

EDUCATORS MOURN TRAGIC LOSS OF BELOVED TEACHER



MTA Today

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**COMMON CORE
'A REALLY BIG RESET'**



Celebrating the contributions of ESPs

In honor of national Education Support Professionals Day on Nov. 20, NEA President Dennis Van Roekel, right, and MTA President Paul Toner served up a healthful lunch to Jett DuVal, 11, left, and other students at the John F. Kennedy Middle School in Northampton. Talking in the background are Carol DiMauro, the school's director of food services, and Kevin Concannon, undersecretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The event was one of many held around the state to mark American Education Week. After their stint at the counter, Van Roekel and Toner attended the Northwestern District Attorney's Safe School Summit, which was followed by a reception celebrating the contributions made by ESPs across the nation. On Nov. 21, the two leaders took part in "Educator for a Day" festivities at the Parlin School in Everett. For more information on American Education Week events, please visit www.massteacher.org.

Photo by Christine Peterson

MTA Today

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This issue of MTA Today also includes the fall 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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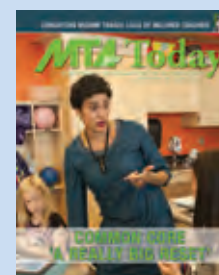
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On the cover

Sarah Marie Jette, a fourth-grade teacher at the Thompson Elementary School in Arlington, works with students Lydia Powell, left, and Trinity Zhen-yi Choroszej on a project about the Lowell textile mills. Jette has incorporated the state's new Common Core-based Curriculum Frameworks into her teaching. Please turn to Page 6 for a story focusing on the Common Core and field testing of the PARCC exams. Please see Page 3 for coverage of the tragic loss of Danvers math teacher Colleen Ritzer, who was found slain outside her school on Oct. 23.



Cover photo by Christine Peterson
Photo of Colleen Ritzer provided by the Ritzer family
Cover design by Alison Donato

Quote-Unquote

"If you think education is expensive, wait until you see how much ignorance costs."

— Comment by President Barack Obama that drew a round of applause from the crowd during a visit to a high school in Brooklyn, N.Y., on October 25, according to The New York Times

Educators mourn loss of beloved teacher

By Scott McLennan and Sarah Nathan

Educators from across the country joined family members, friends, students and colleagues in mourning the tragic loss of Colleen Ritzer, a popular Danvers High School math teacher who was found slain outside her school on Oct. 23.

"There's been a true outpouring of support and feeling," said Danvers Teachers Association President Christopher Hopkins. Hopkins noted that a teacher from Newtown, Conn., "randomly chose a teacher here to write to, to let us know we are in their thoughts."

A guestbook on the National Education Association's website includes condolences from Crystal Falls, Mich., more than 1,000 miles from

Danvers, and many other communities across the country.

Ritzer, 24, was buried on Oct. 28 in her hometown of Andover after funeral services at St. Augustine Church that drew close to 1,000 mourners. About 500 students and close to 100 educators and staff members from Danvers High School attended the services.



Colleen Ritzer

They joined those who knew and mentored Ritzer when she was a student at Assumption College in Worcester and a large contingent of educators from Andover, where she had attended the public schools.

At the beginning and end of the funeral service, educators wearing pink carnations to reflect the teacher's favorite color formed an honor guard on the steps of the church.

A 14-year-old student at the school is charged with murder in connection with Ritzer's death.

Though just in her second year of teaching at Danvers High School, Ritzer had already become a respected and popular member of the school community. Following a year of teaching at the Hale Middle School in Stow, she had arrived in Danvers along with three other teachers new to the school's math department.

"They brought in so many new ideas. She was teaching people like me who have been around for years," recalled fellow math teacher Jeff Avigian.

Avigian said the math team grew close, eating lunches together and "always talking."

He said he has been touched by the support for his fellow teachers shown by the high school's students.

"The students have really been there for the teachers," he said. "They know we've lost not just a colleague, but also a friend."

Avigian said he and the other math teachers at the high school, who are now sharing Ritzer's



Photo by Sarah Nathan

Ritzer family expresses gratitude for 'outpouring of love and support'

Colleen Ritzer's family released the following statement for publication in *MTA Today*:

"We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the education community near and far for the outpouring of love and support we have received. We have heard from teachers who taught Colleen and educators who worked alongside her. We have also heard from people she never met, yet whose lives she touched in some way. The kind words and gestures, and knowing of the tremendous difference that Colleen made for so many teachers and students alike, have brought us some comfort during this very difficult time. We hope and pray that Colleen's dedication to a career she embraced, as well as her unique ability to find the good in everything and everyone, may serve as an inspiration for teachers everywhere."

teaching responsibilities, are trying to follow her example of starting each class with a positive quote or a fun fact.

"When you try to do it yourself, you realize how much time and thought and energy she was putting into her job as a teacher," he said.

Gina McDaniel, Ritzer's cousin, said in her eulogy that "Colleen's passion in life was to be a teacher."

"Her love for teaching started as early as her preschool class with Miss Laura," McDaniel said. "In the words of Miss Laura, '[Ritzer] was the most amazing person you could ever hope to meet. I'm so blessed to have been her first teacher and friend.'"

In his homily, the Rev. Peter G. Gori also emphasized Ritzer's passion for and dedication to teaching.

"As a teacher, she fulfilled a desire and her dream, and she did so with great joy and talent," he said. "Everyone would agree that Colleen was born to be a teacher. Indeed, she lived for it."

Hopkins, a history teacher at Danvers High School, said the slaying left the staff feeling numb. After the funeral, teachers and students tried to

Hundreds of educators and students lined the steps of St. Augustine Church in Andover on Oct. 28 for the funeral of Danvers High School teacher Colleen Ritzer. In his homily, the Rev. Peter G. Gori emphasized Ritzer's passion for and dedication to teaching. "As a teacher, she fulfilled a desire and her dream, and she did so with great joy and talent," he said.

restore some semblance of normalcy in their building by being openly supportive of each other.

"I walked by my room and saw 'Be someone's rainbow' written on my board. You see little notes like that posted around the school," Hopkins said. "Teachers will always have an open door for kids in need. Our natural reaction is to reach out, and we will continue to do that."

That sentiment mirrored Ritzer's own upbeat attitude. Even her Twitter messages echoed her love for her work.

"Full week of school ahead. That can only mean one thing: lots of math fun :)" she tweeted on Sept. 8.

Ritzer's death generated an emotional response from Massachusetts teachers, which was summed up by MTA President Paul Toner: "Educators across Massachusetts are deeply saddened by the loss of beloved Danvers math teacher Colleen Ritzer," he wrote in a statement immediately after the tragedy. "Colleen was widely respected in her school and her town, and her death is a tragedy. Our hearts go out to Colleen's family, to her students, and to her school community. Our thoughts are with all of her fellow educators across Massachusetts and the nation."

NEA President Dennis Van Roekel sent a letter to Toner to be shared with educators in which he echoed a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson that Ritzer was fond of: "To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded." Van Roekel then added: "I believe Ms. Ritzer personified this and I am heartbroken for those closest to her."

The Ritzer family has established the Colleen Ritzer Memorial Scholarship Fund for students pursuing careers in education. The MTA has contributed \$50,000 to the fund on behalf of its members to honor Ritzer's dedication. The Essex County Community Foundation is administering the fund. Donations can be made online at www.eccf.org or mailed to the Essex County Community Foundation, 175 Andover St., Danvers, MA 01923. A tribute to Ritzer and links to related sites on www.nea.org and on social media can be viewed on the MTA website, www.massteacher.org. The site also provides resources for use by educators and parents in dealing with school-related crises.

Implementing DDMs and Common Core step by step

Shortly after Massachusetts Secretary of Education Matt Malone was sworn into office last January, he was asked by *MTA Today* how student test scores should be used in the educator evaluation process. “If we can show the quality of work that students are doing, I think that is a fair mechanism,” he responded. “I would stress that it can’t just be one thing.”

Malone said teachers shouldn’t be left to conclude, “My kids didn’t do well on the MCAS so I won’t get a good evaluation.” At the end of the day, he said, “I just tell people, ‘Let’s just go through the process and be human about it.’”

Whether a student learns as a result of being in our classrooms matters, and it should be part of

a comprehensive educator evaluation framework.

Student learning is at the heart of our profession.

But measuring the impact that any one educator has on a student’s learning and growth must be done thoughtfully and in partnership with educators.

We know that it can’t and shouldn’t be reduced to a single standardized test score

or a simple formula. That is why the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework requires districts to develop District-Determined Measures — DDMs — to provide authentic measures of student learning and growth.

Many of our colleagues across the nation are very interested in our work and hopeful that we can prove that the overemphasis on standardized test scores in other states’ evaluation systems is the wrong way to go.

Recently, the MTA sent guidance on how to negotiate DDMs with districts to local association presidents and members.

We advise that teachers and administrators work together to figure out several measures that tell something meaningful about how much students learn during the school year.

First and foremost, they should pick measures that can be used to improve teaching and learning — not make up new measures solely for this evaluation system. That would be a waste of time and a disservice to students.

Over several years of data collection, the educator and supervisor should exercise their professional judgment in reviewing the results, looking first at *patterns* — what do the different measures say about the performance of my students in a given year? — and then at *trends* in performance

Now more than ever, we need rank-and-file members to participate. We need our best educators to be engaged in the discussions of these important issues related to teaching and learning. Your local association president can’t do it alone.

— what do the data say about the performance of my students over several years? Professional judgment can then be applied to put the results into the proper context.

After at least two years, depending on the contract language in the district, the evaluator should use professional judgment to determine whether an educator’s impact on student learning was high, moderate or low. As Secretary Malone said more plainly, the evaluator needs to be “human” about it.

MTA members should bear in mind that DDMs need to be focused on improvement, not punishment.

The measurement they yield is used for shaping an educator’s professional growth or improvement plan. If an educator has been rated “Proficient” or “Exemplary” and the student growth impact is deemed to be low, then the length of the self-directed Educator Plan may be shortened from two years to one. (Those who have a summative rating of “Needs Improvement” already have a plan of one year or less, regardless of student impact results, and those rated “Unsatisfactory” may have an even shorter plan, depending on what has been agreed upon in the local collective bargaining agreement.)

It is unfortunate that we have multiple new initiatives — RETELL training; implementation of the Massachusetts 2011 ELA and Math Curriculum Frameworks, which incorporate the Common Core State Standards; and the rollout of new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers tests — occurring at the same time that districts are required to pilot DDMs. Recognizing the burden, the state has slowed the implementation of DDMs. But there is still a lot to do.

Now more than ever, we need rank-and-file members to participate. We need our best educators to be engaged in the discussions of these important issues related to teaching and learning. Your local association president can’t do it alone.

If the call goes out for educators to join “cadres” to develop useful DDMs, please consider participating. Classroom educators are the people best equipped to make decisions about good measures of student learning and growth.

If your local president needs you to help bargain over the scheduling of RETELL courses, please join the team. The flexibility you negotiate may result in a much more convenient schedule for you and your colleagues.

If your grade has been chosen to field test the PARCC exam to measure student mastery of the new Common Core-based frameworks, use it as an opportunity. Learn what this new assessment is all about and then provide the MTA and your local with feedback to help us advocate for improvements in the implementation of the PARCC system.

I know that many of you feel overwhelmed; there is an awful lot on your plates. But it’s worth paying attention to what Audrey Loeb, an Arlington fourth-grader, said in the cover story of this issue of *MTA Today* when she was asked to describe a multifaceted project on the Lowell mills.

“When I first found out about this project I thought it was going to be really hard. I never did a big project like this before,” Audrey said. “But we just did it step by step, and it was easy.”

I don’t mean to say that educator evaluation, Common Core, RETELL and all the rest will be easy, but if we do them all step by step — and if many members share the load — we will get through this. Massachusetts is number one in the nation in academic performance. Our colleagues around the country are looking to us to see that we get this right.

I am confident that we will — by working together with one another, our district leadership and the parents of our students.

Letters policy

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



Paul Toner
MTA President

Union gets flawed evaluations retracted

By Laura Barrett

Thanks to the union, Somerville administrators who had rated an estimated three-quarters of their teachers “Needs Improvement” last spring were persuaded to retract the assessments and hire the MTA to retrain teachers and district personnel in how to do evaluations correctly.

The Somerville Teachers Association first learned of the problem in early May after Superintendent Anthony Pierantozzi released a video message appearing to announce that a high percentage of teachers would be rated “Needs Improvement” under the state’s new educator evaluation system because Somerville’s test scores, like those of other urban districts, are below the state average. Pierantozzi explained in a letter to the STA: “Based on Somerville’s ranking, I imagine that you would agree that we, collectively as a system of educators, need to improve.”

The union strongly objected to the central administration’s presumption that individual educators should receive low ratings based on overall district performance rather than on an evidence-based evaluation of each educator’s performance. The district did not heed the advice.

When the ratings were sent out in June, many teachers who had received stellar evaluations in the past and gotten high compliments from their supervisors during that year’s evaluation cycle were distressed to find they were rated “Needs Improvement.” The STA did a straw poll of members and estimated that 75 percent had received the NI rating.

“Our members were extremely upset, demoralized and angry,” said Jackie Lawrence, president of the STA. “It was a nightmare.”

The consequences of getting an NI rating can be very serious, most immediately for educators who are in their first three years.

According to the regulations, “In order to attain Professional Teacher Status, the educator should achieve ratings of Proficient or Exemplary on each performance standard and overall.” The regulations go on to say that any principal who wants to make a hiring decision that would give PTS to an educator who hadn’t achieved the requisite ratings must seek approval from the superintendent.

