

MTA FIGHTS FOR STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS IN LEVEL 5 SCHOOLS

MTA Today

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**HELPING ALL STUDENTS
MEET READING GOALS**

A SEASON FOR BOOKS AND BASEBALL





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MTA Today

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A section featuring articles and other information about the 2014 MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates — including statements by candidates in contested races — runs from Page 21 to Page 32. This issue of MTA Today also includes the spring edition of the MTA Advantage.



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MTA's Mission Statement

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

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On the cover

Teacher Colleen Gazard works with second-grader Jace Coleman at the Dunning Elementary School in Framingham, where a focus on immersing students in reading and writing has been producing significant results. Across Massachusetts, 43 percent of third-grade students lack reading proficiency. Efforts to improve the situation are getting a boost through the work of a panel of early literacy experts that is charged with assessing the problem and streamlining resources to address it. Coverage begins on Page 6. A story about the 2014 MTA Red Sox Reading Game season getting underway appears on Page 7. Coverage of efforts to fight state takeover plans for Level 5 schools in Holyoke and New Bedford starts on Page 10.



Cover photo by Christine Peterson
 Cover design by Alison Donato

Quote-Unquote

"Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other 'tangible' factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does."

—Excerpt from the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which was written by Chief Justice Earl Warren

After 60 years, 'Brown' ruling resonates

By Jerry Spindel

May 17 marks the 60th anniversary of the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which declared "separate but equal" schools unconstitutional. To commemorate the occasion, teachers talked to *MTA Today* about their classroom approaches to teaching about the ruling, and retired members of the MTA Minority Affairs Committee shared their memories of the landmark 1954 decision.

The following are excerpts from the interviews.

Angela Plant: "Look around the classroom," Plant tells her class. "If you were students in the South back then, before *Brown v. Board of Education*, you wouldn't be allowed to be in diverse classrooms. You'd be in segregated classrooms."

Plant teaches American history at Worcester Technical High School, where President Barack Obama will deliver the commencement address on June 11. WTHS was named a Breakthrough School by the MetLife/National Association of Secondary School Principals in 2011 for outstanding student growth in a high-poverty area.

Plant's students trace the fight for civil rights from the 14th Amendment — which declares that all citizens are entitled to "equal protection of the laws" — to the present. They also cover incendiary and controversial occurrences such as the violence that greeted the enrollment in 1962 of James Meredith at the University of Mississippi and the 1978 Supreme Court case in which Allan P. Bakke argued unsuccessfully that affirmative action was unconstitutional.

As they study such issues, Plant said, her students "sit in a circle and pass a beanbag."

"Whoever gets the beanbag has to discuss the topic at hand," she explained. "The discussion is pretty intense for some kids."

Plant's students dissect the 14th Amendment "and they explain exactly what it's saying," she said. "We also discuss how the civil rights struggle has affected the values of the nation."

John Marderosian: "Minority opinions don't go for naught," Marderosian tells his 11th-grade American history class at Southbridge Middle/High School. "They resurface," he noted, citing the way the minority opinion in *Plessy v. Ferguson* helped shape the arguments made by plaintiffs' attorney Thurgood Marshall — then the NAACP's chief counsel — that prevailed in *Brown*.

"The kids say insightful things and ask a lot of questions, like, 'Why are there still pockets of racism?'" Marderosian said. "I use these questions in my teaching." Marderosian asks his students about changing the prevailing views of a society. "If laws are enforced, incidents go down. But that doesn't change the mentality," he tells them.

Marderosian uses a multidisciplinary approach to teaching. "I use sociology, psychology, statistics, poetry, economic history, historical thinking skills," he said. He covers "what's changed, what's stayed



Photo by Scott McLennan

High school history teacher Angela Plant uses the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to spark discussion among her students.

the same, and why." Marderosian also teaches his students to use a computer graphing program so they can trace immigration patterns.

"I try to offer skills that kids can take away with them — skills that colleges and first employers demand," Marderosian explained.

Cathy Fischer-Mueller: At the Edward Devotion School in Brookline, Fischer-Mueller uses primary documents in her eighth-grade social studies class. "We start by revisiting *Plessy*, the ruling that upheld the doctrine of separate but equal," she said. "Then we examine the words of the 14th Amendment, which guarantees equal protection of the law to all United States citizens."

Fischer-Mueller's class studies the legal cases that led up to the *Brown* decision.

Her students learn Marshall's prevailing argument in *Brown*, that "separate but equal" was inherently unequal and psychologically damaging to African-Americans. They learn how Marshall expanded upon Justice John Harlan's dissent in *Plessy*, which stated: "Our constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens."

Fischer-Mueller uses videos from the 1987 PBS TV series "Eyes on the Prize," which documented the civil rights movement, along with a study guide on the series by Facing History and Ourselves, a Brookline-based organization dedicated to teaching young people about racism, prejudice and anti-Semitism.

"The kids get excited by events like the struggle to desegregate Central High School in Little Rock," Fischer-Mueller said. "They like it because it's heroic," she added, referring to the African-American teenagers who faced hostile crowds and an Arkansas governor intent on defying the law.

Fischer-Mueller remarked on the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court's ruling legalizing gay marriage in November 2003. The court gave the Legislature six months to change the law, and exactly 50 years after the *Brown* decision, the first same-sex marriages were celebrated.

"Laws against gays created a form of segregation," she said. "I think the justices had their eye on history when they chose that date."

Louise Gaskins, former chair of the MTA Human and Civil Rights Council and member of the Minority Affairs Committee: In 1954, Gaskins was teaching mathematics in an all-black high school in Winston-Salem, N.C. When news of the *Brown* decision came over the radio, she said, "I ran across the hall to my friend, an English teacher, and we jumped up and down and hugged each other." But by 1961, the schools there were still segregated.

Gaskins, who taught mathematics in Ayer for 30 years, moved north in 1964 with her husband, an Army officer. When she enrolled at Fitchburg State College as a graduate student, it was the first time she attended an integrated school.

Edith Cannon, a former MAC chair and member of the NEA Minority Affairs Committee: Cannon was 14 years old and in the 10th grade in Greenville, Miss., when the *Brown* decision was handed down. She didn't notice any changes for a long time. "Mississippi was slow moving forward," she said.

Cannon began her teaching career in Greenville and later moved north and taught elementary and middle school in Randolph. She retired as an elementary school principal in Taunton.

According to Cannon, Greenville was a better place to grow up than many other cities and towns in the South. "When it came to racism, it wasn't as blatant," she said. "We had a liberal newspaper that helped in many ways. There was also an Air Force base in the city."

Still, the schools were segregated. "We never got books that weren't used by white students first," Cannon said. "They tried to make the schools look the same on the outside, but not the inside."

Cannon attended Tougaloo College in Mississippi, a center of the civil rights struggle and home of one of the early lunch-counter sit-ins. "Medgar Evers came two or three times a week to organize us. James Meredith came," she said. "We sang 'We Shall Overcome' at rallies; I locked arms with Martin Luther King Jr. It was really special. We felt we were part of a movement that had to happen."

Ellie Mayers: Mayers, who was the first African-American on the MTA Executive Committee and also served as MAC chair, taught in Rockland for 39 years.

Mayers had been raised in Providence. She was surprised by the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown*. "I didn't expect it with nine white men up there," she said, "but I was pleased."

Providence wasn't free of racism, but attending a black college in the South — Livingstone College in North Carolina — "was a revelation," she said. "You could go into a department store, but they would ask you not to try anything on."

When Mayers started teaching middle school in Rockland, a friendly School Committee member

Please turn to **Teachers**/Page 11

Leading change in turbulent times

A new MTA president and vice president will be elected on May 10, and I will end my tenure as president on July 15. This is therefore my last *MTA Today* editorial.

Serving in MTA's leadership for the past eight years as vice president and president has been both rewarding and challenging.

The rewards have been many, including pride in the continued success of our schools. Over the past eight years, our students have been first or tied for first on the National Assessment of Educational Progress exams in English, math and science. On certain international assessments we rank higher than Finland and just below Singapore. All of this is due to the caliber of our students and the hard work of you, our members.

But this has also been a time of great change and big challenges. I have often felt like a captain steering a ship through one typhoon after another.

During this period, we have experienced a major recession and growing public concern about the costs of public employee health insurance and pensions. Nationwide, public employee unions have been under attack. Laws have been passed in several states — including Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio and Michigan — making it harder for educators to form and sustain their unions and exercise their collective bargaining rights. Many state affiliates have lost members and staff, as has the NEA.

In addition, demands for school improvement have increased. Technological innovations have exploded, changing how we teach and learn. Baby Boomers have been retiring in record numbers, bringing an influx of new teachers with new ideas into the profession.

Despite these challenges, the state of *our* union — the MTA — is strong and growing stronger. We rode out the recession without any membership loss. In fact, our membership has grown. Our MTA budget is balanced, and the vast majority of our elected officials recognize the importance of investing in education and working with our members to improve the lives of our students.

We haven't been passive in the face of change. We adopted a Strategic Action Plan that calls for making our members the voice of education. We have engaged more members than ever before and continue to involve them through visits to local associations, panel discussions, All Presidents' Meetings, regional meetings, member forums, UnConferences, regional trainings, professional development opportunities, social media, webinars and one-on-one conversations.

At the same time, we are trying to deal with numerous new initiatives. Many of these are worthy, but they are hard to cope with all at once. Topping

the list for K-12 educators are RETELL, educator evaluation, District-Determined Measures, Common Core and PARCC. Higher education concerns include demands to improve graduation rates and balance the needs of our knowledge economy with the needs of students on campuses that are full to the brim and underfunded.

Believe me, I hear you when you say that the work is overwhelming. I have carried that message to the policymakers and leaders of our state and nation. But we must move forward and be the architects of reform — not the objects of it. We must stay engaged in the policy debates and discussions that affect our students and our profession.

This engagement is not only needed at the state level. We need you as leaders and members to share your ideas about your profession and the needs of your students with district, school and campus administrators as well as parents, political leaders, the business community and community organizations.

If you don't think your school committee members are representing your interests, work to elect better candidates.

If your local newspaper isn't providing accurate coverage of what your schools have accomplished, write a letter to the editor.

If you believe that one candidate for governor would do more than another to support your work and your students, actively support that candidate.

MTA leadership and staff can support and guide you in all of these endeavors, but ultimately it is you, the members, who have the power to bring about lasting change.

Not all of our members agree with all of the decisions that I, the MTA Board of Directors and the delegates to the Annual Meeting have made over the past eight years. We are a democratic union of 110,000 members, and dissent is fundamental to democracy. I welcome the debate. But when the debate is over and votes are taken by the Board or the delegates, we must move forward as one. That is the definition of a union — working together as one.

I was elected vice president and president based on a philosophy that I have been very public about: We must be true to both our profession and union values.

Based on countless conversations, along with member polling and focus groups, I believe that our members want us to be both a professional association that works on behalf of quality education and a union that defends the economic interests of our members — *in that order*. We cannot be successful in the latter unless we promote the former. I believe that in promoting quality education we have to be open to new ideas. We don't have to agree with every new idea, but we also can't say "no" to all of them and remain relevant to our members, students or the public.

I also believe that seeking change through dialogue and collaboration is the best approach. Trying to force change through confrontation

should be a last resort, and it can only be successful if we have laid a strong foundation for our positions based on research, member engagement, relationship building and political and community organizing.

My successor will face many challenges and opportunities in the years ahead, including:

- What can we do to close achievement gaps and increase graduation rates and college completion rates?

- How can we build public support for more resources for our students and schools, especially in our Gateway Cities?

- How do we provide students with a well-rounded education that develops them as active participants in our democracy while also providing them with the skills they need to be prepared for our knowledge-based economy?

- What new models of compensation can be developed to attract and retain the most talented educators and provide salaries on par with comparable professions?

- What improvements can be made in the teacher preparation, licensure, professional development and evaluation systems that will ensure that educators are equipped to serve an increasingly diverse student population?

- How can we end the perennial debate over Commonwealth Charter Schools and work with educators, parents and students to develop teacher-led and district-based innovation to reduce the demand for charter schools?

- How do we transition away from an educational system that treats all students alike and use new technology and methods to move toward a more individualized competency-based system that challenges students and allows them to move forward at their own pace?

In closing, I must thank a number of people. Thank you, Tim Sullivan, MTA vice president, and Ann Clarke, MTA executive director-treasurer, for your unfailing support during these challenging times. Thank you to the Board of Directors and all of the local presidents who give of themselves to advocate for our members and students. Thank you to our excellent and hardworking staff members, who always put the members first. Thank you to all of my friends and supporters who have given me the opportunity to lead this great organization. Finally, thank you to my wife, Susan; my daughter, Grace; and my son, Jack, for making such huge personal sacrifices to let me serve the members of the MTA. I believe that together we have navigated these turbulent waters well.

Although I am term-limited as president, there is no term limit on my passion for improving the lives of our students through our schools, our colleges and our profession. I will be an activist for quality public education in some capacity. I hope to continue working with many of you in the future.

Thank you!



Paul Toner
MTA President

PARCC field tests draw mixed reactions

By Laura Barrett

Reactions to the first round of PARCC field tests run the gamut: “The kids were excited about it.” “The user interface is terrible.” “It’s largely going well.” “It’s an awful lot of testing.”

Fortunately, developers of the tests and state policymakers won’t have to rely on anecdotal information about the exams — created by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers — since they will have a wealth of data based on how well students perform and surveys of students and test administrators. In a few months, they will also have findings from an MTA-backed case study of PARCC administration in Revere and Burlington.

“We are helping to manage and finance the PARCC case study because we believe that feedback from educators and students is essential,” said MTA President Paul Toner. “The study will help make a better test and help the state determine whether we should replace MCAS with PARCC in the future.”

Fourteen states and the District of Columbia field-tested the performance-based assessment portion of PARCC in English language arts and mathematics between March 24 and April 11. They will field-test the end-of-year portion between May 5 and June 6. About 8 percent of students in more than 1,000 Massachusetts schools are participating, with some taking it online and others on paper. In Burlington, all students are taking all sections of the online PARCC tests, as are all students in three Revere schools.

The results will be used to create a bank of test items and troubleshoot implementation issues. Next year, districts will be allowed to choose whether to



Photo by Laura Barrett

administer PARCC or MCAS. In the fall of 2015, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will vote on whether to replace MCAS with PARCC, though the 10th-grade MCAS exam will be used as a graduation requirement through the class of 2018.

‘Hiccups and glitches’

Massachusetts Commissioner of Education Mitchell Chester said that the rollout was “not without its hiccups and glitches.”

Diana Marcus, president of the Burlington Education Association, administered the test for her fifth-graders. She agreed that it got off to a rocky start, but said it improved over time.

“The first day, we had a lot of difficulties with kids not being able to log in or being booted off,” she said. There were also user interface problems,

including oddly placed navigation buttons, small font sizes and a signoff tool that shut students out of the test when they just meant to save their answers.

A bigger concern for many was the amount of resources the field tests took to administer. Andrew Marcinek, technology director for the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District, posted a detailed explanation of the complicated steps required. He concluded, “I have some concerns about the time and resources this test will require on a large-scale level. ... My worry is that this test will consume valuable time from central office administration, tech directors and IT managers, principals and teachers.”

If it was hard to test 8 percent of students, will the state and districts be able to scale up to many more next year and 100 percent the year after?

Please turn to **Rollout**/Page 14

Letters to the Editor

Lee teachers’ decision highlights the many problems of merit pay

To the Editor:

I am writing in response to the article, “Lee teachers donate AP bonuses to school,” published in the Winter 2014 edition of *MTA Today*. This article explains exactly why a private, business-model style merit pay program cannot be effective in the world of public education. While the selfless act of the AP teachers who received these bonuses and yet chose to donate them back to the school seemed “crazy” to the representative who urged them to accept the funds, it speaks volumes to the true insanity of pay for performance.

Merit pay based on test scores is inequitable, unfair and in most cases ineffective. Politicians and so-called educational companies that advocate these types of incentive programs forget that in education, it takes a village and oftentimes, true student growth cannot be measured by a test.

Career analyst Dan Pink gives a fascinating TED talk called “The puzzle of motivation” in which

he debunks the idea that financial rewards improve motivation. In fact, his research has found the opposite to be true.

Why then implement this fallible system in education? Kudos to the Lee teachers for their generosity, but also for their intelligence. Hopefully, their actions will awaken others to the many problems of merit pay.

Hilary Skelton
Framingham Teachers Association

Brousseau is the perfect candidate to serve educators’ interests

To the Editor:

I applaud the MTA Board of Directors’ decision to recommend MTA member Robert Brousseau for re-election to the Pension Reserves Investment Management Board.

As the Massachusetts Teachers’ Retirement System’s appointee to serve on the PRIM Board, I have had a front-row seat to see what Bob does in

the interests of retirees. His intelligence, insight, dedication and nearly 30 years of institutional memory at PRIM make him the perfect candidate to serve educators’ interests.

Dennis J. Naughton
MTA Retired

Letters policy

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

Helping students meet reading goals

Framingham school's language-rich environment may point the way

By Jean Conley

To say that Colleen Gazard's second-grade classroom is language-rich would be an understatement.

The classroom in Framingham's Dunning Elementary School is loaded with words. A scene representing Dr. Seuss' "Oh, the Places You'll Go!" covers the inside of the classroom door. Phonics cards take up half a wall. A "brain gym" with activities that exercise the mind is posted at a second-grader's eye level for easy reading.

A billboard decorated with "Writing Small Moments," complete with suggestions for getting started on the class's many writing projects, and a large poster display about Tomie dePaola — Gazard's favorite children's author — line the room.

Gazard, who is in her 26th year of teaching at the K-5 school, has plenty of company. Reading and writing are the foundation of the school's curriculum.

All of this helps explain why Dunning students have been making solid gains on the English language arts portion of the MCAS over the past several years.

