



MTA'S NEW LEADERS SET AMBITIOUS AGENDA

MTA Today

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**STANDING STRONG
IN STOUGHTON**

MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

There's a lot at stake for educators as voters head to the polls for the primary on September 9 and the general election on November 4. The MTA encourages members to help elect candidates who have shown they support public education.

At the center of this edition of *MTA Today*, readers will find a Primary Election Guide that includes MTA-recommended candidates for the state Senate and House of Representatives as well as for attorney general, lieutenant governor and the 5th and 6th Districts in Congress.



The MTA recommends Warren Tolman for attorney general. A state legislator for eight years, Tolman led on progressive issues. The Watertown native champions important issues such as early childhood education and efforts to end bullying. He has been a leader in seeking to end the reign of Big Tobacco and has fought against lax gun laws and domestic violence.

Steve Kerrigan is the recommended candidate for lieutenant governor. A longtime member of the staff of the late U.S. Senator Edward M. Kennedy and more recently CEO

of the 2012 Democratic National Convention Committee, the Lancaster resident says that "education is the key to everything." He has taken a stand against using standardized tests to dictate how students learn.

In the 5th District congressional contest, the MTA and NEA recommend U.S. Representative Katherine Clark. Clark, who was elected in 2013, is focused on advocating for working families, creating good jobs, ensuring excellent schools, and keeping promises to seniors and veterans.

In the 6th District congressional race, the MTA and the NEA recommend U.S. Representative John Tierney. Currently in his ninth term, the Salem native is a fighter for a vibrant middle class who works to create opportunity for all. Tierney is a member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, where he has championed pro-labor issues and making college more affordable and accessible.

If you are interested in volunteering during the campaign season, please contact Jo Ann Fitzgerald, MTA's director of grassroots campaigns. Her e-mail address is jfitzgerald@massteacher.org, and her phone number is 617.878.8190.

MTA Today

In this issue

New leaders say activism is crucial	3
Editorial: Fighting for our vision of public education	4
Teacher of the Year goes all out for students	5
'Smartest man in baseball' makes pitch for reading	6
MTA contest is a perennial hit with students	6
Outcome of Stoughton contract fight proves value of unity	7
Test resistance grows across U.S.	8
Member-led forums offer chance to 'aim high'	8
MCCC takes action to ensure fair agreement	9
Just for New Teachers Conference is set for December 5	9
Summer Conference energizes members	10
Mark your calendar for the 2014 EMAC Conference	11
Move to lift charter cap is defeated	12
MTA call to action echoes across international borders	12
United effort fends off privatization attempt	13
HCR honorees share commitment to enriching lives	14
A call to focus on 'educating the whole child'	15
Presidents: Hold teachers, students harmless on PARCC exams	15
MTA takes Level 5 fight to court	16
Monument pays tribute to fallen educators	17
Obituaries	19
Plan your travel with the MTA Vacation Center	21
MTAB updates on great giveaways, discounts and more	21
Regional retirement consultations available	22
'You're already leading,' Obama tells graduates	23
Classifieds	26
Foundation Budget Commission to be revived	28

**This edition of MTA Today also includes
the 2014 MTA Primary Election Guide**



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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

When the members of the Stoughton Teachers Association found themselves in a contentious contract battle to retain their salary schedule, they employed organizing, legal and political strategies. In a story beginning on Page 7, STA activists reflect on the greater implications of their lengthy fight and ultimate victory. STA members are shown on the cover behind their former president, Andrea Pires, who led the 15-month fight. Please also see Page 3 for an interview with new MTA leaders Barbara Madeloni and Janet Anderson.



Cover photos by Christine Peterson
and Laura Barrett
Cover design by Alison Donato

Quote-Unquote

"We know what is at stake and it is why we are who we are. It is why we are fearless and why we will not be silent when people who for their own profit and political posture subvert words like 'reform' or 'accountability.'"

— NEA President-elect Lily Eskelsen García, speaking to delegates at the 2014 Representative Assembly

New leaders say activism is crucial

New association leaders were elected at MTA's Annual Meeting of Delegates on May 10. They are President Barbara Madeloni and Vice President Janet Anderson. MTA Communications Specialist Laura Barrett interviewed them together at MTA headquarters on July 17, two days after they assumed their new posts. The questions and answers that follow have been edited and condensed for clarity.

Q: Why did you run for MTA president and vice president?

MADELONI: It has been a lifetime journey. I grew up in a family where activism and social justice were a key part of our lives together — boycotting grapes in California and marching against the war in Vietnam and taking part in civil rights work. So that has always been a deep part of who I am.

For a time in my life, I thought that the best way to help people would be in a more individual context, through psychotherapy. I got my doctor of psychology degree and did that work. Eventually I came to understand that wasn't enough. I had people who were coming in frequently because of the social context of their lives.

I became an English teacher at Frontier High School in South Deerfield and Northampton High School. I loved that work, and I felt like being an English teacher was a place to grow democracy and grow empathy and imagination. But I came into the field at the same time Ed Reform was closing down the ability to do the kind of work that mattered to me in the classroom.

I then became a teacher educator at UMass because I thought maybe that would give me more freedom to do that work. I discovered that teacher education was also a place where possibilities for creativity and critical thinking were being closed off by a sort of hyper-accountability regime. I began to understand that I needed to be part of something bigger outside of the classroom and that the union was a place that I could do that.

I became involved with Educators for a Democratic Union, which is a progressive caucus within the MTA, where people were gathering who were asking, "How does the union resist this corporate reform? How can the union address the larger social issues that our students, our families and our teachers are facing?" I was invited to run because we felt that the things we were talking about would resonate with a broader membership. We discovered that they did. So I'm here and I'm excited to be able to bring more member voices to the MTA.

ANDERSON: I grew up in Dorchester in a family where unions were highly valued, and so was public education. I received most of my preK-12 education in the Boston Public Schools. My father was a Boston firefighter. At his second job, he was a member of the Teamsters. Both of those led me to



Photo by Laura Barrett

MTA President Barbara Madeloni, left, stands with Vice President Janet Anderson outside MTA headquarters. They took office in July.

become a public school teacher and very active in my local union.

I held several different roles in my local union. I've been teaching for 25 years. I feel educators and public schools have been under attack the last few years, and so I decided to run for vice president because I believe this association potentially has a powerful voice in public education. I believe we can create positive change, and I want to be part of that.

Q: What is the purpose of public education?

MADELONI: It's a question that doesn't get asked enough. We behave as if the point of a public education is to get kids to be really good test-takers. Even the language of "college and career readiness" seems broad, but it is actually very narrow in terms of our hopes. And it doesn't include democracy.

We want people who are thoughtful and creative and empathic and informed and able to ask really hard questions of each other and themselves. It really is to develop the whole child so we can enter the world as the fullest human beings possible and figure out how to be with each other in democratic communities.

ANDERSON: The original reason was to make sure we had an educated population so that democracy would survive. That's still a good reason to have a public education system, but we must ensure that public education is taught by highly

skilled professional educators and that the supports are in place for each child to be successful in our schools.

Q: You both have mentioned testing as a big issue ...

ANDERSON: I'm not so sure it's the test that's evil; it's what is done with the test. Assessment is important so you can refine your instruction and find weaknesses and work on them. When we use the test to label children, label schools and label communities, that's the problem. When we become obsessed with the test — when we are taking tests to get ready for the test — it becomes very frightening. When we're restricting children's access to a full curriculum because we want to get them ready for the test, that's the real issue.

MADELONI: Teachers assess constantly. You can walk into any classroom and say to the teacher, "Tell me about this particular child. Where is she? What is she doing well? What are her struggles?" That teacher has an answer that includes the child's home life, emotional life, intellectual development and social development. A test doesn't give us that. A full assessment does. We need more time for teachers to do that really good assessment work.

Q: How do we change that when there's a big federal government that has invested a lot in school accountability, all with the intention — or at least the rhetoric — that this is focused on poor kids and making sure that they don't fall through the cracks?

MADELONI: Poor children are not coming to school ready to learn because they're hungry and they haven't slept well and they're anxious for their family. We have to name that as an issue, and we have to then organize with parents and the larger community to say, "We have to address poverty and economic injustice in this country."

ANDERSON: I had a little boy as a student a few years ago. He came from a very troubled background. He would often put his head down and fall asleep during the day. He stayed up late at night worrying about his parents. He was a really good kid. He used to get in trouble with the adults, but the other kids in the classroom loved him. He was always nice to the other kids.

The MCAS came around and he put his head down and he wouldn't pick it up. I was getting really anxious about the fact that this kid wasn't taking the test. I felt myself getting angry at him. Then I thought to myself, "I should *not* be angry at this kid. This is not his fault."

There are just so many things people aren't taking into consideration when they make decisions for kids. There are a lot of challenges out there that policymakers don't understand.

Please turn to **High-stakes testing**/Page 11

Fighting for our vision of public education

This is my first *MTA Today* editorial, and I am writing it at a moment that is filled with promise and possibilities. I want to begin our conversation in these pages by saying what a great honor it is to be given your trust and the privilege of representing you as your president. I know that our new vice president, Janet Anderson, shares my excitement. Working with all of you, our members, we now have an incredible opportunity to build the MTA's strength as an activist union so that we can reclaim our voices, our power in solidarity, and the hope of public education.

We come into office during tumultuous times — indeed, dangerous times. Corporate players, looking to privatize public education, profit



Barbara Madeloni
MTA President

from the public dollar and bust our unions, have imposed business ideology on public schools through high-stakes testing, charter schools and technocratic accountability systems. Their narrative of failing public schools and bad public school educators — along with lazy public-sector

workers — has been accepted by a bipartisan legion of legislators and policymakers. Our great institutions of public higher education are subject to similar attacks and story lines.

This narrative denies the devastating impact of economic and racial injustice and shows disdain for the enormous achievements of our members. As a result, too many of our students remain in poverty, public-sector unions are threatened, and public education — the cornerstone of our hope for democracy — is endangered.

MTA members recognize that this is a critical period in our history. With the election of new leadership, members announced that we are ready to fight for public education, for our union, and for our communities.

More than 500 first-time delegates attended the Annual Meeting, buoyed by an understanding that the struggle we are engaged in needs activists, organizers and a commitment to win. Our members came to the Annual Meeting because they recognized that the MTA is each one of us, talking to each other and working together to create strategies that protect collective bargaining and due process, strengthen our union, and support the best education possible for *every* student in Massachusetts.

