



**EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS TAKE A STAND AGAINST BULLYING**

# MTA Today

*A publication of the Massachusetts Teachers Association  
Volume 43, No. 3/Winter 2013*



**MORE DISTRICTS TRY  
INNOVATION SCHOOLS**

# Looking to Honor One of Our Own



## Is there an MTA member who:

- Encouraged you professionally or personally?
- Fostered your involvement in MTA?
- Mentored you as a beginning teacher?
- Helped you as a student?

## Now is the time to recognize his or her contribution.

Nomination forms for the *Looking to Honor One of Our Own Award* are available at:

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*Completed nomination forms must be received by MTA no later than June 1.*

## MTA Today

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*This issue of MTA Today also features  
the winter edition of the MTA Advantage*



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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

Innovation Schools were established as part of the Achievement Gap Act of 2010, and there are now 44 in operation across Massachusetts. On a recent morning, Amanda Bell, a teacher of third- and fourth-graders at the Winter Hill Innovation School in Somerville, worked with student William Baxter as he used a game-based computer program to focus on math facts. Bell says that Winter Hill teachers embraced an Innovation School plan because it gave them the flexibility to make changes they believe will help their students. For coverage, see pages 6 and 7. Another way that MTA members are trying to help their students is by standing up to bullying. A conference to further that effort was held in late November at the Tsongas Center in Lowell. A story about the event is on Page 3.



Photos by Laura Barrett and Bob Duffy  
Cover design by Alison Donato

## Quote-Unquote

*"The economy is not like the weather; it is not some natural force that is beyond our control, something where we have to wait for others to predict or explain to us. What we choose to do, and not do, shapes our future. Indeed, as one friend of mine likes to say, 'The future belongs to those who prepare for it.' That is why we invest in education, in innovation and in infrastructure."*

— Excerpt from Governor Deval Patrick's  
State of the Commonwealth address

# Anti-bullying event draws thousands

By Bob Duffy

**M**ore than 5,000 students and educators from across New England gathered recently to unite against bullying.

The Stand Up to Bullying event, which was sponsored in part by the MTA, drew teams from middle schools and high schools to the Tsongas Center in Lowell on Nov. 29.

Stand Up, which was first held in 2011, has quickly become one of the largest such efforts in the United States, according to organizers. The program was developed by a coalition of more than 50 community and educational organizations to counter the effects of bullying and create a culture that helps prevent it.

“Schools should be safe havens for students — places where they can grow, learn and realize their full potential,” said MTA Vice President Tim Sullivan, who co-chaired the Stand Up 2012 program and addressed the crowd. “This event is a sign of positive activism and a broad willingness to fight back against this problem.”

Statistics surrounding the issue are startling. According to the National Education Association, one in three American schoolchildren in grades six through 10 is affected by bullying. All told, 83 percent of girls and 79 percent of boys report experiencing some type of harassment.

Students who are targets of repeated bullying experience extreme stress, which can develop into a fear of going to school, using public bathrooms or taking the bus. These fears can manifest themselves as physical symptoms of illness. They can also lead to a diminished ability to learn.

**S**tand Up 2012 employed a combination of town-hall-style discussions among students, group meetings, musical entertainment and motivational speeches. Students broke into groups to discuss their own ideas and opinions about bullying and creating positive change.

Three schools received Stand Up awards for innovative anti-bullying efforts: the Southeast Alternative School in Middleborough and Sandwich, the Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School in Devens and the Hudson Memorial School in Hudson, N.H.

In addition to the conference, the organizers produced a half-hour television show, “What Every Parent Needs to Know About Bullying,” which aired Dec. 5 on Channel 38.

The show featured a panel of the area’s top experts on bullying prevention.

Lorri Curry, a health education specialist in the Haverhill Public Schools, said it is important for parents to understand the difference between bullying and teasing.

“Almost every time a student is teased it’s being called bullying because bullying has gotten so much attention,” she said, “so we need to help parents try to understand the difference between teasing and



More than 5,000 students and educators packed the Tsongas Center in Lowell on Nov. 29 for Stand Up 2012, one of the largest anti-bullying events in the country. The crowd heard from motivational speakers, listened to music and held a town-hall-style discussion. Students also broke into groups to voice their own opinions of bullying and talk about how to create positive change in their schools. MTA Vice President Tim Sullivan, left, served as the co-chair of the event and addressed the audience.

Photos by Mike Otis and Bob Duffy

**‘Schools should be safe havens for students — places where they can grow, learn and realize their full potential.’**

**— Tim Sullivan  
MTA Vice President**

typical put-downs, which are still rude and mean behavior, and bullying.”

“Bullying isn’t something mean that just happens once. It’s something that happens over

and over again,” said Dr. Elizabeth Englander, director of the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center at Bridgewater State University, one of the organizations that founded the Stand Up campaign. She explained that since fighting on the playground has become less acceptable, more “socially powerful” students have turned to “social snubs” to make others “feel very, very bad.”

Efforts are currently under way to host similar events in New Hampshire and Illinois.

Visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=prfD54A79Ow](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prfD54A79Ow) to see “What Every Parent Needs to Know About Bullying.” MTA Vice President Tim Sullivan’s remarks at Stand Up 2012 can be viewed at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0QBKqX1\\_Yo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0QBKqX1_Yo).

# Trying to drink water from a fire hose

The state's new secretary of education, Matt Malone, recently told local association presidents he knows that trying to keep up with new education mandates is like "trying to drink water from a fire hose." He pledged to focus on implementing a small number of high priorities well rather than launching new ambitious and time-consuming initiatives.

That was music to the ears of everyone at the MTA All Presidents' Meeting. It is something that we at the MTA would like to do, too, though we are often forced to respond to challenges that come at us whether we like it or not.

We have streamlined our legislative agenda this year to six priorities. One, in particular,



Paul Toner  
MTA President

affects all of our members and deserves additional comment: the revenue campaign.

For the first time in recent memory, a sitting governor has proposed tax increases in order to provide more funding to education, transportation and infrastructure improvements, all of which

are critically important to families, communities and our economy.

Governor Deval Patrick's bold revenue plan — like the Campaign for Our Communities bill, which the MTA supports — would raise about \$2 billion a year when fully phased in. Both are progressive, meaning they ask more from the wealthiest taxpayers by raising the income tax rate but also increasing the personal exemption.

Predictably, legislators began hearing negative comments from constituents after Patrick rolled out his proposal in January. The complaint that Massachusetts is "Taxachusetts" has been made again, even though that label has been inaccurate for more than three decades.

In fact, Massachusetts ranks in the bottom half of all states when one calculates the percentage of income paid in all state and local taxes combined.

If more funding for education is to stand a chance, legislators need to hear from those of us who can make a compelling case for it. If you haven't done so already, please take a minute right now to visit [www.massteacher.org/actnow](http://www.massteacher.org/actnow) and send a message to your legislators via the MTA website. Please also start talking up this issue with colleagues, friends and relatives.

When communicating about revenue, don't forget to focus on how the additional money will help. Let others know why increased funding

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The revenue campaign is our highest priority because so many other priorities hinge on adequate funding, but there are other important issues we are facing this year.

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matters — not just to you, but to your students and to the future of our Commonwealth.

If you're a preK-12 educator, does your school need Internet wiring that can handle today's data loads? Time for teachers to collaborate on curricula and instructional strategies? More paraprofessionals to assist students with special needs? A longer day or more staff so art classes can be restored? More social services for students from troubled families?

And if you're a higher education member, does your campus need more full-time faculty so that your students receive the academic guidance they need? More financial aid so that your students don't drop out because they can't pay the fees?

The revenue campaign is our highest priority because so many other priorities hinge on adequate funding, but there are other important issues we are facing this year. Most are described in greater detail in this issue of *MTA Today* and on the MTA website.

■ **Educator evaluation:** We are committed to implementing the new evaluation system so that it is fair, effective and efficient. If you haven't adopted new contract language yet or are beginning the next phase of bargaining, your MTA field representative will be your most valuable resource.

■ **Higher education:** In addition to supporting the governor's plan to increase funding for public colleges and universities by 18 percent, the MTA is promoting one bill to study the higher education financing system and another to increase the use of full-time faculty and provide health insurance and pension benefits to qualifying adjunct faculty members. A new MTA report relating the increased reliance on part-time faculty to lower student college completion rates will be released in the weeks ahead.

■ **Early education:** We support the governor's call to increase spending in early

education. In addition, we are continuing to promote "An Act Relative to Improving Quality in Early Education and Care Through Center-Based Child Care Providers," which would give the educators of our youngest children more of a voice in their profession.

■ **RETELL:** The MTA is pressing the state to make sure the Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners initiative — which seeks to improve how English language learners are taught — is implemented fairly, with ample notice to teachers, flexibility in scheduling and a chance for local associations to bargain over the impact.

■ **Retiree health insurance:** As described on Page 20 of this issue, the association is joining with other unions and retiree organizations to safeguard retiree health insurance benefits for current retirees, those nearing retirement and the longest-serving public employees.

■ **Special election:** The MTA will be informing members about the track records and promises of the candidates vying to fill the U.S. Senate seat formerly held by Secretary of State John Kerry. Any recommendations will go from the MTA's member-run Candidate Recommendation Committee to the NEA. The NEA has the final word on association recommendations in national races.

■ **Achievement gaps:** The MTA has recently formed or strengthened partnerships with the VIVA project, the NAACP, the Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth, Jobs with Justice and the Union of Minority Neighborhoods. While each group is different, we all share the common goal of helping low-income students and students of color do better in school.

We won't be able to meet our objectives for any of the issues we work on this year without you. Thank you for all you do for your students, your communities and your association.

## Letters policy

**M***TA 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](mailto:mtatodayletters@massteacher.org). For additional information, please refer to the guidelines posted on [www.massteacher.org](http://www.massteacher.org).

# MTA seeks fairness for adjunct faculty

By Sarah Nathan

The MTA is ramping up efforts to address the inequities facing adjunct faculty members at the Commonwealth's public colleges and universities.

Legislation aimed at providing health and pension benefits for part-time instructors, as well as increasing the percentage of undergraduate courses taught by full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty members, is one of six MTA-backed bills filed in the current session. The bill, sponsored by Representative David Sullivan (D-Fall River), is intended to "reverse the course" by restoring balance among faculty members and putting an end to over-reliance on part-time instructors, said Massachusetts Community College Council President Joe LeBlanc.

The challenges facing part-time faculty members are well documented in Massachusetts and around the country. LeBlanc noted that at the state's 15 community colleges, where the problem is most acute in the state's higher education system, more than two-thirds of classes are now taught by part-time faculty.

The hiring of adjunct faculty members was originally intended to allow working professionals to offer their expertise in the classroom. As enrollment in public higher education has increased and the number of full-time teaching positions has remained stagnant, however, colleges have grown increasingly reliant on adjuncts without providing benefits to meet their needs.

Part-time instructors are paid by the course and are not eligible for health insurance. Moreover, they are not enrolled in the state retirement system or eligible to collect Social Security based on their teaching. Despite the fact that many instructors teach five or more courses per semester — the equivalent of a full-time course load — they do not receive the same pay or benefits as full-time professors.

"Luckily, I love what I do. If I didn't, this would be a really difficult job to manage," said Patrick Lochelt, an adjunct instructor who patches together a modest living each semester teaching eight English courses at three colleges. "I come home with stacks of essays to grade. I just dig in and do it. It's just what I know."

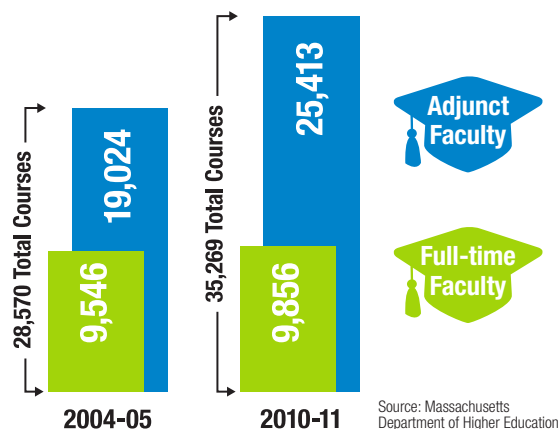
For eight years, Lochelt has been dividing his time among Northern Essex Community College, Middlesex Community College and UMass Lowell. In addition to actual instruction time, he spends about 20 hours a week reviewing students' work. Because he teaches writing classes and requires each student to write five essays, he estimates that he grades about 1,000 papers per semester.

While he knows how much effort he puts into his students and his classes, he has concerns about their future. Because part-time instructors are often stretched very thin, they aren't always available



Patrick Lochelt

Number of courses taught by  
ADJUNCT VS. FULL-TIME FACULTY  
at Massachusetts community colleges



to students in the same way as full-time faculty members, who serve as advisers.