It also provides a possible set of strategies that the state could look to for examples as it seeks to promote school success elsewhere. That is a key priority for Massachusetts Secretary of Education Matthew Malone, who is co-chairing a panel that is assessing how to improve outcomes across the Commonwealth.

Malone said in an interview that early literacy is vital to narrowing the achievement gap, so the panel is not an example of "just one more thing." If he could consolidate all of the work of his office into one strategic goal, he said, it would be getting all students to read proficiently by the end of third grade.

The challenge is daunting, he acknowledged. But he added, "This is an equity issue. It's why we exist."

Last year, the Dunning Elementary School increased its combined Advanced and Proficient categories in grade four English language arts by 16 percent and decreased the percentage of students in the Needs Improvement category by 18 percent, according to district figures. The school also



Photo by Christine Peterson

Principal Kim Taylor, left, says educators at Dunning create a culture of high expectations for students and "go way above and beyond" their basic responsibilities. Second-grade teacher Colleen Gazard, right, has taught at the school for 26 years.

increased the percentage of students in the Advanced and Proficient ELA categories by 10 percent.

Dunning is unique among elementary schools in Framingham, having earned a Level 1 designation for the last two years — not only because MCAS scores are increasing but because the school is meeting its goal of narrowing proficiency gaps.

Overall, 64 percent of the school's students read proficiently or better by the end of third grade, compared to 57 percent statewide. By the end of fifth grade, 67 percent of the students are proficient readers.

The school has a student population that is neither especially rich nor poor. Nearly 20 percent of the 500 students are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. Almost 13 percent are designated as learning-disabled, a few percentage points lower than the state average.

But Principal Kim Taylor said the proportion of students with any type of special need — whether academic, social or emotional — is actually closer to 22 percent.

The school also has a significant number of English language learners — 16 percent, nearly twice as many as in the average Massachusetts elementary school. Taylor said there are more than 25 languages represented.

The gaps among schools that are seeking to realize the Commonwealth's stated goal of having each student

reading proficiently by the end of third grade are not lost on educational experts and lawmakers.

Overall, the fact that 43 percent of students do not achieve that goal hasn't budged for more than a decade. Gateway Cities fare even worse, with an average of 58 percent of third-graders not reading proficiently.

In 2012, Governor Deval Patrick signed "An Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency," which was intended to kick-start an effort to improve outcomes across the state. The nine-member panel Malone co-chairs was established with passage of the law. It has been assessing the problem over the past six months and streamlining resources to fight it. Malone's co-chair is Nonie Lesaux, a Harvard Graduate School of Education expert on children's early language and literacy development.

According to research by the Executive Office of Education, three-quarters of children who have difficulty reading in third grade will continue to struggle academically, greatly reducing their chances of graduating from high school, going to college or successfully participating in an economy that requires a high level of skill.

That is why the literacy experts' work is viewed as crucial.

Malone said the panel, made up of "good thoughtful people" from

Dunning is unique among elementary schools in Framingham, having earned a Level 1 designation for the last two years — not only because MCAS scores are increasing but because the school is meeting its goal of narrowing proficiency gaps.

several sectors that influence children's early development, will advise all state education departments in areas including curriculum and effective instructional practices from early education through college. He said that making use of the latest brain development research — and using it to inform approaches to teaching and education policy issues — will drive the group's work.

It is well established, for instance, that learning gaps are apparent years before children show up for their first day of kindergarten. By age 3, children from low-income families have on average half the vocabulary of their higher-income peers. By age 4, children from poor families have been exposed to 32 million fewer words than children in financially better-off households.

Malone said the panel will grapple with questions such as: "What does our next generation of teachers need to know and be able to do? How do we work across agencies to build capacities around professional development? How do we create more time to get at kids who are second-language learners or special needs students?"

The issues are all complex and integrated. "This is exciting work for us and core to our purpose," Malone said.

At the Dunning Elementary School, educators try to find ways every day to push their students to develop language and literacy skills, no matter the grade and no matter how new they might be to speaking English.

Taylor said she feels lucky to have a committed and experienced staff — many of whom have been together for

Continued on next page

A perfect season for books and baseball

Pitcher Craig Breslow will serve as the spokesperson for the MTA Red Sox Reading Game and the Most Valuable Educator Program this year.

The reading game and the MVE program, sponsored by The Hanover Insurance Group Foundation, are two of the MTA's key student achievement partnerships.

Students in kindergarten through eighth grade are eligible to participate in the game, which encourages reading during the summer, when literacy skills often slide. Students can enter by pledging to read nine books and sending in entry forms signed by parents or guardians.

The MTA draws 100 of the forms from among the thousands submitted and invites the students and their teachers to a game at Fenway Park in September. Each giveaway winner receives two tickets. Five grand prize winners are invited onto the field for a special ceremony.

The Most Valuable Educator Program recognizes those who promote success among students. MVEs are selected by the Red Sox based on nominations from the public. Anyone can nominate an outstanding teacher, education support professional, school staff member, coach or volunteer by writing about his or her contribution to student achievement. Each



Relief pitcher Craig Breslow, this year's spokesperson for the MTA Red Sox Reading Game and the Most Valuable Educator Program, poses with Wally the Green Monster at Fenway Park. Breslow is holding this year's featured book, the World Series edition of "Zachary's Ball."

Photo by Rick Friedman

nomination must include an essay explaining why recognition is deserved.

Breslow will join the team's mascot, Wally the Green Monster, and thousands of educators around the state in promoting the MTA's efforts. To publicize the programs, 15,000 posters and 500,000 entry forms and bookmarks will be distributed in schools around the state. This year's materials feature Breslow and Wally reading the World Series edition of the children's book "Zachary's Ball," by Matt Tavares.

To learn more about the MTA Red Sox Reading Game, go to www.readingmatters.org. Information will be posted by early May, and visitors to the site can download entry forms and other materials. To nominate someone to be an MTA Red Sox Most Valuable Educator, send an essay of up to 400 words to Most Valuable Educator, c/o Red Sox Community Relations, 4 Yawkey Way, Boston MA 02215. MVE nominations must be postmarked by June 30. To find out more about visits from Wally, go to http://boston.redsox.mlb.com/bos/fan_forum/wally.jsp.

Culture of high expectations helps students learn

Continued from previous page

decades. The educators create a culture of high expectations for students, she said, and "go way above and beyond" their basic responsibilities.

"High expectations and no excuses are really, really important to who we are *because* of the population of kids that we have," Taylor said. "Kids come to the table with so many different issues. But when they're with us, the expectations are high across the board."

Directly across from Gazard's classroom is a self-contained ELL classroom that, like hers, is filled with second-graders. The first languages represented include Tamil, Portuguese, Spanish, Urdu, Arabic, French, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese, Chinese, Gujarati and Hindi.

This rich linguistic mix is overseen by ESL teachers Barbara Meléndez and Vicki Trapp. Trapp works in different classrooms depending on need.

The curriculum is the same as in Gazard's classroom, Meléndez said, but every lesson has a language component.

"It's not always a quiet classroom," she said, and that's a good thing. "We want them conversing all the time," she noted. "That's the whole point."

Down the hall and around the corner, Carol Berlin's fifth-grade classroom is hard at work on a nonfiction reading exercise focusing on animal adaptation.

Here, as in Gazard's classroom, the written word is everywhere. The concepts reflect the increasingly sophisticated minds of the almost-middle-school students who call the classroom home. Lining the room are posters with agreed-upon rules, the parts of speech and correct penmanship, along with a world map and a display on "dazzling decimals."

Berlin, who has worked at the school for 18 years, co-teaches with Julie Pikul, who specializes in English as a second language instruction.

Berlin said the co-teaching model, with a single lesson — differentiated by skill level and with plenty of language support — "works really, really well," allowing her students to "access the standard curriculum at the same time

that the ESL teacher is working closely with them on language development."

Berlin said her students form a community that pulls everyone in. One recent day, an ELL student who had never presented in front of the class before gave her first presentation in English on a science project.

"The whole class applauded her before she even started her presentation," Berlin said. "It was just a wonderful moment."

Berlin and Taylor said their school is justifiably proud of its track record in getting all students to achieve. ELL students "have made progress and scored well and helped us achieve that Level 1 status," said Berlin.

Does school culture answer the question of why Dunning is succeeding where some other schools are not?

"People ask us what sets us apart," Taylor said. But competing with other schools, she added, "is not how we judge who we are." She said that because of the multiple needs of the students, "there's a lot of innovation that goes on here, a lot of different ways to look at kids and teaching."

The school's philosophy, based on

the concept of "the global village," helps focus everyone, she said. "Part of the culture here is, 'These are all my kids' as opposed to 'This is my class,'" she said. "The whole staff feels responsible for *all* the kids. It becomes more collaborative."

In general, she said, preschool experience for all children in Framingham, rather than the limited public preschool available now, would go a long way toward eliminating gaps that are apparent even before students spend their first day in kindergarten. In the kindergarten class that entered in September, Taylor said, 25 percent of the 800 students in town had no preschool experience.

"The number has actually fallen off from past years," she said. "That's shocking."

Malone, for his part, said his panel will be looking at best practices at schools that are narrowing gaps and then seeking to spread the wealth, sharing what works throughout the Commonwealth.

"We need to learn to think differently," he said. "This is the most important thing we can do."

ESPs network, learn and honor a colleague

By Jean Conley

A record number of education support professionals attended this year's MTA ESP Conference, a gathering that featured professional development workshops, celebration of the ESP of the Year and the sharing of personal and professional stories that have inspired educators to become union activists.

Lois Powers, a career resource librarian in the Office of Career Services at UMass Boston and a member of the Classified Staff Union, was named ESP of the Year. Powers, who has worked at UMass Boston for 23 years, told 430 fellow ESPs at the event that she believes in "paying it forward."

"That's why I have volunteered to mentor others, as I have been the recipient of positive mentorship," she said.

Powers said that eight years ago, when she was asked to join a small group helping the CSU as it was affiliating with the MTA, "it was the beginning of many more opportunities." It provided the chance, she said, to help build a strong local and work with others in the MTA and NEA.

Powers said that "as ESPs, we know that our dedication, resourcefulness, friendliness and professionalism are some of our daily contributions and are critical to the success of our students, our schools and our organizations." She told her fellow ESPs that "without a doubt, we are indeed an integral contributor to public education."

"Never, ever underestimate your value," she added.

Janelle Quarles, a member of the ESP Committee, said Powers embodies the spirit of the award.

"The ESP of the Year needs to be creative and innovative, a tireless worker, someone who wants to make a difference in the lives of his or her students," she said, as well as being an ardent supporter of workers' rights.

The conference, held at the oceanfront Sea Crest Hotel in Falmouth on April 4 and 5, included workshops ranging from "Classroom Management for ESPs" to "Unmasking the Social Mind of Individuals with Asperger's Syndrome" and "Organizing the Unorganized: The Brockton Story."

NEA Executive Committee member Maury Koffman, now in his fifth term as president of the 2,400-member Administrative Professional Association at Michigan State University, and MTA Vice President Tim Sullivan spoke to members about their early memories of connecting with ESPs and how those moments led to careers centering on education and union involvement.

In his keynote address, Koffman expressed his deep admiration for his mother, an ESP who was president of a local Michigan Education Association affiliate for more than a decade. "The union blood boils deep within me," he said.

Koffman said he first came to understand what a union was when he was 7 years old. "One sunny spring day, my mother took me with her



Above, participants listened intently to a story about organizing Brockton's Monitor Teacher Assistants, who successfully negotiated job protections and benefit increases in their first contract. The session on Brockton was one of about two dozen workshops offered at the 2014 ESP Conference, which brought more than 400 participants to the Sea Crest Hotel in Falmouth. ESP of the Year Lois Powers, left, told fellow attendees that "without a doubt, we are indeed an integral contributor to public education." Powers is a career resource librarian in the Office of Career Services at UMass Boston and a member of the Classified Staff Union.

Photos by Jean Conley

to attend a school board meeting, challenging the superintendent's terrible idea" of turning the public community school into a charter school, he recalled.

"I remember sitting with my mother on the floor of our school cafeteria as she helped guide the green marker in my hand, coloring a banner that read 'Keep Our Community Schools.' With a lot of effort and hundreds of protesters, the charter school initiative was soundly defeated," he said.

Koffman said that reflecting on moments like those is what makes him proud to have followed in his mother's footsteps, fighting every day "on the front lines in our battle to protect public education and the middle class."

He called it an irony that "bureaucrats believe they know what's best for our students" without spending a day in schools. Koffman said that when his local association has invited legislators to ride the bus with students or to visit a school cafeteria or playground so they could personally get to know how the education system works, "rarely do they accept." "They couldn't last one day in our shoes," he said.

Koffman also addressed "our future need, the next generation of union leaders and activists."

He said all union members need to encourage younger members "to embrace and fight for our core union values."

"We must identify the issues that will motivate our members," he added. "We must connect with

their hearts to determine what they, what we, will fight for. Deep inside, the millennial generation is full of activists. So as we move forward as a union, there has never been a more critical time to cultivate potential future leaders."

On Saturday, Sullivan picked up the theme of involvement, urging members to get to know the MTA's position on the issues that affect all educators — such as closing the achievement gap, establishing equitable funding for all public schools in Massachusetts and ensuring a living wage for all workers, including early childhood educators and adjunct professors in the public higher education system — and then advocating for candidates at the local, state and national levels who hold those same values.

"Members are at the core of our existence at the MTA," he said. "That means all of us, and we need to be out there pulling together. Please use your voice for our students and our colleagues. Use it to accomplish our very important work and to support one another. And remember: ESPs are the heart of public education."

Christine Boseman, an ESP at UMass Boston and chair of the MTA Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee, said she appreciated learning "skills to bring back to my co-workers and understanding my rights." What she most appreciated, however, was that the conference is "exciting, educational and fun."

Higher ed members confront range of issues

By Scott McLennan

The 2014 MTA Higher Education Conference brought together about 180 faculty members, staff and administrators from across the state for discussions on key issues and a wide range of professional workshops.

Topics ranged from the difficulties faced by adjunct faculty members to the implications of student outcome assessments.

The two-day gathering was held at the Westin hotel in Waltham.

The conference, MTA's first since 2011 dedicated specifically to the concerns of higher education members, opened on April 11 with a question-and-answer session featuring MTA President Paul Toner and Vice President Tim Sullivan.

"Behind all of the issues raised here is the single-minded goal of creating colleges and universities where faculty and staff are fully supported and students are given the opportunity to thrive," Toner said during the exchange.

Toner touched on pending pay increases and improvements in working conditions for community college adjunct faculty members who are working under a tentative agreement that has been overwhelmingly ratified by the Massachusetts Community College Council.

More work still needs to be done, he said, to secure health insurance and retirement benefits for contingent faculty.

The prevalence of adjunct faculty on higher education campuses generated many of the comments and questions during plenary sessions. Faculty and staff raised practical issues — such as the low pay and lack of benefits that make adjunct jobs economically unsustainable — as well as broader policy issues, including the impact of staffing patterns on students when most of their education is delivered by instructors who are not on campus full time.

Many other MTA higher education units are just beginning to negotiate new contracts, and the conference gave bargaining leaders a chance to discuss what they have been seeing at the table.

Addressing another subject, Toner highlighted a successful campaign at UMass Amherst to address workplace bullying. He also made note of organizing drives for new members on the UMass campuses in Amherst and Boston.

Sullivan recounted a swift and successful lobbying effort in March by members to preserve their health insurance options when one carrier, Fallon Health Care, announced it would drop the popular Fallon Select Care HMO plan. He said successes such as the "call for action" directed at Fallon underscore the value of union membership.

On Saturday, Massachusetts Commissioner of Higher Education Richard Freeland and members of his staff answered educators' questions.

In both prepared remarks and in response to inquiries, Freeland emphasized that the state needs to significantly increase appropriations for higher



Members of negotiating teams from several higher education associations, above, attended a workshop on collaborative bargaining. At left, Massachusetts Commissioner of Higher Education Richard Freeland, left, spent a few minutes talking to C.J. O'Donnell, president of the Massachusetts State College Association.

Photos by Scott McLennan

education. Even with a rise in state spending on higher education last year and proposals for an additional funding boost in fiscal 2015, Freeland pointed out, Massachusetts would still need to pour \$300 million more into its colleges and universities for the Commonwealth to be ranked among the top 10 states in terms of funding.

Current spending levels in Massachusetts are still far below peak years. The shortfall has an impact on everything from rising student debt to the state's overreliance on lower-paid contingent faculty, Freeland said. He said, however, that there is hope for improvement. "There is traction for our message that there is a need for quality public higher education," he said.

"Your advocacy and the economy have helped increase interest in public education," Freeland continued. He pointed to the need for a well-educated and well-trained workforce and an affordable means for Massachusetts residents to obtain postsecondary degrees and certificates.

Student outcome assessments were also linked to funding. Many educators voiced concern about what a fair assessment system would look like, given the wide variety of backgrounds and aspirations among students attending public colleges and universities.

While members of the Department of Higher Education said that the state has no plans to formulate a standardized test for student achievement at the college level, they cited a need to determine how students are faring.

"The reality is that money flows to quality, not to need, and we need to demonstrate that we are successful if we hope to receive the funding we need," Freeland said.

He said that because federal measures of success — centered on graduation rates and student loan default rates — are not adequate, Massachusetts should develop assessment measures of its own. In that context, he defended the open-admissions policy of community colleges.

Other participants expressed concerns about privatizing services on public campuses, especially as the DHE looks at maximizing cost efficiency across the system.

The second day of the conference also featured several workshops. MTA leaders and staff presented seminars on legislative issues, collaborative bargaining, online topics such as social media, and retirement planning. Education and finance experts were on hand to lead discussions on the Affordable Care Act, higher education funding trends and student assessment initiatives.

Teachers oppose takeover plans for Level 5 schools in two cities

By Laura Barrett

Teachers represented by the MTA in two schools that have been designated Level 5, or “chronically underperforming,” say that “with heavy hearts” they are seeking to transfer to other district schools because they don’t believe that the commissioner of education’s planned changes are good for students or fair to educators.