In Somerville, that would mean getting approval from the same person who was driving the lower ratings.

For teachers with PTS, the regulations require that an NI rating result in significantly more supervisory oversight and a Directed Growth Plan of one year or less.

“This system is designed to help struggling educators improve,” said Lawrence. “However, that level of micromanagement applied to successful educators wastes time and energy and causes a lot of anxiety by unnecessarily threatening their job security.”



Photo by Laura Barrett

Somerville Teachers Association President Jackie Lawrence took immediate action when numerous members improperly received “Needs Improvement” ratings under the new evaluation system.

‘It was a huge victory for us. This is just one more example of why unions are so important. Administrators sometimes make bad decisions. We need to be there to catch the bad decisions and use our collective power to protect our members’ interests. We struck a blow for fairness that turned out to be good for our members and, by extension, good for the students we teach.’

— Jackie Lawrence
STA President

According to the new regulations, at the end of the growth plan period, an NI-rated educator must either move up to Proficient or down to Unsatisfactory. If rated Unsatisfactory, an educator may be put on an Improvement Plan, which could be as short as 30 days.

“Successful teachers who had dedicated their careers to Somerville suddenly realized they were potentially one year and one month away from being fired — for no good reason,” Lawrence said. “This was shocking to all of us.”

With help from the MTA, the STA wasted no time; over the summer, the union filed a class-action grievance. Elected officials also reportedly weighed in, telling school administrators that they had made a serious error

that was undermining the legitimacy of the new evaluation system.

The message finally got through.

In early September, the school committee and the STA reached a settlement agreement that begins, “The school committee acknowledges to the STA and its members that it made systemic mistakes in the application and implementation of the new Education Evaluation. Specifically, the school committee acknowledges that it misapplied the ‘Needs Improvement’ rating by equating said rating with the concept of ‘everyone can improve.’”

The settlement went on to acknowledge that the ratings must be based on an individualized process and that there is no quota for determining how many educators should fall into each of the four categories. The evaluations and underlying documents for that cycle were to be “purged from every member’s file” unless the educator wanted the records retained.

The school committee also agreed to contract with the MTA — a state-approved professional development provider — for retraining administrators and teachers in the new evaluation system. In addition, the settlement requires the district to rate teachers NI and put them on a Directed Growth Plan before they can be rated Unsatisfactory overall.

“It was a huge victory for us,” said Lawrence. “This is just one more example of why unions are so important. Administrators sometimes make bad decisions. We need to be there to catch the bad decisions and use our collective power to protect our members’ interests. We struck a blow for fairness that turned out to be good for our members and, by extension, good for the students we teach.”

The MTA is offering training programs for evaluation teams. To find out more, see Page 19.

Common Core ‘a really big reset’

By Laura Barrett

Sarah Marie Jette’s fourth-grade Arlington classroom looked like a poster for the Common Core State Standards.

During a reporter’s visit in late October, Jette’s students were busily working on iPads in the beautiful new Thompson Elementary School building, examining 19th-century photographs of children putting in long hours in the dangerous Lowell textile mills.

Nine-year-old Audrey Loeb explained, “When I first found out about this project I thought it was going to be really hard. I never did a big project like this before. But we just did it step by step, and it was easy.

“We have to find out information from a lot of different places and sort it into something,” Audrey continued. “We started out collecting photos on the iPads of people working in the mills. We had to notice what people were doing, what objects they used and what activities were going on. We wrote some sentences about what we saw.

“We also got written materials,” she added, pulling up a scan of an article from 1842. “We have to say if it was a firsthand or secondhand document, what kind of document it is, what year it was, who created it, whom it was written for and what it says. We wrote down two facts about the documents. We also watched a video that showed how the mills worked and how people who worked there weren’t getting their fair share of the money.”

Once they had collected all of their materials, the students would use the Explain Everything application to create a booklet that they could print or share online.

Off to one side in Jette’s room sat a loom that was bought with privately raised funds to supplement the project. Students have taken turns on the loom to get a feel for weaving.

Linda Hanson, co-coordinator of K-5 literacy for Arlington, said the Lowell mills project is an ideal example of the Common Core in action.

“It’s been 20 years since the Massachusetts frameworks were established, so this is a really big reset,” said Hanson, who is also president of the Arlington Education Association. The Common Core State Standards — adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia — were incorporated into the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in 2011. “We need to move carefully,” Hanson said. “It’s kind of like turning a barge. It doesn’t happen overnight.”

Hanson said that the Common Core English language arts standards call for all students to do the kind of “higher-order thinking” that students who take Advanced Placement courses are expected to do.

“Common Core is about getting them to read more complex texts independently,” she said. “They need to handle getting information from multiple and diverse sources, to analyze them quickly and come up with an essay that uses the textual evidence to write a persuasive argument. Just summarizing what you’ve read is not enough.”



Photo by Christine Peterson

AEA President Linda Hanson talks to student Jeannine Al Attal about her Lowell mills project.

Jette, a sixth-year teacher, said it has been a challenge incorporating the new standards into her teaching while also figuring out how to use iPads in an effective way.

“Although it’s a lot of work,” she said, “I’m enjoying having fewer things to cover, but digging deeper. If you’re racing through things, it’s the hands-on exploring you miss.”

District initiatives have helped. Over the summer, Jette took part in professional development sessions on the ELA standards and learned about the increased focus on nonfiction reading and writing and the use of multiple sources.

She has also changed how she teaches math, covering fewer topics but each one in more depth. The district has adopted an updated mathematics curriculum, but her school’s math coach has had to create lessons to make sure all the new standards are addressed.

Peter Mili, a retired high school math teacher from Cambridge who serves on the National Education Association’s Common Core Working Group, said he is a fan of the new math standards.

“A lot of topics are getting a deeper look, and the new standards are reducing the amount of repetition,” he said.

Mili did express some concerns about how fast things are moving, however.

“I’m not sure there has been a sufficient phase-in period for implementing the new frameworks,” he said, adding that he has heard anecdotally that some of the requirements in the early elementary grades may prove to be too difficult.

That concern has been voiced nationally by several associations representing early childhood

educators. If field testing shows that some of the standards are not age-appropriate, Mili said, “the jury is still out whether the system will be flexible enough to change.”

Another concern has been a lack of curricular materials that address all of the new standards. In some districts, teachers have been primarily responsible for finding appropriate materials.

“My understanding is that they believe that given a set of paragraphs that are called ‘standards,’ the expectation is that everyone will come out with the same learning and the same knowledge and will be able to pass the same tests and go to college and reach all the goals that Race to the Top is hoping for,” said Susan Gilman, a teacher at the Brayton Elementary School in North Adams. “My frustration is with the lack of materials to go with that.”

In a survey of educators conducted jointly by the MTA and Teach Plus this fall, only a little more than half of the teachers surveyed said they were prepared to teach the Common Core. Support for the Common Core was also divided, but was significantly higher among those who had received training in the standards.

Despite the frustrations expressed by some educators, Massachusetts is considered by many to be the state most likely to succeed at implementing the Common Core, in part because many of the standards were based on the former Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

In addition, Massachusetts is a higher-income state whose students perform the best in the country on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. If Common Core doesn’t work well here, it is unlikely

Continued on next page

Bill seeks early education improvements

By Scott McLennan

About two dozen children — none older than 5, some just infants — spend their days at the Wonder Years child care and education center, learning about a world that is still fresh to them. Some work on puzzles, others grapple with new vocabulary words, and a few let their creativity loose by finger-painting.

Located on a tree-lined residential street in Dorchester, the center is the very picture of stability and nurturing. In reality, though, it exists in a world in which independently owned early education centers catering to families with low and moderate incomes struggle to stay open even though their waiting lists are growing.

Sharon Jones, who owns the Wonder Years and is a part owner of two other centers, offers a sentiment also heard at many other early education centers that work with families receiving state subsidies: “We are happy to have good regulations; we just want a voice in setting up those regulations.”

Educators, child care center directors and owners across the state



Photo by Scot McLennan

Cathy Harris works with Maliyah Clarke, left, and Ayden Kyle, both 1, at the Wonder Years education and child care center in Dorchester.

have formed the Massachusetts Early Childhood Educators Union and are behind a bill that would help it become a providers’ organization.

MECEU affiliates are independently owned centers where at least 10 percent of the children receive subsidies.

The MECEU would improve the quality of early learning and child care by negotiating directly with the state on issues such as voucher rates, regulations and reimbursements.

MTA President Paul Toner said the need for a collective voice of early education providers is readily apparent.

“We believe that when it comes to improving the direct care and education provided to young children, there is no better source of expertise than those who do the work with them every day,” he said.

“An Act to Improve Quality in Early Education Centers” (House Bill 477/Senate Bill 223) is a key legislative priority of the MTA. The MTA and the NEA have joined with the American Federation of Teachers and AFT Massachusetts, which are affiliated with the AFL-CIO, in support of the legislation.

State Senator Sal DiDomenico and Representative Jeffrey Sánchez are sponsoring the legislation, which was slated for a public hearing before the Joint Committee on Public Service on Nov. 25, as *MTA Today* went to press.

Please turn to **Providers’**/Page 20

Teachers prepare for field test of PARCC system

Continued from previous page

to succeed in states with fewer resources and lower levels of educational attainment.

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System tests have already begun to incorporate items that reflect the new standards, but the real measure will come if and when the state fully adopts a new assessment being developed by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers.

PARCC is a consortium of 18 states plus the District of Columbia that is developing a system to measure mastery of the Common Core. Another 25 states plus the U.S. Virgin Islands are backing a different assessment developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium.

PARCC is being field tested in Massachusetts and most other PARCC states this spring. PARCC has two required parts, a Performance Based Assessment administered in March and April and an End of Year Assessment administered in May and June. Sample items can be found at www.parcconline.org.

Approximately 15 percent of students in 1,300 schools and 340 districts in Massachusetts will take different parts of the test this spring. Students who take the longer PBA section will not have to take the MCAS as well.

This field test is designed to help the test makers create appropriate items and to work out issues with test administration. PARCC is designed as an online tool to assess the kinds of higher-order thinking that Hanson, of Arlington, talked about. Like Jette’s Lowell mills project, some test items will include audio or video segments along with written texts.

“It’s a 21st-century assessment,” said Jeff Nellhaus, a former education official from Massachusetts who is now heading up development of PARCC for Achieve, an organization based in Washington, D.C., that convenes leaders from across states to tackle common challenges.

Nellhaus acknowledged that many schools do not have enough computers and Internet bandwidth to allow all students to take the test online.

“We recognize that not everyone’s going to be ready in the 2014-2015 school year to administer the test online, so we’re going to have paper versions as well,” he said. “By the third year we’re hoping that the vast majority of schools will be able to do this online.”

Nellhaus said that the field test will help the developers determine whether students perform better on the paper or online version and start setting performance levels.

Asked about how quickly PARCC results will be useful for purposes of school and district

accountability and educator evaluations, Nellhaus said those are decisions that have to be made state by state.

The Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education is expected to vote in the late fall of 2015 on whether to replace the MCAS with PARCC. The BESE voted on Nov. 19 to implement the following transition schedule:

■ **Spring 2014:** Field test PARCC.

■ **Spring 2015:** Districts choose whether to administer PARCC or MCAS. Students will take one test or the other, but not both.

■ **Spring 2016:** If adopted, PARCC is administered to students in grades three to eight statewide. The Grade 10 MCAS test will be used as a graduation requirement at least through the class of 2018.

While policymakers and education advocates are already grappling with the implications of changing the state’s entire assessment system, most classroom teachers are like Arlington’s Jette, who is working double-time to teach the new standards and comply with a multitude of other mandates and initiatives.

She is glad her class will be field testing one of the PARCC assessments in the spring.

“That will be a good opportunity for us to get a sense of it,” Jette said. “But I’m not really thinking about PARCC yet. I have too much else to do.”

Bay State visit caps Back to School Tour

By Jean Conley

NEA President Dennis Van Roekel and MTA President Paul Toner fielded questions on a wide range of issues when they met with educators in Somerville as part of Van Roekel's nationwide Back to School Tour.

The Somerville stop on the tour — which also included visits to Chicago, Minneapolis and two communities in Oregon — featured a town-hall-style discussion. The conversation, held at the Winter Hill Community Innovation School on Sept. 12, was moderated by Somerville Teachers Association President Jackie Lawrence.

The conversation touched on subjects including the Common Core State Standards, teacher evaluations and the need for educator activism. MTA educators — most of them from Somerville and other eastern Massachusetts districts — posed questions to Van Roekel and Toner about the impact of poverty on students and communities, the need for educator empowerment, collective bargaining, organizing, problems facing unions across the nation, and the influence of moneyed interests in politics and policy.

The Back to School Tour was part of an effort to raise awareness about the NEA's initiative to strengthen public education through the power of the organization's 3 million members.

Van Roekel thanked educators for attending and engaging in "the lost art of the exchange of ideas."

A number of educators voiced specific concerns during the hour-and-a-half-long session. In response to a Cambridge teacher's comment that she is "terrified" about how PARCC assessments will be used to evaluate teachers, Van Roekel said she is not alone. He said there is a need "for



Photo by Laura Barrett

Julie Scafidi, a seventh- and eighth-grade math teacher at the Winter Hill Community Innovation School, spoke to NEA President Dennis Van Roekel after the town-hall-style meeting on Sept. 12.

a new conversation about the use of tests," and he pledged that the NEA will continue to "fight against the abuse of test scores" in teacher evaluations.

Toner noted that the MTA was involved early on in the development of the Massachusetts teacher evaluation system, exerting its expertise at the policy level and insisting that high-stakes assessments not become a major determinant in the process. Van Roekel said he holds up the Massachusetts system "all the time" as a model of the way to do teacher evaluations the right way.