Higher ed faculty members see this as a significant issue because establishing such connections can contribute to long-term success — and at times may determine whether a student remains in school.

At Bridgewater State University, where there has been a concerted effort to increase the number of full-time faculty members, the number of full-time first-year students who stay in school is growing. At a recent Board of Higher Education meeting, Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria, BSU's president, reported that the number of full-time faculty has grown by 27 percent since 2000. He said that as faculty-student ratios have improved, so has the retention rate for students of color and low-income students.

Lochelt said he tries to stay in touch with his students during the week, but is not always readily available because he is forced to divide his time.

"I do my best. I receive and send a lot of e-mails, but I'm spread out among three campuses," he said. "If I were a full-time faculty member, I'd have fewer classes and office hours. As adjuncts, we just can't do as much. It's hard because I don't think a lot of people even know what an adjunct is or the role we play in public higher education."

In 2009, the MTA, the MCCC and five instructors, including Lochelt, filed suit against the state seeking health insurance coverage for adjunct faculty members teaching multiple courses on different campuses. In January, a Suffolk Superior Court judge rejected the argument that the Commonwealth was improperly denying adjuncts access to state-administered health insurance. The plaintiffs had argued that adjuncts met the definition of part-time employees as outlined in state law and should be treated as such.

"The state is just heartless when it comes to this question," LeBlanc said. "Many of our adjunct faculty members face incredible hardships. They do this work because they love it and receive abuse, no benefits and small paychecks in return."

The MTA and the MCCC recently brought the issue to the attention of state Labor Secretary Joanne

## SAVE THE DATE

Massachusetts Public Higher Education Advocacy Day is slated for Tuesday, March 5, at the State House. MTA members will join forces with fellow union activists, students and administrators to advocate for increased funding for the state's colleges and universities. More details will be posted on the MTA's website, [www.massteacher.org](http://www.massteacher.org).

Goldstein and Higher Education Commissioner Richard Freeland. In an effort to illustrate the real-life problems that some faculty members are facing, the MTA and the MCCC collected and shared stories about personal health care crises from 10 adjunct faculty members.

One part-time instructor who wished to remain anonymous for fear of reprisal spoke about having to choose between paying his college loans or his health insurance because he couldn't afford both. While he thought he had made a responsible decision, he said, he is a relatively young person who is now harnessed with a \$100,000 medical bill for emergency surgery that might have been prevented had he not been uninsured and unable to afford regular visits to doctors. Another faculty member noted that her income as an adjunct goes almost entirely to pay for her family's health insurance. "I love teaching, but the state is being fundamentally unfair toward adjuncts," wrote another instructor. "The state mandates that every citizen in Massachusetts must have health insurance, yet it denies this same insurance to thousands of state employees."

The MCCC is taking the fight to restore equity and improve working conditions for adjuncts to the bargaining table, where contract negotiations for part-time faculty in the Division of Continuing Education will begin soon. The DCE's current contract expires in June. In addition, the MCCC launched an organizing effort last fall to increase the number of part-time faculty members who joined the union. The ongoing campaign has quickly proven to be a success, with a 10 percent increase in members.

"Unfortunately, the problem of part-time employment is not limited to our public campuses or academia — there are workers in many other industries who are struggling to hold on to full-time positions and the wages and benefits that come with these jobs," said James Rice, president of the National Council of Higher Education, the higher education arm of the NEA. "There is certainly an incredible effort all over to exploit workers."

Rice recently participated in the Delphi Project, a collaboration that is creating resources and materials aimed at helping faculty and staff with issues related to part-time instructors.

Information on the Delphi Project is available at [www.thechangingfaculty.org](http://www.thechangingfaculty.org). The MTA's Center for Education Policy and Practice is finalizing a research paper on the topic of adjunct faculty members titled "Reverse the Course." It will be available on the MTA website, [www.massteacher.org](http://www.massteacher.org), in the next few weeks.

# More districts try Innovation Schools

By Laura Barrett

There is an ongoing debate in public education about the tension between choice and equity. Are Innovation Schools one way to strike a balance? MTA members and association leaders in some districts believe they are an exciting option, while others have their doubts.

As a way to foster school-based decision-making, innovation and choice within public school districts, Governor Deval Patrick included Innovation Schools in his Achievement Gap Act of 2010. Some argued that creating such schools would reduce pressure to lift the cap on Commonwealth Charter Schools.

Innovation Schools are similar to Horace Mann Charter Schools and to Boston's Pilot Schools, though there are differences in implementation. Innovation Schools have more flexibility and autonomy than most district schools with regard to curriculum, staffing, budget, scheduling, professional development and district policies.

Staff members at these schools still belong to their local associations and are often very involved in the design and implementation of changes. Some plans require negotiating waivers to the union contract, while others do not.

Two Innovation Schools opened in the 2010-2011 school year and another 16 in 2011-2012. This year there are 44 Innovation Schools across the Commonwealth, and six more are under consideration for 2013-2014.

"Implementing these schools involves a lot of thought and discussion, and it has not always been easy," said MTA President Paul Toner. "But after talking to members who work in Innovation Schools in several districts, I am convinced that if done in collaboration with teachers and their unions, this model gives our members more of a voice in school improvement and is leading to some exciting new education models."

Bridget Rodriguez, a former teacher and principal in the Cambridge Public Schools, heads the Innovation Schools program for the state's Executive Office of Education. She described why she is excited about the concept.

"As a former teacher, I remember when I used to drive home I would often think, 'If only we could do things this other way,'" Rodriguez said. "Now teachers have a place they can go with their ideas. We think these schools can be an excellent demonstration of teacher professionalism and teacher-initiated reform. There's no lack of good ideas. To me, teachers are the people who know the school population intimately and can custom-tailor solutions to the kids in front of them."

Innovation School plans may be proposed by teachers, unions, district administrators, community residents or other interested parties. Applicants may seek a planning grant from the state. The local school committee must approve the plan before it can move forward, and the district oversees the school as it would any other district school. Innovation Schools



There are now 44 Innovation Schools across the state. Teachers say it is important for them to lead educational changes because they know their students best. At the Winter Hill Innovation School in Somerville, teacher Amanda Bell spent time one recent morning working with Shelby Duval on a story-writing project.

Photo by Laura Barrett

are supposed to receive the same per-pupil allotment as other schools, although — like any school — they can apply for grant money.

Innovation Schools must develop Measurable Annual Goals, and local school committees are responsible for holding them accountable for meeting those goals. The state receives copies of their MAG progress reports and is in the process of analyzing results from the second full year that the schools were in operation.

There are two different models: conversion — that is, created by converting an existing school to a new program — and new. About one-third of the conversions take place in Level 3 schools — schools performing in the bottom 20 percent statewide — with the hope that the changes will improve performance and reduce the chance of the school falling into Level 4 status. Level 4 schools are selected from among low-performing Level 3 schools that show little or no improvement.

For new schools, the local association, the applicant and school committee must negotiate any waivers to the contract. Bargaining disputes are resolved through an expedited binding arbitration process. The arbitrator must consider the parties' positions and the needs of the students in the district.

One concern has been the lack of a clear definition of the difference between the two models. New Bedford Education Association President Lou St. John objected to a plan for two Innovation Schools in his district in part because he believed they were really conversion schools that were being called new in order to get around the two-thirds-vote requirement. An MTA attorney wrote an opinion agreeing that the New Bedford models most closely resemble conversion schools, but state education officials disagreed. The issue has not yet been resolved.

St. John also questions whether it is really possible for Innovation Schools to offer substantially more services — such as art, music, physical education and smaller class sizes — for the district's

average per-pupil expenditure. If it is possible, he asked the school committee in testimony, "Why have you denied these same supports and services that we have been requesting all these years for all our kids and teachers?"

In Worcester, there were concerns about the voting process at Worcester Technical High School. Despite those concerns, Leonard Zalauskas, president of the Educational Association of Worcester, said that Innovation Schools can be "magic" when they work, giving teachers a chance to transform their own schools and generating excitement and creativity among the staff. Worcester has eight Innovation Schools, including a dual-language program, an accelerated magnet program and two that emphasize science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Rodriguez said the schools have adopted a variety of innovations. One uses a co-teaching model for special education inclusion, several focus on STEM subjects and a school in Salem has created a continuous-progress model in which students move up through the system when they have mastered the curriculum, not based on age or traditional grade levels.

Are they successful? Rodriguez said it is too early to say whether Innovation Schools outperform comparable schools on MCAS tests or other measures, but feedback from most teachers and administrators is positive. Few teachers or students typically transfer out when a school converts to the new model.

In Dennis-Yarmouth, three of the district's seven schools are Innovation Schools, including the Marguerite E. Small School for fourth- and fifth-graders. There, teachers work on a staggered schedule to extend the school day by 50 minutes to provide students with an enrichment block. Students can choose from among 21 different semester-long opportunities, including programs in the arts, fitness, leadership, reading, math, writing, science and technology.

Continued on next page

# *'This was an opportunity to put innovation on steroids'*

By Laura Barrett

**A**manda Bell, a teacher at the Winter Hill Innovation School in Somerville, said staff members had to decide quickly if they wanted to convert to a new educational model.

"Prior to Tony coming to us," she said, referring to Superintendent Anthony Pierantozzi, "I don't think any of us had heard of Innovation Schools. It was quite interesting at our first meeting hearing he wanted us to do it and if we agreed then we had to make a decision very quickly because there was a grant available."

"We all came together and realized we have a great school," Bell continued. "We know what we're doing. We have fantastic people here and we know what works. So it was sort of like, 'Aha, here's a chance to get to do what we want to do.'"

Add to the mix that a new principal, Chad Mazza, had just been hired as implementation was beginning.

"I jumped on a moving cart," said Mazza.

"This is a unique staff," he added. "I could see right from the start that they work well together. I could tell this could work at this school."

Mary McGivern, an inclusion specialist, said the school is filled with strong and open-minded educators. "There were a lot of innovative things happening here already, but some of them were in their infancy and had not been realized to their full potential," she said.

"This was an opportunity to put innovation on steroids," added Jackie Lawrence, president of the Somerville Teachers Association.

Teachers interviewed by *MTA Today* agreed that putting a plan together quickly is not ideal. To slow it down a little, they are implementing the



Photo by Laura Barrett

Somerville Teachers Association President Jackie Lawrence visited the Winter Hill Innovation School, where she spent time in a classroom with Principal Chad Mazza.

changes in phases. As part of the planning, it was important for parents to be in the mix.

Bell explained, "We had a meeting with parents to ask, 'If you could have anything at your school, what would you want to see?'"

The teachers also put up a "parking lot" chart on which staff members could post their ideas, questions and concerns. Several priorities emerged, and plans were put together by the governing board. Each component was voted on

by the staff, with nearly unanimous approval for the final plan.

One change seeks to improve students' "social competency" through adopting the Responsive Classroom approach, a program that involves the whole staff in promoting appropriate social interactions.

Bell allowed a visitor to spend time in her classroom of third- and fourth-graders during "morning meeting," a daily feature of the Responsive Classroom. On that December day, students took turns being in the center of a circle and everyone was told to observe them. The chosen student then hid and made a change in his or her appearance. One boy put his shoes on the wrong feet. Nine-year-old Shellby Duval removed the hair tie that had been around her wrist and was pleased that no one could identify what had changed.

Shellby said she loves morning meetings. "We have fun and play little games and tell our friends what we did over the weekends and things like that," she said.

In this particular exercise, the students were also honing their observation skills and modeling taking turns. Morning meeting is also a time the teacher can observe whether a student seems troubled and may need some extra attention.

"It's important for students to build social skills so they can interact well with each other and the staff," Bell said. "Self-regulation is so important."

The innovation plan also calls for more common planning time — carved out of the existing schedule — and staff-driven professional development. The school is also introducing a therapy dog program for special needs students.

Please turn to **When**/Page 9

## **New approach shows promise — but also presents challenges**

Continued from previous page

Erin Porter, president of the Dennis-Yarmouth Educators Association, said the program has worked well at that school because "the teachers were very involved in the planning and implementation from the start."

The Marguerite E. Small School had already established a grant-funded after-school program before the Innovation model was available. The planning grant gave the staff time to figure out how to provide all students with enrichment during a longer school day without requiring teachers to work longer.

Porter said the model isn't completely revenue-neutral since the district pays some of the teachers a stipend to stay longer for the enrichment block. "But they are getting a big bang for their buck," she said. "The students and teachers are very happy with the new schedule."

The experience in the district's other two Innovation Schools that opened this year has been mixed, Porter said. Teachers are overwhelmed by

so many other requirements — including the new evaluation system and Common Core curriculum alignment — that there is little time and energy left over for planning big changes. In addition, the district is in the process of reorganizing and closing one of its school buildings, which is likely to disrupt the implementation process.