MTA members recognize that this is a critical period in our history. With the election of new leadership, members announced that we are ready to fight for public education, for our union, and for our communities.

Ours is not simply a fight against corporate “reforms,” as some would frame it. Ours is a struggle *for* a vision of public education as a place for joy, creativity, imagination, empathy and critical questioning so that students enter the world ready to participate in democratic communities.

In this vision, every child is exposed to a rich curriculum; every school is well-funded; all educators are given respect, autonomy and time to do our work; and parents, students and educators work together to assess and reassess our efforts. This vision must replace the dehumanizing data-driven madness that is choking the life from our schools.

Ours is a vision for economic and racial justice, a society in which every child enters the classroom from a place of material security and with the consciousness of being a valued member of our community with the same opportunities as any other child.

Ours is a vision in which higher education — *public* higher education — is accessible to all families and affordable to every student. Our colleges and universities are places of free inquiry and intellectual exploration of the highest order, as well as institutions that offer preparation for economic security and successful professional lives. Along with our schools, they help provide the threads that bind us together as a healthy and just society.

This fall and into the years ahead, MTA members will engage in a movement to create a more activist union and reclaim public education. The more members engage, the stronger our movement will be and the more we can do.

Here are some ways you can help build our power:

- Get in touch with your local president, your field representative or me about sponsoring a forum in your local, community or region. At these member-led forums, we will discuss the impact of accountability measures on our work, our students and our schools.

- Become active in your local and your community — at the bargaining table, at meetings, on committees and through community organizations and events.

- Become active in our union at the statewide level by nominating yourself to a committee. These committees are critical to the work of the MTA and are places where members can help set our course. Go to www.massteacher.org/committees to find out more, and then let me know what interests you by e-mailing Jennie Holland at jholland@massteacher.org.

- Nominate yourself to one of the task forces that are being formed at this writing: one focusing on bilingual education, another on reviewing the MTA Strategic Action Plan, and a third on rethinking our Annual Meeting. Again, to express your interest, please just e-mail jholland@massteacher.org.

- Write letters to the editor, articles and blog posts. Speak out on Facebook, tweet, and use video to spread the word about public education and its many successes. Make sure to include the MTA's pages and feeds in your social media expressions. Create every opportunity for conversations in which we tell our stories and take back the narrative about our schools, colleges, universities and communities, as well as our work and our union.

I will be in touch on a weekly basis to share ideas, let you know about events and ask questions. Please be sure that the MTA has your current non-school contact information so that we can communicate.

This is a terribly important time for public education and union democracy. It is a time for struggle, but a time, as well, for the joy of solidarity and of being able to say, when asked, that we stood together for students, public education and democracy.

In solidarity, and in anticipation of many great things ahead,

Barbara

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.

'Curiosity will lead you to many successes'

Teacher of the Year Jeffrey Shea goes all out for Belmont High School students

By Jean Conley

As he cleans the sparkling blue swimming pool at an eco-resort in Kenya, the Maasai man dressed in a traditional red shuka and glass beadwork sings softly about his love for his cattle: "My cattle, you are like my heart. Without you I cannot survive. I will lead you to water and pasture. Do not worry. I will care for you."

The scene encapsulates Kenyans' internal struggle between modernization and tradition. It is one of many scenes in the film "Milking the Rhino" that are meant to challenge Western notions of appropriate development and conservation prescriptions for emerging economies.

The 14 juniors and seniors in the global leadership class at Belmont High School struggle with the complexity and contradictions of the film, which deals with subjects seemingly a world away from the Boston suburb they call home.

What does "conservation" really mean? What shapes the worldview of people who have always hunted the beautiful and now rare animals that roam the plains? And what should be done to reconcile differing perspectives on economic progress and conservation? Where does social justice fit into all of this?

Dr. Jeffrey Shea, the teacher leading the discussion, quietly but persistently peels back layer after layer of argument with his students to get at the crux of the complex issues raised in the film. Shea and his class are lost in the moment, grappling with the many possible interpretations of its title.

Half an hour later, the social studies teacher and varsity golf coach is standing in the school's field house, soaking in the thunderous applause arising from the stands. Colleagues and students have gathered on May 6, National Teacher Day, to celebrate the choice of Shea as the 2015 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year. The honor automatically makes him the state's candidate for National Teacher of the Year.

"Students, parents and colleagues find Dr. Shea easy to talk to because he listens carefully and attentively; he



Photo by Jean Conley

Dr. Jeffrey Shea, Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, and junior Kasia Dillon worked on a project in Shea's 2013-14 global leadership class.

speaks after thoughtful consideration and maintains his sense of humor at all times," Belmont High Principal Daniel Richards wrote in his letter nominating Shea.

Shea is known for his zany side. But he is also serious, as committed to students for whom school is a challenge as he is to those who are the most highly motivated.

"He has mentored many troubled students who owe their high school diplomas to his willingness to stand behind them, yet hold them accountable for their work and achievement," Richards said.

Outgoing Belmont Superintendent Thomas Kingston called Shea an example of "the best and the brightest in the teaching profession." Like any great teacher, Shea works tirelessly to make his classes better every year, even asking his students for advice on how to improve.

The fellow educators and officials who chose Shea as Teacher of the Year also noted his interest in technology

and other innovations as supplements to the curriculum. In 2012, he was a leader in the development of the school's one-to-one iPad initiative through a pilot program that expanded during the last school year.

For three years before becoming a teacher in 2004 at Belmont's Chenery Middle School, Shea was a golf pro, helping club members improve their game.

During that time the idea of teaching — which had always been in the back of his mind — flowered. His mother, a school librarian, started a substance abuse library in Lawrence and introduced him to the idea of social justice.

He has been a social studies teacher — with four sections of American studies and one of global leadership — since 2009.

When Shea had his turn at the microphone on May 6, he thanked the students, telling them that "curiosity will lead you to many successes." He was quick to deflect praise to his BHS

'He has mentored many troubled students who owe their high school diplomas to his willingness to stand behind them, yet hold them accountable for their work and achievement.'

— Principal Daniel Richards
Belmont High School

colleagues, who, he said, "help me to improve every day."

Shea's youthful energy — he is 36 — along with a solid work ethic and a disarming wit are known to delight his students, making him extremely popular as a teacher and a coach.

Jackson Haight, a senior in the global leadership class in 2013-14, said he had "never had a teacher who spent so much time with his work." Another senior last year, Lucy Mitchell, said she had taken a class with Shea in the past and took the global leadership class mostly "because *he* was the teacher."

Last spring, Shea and two other BHS teachers led a group of two dozen students to Costa Rica to study sustainability, development and science. The group, comprising global studies and AP environmental science students, combined geopolitics, sustainability, science and a service component — working on mangrove reforestation — for an April vacation the students would not soon forget.

Several global leadership students said the trip, as well as a visit the class made to Partners in Health headquarters in Boston, helped them learn how disciplines as seemingly unrelated as medicine, marketing, policy analysis and logistics combine at a place like PIH, which helps build health centers and hospitals in some of the poorest countries in the world.

This year, Shea will forgo foreign travel with his students. Along with his responsibilities as a father of two, his position as Massachusetts Teacher of the Year will keep him busy with speaking engagements, policy discussions and, he hopes, making the same deep connections with his fellow Teachers of the Year that he has made with his students.

'Smartest man in baseball' makes pitch for reading

By Sarah Nathan

Craig Breslow, the 2014 spokesman for the MTA Red Sox Reading Game and Most Valuable Educator Program, knows the power of a good pitch — and the impact of reading a good book.

The player known as “the smartest man in baseball” is a 2002 graduate of Yale University, where — aside from playing baseball — he majored in molecular biophysics and biochemistry.

After college, Breslow was on track to attend New York University’s School of Medicine and carry out his lifelong ambition of becoming a physician. His plans changed when he was drafted to play Major League ball.

“I thought I’d be a doctor, and baseball was always this fantasy life that I entertained,” Breslow said. “As it turned out, it seems like I got it exactly backward. Baseball is my reality and life as a doctor was more of a fantasy.”

Breslow spoke to *MTA Today* during a trip to the Brophy Elementary School in Framingham, where he made a pitch to students to keep up their reading over the summer. He read “How Full Is Your Bucket?” to the students.

Breslow’s extraordinary combination of academic and athletic gifts earned him the “smartest man in baseball” moniker in an article written by a *Minneapolis Star Tribune* reporter years ago. He topped the list of the smartest athletes in *The Sporting News* in 2010, and in 2012, *Men’s Fitness* named him one of the 10 smartest athletes in professional sports.

“Breslow uses words in a normal conversation that I’m not used to,” Red Sox Manager John Farrell told *mlb.com* in 2013. “When he starts to speak, some guys might not be thinking along with him.”

The gifted athlete is the son of two teachers. His mother taught math in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and his father taught middle school



Photo by Bob Duffy

Red Sox relief pitcher Craig Breslow, accompanied by Wally the Green Monster, read to students at Framingham’s Brophy Elementary School during a visit in June.

biology, health and physical education nearby in his hometown of Trumbull.

“The importance of education was always stressed in our household,” Breslow said. “Between the two of them, I guess you could probably explain my interest in math, science and analytical thinking — as well as athletics.”

He jokes about being a student at the same school where his father, Abe Breslow, was a health teacher. “The possibility of having your dad as your gym teacher is slightly unnerving, but the possibility of having your dad as your *health* teacher is even more uncomfortable. Fortunately, I never had him” as a teacher.

Breslow is passionate about baseball and reading. During the season, he takes advantage of downtime — when traveling between games and during rain delays — to pick up a good book. He said he wishes he had read more during his free time when he was a kid.

“I think back on how much time I had growing up and how many more books I would

have loved to have read,” he said. “It’s important to impress upon younger kids the importance of reading and the benefits of reading.”

“Reading is invaluable,” Breslow continued. “It is an incredible way to further your education, remain connected to world issues and entertain yourself when there is no one else around.”

He is passionate about combating cancer, as well as about books and learning. With his wife, Kelly, he runs the Strike 3 Foundation, a nonprofit that raises awareness and support for pediatric cancer research.

His sister, Leslie, who beat cancer when she was a middle school student, is the inspiration behind the charity. Leslie, who has been cancer-free for 25 years, also works in public education. She is a guidance counselor in Connecticut.

To see a video of MTA Today’s interview with Breslow, please visit www.youtube.com/massteacher. To learn more about the Strike 3 Foundation, go to www.strike3foundation.org.