Van Roekel noted that one of the goals of the NEA's Great Public Schools initiative is to get "transformative ideas" about education shared around the country.

The realization of one of those transformative ideas is the school in which the discussion was held.

The Winter Hill Community Innovation School is one of approximately 50 such schools created in Massachusetts under the Achievement Gap Act of 2010 to foster new ideas within in-district public schools. Innovation schools typically have more autonomy and flexibility than most district schools with regard to curriculum, staffing, budget and professional development.

Toner reminded those in the crowd that they and their colleagues are experts on what works for students and called on them to be the voice of public education.

He said that in general, he would like to see more teachers "at

the microphone" at civic gatherings and other forums, making personal connections in their communities and speaking out about the issues that are important to all educators and students.

He and Van Roekel said that if educators are active in those ways, they will be helping to combat negative media stereotypes about unions and public education.

Toner said that a "whole lot of players" have joined critical debates and that educators must be active on all fronts to make sure that student-centered policies prevail. On issues such as "education reform, bargaining and digital online learning," he said, unions and those who support them must "engage people, meet with them, talk to them."

"We need to be part of the change," Toner said.

Van Roekel's visits around the country drew attention over the summer to ongoing and threatened cuts to education, the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, the fight for publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs and full-day kindergarten, and efforts to strip collective bargaining rights from workers.

Van Roekel said that labor unions need to go "back to their roots and really organize communities" if they want to fight the well-financed forces that seek to privatize education. He reminded his audience that "everything we've ever gotten in this country has been the result of collective action."

Today's challenges are unprecedented, Van Roekel said, but it is "our obligation as the adults in the system" to bring about positive change.

A collection of tweets, photos and Facebook posts is available on Storify at <http://storify.com/massteacher/back-to-school-tour-somerville-ma>.

Tools 4 Teaching 'store' has right prices for Springfield educators

By Scott McLennan

Now-retired Springfield educator Chris Williams remembers cringing whenever she saw classroom materials thrown away.

"I was in a K-to-5 building and a preK-to-1 building, and materials were just discarded when people left or whenever a new publisher came

on board and we wanted to get rid of the old materials," Williams recalled.

After seeing a television news story about a Florida school district that took in donated pens, notebooks and other materials from businesses to make them available to teachers for free, Williams decided that Springfield should do not just the same, but better. Williams and the other members of the Springfield Education Association's Committee of

Retired Teachers added the important component of recycling, and they are now getting usable materials — both purchased and homemade — into the hands of teachers.

The Tools 4 Teaching "store" opened on Sept. 19, stocked with books, posters, markers, construction paper and the like, all donated by local businesses or teachers who had retired or

Please turn to **The right supplies**/Page 22

‘My country made an investment in me’

NEA vice president shares vision for public higher education

By Scott McLennan

During a spirited conversation with educators and students at UMass Amherst on Oct. 16, National Education Association Vice President Lily Eskelsen García championed the value of a strong and accessible public higher education system.

Eskelsen García drew on her own story for illustration, recalling that she was a “lunch lady” and kindergarten aide before she was persuaded to become a teacher herself. Public higher education provided the key to her success, she said.

She worked and relied on federally backed student loans in order to get her degree from the University of Utah. Upon graduation, she taught elementary school, eventually being named Utah’s Teacher of the Year in 1989. She also ran for Congress in 1998.

“My country made an investment in me,” Eskelsen García said.

Eskelsen García drew a packed house at the UMass Student Union. Following her talk, she met with about a dozen students from the College of Education and the Labor Studies Program. The three MTA units on the UMass campus — the University Staff Association, the Professional Staff Union and the Massachusetts Society of Professors — had invited Eskelsen García to a kickoff event as contract talks got underway on campus.

Eskelsen García blended humor and insight during her remarks, which depicted two different visions of public higher education.

“There are those motivated by greed and fear,” she said, describing interests that advocate for putting colleges and universities in private hands and shrinking public funding for higher education. “At the NEA, we believe the business of education is to open students’ minds.”



NEA Vice President Lily Eskelsen García, on a visit to UMass Amherst, drew a packed house at the Student Union. She later met with smaller groups of students, drawing the connection between union membership and education and explaining how the NEA finds its power in grassroots organizing. “The union creates a circle of influence to achieve the education goals our members want,” she said.

Photo by Scott McLennan

Acknowledging the need for high standards, Eskelsen García sharply criticized the use of college rankings and rigid approaches to measure the quality of education.

“Paint-by-numbers reform makes us sick,” she said, describing a cycle in which faulty ranking methods can form the basis for criticizing public education, then fuel campaigns for reducing funding, destabilizing the system and opening it up to further criticism.

When Eskelsen García took questions from the audience, a student asked what she thought the relationship should be between students and unions.

Eskelsen García responded, “You are our biggest untapped treasure, the diamonds. As a union, we need to build an organization outside of our own organization and organize students and families into

communities and fight for what this community wants and needs.”

Eskelsen García brought that same message into her smaller meeting with students, drawing the connection between union membership and education and explaining how a national union of 3 million members finds its power in grassroots organizing.

“The union creates a circle of influence to achieve the education goals our members want,” she said.

MTA President Paul Toner, who attended Eskelsen García’s talk, said that the unions on the UMass campus and throughout the state’s public colleges and universities “are at the forefront of efforts to maintain quality and affordability for students.”

“When you look at Lily’s own story and successes, it’s plain to see how public colleges and universities make it possible for people to reach their potential, and that benefits us all in the long run,” Toner said.

Rivers to cross

History and social studies teachers pored over classroom materials and guides at the WGBH studios in Boston on Oct. 28 during a workshop on the six-part PBS documentary *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross*. The workshop — for middle and high school teachers — introduced the educators to the documentary series, which builds on existing research to offer viewers a journey across continents and through centuries to shed new light on the experience of being African American. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Harvard University’s Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and head of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research, narrated the documentary. He opened the workshop with a keynote address, which was followed by a screening of clips from the series.

Photo by Bob Duffy





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MORNING WORKSHOPS 9 – 11:30 a.m.

CONTEMPORARY IDEAS FOR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AM1 – Elementary • AM2 – Middle School

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

CONTEMPORARY IDEAS FOR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AM3 – High School

This interactive workshop will focus on strategies to manage a productive high school classroom. We will examine how to begin class, manage projects, engage students throughout the period and create classroom systems to aid both the teacher and the students.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION AM4 – Elementary • AM5 – Middle School/High School

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

AM6 – ASSESSING STUDENT PROGRESS – ALL LEVELS

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

MANAGING TIME, PAPERWORK & PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AM7 – Elementary • AM8 – Middle School/High School

There are progress reports, report cards, IEPs, coordinating with your team, working with your mentor, providing evidence, surviving parent conferences, and (oh, right!) teaching. Feeling overwhelmed? This workshop will allow participants to reassess their classroom routines, organize the piles of paperwork and provide strategies for working successfully with parents/guardians and colleagues. This session is packed with tips and tricks for anticipating and managing the many unknowns.

AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.

KEEP THEM ENGAGED

PM1 – Elementary • PM2 – Middle School/High School

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

PM3 – LEGAL BASICS FOR NEW TEACHERS

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

PM4 – THE PERILS OF THE INTERNET AND E-MAIL

Educators face dangers when using e-mail and the Internet. This workshop explores e-mail form and format, privacy rights in the technological world, Internet use on duty and off duty, acceptable-use policies, social networking activity, and public employees' rights as citizens versus their status as employees and role models.

PM5 – ACADEMIC LANGUAGE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND STRUGGLING STUDENTS

Do you have English language learners in your classroom? Your school? This workshop for non-ESL teachers in grades K-12 will offer information about the new RETELL requirements, including the mandated SEI course, WIDA standards and the ACCESS assessment. Participants will leave with strategies for effectively instructing ELLs and struggling students in their classrooms.

PM6 – TEACHER EVALUATION: WHAT DOES EFFECTIVENESS LOOK LIKE?

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

PM7 – PLAYFUL LEARNING: LEVERAGING DIGITAL GAMES AS EFFECTIVE LEARNING TOOLS

Play is how we learn best. Join us for a fun and informative hands-on workshop facilitated by national experts to learn how to effectively integrate digital games into your teaching. This workshop will introduce you to the basics of game-based learning, including why games work as a teaching tool, how they are being used, what is available, and how you can start using games in your classroom tomorrow. The workshop includes hands-on game play and working with the Playful Learning platform.

PM8 – LICENSURE EXPLAINED

Do you understand how to get to your Professional License? This workshop will demystify the Massachusetts educator licensure requirements and procedures for advancing your license, from Preliminary through Initial to Professional, adding a new license and keeping your current license active and valid.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

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MATTHEW H. MALONE

As secretary of education, Matthew Malone directs the Executive Office of Education and works closely with the Commonwealth's education agencies and institutions. He serves as a voting member of the governing boards of the departments of Early Education and Care, Elementary and Secondary Education and Higher Education, as well as the University of Massachusetts system. He is the governor's top advisor on education and helps shape the Commonwealth's education reform agenda.

Prior to his appointment as secretary, Dr. Malone served as the superintendent of the Brockton Public Schools. He brings real-world experience from managing the fourth-largest school district in the state to his role as secretary. While superintendent in Brockton, Dr. Malone led the development of an innovative strategy to increase student achievement known as R3: "Realizing Resources for Results," which focused on supporting learning and teaching in the classroom. This initiative and others he helped implement resulted in both increased student achievement and the narrowing of achievement gaps among students in Brockton.

CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

8 – 9 a.m.	On-site check-in (Prior registration is required) Exhibits and "good stuff free"
9 – 11:30 a.m.	Morning Workshops
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Luncheon
12:30 – 2:30 p.m.	Afternoon Workshops
2:30 p.m.	Keynote Speaker

IMPORTANT NOTES

The conference is open to MTA members in their first four years of practice. NEA/MTA student members entering the final year of an educator preparation program or who have completed student teaching are also invited, as well as any other students enrolled in education degree programs. Districts may register individuals or groups by calling 800.392.6175, ext. 8305. This conference partially fulfills school districts' obligation to provide an induction program for all new teachers (603 CMR 7.00). MTA will provide participants with a record of sessions attended.

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DDMs being developed for evaluations

By Laura Barrett

The thorniest issue involved in establishing a comprehensive educator evaluation system concerns the role of test scores and other measures of student learning.

While student test scores play a very different role in educator evaluations in Massachusetts than they do in other states, the use of these scores has generated debate here, just as it has in the rest of the country.

Questions about what measures to use and how to determine low, moderate and high impact on student learning are being asked as the state rolls out a timeline for complying with 2011 state regulations requiring that District-Determined Measures — DDMs — of student learning growth be developed.

At least two state or local DDMs must be identified for every licensed educator, including administrators. When analyzed using professional judgment, these DDMs will lead to a determination of the educator's "impact on student learning." That impact rating, in turn, may affect the length of a teacher or administrator's Educator Plan, which describes the growth or improvement actions identified as part of each educator's evaluation.

For teachers of English language arts and mathematics in grades four to eight, one of those measures must be based on Student Growth

Percentiles on MCAS ELA and math tests. The other measure — or at least two other measures in cases where SGPs are not available — must be locally developed or selected measures of growth in learning that are common across grades or subjects.

The MTA is recommending that at least three measures be used and at least three years of data be collected for determining trends and patterns in growth.

The MTA also maintains that DDMs constitute "performance standards" and are therefore a mandatory subject of bargaining. Local association leaders are urged to confer with their field representatives about how to preserve their bargaining rights during this process.

Debate over use of student results

Representatives of the MTA and other education stakeholders began discussing how to incorporate student growth data when the Educator Evaluation Task Force was formed in 2010. Task force members agreed that student assessment results should not count for a specific percentage of an educator's evaluation because educators are not entirely responsible for how their students perform.

The research is clear that out-of-school factors — such as parental income and education levels — affect student achievement more than differences in the performance of individual teachers do. Even

expert teachers can't teach students who don't show up or who come to school hungry.

In-school factors over which educators have no control — such as class size, student classroom assignment or school-based technology — also play a significant role. A class with a high percentage of students who have behavior problems and insufficient support may not show as much "growth" in learning as a less challenging class taught by the same teacher in a different year.

Because of this, Massachusetts policymakers have given student test data a significant but discrete role in the evaluation process: Educators and their evaluators must analyze the data and use professional judgment to determine whether changes in instruction are warranted.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's "Rating Educator Performance" guidance, issued in April, states, "Formulaic or numerical processes that calculate outcome ratings and preclude the application of professional judgment are inconsistent with the letter and the spirit of the evaluation framework."

The DESE and the MTA are also in agreement that "impact on student learning" determinations affect the Educator Plan, not the educator's summative rating. If the impact is deemed low, that could lead to more observations by the supervisor,

Please turn to **Schedule**/Page 13

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EMAC event focuses on nurturing diversity

By Jean Conley

This year's Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee Conference will feature workshops, networking opportunities and talks by the mayor of Fitchburg and an inclusion specialist — both of whom will address the challenges that members of minority groups face as they attain leadership positions and the need to continuously nurture diversity.

The event will be held Dec. 6 and 7 at the Sheraton Framingham Hotel and Conference Center.

The conference, which is open to all MTA members, offers educators the perfect opportunity to build skills, connect with and support others with similar interests and experiences, and expand professional networks.

EMAC Chair Christine Boseman said she is eager to hear the speakers describe the roadblocks they faced on their way to leadership positions. She added that MTA members also want to learn about strategies successfully employed by members of minority groups who work in climates that do not always welcome diversity.