The local associations are fighting for changes in the Level 5 plans for both the Morgan Full Service Community School in Holyoke and the Parker Elementary School in New Bedford. They say the plans will not lead to the “rapid academic achievement” of students, as required by law.

Commissioner Mitchell Chester has named Project GRAD, a Texas-based company, to serve as the receiver for Morgan and New Bedford Superintendent Pia Durkin as the receiver for Parker.

As *MTA Today* went to press, Chester had released a preliminary plan for Morgan and a final plan for Parker. The final Morgan plan was expected shortly. The local associations may appeal to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education for changes within 30 days of final plans being released.

The New Bedford Educators Association and the Holyoke Teachers Association say the plans as drafted will hurt the quality of education for the high-needs students they serve by driving away good teachers. Both plans would:

- Require teachers to work hundreds of hours more through a longer day and longer school year with no guarantee of additional pay. Morgan teachers would have to work up to 453 more hours, equivalent to 53 more days, or 10½ weeks. At Parker, the plan calls for 331 more hours, equal to 41 more days, or about eight more weeks a year.

- Abolish the negotiated salary schedule based on steps and lanes and replace it with a performance-based system based on teacher effectiveness. The new system would take effect at Parker in the fall and at Morgan the following year. The local associations both argue that performance pay is divisive, fostering competition rather than collaboration. They cite research findings showing that performance pay does not improve student achievement.

- Replace the negotiated grievance procedure and impartial arbitration process with an expedited system in which the final decision would rest with the commissioner, who would give “substantial deference” to his appointed receivers.

Funding levels are unclear, with no assurance there will be enough district, state or federal money to implement the proposed changes. Neither plan guarantees adequate preschool services despite the acknowledged need for them.



Photo by Laura Barrett

Holyoke educators are asking Commissioner Mitchell Chester to make significant changes to his Level 5 turnaround plan for the Morgan Full Service Community School. Peter McAndrew, left, president of the Holyoke Teachers Association, attended a recent stakeholders’ meeting with Superintendent Sergio Páez, center, and Assistant Superintendent Paul Hyry-Dermith.

The preliminary Morgan plan has an added provision opposed by the HTA that says Project GRAD “may outsource positions in whole or in part, may transfer bargaining unit work in the best interests of the school operations and the students it serves, and may hire part-time employees at its discretion.”

Under the Achievement Gap Act of 2010, Level 5 schools are designated by the commissioner from among the Level 4 “underperforming” schools that have failed to meet state improvement targets. After the Parker, Morgan and two Boston schools were designated Level 5, Local Stakeholder Groups composed of parent, teacher, union, district and community representatives for each school were formed to make recommendations to Chester about the turnaround plans.

After Chester released his preliminary plans in March, the LSGs met to discuss recommended modifications. The commissioner did not have to accept any of the suggestions and has broad authority to appoint receivers, override local contracts and make other significant changes.

In Holyoke, the members of the LSG reached consensus on many issues, including calling on Chester to commit to returning the Morgan to the district if other district schools improve more quickly than Morgan does under Project GRAD.

HTA President Peter McAndrew said of the

Morgan preliminary plan as a whole, “I think this is an attempt to break the union.” Holyoke School Superintendent Sergio Páez said he shared many of McAndrew’s concerns.

In New Bedford, there was consensus on some small issues but no agreement on major ones. At a contentious LSG meeting on March 24, Parker teacher and LSG member Michael Irving said, “I don’t think there’s a single teacher here who doesn’t think there should be more time on learning, but there has to be adequate compensation.”

Marcia Guy, a Parker teacher and LSG member, tearfully echoed that sentiment. “The way this is structured, I don’t see how anyone who has put time into teaching will want to come here and help these kids out,” she said.

Kerri DiPina, the parent representative on the Parker LSG, expressed anger that parents had yet to be informed about the planned changes. “It’s going to be very traumatic for families when they find out how many teachers are leaving,” she said after the meeting. “We’ve come to know and trust these faces. They know my family. They know my children.”

In both Holyoke and New Bedford, the transfer process is underway. Uncertainty is rippling through both districts, since teachers with Professional Teacher Status who leave the two schools may bump teachers without PTS in other buildings.

Please turn to **Teachers**/Page 15

Toner issues statement on education legislation

The House Ways and Means Committee is considering a bill — House 3984 — that would make changes in state laws governing low-performing schools and charter schools. On March 27, MTA President Paul Toner issued the following statement about the legislation:

The legislation now being considered has some strong points and would take certain steps that the MTA opposes.

We support the bill's proposal to authorize the commissioner of education to identify "Challenge Schools" from among the lowest-performing 20 percent of schools. The goal is for the stakeholders in these schools to collaboratively develop improvement plans — with significant input from teachers and their local associations through collective bargaining — to improve student achievement.

We strongly believe that collaboration is the right path for our students. It will allow educators to have a real voice in the process

and make appropriate use of their classroom expertise, which has helped make Massachusetts No. 1 in the nation in student achievement.

If the parties agree on an improvement plan, a Level 3 school would avoid the designation of "underperforming" and the Level 4 process, under which teachers lose significant collective bargaining rights.

We do not, however, support the plan contained in the bill to increase net spending on charter schools because it is unnecessary. The current limit of 18 percent is still being phased in and has not been reached in any district.

The bill does not change either the current cap of 72 Commonwealth Charter Schools statewide or the current exception to that cap in the lowest-performing 10 percent of districts. The bill contains language that would allow net school spending on charter schools to increase in those districts, either by increasing the number of seats in existing charter schools that have been successful in improving student outcomes or by

authorizing new charters operated by providers with proven track records. If new charters are authorized in these districts, it would push the number of Commonwealth Charter Schools beyond 72.

Under this plan, the process of increasing the charter schools' share of net school spending in certain districts from 18 percent to 23 percent would not start until 2018. The limit would rise 1 percentage point annually through 2022.

Instead of increasing net school spending on charters, we believe that all schools — charter schools and regular district schools — should share best practices. Many schools have developed strategies to narrow the achievement gap that are replicable and are having a positive impact on students.

Although opposed to the increase in net school spending on charter schools, we do appreciate the effort by the bill's sponsor to hold charter schools that wish to expand more accountable and to restrict the kinds of charter schools that can expand.

This would be achieved by requiring that charters enroll student populations from these categories, among others: at-risk students, English language learners and special education students. In addition, the charter school applicant would have to agree to an opt-out admissions policy, or the school's primary purpose would have to be to provide an alternative setting for dropouts or students at risk of not graduating on time.

The intent of these approaches is to ensure that any new charter schools actually reflect the demographics of the students in the area and to prevent charter schools from "skimming" student populations through enrollment practices and selective attrition — practices that the MTA has long opposed.

We will monitor this legislation carefully in the coming months and support appropriate steps to help all students succeed. The bill contains positive proposals concerning low-performing schools, and we believe they deserve detailed consideration by the Legislature. In addition, we urge the Legislature to fully fund charter reimbursements to local districts each year.

A legislative summary of the bill — which resulted from an Education Committee draft — is posted at www.massteacher.org/edbillsummary, along with a link to the text of the legislation. The summary was provided by the Joint Committee on Education.

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Teachers discuss impact of 'Brown' decision

Continued from Page 3

asked her how she would teach about sub-Saharan Africa, which, according to the school's textbook, wasn't among the "Great Civilizations." So she did her own research and made study packets for her students. "I taught them what wasn't in the history books about the contributions and history of blacks, women, Native Americans and poor whites," she said.

The NEA is in search of stories from people who attended public schools in the 1950s and 1960s and about educators who helped ensure that every student received an equal education. For more information, please visit www.nea.org/home/brown-vs-board-share-your-story.html.

Conference promotes collaboration among AP and IB teachers

By Scott McLennan

More than 85 teachers from across the state plus MTA local association presidents, superintendents and Secretary of Education Matthew Malone participated in the second annual professional development conference held by the Massachusetts Aspiration and Achievement Partnership, which seeks to increase student participation in Advanced Placement courses and maximize student results on AP tests.

During the conference on March 17 at the University of Massachusetts Boston, AP and International Baccalaureate teachers worked collaboratively in breakout sessions based on subject matter, sharing best practices and strategies. The workshops were designed by educators from the districts that pioneered the MAAP initiative: Milton, Pembroke, Holbrook, Brockton and Taunton.

“It’s difficult to collaborate with peers from other districts,” said Milton AP English teacher Nick

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Education Secretary Matt Malone, second from left, chats with Brockton Superintendent Kathleen Smith, center, and Brockton Education Association President Kim Gibson.

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Legislature extends deadline for MECEU bill

By Scott McLennan
and Jean Conley

The Legislature has extended its deadline for action on a bill that would allow early childhood educators to form a providers' organization.

Legislators now have until June to consider the Massachusetts Early Childhood Educators Union's bill, "An Act to Improve Quality in Early Education Centers" (House 477/Senate 223). Sponsors and supporters of the measure plan to use the additional time to provide information and continue their advocacy.

"After several meetings with legislative leaders and members, it is clear that many still have questions about what exactly this bill would do," said MTA President Paul Toner. "We will continue our work with the early education organizers to answer those questions and demonstrate how the MECEU will benefit our youngest learners and those dedicated to educating them."



Photo by Jean Conley

MECEU supporters met with Representative Aaron Michlewitz, right, House chair of the Joint Committee on Public Service, during the lobby day.

The MECEU has the support of the MTA, which has made the bill's passage a top legislative priority; the National Education Association; AFT Massachusetts and the national AFT;

and the Massachusetts AFL-CIO. The providers' organization would be jointly affiliated with the MTA and the AFT.

The legislation would allow educators, directors and owners of

The legislation would affect roughly 5,000 employees working at 500 centers.

early education centers where at least 10 percent of the children receive state subsidies to form a nontraditional union that would work with the state Department of Early Education and Care on policies and regulations.

The legislation would affect roughly 5,000 employees working at 500 centers, most of which are small. The providers' organization would advocate for adequate funding to support quality-assurance regulations and professional training, increased reimbursement rates for vouchers used by income-eligible families, and additional funding for children now on waiting lists for subsidized preK centers.

Statewide, early educators earn an average annual wage of \$25,000, and more than 30,000 qualified families are on waiting lists for slots in subsidized preK centers.

News that the bill would have a later deadline for action came shortly after a successful lobby day by MECEU activists. On March 6, dozens of early childhood educators from across Massachusetts set up a gallery of student-created artwork in the corridors of the State House, then fanned out to visit lawmakers to try to persuade them to pass the legislation.

Lead sponsors of the bill are Representative Jeffrey Sánchez (D-Jamaica Plain) and Senator Sal DiDomenico (D-Everett). MECEU activists visited legislators from their home districts as well as Representative Aaron Michlewitz (D-Boston), House chair of the Joint Public Service Committee, urging that the bill be reported out favorably.

As the lobby day got underway, MTA Vice President Tim Sullivan and AFT Massachusetts President Tom Gosnell thanked the early education activists who had gathered at MTA headquarters. "Your efforts have been noticed," Sullivan said. "What you consider a day on the job, we recognize as an incredibly difficult undertaking for the good of our society. Today, you have the opportunity to unleash the power of your stories before legislators responsible for moving this bill forward."

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Rollout highlights challenges and advantages

Continued from Page 5

The quality of the test items themselves was hard for teachers to judge, since the exams are secure and students received different versions. Several local associations — including those in Somerville, Revere and Burlington — invited teachers and parents to try out sample PARCC items before the field test so they could see the level of difficulty and experience what the online test is like. Links to sample items and a practice test are available on the MTA website.

“Teachers have said some of the questions appear to be difficult,” said Burlington School Superintendent Eric Conti. However, Conti said he was not sure if the content was difficult or the issues involved “instructions and how it was laid out on the computer.”

Despite fears about PARCC being a timed test, most educators interviewed by *MTA Today* said most of their students finished with time to spare.

“Even our kids who took the longest managed to finish within the allotted time,” said Marcus.

Some teachers recognized that their curricula are not fully aligned with PARCC, a test designed to measure student mastery of the Common Core. “To be blunt about it,” said Marcus, “we haven’t done that much work in fractions by this time in the year, yet there were a lot of fraction questions on the test.”

Several raised the concern that PARCC could require more testing time than MCAS.

“It’s an awful lot of testing,” said Conti. “If we go this route, we have to make sure it is done in a way that minimizes the disruption to more important instruction and assessment.”

Chester told *MTA Today* he had heard complaints about the user interface and logistics, but that he also heard good reviews from many students and teachers he met with in Malden, Revere and Charlestown during the first week of the field test.

“I’ve probably talked to easily 150 students,” he said. “They were overwhelmingly positive.”

Revere Superintendent Paul Dakin agreed. “Almost every kid we met with said they enjoyed PARCC more than MCAS,” Dakin said. “When it first started, the teachers were a nervous wreck. As the week went on they

Several local associations — including those in Somerville, Revere and Burlington — invited teachers and parents to try out sample PARCC items before the field test so they could see the level of difficulty and experience what the online test is like.

started to overcome their anxiety. The students didn’t bat an eye.”

Chester added that PARCC provides several tools that should help special needs students, including a text-to-speech application. It also includes a bilingual dictionary application for English language learners.

Board of Elementary and Secondary Education members have raised concerns about whether students who have limited access to computers at home will be disadvantaged. Chester acknowledged the concern, but expressed optimism that students at all income levels may be more comfortable with computers than some fear.

“I observed testing sessions with third-graders in Revere and Malden,” he said. “These were

diverse classrooms that included ELL students, different ethnicities, low-income students and special education students. What struck me was that students are a lot more facile than adults in engaging the technology.”

Many have raised concerns about whether schools will have the technology to administer PARCC online by 2016. That is the year the test is supposed to be mostly online, though a paper version will still be available.

One Brockton teacher burst out laughing when she was asked if she thought Brockton High School would have enough computers to accommodate the school’s 4,100 students.

Chester noted that the federal government has already allocated more money for school technology and that a technology bond bill is currently before the state Legislature.

Others expressed concern about logistics and space issues.

For example, MTA Board member Ginger Armstrong, a digital arts and technology teacher in Lee, was upset that her classroom, which is a computer lab, was taken over for test administration, depriving her students of access to the room to prepare for an art exhibit.

Chester said that the challenges are real, but the need to bring technology into schools across the Commonwealth is great. “Let me be clear about something,” he said. “We need to get there technologically not because of PARCC but because our teachers need 21st-century classrooms.”

For more information on PARCC, please visit MTA’s PARCC toolkit, www.massteacher.org/advocating/toolkits/ccss/PARCC.aspx.

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Teachers oppose takeover plans

Continued from Page 10

The local associations have made the case that poverty and the high needs of their students are at the root of the low test scores — not poor performance by teachers.

At Morgan, for example, 98 percent of the students are from low-income families and 46 percent are English language learners. The school is surrounded by boarded-up warehouses. In March, an *MTA Today* photo session at the school was canceled because of a shooting outside. Only three of 54 students entered kindergarten knowing their letters. The school has lost seven teaching positions over the past three years.

Margo Ross, a fourth-grade math teacher, has a class of 28 students, all but six of whom are either English language learners, special needs students or both. Ten of her ELL students speak little English.

"If kids don't speak English, sometimes I pair them up with a student who is bilingual to translate," she said.



She has no classroom aides. Aides and tutors, she said, "would be very helpful."

She has a full complement of

computers, but only five of them work. Transiency is a constant problem.

"I just got four new kids in the last month," Ross said. "I had lost one,

Teachers at the Parker School in New Bedford say that Commissioner Mitchell Chester's Level 5 turnaround plan will drive most experienced teachers out of the school if it is implemented as proposed. Conferring after a Local Stakeholders' Group meeting in March, from left to right, are Lou St. John, president of the New Bedford Educators Association, and Parker educators Jessica Amaral, Kerry Leary Agashe and Michael Irving. Irving and Parker teacher Marcia Guy are members of the LSG.

Photo by Laura Barrett

who was gone for a while, and then she came back."

Ross said that despite all of the problems, the school has a dedicated staff, a welcoming atmosphere and many wonderful students and families.

"I really struggled with the decision to leave," she said. "My own kids went here. Our mayor, Alex Morse, is a Morgan alumnus who graduated from Brown University and was elected mayor at age 22. I love the Morgan School. I think we were making enormous strides."

Although Morgan's MCAS scores are low, in many grades the students' growth scores exceed the state median. "Teachers here are working really hard, and so are our students," said Ross, a 20-year teacher. "The kids need a pat on the back instead of this."

The teachers at Parker make a similar case. Many were shocked that Parker was named a Level 5 school because scores there have been improving steadily and are higher than in many other schools across the state. In fact, Parker was not eligible for federal improvement funds this year because student achievement levels were too high.

"We lost 50 percent of our teachers last year," Irving said at the LSG meeting. "If this plan goes in as written, many teachers aren't coming back. You may disagree, but I think this will have an enormous negative impact on the students."

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'Good old-fashioned organizing' helps PSU add members

By Scott McLennan

Prior to a concerted organizing effort by the Professional Staff Union at UMass Boston, there were “no rules” when it came to ESL instructors on campus.

That’s the assessment offered by UMass Boston PSU President Tom Goodkind, who described how instructors of English as a second language were subject to arbitrary pay rates and ineligible for any benefits,

despite the fact that many worked full time.

The PSU filed a grievance in January 2012, arguing that at one time the university had recognized an ESL instructor as a member of the PSU. After that instructor left the university, however, ESL instructors were no longer considered eligible for union membership.

The issue had come to a head in 2011, Goodkind recalled. That was when former ESL instructors promoted



ESL instructor Gabe Hedemann, PSU Vice President Anneta Argyres, PSU President Tom Goodkind and ESL instructor Louis Frank, left to right, go over membership papers.