MTA contest is a perennial hit with Massachusetts students

By Bob Duffy

It has been another championship season for programs run by the MTA and the Boston Red Sox that inspire students to read and succeed.

Pitcher Craig Breslow has teamed up with public educators to encourage students to read thousands of books through the MTA Red Sox Reading Game. In addition, teachers and other school staff have been recognized at Saturday home games as part of the Most Valuable Educator program. Both efforts are sponsored by a generous grant from The Hanover Insurance Group Foundation.

As the baseball season moves toward its conclusion, 100 lucky winners of the reading game

have been selected randomly from among the thousands of entries that students in kindergarten through eighth grade have sent in. The winning students — plus their guardians and teachers — will attend an evening game at Fenway Park on Sept. 6.

Five of the 100 winning students, one from each region of the state, have been chosen as grand prize winners. Each gets an extra pair of tickets, is invited to participate in a pregame recognition ceremony on the field, and will receive a baseball signed by Breslow, who serves as the contest spokesman.

The program is designed to be an enjoyable way to help parents encourage their children to read over the summer, when literacy skills typically take a slide.

The Most Valuable Educator program encourages students and others to nominate educators for special recognition by submitting essays to the Red Sox.

Winners are invited to participate in a pregame recognition ceremony during Saturday home games, along with the people who nominated them.

Breslow, who is known for his own level of academic achievement, told *MTA Today* during a recent interview at the Brophy School in Framingham that he is committed to helping children learn.

“Both my parents were public school teachers, so the importance of reading and education was always front and center,” he said.

Standing strong in Stoughton

Outcome of contract fight proves value of unity and collective bargaining

By Scott McLennan

A protracted contract battle in Stoughton highlights the extent to which union opponents are trying to erode salary schedules, but it also shows how powerful collective action can prove to be in fighting such attacks.

Salary schedules are the bedrock of collective bargaining agreements between educators and the communities they serve. The schedules have become the mechanism that ensures predictability and equity, beneficial on both sides of the bargaining table.

Yet attacks on educators' salary schedules have become more brazen. They range from merit-pay schemes, such as the model used by the corporation-backed Mass Math + Science Initiative for its Advanced Placement grant program, to the gutting of collective bargaining rights for educators working at schools that the state labels "underperforming."

In Stoughton, the issue came to a head on April 1, 2013, when the School Committee proposed a 39-step salary schedule to replace the 14-step pay ladder that had been in place for decades. The proposal, handed to teachers during negotiations that began before their contract was set to expire at the end of August, did not increase maximum salaries, and it lengthened the amount of time a teacher would need to reach the top of the pay scale by an astounding 25 years.

The 350-member Stoughton Teachers Association used a combination of union organizing, political activism and legal action to fight back at the bargaining table, and it prevailed, winning a contract that is better and more fair. "Every teacher here got involved in the local union," said Andrea Pires, president of the STA during its 15-month battle with school and town administrators.

Pires and a handful of STA activists spoke to *MTA Today* in June to discuss the drawn-out and sometimes rancorous contract fight.

The superintendent and School Committee "tried to paint the union as different from the teachers, like there was a small group agitating," said STA President-elect John Gunning, who was vice president during the contract campaign. The STA's adversaries turned out to be "our best organizers," quipped Pires.

When teachers returned to work last fall, they found that the school administration was withholding payments to those eligible for step increases based on the existing salary schedule.

The STA filed an unfair labor practice charge with the state Department of Labor Relations, asserting that the teachers were owed the payments for step increases even though a new contract had not been settled. Working with the MTA Division of Legal Services, the STA ultimately filed eight unfair labor practice charges against the School Committee and superintendent.

The STA also embarked on a robust organizing campaign. Having begun the school year without



Photo by Christine Peterson

Members of the Stoughton Teachers Association display some of the signs used during the local's long campaign to win a contract.

a contract, the teachers agreed that they would continue to come in early and stay late for their students, but that they would not volunteer on any of the superintendent's curriculum committees.

The local also formed a crisis team made up of representatives from each of the town's eight school buildings. The representatives distributed STA crisis updates and held regular 10-minute meetings, often with MTA field staff from the Braintree office on hand to discuss updates and strategy.

"There was constant and continuous communication," Pires said. Gunning noted that all members — from those close to retirement to those with just one year in the system — were involved.

The teachers then went public. Each school took a turn sending association members to a School Committee meeting to present a signed petition asking for a fair and prompt contract settlement.

In December, an STA rally drew members, educators from other districts, parents and children to the courtyard at Stoughton High School, where the School Committee was set to meet later in the evening. Following spirited rounds of singing and chanting, the demonstrators packed the School Committee meeting to let the board know they were frustrated and angry about the lack of progress in negotiations.

The STA also held forums for parents and residents in the local VFW Hall. At those meetings, the association gave detailed presentations on teachers' attitudes about the situation as well as on School Committee actions. The STA noted that School Committee members claimed that the existing salary schedule was "unsustainable" at the

"Every teacher here got involved in the local union," said Andrea Pires, president of the STA during its 15-month battle with school and town administrators.

same time that they were returning \$780,000 to the town as surplus.

Two important developments grew out of the forums.

■ First, parents got involved, creating a Facebook page that drove a social media campaign supporting the STA.

■ Next, a candidate running for a School Committee seat attended a forum and asked for signatures in order to be placed on the ballot for the town's spring election. This set in motion an effort to replace two incumbent School Committee members.

In addition, the STA joined forces with other municipal unions, which were also feeling stymied in their bargaining with town boards. All of the incumbents running for the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen lost by wide margins.

STA member Lynne Bonnarigo described the election campaign as an "eleventh-hour" action that pulled in a broad cross-section of members, parents and retired school employees.

Volunteers worked at phone banks, handed out leaflets and held signs — even when it poured rain. On the day before the election, the STA distributed an open letter to the community that was signed by 90 retired school employees. The letter urged residents to go to the polls and "vote for change."

The STA delivered a simple, consistent message throughout its contract battle: that the School Committee's salary proposals amounted to bad-faith bargaining. Newspapers, bloggers and social media sites carried the message.

Progress was also being made on the legal front. Of the eight unfair labor charges that the union filed, two were settled in favor of the STA. The Department of Labor Relations found that probable cause existed in all of the other claims.

The STA's biggest victory was the ruling that the withholding of step increases, even after the contract had expired, was illegal.

When the district failed to pay the increases despite the ruling, the union prepared a class action civil suit. Under the Massachusetts Wage Act, the suit filed by the STA would have required the town to pay triple damages — to the tune of \$1.5 million plus attorneys' fees and litigation costs.

The union used the suit as leverage, promising to drop it if the School Committee would adopt a contract that the STA was ready to ratify. But when the newly elected School Committee members joined the chairman in supporting the contract, Town

Please turn to **Unity**/Page 25

Test resistance grows across U.S.

Madeloni: 'Learning cannot be narrowed to a number or a sound bite'

By Laura Barrett

The dramatic growth in resistance to high-stakes testing was highlighted by votes at the most recent MTA and NEA annual conventions.

"When I talk to members about what bothers them, the excessive focus on testing and accountability is among the first subjects they want to discuss," said MTA President Barbara Madeloni. "I'm excited that the MTA is joining a growing national movement to replace high-stakes tests with authentic forms of assessment that reflect the real work of the classroom."

In May, delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting approved two new business items that make test reform a priority. The MTA is working with the National Center for Fair & Open Testing — known as FairTest — as well as with Citizens for Public Schools and other groups to develop a statewide campaign to replace high-stakes tests with better measures of student learning.

In July, delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly launched a national "Toxic Testing" campaign aimed at ending the misuse and abuse of standardized tests and reducing the amount of time consumed by them.

Monty Neill, executive director of FairTest, has been working on the issue for more than 25 years and finds the new activism inspiring.

"For the first time ever, in multiple states there is visible parent, teacher and student resistance to the overuse and misuse of standardized tests," Neill said.

He ticked off some examples from the last two years.

- In New York State, about 50,000 parents opted their children out of that state's Common Core-aligned tests. Parents were outraged that the very difficult tests had been rushed into use shortly after the Common Core State Standards were introduced. They were also upset that the cut scores on the new exams were set at levels that resulted in high failure rates.

- In Chicago, teachers at two schools boycotted state-mandated tests and were supported by thousands of parents across the city. A major focus of the Chicago teachers' strike in the fall of 2012 was to stop a plan to tie teacher pay to student test results.

- In Seattle, Garfield High School teachers made national headlines when they refused to administer a standardized reading and math test.

- In South Carolina, Minnesota, Rhode Island and Alaska, high school exit exams were either abolished or delayed. Today, fewer than half of all states require students to pass an exam in order to graduate.

"There is a surge in resistance because people have seen the damage caused by incessant testing, and they've had enough," said Neill. "For

example, in Chicago they required some 14 tests for kindergartners. It's just ridiculous."

Neill added that the federal Race to the Top requirement that student test scores be a "significant factor" in educators' evaluations added fuel to the fire, since it led to the development of even more tests, along with complicated formulas designed to judge teachers.

"There are three major issues with testing," Neill said. "One, there is simply too much. Two, there is concern about the high stakes for students, teachers and schools; there is a wide recognition that high-stakes standardized tests hurt, not help, teaching and learning. Three, we need better indicators of what students are learning — better assessments and accountability systems to help strengthen education."

Madeloni said the first push in Massachusetts will be for a moratorium.

"We need a moratorium on implementing new tests such as the PARCC exams and on using new or existing tests to make high-stakes decisions about students or teachers," she said. "We need to stop the testing machine so we can have thoughtful conversations with educators, parents and students about the effect this toxic testing is having on our students, teachers and schools."

"Teachers assess all of the time across a range of criteria," Madeloni added. "Learning cannot be narrowed to a number or a sound bite."

Member-led forums offer chance to 'aim high'

The MTA is calling on members across the state to help organize and participate in forums about high-stakes testing, the evaluation system and other policies and practices affecting educators' work.

"Our members have a real hunger to talk about these issues and organize for change," said MTA President Barbara Madeloni. "Throughout my campaign for the MTA presidency, our members talked about how high-stakes testing is narrowing their curriculum and the teacher evaluation system. Testing and other mandates are taking too much time and energy away from what really matters. Educators want time to teach. They want schools to be joyous places of learning — not test-prep centers."

Delegates to MTA's Annual Meeting in May approved a new business item submitted by Madeloni and Mary Porter, a science teacher from Revere, to establish the forums. The NBI directs the MTA to:

- Send a letter to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education calling for a three-year moratorium on PARCC testing, the teacher evaluation system and the use of any student test results to evaluate school or teacher performance.