"People want and need to hear positive feedback on how to succeed," she said. "Because diversity is our target point, we would like to know what they can share."

The conference will kick off on Friday with registration starting at 5 p.m., followed by dinner and a keynote speech by Fitchburg Mayor Lisa A. Wong. Wong, now serving her third term, was first elected to the post in 2007 at the age of 28.

She is the first minority mayor of Fitchburg and the first female Asian-American mayor in Massachusetts. Wong will speak about how her experiences have shaped her opportunities and challenges. A reception with line dancing and lessons will follow the meal.

Saturday morning workshops

are "Keeping Alive Our Commitment to 'Justice for All,'" "Networking: There's More than One Way to Do It" and "Family and Community School Partnerships." Saturday afternoon workshops are titled "An Introduction to Facing History and Ourselves," "English Language Learner Culture and Equity" and "Critical Analysis of the Portrayals of African-Americans in the Movies *Django* and *Lincoln*."

'People want and need to hear positive feedback on how to succeed. Because diversity is our target point, we would like to know what they can share.'

— EMAC Chair Christine Boseman

The lunchtime speaker on Saturday will be Juan Nuñez, a recognized expert in diversity management, employee relations and affirmative action.

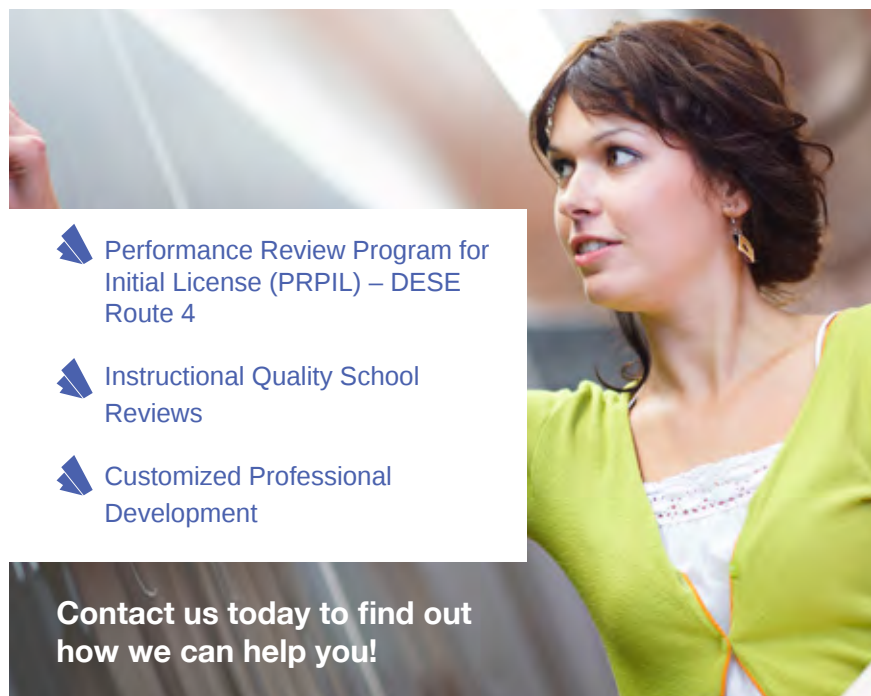
The former UMass Boston chief diversity officer works with organizations as an inclusion specialist to build welcoming and supportive workplaces. Nuñez has also been vice president for diversity and compliance at the Fashion Institute of Technology and director of regional compliance for the New York State Department of Transportation.

An MTA Benefits giveaway will be held during evening festivities on Friday. Another will follow the Saturday afternoon session.

For conference registration details and further information about the MTA Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee, please visit www.massteacher.org/emac.



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Schedule is established for piloting DDMs

Continued from Page 11
alteration of certain professional development requirements or a shortening of the length of the Educator Plan from two years to one.

DDM implementation

The DESE is slowing down DDM implementation.

“After hearing from our members, it was very clear that the schedule they had planned was far too fast,” said MTA President Paul Toner. “Districts were being expected to move forward even before guidance was available from the department. That’s why we and others urged the commissioner to slow it down.”

This year, districts are supposed to be piloting at least one potential DDM in each of these subjects:

- Early-grade literacy
- Early-grade math
- Middle-grade math
- High school writing to text
- Traditionally non-tested grades and subjects

Unless an extension is granted, DDMs piloted this year are to be

‘I am optimistic that if DDMs are done right, they can be helpful.’
— North Reading Band Director Eric Forman

administered in 2014-2015 and DDMs for the remaining subjects are to be administered the following year.

The DESE and the MTA have both created examples of DDMs, which can be found in the District-Determined Measures Toolkit on the MTA website at www.massteacher.org/ddms.

Locals begin process

Eric Forman, former president of the North Reading Education Association, said that a teacher-administrator work group has begun to implement DDMs in his district.

“I am optimistic that if DDMs are done right, they can be helpful,” he told *MTA Today*.

“We and the administration agree this new evaluation system is about growth,” he continued. “At first some people felt like, ‘They’re out to get us.’ As people have gone through this, they are seeing that it’s not to get rid of me but to help me be a better teacher. The

attitude on both sides is that, ‘We are all in this together. We have to make this work for everybody.’”

Forman, a middle and high school band director, said he is piloting a literacy DDM this year, since students are required to write in all subjects.

“I’m going to give them a writing assignment at the end of November and then another one in May,” he said.

The music department is also creating team goals to help measure improvements in students’ musical performance. Staff members are hoping to obtain software called SmartMusic, which analyzes how many notes a student plays correctly and suggests improvements.

Fall River, like many districts, is not as far along. Rebecca Cusick, president of the Fall River Educators Association, said of DDMs: “We’re at the starting line.” She added that her association’s goal is to form teams of teachers and administrators to “create

authentic assessments” that show growth.

“I don’t think that the canned assessments we have are good at measuring growth,” she said.

Linda Hanson, president of the Arlington Education Association and co-coordinator of K-5 literacy in her district, called for “common sense about DDMs.”

“I support there being pre- and post-measures at the local level,” Hanson said. “The best common assessments are used to inform instruction. Where are your strengths and weaknesses? It helps inform curriculum and lesson planning.

“We will be concerned if the state wants us to boil it all down to numbers,” she continued. “How do you quantify a year’s growth in ninth-grade social studies skills? It’s the statistics that make us nervous, not the concept of having a common assessment. In Arlington, the school committee, administration and teachers are on the same page about moving slowly and using measurements that make sense.”

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Setting goals is key step for educators

District-Determined Measures are one place in the evaluation system where student learning is considered. The other is in the “goal-setting” step of the evaluation process.

Under the new regulations, educators must identify at least one Professional Practice Goal and one Student Learning Goal.

Progress made toward meeting these goals is part of an educator’s summative evaluation rating. For example, if the goal is to make sure students use topic sentences effectively in their essays, and if a high percentage of students in a class fail to reach that goal by the end of the year, that failure could contribute to changing the teacher’s evaluation rating.

The SLG part of the system is already being implemented. The MTA is advising local associations that goals should describe what students are expected to know and be able to do and should not be a measure of performance. An educator should present multiple types of evidence, such as student writing samples from the beginning and end of the year or teacher-developed assessments, to show progress toward meeting a goal.

“The biggest pitfall to avoid is setting increased scores on a standardized test as the goal,” said Kathleen Skinner, director of the MTA’s Center for Education Policy and Practice. “Quality teaching and learning is the goal; test scores are just one possible source of evidence about whether progress is being made toward meeting it.

“Educators already report in poll after poll that they believe there is too much emphasis on standardized tests at the expense of teaching the whole child,” Skinner said. “Likewise, the new evaluation system should be looking at ‘the whole educator,’ not reducing teachers to their students’ test scores.”

More information on Student Learning Goals is available at massteacher.org/evaluation under Quick Links.

Retiree health bill hearing draws big crowd

By Laura Barrett

Gardner Auditorium in the State House was packed on Oct. 31 with public employees, state and municipal leaders, retirees and legislators testifying for and against House 59, the governor's bill to reduce the unfunded liability for retiree health insurance by changing certain eligibility requirements and increasing the health insurance premium share paid by some future retirees.

Governor Deval Patrick's bill is based on the recommendations of a special commission co-chaired by former MTA President Anne Wass that concluded the current level of benefits is unsustainable. The projected unfunded liability for retiree health insurance is \$30 billion for municipalities and another \$16 billion for the Commonwealth over the next 30 years.

"I'm here to say that we support the recommendations, but we want to work with you to improve upon this bill," MTA President Paul Toner testified at the hearing, which was held by the Joint Committee on Public Service.

Toner and others said they recognize that the magnitude of the unfunded liabilities could lead to future member layoffs, cuts in education services and reductions in benefits to retirees. Toner stated that the MTA's goal is to protect current employees, those close to retirement and long-term public employees.

The legislation based on the recommendations made by the special commission meets these goals, Toner said, but the MTA would like to see changes made that would address certain issues.

He outlined three areas in which the MTA hopes the Legislature will consider improvements in H. 59 to protect MTA members who could be adversely affected by the bill's eligibility requirements due to the nature of their jobs. The areas involve:

■ **Vocational/technical education teachers**, who are often hired in middle age after they have significant experience in their trades.

■ **Higher education faculty**, who are often hired later in life because it takes them many years to obtain advanced degrees.

■ **Education support professionals**, if they work in a municipality that only gives them



Photo by Laura Barrett

The audience pays close attention during a hearing on legislation that would affect health benefits for retirees.

credit for 10 months of work each year, thus making it significantly more difficult for them to become eligible for retiree health benefits.

A wide range of views was expressed by others who testified at the crowded hearing, including some who argued that the governor's bill goes

too far in cutting benefits and others who claimed it does not go far enough. Glen Shor, secretary of administration

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Educators lead call for Foundation Budget panel

By Jean Conley

Dozens of education activists and policy experts turned out at a recent State House hearing to voice enthusiastic support for “An Act to Revive the Foundation Budget Review Commission.”

The hearing room overflowed with educators, public policy experts and school business administrators waiting their turn to speak in front of the joint Education Committee, chaired by Representative Alice Peisch (D-Wellesley) and Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz (D-Boston). The legislation — House 457 and Senate 207 — is sponsored by the co-chairs. It would provide the first systematic review of the Foundation Budget formula since the Education Reform Act of 1993.

The Foundation Budget was established to ensure that each community has the funding it needs to educate its students adequately, regardless of how wealthy the city or town might be. The formula was to be reviewed every few years; there were two reviews early on, but it has



Photo by Jean Conley

Representative Jason Lewis (D-Winchester), fourth from left, testified with House colleagues, from left, Jay Kaufman (D-Lexington), Tackey Chan (D-Quincy), Paul Mark (D-Peru), Lori Ehrlich (D-Marblehead) and Keiko Orrall (R-Lakeville) in favor of legislation that would create a commission to review the Foundation Budget.

not been systematically updated. The current legislation would reconstitute the commission, ensuring a review every four years and updating of the formula when necessary.

MTA Vice President Tim Sullivan led off the testimony at the Oct. 17 hearing, noting that “over \$4 billion in state aid goes to local school districts every year, and we are now long

The Foundation Budget was established to ensure that each community has the funding it needs to educate its students adequately, regardless of how wealthy the city or town might be.

overdue for an analysis of whether school funding is adequate and used most effectively to meet the needs of our students.”

Sullivan testified that the Readiness Project, established by Governor Deval Patrick in 2007 to develop a plan for fundamental and systemic reforms to public education, recommended specifically that a comprehensive adequacy study be done to “quantify the level of resources required to provide an adequate public education to all children as required under the Massachusetts Constitution.”

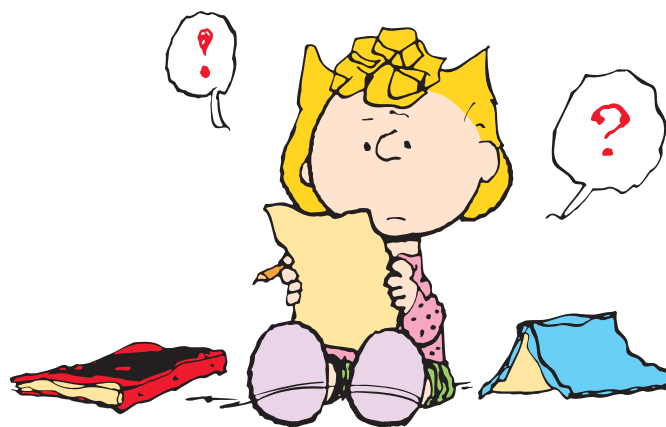
“In previous years,” Sullivan said, “we have asked for your support of such a comprehensive adequacy study, as recommended by the governor and others, but there have been questions about the need for such a study, which is why we have filed the bills currently before you.” He said the measures “put the Legislature in control of the process and outcome.”

The speakers who followed also spoke of the need for regular review. Representative Jason Lewis (D-Winchester) stood with five House colleagues, Democrats and Republicans alike, in favor of the legislation as he testified that “Massachusetts led the nation in 1993 with ed reform, and the Foundation Budget once served our Commonwealth very well.” But “many, many years have passed,” he said, and “that is no longer the case.”

Lewis testified with Representatives Jay Kaufman (D-Lexington), Tackey Chan (D-Quincy), Paul Mark (D-Peru), Lori Ehrlich (D-Marblehead) and Keiko Orrall (R-Lakeville). Representatives Paul Brodeur (D-Melrose) and Timothy Madden (D-Nantucket) and Senator John Keenan (D-Quincy), all of whom are co-sponsors of the legislation, also testified, and many other co-sponsors

Please turn to **Formula**/Page 21

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Gathering features melodious mix of activities

By Scott McLennan

The 12th annual MTA Retired Members Gathering featured a vibrant mix of celebration, activism and education, drawing roughly 200 participants to the Best Western Royal Plaza in Marlborough.