Photo by Scott McLennan

to bargaining unit positions informed him that ESL teachers, who are part

of the College of Advancing and Professional Studies, had no benefits and poor pay. There were a “whole bunch” of instructors in the same predicament, Goodkind was told.

With an influx of foreign students accepted to UMass Boston but needing greater English proficiency — plus an agreement between the university and the Massachusetts International Academy in Marlborough to have university ESL instructors help prepare the students — the number of ESL teachers had been on the rise.

Goodkind, PSU Vice President Anneta Argyres and staff member Mary Jo Connelly, working closely with Maura Sweeney and Katie D’Urso of the MTA Division of Higher Education, spent months crunching data that bolstered the argument that the instructors were eligible for union membership. The PSU crafted a package of benefits and pay commensurate with the work done by ESL teachers.

While that work was going on, the ESL instructors organized themselves. Gabe Hedemann and Louis Frank stepped up as leaders on the Boston campus, and Kristen Forrelli and Jennifer Schmotzer became the main organizers in Marlborough.

The instructors circulated petitions asking for support for their unionizing efforts and wore stickers proclaiming “We all deserve benefits; We all deserve a union.” They also sought consensus and highlighted concerns that ultimately shaped a settlement agreement between the union and the university.

“It was good old-fashioned organizing,” Argyres said.

The 21 ESL instructors entering the PSU have seen a boost in pay, an agreement to receive retroactive pay and access to benefits.

“For a lot of us, we are working full time,” Hedemann said. “It’s what we do for a living, and to finally have a chance to get benefits is amazing.”



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Stories illustrate higher ed successes and challenges

By Sarah Nathan

Faculty, staff, administrators and students representing Massachusetts' public higher education institutions arrived at the State House on Public Higher Education Advocacy Day with the most convincing of arguments — their own personal stories.

Students from vastly different backgrounds spoke about the importance of public higher education and how they have benefited from having access to the Commonwealth's colleges and universities.

"If you have ever wondered what a miracle looked like, take a good look, because you are looking at one right now," said Steven Fanus, a native of Barbados who struggled with a disability that prevented him from learning to read and write as a child. Fanus enrolled in an adult literacy class and is now on track to receive a communications degree from Bristol Community College.

The faculty and staff at BCC "opened my eyes to a world of possibilities that I on my own had never seen," Fanus said, giving credit to Ron Weisberger, who coordinates tutoring at BCC and is an active member of the Massachusetts Community College Council.

Weisberger brought 25 students and faculty and staff members from Bristol to the advocacy day on March 5. "Without funding," he said, "we cannot do the work that needs to be done. Community colleges are open and accessible to everyone. We need resources to continue to help our students succeed."

The current state budget includes an increase in state funding for public higher education, the first one since 2000. But when adjusted for inflation, state funding for public higher education has declined by \$537 million since 2000.

"That's nearly a 33 percent drop — I'm not particularly proud of that fact," said MCCC President Joe LeBlanc. "We are here to urge our allies at the State House to recommit to investing in our public higher education campuses now and in the future."

LeBlanc called on legislators to commit to a 25-year plan to fund Massachusetts public higher education and asked activists to join with the



Bristol Community College student Steven Fanus lauded the educators in the audience, calling them "miracle workers." He urged legislators to provide additional funding so that public colleges and universities can help even more students. The faculty and staff "opened my eyes to a world of possibilities that I on my own had never seen," Fanus said, giving credit to Ron Weisberger, who coordinates tutoring at BCC and is an active member of the MCCC.

Photo by Sarah Nathan

14,000 MTA higher education members in calling for "real change."

LeBlanc also called for an end to the unfair treatment of adjunct faculty. In a report released last year called "Reverse the Course," the MTA pointed out how reliant community colleges have become on adjuncts, yet how poorly these important members of the higher education community are treated.

The event gave faculty, students and administrators from UMass, state universities and community colleges

an opportunity to speak with a unified voice in urging legislators to invest in the state's higher education system. After a rally, the activists fanned out through the State House to visit their representatives and senators to advocate for quality and affordable public higher education.

Sheri Denk, who coordinates special programs at Middlesex Community College, traveled to Boston with a van full of students and staff members.

"It's important for students to see the bigger picture and how they fit

into it — I think it gives them a really good connection to things and informs them about the civic role that they can play," Denk said as she and a group of students and staff headed off to Senator Eileen M. Donoghue's office. "Their stories make a real difference."

Cameron Pramas, a Worcester State University criminal justice student, said, "We're some of the Commonwealth's most valuable assets. We are the future graduates and, more importantly, we're the future workforce."

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MTA signs partnership pact with two other unions

By Scott McLennan

The MTA and state affiliates of the Service Employees International Union and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees entered into a partnership agreement on March 24 that leaders of the unions described as a boon to working families throughout the Commonwealth.

Last year, the National Education Association and the national leadership

of the SEIU and AFSCME crafted a pact that calls for cooperation among the unions and placed prohibitions on interfering with one another's organizing activities.

The MTA and Massachusetts locals of the SEIU and AFSCME became the first state organizations to adopt the agreement.

"We have close relationships with all of the people around this table, and this agreement strengthens that bond," MTA President Paul Toner



Photo by Scott McLennan

MTA Executive Director-Treasurer Ann Clarke, center, met with union leaders from the SEIU and AFSCME on March 24 to sign an agreement pledging increased cooperation.

said as representatives of the various unions gathered in Boston to sign the agreement. "This partnership among our unions will help all of us be stronger advocates for the working families we fight for every day."

Along with having an effect on organizing activities, the pact will enhance the affiliates' ability to work together on political and legislative campaigns and find common ground

"This partnership among our unions will help all of us be stronger advocates for the working families we fight for every day," said MTA President Paul Toner.

on bargaining issues, especially at work sites where employees are represented by more than one union.

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Agenda features elections, awards and budget

By Jean Conley

The MTA's Annual Meeting of Delegates on May 9 and 10 will feature elections to the association's top leadership posts and tributes to Governor Deval Patrick, U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren and others who have shown their commitment to public education and organized labor.

The association's 169th Annual Meeting will be held at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston.

Outgoing MTA President Paul Toner will preside over his fourth Annual Meeting. The middle school social studies teacher from Cambridge said his past four years at the helm of the MTA have taught him a lot about how to respond to the challenges that unions and public education are facing.

"We can't let powerful forces on the outside dictate change, and we also can't reflexively say 'no' to proposals for change," Toner said.

Toner — whose second and final term ends in July — said he is hopeful that teachers' unions will play an increasingly important role in policy "by focusing far more on the quality of public education."

The union must take part in setting academic standards, promote strong evaluation systems, help design better teacher preparation and professional development programs and demand shared decision-making authority, he said.

"Educators are the experts on what works in the classroom, and our unions have the solutions to the challenges that public education is facing," Toner said.

The two-day agenda includes contests for MTA president, vice president, Executive Committee and Board of Directors.

The keynote address will be delivered on Friday by Greg Anrig, vice president of policy and programs at The Century Foundation.

Anrig is the author of "Beyond the Education Wars: Evidence That Collaboration Builds Effective Schools," which examines connections between student outcomes and organizational practices and delves into case studies of school districts — including Springfield — that have embraced collaboration with their educators' unions. Anrig is also the author of "The Conservatives Have No Clothes: Why Right-Wing Ideas Keep Failing."

On Saturday morning, Teacher of the Year Anne Marie Osheyack will address the thousand-plus



GREG ANRIG



GOVERNOR DEVAL PATRICK



U.S. SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN



ANNE MARIE OSHEYACK

Outgoing MTA President Paul Toner will preside over his fourth Annual Meeting. The middle school social studies teacher from Cambridge said his past four years at the helm of the MTA have taught him a lot about how to respond to the challenges that unions and public education are facing. "We can't let powerful forces on the outside dictate change, and we also can't reflexively say 'no' to proposals for change," Toner said.

delegates. Osheyack is an English language arts teacher at Northampton High School who worked at Central High School in Springfield when she was named Teacher of the Year last May. She is an outspoken advocate for urban educators.

The President's Award will honor Governor Patrick for his "passionate advocacy and support" for public education, MTA members and students. Toner lauded the governor's "commitment to collaboration" with the MTA over his more than seven years in office. Patrick is completing his second term as governor and will not seek re-election in November.

The MTA Friend of Labor Award will be presented to a representative of Senator Warren,

who cannot attend due to a scheduling conflict. Warren will speak to convention delegates in a video message.

Warren, once a teacher herself, went on to become a lawyer, a tenured professor at Harvard Law School and a nationally known advocate for working families. She unseated Senator Scott Brown in 2012. Friend of Education Awards will also be presented.

The Annual Meeting will be called to order at noon on May 9. That day's session will include leadership reports delivered by Toner, MTA Vice President Tim Sullivan and Executive Director-Treasurer Ann Clarke.

Saturday's activities include the presentation of awards and other business. Voting to fill MTA statewide leadership posts and other association positions will be open from 8 to 11 a.m. A report on the Public Relations/Organizing Campaign will be delivered by Sullivan.

The proposed operating budget of \$43,655,890 for fiscal 2014-2015 will also be presented and voted on. The Advisory Budget Committee, the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors have proposed annual dues of \$459 for full-time active members, a \$3 increase over last year. Dues for secretaries, clerks and custodians would be \$276, while dues for aides, food service personnel and other education support professionals would be \$138.

In addition, the PR/Organizing Campaign will be considered. The general dues assessment for the PR/Organizing budget would be \$30. For secretaries, clerks and custodians, the assessment would be \$18; aides, food service personnel and other education support professionals would be assessed \$9. The amounts are unchanged from last year.



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2014 **MTA** ANNUAL MEETING OF DELEGATES

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

THURSDAY, MAY 8

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
2 – 4 p.m.	MTAB Sponsors' Booth Registration	Hynes Ballroom Pre-Function Area, 3rd Floor
2 – 4 p.m.	MTA Candidates' Booth Registration	Hynes Boylston Street Hallway, 3rd Floor

FRIDAY, MAY 9

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
8 – 9:30 a.m.	MTAB Sponsors' Booth Registration	Hynes Ballroom Pre-Function Area, 3rd Floor
8 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.	Emergency Medical Technician	Hynes Plaza Level, Main Lobby
10 a.m. – 6 p.m.	Delegate and Non-Delegate Registration	Hynes Rooms 304-306, 3rd Floor
10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Retirement Consultations	Hynes Boylston Street Hallway, 3rd Floor
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.	MTAB Sponsors' Booths	Hynes Ballroom Pre-Function Area, 3rd Floor
10 a.m. – 6 p.m.	MTA Candidates' Booths	Hynes Boylston Street Hallway, 3rd Floor
10 a.m. – 6 p.m.	Boston Concierge Service Desk	Hynes Boylston Street Hallway, 3rd Floor
10 a.m. – 6 p.m.	Meeting Rooms	Hynes Rooms 301, 302, 303, 305, 3rd Floor
11 a.m.	Business Session Doors Open	Hynes Ballroom, 3rd Floor
11 a.m. – Noon	Final Deadline: Submit Proposed Amendments to the Standing Rules	Hynes Ballroom, 3rd Floor (Bylaws and Rules Committee Table)
11:30 – 11:50 a.m.	MTA Chorus	Hynes Ballroom, 3rd Floor
Noon	Business Session Convenes	Hynes Ballroom, 3rd Floor
4 p.m.	Hotel Registration for Delegates Begins	Sheraton Boston Hotel
Prior to Recess	Friday Deadline: New Business Items <u>without</u> Budgetary Implications	Hynes Ballroom, 3rd Floor (Podium)
Prior to Recess	Final Deadline: New Business Items <u>with</u> Budgetary Implications	Hynes Ballroom, 3rd Floor (Podium)
Prior to Recess	Final Deadline: Proposed Resolutions	Hynes Ballroom, 3rd Floor (Resolutions Committee Table)
6 p.m. (Approximately)	Business Session Recesses	Hynes Ballroom, 3rd Floor
6 – 7 p.m.	Resolutions Committee Meeting	Hynes Room 303, 3rd Floor
6 – 7 p.m.	Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee Meeting	Hynes Room 301, 3rd Floor
15 Minutes After Recess	Candidate Speeches for Contested Seats:	
	Retired Members Committee	Hynes Room 302, 3rd Floor
	Executive Committee Region G	Hynes Room 308, 3rd Floor
	Board District 26A	Hynes Room 305, 3rd Floor
6:30 – 7:30 p.m.	Dismantling of MTA Candidates' Booths	Hynes Boylston Street Hallway, 3rd Floor

SATURDAY, MAY 10

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
8 a.m.	Business Session Doors Open	Hynes Ballroom, 3rd Floor
8 – 11 a.m.	Delegate and Non-Delegate Registration	Hynes Rooms 304-306, 3rd Floor
8 a.m.	Election: Polls Open	Hynes Room 311, 3rd Floor (Voting Area)
8 – 11 a.m.	MTAB Sponsors' Booths	Hynes Ballroom Pre-Function Area, 3rd Floor
8 a.m. – Noon	Boston Concierge Service Desk	Hynes Boylston Street Hallway, 3rd Floor
8 a.m. – Adjournment	Meeting Rooms	Hynes Rooms 301, 302, 303, 305, 3rd Floor
8 a.m. – Adjournment	Emergency Medical Technician	Hynes Plaza Level, Main Lobby
9 a.m.	Business Session Reconvenes	Hynes Ballroom, 3rd Floor
10 a.m. (Approximately)	Saturday Final Deadline: New Business Items <u>without</u> Budgetary Implications	Hynes Ballroom, 3rd Floor (Podium)
10:55 a.m.	Admittance/Briefing of Observers	Hynes Room 311, 3rd Floor (Voting Area)
11 a.m.	Election: Polls Close	Hynes Room 311, 3rd Floor (Voting Area)
11 a.m.	Hotel Checkout	Sheraton Boston Hotel
11 a.m. – Noon	Election Tabulation	Hynes Room 311, 3rd Floor (Voting Area)
11 a.m. – 1 p.m.	Dismantling of MTAB Sponsors' Booths	Hynes Ballroom Pre-Function Area, 3rd Floor
11:15 a.m. – Adjournment	Non-Delegate Registration	Hynes Ballroom Pre-Function Area, 3rd Floor
11:15 a.m. – Adjournment	Late Delegate Seating	Hynes Ballroom Pre-Function Area, 3rd Floor
12:15 p.m. (Approximately)	Election Results Announced	Hynes Ballroom, 3rd Floor (Podium)
1 – 1:30 p.m.	Runoff Election: Polls Reopen (if Necessary)	Hynes Room 311, 3rd Floor (Voting Area)
1:25 p.m.	Admittance of Observers (if Necessary)	Hynes Room 311, 3rd Floor (Voting Area)
1:30 – 2 p.m.	Runoff Election Tabulation (if Necessary)	Hynes Room 311, 3rd Floor (Voting Area)
2 p.m.	Runoff Election Results Announced (if Necessary)	Hynes Ballroom, 3rd Floor (Podium)
3 p.m. (Approximately)	Business Session Adjourns	Hynes Ballroom, 3rd Floor

2014 **MTA** ANNUAL MEETING OF DELEGATES

BUSINESS SESSION AGENDA

FRIDAY, MAY 9

1. Call to Order (Noon) Paul Toner, President, Presiding
2. Pledge of Allegiance Tim Sullivan, Vice President
3. "The Star-Spangled Banner" MTA Annual Meeting Chorus
4. Moment of Remembrance
5. Announcements
6. Adopt the Preliminary Credentials Report (Quorum) Joyce Desjardins, Chair, Credentials and Ballot Committee
7. Adopt the Order of Business
8. Act on Proposed Amendments to the MTA Standing Rules Gerry Ruane, Chair, Bylaws and Rules Committee
9. Act on Proposed Amendments to the MTA Bylaws Gerry Ruane, Chair, Bylaws and Rules Committee
10. Report on Certified Candidates Joyce Desjardins, Chair, Credentials and Ballot Committee
11. Act on Proposed Resolutions Diana Marcus, Chair, Resolutions Committee
12. MTA Year in Review Video
13. MTA Leadership Reports
 - a. Paul Toner, President, and Tim Sullivan, Vice President
 - b. Ann Clarke, Executive Director-Treasurer
14. Keynote Address Greg Anrig, Vice President of Policy and Programs, The Century Foundation
15. Greetings from Tom Gosnell, President of AFT Massachusetts
16. Speeches by Candidates for President and Vice President
17. Act on Proposed New Business Items with Budgetary Implications
18. Adopt the Supplemental Credentials Report Joyce Desjardins, Chair, Credentials and Ballot Committee
19. Recess

SATURDAY, MAY 10

The Saturday Session Lasts through Adjournment with No Lunch Break

20. Call to Order (9 a.m.) Paul Toner, President, Presiding
21. Announcements
22. Adopt the Supplemental Credentials Report Joyce Desjardins, Chair, Credentials and Ballot Committee
23. Recognition and Presentation of Awards
 - a. MTA Special Recognition for the Recipient of the 2014 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year Award
 - b. MTA President's Award
 - c. MTA Friend of Education Awards
 - d. MTA Friend of Labor Award
24. Presentation of the Grant for the MTA Red Sox Reading Game
25. Act on Proposed New Business Items with Budgetary Implications
26. Act on the Budget and Dues Recommendation for FY 2014-15 Tim Sullivan, Vice President and Chair of the Advisory Budget Committee
 - a. Presentation and Discussion of the Recommended Operating Budget and Dues
 - b. Act on the MTA Annual Operating Budget and Dues
27. Act on the PR/Organizing Campaign Budget and Dues Tim Sullivan, Vice President and Co-Chair of the PR/Organizing Campaign Committee
 - a. Video Presentation and Discussion of the Public Relations/Organizing Campaign Budget and Dues
 - b. Act on the Proposed Public Relations/Organizing Campaign Budget and Dues
28. Adopt the Results of the Election Joyce Desjardins, Chair, Credentials and Ballot Committee
29. Act on Additional Proposed Resolutions (if Necessary) Diana Marcus, Chair, Resolutions Committee
30. Adopt the Final Credentials Report Joyce Desjardins, Chair, Credentials and Ballot Committee
31. Adopt the Results of Any Runoff Election (if Necessary) Joyce Desjardins, Chair, Credentials and Ballot Committee
32. Act on Proposed New Business Items without Budgetary Implications
33. Greetings from MTA Vice President-Elect and President-Elect
34. Closing Comments by Outgoing President Paul Toner
35. Announcements and Points of Personal Privilege
36. VOTE Giveaway
37. Adjournment

Candidate for MTA President: Timothy Sullivan

My name is Timothy D. Sullivan, and I am a 34-year veteran educator, a 25-year union activist, and a candidate for the office of President of the Massachusetts Teachers Association. I am seeking election because of my passion for the fundamental values of unionism and professionalism and my commitment to preserving them. I have demonstrated this commitment during my tenure as your Vice President.