"My advice to anyone considering this is not to rush in with major changes too quickly," she said. "We tried to do too much too fast. If we'd had more planning and more teacher involvement from the beginning, it would have worked better."

**T**hat said, Porter believes the new models are promising. Plans in her preK-3 school include a healthy-lunch program that incorporates local produce from a community garden and a farm-to-plate initiative, a beautification project for which students helped plant hundreds of daffodils and a community service program that involves students "harvesting" pennies on behalf of a charity they get to choose.

"Down here there are a lot of charter schools and school choice districts," Porter said. "We know we have to do something that's a little different to appeal to our customer base — the parents. The teachers are working very hard on this and are dedicated. It may be a little too quick, but I think we will succeed."

Toner said he hopes that expansion of successful Innovation Schools will help convince legislators and the public that they do not have to lift the cap on charter schools to promote new ideas and choice in public education. Systems are already in place for Innovation Schools to share their ideas with other schools that want to replicate their practices. This is something charter schools were supposed to do but have rarely accomplished.

"I believe that MTA members can and should be the architects of reform and not the objects of it. We need to be the ones leading change with our students and communities," Toner said. "When they are developed with educators, their unions and community members, Innovation Schools can be a very positive experience for teachers and students alike."

# Four candidates running for NEA Director seats

Four MTA members are vying for two seats on the NEA Board of Directors.

The NEA Director candidates are Timothy Sheehan of the Amherst-Pelham Education Association, Diana (Donnie) McGee of the Massachusetts Community College Council's Bristol Chapter, Gloria

Salazar of the Somerville Teachers Association and Bonnie Page of the Malden Education Association.

The two open Massachusetts seats will be filled by direct-mail vote in March and April, in tandem with the NEA statewide and regional delegate elections.

The terms last for three years, beginning Sept. 1, 2013, and expiring Aug. 31, 2016, in accordance with the NEA's fiscal year. Ballots will be sent to the entire membership.

Each candidate was asked to submit a statement and a photograph. The candidates'

submissions appear on this page. For further information on MTA nominations and elections, please contact Diane Foley of the MTA Division of Governance by calling 617.878.8217, e-mailing [dfoley@massteacher.org](mailto:dfoley@massteacher.org) or faxing inquiries to 617.742.7046.

## Timothy Sheehan Amherst-Pelham Education Association

It would be an honor to represent you on the NEA Board of Directors.

As a classroom teacher, I have a clear understanding of the challenges facing us as educators in the 21st century. Educators are accountable to students, families, administrators, school committees and state and federal agencies. We face shrinking budgets, the continued loss of colleagues to budget cuts, stagnant salaries, loss of benefits and, perhaps worst of all, a lack of respect for our profession. It is up to us as educators and leaders to reverse this tide.

The NEA Board of Directors will play an important role in the coming years. Recently, public employees in states as progressive as Massachusetts have lost collective bargaining rights and become "right to work" states. The NEA Board must take a proactive stance to protect collective bargaining where it still exists and also push back to reclaim the rights of public employees where they have been lost.

Unfortunately, the NEA and many of its affiliates are facing shrinking budgets due to a loss of membership. Our goals must be streamlined and prioritized to best support the rights of educators while we continue to ensure high-quality public education so our children can be informed citizens in our democracy and compete in a globalized economy.

I will bring my experience as a local president and treasurer, MTA Board member and experienced educator to representing your voice in Washington, D.C. I have worked closely with education support professionals, teachers and administrators in preK-graduate school settings and will continue to work collaboratively to bring us to our shared goal of better teaching and learning conditions for everyone.

I would appreciate your vote for NEA Director. Thank you.



Timothy Sheehan

## Diana (Donnie) McGee MCCC-Bristol Community College

I am running for the position of NEA Director because I believe my 15-plus years of union leadership, professional experience and statewide activism will enable me to defend public education and represent MTA locals effectively.

I am currently an English professor at Bristol Community College, where I have worked for 30 years as a writing specialist, program coordinator and faculty member.

As the statewide vice president of the Massachusetts Community College Council, I have chaired its Strategic Action and ORP Ad Hoc Committees for the past six-plus years.

My MTA union experience includes four-plus years on the Board of Directors and service on the following committees: State Revenue Enhancement, Full Capacity Local Training, Public Relations/Organizing Campaign, and Government Relations. I have been an MTA Annual Meeting delegate since 2002, an NEA RA delegate since 2006 and a member of the Higher Education Leadership Council since 2008.

As a State House lobbyist and union activist, I led multiple campaigns that resulted in the enactment of new laws that would promote increased retirement security for thousands of MTA members. Twice I was sent by the MTA to Washington, D.C., to lobby for the repeal of the GPO/WEP statutes that penalize many MTA members upon retirement. I have testified before dozens of legislative committees and authored many op-ed pieces in support of

public education and the related resources needed to fund our schools and colleges.

Like other MTA members, I am concerned about the attacks on collective bargaining rights; the trend toward privatization; the emphasis on performance-based funding and related educator evaluations; the overreliance on part-time, non-benefited employees; and the ever increasing cost of health insurance. On your behalf, I would bring a passionate voice to the NEA Board and Capitol Hill.

Please consider me when you cast your ballot. Thank you.



Diana McGee

## Gloria Salazar Somerville Teachers Association

I am a passionate leader with a long-lasting commitment to drive for results and pursue equal opportunity.

My commitment begins in supporting my students as an ELL instructor in Somerville. Beyond inspiring my students, I have learned that participating in the union, outside of your local, is critical to ensure that decision-makers are well-informed and active in pursuing local interests and challenges.

I learned this by experiencing firsthand how five of my colleagues were dismissed under the guise of new bilingual regulations. I was instrumental, even as a first-

year building rep, in having them reinstated.

I have devoted myself to the union all 12 years that I have been a teacher in the United States. I have served locally as a building representative, member of the Board of Directors and member of the negotiations team. I have attended the NEA RA every year since 2003. Also, I have attended and presented at the Northeast MLT and NRL conferences. I have been appointed to return to the Equal Opportunity Council after eight years away.

At the RA, I serve on the New Business Item Committee. At the national level, I served as Northeast regional director of the National Hispanic Caucus and a representative on the Team of Experts that met in San Francisco to write the NEA's ELL module.

For eight years I have represented the Northeast Region at the National Ethnic Leaders Meeting prior to the RA. I was selected to be part of the committee sent to Honduras by the NEA in 2009. I currently serve on the NEA Human and Civil Rights Committee and the NEA Resolutions Committee.

At a time when unions are under attack, leaders like me who demonstrate experience can help defend what those before us created. I offer a different perspective.

Thank you for your vote.



Gloria Salazar

## Bonnie Page Malden Education Association

My name is Bonnie Page and I am asking for your vote to represent you as one of your NEA directors.

I am an active teacher in Malden and have represented all educators in my local as vice president and as negotiations, bylaws and grievance chair, as well as serving as a building representative. Additionally, I have served on the MTA Board of Directors for 11 years, as an MTA Annual Meeting delegate for 24 years and as a delegate to the NEA RA for 16 years.

I have also served on MTA committees, including the MTA Benefits Board, the Committee to Evaluate the Executive Director-Treasurer, the Communications Council (as chair and a member), the Workplace Equity Committee and the Human and Civil Rights Committee.

The MTA needs NEA directors who will be out in front of all the issues our members encounter — RTTT, NCLB, the new educator evaluation tool, pensions and health insurance. Our ESPs need a fair wage and good benefits. From preK to higher ed, your concerns will be heard.

I firmly believe in the impact that we can have as a union on the quality of the professional lives

of our members and the education of our students.

Communication and getting more of us involved are vital to accomplishing this. I have the experience and passion that are needed to work for you at the national level.

I am excited to have the opportunity to serve you, the members, on a national level.

I would appreciate your vote. Thank you.



Bonnie Page

# School gardens produce healthy results

By Bob Duffy

A multi-year push to help students and teachers establish gardens at Massachusetts schools continues to bear fruit.

The Massachusetts Farm to School project, started in 2004 and based in Amherst, encourages students to learn where their food comes from and persuades them to get their hands dirty as they learn how to lead healthier lives.

Gardens at public schools were commonplace through the first half of the 20th century, but diminished in popularity with the rise of processed foods. In the past few years, however, environmental concerns and student health problems such as obesity and diabetes have led to a revival of localized efforts to grow produce.

In addition to promoting healthier lifestyles, school gardens enrich many subject areas and students' abilities. They also promote teamwork among educators, students of all ages and communities.

At the Dr. Elmer S. Bagnall School in Groveland, the garden is incorporated into just about every facet of the day. Students learn about life sciences through the soils the garden uses and the produce it grows. In math, students estimate how many plants can fit into limited spaces, measure the perimeter of the garden and estimate the volume of the beds.

The literacy lab includes the use of gardening books, and vocabulary develops as students converse with teachers about everything from plant life to components of the soil.

Establishing the Bagnall School garden took a lot of planning and work. After the idea was suggested by a parent, a group of educators, families and businesses conducted research and obtained a \$5,000 NEA grant through the MTA before getting the project approved by the local school committee.

With the help of a joint NEA-MTA professional development program, education support professionals took the lead, obtaining technical assistance on the types of plants that would grow best in their area and providing curriculum guides within the state's frameworks on how to use the gardens as a teaching tool. The NEA is using Massachusetts to pilot the expansion of the program to other states around the nation.

The program partners ESPs with local farmers they can call on for help and advice on everything from plant selection to the timing of crops.



Photo by Bob Duffy

Kindergarten paraprofessional Kelly Procurot works with students in the Bagnall School garden.

"There is growing interest in this issue, and each year we have had increasing demand for these types of professional development programs," said Donna Johnson, president of the University Staff Association at UMass Amherst. Johnson, who is also a member of the MTA Board of Directors, has helped spearhead expansion of the gardening effort.

The number of public school districts establishing school gardens "has grown exponentially in the last several years," said Debi Hogan, executive director of the Massachusetts chapter of Agriculture in the Classroom, a national nonprofit organization that has worked since 1984 to provide training and resources for educators.

Interest in school gardens "has really surged in the last two to three years because people are really starting to see the benefits," Hogan added.

"The professional development provided by the MTA around establishing school gardens has been awesome," said Donna Beeler, an ESP at Haverhill High School.

"This type of professional development fits right in with our goal to try to get the students to eat more fruits and vegetables," noted Rachel Oliveira, who works in food services at the Frederick W. Hartnett Middle School in Blackstone. A school garden reinforces the concept of eating right by engaging the students in the process of growing their own food and might even influence what they are willing to consume, she said.

"You can't force kids to eat carrots over cookies if they don't want to, so we hope that if the students start learning the process and they grow the healthy food themselves, they are going to be more likely to try these healthy foods and maybe even enjoy them," said Debra Hebert, who also works in food services at the school.

School gardens also offer a way to integrate the community into school activities, which promotes increased family and community involvement.

Over the summer, for example, volunteer families share the job of tending the Bagnall School garden. A journal is left in the garden for families to record their thoughts and leave messages for other volunteers.

At Haverhill High School, a dedicated team of ESPs plans to use the school garden to provide activities that teach cooperation, responsibility and patience, as well as to increase self-esteem among students in the Learning for Life program for disabled students who are transitioning to adulthood.

"These kids have never had the opportunity to learn to garden and grow their own fruits and vegetables, so the idea is to teach them how to do it for themselves and also to provide fresh fruit and vegetables to the school," said Beeler.

*For more information on school gardens and the Farm to School Project, contact Johnson by e-mailing [Djohnson@english.umass.edu](mailto:Djohnson@english.umass.edu).*

## 'When this process is done right, it is teacher-owned,' union leader says

Continued from Page 7

Winter Hill is typical of an urban school. Among its students, 84 percent are low-income, three-quarters are of color, 20 percent are English language learners and 27 percent have special needs. MCAS scores are below the state average.

The school also houses a large Sheltered English Immersion program that draws students from across the district. Although this program no doubt affects

the school's MCAS scores, Mazza urged the district to provide T passes to middle-schoolers who no longer qualify for busing so that they can remain at Winter Hill, where they have made significant progress.

In the end, the teachers agreed the Innovation School process is not just about raising test scores, though they hope that happens. Mostly, they want their school to be a welcoming community that addresses both the learning and social-emotional

needs of their students. Lawrence, the local president, noted that Somerville has had a number of innovative programs for years. She believes this model is different.

"Somerville has always been innovative, but the innovation has not always been teacher-owned," she said. "When this process is done right, it is teacher-owned. Teachers have a voice in every step of the process."



Photos by Laura Barrett

Christine Boseman, Suban Krishnamoorthy, Shin Freedman, Karen Reed and Julia Monteiro Johnson, left to right, enjoyed the evening festivities.

# Conference focuses on need for involvement

## Speaker calls on EMAC audience to 'organize, organize, organize'

By Laura Barrett

**H**ow about the 2012 election?" said an upbeat Princess Moss, the luncheon speaker at the recent MTA Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee Conference.

