MTA and the NEA — by presenting awards in her honor.

Though she is retired, Monteiro Johnson remains committed to making a difference.

“The struggle for women, for people of color and for those traditionally excluded — and for elimination of racism and sexism — continues,” she said. “I will continue to be part of the forces of change.”

This year, for the first time, the MTA is making a \$2,000 charitable donation for each of the award winners, MTA President Paul Toner announced at the banquet.

“Your contributions and service are inspiring to us all, and we admire your accomplishments and commitment,” Toner said. “Each of you represents the finest in character, leadership and public leadership.”