The program, held Sept. 24, featured seminars on topics ranging from financial and legal planning to political organizing, reports from the MTA Retired Members Committee and MTA leaders on issues of concern to educators, and recognition for decades of service by Dr. Richard Lyons and Kathleen Roberts, who co-chairs the Retired Members Committee.

Roberts' committee co-chair, Richard Liston, touched on the activism of MTA retirees during his opening remarks.

"Since our last gathering, we have two new senators, and MTA retirees played key roles in the elections," Liston said, referring to U.S. Senators Elizabeth Warren and Edward Markey. "We made calls, held signs and were poll watchers.

"But we can never rest on our laurels," he continued. "We need the same amount of vigor, passion and involvement as we come into fall 2014, with the governor's race and Senator Markey's race."

Markey won a special election in June to fulfill the term of Senator John Kerry following Kerry's appointment as secretary of state. The seat will be on the ballot again in November 2014. Warren was elected to a full six-year term in 2012, defeating incumbent Republican Scott Brown, who had served in the Senate since 2010.

MTA retirees' involvement in politics is reliable, and they can be counted on to step up again in 2014. Liston pointed out during the Marlborough event that one-third of MTA's Legislative and Political Action Team members are retirees.

During his address to the crowd, MTA Vice President Tim Sullivan praised retirees' activism and outlined MTA's legislative and policy initiatives, which range from protecting Social Security benefits to the proper implementation of Common Core standards in the classroom. He also alluded to the goals of the MTA Strategic Action Plan, which seeks to build the strength of the union and



Photo by Scott McLennan

MTA Retired Members Committee Co-Chair Richard Liston reads a birthday greeting from U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren to former MTA President Kathleen Roberts. Roberts, who co-chairs the committee, turned 99 in September and received special recognition during the recent Retired Members Gathering. Looking on at right is MTA Vice President Tim Sullivan, who led the group in singing "Happy Birthday" to Roberts. The gathering drew approximately 200 participants to Marlborough on Sept. 24.

engage educators in politics, policy and the public debate.

"We need to engage members so we can build the power necessary to meet our standards and our needs — and the needs of our students," Sullivan said. "Thank you for all that you do. Stay active professionally

and in the campaigns. Keep being the educators you have always been."

Two retirees received special thanks. First, Lyons received the Honor Our Own award.

In presenting him with the honor, former MTA President Mary Gilmore, a member of the association's Executive

Committee, noted Lyons' significant role in the drive that merged Lowell State College and Lowell Technological Institute in 1975 to create what is now UMass Lowell. Lyons was president of the first faculty association to represent educators at the new institution, and he

Please turn to **Two**/Page 22

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16 Fall 2013

MTA offers DDM recommendations

Continued from Page 13

The MTA is recommending that locals bargain a DDM process that includes the following steps:

■ **District working groups:** District and association leaders should form a District Evaluation Working Group that oversees the identification and/or development of DDMs.

■ **Assessment survey:** This group should administer an online survey developed by the MTA and recommended by the DESE to identify assessments that are already being used and that fit DDM requirements.

■ **DDM cadres:** The district working group should form DDM cadres made up of teachers and subject-area leaders. Among other tasks, the cadres should review and understand the requirements, analyze which DDMs are already available, recommend new ones that meet the criteria and estimate how much learning constitutes a year’s worth of growth on each DDM.

■ **Create a plan:** Based on recommendations from the cadres, the working group should provide a written recommendation to the school committee and local association to ratify or negotiate modifications. If an agreement is not reached, either party may file a petition for arbitration.

■ **Professional learning:** Prior to adopting the DDMs, district educators and evaluators will need professional development in understanding the DDMs and how they should be used.

■ **Pilot, evaluate and revise:** The MTA recommends that the DDM process be ongoing. Educators should discuss and analyze what they learned from the pilot years and make changes, as needed, to try to make sure the program is relevant and helpful at improving instruction.

“Work closely with your MTA field representative to make sure that whatever DDMs you develop are fair, effective and helpful,” Toner advised local leaders.

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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 and school vacations.

- 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., 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 — Edward Nelson: 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, 774.239.7823.

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Agent? Carrier? Deciphering insurance terminology

As you go about your day, you're likely to turn to a variety of people for answers to specific questions. Is it a matter for the principal? Is it a school committee issue? Maybe you need to touch base with a fellow educator — to turn to a paraprofessional or consult with a teacher. Perhaps you need to speak to a janitor.

As members are aware, the MTA represents a diverse family of individuals in an array of roles.

Within the insurance industry, there is a similar range of roles. Educators Insurance Agency often fields questions such as:

Are *agent* and *carrier* interchangeable?

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First, consider the *people* involved in the insurance process. They probably include you and the person you purchased your insurance from, in addition to the team that helps you in the event of a claim or a change in your coverage needs.

These people effectively represent the retail side of the insurance industry and are considered *agents* because they deal directly with customers.

Agents sell policies on behalf of insurance *carriers*, and they can represent one or more companies. At Educators Insurance, there are *agents* who help advise MTA members and their families on the best coverage, policies and products to meet their needs.

Carriers, on the other hand, set rates and determine premiums. In the event of an accident, the *carrier* is the company that will assist you with your claim. Educators Insurance Agency represents carriers, including the Andover Insurance Company and The Hanover Insurance Group.

Another common insurance question is, "Why do I need an *agent*?" With today's technology, it's



very easy to go online and get a quote directly from companies such as Geico and Progressive. So what's the point of having an agent?

Consulting with an insurance agent provides a variety of benefits. Agents can build a policy that's right for you.

Since all MTA members drive different vehicles and own various types of properties, insurance needs may differ. Your agent will work with you extensively and help determine specific coverage based on your lifestyle.

Agents are also trained to ask the questions you haven't thought of regarding your coverage. They're

able to explain exactly what a policy covers and the limitations on that coverage.

Educators Insurance Agency is there to help you with any insurance question you may have. For more information or to speak with an advisor toll-free, call 877.284.7646 or visit www.educatorsinsuranceagency.com.

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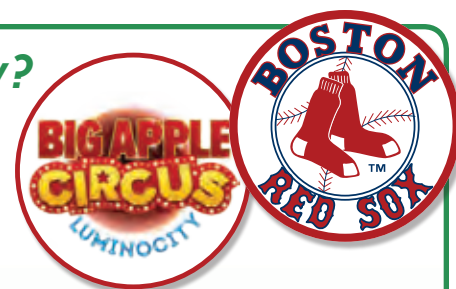


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Did you know this year's directory can be printed from the MTA Benefits website? That's right. Whether you want to copy the directory from cover to cover or just one page for a specific discount listing, you will find it housed in a PDF format on the MTAB website. Just visit mtabenefits.com and click on Discount Directory under "Discounts."



MTA offers training for evaluation teams

By Jean Conley

The MTA is providing “train the trainer” programs for school, district and combined school/district teams learning to lead implementation of the state’s new educator evaluation system.

Administrators and teacher leaders will learn how to plan and deliver professional development sessions at their own schools or at sites in their districts, whether or not they

are Race to the Top districts. Funding for the sessions is provided by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Professional development points are available from the MTA.

Anne Wass, former MTA president and a trainer for the program, said she thinks that “every local district would be smart” to choose the MTA to do its educator evaluation training.

“The program developed by the MTA is well organized, well

‘The program developed by the MTA is well organized, well researched and highly effective.’

— Former MTA President Anne Wass

researched and highly effective,” Wass said. “It takes what at first appears to be a very complex and overwhelming process and breaks it down into easily understandable units.”

She added, “I believe members are more likely to embrace this new system if it is presented by other MTA members. That is one of the strengths of the ‘train the trainer’ model. It is also a much more effective program because the school building teams are composed of both administrators and teachers working together. A district will benefit by giving the appropriate time and training provided by this high-quality program to its educators.”

Districts have two options for the six-session training. The MTA recommends that districts choose six three-hour sessions, which generally include an hour each session of direct instruction, team-based activities and planning for school/district PD sessions. The other option consists of six two-hour sessions that include an hour each of direct instruction and team-based activities. Each session is followed by a one-hour team homework assignment.

Session topics include an overview

of statutory and regulatory requirements and an explanation of the five-step evaluation cycle, “unpacking the rubric,” self-assessment, SMART-ER goals and educator plan development, gathering evidence, and observation and feedback.

School teams must have at least four members, including the principal, administrators and teacher leaders; district teams must have at least four members; and mixed teams must have at least three school members and one district member. For teams of up to six members, the DESE will pay all costs directly to the MTA. For more than six, districts will be assessed a fee by the MTA. Every district may send one team per school plus one district team. That means that a district with nine schools could send 10 teams — nine school teams and one district team.

For more information, please contact Ralph Devlin in the MTA’s Division of Training and Professional Learning by e-mailing rdevlin@massteacher.org or calling 617.878.8234. A copy of the division’s full description of the program can be found at <http://masstea.ch/HJyXDH>.

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Sullivan named to early ed panel

MTA Vice President Tim Sullivan has been named to a special commission investigating the current state of early education and care services in Massachusetts.

The commission, established during fiscal 2014 budget deliberations, is charged with assessing the need for greater access to high-quality early education and care. It is also charged with examining eligibility and procedures and developing recommendations to improve affordability.

“There are approximately 42,000 children in Massachusetts on waiting lists for early education centers,” Sullivan said. “All of the research shows that students given access to early education programs are better prepared and more likely to succeed once they enter kindergarten and

‘Expanding access to early education programs will help close achievement gaps among our students.’

— Tim Sullivan
MTA Vice President

first grade. Expanding access to early education programs will help close achievement gaps among our students.”

The 19 members of the Early Education and Care Commission come from a variety of educational, legislative and administrative backgrounds. The panel is chaired by Thomas L. Weber, commissioner of early education and care. A consultant has been hired to assist the commission in its work. The panel began meeting in September and is expected to submit a report by Dec. 31.

Providers' group would enhance stability and quality

Continued from Page 7

A coalition of education and labor activists has built a statewide network of center owners and workers to continue pushing for the bill's passage once it emerges from the committee.

"Study after study shows the value of good preK programs. The MECEU will help ensure the quality of early education programs, create stability for providers and increase access for parents," said MECEU Campaign Director Teresa Rankin.

Unlike traditional collective bargaining units, the providers' organization would not seek to draw up agreements that affect working conditions *within* child care centers. Instead, each center would retain its autonomy, and owners, educators and directors alike would be members of the providers' union. The legislation would affect roughly 500 independently operated centers that employ 5,000 educators.

MTA General Counsel Lee Weissinger said that the legislation "would stabilize the channels of communication."

"Those in the field could better work with the state to improve the climate of child care and early education," Weissinger added.

Regulation vs. reality

The tension between state-mandated regulations and the economic viability of centers taking state vouchers is ever present, affecting everything from staffing requirements to teaching credentials and reimbursements for transporting children.

Wonder Years owner Jones said that her \$9-per-child reimbursement for transporting children between home and the center has gone unchanged over the course of the 10 years that she has been in the field.

"Gas and insurance have certainly gone up. And I have to pay the van driver and monitor," she said.

Likewise, the push to have early education instructors hold at least a bachelor's degree is welcomed by many staff members and directors. Yet once educators earn their degrees, they must often leave the centers they work for in search of higher-paying positions to cover the cost of having furthered their education.

A white paper issued by the MECEU that was delivered to state



Photo by Scott McLennan

Janetsy Sanchez works on reading skills with 3-year-old Alahni Davis at the Wonder Years early education and child care center in Dorchester.

legislators this past summer showed that because the annual salary for a center-based teacher in Massachusetts is \$25,000 — roughly half the average salary of a public preschool teacher — high turnover is rampant in an industry that needs more workers.

The policy paper also noted that state reimbursements for care are far below market value, and families that

do qualify for vouchers have access to only a sliver of the existing education market.

Centers accepting state vouchers also find themselves at a loss to pay for the types of program enhancements, such as increased staffing, that could pave the way for greater reimbursement from the state, setting up a frustrating work environment

that left one center owner in Roxbury saying she feels like her center is open on a day-to-day basis.

Lenita Richardson has seen the early education and care issue from the angles of parent, educator and director.

"I felt comfortable knowing my kids were in a safe environment and with people who were helping them grow," she said of the days when she relied on child care so she could work.

Richardson eventually entered the child care field and saw firsthand both the difficulties and the rewards of taking courses and engaging in professional development that ultimately made her better at her job, despite some degree of financial strain. She has now been in the field of early education for 22 years and serves as director of the Arcadia Learning Academy in Dorchester.

"A lot of people look at us like we are baby sitters, and people are just dropping off their kids for us to watch," Richardson said. "We are not just baby sitters. We are working with these children and seeing them flourish and bloom."

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*The M.Ed. in Curriculum & Instruction does not lead to licensure and is intended primarily for professional advancement.

Formula leaves school districts facing ‘huge disparities’

Continued from Page 15

of the legislation submitted written testimony urging that the bills be voted out of committee.

Luc Schuster, deputy director of the nonpartisan Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, displayed slides showing that costs in some areas, such as special education and health insurance, have grown far faster than had been estimated when the funding formula was initiated. While wealthier districts have been able to shift or add to Chapter 70 funding, lower-income districts have often not had the resources to do so. This, Schuster said, ultimately leads to huge disparities between non-wealthy districts and wealthier ones.

Schuster said that while the state initially “made an important commitment” to the Foundation Budget, inflation, lower tax revenues and other factors over the last 20 years have eroded that commitment.