"President Obama is taking his case to the American people," she continued. "If we're going to be in the fight, we must organize. A lot of our ethnic minority members are very new to politics. They are fresh, fertile ground for us to organize, organize, organize."

Moss is a member of the NEA Executive Committee. Like the other speakers at the conference, which was held at the Sheraton Framingham on Nov. 30 and Dec. 1, she emphasized the need to get more ethnic minority members involved in their locals, in the MTA and in the NEA.

Important ways to become involved, speakers noted, include attending the EMAC Conference each winter and participating in training and other activities at the MTA Summer Conference, which is held in Williamstown every August.

The Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee was founded in 1979 and is charged with implementing the MTA Ethnic Minority Involvement Plan, which is designed to increase the participation of members from diverse backgrounds in all phases of the association.

"I didn't get to a leadership position with the NEA by myself," Moss told a crowd of more than 100 conference attendees and MTA Board members during her speech. She then ticked off some of the lessons she learned along the way:

- It is important to volunteer. That's also how you inspire others to be engaged.
- Learn the power structure of your organization. Not every power person has a title.

- Find mentors. Most often, they find you.
- Actively listen. Empathy is important.
- Be kind to people.
- Never, ever play with other people's money.
- Find a replacement for yourself if you move on. That means you're bringing other people along.
- Remember that life is not fair. Favor isn't fair, either. When the window of opportunity opens, be prepared. Once it closes, it may not open again for years.

Several of those lessons apply to Christine Boseman, the new chair of the committee and a member of the Classified Staff Union at the University of Massachusetts in Boston. Boseman credited mentors with getting her involved by asking her to become a CSU steward and then inviting her to come to the Summer Conference for training. As a result, she was ready when new opportunities arose.

"While I was at the Summer Conference, Susan Baker grabbed me by the collar, so to speak, and insisted I join EMAC," Boseman said, referring to her predecessor as EMAC chair. "The rest is history."

**B**oseman and Moss both highlighted the importance of increasing the number of ethnic minority educators in the state.

Moss said that students need "powerful, positive role models."

Boseman cited statistics showing those role models aren't always available.

"While two-thirds of students in this state are white, nine out of 10 of the teachers are white," she said. "Eight percent of students are African-American but only 2.6 percent of teachers are African-American. Fifteen percent of students are Hispanic but less than 3 percent of teachers are Hispanic. Five-and-a-half percent of our students are Asian but only 1 percent of teachers are Asian."

"I think these numbers are a shame because young ethnic minority children should have more adult authority figures who look like them," Boseman added. "We want our children to know that they, too, can someday become a teacher, or a principal, a college student or a college professor, a senator or maybe even the president of the United States!"

Later, Boseman offered her view of how educators — and members of the committee — can build power and involvement.

"As leaders we can extend our reach by teaching other future leaders. We can teach one and reach two, teach two and reach four, teach three reach six, and so on," she said. "We want our members to know what EMAC has to offer and that we are here."

Former NEA President Reg Weaver energized conference participants in a lively keynote address. Weaver told stories about the different paths his own children took through education, recalling that one of them struggled in school until he found his way at a community college. "One of the best kept secrets — a community college," Weaver said.

In addition to listening to the presenters, the MTA members who attended the conference took part in workshops and, on Friday evening, enjoyed dinner followed by dancing to the Never Say Never Jazz Band.

Suban Krishnamoorthy, a member of the computer science faculty at Framingham State University, said he is an EMAC participant because he has always been interested in diversity.

"When I grew up in India, I was taught there is only one race," he said. "Human beings."

*MTA members interested in learning more about the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee should contact staff consultant George Luse by e-mailing [gluse@massteacher.org](mailto:gluse@massteacher.org).*

# MTA and NAACP announce partnership

## Organizations to focus on narrowing achievement gaps and other key goals

By Laura Barrett  
and Jean Conley

The MTA and the New England Area Conference of the NAACP chose Jan. 15, the 84th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther King Jr., to announce a partnership to address the educational achievement gaps affecting low-income students and students of color.

Priorities include increasing the number of teachers of color in Massachusetts public schools, improving access to affordable high-quality early childhood education for low-income students and students of color, and recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers to work in hard-to-staff urban schools.

"Education has long been the key to success for students of color," said Juan Cofield, president of the New England Area Conference of the NAACP. "Too many of our children enter kindergarten already behind and are never able to catch up."

MTA President Paul Toner said the association is eager to work with the NAACP to make sure that all students have an opportunity to learn and thrive in the state's public schools.

"On average, our students perform better than students in any other state and as well as top-performing students in the world," Toner said. "Unfortunately, averages can mask persistent disparities. While many students in our high-achieving schools are winning spots in top universities and succeeding in their studies, too high a percentage of students entering our higher education system — especially English language learners, students of color and low-income students — still need remedial education before they can take college-level courses. In addition, college completion rates are too low for these students."



The day after the announcement, Toner praised Governor Deval Patrick's State of the Commonwealth address, which proposed significant new investments in public education, from early education through college. Patrick, Toner said, "is wise not to conclude that our job is done."

Cofield and Toner agreed that poverty among African-American and Latino students is at the root of the problems facing many of them and must be addressed through broad political and economic reforms. They also agreed, however, that school systems can do more to close the achievement gaps if they are given adequate funding and support.

The partnership's goals include:

- **Increasing the number of educators of color.** Students of color benefit greatly from having educator role models who understand and share their backgrounds. In Massachusetts, as in other states, teachers of color are underrepresented in schools. While 93 percent of Massachusetts teachers are

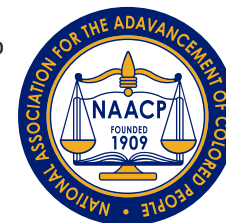
white, they are serving a much more diverse population — one in which 29 percent of students are from ethnic and racial minority backgrounds. More specifically, 8 percent of students, but only 2.6 percent of teachers, are African-American and 15 percent of students, but less than 3 percent of teachers, are Latino.

- **Improving the quality and affordability of early childhood education.** According to a 2012 report by the NAACP, "Finding Our Way Back to First: Reclaiming World Leadership by Educating All America's Children," by the time they reach age 3, children from higher-income families have heard as many as 30 million more words than children from lower-income families. In addition to educating parents about the importance of talking to and reading to their children, it is critical to provide children with access to high-quality early education.

- **Encouraging and supporting more highly qualified and experienced educators to work in schools in low-income areas in order to improve the quality of instruction.** Better compensation and working conditions in hard-to-staff schools are important tools to advance this effort.

- **Providing teachers and administrators with resources to support excellent teaching, learning and leading.** Teachers and administrators need time to plan, prepare, evaluate and assess their instruction and their students' learning. This requires more time and resources and much more engagement with parents and the community to make all students successful.

- **Examining and addressing racial disparities in school discipline and reducing school suspensions.** While school safety must be a priority, student suspensions for nonviolent offenses lead to increased dropout rates and future incarceration — creating the so-called school-to-prison pipeline. Promoting disciplinary measures that do not deprive students of time on learning is a shared goal.



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# Members urged to support crucial bills

By Jean Conley

The MTA's legislative priorities for the current session include bills that would mean significant investments in public education at all levels, revive a commission updating the Foundation Budget, establish a commission to examine current funding for public education and recommend changes, increase the number of courses taught by full-time faculty at public colleges and universities, require more integrity in the ballot initiative petition process and create a providers' organization for early childhood workers.

MTA President Paul Toner urged members to support the six bills.

"Our members need to lend their strong, clear voices to these initiatives by contacting their legislators right away and staying active in the legislative process," Toner said.

While Massachusetts students score at the top on the National Assessment of Educational Progress and international exams, he said, additional efforts are crucial to narrowing the achievement gaps among students and ensuring that Massachusetts can meet the challenges of a global economy.

On Jan. 23, Governor Deval Patrick released his budget proposal for the next fiscal year. Included is a bold plan to increase revenue and make major investments in education, infrastructure and innovation. Patrick's revenue proposal — like "An Act to Invest in Our



Communities," a measure that the MTA-supported Campaign for Our Communities asked to have filed — raises almost \$2 billion by increasing the income tax rate and increasing personal exemptions so that low- and middle-income families would see little increase in their taxes. The MTA also urges support for the governor's proposal.

The six key MTA bills are:

- "An Act to Invest in Our Communities," which would provide about \$2 billion in new revenue to restore cuts that have been made to budgets in recent years. The increase in revenue would also allow new investments in programs that make Massachusetts communities good places to live. The Campaign for Our Communities is a statewide coalition of 120 labor, education, community

and social justice organizations in which the MTA plays a lead role. The bill calls for restoring the income tax to the previous rate of 5.95 percent as well as raising the tax rate on investment income to 8.95 percent while holding down increases for low- and middle-income taxpayers and seniors. The measure is sponsored by Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz (D-Boston) and Representative James O'Day (D-West Boylston).

- "An Act Reviving the Foundation Budget Review Commission," which would put a panel in place to review the Chapter 70 Foundation Budget formula. The goal is to ensure that the formula precisely targets resources to provide all students with a high-quality education. The bill is sponsored by Chang-Diaz and Representative Alice Peisch (D-Wellesley).

- "An Act Establishing a Commission on the Funding Needs for Quality Public Higher Education," which establishes a commission composed of representatives of the Legislature, administration and unions to assess current funding for higher education and then offer recommendations on program improvements, staffing and funding. The bill is sponsored by Senator Michael Moore (D-Millbury). The governor, in his fiscal 2014 budget, has also called for a commission to study higher education funding. His proposal is based on the MTA's bill.

- "An Act Restoring Faculty and College Excellence," which seeks to increase the percentage of

undergraduate courses taught by full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty. The MTA and the bill's backers believe the overuse of adjunct faculty in the state's public colleges and universities threatens the quality of education. The bill, sponsored by Representative David Sullivan (D-Fall River), would also require health and pension benefits for adjunct faculty.

- "An Act Relative to Improving Quality in Early Education and Care Through Center-Based Child Care Providers," which would help the state establish a process, through negotiation, to improve the quality of early learning and child-care services. The bill would also seek to expand educational advancement opportunities for child-care providers. The bill is sponsored by Senator Sal DiDomenico (D-Everett) and Representative Jeffrey Sanchez (D-Boston).

- "An Act to Protect the Integrity of Initiative and Referendum Petitions," which seeks to ensure integrity and confidence in the ballot initiative process. The bill calls for establishing a process that would guarantee a fair system of collecting signatures for petitions. Currently, there are no state regulations concerning the oversight of individuals who are paid to gather signatures. The sponsors are Senator Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst) and Representative Denise Provost (D-Somerville).

To send an e-mail urging your legislators to support the six bills, go to <http://www.capwiz.com/nea/ma/issues/alert/?alertid=62328451&type=ST>.

## Governor's budget seeks increased funding for public education

By Jean Conley

Governor Deval Patrick has proposed a \$34.8 billion budget for the upcoming fiscal year that significantly increases funding for education and transportation.

The budget, released on Jan. 23, represents close to a 7 percent increase over current spending. Almost every area of the budget would see increases, including local aid and human service programs, which were cut during the recession.

MTA President Paul Toner applauded the governor's approach, which calls for raising revenue while doubling the personal exemption to

lessen the impact on low- and middle-income taxpayers.

"The governor's budget lays out a plan that provides high-quality public education opportunities for every student in the Commonwealth, from early childhood through college, as well as funding for the infrastructure needed to accelerate the growth of the state's innovation economy," Toner said. "While many households in Massachusetts continue to struggle with the effects of the recession, investing today in education and transportation will significantly improve job growth tomorrow."

To pay for the increases, the governor proposes a plan which, when

fully implemented, raises \$1.9 billion in new revenue. The budget would increase the income tax rate from 5.25 percent to 6.25 percent, double the personal exemption and lower the sales tax from 6.25 percent to 4.5 percent.

The governor's budget uses an approach similar to that of the Campaign for Our Communities, a coalition that supports legislation filed by Representative James O'Day (D-West Boylston) and Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz (D-Boston). The coalition's bill, called "An Act to Invest in Our Communities," would raise \$2 billion a year when fully phased in to maintain funding for communities, schools, health-care needs and public safety. The

bill would also increase the personal exemption to ease the impact on low- and middle-class earners.

In the governor's proposal for fiscal 2014, which begins July 1, Chapter 70 state aid for preK-12 education to municipalities and regional schools would rise to a new high of \$4.4 billion, a \$226 million increase over current spending. In addition, Patrick calls for increasing local aid by \$31 million, education grants by \$13 million and efforts to help close the achievement gaps in the state's Gateway Cities by \$11 million.