I believe that my association experiences at the state, county, local (Brockton), and national levels have prepared me well for the continued challenges that await the MTA and the students of our Commonwealth. In my current capacity as MTA Vice President, I serve as Chairperson of the Advisory Budget Committee and as Co-Chair of the Public Relations/Organizing Campaign Committee. Both of these positions have afforded me an opportunity to work on issues that affect all of our members each and every day. My focus as a leader has always been, and will continue to be, on our members, who are the core reason for our existence.

Throughout my four years as MTA Vice President, I have focused on our mission. The MTA mission statement reads in part: “The MTA promotes the use of its members’ collective power to advance their professional and economic interests.” With MTA’s emerging focus on our Strategic Action Plan and Full Capacity Locals, now is the time to use our collective power to its fullest.

- We must meet head-on those who seek to diminish our voices and our profession.
- We must harness our common expertise by continuing to put our own imprimatur on education reform.
- We must send a message to the political establishment that we insist that our collective voice be heard.

After all, it is the practitioner — whether a teacher, an ESP, a higher ed member, an administrator or a retiree — who should be the standard-bearer of public education. I believe the MTA is at a critical point — a point where we need to remain true to our core union values while remaining open to possibilities of collaboration that have the potential to change education policy for the good of our members and our students.

When I became your Vice President in 2010, I could not have imagined the significant challenges that our organization would face. I am not sure anyone could have predicted that in “union-friendly” Massachusetts we would be confronted with changes to pensions, health care, teacher evaluations and seniority. Now more than ever is the time to use our collective power to defeat those who seek to harm us and to work with those who are truly interested in partnering with us for the betterment of our schools and colleges. As a result of our recent challenges, the MTA has emerged as



a strong and rational voice for unionism, education reform and our profession.

As we move forward, the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, PARCC assessments, District-Determined Measures, RETELL and accountability intervention models will continue to challenge our preK-12 members. I vow that if I am elected MTA President, the association will work with our members to raise awareness of the many difficulties associated with such implementation, seek to modify existing regulations and laws to help educators in their practice, and delay timelines where appropriate.

Our higher ed members face myriad challenges that include — but are not limited to — the Vision Project, full-time-to-adjunct ratios, funding, benefits, soaring tuition and fees, ORP changes, attacks on academic freedom, and online instruction. As I have in the past, I will work closely with our higher education members through their local chapters and HELC, the Higher Education Leadership Council.

In recent years, one of the fastest-growing segments of our membership has been our Education Support Professionals. I want to continue to work with all of our ESPs, preK through graduate school, to ensure that they feel they are a valued part of the MTA and that they receive the respect in the field that they rightfully deserve. Speaking from experience, the ESPs who worked in my classroom were a vital part of the educational process for the students we served together. Going forward, I hope to work with the MTA ESP Committee to strengthen ESP support and offerings at all levels of the organization.

The road ahead will not be an easy one, given the forces out there that would welcome our

demise and will try to ensure that outcome. Last year I had the honor of chairing an MTA task force charged with identifying the players in the local and national networks of anti-public-education and anti-worker groups. Our work culminated in the release of a report appropriately titled “Threat from the Right.”

We need to heed the warnings in the report concerning local groups such as the Beacon Hill Institute and the Pioneer Institute, as well as national groups such as Americans for Prosperity, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), and the Heritage Foundation. These groups, along with others, often espouse policies that attack public education and the rights of workers. To combat such forces we need to continue to develop our power at the grassroots level. Strengthening our grassroots efforts will be a hallmark of my presidency.

It is incumbent upon us — the educators — to put forth our own solutions to address the achievement gap. We also must address other perceived “ills” of the public education system. If we do not provide real solutions — our solutions — then others will drive the education policy debate. Although Massachusetts is No. 1 and we should be proud of it, we all realize there is still work to be done. I say: Ask us. We are the experts!

On a personal note, my wife, Joyce, and I are public school graduates (K-12 and higher ed) and the proud parents of Timmy Jr., a seventh-grader in the Weymouth Public Schools.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve you for the past four years. I ask for your vote so that I may continue to serve.

Thank you!

Candidate for MTA President: Barbara Madeloni

Where we are:

- Education workers have lost autonomy and respect. Top-down mandates and high-stakes testing are narrowing the curriculum, and evaluations reduce our work and our students to numbers. With fewer and fewer resources, we work under constant threat of job loss and the specter of reduced retiree health care benefits.

- Corporate interests are using high-stakes testing, teacher evaluations and charter schools to attack education workers, profit from the public dollar, privatize public education and bust our unions.

- We have negotiated and compromised in the hope that this would stave off the assault on public education, but each year we lose more ground, while our members grow increasingly cynical and disengaged.

Where we can be:

- Public education can be a space to nurture the whole child: to develop creativity, imagination, empathy, critical questioning, and our democratic project.

- Union leadership can name the assault on public education and work with members, parents, students and community organizers to build a movement countering corporate reform, with a renewed vision of high-quality public education as a human right.

- Our union can develop alliances and strategies to engage in the struggle for economic and racial justice, for autonomy and democracy in all



workplaces, and for the well-being of the children and communities in which we work.

How we will get there:

- We will initiate conversations within and across locals to develop strategies that mobilize our

union to resist corporate-driven reforms and reclaim a broad vision for public education.

- I will spend one day a week traveling to locals to listen.

- We will use the political power and influence of the MTA to the fullest extent — including collective action — to assert that our working conditions are our students' learning conditions.

- We will hold community forums to discuss the impact of over-testing, develop strategies to resist high-stakes testing and put assessment back into the hands of educators.

- We will grow alliances across locals to demand fair wages and benefits, autonomy on the job, collective voice in the workplace, and respect for the professional knowledge of all education workers, whether they are ESPs, preK-12 teachers, or in higher education.

- We will organize across the state for a progressive tax that fully and equitably funds our public schools and universities, as well as providing for the well-being of the people of Massachusetts.

- We will ally with national education union activists in the larger campaign to preserve public education, social justice and the democratic ideal.

Together we can roll back the corporate assault and reclaim education. Become a delegate.

Vote for Barbara Madeloni on May 10.

Barbara Madeloni taught high school English before becoming a teacher educator at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Currently secretary of the Massachusetts Society of Professors, she served on the negotiating team at Frontier Regional School.

She emerged as a national leader in resisting corporate reform while supporting prospective educators who refused to participate in a Pearson, Inc., field test of a standardized high-stakes assessment of student teachers.

She is running under the banner of Educators for a Democratic Union, a progressive caucus in the MTA.

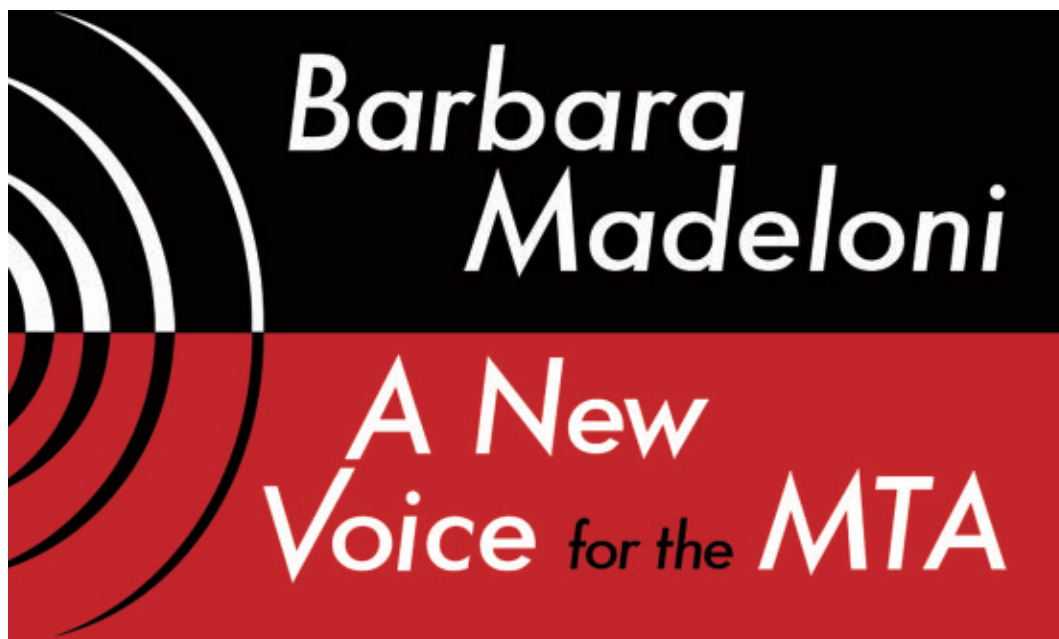
Find out more:

- <http://www.educatorsfordemocraticunion.com/barbara-for-president.html>

- <https://www.facebook.com/barbaraformta>

- E-mail Barbara at barbaraformta@gmail.com

*Message from the Committee to Elect
Barbara Madeloni*



Candidate for MTA Vice President: Bob Becker

My name is Bob Becker, and I am a candidate for MTA Vice President. This office requires commitment, knowledge, and vision, the skills I have developed throughout my teaching and union career. I represent the teachers in the Wachusett Regional Education Association (WREA) as their president, the District 9B members on the MTA Board, and all members as a delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly.

I am a full-time high school science teacher and a union activist. Like many of our leaders, I began my union activism as a building representative. I have also served as local contract negotiator, lead negotiator, and vice president for grievances and contract maintenance.

Seven years ago, I decided to get more involved in MTA, and I ran and was elected to the MTA Board. During my time on the Board, I have served on many committees, such as the MTA employees' Retirement Planning Committee and the Personnel Selection Team, and I currently serve as Co-Chair of the Board Bargaining Team. I was elected to the Advisory Budget Committee, and I am also part of the NEA's Northeast Organizing Institute.

At every level of my involvement, I continue to see unprecedented attacks on public education and educators. Addressing these attacks will clearly



be one of the biggest challenges faced by our state association. Going forward, we must strive to continue to provide the services that our members need while at the same time increasing our ability to

organize and mobilize members in order to counter these assaults.

The MTA continues to be in challenging times. The attempts to marginalize the MTA's influence will not abate. Attacks on our collective bargaining rights will not diminish, and for-profits will continue to chip away at our profession.

I pledge to you that I will work with the MTA President, the Board, local leaders and all members to:

- Activate and motivate our members to take a more active role in their locals and in the MTA.
- Provide a balance of the need to negotiate and maintain strong collective bargaining agreements with the need to organize our next cadre of local and state leaders.
- Expand our work with coalitions that share our education philosophy.
- Represent our diverse membership, preK through 12, education support professionals, academic professionals, full- and part-time faculty and staff in higher education, retirees, and students.

I believe that I have the knowledge, the vision, and the experience to be the next MTA Vice President and to ensure that MTA is the voice for public education in Massachusetts. I ask for your vote at the MTA Annual Meeting on May 10.

Thank you.

Candidate for MTA Vice President: Lenny Zalauskas

My name is Lenny Zalauskas, and I am a candidate for MTA Vice President. I am seeking this office because of my commitment to and passion for the fundamental values of unionism. I have demonstrated this commitment by serving on the MTA Board, as an NEA delegate, and as president of the Educational Association of Worcester (EAW), the largest MTA K-12 local. I have a degree in labor relations.

I believe that my wide range of experiences at the local, state, and national levels have prepared me well for the challenges that await the MTA. I am currently serving my fourth year as EAW President. My focus as a local leader has always been on the "member," who is the core reason for our existence as a union.

In Worcester, I represent over 2,800 people across six bargaining units. These include teachers, assistant principals and five ESP groups, which are instructional assistants, bus drivers and bus monitors, parent liaisons, ESL tutors and OT/PT assistants. This enables me to have a good understanding of the issues of not only teachers but many ESP groups.

As the only Vice President candidate who is a full-time President, I have experience in many of the issues that face MTA on the K-12 level. That includes Level 4 Schools, Innovation Schools, Extended Learning Time Schools, etc. I stand alone in this regard. I interact on a regular basis with



all facets of the MTA, whether it be field service, communications, legal or CEPP. I work hard in Worcester and would work hard for you. This, combined with my other union skill set, exceeds

those qualifications of the other candidates. I possess the leadership to find the solutions to our problems and the diplomacy to work with a diverse group of people to obtain results.

I am a graduate of Worcester State University. I have advocated with Senator Michael Moore incessantly to increase funding for higher education. I have been involved from the beginning in the fight against OPEB. My experience dealing with ESPs should easily be transferable to higher ed workplace ESPs. I will work diligently to thoroughly understand and represent higher ed issues.

We have been under attack for some time. There are those who take the view that these most recent attacks on our collective bargaining rights impact but a few. However, I believe an injury to one member is an injury to all. I believe the MTA is at a critical point where we need to remain true to our core union values while remaining open to the possibilities of collaboration that have the potential to change education policy.

These battles can only be won by collective action. As your MTA Vice President, I will welcome the opportunity to lead you in those important battles. We need to continue the fight for our members and public education. I ask that you join me in this fight and please give me your vote on Saturday, May 10, at the MTA Annual Meeting.

Candidate for MTA Vice President: Janet Anderson

As a candidate for MTA Vice President, I understand that our members drive public education. There is no more important institution in our country than our public school system. It is the “great equalizer” because every child has a chance to succeed in life. It is where the American success story begins.

Our schools and educators provide the one place where many students know they will be safe and secure. We all share the same vision for our students. Too often, educators take the blame for students the state has labeled as failing. We are not failing these students. We have an obligation to ourselves, our students, and our communities to advocate for sound education policy from preK to higher education.

However, we must never forget that the Massachusetts Teachers Association is a labor union. It’s why we were created, it’s why we exist, and why we must work to advance and protect our members’ economic and professional interests. We must guarantee that the MTA is a member-driven organization, and that our direction comes from our members. We must ensure that every member has a voice and every local is engaged.

I’ve had the pleasure of serving on the MTA Board of Directors, and I am proud of my voting record. I’ve served on the MTA Education Policy and Practice Committee and the Environmental Health



and Safety Committee, and I am a member of the Large Locals Task Force. I’ve attended numerous MTA Annual Meetings and NEA Representative Assemblies.

But most importantly, I am a fifth-grade teacher and a member and President of the Taunton Education Association. I believe that actions speak louder than words. My record shows that I’ve successfully advocated for sound education policy while at the same time protected our members’ interests.

During my time as President, I negotiated an inclusion agreement that provided a minimum of five special educators in every elementary school. I initiated discussions with the superintendent and the School Committee that led to a collaborative endeavor resulting in the Taunton School Committee becoming the first in the state to sign on to the National Resolution Against High-Stakes Testing.

I’ve demonstrated my ability to organize and mobilize TEA members on issues that are important to them, all the while protecting members’ economic interests, wages, and benefits. I am proud of our achievements in Taunton.

I will bring this type of leadership to the office of MTA Vice President. I am a proven leader. Let’s work together to make sure that in our association, every local is engaged and every member matters. This is why I’m asking for your vote.

I look forward to seeing you at the MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates on May 9 and 10!

Alternative nomination process is available under MTA rules

Article VII, Section 2B(2), of the MTA Bylaws provides for an alternative nomination process for President and Vice President at the Annual Meeting of Delegates:

- Nomination papers may be obtained at the Annual Meeting from the Executive Director-Treasurer.
- Nomination papers must be signed by 200 of the registered delegates with the same limitations as described in Section 2B(1)b of the MTA Bylaws.
- Nomination papers must be filed with the Credentials and Ballot

Committee prior to the close of the first business session.

- The committee will certify that the nomination papers comply with the requirements in Sections 2B(1) b, 2B(2)b and 2B(2)c of the MTA Bylaws. Upon certification, the candidate’s name will be placed on the ballot for the office sought.

A candidate who has not previously filed papers can obtain nomination papers from the Executive Director-Treasurer or his/her designee at the podium after the opening of the first business session of the Annual Meeting

of Delegates. The candidate(s) must then file the nomination papers with the chair of the Credentials and Ballot Committee through the podium assistant prior to the close of the first business session.

The Credentials and Ballot Committee will process the nomination papers for certification in accordance with the established procedure and will certify the papers if they are in compliance with the MTA Bylaws.

As the last item of business prior to the close of the first business session,

the chair of the Credentials and Ballot Committee will present a supplementary (amended) report of the committee by reading into the record the names of those who have requested nomination papers for President and/or Vice President.

The Credentials and Ballot Committee will ensure that the names of all certified candidates for President and/or Vice President will appear on the ballots. Sufficient space will be available on the ballots to allow for the names of certified additional candidates under the supervision of the committee.



The Massachusetts Child gives grants of \$750 or more to MTA preK-12 locals to help students succeed in school.

massteacher.org/masschild | 617.878.8265

Candidates vie for seats on Board and Executive Committee

In addition to contests for the statewide offices of MTA President and Vice President, the Annual Meeting of Delegates will feature contests for seats on the Executive Committee and Board of Directors.