David Verdolino, assistant superintendent for operations in Medway and a member of the Massachusetts Association of School

Officials, called the current formula “outdated and illogical.”

Business Officials, said technology, energy and health insurance costs have risen far faster than the average rate of inflation. He called the current formula “outdated and illogical” and reiterated that financially struggling cities and towns are “spending at exactly foundation levels,” while wealthier districts routinely spend 115 percent to 120 percent above their foundation budgets.

Titus DosRemedios, director of research and policy for Strategies for Children, testified that the review commission is vitally needed to deal with the state’s persistent achievement gap.

“We will not close this gap until we target more resources to early learning,” he said.

“We all want the same thing for the Commonwealth that we do for our own children — a bright and prosperous future,” he said. But

he cited results of Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System tests that showed that 43 percent of Massachusetts third-graders scored below “proficient” in reading this year. He said that 68 percent of third-graders in Boston, 73 percent in Brockton and 87 percent in Holyoke don’t meet standards for reading.

Schuster cited gains in neuroscience research that point to the need for more emphasis on early childhood education. Despite these gains, he said, the Chapter 70 Foundation Budget “is virtually silent on how to fund and adequately address learning from preschool through grade three.”

“We need to go where research tells us has the most impact — high-quality early education,” he said.

Neil Clarke, a Legislative and Political Action Team Senate district coordinator for the MTA and a retired

teacher from Lee, reminded the committee how quickly the pace of change has accelerated since education reform put the funding formula into effect. Today’s “top 10 in-demand jobs didn’t exist in 2004,” Clarke said. “If Facebook were a country, it would be the third largest, behind China and India,” he added.

Clarke said it took “38 years for radio to reach 350 million people, 13 years for television, and four for the Web.” And yet the Foundation Budget formula remains the same.

“We need to be resilient — not resistant to change,” he said, noting that Charles Darwin proved it’s “not the strongest of the species that survive, or the most intelligent, but those that are the most adaptable” to change.

Clarke then posed this question: “Isn’t it time now, after 20 years, to revive the Foundation Budget Review Commission and explore what changes might be necessary?”

Updates will be posted on the MTA website, www.massteacher.org.

Keira Clemenzi Excited Fan of Greenpark Mortgage



Keira Clemenzi

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Photo by Scott McLennan

Members of the SEA Committee of Retired Teachers at the opening.

The right supplies at the perfect price

Continued from Page 8

were taking on new assignments in which they would no longer need the accumulated materials.

After a preliminary opening for new teachers, Tools 4 Teaching attracted a diverse array of educators for its grand opening.

Jean-Claude Gerlus, who teaches French and Spanish at Central High School, loaded up on some basic supplies and scanned shelves of books. Ashley Abel, who teaches fourth-graders at the Liberty Elementary School, was selecting reading materials appropriate for her students. PreK teachers found a trove of games and toys for their young charges.

The giveaway center, in space donated by the city, sits within a fenced area inside the Richard E. Neal Municipal Operations Center at 70 Tapley St. Consider it Springfield's little-box alternative to those big-box stores that teachers often have to run to when they need to replenish supplies.

A group called Springfield School Volunteers is facilitating business and corporate donations to Tools 4 Teaching so the donors can take advantage of that group's 501(c)(3) nonprofit status at tax time. The Springfield Teachers Credit Union and Mass Mutual Financial Group have already sent in items, some surplus and some left over from conferences and seminars, according to Denise Cogman of Springfield School Volunteers. Teachers can also procure classroom furniture stored at the Neal Building.

Members of the SEA Committee of Retired Teachers staff the location on the second Thursday afternoon of each month to collect materials, and on the third Thursday afternoon of each month so it can be open for "shoppers." As long as the shoppers have Springfield school employee IDs, the Tools 4 Teaching merchandise is free.

Williams encourages other districts to start resource recycling programs of their own. She suggests

tapping into city resources, as the Springfield Education Association did to find space in the Neal building; forming a dedicated committee that meets at least once per month to make sure the program stays on track; and communicating constantly.

"Be prepared to make many follow-up phone calls," she said.

Committee members involved in the project include Williams, Ronnie Tillman, Patricia Sullivan, Mary Scherpa, Nancy Meyer, Gail Healey, Jean Haley and Sue Fielding.

Questions about donations can be sent to Chris Williams via e-mail at chris429544@gmail.com.

Two retirees are honored

Continued from Page 16

served the union in various capacities throughout his career.

"I felt I had more of an impact as a grad student than I did as a professor," Lyons said, reflecting on why he became active in his union and stayed active throughout a career that spanned 36 years. "I wanted to have a say in who was hired, who was promoted, who supervised me."

Roberts expressed genuine surprise when Liston interrupted lunch with what seemed an impromptu speech. It began with a recitation of historic events from 1937, including Amelia Earhart's disappearance and the Hindenburg dirigible disaster.

"Perhaps more importantly on this date in 1937, there were two more things of note. On September 24, 1937, the Sox lost to the dreaded Yankees, 5 to 1, and Kay Roberts was teaching," Liston said. His comment was followed by the presentation of a plaque honoring Roberts' many contributions through the years — to students, to the MTA, to public education and to her community.



Photo by Scott McLennan

Dr. Richard Lyons received the Honor Our Own award.

Liston also read Roberts — who had recently turned 99 — a birthday greeting sent from Senator Warren. MTA Vice President Sullivan then led the luncheon crowd in singing "Happy Birthday."

The light moments were balanced with the serious business of legal and financial-issue seminars specifically geared toward retirees. The Retired Members Committee also collected school supplies to be donated to the Emma L. Miller Memorial Elementary School in the rural Western Massachusetts community of Savoy.

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A parade of pink

MTA Vice President Tim Sullivan, wearing a blue jacket, joined his son, Timothy, Jr., who is walking just in front of him, and other students from the Maria Weston Chapman Middle School in Weymouth on a two-mile march in support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month on Oct. 25. The march, which also included other adults, was the brainchild of seventh-grade English language arts teacher Laura Bianco-Caterer, a breast cancer survivor herself, who also organized other events at the school. The students have raised thousands of dollars for cancer research.

Photo by Bob Duffy



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Bill seeks changes in retirees' benefits

Continued from Page 14

and finance, said that the governor is not wedded to all of the provisions in H. 59, but strongly believes that changes along the lines outlined in the bill are needed to prevent massive fiscal problems for both the state and municipalities, as well as to preserve the quality of public services in the future.

Under current law, most state and municipal retirees are eligible for health insurance benefits after they retire if they have completed 10 years of creditable service. The employer pays 50 percent or more of the premium.

Under H. 59, future employees and some current employees would need at least 20 years of creditable service to be eligible for retiree health insurance benefits. The employer's share of the retiree's health insurance premium would be prorated for those with more than 20 years but fewer than 30 years.

Certain employees nearing retirement would be "grandfathered in" under the bill.

The Public Service Committee took no immediate action on the bill following the hearing.

More information on the bill is posted on the MTA website at www.massteacher.org/OPEB.



**For information, call
800.392.6175, Ext. 8265**

MTA supports workplace fairness initiatives

The MTA Board of Directors has voted unanimously to endorse two ballot proposals designed to improve fairness for some of the lowest-paid workers in the Commonwealth.

One initiative would require employers to offer earned sick time at the rate of an hour for every 30 hours of work, with a cap at 40 hours a year. U.S. Senator Edward Markey is the lead petitioner.

The second proposal would gradually raise the state's minimum wage from \$8 to \$10.50 an hour over the next two years. Future increases after two years would be tied to inflation. U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren is the lead signer on that initiative.

Raise Up Massachusetts, an umbrella coalition of labor, religious and community groups,

is spearheading the effort to get the initiatives on the November 2014 ballot. The MTA Board voted to support the proposals in October. As *MTA Today* went to press, signature gathering on the petitions had concluded, and the assessment process was underway.

Raise Up Massachusetts estimates that nearly 1 million workers in Massachusetts do not have access to paid time off when the employee or a family member is ill. In June,

New York City adopted a measure guaranteeing paid earned sick leave for workers, as have Seattle, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Portland, Ore., and the state of Connecticut.

MTA President Paul Toner urged MTA members to support the two ballot questions, saying that paid sick time and a livable wage are crucial to the economic health of Massachusetts.

"Too many workers in Massachusetts have gone far too

long without the basics of workplace fairness," Toner said. "Both our continued economic progress in Massachusetts and simple decency demand that workplaces treat their employees in fair and equitable ways."

More information about the Raise Up Massachusetts campaign is available at www.raiseupma.org, by e-mailing Carl Nilsson at carltoness@gmail.com or calling 617.284.1260.

Obituaries

Saundra F. Boyer, 77, of Worcester. Taught for several years at the West Tatnuck School in Worcester, retiring in 2010. Aug. 23.

Irene C. Donovan, 87, of Stoneham. Was an elementary teacher for the Stoneham Public Schools. Sept. 24.

Mildred M. "Bonnie" Finn, 86, of Holyoke. Taught fourth grade at the Stefanik School in Chicopee for 35 years. Oct. 9.

Theodore E. "Ted" Kyrios, Jr., 63, of Amesbury. Taught social studies for 32 years at the Nock Middle School in Newburyport. Aug. 12.

Claire McManus, 81, of West Boylston. Was a kindergarten teacher for 31 years in the Worcester school system. Aug. 26.

Frank C. Olbris, 69, of Florence. Was a mail clerk for Central Mail Services for 47 years at UMass Amherst. Was a past president of the University Staff Association and a member of the MTA Board of Directors. Sept. 15.

Judith M. Prisco, 66, of Southbridge. Taught reading and computer science for several years in the Southbridge school system and served as treasurer of the Southbridge Teachers Association. Aug. 20.

Gary W. Sherman, 64, of New Bedford. Taught in the New Bedford Public Schools for 35 years. July 21.

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Nomination papers available

MTA members who intend to seek election to MTA office at the 2014 Annual Meeting of Delegates or to run for NEA Director may now apply for nomination papers.

Annual Meeting elections will take place in May for vacancies in the offices of President, Vice President, Regional Executive Committee Member, At-Large ESP Executive Committee Member, Statewide Retired Region Executive Committee Member, At-Large Director to Represent Education Support Professionals and District Director.

There are two NEA Director vacancies. The directors will be elected by direct-mail ballot. Ballots will be sent to the entire membership.

Applications for nomination papers for MTA office must be submitted in writing to the office of the Executive Director-Treasurer, MTA, 20 Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108. Although there is no deadline for requesting them, nomination papers for MTA office must be filed with the Executive Director-Treasurer *by 5 p.m. on March 7*, regardless of when they are postmarked.

Nomination papers for the NEA Director posts may be requested in the same manner, but must be filed no later than *Friday, Jan. 10*.

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

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

President and Vice President*: The President and Vice President will be elected for two-year terms commencing July 15, 2014. A candidate must be an active MTA member** or a retired MTA member within the statewide retired district. A local affiliate shall not be represented

ELECTION TIMELINE	
NOMINATION DEADLINES	
December 30	Candidate Recommendation Committee
January 10	Regional Ethnic Minority Delegates to MTA Annual Meeting
January 10	Statewide Retired District Delegates to MTA Annual Meeting
January 10	Statewide, Regional and Retired Delegates to NEA RA
January 10	NEA Directors
March 7	President
March 7	Vice President
March 7	Regional Executive Committee Members
March 7	At-Large ESP Executive Committee Member
March 7	Statewide Retired Region Executive Committee Member
March 7	District Directors
March 7	At-Large Director to Represent ESPs
March 7	Retired Members Committee
April 11	Student Delegate Election to the NEA RA
FILING DEADLINES FOR PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	
January 10	Bylaws and Standing Rules
January 10	Resolutions

on the MTA Board of Directors by more than one officer (President or Vice President).

Regional Executive Committee Members*: There will be four vacancies for Regional Executive Committee Member positions. The vacancies are for Regions A, C, F and

G. A candidate must be an active MTA member** and must be employed in education within the electoral region in which the candidate seeks office. All terms will be for three years.

At-Large ESP Executive Committee Member*: There is one vacancy for At-Large ESP Executive

Committee Member. The term is for three years. Any active member of the association who is an education support professional is eligible to be a candidate for At-Large ESP Executive Committee Member. The nomination deadline is March 7.

Please turn to **Nomination**/Page 29

2014 NOMINATION FORM FOR:

NEA DELEGATES TO THE NEA RA ● REGIONAL ETHNIC MINORITY DELEGATES

TO THE MTA ANNUAL MEETING ● STATEWIDE RETIRED DISTRICT DELEGATES TO THE MTA ANNUAL MEETING

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

A candidate must file this nomination form or a facsimile with the Executive Director-Treasurer by 5 p.m. on Friday, January 10, 2014, regardless of postmark.

ADDITIONAL FORMS MAY BE REQUESTED OR THIS FORM MAY BE DUPLICATED. FORMS MAY BE FAXED TO VANESSA STORY AT 617.570.4901.

NAME OF CANDIDATE: _____

MEMBER ID #: _____

(Listed on your MTA ID card)

E-MAIL: _____

HOME ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

WORK E-MAIL: _____

SCHOOL ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

LOCAL ASSOCIATION: _____

DISTRICT/REGION: _____

Please check the appropriate box that corresponds to the election.

**NEA DELEGATE
TO THE NEA RA**

EDUCATIONAL POSITION:
(Check One)

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

(See policy for definitions.)