For public higher education, the governor proposes a \$193 million

Continued on next page

# New teachers focus on classroom techniques

By Meg Secatore

**T**he takeaway: It's as important to the conference experience as are inspiring speakers, the chance to build your professional network and, of course, freebies and prizes.

For Michael Milton, a Burlington High School psychology and world history teacher, "the takeaway" from the recent MTA Just for New Teachers Conference — the idea he knew he could use right away in his own classroom — was Bloom's Mountain, demonstrated in a workshop titled "Keeping Them Engaged."

"In our presentation we included an activity called 'Question Generation' based on Bloom's Taxonomy," said Laura Vago, a middle-school science teacher in Malden. "It involves a poster of a figurative 'mountain' split into six levels, each corresponding to one level of Bloom's Taxonomy" — that is, remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating.

"Students create questions about a particular topic or a response to reading, which require thinking at the different Bloom's levels, and then post them onto the correct point of the mountain using sticky notes," Vago explained.

"After all the questions have been posted, the class discusses whether they have been placed appropriately and we make the necessary changes," said co-presenter Miriam Kranz, who frequently uses the exercise in her eighth-grade English language arts classes in Southbridge. "Then, as a class, we answer a couple of the questions from each level. Over time, students should be able to independently develop questions requiring higher-order thinking, figuratively climbing the mountain and leading their own class discussions."



Photo by Bob Duffy

Michael Milton and Jennifer Maio participated in presenting a workshop on assessing student progress during the Just for New Teachers Conference in Marlborough. The event, which featured a wide range of topics and sessions, drew 168 educators from across the state.

Kranz, who began using the activity last year when her district implemented the Keys to Literacy program, has found the exercise to be "an invaluable tool in getting the students to think more deeply about the texts we read."

"It's a great classroom activity for both thinking and engagement and a great way to review material," said another co-presenter, Rosie O'Sullivan, a seventh-grade science teacher in Waltham.

Milton, who knew about Bloom's Taxonomy but had never seen the mountain exercise, called it an innovative idea.

"To be able to think about these different ways of thinking and to be able to put that into students' heads is just remarkable," he said.

"And, it doesn't have to be a mountain," added Kranz. "We have ships and dinosaurs in our building, too."

"This conference is great because it is designed for members and the learning is peer to peer," said Milton, who presented a workshop titled "Assessing Student Progress" with Krystle LaChance of Southborough, Jennifer Maio of Groton-Dunstable and Kathleen Skinner, director of MTA's Center for Education Policy and Practice.

Skinner "is a wealth of information, and she was able to give a really great overview of student assessment," Milton said.

Participants in the workshop spent a lot of time discussing summative assessments, which

he said often have new educators "spinning their wheels."

"We talked about how everything we do in class is important, but not everything has to be graded," Milton continued. "The discussion was very rich, with educators from so many different disciplines and grade levels in the room."

The program for the Nov. 30 conference, which brought 168 educators from across the state to Marlborough, was the brainchild of MTA's New Member Committee, which also plans Summer Conference offerings and events throughout the year.

"We want new members to see that involvement in the MTA is the best way for them to support public education," said committee Chair Josh Chrzanowski, a teacher in Chicopee. Chrzanowski was master of ceremonies for the conference luncheon, which included greetings from MTA President Paul Toner and Vice President Tim Sullivan, as well as a keynote address from Kathleen Turner, Massachusetts Teacher of the Year.

Conference day opened with a breakfast buffet and a round of Bingo that had participants scrambling to complete their game cards by networking with each other, representatives of MTA divisions and MTA Benefits vendors.

In addition to Chrzanowski, Kranz, LaChance, Maio, Milton, O'Sullivan and Vago, members of the New Member Committee are Trevor Blanchet of Dracut, Deidre D'Egidio of Wrentham, Emily Ferrara of Leominster, Kathy Kennedy of Acton-Boxborough, Nichole Masse of Dracut, Cheryl McDonough of Malden, Jessica Rosenthal of Stoughton, Nicole Shadeed of Methuen, Maryann Ziemba of Millis and Andrea Pires, a Stoughton teacher and president of her local association.

## Patrick proposes creation of commission to study campus issues

Continued from previous page  
increase in campus line items and scholarship aid over the current year, a rise of more than 18 percent.

The budget also establishes a commission on public higher education finance, one of MTA's legislative priorities. The commission would be charged with examining a number of higher education issues, including the appropriate use of adjunct faculty and

the ratio of adjunct faculty to full-time faculty.

Funding for early education would rise by \$132 million next year under the governor's plan, growing to a \$350 million increase by FY17. The additional funds would help ensure that low-income families have access to high-quality early education. The funding also provides more training for teachers and supports initiatives to

raise the quality of early education.

When fully phased in, the governor's initiative would increase education investment by close to \$1 billion. Because most of the new increases in revenue would not take effect until January 2014 and the FY14 budget year begins July 1, all new revenue would not be available until the FY15 and FY16 budgets.

The governor's office estimates

that the proposed tax increases would increase revenue by close to \$1.2 billion in fiscal year 2014, \$1.6 billion in fiscal year 2015 and more than \$1.8 billion in fiscal year 2016.

A summary of key elements of the budget is available on the MTA website, [www.massteacher.org](http://www.massteacher.org). For further details and spreadsheets, go to <http://www.massteacher.org/advocating/budget/budgetsheets.aspx>.

# Locals urged to bargain over RETELL impact

By Laura Barrett

Some local associations with members who are being assigned to a training course in educating English language learners are dealing with scheduling issues, unanswered questions and other implementation concerns.

The MTA is encouraging local associations to bargain over the impact of the new requirement and is strongly urging the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to communicate more effectively about it with educators and districts.

The Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners — RETELL — initiative is the DESE's response to a U.S. Department of Justice finding that the state has failed to adequately train teachers in Sheltered English Immersion instruction. SEI was mandated for most ELL students after the passage of an initiative petition by voters in 2002 that outlawed most forms of bilingual education.

"We have heard from many teachers that they agree they need better training in how to teach ELL students," said MTA President Paul Toner. "But we have also heard concerns about how quickly this is being implemented and how frequently teachers are being assigned to courses they aren't available to take. This is a very time-consuming obligation. Districts need to make every effort to make it as easy and convenient as possible for teachers to fulfill the requirement."

The RETELL regulations require a subset of teachers called "core academic teachers" to receive an SEI endorsement in order to extend, advance or renew their licenses after 2016. There are six possible ways to obtain the endorsement.

The primary option — the DESE-approved course — is being offered free of charge in certain districts. Teachers who forgo taking the course in the hope they will pass the SEI MTEL — Massachusetts Test for Educator Licensure — or obtain the endorsement by other means must pay for the alternate route themselves.

The DESE estimates that anywhere from 25,000 to 40,000 teachers are affected by the new

## Core Academic Teachers

Defined in regulations as early childhood and elementary teachers, teachers of students with moderate and severe disabilities and teachers of the following academic subjects at all grade levels: English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, civics and government, economics, history, and geography.

requirement. Given the large number, the department is providing trainers to districts on a staggered basis. Affected districts are placed in one of three "cohorts." Training for the first cohort begins this spring, and all training must be done by the end of the 2015-2016 school year.

When they have met the requirement, affected teachers will apply for the SEI endorsement via their ELAR — Educator Licensure and Recruitment — accounts.

The following are ways that teachers can obtain an endorsement.

- **Complete a DESE-approved SEI endorsement course.** This course will be offered at no cost to members who take it during their district's "cohort" period. Equivalent to a three-credit graduate course, this training involves 45 hours of instruction and is worth 67.5 professional development points. According to DESE guidance, districts must consult with teachers before assigning them to a specific course schedule. If teachers cannot take the course during the assigned period, they should seek a change of schedule from their administrators. If the district refuses to accommodate them, they should seek help from their local associations.

- **Have an ESL or ELL license.**

- **Have completed approved prior training.** Completion of undergraduate- or graduate-level

training in applied linguistics, teaching ESL or other related subjects, if approved by the DESE.

- **Complete certain category trainings plus an abridged SEI course.** Completion of a DESE-developed "bridge" SEI endorsement course for those who have taken two or three of the following category trainings: 1, 2 and 4. The DESE has said the course will be available in the fall of 2013. It has informed districts that members eligible for this "bridge" course do *not* have to take the full SEI endorsement course.

- **Complete an educator preparation program.** The regulations require approved educator programs to include SEI instruction for students who will complete the program for an Initial License after July 1, 2014.

- **Pass a DESE-approved assessment.** The DESE intends to offer an SEI MTEL beginning early in 2014. Earning a passing score will qualify teachers for the endorsement. Meanwhile, teachers who have received an SEI or ESL endorsement in another state may also qualify, but must seek approval from the DESE.

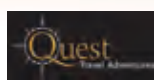
Questions remain about what training will be available for teachers who can't take the course at the time it is offered in their districts. There are also unanswered questions about how the mandate applies to core academic teachers in districts that have low numbers of ELL students and who therefore are not assigned to a cohort. For example, it is unclear what sanctions, if any, the state or districts will seek to impose on teachers who have never been offered the SEI course if an ELL student is assigned to them in the future.

The MTA is continuing to press the DESE for answers to these and other questions while at the same time assisting local associations in bargaining over the impact of the new regulations as they are implemented.

More information is available from the MTA at [www.massteacher.org/ell](http://www.massteacher.org/ell), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education at [www.doe.mass.edu/retell/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/retell/), your local association and your district administration.

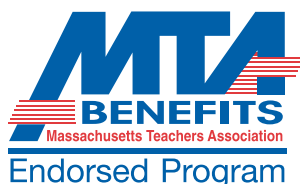
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# 'Education is the great equalizer'

## New secretary brings wide range of experience to statewide role

By Jean Conley

Former Brockton School Superintendent Matthew H. Malone began his new job as Massachusetts Secretary of Education on Jan. 14, replacing Paul Reville in that post.

Governor Deval Patrick said Malone brings a "keen understanding of the challenges facing Gateway City schools to his new role." The governor pointed to Malone's "tremendous amount of passion" and his stewardship of the Brockton Public Schools for more than three years. Brockton has the state's fourth-largest school district, with about 16,000 students.

MTA President Paul Toner also offered praise for Malone.

"Matt has spent his career in public education, and he understands the needs of our students," Toner said. "In addition to a strong leadership background, he brings a wealth of firsthand classroom experience as an ESP and a teacher to his new position."

During Malone's first year as superintendent in Brockton, he studied the schools' organizational structure, convened teams to design best practices and wrote "Realigning Resources for Results (R<sup>3</sup>)," a three- to five-year strategic blueprint for improving student achievement and increasing efficiencies.

"Education is the great equalizer," said Malone, "and it is incumbent upon the schools to prepare the students of today for the challenges of tomorrow. There are unique challenges to working in urban school systems where poverty, language barriers and other special needs are represented in greater numbers."

Kim Gibson, president of the Brockton Education Association, called Malone "a leader with vision, integrity and passion."

"Dr. Malone created an environment of collaboration during his time in Brockton," Gibson said, "and made sure the union was involved in conversations during the planning phases of any changes the system was contemplating."

"The respect that the superintendent had for the BEA was evident and served the students and teachers of Brockton very well," she added.

Before coming to Brockton, Malone served as superintendent of the 2,400-student Swampscott Public Schools from 2005 to 2009.

Prior to taking that post, Malone served as a special assistant to the superintendent/instructional leader in the San Diego school district in California. In that role, he led the Small High School Renewal

Initiative, successfully converting three large underperforming high schools into 14 career-themed high schools, among other accomplishments.

He has worked in the Boston school system as a paraprofessional, a headmaster and a social studies teacher. He also was a middle school assistant principal in Duxbury.

Malone served as a sergeant in the Marines during the Persian Gulf War, in both the Saudi Arabian and Kuwaiti theaters.

He holds a bachelor's degree in history from Suffolk University. He also earned a master's degree in education and a Ph.D. in education/administration/school leadership from Boston College. Malone lives in Roslindale and has two children in the Boston Public Schools.

Reville, along with other key officials, left the administration as Patrick entered the last two years of his gubernatorial term.



Matthew H. Malone

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# Teachers offer views on boosting achievement

By Laura Barrett

One of the biggest problems in public education is the persistence of achievement gaps, even in states like Massachusetts where standardized student test scores have risen overall. There is no shortage of ideas about how to reduce those gaps, but the individual teacher’s voice can often be drowned out in the debate.

The MTA collaborated with a Chicago-based organization, New Voice Strategies, to encourage teachers to share their ideas on the issue through an online forum called the MTA Voice Ideas Vision Action Teachers Idea Exchange.

The forum led to recommendations contained in a report, “Addressing Educational Inequities: Proposals for Narrowing the Achievement Gaps in Massachusetts’ Gateway Cities,” which was approved by the MTA Board of Directors. The report has been released by the MTA and is posted on the MTA website.