- Establish structures through which preK-12 locals will organize member-led community forums

in the fall, inviting students and parents, to address the questions: (a) How does standardized testing impact student learning, engagement and love of learning? (b) How do standardized testing and the teacher evaluation system impact teacher autonomy, curriculum development and creativity? (c) How do standardized testing and the teacher evaluation system impact school climate and culture? (d) How does the teacher evaluation system impact teacher workload, development and job security?

- Set aside the January 2015 All Presidents' Meeting as a time for local leaders to report on the outcome of these forums and the impact of testing and the evaluation system on students, teachers and schools, and to determine a unified response and organized strategy to address these mandates.

- Provide active, vocal support and protection for teachers who voice concerns about high-stakes testing, PARCC testing and the teacher evaluation system.

"This is a great opportunity for members to talk to each other about the issues that affect them and their students deeply," Madeloni said. "These conversations will build understanding and serve as a space to jump-start organizing to reclaim our voices as educators."

Madeloni said that she hopes members will "aim high" in advocating for their vision of quality schools.

"Every child in Massachusetts deserves a high-quality education. Let's work together to create a broad vision for our public schools and ally with parents, students and community organizations to secure the resources, time and autonomy to create those schools," she said.

"We envision that some of these meetings will involve members only if that's where they feel safest expressing their ideas," Madeloni added. "In some locals, the members will want to invite parents, students and other community residents so that they can share ideas with one another."

Madeloni said the MTA is developing protocols for the forums, which will be available before the school year begins. "I intend to go to as many of these forums as I can," she said. "I want to support members as they name their experiences and begin to organize to reclaim public education." Madeloni also encouraged members at public colleges and universities to develop their own forums on issues relevant to their workplaces.

To request more information or schedule a forum, please e-mail Governance Assistant Jennie Holland at jholland@massteacher.org.

MCCC takes action to ensure fair agreement

By Scott McLennan

Adjunct faculty members teaching at the state's 15 community colleges engaged in an unexpected but ultimately successful battle with employers en route to ratification of a new contract that boosts pay and improves job security and other working conditions.

After negotiators for the Massachusetts Community College Council signed off on a tentative agreement with the state Board of Higher Education in January, the presidents of the community colleges announced they would not honor the three-year pact for contingent faculty members. The presidents, who bargained on behalf of the BHE, claimed they had miscalculated a negotiated payment for instructors teaching lab courses.

The presidents' attempt to withdraw from the agreement prompted the MCCC to file a complaint with the state Department of Labor Relations, arguing that the presidents failed to bargain in good faith.

After members of the MCCC's Division of Continuing Education Unit voted 2,001 to 92 in favor of the negotiated agreement, the local's leadership pushed harder to ensure the contract's survival.

On April 25, several members of the MCCC picketed at Quinsigamond Community College, where the presidents of the community colleges were greeted by placards reading "Honor Your Promise!"



and "Protect Public Higher Education" as they drove onto the campus for a meeting.

By day's end, the presidents agreed to let the contract stand as negotiated.

"There was no way we were going to start tinkering with a contract that our members so overwhelmingly wanted," said MCCC President Joe LeBlanc. "I'm just glad that the presidents saw fit to stick to the agreement and preserve the integrity of collective bargaining."

The agreement calls for raises of 3.5 percent in the contract's first two years, 4 percent in the third year, and 4 percent for an outside year should a successor contract not be settled. Those raises apply to per-credit pay rates within a four-step scale. Courses typically offer three credits each.

"This is the strongest contract I've seen in years," LeBlanc said.

MCCC members held a demonstration at Quinsigamond Community College when community college presidents met on the campus on April 25. Later that day, the presidents dropped objections they had voiced concerning a contract agreement reached with adjunct faculty members. Pictured at the protest, from left to right, are MCCC members Lisa Cook, Kathi Lewando, Anne Shull and Susan McPherson. Standing with them is MTA Director of Higher Education Joey Hansen.

Photo by Scott McLennan

About two-thirds of community college courses in Massachusetts are taught by adjunct faculty. LeBlanc said that the agreement will cover roughly 5,000 educators.

Linda Grochowalski, chair of the DCE bargaining committee, said the negotiated pay hikes are a "huge" step toward achieving income parity between adjunct and full-time faculty.

"Management refused to talk about parity, but we really pushed," Grochowalski said. "We're not there yet, but we are moving toward that goal. Nobody in higher ed is getting 4 percent these days, so we feel we have a good start."

The contract also includes many firsts for adjunct instructors. It calls for systemwide salary steps, meaning that instructors teaching at more than one community college can petition schools

Please turn to **New**/Page 20

JUST FOR NEW TEACHERS

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2014 MTA JUST FOR NEW TEACHERS 13TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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Please also consider joining us for the
ETHNIC MINORITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE CONFERENCE.

Summer Conference energizes members

By Scott McLennan

The MTA's annual Summer Conference was an energy-infused blend of serious work and warm camaraderie that offered an array of professional development opportunities, union-building sessions and social gatherings.

Hundreds of preK-12 and higher education members attended the conference, which was held in Williamstown during the first full week in August.

MTA President Barbara Madeloni and Vice President Janet Anderson welcomed attendees with messages that urged them to be vocal and to speak up for what they believe is the right course for public education and for the MTA.

"The core of our work as educators in public education is faith and trust. It's about a relationship," Madeloni said. "Now is the time to recommit to union power that comes with solidarity, that comes with building relationships — member to member, rank and file — using our voices and translating our voices into real action."

Anderson acknowledged how difficult the education profession has become, but urged optimism.

"These days, our jobs are more challenging than ever," she said. "But I have no doubt that working together as a strong union of activists and educators, we can and will have a positive impact on public policy and the future of our schools, our colleges, our universities and our Commonwealth."

Keynote speaker Sabrina Stevens echoed the messages of the president and vice president in her address at the Opening Session.

The teacher-turned-education activist declared that many of the state and federal initiatives being rolled out under the guise of "reforming" public schools actually do more to damage democracy than to help students.

"We are squeezing out of the school day all of the opportunities to practice democracy," she said, adding that some administrators actually hand educators a script now rather than trust them to use their acquired skills. "We need to protect our ability to stand up and say, 'This doesn't make sense,'" Stevens said.

She also urged MTA members to be active in their unions as an act of democracy.

"Make connections, serve on committees," she said. "Being an active citizen of a whole, functioning society" — a democracy — takes participation.

Max Hyde, president of the National Union of Teachers in the United Kingdom, also spoke, telling members how the struggles of educators in Britain to teach the whole child — rather than teach to standardized tests — mirror the challenges of their counterparts in this country.

The dozens of workshops and the many multi-day professional education tracks during the conference

Please turn to **MTA**/Page 13



Scenes from the Summer Conference included, counterclockwise from upper right, keynote speaker Sabrina Stevens at the Opening Session; MTA Executive Committee member Kathleen Meltsakos adding her thoughts about education to a "graffiti" table; Annetta Argyres, vice president of the Professional Staff Union at UMass Boston, left, and MTA President Barbara Madeloni sharing a laugh before the start of a higher education panel discussion; Julia Cradle and Jared Killgoar watching Jay Wolan at the podium during final presentations by participants in the Emerging Leaders track; audience members giving a standing ovation to Retired Members Committee Co-Chair and former MTA President Kathleen Roberts at the premiere of "Kind Kay," a documentary about her life and experiences; and Retired Members Committee Co-Chair Richard Liston introducing Roberts at the screening.

Photos by MTA Communications staff

High-stakes testing is key focus

Madeloni and Anderson plan to press for enactment of moratorium

Continued from Page 3

Q: Our mission statement has three things that are listed as important to the MTA: quality education, the economic interests of our members, and social justice. What are your thoughts on those three and the relative weight the MTA should give them?

MADELONI: I think it's really important that they're not rank-ordered. They're connected. You need one to have the other.

ANDERSON: I agree. You can't have great public schools and high-quality education if you're not willing to give educators a decent contract that's going to retain and attract quality educators.

Q: Unions are under attack, and not just in Wisconsin. Any thoughts on how we change the image of educators' unions?

MADELONI: The stronger our unions are, the stronger everyone is. We need to show how our interests are connected to the broader issues of quality public education and social justice.

ANDERSON: We need to help the public realize that our unions are made up of educators. They're

The stronger our unions are, the stronger everyone is. We need to show how our interests are connected to the broader issues of quality public education and social justice.

— MTA President Barbara Madeloni

made up of that teacher who brings clothes for a kid so he has something to wear. They're made up of educators who bring in food for those kids who maybe don't have enough food at home.

Q: You talk about corporate influence on education. What do you mean by that, and what can we do about it?

MADELONI: Educators are under assault. The public sector in general is under assault by people who are looking to privatize public spaces and, in particular, to privatize public education — to profit from the public dollar and to bust our unions.

Q: Janet, what do Taunton educators want from their union?

ANDERSON: They want advocacy on public school issues. They want somebody to fight high-

stakes testing. They want some relief from things like RETELL. They don't want test results used in educator evaluation. They also want a good contract. They want good wages and benefits, so it's all of these issues.

Q: What will you start tackling first?

ANDERSON: One of the new business items at the Annual Meeting called for a moratorium on high-stakes testing and the use of it in decisions and teacher evaluations. I would really want to work on that because I think that's doable; I think we can achieve that.

MADELONI: I agree. I think that's very doable, and I think we can do that not only in Massachusetts but can connect it to a larger national movement with parents and teachers across the country to say "no" to high-stakes testing.

My really deep goal is to have members talking to members about the kinds of experiences we're having in the workplace, about what that means for our hopes and dreams for public education, and, from that, grow much stronger ties with the community so together we can fight for the things that we care about.



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Move to lift charter cap is defeated

MTA members flood state Senate with e-mails opposing legislation

By Laura Barrett

Late in the afternoon of July 15, on her first day as MTA president, Barbara Madeloni sent an e-mail to members urging them to contact their state senators and ask them to vote against a bill that sought to raise the cap on charter schools.

By the next morning, more than 1,100 MTA members had contacted their senators. Later that day, the bill was defeated by a lopsided 26-13 vote.

Although the House had passed a similar bill, the Senate vote killed the proposal for the current legislative session, which ended on July 31.

“The response to the MTA e-mail — on a Tuesday in July — was fantastic,” Madeloni said. “It shows that members are ready to act on issues that matter to them.