Michael Zilles of Newton and Kim Auger of Everett are vying for the Region G seat on the Executive Committee. Jean Sherlock of Chicopee and Erin DuFresne of Holyoke are running for the District 26A seat on the Board of Directors.

All other candidates for the Executive Committee and the Board have been declared elected under the election waiver in the MTA Bylaws. The provision states that if there is only one candidate for an open position, the election will be waived and the candidate is declared elected. Terms on the Board and Executive Committee begin July 1 and last for three years.

The candidates declared elected because of the election waiver are:

Executive Committee

Region A: Ginger Armstrong, Lee

Region C: Beth Stafford, Whitman-Hanson

Region F: Kathy Meltsakos, Andover

At-Large Retired: Gerard Ruane, MTA Retired

At-Large ESP: Robert Travers, Cambridge

Board of Directors

At-Large ESP: Donna Johnson, University Staff Association

District 3A: Sharon Carlson, Northampton

District 4A: Jean Fay, Amherst-Pelham

District 5A: Shirley Peaks, Springfield

District 8B: Karen Ballway, Auburn

District 11B: Elaine Valk, Sutton Education Support Professionals

District 34C: Tammy Johnson, Plymouth-Carver

District 27D: Nicole Prevost, Quincy

District 22F: Kerry Costello, Andover

District 18G: Debra King, Watertown

District 21G: Laura Vago, Malden

District 44H: Catherine Boudreau, MCCC

Candidates who supplied photos are pictured with this article. The biographical statements of the Executive Committee and Board candidates in contested races appear below and on page 29.



Ginger Armstrong



Kim Auger



Karen Ballway



Sharon Carlson



Kerry Costello



Erin DuFresne



Jean Fay



Donna Johnson



Tammy Johnson



Debra King



Kathy Meltsakos



Shirley Peaks



Nicole Prevost



Gerard Ruane



Beth Stafford



Robert Travers



Laura Vago



Elaine Valk



Michael Zilles

Biographical statements of Executive Committee candidates

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

REGION G

Michael Zilles, Newton

In these tough times we need our MTA leadership to stand up for our rights, lead a fight for genuine education reform, and hold our politicians accountable. As President of the Newton Teachers Association, I've done this. Under my leadership, we have successfully bargained contracts that provided real gains in tough economic times, built a strong collaborative relationship with administrators that gives educators a voice, and helped re-elect a mayor who has respected our collective bargaining rights. I will bring to the MTA the same passion, dedication and strategic thinking that I bring to my leadership of the NTA!

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

REGION G

Kim Auger, Everett

I am Kim Auger, a candidate for re-election to the Region G Executive Committee seat. Three years ago, I made a commitment to communicate with the local leaders and Board members. Since that time, I have met monthly with these local leaders to discuss issues and the concerns of their members. I have brought these concerns and issues forward to the Executive Committee. I am a member of the MTA Board Bargaining Team and was elected to the Advisory Budget Committee, two critically important MTA committees. I ask for your support to re-elect me to the MTA Executive Committee.

Amendments to bylaws are proposed

The following is Bylaw Amendment #1. It would revise portions of Article 4, Section 2: "Dues." The present text is in the left column. Revisions are indicated by bold text and strikethroughs in the right column.

PRESENT TEXT:

3) Members Earning Minimal Base Salary or Minimal Annual Income

a. An MTA active member whose base salary for the employment that qualifies him or her for MTA active membership is less than twelve thousand dollars (\$12,000) or an active MTA member whose annual income from the employment that qualifies him or her for active membership is less than twelve thousand dollars (\$12,000) due to an unpaid leave of absence, shall pay thirty (30%) percent of the annual dues of a full-time active member.

b. An MTA active member whose base salary for the employment that qualifies him or her for MTA active membership is less than six thousand dollars (\$6,000) or an active MTA member whose annual income from the employment that qualifies him or her for active membership is less than six thousand dollars (\$6,000) due to an unpaid leave of absence shall pay fifteen (15%) percent of the annual dues of a full-time active member.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS:

3) Members Earning Minimal Base Salary or Minimal Annual Income

a. An MTA active member whose base salary for the employment that qualifies him or her for MTA active membership is less than ~~(twelve thousand dollars) (\$12,000)~~ **eighteen thousand dollars (\$18,000)** or an active MTA member whose annual income from the employment that qualifies him or her for active membership is less than ~~(twelve thousand dollars) (\$12,000)~~ **eighteen thousand dollars (\$18,000)** due to an unpaid leave of absence, shall pay thirty (30%) percent of the annual dues of a full-time active member.

b. An MTA active member whose base salary for the employment that qualifies him or her for MTA active membership is less than ~~(six thousand dollars) (\$6,000)~~ **nine thousand dollars (\$9,000)** or an active MTA member whose annual income from the employment that qualifies him or her for active membership is less than ~~six thousand dollars (\$6,000)~~ **nine thousand dollars (\$9,000)** due to an unpaid leave of absence shall pay fifteen (15%) percent of the annual dues of a full-time active member.

Submitted by: Candace Shivers, MCCC-Mt. Wachusett Community College

Submitter's rationale: The dues levels have not been changed since the 1990s. This change in the bylaws takes into consideration current salaries.

MTA Bylaws and Rules Committee:
Recommends Adoption (6-0)

MTA Board of Directors:
Recommends Adoption (51-3)

Impact statement: Adoption of this bylaw increases the minimum salary levels that were introduced at the 1994 Annual Meeting of Delegates (at \$10,000 and \$5,000) and increased in 2001 (to \$12,000 and \$6,000) to reflect inflation and is consistent with the increase in current average teachers' salaries.

The following is Bylaw Amendment #2. It would revise Article 4, Section 2: "Dues." The present text is in the left column. Revisions are indicated by bold text and strikethroughs in the right column.

PRESENT TEXT:

Section 2. *Dues*

Full-time dues and part-time dues percentages are based upon membership category.

A. Active Members
(2) Part-Time Dues

b. The annual dues of an active member who is employed by the University of Massachusetts Trustees or Board of Higher Education who presents evidence of part-time employment which is less than one half (1/2) of a full-time position, shall be an amount equal to 30% of the annual dues of full-time members, except that the dues for part-time active members who teach less than three (3) credits per semester shall be 15% of the annual dues of full-time active members.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS:

Section 2. *Dues*

Full-time dues and part-time dues percentages are based upon membership category.

A. Active Members
(2) Part-Time Dues

b. The annual dues of an active member who is employed by the University of Massachusetts Trustees or Board of Higher Education who presents evidence of part-time employment, which is **at or** less than one-half (1/2) of a full-time position, shall be an amount equal to 30% of the annual dues of full-time members, except that the dues for part-time active members ~~who teach less than three (3) credits per semester~~ **who are assigned six hundred eighty-two (682) or fewer hours annually or teach eight (8) or fewer credits a semester** shall be 15% of the annual dues of full-time active members.

Submitted by: Gertrude Tynan, MCCC-Division of Continuing Education

Submitter's rationale: The MTA bylaws dealing with higher education adjuncts and part-time professional staff have never been updated since the MCCC affiliated with the MTA nearly 40 years ago and are now wildly out of date. In the intervening decades, colleges have increasingly turned to part-time professional staff as well as adjuncts to replace full-time staff and faculty, and both groups now comprise significant portions of our unit membership. The proposed update to Section 2A, Paragraph 2b, corrects an inequity in the bylaw by affording part-time professional staff working minimum hours equivalent relief to adjunct faculty. This is done by including actual as well as credit hours. In addition, the proposal also updates credit and work hours to reflect current minimum assignments.

MTA Bylaws and Rules Committee:
Recommends Rejection (6-0)

MTA Board of Directors:
Recommends Rejection: 49-5

Impact statement: Changes the standard of employee in terms of hours.

Biographical statements of candidates for Board of Directors

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 26A

Jean Sherlock, Chicopee

I will work to harness our collective power to stand with parents, students and the community in resistance to the corporate education policies of NCLB and RTTT. As an experienced community and union activist, I envision a democratic, transparent MTA that values teacher autonomy and promotes developmentally appropriate, engaging curriculum.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 26A

Erin DuFresne, Holyoke

I am running for a seat on the Board of Directors because I would like to advocate for teachers in my region and across the state. I hope to address the issue of privatization in our schools as we give more resources to outside companies and respect teachers' abilities less.

Amendments to resolutions are recommended

MTA Resolutions are the association's statements of principle on issues relating to members, public education, the welfare of students and human and civil rights.

Resolutions may be submitted by any member to the Resolutions Committee by the second Friday in January. They also may be submitted by the end of business on Friday at the Annual Meeting of Delegates. In addition, the committee may propose resolutions.

All resolutions submitted are considered by the committee, and those submitted by the January deadline are also brought before the Board of Directors. To become an official position of the MTA, a resolution must be adopted by the delegates at the Annual Meeting.

The revisions printed here were recommended by the Resolutions Committee.

All were recommended for passage by Board votes of 57-0.

In instances where the proposal is to amend an existing resolution, the current version is shown first and the proposed modifications are shown below it.

A section that has a line through it is proposed for elimination; a section that is underlined is a proposed addition.

All current resolutions are posted on the MTA website. To review the resolutions and bylaws, please visit www.massteacher.org/resolutions.

Current H-4 Political Involvement and Social Action

The Massachusetts Teachers Association recognizes that most decisions affecting education, schools, students, education support professionals and other school personnel are, in fact, political decisions and that educational problems are often related to other political, economic, and social issues. Therefore, the MTA urges its members and affiliates to participate actively in the political process to ensure the election and/or appointment of individuals who will make sound and progressive decisions on educational matters. The MTA also urges its members to assume leadership roles in solving social problems and to participate with other organizations in seeking solutions to them.

The MTA also believes that local government units should be prevented from restricting the rights of education employees to run for any elective office. Provisions should be made to enable education employees to serve in public office without curtailment of annual increments, tenure, retirement, or seniority rights, or carry out jury duty without personal financial loss. (73, 75, 76, 82, 85, 95, 07)

Proposed Amended H-4 Political Involvement and Social Action

The Massachusetts Teachers Association recognizes that most decisions affecting education public education from preschool through graduate school, schools; students and educators education professionals and other school personnel are, in fact, political decisions and that educational problems are often related to other political, economic and social issues. Therefore, the MTA urges its members

and affiliates to participate actively in the political process to ensure the election and/or appointment of individuals who will make sound and progressive decisions on educational matters.

~~The MTA also urges its members to assume leadership roles in solving social problems and to participate with other organizations in seeking solutions to them.~~ also encourages its members to become involved in citizen-based community organizations and to influence those organizations to address issues of common concern to their local, state and national education associations.

The MTA also urges its local affiliates to organize members through a process of listening, asking, educating and mobilizing members to lead the development of policy as the recognized voices of public education.

In addition, the MTA ~~also~~ believes that local government units should be prevented from restricting the rights of education employees to run for any elective office. Provisions should be made to enable education employees to serve in public office without curtailment of annual increments, tenure, retirement or seniority rights, or carry out jury duty without personal financial loss. (73, 75, 76, 82, 85, 95, 07, 14)

Rationale: Wording in the second paragraph has been modified based on language in an NEA resolution that the committee felt was clearer than MTA's version. Concepts and some wording in the third paragraph are taken from the "strategic intent" of the MTA Strategic Action Plan and reflect a principle that the committee felt should endure through the resolutions.

New D-5 (and renumber the rest of D) Diversity in the Education Profession

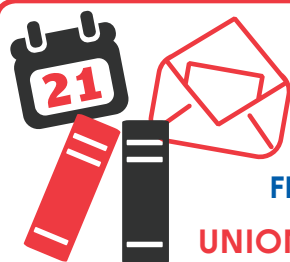
Recognizing the importance of having an education profession that reflects the racial, ethnic and linguistic diversity of the student population in Massachusetts, the MTA encourages efforts to recruit ethnic minority candidates to enter the field of education. (14)

Rationale: This was inspired by a similar NEA resolution. While the MTA Resolutions address the needs of ethnic minority students, there are no resolutions that support the goal of increasing the number of ethnic minority educators, though that is a priority of MTA's Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee and is strongly encouraged by the NEA.

New D (at the end of renumbered D section) Retired Member Participation

The MTA believes that retired members are a valuable asset and should be active participants within the association at the national, state and local levels. The expertise of retired members should be utilized in all areas of the association. The MTA encourages all who are eligible to join the MTA and NEA retired member programs. (14)

Rationale: This resolution was inspired by a similar NEA resolution. The committee felt it would be important for the MTA Resolutions to acknowledge the contribution of retired members.



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Our challenges have made us stronger

Numerous challenges have shaped the MTA over the past year. We have risen to meet them, and in the process we have become a stronger force for students, members and public education. We have also become more strategic in seeking opportunities, fighting the battles that need to be fought for the common good, and preparing for the many difficulties that lie ahead.

Since the last Annual Meeting, MTA leaders and members have spent considerable time assessing and refining our guiding document, the Strategic Action Plan. The process has involved meetings of local presidents, the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee. The subject has been discussed by members of the staff and our division managers, and I have devoted a large amount of attention to it. The many MTA members and leaders involved in these discussions were gratified to see the degree to which the plan remains relevant today, several years after it was adopted.



Ann Clarke

- We are continuing to educate, organize, mobilize and engage our members, though we still have some distance to travel on the road to becoming a union that is fully member-driven.

- We are building our presence as the voice of public education, and we must continue to do so.

- We are fully dedicated, as always, to providing the highest level of assistance and training to our more than 110,000 members and to helping them gain the resources and power they need to achieve their professional goals.

- We remain committed to electing pro-public-education candidates and to the success of every student, and we recognize that success in the battle for resources and support for our schools, colleges and universities depends on the activism of MTA members.

At the same time, our deliberations — which involved analyzing, prioritizing and digging deeply into our activities and our structure — have led us to a tighter formulation related to the Strategic Action Plan. We are now applying it to all of our activities — even as we closely adhere to the principles that have made the MTA a great organization since it was founded almost 170 years ago. Indeed, we are using “strategic intent” — representing the heart of the plan — to drive everything that we do.

It took some time to wordsmith, but here is the foundational language we now bring to bear on policy efforts, political campaigns, specific projects, media work and other initiatives:

The “strategic intent” of MTA’s Strategic Action Plan is to build power at the state and local levels through the systematic engagement of more members and leaders (organizing them through a process of listening, asking, educating and mobilizing) so that members decide what matters to them and then lead the implementation and development of policy as the recognized voices of public education.

Does the task at hand move us ahead in that context, or does it not? If not, does it need to be reassessed? Reconfigured? Abandoned? Figuring that out is often difficult. But it is also worthwhile.

As I look back over the last year, I see progress, and I believe that all of our strategic work has played a key role in the advances we have made, as well as in our ability to fend off the attacks that continue to hit us one after another. The many ways our strategic intent has been deployed include:

Developing Full Capacity Locals. More than 25 local associations have brought teams to FCL planning seminars to assess strengths and weaknesses so they can build on the former and address the latter. Locals have developed capacity in negotiating, contract administration, communications and political action, among other areas.

Working with coalition partners in every area. The MTA has developed a variety of productive partnerships. We are working with Jobs with Justice on community organizing. We are in regular contact with the NAACP about issues of common concern. We are working with Teach Plus and others to ensure that our members play a strong role in professional development related to the Common Core. We belong to Working Massachusetts, which deals with issues of special concern to public employees, and we are active participants in the AFL-CIO.

Electing pro-public-education candidates. Our Government Relations and Grassroots Campaigns divisions, working with members and staff from across the MTA, have recently played a critical role in numerous successful political campaigns, including those of U.S. Senator Edward Markey, U.S. Representative Katherine Clark and candidates for the Legislature.

Protecting members’ rights. The MTA Legal Services Division has taken on more than 800 cases while filing friend-of-the-court briefs in critical education and labor cases.

Helping members learn, network and share. Our new Training and Professional Learning Division is off to an impressive start. More than 400 education support professionals attended the recent ESP Conference in Falmouth, handily beating the old record. Other successes include the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee Conference, our Higher Education Conference, the 2013 Summer Conference, the MTA Retired Gathering and the

association’s first UnConference. In addition, the MTA was a key participant in the Safe School Summit on Youth Mental Health, setting the stage for further efforts in that area.

Ensuring proper implementation of the new evaluation system. Many MTA divisions and members have been involved in this process. We have conducted surveys, developed detailed guidance documents, trained evaluators and provided model contract language related to District-Determined Measures. And throughout, we have successfully insisted on the proper role of collective bargaining.

Advancing the interests of public higher education members. While working to achieve fair contracts for all higher education members, we have moved aggressively to represent the interests of adjunct faculty and other staff. The Center for Education Policy and Practice issued a well-received report on the situation facing our community colleges. Legislation to assist adjunct members is under consideration, and we have made crucial steps forward in resolving the problems of members who joined the state’s Optional Retirement Program.

Activity in the Legislature. MTA members and staff have lobbied hard for students and public education. They have been relentless in the battle to pass “An Act to Improve Quality in Early Education Centers,” working hand in hand with the members of the Massachusetts Early Childhood Educators Union. We have continued the fight for education funding, and the MTA has succeeded in advancing a proposal for the revival of a commission that would provide a systematic review of the Foundation Budget formula. Our focus has been on a streamlined legislative agenda. Significant advocacy work has been done by more than 400 members of our Legislative and Political Action Teams and local Political Action Leaders, as well as by MTA’s lobbyists.

Improving electronic communications. Building on a new home page, we have made steady and continued improvements to the MTA website and the digital version of *MTA Today* while also preparing for the replacement of *massteacher.org* with a more robust platform that will expand our options, our Internet presence and our strategic flexibility.

Budgeting carefully. The MTA’s cash condition and liquid reserves continue to be very strong, the result of years of reserve-building and sound fiscal management.

Holding regular gatherings of presidents and using Board and Executive Committee meetings for valuable discussions. There has been substantial conversation at virtually every forum this year concerning the Common Core, issues facing public higher education, dealing with the arrival of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College

Please turn to **Strategic**/Page 32

Strategic intent will continue to help us move forward

Continued from Page 31

and Careers tests, DDMs and other evaluation issues, political campaigns and countless other vital matters.