Through the initiative, more than 300 teachers in 24 Massachusetts “Gateway Cities” plus Cambridge and Somerville shared their views in a freewheeling online discussion. Active participants were then asked to join a writing collaborative to craft the recommendations.

“We hope that the MTA VIVA project inspires discussions at the local level about what schools and districts can do about the critically important issues that our teachers have raised,” said MTA President Paul Toner. “The wide variety of opinions expressed reminds us all that there is no single solution. Rather, there are a variety of strategies that can be effective if teachers, administrators, parents and community members all work together on behalf of students.”

The recommendations include:

- Breaking the school-to-prison pipeline by reducing suspensions and promoting positive student behavior through in-school initiatives.
- Expanding second-language-acquisition programs.
- Transforming teacher preparation and professional development to address the challenges of a diverse student population.
- Strengthening school-community relations.
- Using flexible staffing schedules and collaboration with community-

based organizations, among other methods, to lengthen the school day, providing enrichment and academic support for students and shared planning time for education staff.

■ Encouraging Gateway Cities to collaborate on initiatives and jointly seek grant funding.

Gateway Cities are mid-sized urban centers that often serve as the “gateway” into Massachusetts for immigrant families. Many of these communities, including Holyoke, Springfield, Lawrence and Lowell, are former manufacturing centers. They have faced significant social and economic challenges since manufacturing has been in decline in the United States.

Education is often seen as the best means for building stronger economies

in these communities, yet — as in Boston — student performance and graduation rates are significantly lower in Gateway Cities than in the rest of the state. For example, the five-year graduation rate for high school students is just 69 percent in the Gateway Cities. It is 72 percent in Boston and 91 percent in the rest of the state.

One of the biggest challenges for school districts in the Gateway Cities is that they serve a relatively high percentage of English language learners. Among other recommendations, the MTA VIVA teachers call on districts to do a better job of identifying ELL students who have learning disabilities so they can receive appropriate services at a young age.

They also encourage districts to teach native English language speakers a second language while teaching ELL students English.

On the issue of suspensions, the report recommends, “End all ‘no excuses’ or ‘zero tolerance’ disciplinary programs and policies that

criminalize minor infractions of school rules, and limit both in-school and out-of-school suspensions to only the most serious disruptions.”

The report also recommends strengthening school-community relations by, among other measures, extending school building hours “to allow students to have a safe place for before- and after-school activities” and establishing “home-school visitation programs” such as one in effect in parts of Springfield.

The authors recommend that Gateway City administrators work more closely together to share ideas and professional development opportunities and to jointly apply for grants.

*The teacher-writers for the MTA VIVA project and the districts in which they teach are: Nancy Hilliard and James Kobialka, Worcester; Joel Patterson, Cambridge; Chelsea Mullins, Springfield; and Kathleen Sullivan, Malden.*



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## Charter school proposal draws opposition



Photos by Laura Barrett

Brockton educators, elected officials and parents turned out in force on Dec. 19 to speak against a proposed Sabis-run charter school. They talked about the negative impact the charter school would have on excellence and innovation already present in the Brockton Public Schools. Testifying at the hearing were Brockton Education Association President Kim Gibson, left, and Brockton Paraprofessional Association President Lorraine Niccoli. A vote on this charter proposal and others is expected soon.

## Nation gears up to celebrate love of reading

By Jean Conley

Theodor Seuss Geisel started a revolution in 1957 when he chose more than 200 beginning vocabulary words and twinned them with his engaging, child-friendly illustrations.

The result was a rhyming masterpiece of children's literature titled "The Cat in the Hat."

On March 1, The Cat will be back in a big way. Teachers and students across Massachusetts will again join their counterparts in thousands of other schools in observing Read Across America Day.

The Read Across America program, which is sponsored by the National Education Association, seeks to keep reading front and center in the classroom and inspire a love of books among students.

The program came into being in 1997 when an NEA task force convened to create a special day to celebrate reading. Dr. Seuss's birthday, March 2, was chosen as the preferred date, and since then the event has been held as close to then as possible.

The theme for 2013 is "Grab Your Hat and Read with the Cat."

This year, NEA's Read Across America team is producing a Read Across America calendar, certificates, bookmarks and other resources for classrooms, as well as a "Cat-a-log" of reading awards, pencils and classroom decorations at a 20 percent discount for NEA members. The RAA website, [www.nea.org/grants/886.htm](http://www.nea.org/grants/886.htm), will provide dozens of ideas for teachers and a "pledge wall" on which schools across the nation — and even in other countries — can post their plans for the day.

Last year, the program featured "The Lorax" to coincide with NBC/Universal's release of the 3-D film carrying the same name. Schools used the theme of the book to plant "truffula" trees and as a jumping-off point for discussions about the environment.

Born in 1904, Theodor Geisel grew up in Springfield and graduated from Dartmouth College. As a book author and illustrator, Dr. Seuss created dozens of fantastical best-sellers that sparked the flame of reading for children and adults alike.

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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.

**HIGHER EDUCATION AT-LARGE** — Edward McCourt, Massachusetts Bay Community College, Wellesley; 781.239.2207; e-mail: emccourt.mccc@gmail.com.

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# NOMINATIONS sought for MTA Human and Civil Rights Awards

The MTA is seeking nominations for its 2013 Human and Civil Rights Awards. The awards honor MTA members and others who work in the areas of human and/or civil rights and whose activities have had a community and/or organizational impact. Nominees may be individuals, students, teachers, administrators or agencies.

The awards will be presented at the Human and Civil Rights Banquet on June 14 at the

Sheraton Framingham Hotel. Nominations and supporting data must be received no later than March 29. Award criteria, guidelines and application forms have been mailed to local association presidents.

The nomination form is also available at [www.massteacher.org/hcr](http://www.massteacher.org/hcr).

Further details on the banquet, including registration information, will be published in the Spring edition of *MTA Today*.



## PRECONVENTION MEETINGS TO BE HELD IN APRIL

Regional preconvention meetings have been set for elected delegates to the 2013 MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates.

At these preconventions, the delegates will receive information and materials critical to their decision-making on organizational matters.

Registration for the preconventions begins at 3:30 p.m. Each meeting is scheduled to begin at 4 p.m.

The following is a list of locations and dates for the 2013 preconventions:

- **Tuesday, April 9**, Central Region, Holiday Inn, Marlborough.
- **Tuesday, April 9**, Cape and Islands Region, Cape Codder Resort, Hyannis.
- **Wednesday, April 10**, Northeast/Metro Regions, Crowne Plaza, Woburn.
- **Wednesday, April 10**, Western Region, Clarion Hotel and Conference Center, Northampton.
- **Thursday, April 11**, Southeast/Metro Regions, Holiday Inn, Taunton.
- **Thursday, April 11**, Berkshire Region, Crowne Plaza, Pittsfield.

Further information will be provided to delegates as it becomes available. The Annual Meeting of Delegates will be held May 10-11 at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston.

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# Commission recommends retiree health insurance changes

Governor Deval Patrick is expected to file legislation during the current session based on the recommendations of a special commission he appointed to analyze the impact of unfunded retiree health insurance liabilities on state and local budgets.

The commission recommended reducing benefits for certain short-term employees, but also recommended protecting benefits for current retirees, long-serving employees and current employees who are near retirement.

Under current law, someone who works in the public sector for 10 years in Massachusetts is entitled to full health benefits upon retirement. Under the new proposal, benefits in the future would be provided to those who work in the public sector for at least 20 years, though most current employees nearing retirement who have worked for less than 20 years would be granted full or partial benefits.

The commission was co-chaired by former MTA President Anne Wass and included representatives of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, the Massachusetts Retirees Association and the Massachusetts Municipal Association, as well as appointees from the legislative and administrative branches. Only the MMA representative voted against the recommendations, contending they did not give municipalities enough power to cut benefits further.

'As is the case with pension reform, our focus is on providing the best benefits to long-term employees. The labor representatives on the commission spoke with one voice in strongly recommending preservation of benefits for current retirees, those nearing retirement and those who have devoted many years to public service.'

—MTA President Paul Toner

The state provided the commission with data demonstrating that the unfunded retiree health insurance liability for state and local governments totals more than \$46 billion — \$16.7 billion for state and \$30 billion for municipalities — over the next

30 years. That is more than the unfunded pension liability.

The MTA hired an actuary and a benefits consultant, both of whom confirmed the figures provided by the state.

Unlike they do for the pension system, employees do not contribute to retiree health insurance, so paying the benefit has a direct impact on the ability of state and local governments to fund services and pay salaries of active employees.

"The labor and retiree representatives on the commission and our own analysts agreed that the size of the unfunded liability poses a threat to members' jobs, salaries and benefits in the future," said MTA President Paul Toner.

"But we also know that retiree health insurance is a very important benefit for our members and must be safeguarded," he continued. "As is the case with pension reform, our focus is on providing the best benefits to long-term employees. The labor representatives on the commission spoke with one voice in strongly recommending preservation of benefits for current retirees, those nearing retirement and those who have devoted many years to public service."

*Details about the recommendations and a link to the full report of the commission can be found at [www.massteacher.org/news/archive/2013/retirement.aspx](http://www.massteacher.org/news/archive/2013/retirement.aspx).*

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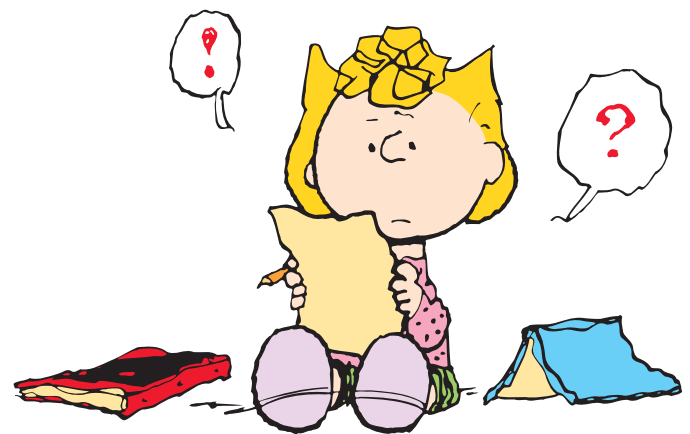
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# ESP Conference to be 'bigger and even better'

By Jean Conley

Issues ranging from retirement and workplace bullying to "taking care of the caretaker" highlight two days of empowering workshops at the MTA's upcoming Education Support Professionals Conference on Cape Cod.

Like its predecessors, this year's conference, to be held April 5 and 6 at the Sea Crest Beach Hotel in Falmouth, gives ESPs their own stage on which to grapple with some of the most important issues in today's education workplace. The conference also provides time to dine, laugh and connect with fellow members during an early spring weekend in a beautiful location.

Millie Ficarra of Weymouth, an ESP Committee co-chair and a member of the MTA Executive Committee, said she is looking forward to a "bigger and even better" event than the one in 2012.

Ficarra said the increasingly popular conference has outgrown two facilities and this year is attracting a

Like its predecessors, this year's conference, to be held April 5 and 6 at the Sea Crest Beach Hotel in Falmouth, gives ESPs their own stage on which to grapple with some of the most important issues in today's education workplace.

minimum of 400 participants. There will be 23 workshops at the Sea Crest.

"We continue to broaden the conference every year," Ficarra said, "to give ESPs what they're looking for." The event offers information on new topics and skills while also bringing back popular presenters to repeat workshops from past years.

On Friday, April 5, attendees can go to afternoon sessions titled "Collective Bargaining Issues Affecting Paraprofessionals in Special Ed Settings," "How to Run

an Effective Meeting," "Organizing for Respect and Power" and "ESP Retirement: What You Should Know."

They can also help provide news coverage by participating in "Reporting Live from the ESP Conference in Falmouth," a hands-on workshop that invites members to contribute their conference photos to MTA's Facebook page and Twitter stream. The workshop explores social media tools and suggests ways that ESPs can use these tools to organize and energize their own locals. A reception, dinner and a raffle will follow.

On Saturday morning, a breakfast buffet precedes the morning sessions — "Working with Neurobehavioral Disorders" such as Asperger's syndrome and autism, "Workplace Bullying" and "Moving Off of Stuck — Building a Strong Local."

After a break, one workshop titled "Don't Trip over Your Cape" takes in the myriad competencies expected in today's workplace. Other sessions include "Today a Peacock ... Tomorrow a Feather Duster" and



"What Would You Do? What Should You Do?" This thought-provoking session explores the gray areas for ESPs, including common-sense responses to traumatic and frightening situations.

Other sessions on Saturday are "Immigration Issues for K-12 and Higher Ed Students," "Making Community Connections" and "Taking Care of the Caretaker."

A closing luncheon and more raffles follow before the conference wraps up at 3 p.m. on Saturday.