“I am thrilled that the cap will not be lifted,” she continued. “Many senators agreed with us that instead of allowing charters to divide our communities and drain their resources, the state should be putting resources into strengthening our public schools.”

The Senate bill, like the House version, would have raised the cap on how much funding certain districts could be forced to spend on charter schools — from 18 percent of net school spending to 23 percent, phased in over five years. The higher cap would have applied to districts in the bottom 10 percent of student performance.

The Senate bill, sponsored by Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz (D-Boston), included several provisions addressing some of the concerns about charter schools.

These included a trigger mechanism that would have suspended the cap lift if the state failed to fully fund the charter reimbursement account; an “opt-out” provision under which students in a charter’s geographic area would have been automatically enrolled in the charter school unless their parents opted out of enrollment; and limits on the expansion of charter schools with high attrition rates. In addition, preference would have been given to charter schools designed to serve dropouts or at-risk students.

Even with those provisions, however, a majority of the Senate agreed with Senator Pat Jehlen (D-Somerville) and others who maintained that increasing the cap again so soon after it was raised in 2010 would hurt students enrolled in district schools and be costly to the state.

Rather than spending several hundred million dollars on charter expansion, Jehlen argued, the state could better serve students by spending that money on services that are known to work, such as early education.

“Why can’t we spend money on things that are proven instead of things that are controversial?” Jehlen asked during the lengthy Senate debate.

Call to action echoes across international borders

By Paul McClory

Juanita Martinez, a retired MTA member from Springfield, was vacationing with her family in Spain on July 15 when she opened an e-mail that asked for her help in defeating a bill before the Massachusetts Senate that sought to lift the cap on charter school funding in the state.

Right after receiving the message from Burt Freedman, the Legislative and Political Action Team coordinator for the district of Senator Jim Welch (D-West Springfield), Martinez sprang into action and contacted her legislator.

Martinez said she is a strong believer in public education who wants to see the state’s efforts focus on “existing public schools rather than charters.”

Peter Lahey, an LPAT coordinator in the district of Senator Sal DiDomenico (D-Everett), was visiting family members in southern France when he received word that the bill was coming

up for a vote. Like Martinez, he responded by contacting his senator from abroad.

The same pattern held true for hundreds of MTA members closer to home and for other member-coordinators of the MTA’s grassroots legislative teams.

The call to action began at the desk of MTA President Barbara Madeloni, who exhorted members on her first day in office to contact their senators and urge them to vote against lifting the charter funding cap. On July 16, the bill containing the provision went down to defeat by a vote of 26 to 13.

Madeloni said she was thrilled by the outcome, and she thanked the more than 1,100 members who contacted their senators.

Lahey, for his part, said he was “happy to be able to help.”

“Public education is a cause I’m always willing and excited to defend, no matter where I am or what the circumstances are,” he said.

‘Many senators agreed with us that instead of allowing charters to divide our communities and drain their resources, the state should be putting resources into strengthening our public schools.’

**— Barbara Madeloni
MTA President**

Senator Ken Donnelly (D-Arlington), another leading opponent, asked, “What is the endgame?” He and others questioned whether increasing the number of charter schools would inevitably lead to a two-tiered education system, with district schools serving the most needy students.

The MTA released a study in 2009 documenting a dramatic difference in the types of students served by Boston’s charter schools and those served by the Boston Public Schools. The charters typically served far fewer special needs students, English language learners and very low-income students than the Boston Public Schools.

The MTA report also documented that most Boston charter schools had high attrition rates, meaning that far more students were enrolled in the initial year than remained in the school by the final year. The MTA concluded that students who were not

meeting a school’s academic and behavior standards were being sent back to district schools or to the streets; exaggerated claims of success were then being made by charter schools based on the number of students who remained.

Another concern expressed by several senators during the recent debate was that charter schools have not lived up to their promise of creating innovative, replicable practices that they share freely with district schools.

The education bill that called for lifting the charter cap also included provisions that would have created a new category of schools, Challenge Schools, identified by the commissioner of elementary and secondary education from among the lowest-performing Level 3 schools.

In these schools, a turnaround process involving a stakeholder group and expedited bargaining would have been established in an effort to create improvement plans that ultimately would have to be approved by at least two-thirds of the teachers in the school. If no agreement was reached, the commissioner could have designated the school Level 4. Because this proposal was included in the same bill that lifted the cap on charter schools, it died in the Senate when the entire bill was defeated. Similar proposals could emerge in the future, as could a bill or ballot question on charter schools.

“The MTA is committed to great public schools for every student in Massachusetts,” said Madeloni. “Charters are not the answer. Our members will stand strong for our schools, our students and our communities.”

United effort fends off privatization attempt

By Scott McLennan

Three years ago, when a plan to renovate Concord-Carlisle High School called for relocating the district's school bus operation off school property, district administrators began a campaign to outsource transportation services to a private company.

But the Concord-Carlisle Bus Drivers' Unit mobilized quickly, joining with citizens groups that came together to save the district's ownership of the buses and the jobs of the drivers.

The successful anti-privatization effort stretched over three long years, during which the 30-person group, one of the few drivers-only units in the MTA, would crunch numbers, conduct informational pickets and give presentations to the Town Meeting members who would ultimately decide their fate.

For decades, the district's buses had provided service to the students of Concord and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District.

"We trusted the drivers. We knew the drivers knew our kids," said parent Lissa McKinney. "There's a real personal element with the drivers."

So when the district began moving toward privatization, a Citizens Transportation Committee formed to study the issue. That committee found it would be less expensive for the district to maintain its own bus service than to privatize.

When the district responded with its own transportation study concluding that privatization would be less expensive and attempted to move forward on a contract with First Student, citizens filed a complaint with the state Office of the Inspector General alleging that the bid process was flawed.

The dispute dragged on through three annual Town Meetings, during which the drivers were able to settle only one-year contracts.

This past spring, Town Meeting voters backed a plan to relocate the bus yard to Acton temporarily, eventually buy a parcel of land for the bus yard and maintain their own transportation service.

Unit Co-President Frank Murphy applauded members for staying motivated as the battle unfolded.



Photo by Scott McLennan

Members of the Concord-Carlisle Bus Drivers' Unit met with community supporters and MTA staff members at the bus yard in Acton to discuss their successful campaign against the outsourcing of student transportation services. Standing, from left to right, are outgoing union Co-President Ann Marie Pike; drivers Lisa Schreiber and Angel Diaz; unit Vice President Harry Vafides; unit Treasurer Janice Crain; Mark Hanson of the Citizens Transportation Committee; driver John Groleau; unit Co-President Frank Murphy; drivers Paula du Plessis, Maricela Higgins and Sandy Cannon; Concord resident Bill Plummer; and MTA staff members Tedi Winkler and Laurie Stead. In the front row, from left to right, are Concord resident Lissa McKinney, drivers Christine Kelleher-Ross and Donna Kenney, and union Secretary Sue Dunn.

'We trusted the drivers. We knew the drivers knew our kids. There's a real personal element with the drivers.'

— Parent Lissa McKinney

The drivers also hailed the strong support they received from the families they serve and from other community residents who recognized their value.

Harry Vafides, vice president of the local, said that when he worked as a bus driver in Framingham and the town privatized student transportation there, drivers' benefits decreased and the town realized no savings.

When the privatization issue was finally resolved, the union settled a three-year contract, which raises drivers' pay 2 percent in each of the first two years and 2.5 percent in the third. The agreement stood in contrast to the one-year pacts during the dispute.

And there was another happy ending: New drivers, hired when the dispute was finally resolved, have been added to the unit.

MTA members showcase 'big ideas,' speak out and network

Continued from Page 10

offered innumerable ideas for educators in terms of classroom strategy and union activism.

But the conference wasn't all about pondering possibilities; it also provided opportunities for educators to voice their perspectives and concerns.

ED Talks, for example, featured eight speakers offering "big ideas" about education. An enthusiastic crowd of members packed an auditorium for presentations on subjects that ranged from public education funding to punk rock as an inspiration for connecting with students.

This year's conference introduced an "open mic" session for educators to air concerns and share

strategies. The forum brought to light issues such as how to build better relationships between preK-12 schools, colleges and universities and the damages wrought by high-stakes standardized testing.

Aside from tackling weighty issues, attendees had the chance to socialize with colleagues and to meet fellow members from across the state.

The conference also provided a relaxed atmosphere for members to talk to Warren Tolman, a candidate for attorney general, and Steve Kerrigan, a candidate for lieutenant governor. Both MTA-recommended candidates attended an afternoon picnic, where they mingled with members and listened to educators' concerns.

The week also featured the premiere of "Kind Kay," an MTA documentary about former MTA President Kathleen Roberts filmed by Communications Specialist Bob Duffy.

Roberts, who is about to turn 100 years old, remains active in both her union and her town. She received a standing ovation at the film's screening, and her message — that a strong union leads to strong schools and strong communities — resonated throughout the conference.

To see more Summer Conference photos and view videos, visit flickr.com/mtacommunications and youtube.com/massteacher.

Advancing human and civil rights

Award winners share commitment to 'enriching the lives of those they serve'

By Jean Conley

Four individuals committed to furthering civil rights and human relations were honored on June 20 at the annual MTA Human and Civil Rights banquet.

George Spivey, a retired educator and a member of NAACP-Cape Cod and Concerned Black Men, was the recipient of this year's Louise Gaskins Lifetime Civil Rights Award.

Worcester educator and screenwriter Caitlin McCarthy received the Kathleen Roberts Creative Leadership Award, as did Kelvin Ing and Amy Lipkind of the Cape Cod Challenger Club.

During the event, outgoing MTA President Paul Toner acknowledged Roberts and Gaskins, both of whom were on hand, for their contributions to education, the MTA and to human and civil rights. Toner, whose term of office ended in July, said that again this year, the MTA would make a \$2,000 contribution in the name of each honoree to the charity of his or her choice.

In the spirit of the evening, Toner's eighth-grade algebra teacher, Roland LaChance, who was in attendance, was recognized. Toner said LaChance and several other teachers "inspired me and shaped my future career as a teacher and union leader without me even realizing it."

Human Relations Committee Chair Dale Forest said the four award recipients were chosen for their efforts "to make the world more just and tolerant."

"Though they have contributed to society in very different ways," he said, the honorees "share a commitment to enriching the lives of those they serve."