Providing great benefits to members. Tens of thousands of members have participated in the 39 programs offered by MTA Benefits, and the discounts that MTAB offers continue to provide incredible savings.

The foregoing is an impressive list — and the accomplishments it includes are by no means all-encompassing. The key is that every item has been enhanced by the application of strategic intent.

The association is entering a pivotal year in a pivotal period. In July, a new MTA President and Vice President will take office. In November, Massachusetts voters will elect a new governor, a U.S. senator and members of the Legislature and the U.S. House of Representatives. Make no mistake: We will be out there on all fronts to make sure the

right candidates — those who will support students, educators and public education — get elected. You will hear from your fellow members and the MTA as the campaign plays out.

Between now and then, our locals and the state association will continue to deal with momentous issues — among them the MECEU bill, the battle over Level 5 schools, legislation concerning “Challenge Schools” and charter schools, the push to appoint a Foundation Budget review panel, the continued rollout of the Common Core, and the use of the PARCC tests, which may ultimately replace the MCAS exams. There are others that cannot be predicted at this time.

As I conclude, I want to mention one development that is important not only to the MTA but also to other NEA affiliates in New England and beyond.

After recharging my batteries at the 2013 MTA Summer Conference, I had the privilege of attending the first Northeast Organizing Institute, which spanned several days and was held in Quincy. A number of MTA members and staff also participated.

During a series of intense and energizing sessions, we joined our counterparts from other states in delving deeply into what it takes to become more member-driven, learn from our failures and build on our successes. This August, we will gather again so that we can continue our progress in these areas. We will bring more people into the process — and more power to educators.

The institute is yet another example of the way we are committed to putting our words into action. Going forward, we will continue to assess everything we do against our strategic intent, which will help us fulfill the great promise of this organization in the days, months and years ahead.

A longer version of the Annual Report of the Executive Director-Treasurer, including sections on the work of each MTA division and department, is included in the Delegate Handbook for the 2014 Annual Meeting. The full report is also posted in the members' area of the MTA website.



2014 HUMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET JUNE 20 – WESTIN WALTHAM HOTEL



Since 1983, MTA's Human Relations Committee has reviewed nominations and selected the recipients of the annual Human and Civil Rights Awards. The annual HCR Awards Banquet, attended by educators from across the state, honors those who have shown extraordinary dedication to civil rights and human relations. Honoring those who dedicate themselves to equality for all is a proud tradition of the MTA.

ONLINE REGISTRATION:

www.massteacher.org/hcr

Deadline for event registration is Friday, June 13.

Telephone reservations will NOT be accepted.

Candidates for MTA Retired Members Committee

Four vacancies for two-year terms commencing July 1

Stephen Gorrie

Burton Weiner

Mary Gilmore

Dorothy Wright

Paul Mazut

Richard Lyons

Nilda Guzman

Gladys Durant

Patricia Cameron

Kathleen Comer

NEA TO SURVEY MTA MEMBERS

MTA members may be contacted by the NEA within the next few weeks as part of a survey of the Massachusetts UniServ program. Members who are asked to participate will receive a message from neasurey@nea.org. They will be selected at random. The assessment is consistent with NEA UniServ guidelines adopted by the NEA Board of Directors on May 2, 2008. The NEA is required to assess each state affiliate's UniServ program at least once every six years.

Obituaries

Marshall J. Aronstam, 75, of South Deerfield. Was a teacher and principal in the Goshen, Sunderland and Whately elementary schools for nearly 40 years, retiring in 2003. Feb. 2.

Jean R. Cash, 58, of Plaistow, N.H. Was an elementary teacher in the Haverhill school system for 15 years and had worked previously at schools in Medford and Kingston, N.H. Feb. 27.

Richard J. Collins, 82, of Andover. Was a social studies teacher

and coach for 37 years at Andover High School and served on the Andover School Committee. Feb. 19.

Sheila M. Doherty, 60, of Everett. Was a longtime teacher in the Everett school system. Dec. 27.

Roger A. Gagnon, 74, of Newburyport. Taught history at Newburyport High School for 37 years. Dec. 17.

Ernest D. Glynn, 88, of Chatham. Taught mathematics and

business in Belmont, Waltham and Wayland. Feb. 11.

Stephen Lacilla, 66, of Holden. Was a mathematics teacher for 10 years at South High Community School in Worcester. Jan. 29.

Kathleen M. Morey, 59, of Plymouth. Was an elementary teacher at the Indian Brook Elementary School in Manomet for 33 years. Feb. 6.

Suzanne L. Moynihan, 71, of Worcester. Taught in the Lancaster

Public Schools for 36 years. Feb. 25.

Irma F. Resnick, 95, of Canton. Was a guidance counselor in the Milton school system. Jan. 8.

Lawrence A. Ristuccia, 92, of Belmont. Taught at the Northeast Regional Vocational School. Jan. 15.

Carol Sullivan, 70, of Westford. Taught at the John F. Kennedy Junior High School in Woburn for more than 30 years, retiring in 2001. Jan. 3.

MAAP conference fosters collaboration

Continued from Page 12

Fitzgerald, who addressed attendees as the event got underway. He said such collaborations are crucial because many AP and IB instructors are the only ones in their buildings teaching a particular course.

The teachers came to the MTA-sponsored conference from more than two dozen school districts stretching from Cape Cod to the Berkshires.

Malone, who was the school superintendent in Brockton when the MAAP initiative first took shape, praised the group's ongoing efforts.

"You are caring, thoughtful, talented, highly skilled teachers," Malone said in his keynote address. "You teach empathy. You are building the future citizenry. You make young people want to come to school."

The hope among the MAAP participants is that students will pursue rigorous coursework and that a more diverse population of students will avail themselves of AP and IB courses.

In answering one teacher's question about the effects of poverty on public education, Malone pointed out that closing racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps is at the heart of MAAP's work.

"You are creating a pathway to success that can break the cycle of poverty," Malone said, referring to the role of AP exams in providing college credit and facilitating placement. "Students who achieve qualifying scores can save money and make college more affordable."

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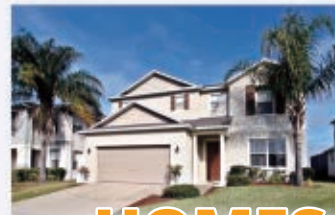
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YOUR ORGANIZATION

The Massachusetts Teachers Association is your organization. It gets its strength from more than 110,000 MTA members and from its national affiliation with the National Education Association, which has 3 million members.

Your membership in MTA Retired and NEA Retired gives you the ability to keep abreast of educational, political and legislative issues. The MTA dedicates significant resources to maintaining and improving benefits for retired members.

CONTINUED INVOLVEMENT

As a member of MTA Retired and NEA Retired, you will participate in the governance of your union. You will help elect two retired members to the MTA Board of Directors and one retired member to the MTA Executive Committee — members with full voting rights.

The MTA Retired Members Committee meets regularly to provide a forum for retired members to address and pursue issues of concern. Eight MTA Retired members are elected to the MTA Retired Members Committee by the MTA Retired delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting.

In addition, MTA provides some financial support for MTA Retired delegates to the MTA Annual

Meeting, the annual NEA Representative Assembly, the NEA Retired Annual Meeting and the NEA Retired Regional Conference.

MTA BENEFITS

MTA Benefits, a wholly owned subsidiary of the MTA, can help you make the most of your retirement years. MTAB provides members with a vast array of money-saving programs for auto, homeowners and dental insurance; reverse mortgages; credit cards; travel and car rentals; and a wide range of discounts on items you purchase every day. All programs are designed to provide you with the added security you need during this special time in your life. For more information, call 800.336.0990 or log on to www.mtabenefits.com.

COMMUNICATIONS

Receive information of special interest to retired members through *MTA Today*, *NEA Today*, the *MTA Reporter*, *This Active Life* and other publications. Receive timely updates by e-mail on matters relating to pension and retirement from both Beacon Hill and Capitol Hill. NEA and MTA maintain websites with valuable information for retired members: www.nea.org and www.massteacher.org.

MTA RETIRED MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

For decades, MTA has led the way for most of the key legislation enacted to improve benefits for retired members.

- **MTA believes that our members should have a financially sound retirement upon the completion of active employment.**
- **MTA serves as a strong advocate for its retired members through MTA's Legislative Program. Through organized political action under the auspices of the MTA, your concerns about COLAs, Social Security, pension benefits and improving the standard of living for retirees are actively addressed.**
- **MTA's Division of Government Relations provides research on, and testimony for, maintaining and improving post-retirement benefits.**
- **Government Relations has five registered lobbyists who advocate for active educators and retired members. When MTA lobbyists speak to legislators, legislators know that they represent more than 110,000 members.**



Membership Form

MTA Retired and NEA Retired

MTA Member ID # _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____

Telephone () _____

E-mail _____

Fax () _____

Estimated Date of Retirement _____

Prior Local Association _____

Select Membership Options:

- MTA Retired Annual \$30
- MTA Retired Life \$450
- MTA Retired Age 80+ \$0

and

- NEA Retired Annual \$30
- NEA Retired Life \$250

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

Tear off this form and send it with a check for the appropriate amount, made payable to the MTA, to:

Membership Accounting
Massachusetts Teachers Association
20 Ashburton Place
Boston, MA 02108

You can also join online
by visiting:
www.massteacher.org



We keep on working for you after your retirement!

Bundling insurance brings valuable savings

Spring is finally here after another long, cold winter in New England. It's time to turn down the thermostat and embrace the warmer weather.

With the rise in temperatures, it's time to look forward to the upcoming summer months. When you begin to think of your vacation plans, you're probably searching for ways to save some money.

After all the hard work you have put in, you deserve a fun-filled summer, with beach trips to the Cape, family cookouts and plenty of festivals. One simple way to keep some money in your pocket in order to fund all of those activities is to bundle your auto and home insurance policies.

Many insurance carriers offer discounts to customers with more than one policy, often called an account. Companies typically save the best pricing for customers who have bundled their policies.

Saving money isn't the only big benefit to bundling your policies, however. When you combine policies with one agency, you're reducing



the risk of potential coverage gaps. Bundling gives your agent more insight into your coverage needs so he or she can serve you more effectively.

Managing multiple policies also becomes more convenient when you deal with only one agency and a single point of contact for all of your insurance needs. Your agent can work with your carrier to set a single

renewal date for all your policies and create simplified billing.

That means less time will be required of you. With all of the responsibilities in your life, time saved is just as valuable as money saved.

Every day, insurance advisors at Educators Insurance Agency spend time with MTA members to evaluate their coverage on auto, homeowners,

Your agent can work with your carrier to set a single renewal date for all your policies and create simplified billing.

renters and other insurance policies and to check for opportunities to provide them with the best value for their premium payments.

Don't wait until summer to review your insurance. If you have your auto policy with one provider and your homeowner policy with another, it's worth making a call to EIA to see if you should combine the two.

For information or to review your insurance policies, call EIA at 877.284.7646.

This material is provided for informational purposes only and does not provide any coverage. Policies are underwritten by The Hanover Insurance Company or one of its insurance company subsidiaries or affiliates ("The Hanover"). Coverage may not be available in all states and is subject to company underwriting guidelines and issued policy. The MTA member discount is available to Massachusetts residents only. EIA is a member of The Hanover Insurance Group, 440 Lincoln Street, Worcester, MA 01653 LC 14-109.

Annual Meeting to feature savings, prizes and on-site optical shop

MTA Benefits looks forward to seeing all delegates at the MTA Annual Meeting on May 9-10 in Boston.

Fun, savings and winning will be the name of the game as all registrants will be entered into a random giveaway for cash prizes.

Returning this year is **Your Optical Shop's** on-site, full-service shop. Stop by and try on a few different styles to find the eyeglasses that best suit you.

Classroom supplies. Classroom supplies can take a toll on your wallet. We have the perfect solution for you with a new savings program.

Insurance. Insurance can be expensive, which is why we do our best to find savings for you wherever we can. Find out how you can save on auto and home insurance, dental insurance, disability insurance and more.

Travel. Traveling is something many of us like to do, but it is often costly. If you're in

need of an escape this year, MTA Benefits will help you save on vacations, cruises, car rentals, hotels and tickets to Disney World.

Banking. Learn about the all-new Elite Relationship Checking package, available only to MTA members and their immediate families. Features include an interest-earning account with no minimum balance required, no service charges and unlimited check writing.

Mortgages. Whether you're a first-time homebuyer or interested in refinancing, our mortgage program can offer you great savings and fantastic service.

Wireless. Find out about the wireless discounts we offer and be sure to take advantage of the savings.

This is just a sample of what MTAB has in store for you at the Annual Meeting. Be sure to visit all of the sponsors and MTA Benefits for savings information, giveaways and more!



Member Appreciation Week Giveaway

May 5-9 marks a special giveaway from MTAB in celebration of Member Appreciation Week. All MTA members are encouraged to enter the giveaway for a chance to be the lucky winner. Whether you're planning a trip, making home repairs or just want to do a little shopping for yourself, an \$800 American Express gift card can go a long way. Mark your calendar for May 5 and visit www.mtabenefits.com to enter.

This giveaway is sponsored by Educators Insurance Agency (EIA), which has been serving MTA members' home and auto insurance needs for more than 16 years. To learn more about auto and home insurance discounts through EIA or to request a no-obligation quote, visit www.educatorsinsuranceagency.com.

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REGIONAL RETIREMENT CONSULTATIONS AVAILABLE

The MTA conducts retirement consultations throughout the state to assist members. Proof of membership must be submitted when requesting retirement services. This schedule is in effect from September to June, except in the Boston office, which is staffed during the summer 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, 413.893.9173.

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.

HIGHER EDUCATION AT-LARGE — Edward McCourt, Wellesley; 781.325.2553; e-mail: emccourt.mccc@gmail.com. (Call or e-mail for assistance.)

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

Do you have questions
about how to achieve
your retirement goals?



Your MetLife Resources Financial Services Representative might just have the answers you're looking for — in language you don't need to be an expert to understand. Give us a call today and see what you can do with MetLife.

**For an appointment, contact Randy Feid, Workplace Sales Director at MetLife Resources:
508.870.1724 or rfeid@metlife.com.**



MetLife
I CAN DO THIS.

MetLife offers various products and services to MTA members through the MTA Benefits program. MTA Benefits receives a sponsorship fee from MetLife in connection with its endorsement of its products and services. MetLife Resources is a division of Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, 200 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10166.
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Classifieds

CONFERENCES

SECOND ANNUAL INSPIRE CONFERENCE — Oct. 22-23, Norwood. A professional conference bringing together leading experts and practitioners on student-centered education. *Explore* a diverse collection of student-centered approaches to learning. *Discover* effective strategies for raising student achievement. *Learn* techniques to overcome the challenges of student-centered practices. Hosted by NISCE; www.inspire2014.org.

EDUCATION/LICENSURE

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

EMPLOYMENT

NEED ADDITIONAL INCOME? LOVE TO ENTERTAIN AND MAKE NEW FRIENDS? Provide room, board, friendship and tutoring for a foreign student of English in your own New England home (within three hours of Boston). Average pay \$550 per week. Please review details at <http://www.HLI-HostFamilies-Boston.com> or e-mail info@HLI-HostFamilies-Boston.com.

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FIELD TRIPS

IN-SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS — Now Voyager Education. Hands-on Geography (1st & 2nd, *Map Skills, Habitats*; 3rd, *Maps & Massachusetts*

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LOOKING FOR A "SCOOPER" YEAR-END FIELD TRIP? Participate in the Jimmy Fund Scooper Bowl® Scooper Schools program. Fund-raise for the Jimmy Fund and earn free admission to the Scooper Bowl June 3-5! For more information, visit www.JimmyFund.org/scooper-schools or e-mail scooper_bowl@dfci.harvard.edu.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SIXTH ANNUAL SUMMER STORYTELLING INSTITUTE in Western Mass. Aug. 8-10, with international storyteller and certified teacher Rona Leventhal. Learn the art of storytelling and why it's such a successful tool for motivating kids and promoting language and learning. 20 PDPs! Call 413.586.0624 or visit www.ronatales.com.

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COME TO THE ZOO! — Looking for a fun way to get your PDPs and learn about teaching science? Teacher workshops are offered on Wednesdays at Stone Zoo through May at \$60 per month. Learn more at www.zoonewengland.com/forteachers or by calling 617.989.3742.

TRAVEL

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TRAVEL/STUDY

SEMINAR — Education in Ireland (six graduate credits) July 3-26. National University of Ireland, Galway. Study aspects of Ireland's education system, history, literature and culture. 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!

VACATION RENTALS

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CAPE COD, OCEAN EDGE RESORT, BREWSTER — Perfect vacation resort setting. Spacious, nicely appointed villa; spiral staircase to large loft; two baths, sleeps six. Excellent location within resort, steps from indoor/outdoor pools, tennis. Nearby beaches, shopping, bike trails and more. Owned/offered by MTA member, summer weekly, off-season weeks or weekends. Call 413.594.4056 or e-mail dr_jim_c@hotmail.com.

NANTUCKET ISLAND TOWNHOUSE — Fully furnished, including linens. Two decks, two bedrooms, 2.5 baths and full kitchen. Sleeps six. Short walk to beautiful beaches. Near bus route and bike paths. Ideal for small family. By the week June through September. Brochure available. Call 978.256.5044 or e-mail joamtam@aol.com.

FOREST LAKE, WINDHAM, MAINE — Lakefront cottage rental. Three bedrooms, sleeps six. Pristine setting. \$1,250 per week. E-mail Richm@futuresearchllc.com or call 781.599.8828.

FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA — Scenic three-bedroom; sleeps eight; Wyndham Resort mountain condo. Near Grand Canyon, Sedona and famous Route 66. Private outdoor Jacuzzi. Aug. 8-15, \$900. Call 508.672.2148.