*The final date to register for the conference is March 1. For information on conference costs, hotel charges and registration, visit [www.massteacher.org/esp](http://www.massteacher.org/esp). Other questions can be directed to MTA ESP Organizer/Consultant George Luse at [gluse@massteacher.org](mailto:gluse@massteacher.org). His phone number is 800.542.5504.*



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# New law requires background checks for educators

By Sarah Nathan

Governor Deval Patrick has signed legislation requiring prospective and current Massachusetts educators employed in public and private schools, as well as those employed in child-care programs licensed by the state, to undergo national background checks and fingerprinting.

Massachusetts is one of the last states in the country to require national background checks for teachers and other school employees. Prior to enactment of the law, educators and child-care employees were required to be checked against the state's Criminal Offender Record Information system, commonly known as CORI, which is limited to offenses committed within Massachusetts.

The governor signed the measure on Jan. 10. The impetus for the bill was to promote safe schools and protect all children in Massachusetts.

## MTA and NAACP form alliance to promote success

Continued from Page 11

John L. Reed, chair of the NEAC's Education Committee and a former member of the MTA Board of Directors, was instrumental in promoting the new partnership between the two organizations.

"The NEAC and the MTA are both excellent organizations, and they share similar goals for educating students of color," Reed said. "As the number and percentage of these students increase in our state and across the country, we need to be aggressive in making sure they are well served by our public schools. Fairness, justice and the health of our economy and our communities depend on how well we as a society can address persistent achievement gaps that limit opportunities for too many children of color."

The NAACP and the MTA will be working together to seek additional community partners and to build on the initial conversations they have held on how best to work together toward the common goal of excellent public schools and education for every student.

The MTA was successful in advocating that any law related to educator background checks should not be limited to public schools, but also should include all private schools and licensed child-care programs. The MTA also worked to make the provisions for those covered by the new law consistent with those included in CORI reforms made in 2010.

This will help ensure that access to background information is properly limited and that the information can be

used only for the purposes intended.

The new law includes a one-time fee for prospective and current employees, which will be capped at \$55 for teachers and professional staff and \$35 for education support professionals and child-care employees. The one-time fee is to cover the cost of the checks and associated processing expenses. The law allows the fees to be subject to local negotiations calling for school districts to cover the costs.

The law takes effect for the 2013-2014 school year for all new employees and requires all current employees to undergo national background checks over the next three years. In the next few months, regulations will be put in place that will help explain how the measure will be implemented.

The MTA will continue to provide updates as things develop, including advice from the Legal Division and field representatives.



# 2013

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## A salute to the coach

The Beverly High School team was one of 16 squads that made the cut to appear on WGBH's *High School Quiz Show* during the Super Sunday Tournament in November. During the day of the competition, students on the team shared a light moment with their coach, Assistant Principal Betty Taylor. The show, which is partially sponsored by the MTA, began airing Feb. 10. For more information on upcoming shows, visit [www.wgbh.org/quizshow](http://www.wgbh.org/quizshow).

Photo courtesy of WGBH



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## Obituaries

**Kyriacoula "Coula" (Gounaris) Barakitis, 85**, of Haverhill. Was a music teacher in Haverhill elementary schools for more than 20 years before retiring. Nov. 27.

**Cynthia M. Boyd, 59**, of Woodstock, Conn. Taught math at Shepherd Hill Regional High School in Dudley and had served as the coordinator of the Mathematics Department since 1977. Coached the math team and the "High School Quiz Show" team. Jan. 6.

**Ralph Carrozza, Jr., 61**, of Salem, N.H., formerly of Wilmington and Revere. Taught masonry at Shawsheen Valley Technical High School. Oct. 30.

**Edith F. Fleming, 85**, of Grafton. Was an elementary school teacher in Douglas for over 40 years. Dec. 27.

**Dr. Merrill Harvey Goldwyn, 81**, of Cambridge. Was an English professor at Worcester State College for 30 years before retiring in 1998. Nov. 2.

**Thomas J. Joyce, 89**, of Clinton. Was a business teacher at Clinton High School for 23 years before he retired in 1988. Dec. 25.

**Mary R. Kloster, 62**, of East Longmeadow. Was a teaching assistant at the Center School in Longmeadow for 23 years before retiring in 2009. Dec. 18.

**Irene M. Lavin, 96**, of Methuen. Was an elementary school teacher in Wilmington, in Hooksett, N.H., and at the Corliss School in Methuen for 30 years before retiring in 1976. Dec. 5.

**Joseph W. LeBritton, 86**, of Shrewsbury. Was a high school business teacher in Northbridge for 25 years. Nov. 5.

**Priscilla A. Lyons, 63**, of Holliston. Was a former director of the MTA Higher Education Division. Dec. 30.

**Phyllis V. McLaughlin, 89**, of Easton. Was an elementary school teacher in Randolph and Avon, once named Teacher of the Year in Norfolk County. Oct. 25.

**Ellen A. Moilanen, 92**, of Westerly, R.I. Taught second grade in Agawam for 24 years before retiring in 1985. Nov. 19.

**Dorothy S. "Dot" O'Connor, 84**, of Melrose. Was an elementary school teacher in Lexington before retiring in 1981. Oct. 26.

**Rita Fitzgerald Skinner, 97**, of Pembroke. Was an educator in Arlington for more than 35 years. Also taught in Chelsea and Somerville. Jan. 1.

# Exciting new travel packages for members

**E**xciting new discounted travel packages to Peru, Costa Rica and Belize were announced recently by the MTA Vacation Center and its new travel partner, Quest Travel Adventures.

In-depth, culturally enriching itineraries include expertly guided small-group sightseeing trips, meals, accommodations, on-tour transportation\*, luggage handling, hotel taxes and service charges, plus the peace of mind of toll-free 24/7 emergency assistance. And, because you belong to MTA, you'll save \$300 per couple with your exclusive member discount.

Join fellow MTA members on one of these exciting new eight- or nine-day tours departing on select dates throughout 2013 (details are available at [www.QuestTravelAdventures.com/special-mta-journeys](http://www.QuestTravelAdventures.com/special-mta-journeys)). Choose to explore Peru and discover legendary Machu Picchu. Visit Costa Rica and encounter volcanoes, tree frogs and toucans. Immerse yourself in Belize and uncover the mysteries of the ancient Mayan world.

**Highlights of Costa Rica** — eight days starting at \$1,899. Venture from the Caribbean to the Pacific as expert guides make this diverse Costa Rican vacation truly fun and rewarding. A canal safari along the pristine waterways of Tortuguero National Park reveals a stunning variety of tropical flora and fauna. You'll also enjoy splendid volcano views from the relaxing mineral springs during your Arenal resort stay. Space is limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Contact Quest Travel Adventures at 800.693.1815 or e-mail [info@QuestTravelAdventures.com](mailto:info@QuestTravelAdventures.com) for a detailed day-by-day itinerary of the trips that interest you. You can also find more information by visiting [www.QuestTravelAdventures.com/special-mta-journeys](http://www.QuestTravelAdventures.com/special-mta-journeys).

**Belize Grand Discovery** — eight days starting at \$2,399. This Belize vacation features rainforest adventures, exploration into the Mayan world and snorkeling at Ambergris Caye and Mexico Rocks, famed among marine enthusiasts for its diverse sea



life. Soar over the lush rainforest canopy on a zip line adventure and explore crystalline caverns by headlamp along an underground river. Encounter the mysterious Mayan world at the impressive ruins of Xunantunich and in Cahal Pech, a celebrated six-acre site filled with ancient temples and plazas.

**Peru Explorer** — nine days starting at \$2,499. Peru is the land of mist-shrouded ruins, snow-capped peaks, verdant valleys, remote mountainous villages and dense tropical jungles. An extended stay in

Cuzco and overnight at Machu Picchu allow you to experience the best of Peru, including sunrise at the Lost City. Discover the vibrant modern spirit and ancient ways of the highlands, embodied in the residents of Cuyuni. Spend time in their homes and fields as you gain deep insight into a lifestyle that has changed little since the days of the Inca.

\*While local transfers and internal flights are included, international airfare is additional.

## Propane at a big MTA discount

**P**ropane is becoming a hot commodity. According to the National Propane Gas Association, the fuel is helping Americans shrink their carbon footprint by providing a "green" solution with its clean, cost-effective, efficient and reliable properties.

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MTA members who use propane can save as much as \$400 a year through Propane USA, partner in the propane discount program offered through MTA Benefits. In addition to significant cost savings, Propane USA has eliminated all fees typically charged by propane providers.

Program advantages for MTA members include:

-  Average savings of 30 to 50 cents per gallon.
-  The elimination of tank-rental or line-testing fees.
-  Automatic delivery and low delivery fees.
-  Top-rated local propane suppliers.
-  First-year membership fee of only \$15 — a \$10 savings.
-  Thirty-day payment terms, with budget plans available.

### High praise from an MTA member

Dissatisfied with the expense and service from his existing propane provider, lifetime MTA member Phil Flaherty switched to Propane USA last year.

"I am very impressed with the program," said Flaherty. "First of all, the local propane supplier delivered the fuel in an immaculate new truck. In addition, the

*'It is a great opportunity to save money on propane and get exceptional service.'*

*— Lifetime MTA member Phil Flaherty*

company representative was very professional in removing the old tank and installing the new one. This conveyed to me that the company was safety-conscious and reliable, a first-class operation."

Flaherty is also pleased with the lower costs.

"I no longer have delivery fees and tank-rental costs, which could be up to \$200 a year," he said. "Plus I pay 50 cents a gallon less, which generates another \$140 or more in yearly savings."

Flaherty, former president of the Westwood Education Association and currently assistant director of the Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators' Association, encourages MTA members who use propane to take advantage of Propane USA.

# Classifieds

## BOOK SALE

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GEORGE McCLOSKEY — July 15-19. *Learning Disabilities in Children: Assessment/Intervention* — [www.cape.org](http://www.cape.org).

KAREN LEVINE — July 22-26. *Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Humanistic Perspective on Diagnosis and Intervention* — [www.cape.org](http://www.cape.org).

GEORGE McCLOSKEY — July 29-Aug. 1. *Executive Function Difficulties in Children: Assessment/Intervention* — [www.cape.org](http://www.cape.org).

EDWARD HALLOWELL — Aug. 12-16. *A Strength-Based Approach to ADHD across the Life Span* — [www.cape.org](http://www.cape.org).

## TRAVEL

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<sup>1</sup>Visit [ambest.com](http://ambest.com) to learn more. <sup>2</sup>The children's rider is for children who are dependent on the insured for financial support, are at least 15 days old and have not reached age 17 on effective date.



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Sara and Jeremy Ames

Sara teaches at Millis High School in Millis.

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\*Member discount is available to Massachusetts residents only. Product availability, services and discounts vary by state; our commitment to MTA members does not. EIA is a member of The Hanover Insurance Group. Underwritten by Citizens Insurance Company of America and The Hanover Insurance Company, companies of The Hanover Insurance Group, Inc. (www.hanover.com) LC 12-302

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We're available to answer your insurance policy questions and to provide you with outstanding service from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays.

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# Coalition calls for revenue to fund key services

By Laura Barrett

The MTA has been working with the Campaign for Our Communities for several years in advocating for more revenue — but this year state lawmakers are taking the call more seriously because Governor Deval Patrick has joined the fray by proposing significant tax increases to fund education, transportation and infrastructure needs.

The Campaign for Our Communities is a statewide coalition of more than 120 organizations that support broad-based tax increases to ensure that Massachusetts continues to be a great place to live, work and raise a family.

The campaign's revenue bill, "An Act to Invest in Our Communities," is co-sponsored by Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz (D-Boston) and Representative James O'Day (D-West Boylston).

Like the governor's proposal, the coalition's plan would increase income tax rates but also raise personal exemptions to reduce the impact on low- and middle-income families. Most of the approximately \$2 billion a year in revenue raised would come from the wealthiest taxpayers.

The bill was unveiled at a State House news conference on Jan. 15. The MTA is engaging in grassroots organizing, legislative lobbying and public education to support the campaign.

The governor's bill differs from the campaign's measure in some particulars, but they both call for progressive tax reforms — with most new revenue coming from the income tax — to fund services that benefit everyone. In education, the governor is proposing substantial increases in spending on early childhood education, K-12 schools and public higher education.

"We are very much on the same page as the governor," said MTA President Paul Toner. "Our job now is to activate members to inform one another and the public about how we all would benefit from new investments in education and our communities.

"As MTA members know too well, the state and municipalities have already squeezed substantial savings out of their budgets," Toner continued. "Members have made sacrifices during this



Photo by Laura Barrett

Jackie Lawrence, president of the Somerville Teachers Association, spoke at the State House press conference about how communities and the economy benefit when students are well educated.

**See Page 12 for coverage of the governor's budget proposal and MTA's legislative priorities.**

recession. Without new revenues, the next round of cuts will threaten the state's future economic health."