Spivey is a retired school principal and teacher of math and history in Falmouth and the Barnstable Public Schools. He also served as the town of Falmouth's affirmative action officer for 13 years. In January, Spivey received the Falmouth Clergy Association's first award for human rights work and community leadership, and he still acts as a mentor to young people.

Spivey was born in the Bronx but moved to rural New Jersey with his family. He said he was a slow starter in school, initially having trouble with reading. But his mother inspired him and he worked hard, eventually becoming the valedictorian of his class. His high school principal, he said, persuaded him to aim high and consider applying to Dartmouth College.

"He helped me to look beyond what I could see," Spivey said. Spivey did attend Dartmouth, and he said the principal's sentiment became his mantra.

He urged the audience of educators to help students "look beyond what they can see, and never be told that you can't help young people."

He said he decided after a year of working in the insurance industry — which he hated — that he would spend his life helping other people, so he became a teacher, a principal and a mentor.



Photo by Jean Conley

The 2014 MTA Human and Civil Rights Award winners shared the banquet spotlight with Louise Gaskins and Kathleen Roberts, for whom the honors are named. From left to right are Gaskins, George Spivey, Caitlin McCarthy, Roberts, Amy Lipkind and Kelvin Ing.

McCarthy, an English language arts teacher at Worcester Technical High School, served as the screenwriter of "Wonder Drug." The film tells the story of diethylstilbestrol, otherwise known as DES.

Once thought to be a groundbreaking synthetic form of estrogen and widely prescribed to millions of pregnant women, DES instead became a medical disaster when the risks of taking the drug became known: a rare vaginal cancer and an increase in the risk of breast cancer in DES daughters, along with increased testicular cancer in DES sons.

McCarthy's mother had been prescribed a vitamin containing DES when she was pregnant. When Caitlin discovered in 2005 that she had been exposed to the drug, she researched it and then began to educate others about DES.

McCarthy offered "a thousand thank yous" to her mother, Ann, and father, Albert, who accompanied her to the dinner. She said that as an educator and a writer, she considered it her duty to educate the world about DES.

"The sad story of DES demonstrates how hormone-disrupting chemicals can influence disease risks across generations, reminding us why it's important to reduce exposures now," she said. McCarthy said she had already made arrangements for her \$2,000 award to be sent to a leading researcher at Tulane University who is organizing a DES meeting in Washington among scientists, researchers and "political folks."

"Without the MTA," she said, "this much-needed education in Washington would not be possible."

Ing and Lipkind are the founders of the Cape Cod Challenger Club, which has become a vital provider of support for parents of special needs children.

The club began as the couple's effort to integrate special needs students into the Sandwich Little League program, but it blossomed into a year-round effort serving more than 400 young people and attracting a similar number of volunteers. The club's programs serve not only as a respite for parents but also as a vital networking opportunity for families and as learning opportunities — both socially and emotionally — for the students.

The club spends all of the money raised through donations and gifts to foster individual growth and development, confidence and self-esteem in the children, Lipkind said.

She lauded the volunteers who "play with the kids, teach the kids and just be a friend" through athletic, recreational and social activities.

Ing said that the club continues to grow, sharing a closed Barnstable school with the Cape Cod Collaborative and offering activities over the summer and during other school vacation periods.

Forest, the HRC chair, also paid tribute to Beverly Miyares, an education policy specialist for the MTA who undertook much of the organizing and logistics of the annual dinner for nearly 25 years.

Her contributions to the event have been "truly greatly appreciated" by Human Relations Committees past and present, Forest said.

A call to focus on 'educating the whole child'

By Laura Barrett

What is the goal of public education? Does high-stakes testing undermine or advance that goal? These are two of the questions that MTA President Barbara Madeloni wants members to address at a series of member-led forums beginning this fall.

The forums and a call for a three-year moratorium on high-stakes tests were among the policies approved when the delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting voted in favor of New Business Item No. 6 on May 10. Madeloni was a co-sponsor of that NBI.

"When I traveled throughout the state campaigning for the presidency of the MTA, our members told me over and over again about the ways testing mandates are hurting students and educators alike," she said.

"Teachers aren't against assessments," Madeloni continued. "We assess students all the time. We are against an excessive focus on high-stakes standardized tests and accountability at the expense of quality teaching and learning."

"The problem is particularly severe in low-income communities. Much of the school year is spent drilling students for the MCAS tests in these districts," she said. "Then, when the results come back, teachers are blamed for test scores that reflect the socioeconomic status of their students, not the quality of their teaching."

"We need to shift the focus back to educating the whole child and addressing economic injustice — the root cause of low student performance," Madeloni added.

The NBI requires the MTA to advocate for a three-year moratorium on the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, known as PARCC, the teacher evaluation system and the use of any student test results to evaluate school or teacher performance.

Since some of the high-stakes testing requirements originate with the federal government, Madeloni would also like the MTA to join forces with the National Education Association and other state associations to seek changes in federal education laws and regulations.

'Operational year' for PARCC

This is the first "operational" year for PARCC testing. Districts have been given the choice of administering the MCAS or PARCC exams. If they choose PARCC, they can select the online or paper version. A paper version is expected to be available for several years.

Of the 297 districts that filed their intent by June 30, 176 chose to administer PARCC next spring while 121 chose to stay with MCAS. The remaining districts must decide which test they will use by Oct. 1.

Before superintendents were asked to make a choice, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education informed them that districts and schools

Presidents: Hold teachers and students harmless on PARCC exams

More than 50 presidents representing preK-12 and higher education locals gathered at the MTA Summer Conference to share their ideas and concerns with President Barbara Madeloni, Vice President Janet Anderson and Executive Director-Treasurer Ann Clarke.

After the local presidents spoke during an issues forum, the MTA leadership team asked participants how the association should respond to a July 17 memo from Mitchell Chester, commissioner of elementary and secondary education, regarding the question of holding teachers harmless in districts that have opted to administer the PARCC exams in 2014-15. This will be the first "operational" year for PARCC, meaning that students, teachers, parents, schools and districts will get actual results.

In the memo, the commissioner recommended a protocol for determining Student Growth Percentiles for teachers in schools administering PARCC in 2014-15. SGPs are used in the educator evaluation system to determine the Student Impact Rating, and thus the length and nature of an educator's growth or improvement plan.

While the recommendation — that 2014-15 PARCC-based data not lower an educator's SGP — opens the door to bargaining, the presidents asserted unanimously that the MTA should call for all teachers and students to be held harmless during at least the first operational administration of PARCC rather than bargain the "hold harmless" issue in every local.

Presidents noted that PARCC exposes the fact that the SGP is unrelated to actual teaching and learning in classrooms, that the comparisons required by the ratings are illogical, and that overtesting is undermining the work of educators.

After a straw vote on a motion to call for every teacher and student to be held harmless, Madeloni and Anderson were tasked with exploring educators' concerns and building alliances with superintendents, school committees, parents and communities.

Madeloni and Anderson will continue the discussion at the All Presidents' Meeting on Sept. 13 and will bring the issue to the Board of Directors' meeting Oct. 17 and 18.

To read the commissioner's memo, visit www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=11379.

administering PARCC would be held harmless based on next spring's results. Under the hold harmless rule, PARCC scores could be used to improve a school's or district's accountability rating, but not to lower it.

At that time, however, the DESE informed superintendents that there would be no "hold harmless" language in using PARCC to determine an educator's Student Growth Percentile.

This past spring, the MTA objected to the use of the 2014-2015 PARCC results for calculating an educator's SGP. After all, the MTA argued, that is the first time teachers and students will experience the operational test. Further, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education is not even scheduled to vote on whether PARCC will replace MCAS until the fall of 2015.

In a memo dated July 17, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Mitchell Chester recommended that districts extend the hold harmless concept to the Student Impact Rating for one year. Administrators were advised that they may use PARCC-based SGP scores in the evaluation system, with the following recommendation from the DESE:

"If the educator's 2014-15 PARCC-based SGP is lower than the 2013-14 MCAS-based SGP, then the evaluator will discount the 2014-15 PARCC-based results and instead use the 2013-14 MCAS-based SGP and the 2015-16 state assessment-based SGP, along with data from District-Determined

Measures to determine the educator's Student Impact Rating."

Stop the high-stakes testing train

Madeloni said that any delay in the use of PARCC for high-stakes decisions is better than no delay, but that the DESE decision does not go nearly far enough.

"Our members are saying, 'Enough! Stop the high-stakes testing train!'" she said. "In all their complicated calculations of SGP and CPI and PPI, policymakers have lost sight of our students and of the fundamental purpose of public education, which is about nurturing the whole child."

The MTA-backed forums that are being planned this fall are designed to bring the focus back to the purpose of education and how it can best be fulfilled.

"Wealthy policymakers do not send their own children to schools that are drilling on MCAS from September to March," Madeloni said. "They don't send their children to schools that give short shrift to all subjects except ELA and math because those are the only subjects that 'count' in the accountability system. They send their children to schools with rich and broad curriculums."

"Their children have wonderful opportunities to participate in art, music, athletics and extracurricular activities of their own choosing," she added. "Every child in the Commonwealth should have the same kinds of educational experiences and opportunities that policymakers want for their own children."

MTA takes Level 5 fight to court

By Laura Barrett

The MTA has filed complaints in Middlesex Superior Court contending that the state's takeover plans for the two Level 5 schools represented by the association unlawfully cut members' pay and undermine teachers' rights while also failing to demonstrate how the changes set forth will improve student achievement.

The first lawsuit, challenging the plan for the Parker Elementary School, was filed on July 18 on behalf of the New Bedford Educators Association.

The second, challenging the plan for the Morgan Full Service Community School, was filed on July 23 on behalf of the Holyoke Teachers Association.

"I'm thrilled that the MTA has filed these lawsuits," said Lou St. John, president of the NBEA. "The commissioner of education has acted like a rogue and is doing whatever he wants. I don't think he is following the intent of the law. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education basically rubber-stamped whatever the commissioner wanted. I feel that a court will be more likely to make a decision based on the facts."

The lawsuits also contend that Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Mitchell Chester failed to follow legally required procedures in establishing the turnaround plans and that the BESE erred when it refused to require him to send revised plans back to the stakeholder groups for further review.

"State law creates a highly collaborative process for turning around underperforming schools that requires the input of numerous stakeholders, including teachers and their unions," said Sandra Quinn, the MTA attorney who prepared and filed the Morgan complaint on behalf of the HTA. "The commissioner flouted legislative intent by creating a punitive process that will discourage the recruitment and retention of teachers."