I hereby declare my candidacy for:
(Check One)

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

MTA REGIONAL ETHNIC MINORITY DELEGATE TO THE MTA ANNUAL MEETING

ETHNIC MINORITY DESIGNATION:
(Check One)

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

EDUCATIONAL POSITION

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

**MTA STATEWIDE RETIRED DISTRICT
DELEGATE TO THE MTA ANNUAL MEETING**

Candidate Eligibility: (Check One)

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

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **MTA Policy:** Each candidate may submit a headshot photograph and biography/statement containing no more than 50 words. Note: Only the first 50 words will be printed. ***The Credentials and Ballot Committee reserves the right to edit all bios.***
2. **Write out** your statement on a separate piece of paper first, and then fill out the grid.
3. **Type or print clearly**, using both upper- and lower-case letters, as you expect the final statement to appear.
4. Insert only **one word** per box.
5. **Do not combine words or numbers with hyphens or slashes.**
6. “An,” “a” and “the” constitute one word.
7. **Acronyms**, such as “NEA-RA” or “MTA,” count as one word.
8. **Insert punctuation** in the **same box** immediately after the word that you want it to follow.
9. Indicate intent to commence a **new paragraph** by inserting the paragraph symbol (§) in the same box immediately preceding the first word in the paragraph.
10. **A date** represented as “October 1, 2012” shall constitute three words. The same date represented as “10/1/12” is only one word.
11. Send this entire nomination form and photo to: MTA Governance and Administration Division, 20 Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108. Only this form and photos received by **January 10, 2014**, will be published with the ballot. **PHOTO ON FILE MAY BE USED.** The Credentials and Ballot Committee may request a new or more recent photo.

BIO/STATEMENT GRID — PLEASE PRINT

Please select from the following and check the appropriate boxes:

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

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

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

NEA RA delegates to be elected by mail

Statewide, regional and retired delegates from Massachusetts to the 2014 NEA Representative Assembly will be elected by mail ballot next March and April.

The election to choose NEA Directors will be held simultaneously and in the same manner. The nomination period for delegates is now in process and will close at 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 10. The nomination form is on Page 26 of this issue of *MTA Today*.

The election period runs from March 1 through April 25. Ballots for statewide and regional delegates will be mailed to eligible active MTA/NEA members and will be accompanied by bio/statements and photos of candidates who submit them.

Retired delegate ballots and bio/statements will be mailed only

to retired and retired life NEA members.

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

The distribution of statewide and regional seats will be voted on by the MTA Board of Directors at its meeting on Jan. 24; candidates will be informed of the final allocation plan and will be given an opportunity to alter the designation for the level they seek to represent.

Tentative dates for the RA are July 1 through July 6, and travel dates are June 30 and July 7. The RA will take place in Denver. The statewide,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Inquiries concerning procedures for the nomination and election of NEA delegates may be addressed to Vanessa Story in the MTA Division of Governance and Administration. Her phone number is 617.878.8213, her fax number is 617.570.4901 and her e-mail address is vstory@massteacher.org.

Regional ethnic minority delegates to be chosen

Regional ethnic minority delegates to the 2014 MTA Annual Meeting will be elected by mail ballot next March and April in conjunction with the NEA delegate/director elections.

The nomination period for regional ethnic minority delegates is now in process and will close at 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 10. Nominations are open to all eligible ethnic minority members through a self-nomination process.

The form appears on Page 26 of this issue of *MTA Today*.

Regional ethnic minority delegates will be elected by mail ballots forwarded in the same self-mailer as the NEA ballots. The election period runs from March 1 through April 25. Ballots for regional ethnic minority delegates will be mailed to active MTA members, accompanied by bio/statements and photos of candidates who submit them.

The 2014 allocation of regional ethnic minority delegates will be based

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

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

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

Inquiries regarding procedures may be directed to Vanessa Story in the MTA Division of Governance and Administration. Her phone number is 617.878.8213, her e-mail address is vstory@massteacher.org and her fax number is 617.570.4901.

Bylaws and Rules Committee now accepting proposals

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

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

Filing process and deadline: Proposed changes to the Bylaws must be received in writing by the MTA Bylaws and Rules Committee by 5 p.m. on Jan. 10.

Proposed changes to the Standing Rules only may be submitted in writing to the MTA Bylaws and Rules Committee up to the opening of the first business session of the May 9-10 Annual Meeting in Boston.

However, early submission by the Jan. 10 deadline provides an opportunity for a full hearing by the committee, by the Board of Directors and at the April preconvention meetings.

It also allows advance publication in the Spring issue of *MTA Today*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Who may submit proposals? Individual MTA members, groups of members and local associations are eligible to submit proposed amendments to the MTA Bylaws and Standing Rules.

Members wishing to use an official title representing an MTA

Please turn to **Bylaws**/Page 28

MTA Resolutions Committee accepting proposals

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

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

The initial deadline for submissions to the Resolutions Committee is Friday, Jan. 10.

Proposed resolutions may also be submitted by the end of business on Friday, May 9, at the Annual Meeting of Delegates. The committee may also propose resolutions.

All resolutions submitted are considered by the Resolutions

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

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

The 2013-2014 Resolutions Committee members are Chairwoman Diana Marcus, Susan Densmore,

JoAnn Evans, Millie Ficarra, Susan Karb, David McGlothlin, Lorraine Niccoli and Deanna White-Hebert. Laura Barrett is the staff consultant, and Janice Morrissey is the staff assistant.

To see the MTA’s current resolutions, please visit www.massteacher.org/resolutions.

Nominations sought for Candidate Recommendation Committee

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

The committee is responsible for making recommendations to MTA members to support candidates for state and federal office. There are currently openings in each of the following congressional districts: District 2, two vacancies; District 3, one interim vacancy until March 2015; District 4, one vacancy; District 5, two vacancies; District 6, one vacancy; District 8, one vacancy; and District 9, two vacancies.

Other than interim vacancies, terms are for three years. Each committee member must reside in the congressional district to be represented.

Any MTA member interested in running for the CRC should contact Vanessa Story in the MTA Division of Governance and Administration by calling 617.878.8213 or e-mailing vstory@massteacher.org to request a nomination form.

The nomination form and a biographical statement of not more than 100 words must be received by

Dec. 30. Those eligible to vote for CRC members are delegates to the past year’s MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates who reside in that congressional district.

Upon request, candidates will be provided with lists of MTA Annual Meeting delegates for their respective congressional districts, along with names and addresses.

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

Ballots including the candidates’ biographical statements will be mailed to the electorate on the first Friday in February (Feb. 7) and must be returned no later than 5 p.m. on the last Friday in February (Feb. 28).

Candidates who are elected via the ballot process or the election waiver will start their terms on March 15.

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

Statewide retired district delegates to be chosen by mail ballot

MTA statewide retired district delegates to the 2014 MTA Annual Meeting will be elected by mail ballot in conjunction with the NEA delegate/director elections.

The nomination period for statewide retired delegates is now in process and will close at 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 10.

Nominations are open to all eligible MTA/NEA retired members through a self-nomination process. The form appears on Page 26 of this issue of *MTA Today*.

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

through April 25. Ballots for statewide retired delegates will be mailed to retired MTA/NEA members and will be accompanied by bio/statements and photos of candidates who submit them. The 2014 allocation of statewide retired district delegates and successor delegates will be based on the number of MTA/NEA retired members from the statewide retired district on record no

later than March 1. Terms last one year.

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

Inquiries may be directed to Vanessa Story in the MTA Division of Governance and Administration at 617.878.8213. They may also be e-mailed to vstory@massteacher.org or faxed to 617.570.4901.

Bylaws and Rules Committee assistance available

Continued from Page 27

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

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

Assistance: The Bylaws and Rules Committee and members of the MTA staff are available to discuss

ideas for potential amendments and to provide technical assistance.

Inquiries and proposals submitted to the Bylaws and Rules Committee should be channeled through Vanessa Story, MTA director of governance and administration. Her mailing address is: MTA, 20 Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108. Her phone number is 617.878.8213, her fax number is 617.570.4901 and her e-mail address is vstory@massteacher.org.

Election waiver

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

Retired committee has four seats open

Four members of the eight-member Retired Members Committee will be elected by statewide retired district delegates to the 2014 MTA Annual Meeting in May.

Please see the Winter issue of the *MTA Reporter* for details and the self-nomination form for these positions.

The deadline for nominations is March 7.



Nomination papers available for 2014 elections

Continued from Page 25

Statewide Retired Region Executive Committee Member*: There is one vacancy for a Statewide Retired Region Executive Committee member. The term is for three years. Any retired member can be a candidate. The nomination deadline is March 7.

District Directors – MTA Board*: There will be 18 vacancies for District

Director positions on the MTA Board. All terms will be for three years. The open districts are 2A, 3A, 4A, 5A, 26A, 8B, 11B, 34C, 43C, 15D, 27D, 37E, 38E, 22F, 18G, 21G, 44H and 45H. Each candidate must be an active MTA member** and must be employed in education within the electoral district in which the candidate seeks office.

At-Large Director for Education

Support Professionals*: The At-Large Director for Education Support Professionals will be elected to a three-year term commencing July 1, 2014, and running through June 30, 2017. A candidate must be an active MTA member** in the education support professional category.

NEA Directors*: The vacant NEA Director seats will be filled by

direct-mail vote in March and April, in tandem with NEA statewide and regional delegate elections. The term is three years, beginning Sept. 1, 2014, and expiring Aug. 31, 2017, in accordance with the NEA's fiscal year. Each candidate must be an active MTA member** and an active or education support professional NEA member, as determined by the NEA Constitution and Bylaws, for at least two years immediately preceding the election, and a non-supervisor member as defined by the NEA. The policy procedure for the direct election of NEA Directors and Alternate NEA Directors is available upon request.

For information on nominations and elections, please contact Vanessa Story of the MTA Division of Governance and Administration by calling 617.878.8213, e-mailing vstory@massteacher.org or faxing inquiries to 617.570.4901.

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

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

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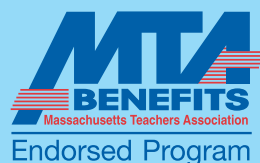
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Classifieds

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EMPLOYMENT

SUMMER CAMPS: HIRING FOR 2014 — Three respected camps in beautiful N.H. and Mass. lakeside locations seeking educators for supervisory positions: arts/crafts, athletics/tennis, waterfront, visual/performing arts and outdoor education. Learn more and download your application by visiting www.cohencamps.org or call 781.489.2070. Competitive salaries, tuition benefits for staff children, Jewish (kosher, pluralist) and welcoming to all.

TRAVEL

APRIL VACATION WEEK — 4/18-26: Sorrento & Rome/Florence, Venice & Rome/Paris & French countryside/Portuguese Riviera/Ireland (tour package or air only). 4/19-27: Sorrento & Rome/Sorrento & Taormina, Sicily. All/most meals, full sightseeing, fully escorted, first-class hotels, RT flights. Group/leader specials. Call Durgan Travel: 781.438.2224, visit www.durgantravel.com or e-mail info@durgantravel.com.

YEAR-ROUND TRAVEL — Durgan Travel, an award-winning tour operator, has a full schedule of mostly or all-inclusive tours from now through 2014, including jet tours and cruises (domestic and international). We have the highest-value, best-priced tours in the industry! Call Durgan Travel at 781.438.2224, visit www.durgantravel.com or e-mail info@durgantravel.com.

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ITALY: JULY 15-29 — Exactly what you've been waiting for! A custom small-group Italian tour including the best of the best: Milan, The Last Supper, Lake District, Venice, Cinque Terre, Pisa, Florence, Tuscany, Siena and San Gimignano,

ending in Rome. Call Marilou Spash, veteran tour organizer for 30 years, at 508.423.6588 or e-mail mspash@verizon.net. BOOK SOON.

TRAVEL / STUDY

SEMINAR — Education in Ireland (six graduate credits) July 3-26. National University of Ireland, Galway. Study aspects of the Irish education system and history, literature and culture of Ireland. Call or write Barney Keenan, NUI coordinator, 127 Glen Road, Gorham, N.H. 03581; call 603.466.2972; or e-mail Lilysky@ncia.net. The Trip of a Lifetime!

VOLUNTEER

THE SINO-AMERICAN BRIDGE FOR EDUCATION AND HEALTH (SABEH) seeks experienced teachers to volunteer for four weeks of subsidized teaching of English and United States studies to Chinese teachers of English, plus one week of free travel in July-August. For more information and an application, please visit www.sabeh.org.



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Massachusetts Teachers Association

MTA Today

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Official Publication of the Massachusetts Teachers Association

New season for partnerships begins on high note

By Bob Duffy

As the Boston Red Sox ended their storybook season by winning the World Series, the MTA's student achievement partnerships turned their focus to the Boston Bruins and Boston Celtics.

Both teams are once again working with the MTA this fall on programs to help encourage students to excel in school.

Last year, 2,400 teachers participated in the Boston Bruins' I.C.E. School program, which is sponsored by AT&T. The program provides kindergarten-through-eighth-grade teachers with lesson plans that are tied to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Hockey is incorporated into all of the I.C.E. School lessons.

The letters stand for "I Can Excel." Grade-specific I.C.E. School curriculum materials cover a number of subjects, including French, geography, math, English/language arts, physical education, science and computer science.

Students who complete the lessons receive a certificate signed by a Bruins player. Educators in the program receive a monthly I.C.E. School newsletter with program updates, exclusive ticket offers and contests.

In addition, program participants are eligible to win autographed Bruins merchandise or a classroom visit by Blades, the Bruins' Mascot, and the Bruins Ice Girls.

The program has seen renewed interest since the team's appearance in the Stanley Cup playoffs last spring.

"I see a lot more Bruins gear being worn in our building this year," said Bob Doherty, a fifth-grade teacher at the Goodyear Elementary School in Woburn. "That helps make the students excited about the lessons because they are all talking about the team."