Mary Whelan-True, a social studies teacher at Doherty Memorial High School in Worcester, said more revenue is critical for many reasons, including the need to improve learning conditions for students.

"Some of our newer buildings are well equipped, but some of our older schools are overcrowded and don't have the wiring they need to support modern technology," she said. "The Internet just shuts down. Teachers have to be cautious about making plans to incorporate technology into a lesson.

"A lot of teachers are spending their own money on routers and other equipment to support their teaching," Whelan-True added.

Sapphire Castillo, a Bristol Community College student from New Bedford, is focused on making public higher education accessible.

"Lack of state revenue is constantly driving up the cost of attending a community college, making it more and more unaffordable," Castillo said. "There is a real need for economic growth in Southeastern Massachusetts, and an educated work force lays the foundation for economic success."

Toner noted, "When districts tell you they can't pay to have a school wired for today's Internet needs or when college students can't afford the cost of public higher education, you know we are hurting the core of what makes Massachusetts great. We have the highest-performing students in the country, but we know we could do so much more if we had adequate resources."

For more information, visit [www.massteacher.org](http://www.massteacher.org) and [www.ourcommunities.org](http://www.ourcommunities.org).

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

## Making sure you get the best

THE MTAB ENDORSEMENT MEANS PROGRAMS  
YOU CAN TRUST AND SAVINGS YOU CAN COUNT ON

For centuries, the title “by appointment to her Majesty the Queen” has been conferred on merchants whose goods are favored by the British royal family. Since 1909, Good Housekeeping has issued its own “seal of approval” to companies and products that meet its high standards. More recently, celebrity recognition of products has come into vogue.

MTA Benefits takes its program endorsement process very seriously. Programs offered through companies such as MetLife, Unum, SBLI and Hanover Insurance “go through a rigorous selection process before they become MTAB-endorsed,” said Maryann Robinson, president of MTA Benefits. “They must meet our stringent criteria for financial stability and strong industry ratings – and they must be able to deliver superior programs designed exclusively for our members. In addition, they must offer significant savings and attentive service. The selection process can take as long as two years.”

### How members benefit

MTAB’s 43 years of evaluation experience and expertise have made it one of the leading educational member benefit corporations in the country. Because of MTAB’s efforts, members are able to select programs they can trust in areas such as insurance and financial services and enjoy discounts offered only to MTA members. In addition, MTAB’s Discount Directory lists more than 1,000 places and products – from museums and music venues to jewelry and computers – that meet its savings requirements.

“Members may also receive assistance and information from the MTAB member benefits team,” said Robinson. “MTAB staff are dedicated to providing members with the most personalized service possible.”

**For more information on MTAB programs and services, visit [www.mtabenefits.com](http://www.mtabenefits.com).**



‘I’ve been a member of the MTA for 12 years and have saved hundreds of dollars a year by taking advantage of the discounts offered by businesses listed in the MTA Benefits & Discount Directory. As a member, you can save the equivalent of your dues and more by shopping at the multitude of businesses that participate in MTAB programs. Many of the small businesses and services listed are owned by active or retired MTA members. It’s a wonderful feeling knowing that I can purchase items I need and help out a colleague at the same time.’

Ryan Hoyt, co-president of the Waltham Educators Association and a member of the MTAB Board of Directors



## The Benefits & Discount Directory provides more than 1,000 ways for MTA members to save

Save up to thousands of dollars every year with your *Benefits & Discount Directory*. Whether you’re looking to catch a show at a local theater, tour one of the many museums in New England, save on your home heating oil or travel to hundreds of destinations worldwide, there is something for everyone! For a full list of benefits and discounts, refer to your printed directory or visit [www.mtabenefits.com](http://www.mtabenefits.com).

# Museum Hopping

**A**rt museums enlighten and inspire, showing us treasures from throughout the world, priceless art and artifacts from ancient times to today. In Boston and on the North Shore, you can see:

- Yin Yu Tang, a 200-year-old Chinese house brought to America and reassembled at the Peabody Essex Museum.
- A replica of a 15th-century Venetian palace, built to house the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, with an interior courtyard of year-round greenery.
- “The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit” (1882), a renowned John Singer Sargent painting admired for its sophistication and imaginative composition, at the Museum of Fine Arts.

Explore the great art museums of Massachusetts – including the following three – at no cost or at a reduced admission price with your MTA card.

**Peabody Essex Museum, Salem.** Founded in 1799 by sea captains who brought back Asian art and crafts from their journeys, the Peabody Essex Museum connects international art with the culture in which it was made. Ranking among the 25 largest art museums in the nation, the Peabody Essex is a major collector of Asian art. On display

you will find Japanese, Chinese, Korean and Indian items, along with one of the nation’s finest collections of Asian Export Art and 19th-century Asian photography. The museum presents the earliest collections of Native American and Oceanic art in the nation. The 200-year-old Yin Yu Tang house, brought from China and reassembled at the museum, demonstrates what everyday life was like for the wealthy extended Huang family. MTA members receive free admission to the museum and house.

**The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.** The museum’s collection contains more than 2,500 paintings, sculptures, tapestries, furnishings, manuscripts, rare books and decorative arts. Galleries house works by some of the most recognized artists in the world, including Titian, Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Raphael, Botticelli, Manet, Degas, Whistler and Sargent. Housed in a stunning building that resembles a

15th-century Venetian palace with three stories of galleries surrounding a flower-filled courtyard, the museum provides a memorable backdrop. The museum’s newest wing presents exhibits of contemporary art. The Gardner also holds musical and social events throughout the year in the galleries and courtyard. MTA members receive two-for-one admission.

**Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.** The MFA’s encyclopedic collection comprises some of the most rare and important artistic treasures in the world. Its heralded new Art of the Americas wing showcases art of the United States from Colonial through modern times, with priceless objects such as Paul Revere’s “Sons of Liberty Bowl” as well as works by Georgia O’Keeffe, Stuart Davis and other lauded American artists. More than 83,000 works of art from the ancient world are on display, representing cultures such as those of Egypt, Nubia, Greece, Italy and Cyprus. They include the “Head of Aphrodite” and other important pieces. The Art of Europe collection features masterpieces by celebrated Dutch, English, French, Italian and Spanish painters, with great depth in 19th-century French works by Barbizon, Impressionist and post-Impressionist artists. The MFA holds one of the largest collections outside of Paris of works by Claude Monet, along with the world’s most extensive collection of paintings and pastels by Jean-François Millet. The Art of Asia, Oceania, and Africa collection covers the creative achievements of more than half of the world’s population over the course of six millennia. The Contemporary Art collection emphasizes painting, but also includes significant examples of sculpture, photography and new media. Photography by Robert Mapplethorpe and pieces by Andy Warhol are among the works in the extensive collection. Watch for frequent blockbuster exhibitions. MTA members receive a \$2 discount on general admission.



*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*



*Courtyard, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston*

# The Tip Sheet

## ENTICING IDEAS for Spring

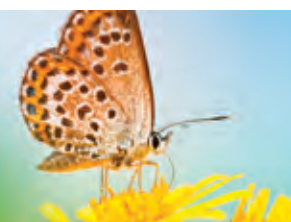


Photo courtesy of National Park Service



*The prickly pear cactus blooms in the Arizona desert.*

### Escape to an exotic Arizona landscape

With its flowering cacti, lush green ground-cover and brilliant sunsets, the Arizona desert is spectacular in the spring. Head for Tucson, where you'll find the Tucson Botanical Gardens, with 15 acres of specialty plantings, including wildflowers, Native American crops, cacti and other desert flora and fauna. Fifteen miles away, along the Old Spanish Trail, is Saguaro National Park, which features sweeping desert landscapes set against purple mountains. Other unique places to see include Colossal Cave Mountain Park, Kartchner Caverns State Park and Catalina State Park. Other Tucson attractions are the historic Mission San Xavier del Bac, the famed Gallery in the Sun, featuring the works of Ted DeGrazia, and turn-of-the-century Mexican neighborhoods. Stay at Comfort Suites Sabino Canyon or any other Choice Hotel and get a 15 percent MTA discount.

### WHERE TO GET INFORMATION

You can find all the places on the Tip Sheet by visiting [www.mtabenefits.com](http://www.mtabenefits.com).

Find Heritage Museums & Gardens under "Discounts," then "Discount Directory."

For Choice Hotels® International and Wyndham Hotel Group, look under "All Benefits," then "Hotel Discounts." For the Hilton Puerto Vallarta, go to "Travel & Vacations," then "MTA Vacation Center." For the Aquarium of the Pacific, look under "All Benefits," then "Theme Parks."

**And when you travel, be sure to take your MTA credit card with you.**

### Entertain your family at an all-inclusive resort

The new Hilton Puerto Vallarta provides everything you want for the perfect vacation: an ocean-front setting, grand terraces, pools, magnificent views of mountains and Banderas Bay, elegant accommodations, fine and casual dining, everyday activities and entertainment, water sports and much more. You'll treasure your time at this luxury hotel set in a world-famous Mexican resort destination. Book through the MTA Vacation Center and receive special MTA deals and discounts at the Hilton Puerto Vallarta or hundreds of other vacation sites around the world.



### Experience amazing sea creatures



At the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach, Calif., you'll find more than 11,000 sea creatures on view in a wide variety of exhibits. Get up close to penguins in a crawl-in space that lets you into their world. The Shark Lagoon features more than 150 sharks, some of which you can reach out and touch as they glide through shallow pools. You can see others through a viewing window, coming nose to nose with these graceful but fierce predators. At the Whales exhibit, you can hear the sounds of humpback, sperm, gray, blue, beaked and Northern right whales. Walk along a rocky coastline among barnacle-encrusted pilings and enjoy ocean and inland vistas. Look in the water and watch sea otters as they swim and interact among kelp and fish. The Aquarium of the Pacific is just one theme park where MTA members receive a discount.

### Explore Cape Cod in the off-season

See the Cape without the crowds, serene and uncluttered. Walk along what feels like your own private beach. Dine in trendy restaurants without a reservation. Visit art galleries and gift boutiques at your leisure. Play golf or go boating year-round. See the vast spring gardens, ride an antique carousel and visit the art museum at the Heritage Museums & Gardens (free to MTA members). Stay at any Wyndham Hotel Group lodging on the Cape and save up to 20 percent as an MTA member.



**For information on all deals and discounts, look through your Benefits & Discount Directory or visit [www.mtabenefits.com](http://www.mtabenefits.com).**

# MTAB Programs



DENTAL OPTIONS FROM **MetLife**

## Now here's something to smile about!

Each year, studies show links between oral health and overall health. That's why staying on top of your dental care is so important. Having the right dental insurance can minimize costs for you and your family.

Active MTA members now have access to three new dental plan options from MetLife, each with the following enhancements:

- Graduating maximums, which increase your annual benefit over three years
- Orthodontia and implant coverage
- Geographical rates, which make premium payments more competitive
- Rates for individual, individual plus spouse/children and families
- Access to your online account through "My Benefits"



For additional information, visit [www.mtabenefits.com](http://www.mtabenefits.com) and click on "Dental Insurance" or contact MTA Benefits at 800.336.0990.

## Get the disability insurance coverage you need during MTA's open-enrollment period

The 2013 disability open-enrollment period offers a bank-draft option for premium deductions, making it easier than ever for a district to offer this important plan to its educators. Members in participating districts may enroll from February through May. Coverage is guaranteed, and no medical questions are asked. The program is extremely affordable and considered to be one of the best plans available to the education community. Watch for an MTA enrollment counselor in your school. To learn more, call 774.551.0013, ext.104, or visit [www.mtabenefits.com](http://www.mtabenefits.com).



One great reason to choose the **MTA Disability Plan**

*A 45-year-old member with a \$60,000 salary could save \$1,887\* per year with the MTA disability plan over an individual fully underwritten plan.*

Here are a few more:

- Convenient bank-draft option if there is no payroll slot
- Guaranteed issue each year
- Benefit **not** offset by sick leave or sick bank
- 60% benefit payment
- Benefit not taxed
- The MTA plan is one of the most competitively priced group disability programs for the education community in Massachusetts

**Open enrollment is on now**

**Participating and new districts – don't miss out!**

For more information or to schedule enrollment meetings in your district, contact:

- Diana Matheson at 888.636.0112, ext. 214, or [dmatheson@enrollmentcompany.com](mailto:dmatheson@enrollmentcompany.com).
- Pearson Grane at 888.636.0112, ext. 210, or [pearson\\_grane@worksitcomm.com](mailto:pearson_grane@worksitcomm.com).

**Receive a \$20 gift card when you call to schedule your district's enrollment.**

\*The actual savings for an individual will vary greatly depending on the age and salary of the participant.

All program and pricing information was current at the time of publication (February 2013) and is subject to change without notice. To find out what may have changed, please call MTA Benefits at 800.336.0990.