Chester designated the schools in New Bedford and Holyoke, along with two in Boston, as Level 5 — or "chronically underperforming" — under the



'I'm thrilled that the MTA has filed these lawsuits. The commissioner of education has acted like a rogue and is doing whatever he wants. I don't think he is following the intent of the law. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education basically rubber-stamped whatever the commissioner wanted. I feel that a court will be more likely to make a decision based on the facts.'

— New Bedford Educators Association President Lou St. John

Achievement Gap Act of 2010. The law entitles the commissioner to develop turnaround plans and name a receiver for each Level 5 school.

In Holyoke, Texas-based Project GRAD USA was named the receiver of Morgan. In New Bedford, School Superintendent Pia Durkin was named the receiver for Parker.

In both schools, all teachers were required to reapply for their jobs. Most chose not to reapply, citing working conditions in the schools and their frustration that many of their ideas about how to help their high-need students were not heeded.

The law also requires the commissioner to develop the turnaround plans with input from local stakeholder groups.

Despite differences in local conditions and recommendations from the stakeholders, all of the Level 5 plans were very similar, reflecting Chester's support for a longer day for students and teachers even if there are not enough funds available to provide pay commensurate with the time required.

As a result, teachers at Morgan have to work 395 more hours each year — or 30 percent more time — for about 5 percent more pay. At Parker, they have to work 392 hours more for about 7 percent more pay.

The lawsuits state that these changes amount to an unlawful salary cut because they reduce a teacher's rate of pay.

In addition, both plans abolish collectively bargained salary schedules and replace them with performance-based pay systems, under which teachers move up to the next level based on their evaluations, not on their years of service. Chester has been vocal in his support of moving the state to a more performance-based pay system.

The plans also eliminate the normal grievance procedures and arbitration before a neutral third party and instead give "substantial deference" to the receiver and final say to the commissioner in disputes with management.

The Morgan complaint contends that these changes "bear no rational relationship to the central statutory purpose of maximizing rapid student achievement."

"We are at the initial stages of litigation and look forward to receiving a response to the complaint from the board and the commissioner," said MTA attorney Laurie Houle, who prepared and filed the Parker complaint on behalf of the NBEA. "Our hope is that this process will result in an improved turnaround plan that will better lead to the rapid academic achievement of students in these schools."



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In memory of fallen educators

Monument is dedicated at National Teachers Hall of Fame in Kansas

By Jean Conley

Outgoing MTA Vice President Tim Sullivan was among state education association representatives from across the nation who gathered in Kansas on June 12 to honor educators who have died in the line of duty.

Sullivan joined hundreds of family members, dignitaries and officials at the National Teachers Hall of Fame in Emporia for the dedication of a plaza memorializing fallen educators. On the plaza, two large black granite tablets shaped like open books hold 113 names etched in gold letters.

Sullivan placed a flower at the base of the monument as the name of Colleen Ritzer, a popular math teacher at Danvers High School, was read. Ritzer, who was slain at her school in October 2013, was among the five educators from Massachusetts whose names were read during the ceremony.

“Our loss of Colleen Ritzer in Massachusetts is still vivid,” Sullivan said. “It is very emotional to see the names of scores of educators — teachers, bus drivers, education support professionals and others — who died just doing their jobs. It makes you pause and remember what we do every single day.”

Four other Massachusetts educators’ names are also etched on the monument. Their stories underscore their dedication to their jobs and their students, even in threatening circumstances.

■ On Dec. 5, 2001, the Rev. Theodore N. Brown, a family outreach counselor at Springfield High School, was stabbed to death after telling a student to remove the hood of his sweatshirt while he was indoors. Brown was stabbed seven times in the chest and stomach and once in the hand. He died before he could be reached by emergency personnel.

■ On Nov. 17, 1999, Maribel Gonzalez, a classroom aide at German Gerena Community Elementary School in Springfield, was kicked in the chest by a fifth-grade student who had refused to board his bus and who had gotten out of control. Gonzalez, who suffered from asthma, was rushed to the hospital but died two hours later.

■ On March 27, 1997, David “Jake” McHugh, a behavior modification specialist at the James F. Sullivan Middle School in Lowell, died after being kicked repeatedly in the head as he tried to break up a fight between two students.



Photo courtesy of Emporia State University

The names of 113 educators — including five from Massachusetts — are etched in gold letters.

■ On April 15, 1993, Carole Day, the school nurse at Albert Ford Middle School in Acushnet, was corralled into the principal’s office, along with the principal and librarian, by a man wielding a 12-gauge shotgun. The man shot her in the back, killing her.

Among the tragedies recalled at the dedication was the fatal shooting of 20 schoolchildren and six educators at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

It was the shooting in Newtown that prompted research and the decision to build an enduring tribute at the National Teachers Hall of Fame, which was founded in 1989.

State affiliates of the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers provided the names of educators who had died in their states, and many made financial contributions to help build the memorial. Educators from 36 states are listed.

Donations for the memorial have come from corporate sponsors, foundations, retired teachers and schoolchildren.

Carol Strickland, executive director of the National Teachers Hall of Fame, emphasized that no donation is regarded as too small.

“We want this to be a national monument built by the people in America to honor these heroes,” she said. “We loved the money order for \$25.38 that was sent from a kindergarten teacher for her students, who collected change for several weeks for us from their lunch money.”

Later additions to the plaza will include outdoor touch-screen kiosks that will tell the story of each educator and help visitors understand the purpose of the memorial.

Donations may be mailed to the NTHF, 1200 Commercial, Campus Box 4017, Emporia, KS 66801. Further information about The National Teachers Hall of Fame and the memorial can be found at www.nthf.org.



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Obituaries

Dr. Francis J. Adams, 80, of Braintree. Taught in the Boston, Weymouth, Scituate and Stoughton school systems. In Stoughton, was director of curriculum for kindergarten through 12th grade. Also taught English literacy at Quincy Junior College and Massasoit Community College. July 20.

Rita M. Albrecht, 100, of Winchendon. Taught first and second grade at the Mitchell School in Marlborough. Was named Massachusetts Teacher of the Year in 1960. March 14.

Rita D. Astorino, 80, of Sun City West, Arizona, formerly of Springfield. Was a science teacher. Dec. 28.

John T. Babine, 63, of Reading. Taught math and science in Reading for 35 years. March 23.

Ann Patch Constantine, 97, of Damariscotta, Maine, formerly of Ipswich. Taught first grade in Ipswich and Topsfield for 25 years. May 12.

Patricia H. Corner, 79, of Marlborough. Was an elementary school teacher for the Marlborough school system

for 30 years, retiring in 1993. March 10.

Gary J. Duffey, 53, of Seekonk. Was a graphic arts teacher at Cape Cod Regional Technical High School, Harwich; Somerville Trade High School, Somerville; Minuteman Regional Technical High School, Lexington; Coventry High School, Coventry, Rhode Island; Madison Park High School, Boston; and Providence Career and Technical Academy, Providence. Feb. 12.

Deborah Eckersley, 50, of Fall River. Was an art teacher at Letourneau Elementary School in Fall River. March 9.

Suzanne E. Fleming, 67, of Marblehead. Taught at the Elbridge Gerry School in Marblehead for 36 years, retiring in 2004. June 22.

William J. Garrity, Jr., 81, of Pittsfield. Taught in the Central Berkshire Regional School District for 35 years. April 7.

Edward J. Goldsmith, Sr., 78, of Oxford. Was an automotive instructor at Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School in Charlton for 28 years. June 20.

Ghernot L. Knox, 92, of Haverhill. Taught English at Haverhill Trade School. Also served as assistant director of vocational education for the state. June 16.

Claire McDonald, 83, of Weymouth. Was a retired employee of MTA Benefits, where she worked for several years. July 16.

Kenneth J. McIntire, Sr., 83, of Randolph. Was an educator and guidance counselor for 35 years in Milton. May 10.

Bryan McSheffrey, 51, of East Bridgewater. Was an eighth-grade history teacher at Easton Middle School. April 23.

Cecilia R. Misseri, 89, of Watertown. Was a business teacher at Waltham High School. April 17.

Donald A. Oakley, 78, of East Bridgewater. Was a history teacher at East Bridgewater High School for more than 20 years. Also served as head of the History Department. April 19.

Mary E. Sheridan, 94, of Clinton. Was a nurse and elementary school teacher for the Clinton school system. March 17.

Ralph L. Shindler, 93, of Arden, North Carolina, formerly of Agawam. Was a teacher for eight years and then assistant principal at Longmeadow High School, followed by 16 years as principal of East Longmeadow High School. July 21.

Daniel M. Weeder, 84, of Topsfield. Taught automotive mechanics at Lynn Vocational and Technical High School for 19 years. April 10.

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New MCCC contract includes improved pay and benefits

Continued from Page 9

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The agreement also boosts payments for lab instruction, which moves from 66 percent of a credit rate to 74 percent of credit rate.

The agreement streamlines the grievance process and calls for a more formalized system of performance review.

Grochowalski said that the DCE bargaining

team surveyed members to establish priorities before negotiations began. The team bargained from the position that adjunct faculty are now the “primary purveyors of knowledge,” she said, and deserve compensation and working conditions commensurate with their importance to the community college system.

“The MCCC has been at the forefront of this fight,” Grochowalski said. “I’m not always sure management is getting the message, but we are wearing them down.”

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March 9-20	Three (3) \$100 Dunkin' Donuts gift cards
April 6-17	Three (3) \$100 Best Buy gift cards
May 4-8	Two (2) \$250 Home Depot gift cards
June 22-July 3	Two (2) \$150 Apple gift cards

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Restaurant.com monthly drawing

MTA Benefits is kicking off another school year with a new monthly drawing for members who register on its website from now to the end of the school year. Some member discounts are accessible only by logging on to the members-only area of the website, so to take advantage, you must register. Each month, one newly registered member will win a \$25 Restaurant.com gift card. The promotion is only for members who are not already registered on the MTAB site. Don't miss out on any discounts or special promotions. Register today!

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The 2014-2015 MTA Benefits & Discount Directory is on its way to you. Here's a peek at what you'll find inside: banking products with Berkshire Bank; a legal protection plan offering affordable services from experienced law firms and attorneys; an online and in-store discount at Office Depot; the all-new LEGOLAND® Discovery Center Boston, with \$5 off admission; the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum with free admission; and Bretton Woods, a perennial favorite, which continues its discount on canopy tours and skiing but has added a \$10 discount for golf at the Omni Mount Washington Resort. Be sure to read through this year's directory for cover-to-cover savings!