He added that the program is a "great tool to help my students," especially as a motivator for those who may be interested in sports.

Doherty uses several of the English lesson plans and all of the fifth-grade math lesson plans. An I.C.E.



School math lesson on angles using hockey has been particularly effective, he said.

"I have noticed improvement in individual items on the MCAS test, and I feel it's related to the I.C.E. School lessons," Doherty added.

Bruins goalie Chad Johnson recently visited Doherty's class as part of the program. The player spent time with each student and participated in a lesson plan designed to increase teamwork among students.

"For the most part, kids just want to have fun, but they also want to learn," said Johnson. He explained that using professional sports figures as academic role models reminds students that learning is important in all walks of life.

"It helps for them to know that no matter what you do, there's always something you can get out of school," Johnson said. "It's important to learn and develop life skills."

Meanwhile, the Boston Celtics are again partnering with the MTA to give students the chance to earn discounted tickets to games through the MTA Boston Celtics Honor Roll program.

The Celtics program rewards students with a B average or perfect attendance with the chance to purchase discounted tickets to certain games. A certificate also entitles the winner's family and friends to buy and reserve additional seats to the same game at a discount. Twenty honor roll participants are chosen at random at each home game

The five grand-prize winners of the 2013 MTA Red Sox Summer Reading Game, flanked by Wally the Green Monster and MTA President Paul Toner, were acknowledged by fans before a home game on Sept. 21. The ceremony on the field at Fenway Park capped another successful season for the contest, in which thousands of students in kindergarten through eighth grade pledge to keep reading over the summer. The reading game is sponsored by The Hanover Insurance Group Foundation.

Photo by Michael Cummo/Boston Red Sox

to go down to the parquet floor and high-five players as they take the court after halftime.

Celtics guard Avery Bradley has stepped in as the primary spokesman for the program this season while regular honor roll spokesman Rajon Rondo recovers from a knee injury.

The fall and winter partnerships are ramping up after a particularly exciting year for the MTA Red Sox Reading Game. To participate in the annual contest, students in kindergarten through eighth grade must pledge to read nine books over the summer — one for each position on the baseball field.

A Sept. 21 celebration capped this year's edition of the reading game, as 100 students and their teachers attended a game at Fenway Park after their entry forms were chosen in a random drawing from among thousands that had been submitted. Five grand-prize winners were invited onto the field for a special ceremony.

Just weeks after the game, the Sox went on to win the World Series on their home turf at Fenway Park, defeating the St. Louis Cardinals and sparking jubilation in Boston and beyond.

For information about the MTA Boston Celtics Honor Roll program, call the Celtics' Chrissy Cronin at 617.854.8034 or e-mail ccronin@celtics.com. For information about the Bruins' I.C.E. School program, e-mail Community Relations Coordinator Ashley Hansen at amhansen@bostonbruins.com or call 617.624.1923.

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

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Switching carriers? Check out these wireless discounts

We've heard recently from many retired MTA members who say they have been told that they are no longer eligible for a discount from Verizon Wireless. Members also report being told that MTA Benefits has canceled its contract with Verizon, leading to the discount loss. In fact, MTAB has never offered a Verizon discount. MTAB does offer wireless discounts through Sprint and T-Mobile. If you're in the market to switch carriers, now is a great time to check out the competition.

Both companies provide members with a 15 percent discount on recurring monthly charges for both new and current customers. With **Sprint**, you can receive up to \$300 when you turn in your used device from any other carrier. Sprint offers truly unlimited data, texting and calling to any mobile phone.

Monthly new customer specials provide added incentives to switch your service to Sprint.

T-Mobile's discount applies to all lines on an account, up to five. In addition, T-Mobile's JUMP! program allows you to upgrade your device up to twice a year after just six months. Other benefits include waived activation fees (a savings of \$35 per line), a risk-free 30-day return policy, and no requirement for an annual contract.

Switching service providers is not always easy or enjoyable. But when you consider the savings, it makes sense to check out all of your options. For more details on both Sprint and T-Mobile discounts, visit mtabenefits.com and click on "All Benefits," then "Wireless Services."



Let Access loosen your budget

If you could use some help stretching your budget, you're not alone. Right now, every dollar earned counts and every penny saved helps. With the Access savings network, you have a plethora of exclusive, value-packed, easily redeemable and convenient savings.

Access is the largest private discount network of its kind, with more than 300,000 participating merchants and deals throughout the United States. What you get with Access is savings of up to 50 percent for dining, shopping, hotels and travel, car rentals, movies and entertainment, recreation, home and garden, health and beauty, auto services and more. Popular national brands and local favorites are part of the network. Offers are one of a kind, with top-brand discounts that you can't get anywhere else.

The My Deals app: savings that fit in your purse or your pocket

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Access Mobile is America's largest "show your phone" discount network. It's a simple way to save on popular brands no matter where you are. No printed coupon is necessary. All together, the Access mobile savings network features more than 150,000 locations nationwide and more than 300 national brands.

The My Deals mobile app makes it easy to locate the deals nearest to you, using GPS technology in your smartphone, a variety of unique search options and



a list that keeps track of your favorite savings. You'll also be able to keep tabs on how much you save with a built-in savings tracker.

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Have you signed up to receive exclusive Access savings e-mail updates? If not, you may be missing out on seasonal discounts, limited-time offers, newly added merchants and more. They're one of the most effective ways for you to keep up to date on relevant savings. Don't miss another chance to put money back in your wallet.

How to redeem your discounts

Online: Go to mtabenefits.com and click on "Discounts" to log on to the "Discounts through Access" page. Search for deals near you, choose your preferred coupon and click on the link to redeem. Remember to read

What you get with Access is savings of up to 50 percent for dining, shopping, hotels and travel, car rentals, movies and entertainment, recreation, home and garden, health and beauty, auto services and more.

the individual merchant's offer to see specific redemption instructions.

In-store: After finding the merchant offer you'd like to redeem, simply follow the specific redemption instructions provided on the savings site. Print out the coupon provided and watch the savings add up. Or save using the My Deals mobile app by loading the discount coupon you'd like to use and showing your phone at checkout.

By phone: Many discount offers on our website are redeemable by phone. Simply call the number provided in the merchant redemption link and follow the instructions.

Now get out there and enjoy your savings!



Editor: Elizabeth A. Bejoian
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The Tip Sheet

Helpful hints on ways to save this winter



COLD WEATHER FUN AT RED HOT PRICES

With the cold winter months comes a pile of snow-driven outdoor fun — and much of it is available at a discount to you. Take a look at just a few ways you can save during the winter season.

Zip across the snow-covered treetops with the Bretton Woods Canopy Tour

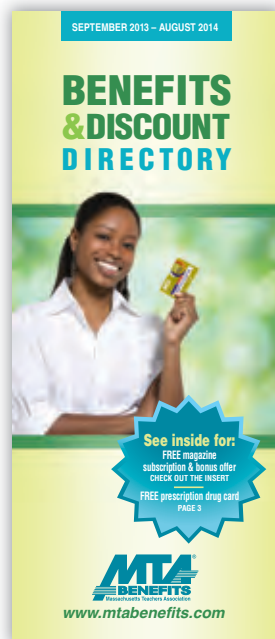
This year-round zip line tour takes nature lovers and thrill seekers across a series of treetop zip lines descending more than 1,000 feet. Follow adventure guides through the course as they describe the nature around you and discuss White Mountain lore. MTA members and immediate family members receive a \$10 discount. While you're there, be sure to check out Ski Bretton Woods, New Hampshire's largest ski area, and receive a \$10 discount on an adult anyday lift ticket.

Hit the slopes all over New England with MTA member discounts

Whether you prefer traditional skiing or cross-country gliding, your membership affords you the opportunity to save at both. If you're heading north, visit Killington Resort/Pico Mountain in Vermont, Pats Peak in New Hampshire or Harris Farm X-C Ski Center in Maine to catch some air. If you'd like to stay closer to home, Wachusett Mountain, Ski Butternut and Maple Corner Farm Cross-Country Ski Center are just a few of the Massachusetts locations that offer MTA member discounts.



GIFT GIVING MADE EASY WITH THE DISCOUNT DIRECTORY



No matter what your holiday shopping needs are, you can find MTA member discounts on just about anything in the *Benefits & Discount Directory*.

Blue Man Group tickets

Even the most difficult person to shop for on your list won't be able to resist Blue Man Group's unique combination of music, technology and comedy. MTA members may purchase \$30 "Teacher Rush" tickets on the day of all available performances.



Send a sweet treat from My Grandma's of New England

Nothing says happy holidays like the gift of a My Grandma's of New England coffee cake. Whether cinnamon, cranberry, blueberry or banana chocolate chip, this tasty cake receives rave reviews. MTA members save 15 percent on mail orders and get a 10 percent discount on in-store retail purchases.

Tickets to the latest blockbuster make perfect stocking stuffers or Yankee swap items

Access, our online discount provider, offers great deals on movie tickets, saving you up to 30 percent at your favorite theater. With more than 300,000 discounts nationwide, Access is your one-stop shop for gift giving.



If you've been a member for more than 12 months, take a look at our new purchasing program with PayCheck Direct. Choose from more than 2,500 products such as toys, electronic items, computers and jewelry, and pay interest-free over 12 months.

ESCAPE TO A WARMER CLIMATE

If the cold weather has already gotten the best of you, plan your trip to warmer weather with hard-to-resist member discounts.

Orlando Vacations is your best bet for savings

MTA Benefits and Orlando Vacations have teamed up to offer MTA members exclusive discounts on hotels, resorts, vacation homes, park tickets and dinner shows at Walt Disney World®. Save up to 30 percent on your entire Orlando Vacation.

Explore endless options with TNT Powered by Funjet

With more than 900 vacation destinations in Mexico, the Caribbean, Europe, Hawaii and the continental United States, your winter getaway is right at your fingertips. TNT Powered by Funjet offers members a wide selection of flight options, hotel choices and exclusive offers. And now, you can take advantage of their all new "Book Now, Pay Later" plan.



All discounts listed in the Tip Sheet can be found at mtabenefits.com.

Continued on page 4

Why choose MetLife dental insurance?

At MTA Benefits, we speak frequently with members who are not satisfied with their dental coverage. Whether the issue involves a high deductible, too few dentists in the network or poor payment of claims, there are many factors to consider when evaluating your options. Each member's needs are different. Some require no services besides cleanings; others face frequent dental work. No matter what your situation, it's likely that MetLife's dental coverage will meet your needs.

MetLife has two separate plans — one for active members and one for retired members. MetLife's network includes more than 3,800 dental offices in Massachusetts alone — and 135,000 nationwide. With both plans, you can visit any licensed dentist, whether in or out of network. If you've had the same dentist for years you needn't switch, but bear in mind that you'll experience the greatest savings with in-network providers. It's easy to see if your dentist is in the network by visiting www.metlife.com/dental.

What does a network of providers offer, other than selection? With MetLife, it's an average savings of 35 percent on the customary dental costs in your area. This discount can really keep your costs down.

It's also easy to figure out which plan is best for you. MetLife offers three plans for active members based on the need for services: core (basic), core plus (intermediate) and premium (extensive). For retired members, the selection includes two plans also ranked by services covered — low or high. Do you pay for cleanings? With MetLife plans, your cleaning is 100 percent covered, both in and out of network.

Have you ever been surprised at your out-of-pocket cost after you've had a procedure? No one needs that kind of shock. MetLife will provide a pre-treatment estimate for any recommended procedure that exceeds \$300. This makes it easier to determine the best course of action for you and can help you avoid an unpleasant situation afterward.

Another great feature of the MetLife plans is vision coverage. There is no extra charge for vision benefits, which can save you as much as \$144 per year.

If you're paying the full cost of your dental coverage and aren't satisfied, take some time to review MetLife's dental plans for MTA members. You can enroll at any time. In general, your application must be received

MetLife



by MetLife by the 15th of the month in order to be processed in time for coverage on the first of the following month. View coverage booklets online at mtabenefits.com.

The Tip Sheet

All discounts listed in the Tip Sheet can be found at mtabenefits.com

Continued from page 3

STAY WARM AND SAVE WITH THESE HEAT SAVINGS TIPS



HEAT USA offers MTA members discounts of up to \$250 a year on home heating oil and heating system service. Here are a few tips on how to save money while keeping warm this winter.

- Get a heating system tune-up — it will ensure you get the maximum performance out of every drop of heating oil burned.
- Open shades and drapes when the sun is shining to help warm your home.
- Turn down the thermostat at night and when you are away; even slightly lowering your thermostat during the day might save you up to 2 percent on your heating bill.
- Insulate pipes to guard against heat loss and to prevent them from freezing.
- Stop heat loss by eliminating any gaps between your door and threshold by using a seal that can be attached to the bottom of the door.
- Talk to your heating fuel supplier about installing a programmable thermostat, which will allow you to save when you're not at home.

Giveaways you won't want to miss!

One of the most exciting benefits you're entitled to as an MTA member is the chance to win one of our fantastic giveaways. Whether it's an American Express gift card or a card to your favorite retail store, there's something for everyone. Here's what's coming up:

- After the holiday season, does your wallet feel a little too light? Let MTA Benefits help with a \$100 gas gift card, Jan. 20-31. There will be three winners.
- MTA Benefits just loves a bargain. Enter our Christmas Tree Shops giveaway March 17-28 and win one of three (3) \$100 store gift cards.
- Mark your calendar for Member Appreciation Week, May 5-9. During this week, members can enter our \$800 American Express gift card giveaway — one of our largest giveaways of the year!



You can't win if you don't enter. So if you haven't already done so, sign up now at mtabenefits.com and we'll remind you when each giveaway begins.

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