MAINE — Housekeeping cabins at family camp on lovely secluded pond in mid-coast Maine, available late June through early September. Two-story cabins with three bedrooms and fireplaces, \$750 per week; three-room cabins, \$535. E-mail campsearsmont@gmail.com.

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Partnership is a gateway to success for students

By Scott McLennan

For the students in the Gateway to College program at Massasoit Community College, finishing high school did not seem to be a realistic goal.

"I walked out of Brockton High with all F's," said one.

"I got into a lot of fights," recalled another.

"I was not going to sit in one spot all day. When I was in middle school, I knew I wanted to drop out of high school," said a third.

Yet there they were, sitting among their peers in a classroom at Massasoit, learning the intricacies of college financial aid forms as they neared the point where they would earn a high school diploma and were considering the next step.

Not surprisingly, these three students — and many of the Gateway graduates from Massasoit — have chosen to stay at the community college in Brockton to earn associate's degrees or complete certificate programs.

Massasoit is one of six colleges across the state offering the Gateway to College program. The others are Bristol Community College, Mount Wachusett Community College, Holyoke Community College, Quinsigamond Community College and Springfield Technical College. The colleges partner with school districts to help students between the ages of 16 and 21 who have somehow veered off a traditional high school path and have either dropped out or are on the brink of doing so.

In the Gateway program, the students earn high school and college credits concurrently on one of the community college campuses. Successful students complete the program with a diploma from a high school in their district and a hefty number of college credits.

Massasoit partners with seven school districts in its region. Academic Services Coordinator Sharice Miles said that in the seven years the program has been in place, she has seen more and more integration between traditional college offerings and the "safety net" aspects offered by the program.

"A lot of our students just blend right in," she said.



Photo by Scott McLennan

Massasoit Academic Services Coordinator Sharice Miles works with student Marco Silva.

Massasoit math professor Teresa Fernandes uses a combination of traditional classroom approaches and online units to catch students up to their high school peers and then launch them into college work.

"I may be a little more nurturing with the Gateway students and help them understand the standards we have set," Fernandes said. "It's not about lowering the standards."

English professor Steve Lester barely varies the curriculum between his traditional college students and his Gateway students. But he does acknowledge a different set of challenges.

"This is a petri dish for urban education," he said. "There are kids living in cars and shelters, kids who became pregnant in high school and are coming back, kids in recovery. Every issue faced in urban districts is present here."

Earning the trust of his Gateway students is a big part of being able to successfully guide them. But when the connections happen, the results are remarkable.

"If they feel you are on their side, they will go through a wall for you," Lester said. "Everyone checks on everyone else. One day I wasn't here, and the students called me, making sure everything was OK."

The program began in Portland, Ore., in 2000 and gained national prominence with the aid of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. In 2006, Mount Wachusett Community College in Gardner was the first Massachusetts campus to adopt Gateway to College.

Mount Wachusett partners with the Ralph C. Mahar Regional High School in Orange.

"In the years that I have been in this role, I have seen an ever-growing number of students graduate from the Gateway to College program," said Sara Storm, the counselor at Mahar who serves as liaison between the high school and the college. "Students who before may have felt behind or disengaged from their traditional high school programs due to a variety of factors have the opportunity for a fresh start through Gateway."

Deb Bibeau, assistant director of transitional programs at Mount Wachusett, pointed out that given a fresh start, many Gateway students become high achievers. The number of those completing postsecondary education programs has risen, with some of MWCC's early Gateway graduates now in possession of master's degrees.

Scholarships cover the cost of tuition and other expenses, keeping costs low for students. There are strict attendance policies, and at Massasoit, the students must complete community service projects as a graduation requirement. With the rigor comes a good deal of support, however.

"The people here want to see you succeed," said a student who entered the program at Massasoit in the spring of 2011. She is working toward an associate's degree in human services and then intends to earn a master's degree in criminal justice.

The Gateway program is helping 20-year-old Marco Silva realize his long-held dream of studying forensics. "I knew I wanted to do that before I even got here," he said.

Another student, who aspires to be a teacher, said she was proud that the school where she volunteered recently hired her to work two days a week with preK students.

"Before, I was crazy and did whatever I wanted to do," she said. "Now I am focused, confident and want to do well."

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

AN INTERVIEW WITH PAUL TONER

Stretching salaries through MTAB savings

As he approaches the end of his term as MTA president and as a member of the MTA Benefits Board of Directors, Paul Toner sat down to talk about his tenure and the value he sees for members in MTAB.

“The striking increase in food prices and rising health care costs are just two of the ways MTA members and others are being negatively impacted today,” Toner said. “Taking advantage of savings available through MTA Benefits can help members stretch their salaries and counter some of these added costs.”

Toner pointed out that MTAB offers thousands of ways to save. “Members can buy discounted auto insurance, save on closing costs on a mortgage and get deals on trips and free admission to museums. These are just a few examples of how they can reduce spending in all areas of their lives. No other educational association in the country matches the programs and discounts that are possible through MTAB. Members can save thousands of dollars a year. MTAB provides members with the opportunity to get a significant financial return on their dues.”

Toner noted that members should look carefully at the *MTA Benefits & Discount Directory* to determine which programs are important to them. “For example, the disability program is something every member should consider,” he said. “The MTA disability program has paid out \$15 million to members who have found themselves unable to work. For lifestyle and everyday cost savings, the discount directory is fabulous.”

Making sure members get the best

Toner has a long and successful track record as an advocate for bettering the lives and workplaces of educators. As a member of

the MTAB Board, he has dedicated himself to helping members get the best possible benefits. “We collectively review programs, setting high standards for quality, service and savings,” Toner said. “Each time a contract comes up for renewal, we look at how well that program has met expectations. Large corporations such as MetLife and Unum receive the same intense scrutiny as small locally based companies. We are always being approached by companies trying to become partners, so the competition is intense. We can get the best. We don’t have to settle for less.”

During Toner’s time on the MTAB Board, major programs — such as those offering home mortgages and auto and home insurance — have been reviewed. “We stayed with Greenpark Mortgage each time it came up for review because no one else could offer the amazing service and significant savings the company provided. When we looked for a partner in auto and home insurance, it was Hanover Insurance that was strongest in terms of getting claims resolved in a timely matter. Hanover also has an excellent reputation in the community and leads on all of the other factors that are so important in a partnership.”

Toner said MTAB staff members are “extremely professional, thoroughly



ABOUT PAUL TONER

Toner is a middle school social studies teacher, lawyer and former president of the Cambridge Teachers Association. He was elected MTA president after serving for four years as the association's vice president. He took office on July 15, 2010.

knowledgeable and constantly thinking and rethinking ways to bring quality programs and services to our members.”

Toner is currently running for a position on the NEA Executive Committee. Among his many supporters is Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick. Toner “is the type of thoughtful leader we need as we reshape our schools and our society for the 21st century,” said the governor.

For more information on MTAB, visit www.mtabenefits.com.

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BE PREPARED!

Before you apply for a mortgage, learn more about the new standards — and how they affect you



New Ability-to-Repay/Qualified Mortgage standards were enacted in January. The standards are the latest federal regulations written to provide added stability to the mortgage industry.

“These standards make it a more complex mortgage process,” said Paul Gershkowitz, first vice president of Greenpark Mortgage, a division of Berkshire Bank and partner in the MTA Mortgage Program. “The creditor must now conduct pointed analysis to ensure that the consumer has the ability to repay the loan. There is also less diversity in mortgage products so as to meet qualified mortgage standards, which provide creditors some protection against failing.”

Gershkowitz added, “The lack of precise financial standards was one of the contributing factors to the housing collapse that began in 2007. The mortgage industry is now in a strong recovery position — and these new standards will help keep it that way.

“Smart applicants will be prepared before they start the process so they know what to expect and what they should do to be successful,” he noted. “Rates are still low, so it is a good time for qualified consumers to apply for a mortgage.”

How the mortgage process works

The consumer deals with only one person at the beginning of the mortgage process: a loan officer licensed by the Nationwide Mortgage Licensing System. The loan officer is also known as the “originator.” The loan officer:

- ▶▶ Guides the consumer through the steps of the process, from application to closing.
- ▶▶ Explains the mortgage process and discusses what is required of the consumer.
- ▶▶ Helps the consumer fill out the mortgage application completely and accurately.
- ▶▶ Is the only individual allowed to discuss terms of the loan with the consumer, including the quoting of rates, points, fees, annual percentage rates and other terms.
- ▶▶ Obtains a credit report on the applicant and initially recommends the information and documentation needed to verify the consumer’s finances, job status and other relevant data.

The processor is responsible for disclosure information — a major consideration in evaluating a loan. This individual compiles the documents needed for underwriting and has them delivered to the client. When the consumer returns the documents, the

processor makes sure they are filled out accurately and completely and then presents them to the underwriter. The processor also communicates with the borrower to answer questions about disclosure and documentation needs. The loan officer may also be a part of the communication process.

As the ultimate decision-maker — the only person who can approve the loan — the underwriter makes sure that the loan meets compliance regulations as set forth under federal and state law. This involves determining that the consumer qualifies for the loan by analyzing the borrower’s income, assets, liabilities, employment status, debt-to-income ratio and credit history, as well as examining the property appraisal. After reviewing the information, the underwriter usually goes back to the processor with a list of items that require further review. Before signing off on a loan, the underwriter needs to ensure that the applicant meets the bank’s underwriting guidelines and has the ability to repay.

Once the underwriter has cleared the loan, it goes to a separate department for a quality control review. This due diligence is necessary to make sure the mortgage meets all of the requirements of investors and others with an interest in the loan, such as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as government agencies that oversee the mortgage industry.

(continued on page 4)

THE PLAYERS



- Consumer
- Underwriter
- Originator
- Closer
- Processor
- Attorney
- Quality Control Department

ADVANTAGES OF THE MTA-Endorsed Mortgage Program



Greenpark offers MTA members a reliable property appraisal at a reduced fee, capped legal fees and beneficial mortgage lending information, including free seminars upon request and other benefits.



Editor: Elizabeth A. Bejoian
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No dues dollars are ever used to market MTA Benefits programs.

The Tip Sheet



Relax and let the stress melt away

As another school year winds down, take some time to relax and rejuvenate. The health benefits of massage therapy go far beyond simple relaxation. Massage therapy helps to reduce stress, pain and muscle tension. Some studies have found that it may be helpful for other conditions as well, such as anxiety, digestive disorders, headaches and sports injuries. Treat yourself to a massage or spa treatment at one of the many locations that offer MTA members a discount. You can get a 20% discount at Advanced Massage Therapy in Brookline, a \$55 one-hour massage at Nurturing Touch Therapeutic Massage in Southborough and discounts at Elements Therapeutic Massage locations in Andover, Burlington, Plymouth and Tewksbury.

Read to your heart's content

Whether you enjoy science fiction, mysteries, biographies or cookbooks, grab a book and head to your favorite reading spot to relax and alleviate the stress of everyday life.



The *MTA Benefits & Discount Directory* offers a multitude of discounts on reading materials. More than 10 MTA members offer discounts on their own written works, which can be found in the "Member Authors" section of the directory. Many bookstores throughout the state offer discounts to MTA members as well. Visit Book Principal/Holyoke News Company Inc. in Holyoke and receive a 25% discount on the retail cover price; head to the New England Mobile Book Fair in Newton for a 20% discount on all books, or find a 30% discount on *New York Times* current best-sellers. Don't forget the MTA Magazine Service, which offers discounts of up to 85% on the cover price of more than 900 titles. And did you know that the service also offers discounts on digital subscriptions for those who like to read on their mobile devices? Visit www.MTAmagazineservice.com for a full list of discounts.

EXPLORE THE HISTORY AND CHARM OF MAINE

York. Just an hour north of Boston, York is the perfect destination for a weekend getaway. As one of the nation's oldest towns, York is rich in history and boasts beautiful beaches, well-regarded restaurants and plenty of shopping. The Museums of Old York allow you to step back in time to New England colonial life as it was lived more than 300 years ago. Admission to the museums is discounted by \$2 for MTA members. Nine historic buildings are included in the Museums of Old York.



You'll find New England artworks, original architecture and antiques dating back to the 1600s. The kids will love a visit to York's Wild Kingdom, Maine's favorite zoo and amusement park. Enjoy the petting zoo, family rides, games and much more. MTA members receive a significant discount to the park. Call MTA Benefits at 800.336.0990 for coupons, as MTA discounts are not available at the gate.



Portland. Seascape, city skyline, historic architecture and modern design combine to create the lively metropolitan hub of Portland. Whether you're looking for entertainment, culture or history, Portland has it. Visit in June and experience the Old Port Festival, a celebration of summer with music, local food and arts and crafts. Be sure to take in a Portland Sea Dogs game, where you'll receive a \$1 discount on reserved or general admission seating when you show your MTA member card. Just a 30-minute drive away is the Blueberry Pond Observatory in Pownal, where you'll enjoy a guided tour of the stars like you've never seen before. Members save 20% on a two-hour evening digital astronomy tour.



Kennebec River. If you're the adventurous type, the Kennebec River area is perfect for you. From fly fishing and hiking to whitewater rafting and kayak excursions, the nature lover in you will experience the thrill of the outdoors. Enjoy rafting trips, kayak rentals, cabins and camping at Maine Whitewater Inc., the largest camping and resort complex in Maine. Moxie Outdoor Adventures provides whitewater rafting, inflatable kayaking, moose safaris and ATV tours to ensure a lifetime of exciting memories. MTA members save 10% at each of these businesses. Just a short distance

away in Bridgton, stay at The Loft House for the duration of your trip. A member-owned business, this vacation rental welcomes large groups and offers a 10% discount on your stay.

The reality of propane pricing

As the nation's largest online propane marketplace, Propane.pro has seen firsthand the personal and economic damage done by the recent propane shortage. Due to sustained cold weather and increased levels of U.S. exports of propane, prices have spiked to record highs.

Propane is a fuel that consumers and businesses use for everything from space heating to cooking. Roughly 8 million U.S. households rely on it for home heating, making the recent combination of frigid weather and supply disruption a potential public health emergency.

Andrew Heaney, the founder of Propane.pro, has called on the federal government to fund the establishment of a strategic propane reserve to ensure that a dangerous shortage never happens again.

"In 2000, the Northeastern U.S. experienced a similar shortage of heating oil due to extreme temperatures and frozen waterways that prevented the delivery of product to the region," Heaney remarked. "Congress responded with the creation of the Strategic

Heating Oil Reserve, which continues to provide consumers with a reliable supply." Heaney said that a strategic propane reserve "would not only protect health and property, but would be a boon to the economy in the long term by providing more stable fuel prices for consumers and businesses."

Heaney pointed out that the United States has exported a record amount of propane this past year as producers have sought higher prices for their product abroad. "The sad irony of this situation is that the United States has never produced as much propane as it does now, with all the natural gas exploration that we have in the U.S.," Heaney said.

In recent months, Propane.pro's website has experienced a huge spike in traffic as propane users seek relief from higher prices. Propane.pro offers to connect consumers with up to four prescreened propane suppliers in their neighborhood. The suppliers compete



for the consumer's business, usually resulting in significantly lower prices.

Propane.pro, the endorsed propane supplier of MTA Benefits, offers members additional unique benefits, including a certificate for \$50 of free propane when they sign up with a Propane.pro supplier as well as a \$100 certificate toward the purchase of a new propane tank.

If you use propane, you know how expensive it can be. Visit propane.pro/mta or call 855.966.1444 today to see how much you might be able to save.

A cruise offers something (fun) for every traveler



Summer is approaching quickly. Do you hope to take some time to recharge your batteries, rekindle your romance or enjoy a family getaway? At sea, the possibilities are endless. On a cruise, you can slip on your sandals or your dancing shoes, break a sweat in the fitness center or get a massage in the spa while your children enjoy the supervised kids' club. Your day may start with soaking up the sun at the pool. Then, after a busy afternoon, you can enjoy the ultimate in fine dining. But the fun really begins after dinner, when you can hit the jackpot in the casino, see a Broadway-style show or unwind in a hot tub under the stars. There's simply something fun for everyone. With prices that haven't been this low in years, it's time to take advantage of both sun and savings.

America's largest cruise agency, **CruisesOnly**, offers the lowest prices in the industry. In fact, CruisesOnly backs up its promise with a **110% Best Price Guarantee**. Shop and compare thousands of cruises from 18 of the world's top fleets, including **Royal Caribbean, Norwegian Cruise Line, Princess, Holland America, Disney** and others, departing from 22 U.S. ports with itineraries that include stops around the world. Browse the latest in new promotions and last-minute offers or shop by category — weekend, family, honeymoon, river cruises and more. Check out customer reviews and travel tips.

Hurry — the best sailings fill up fast! Visit www.MTAvacations.com and click on CruisesOnly to start planning now!

BE PREPARED!

(continued from page 2)

Once the Quality Control Department clears the loan, it goes to the closer. The closer coordinates with attorneys and/or title companies and produces all documents to be signed at the closing. The attorney or title company personnel will contact the consumer to coordinate the closing date and the amount of money that the consumer will need for the closing. Remember, the attorney present at the closing represents the bank, though he or she is acting indirectly in your interest as well. You may wish to consider consulting with your own attorney at the time of closing.

Members have a direct line to Paul Gershkowitz of Greenpark Mortgage. "MTA members are welcome to contact me for more information at 866.475.HOME (4663), ext. 125," said Gershkowitz. "We're here to answer any questions — before, during and after the mortgage process."

Greenpark Mortgage in Needham, Mass., is a division of Berkshire Bank, a Massachusetts-based, FDIC-insured institution for more than 165 years, with approximately \$6 billion in assets and 92 full-service branch offices throughout New England and New York. The newest branch will open in the fall of 2014 in Westborough.

All program and pricing information was current at the time of publication (April 2014) and is subject to change without notice. To find out what may have changed, please call MTA Benefits at 800.336.0990.