New England Aquarium discontinues MTA member discount

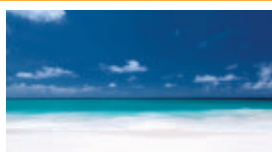
After more than 20 years of generously offering free admission to MTA members, the New England Aquarium is instituting its own Teacher Pass Program, which offers free admission to those who sign up. Eligibility is limited to K-12 teachers and school administrators currently employed in New England school systems. The aquarium's website notes that preK, home-schooling, after-school, college and "informal" teachers and administrators do not qualify for this program. We regret the loss of this very popular member discount and the exclusion of ESPs and retired and higher education members under the new program. Members who wish to contact the aquarium may call 617.973.5200 or e-mail comments@neaq.org.

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AUBURN — Louise Gaskins: first Saturday (by appointment only) and second Saturday 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 (by appointment only), 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 Saturday of each month (by appointment only), 9 a.m. to 1 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 (by appointment only).

Note: If your association would like to schedule 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 consultants do not have records of your service, so members are advised to bring that information along to meetings.

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'You're already leading,' Obama tells graduates

By Scott McLennan

President Barack Obama delivered a humorous and uplifting commencement address to the 301 graduating seniors of Worcester Technical High School on June 11, congratulating them for proving that much is possible with hard work, a good education and a supportive community.

"You're already blazing a trail. You're already leading. You're already giving back," the president said to cheers from the crowd of 5,000 parents and well-wishers. The enthusiasm rippled through the audience as Obama mentioned a list of student-led projects at the school that are benefiting the community.

Worcester Tech came to the president's attention because of significant improvements in student success over the past seven years, the White House said. It was the president's only high school commencement visit in 2014.

Worcester Tech was named a Blue Ribbon School in 2013, and its principal, Dr. Sheila Harrity, was



Photo by Scott McLennan

Worcester Tech class officers presented President Barack Obama with a jacket when he spoke at their school's commencement on June 11.

named National Principal of the Year for the last school year. Four-year graduation rates have risen to 95 percent, and the president noted that proficiency rates on student assessments have doubled or more in math, science and English.

After his speech, the president remained on stage, shaking hands with the graduates as they received their diplomas.

Obama recounted his own story of growing up to illustrate his main points. He told the students and others assembled at the DCU Center to remember that someone had invested in their success, that they should give back to the community, and that they should always believe in their ability to succeed.

The president joked that when he graduated from high school, he

was more concerned about post-commencement parties than about the speaker's remarks.

He quipped that the graduates would not recall his speech, but would remember the event "because there are so many Secret Service members at your graduation."

Obama expressed disappointment that Senate Republicans blocked a bill introduced by Senator Elizabeth Warren aimed at letting people refinance student loans at lower rates. When the crowd began to boo the Republicans' move, the president responded, "Don't boo. Vote."

Some of the biggest cheers of the day were for the teachers and school staff as they marched into the arena just ahead of the students.

"As a teacher from Worcester Tech, I'm so proud for my colleagues and for the whole city," said Educational Association of Worcester President Len Zalauskas, who has taught history and government at the school. "My colleagues are exuberant, as they should be. These are teachers who work very hard."

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Unity brings victory in Stoughton

Continued from Page 7

Manager Michael Hartman deemed himself eligible to vote on the pact and aligned himself with two members long opposed to the mediated agreement, creating a 3-3 deadlock.

The \$1.5 million lawsuit loomed for a month before one of the School Committee members finally changed her vote to support the contract.

Numerous MTA staff members worked with the STA on its campaign, including Field Representatives Jacqueline McDonough, Brendan Sharkey and Jason Leto, MTA lawyer Ira Fader and Communications Specialist Laura Barrett, along with this writer.

The four-year pact is retroactive to Sept. 1, 2013. It consists of a one-year contract plus a three-year contract that expires on Aug. 31, 2017. The existing salary schedule remains intact. Educators will see a 6.2 percent across-the-board increase, plus an additional \$625 at the maximum step each year of the

contract, for an average increase at maximum of 9.4 percent over four years. The teachers also agreed to adopt a new eight-period schedule at the high school.

Veteran teachers said they had not seen a contract fight like this in more than 20 years. At stake, they said, was the kind of school system Stoughton educators not only wanted to work in but also wanted for their students to learn in.

Throughout the campaign, the association argued that high teacher turnover was having a negative impact on students. Creating a new salary schedule that would significantly bring down an educator's earnings over the span of a typical career would only worsen the problem.

"We want Stoughton to be a place where you come to stay," said teacher and STA activist Linda Nobil. "It's important to create a place where teachers want to come and make careers. We were fighting for the next generation of teachers."

Conventioners

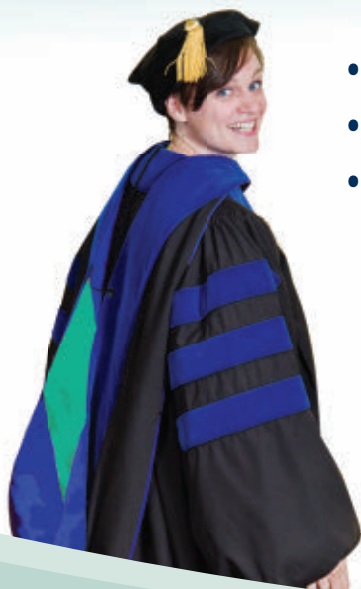


Photo by Sarah Nathan

New MTA Vice President Janet Anderson, left, and former MTA President Carol Doherty were among the many MTA activists who served as delegates to the Democratic State Convention and gave voice to issues of importance to public school educators and higher education faculty and staff. MTA-recommended candidates Warren Tolman for attorney general and Steve Kerrigan for lieutenant governor were victorious at the convention, which was held in Worcester in mid-June. The state primary election is set for Tuesday, Sept. 9.

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Educators speak out on important issues

What do educators have to say about standardized testing, successful teaching moments and student needs? The MTA launched a Listening Tour in 2013-14 to give educators a platform from which to voice their opinions about what changes are needed at the local, state and national levels. The effort began in the Berkshires and then spread to other parts of the state. The MTA Communications Division, working with locals and their leaders, has produced videos of Listening Tour sessions in Berkshire County, Taunton and elsewhere. To see the videos, please visit the MTA's YouTube channel:

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Massachusetts Teachers Association

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Foundation Budget panel to be revived

By Jean Conley

The fiscal 2015 state budget signed by Governor Deval Patrick in July modestly increases funding for K-12 and early education over fiscal 2014 levels and continues the state's reinvestment in higher education. The \$36.5 billion budget also revives the Foundation Budget Review Commission, a key legislative priority of the MTA.

MTA President Barbara Madeloni said the association is gratified that investment in education increased and that the Legislature saw fit to re-establish the commission, which will examine and, if necessary, recalculate and update the Foundation Budget formula.

"Including the commission in the budget represents a huge step forward for students, educators and our communities," Madeloni said. "As a matter of fundamental fairness across the Commonwealth, our elected officials need to regularly review the Foundation Budget — and then take appropriate action to correct inequities — so that we can provide a high-quality education for all children."

The panel was first established under education reform legislation in 1993, and while the commission has produced two reports over the past 20 years, there has not been a systematic analysis of whether schools have sufficient resources to enable students to meet state standards.

Meanwhile, for a third year, the state budget continues to restore some of the higher education funding that had been cut sharply during the 2000s.

Overall, higher education funding will rise \$74 million over the fiscal 2014 General Appropriations Act budget.

UMass will see an increase of 7.8 percent, allowing the university's campuses to freeze tuition and student fees for a second year.

Adjusting for inflation, however, higher education funding is still more than 25 percent below the fiscal 2001 level.



Chapter 70 education aid will rise by 2.3 percent in the new budget, or close to \$100 million, providing at least a \$25-per-pupil boost over 2014 to each district. Adjusted for inflation and enrollment changes, however, Chapter 70 aid is almost \$400 million, or 8 percent, below its high point in 2002.

State universities will see an average increase of 5.8 percent over their 2014 GAA allocations, and community college campuses will receive an average increase of 8 percent over last year, including reserves for collective bargaining.

"We are very happy to see the funding increases for higher education, but there is still a lot of work to be done to return to previous funding levels and guarantee that we do not create a two-tiered funding system for our state colleges and universities," Madeloni said. "Every student at every level deserves our full support."

Chapter 70 education aid will rise by 2.3 percent in the new budget, or close to \$100 million, providing at least a \$25-per-pupil boost over 2014 to each district. Adjusted for inflation and enrollment changes, however, Chapter 70 aid is almost \$400 million, or 8 percent, below its high point in 2002. Including school building assistance financed from a state trust fund, total funding for grades K-12 will be 3.2 percent higher than in fiscal 2014.

The budget provides \$550 million for early education and care programs. The amount represents an increase of 7.4 percent over 2014. Yet that figure is well below what was apportioned for fiscal 2001, when early education and care received an inflation-adjusted \$812 million.

The budget is likely to fully fund the Special Education Circuit Breaker and allocates \$70.3 million, or 90 percent, of the cost for regional school transportation. At present, charter school reimbursement to sending districts is underfunded by \$35 million, or 31 percent, but in recent years the Legislature has later voted to fully fund charter school reimbursement via a supplemental appropriation.

The budget bill was enacted on June 30, just in time for the new fiscal year on July 1. The governor then vetoed certain items amounting to less than 1 percent of the budget and sent it back to the Legislature, which overrode all but one of the vetoes.

2014 Primary Election Guide



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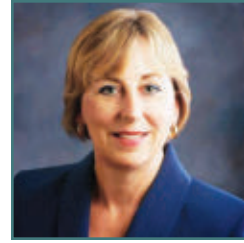
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MTA members have recommended the candidates pictured in this guide for lieutenant governor, attorney general, the 5th and 6th District seats in Congress and the Massachusetts Senate and House of Representatives. Your vote in the primary election on Tuesday, September 9, is crucial. Please help elect candidates who support public education.



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HOW THE MTA RECOMMENDS CANDIDATES

Candidates in statewide races are interviewed by the MTA's member-elected Candidate Recommendation Committee. The CRC's recommendations are reviewed by MTA's Board of Directors for final approval.

Evaluations of incumbent legislators in contested races are based on support for the MTA's legislative agenda, voting records and access to MTA lobbyists and activists. Candidates running in open-seat legislative races fill out questionnaires developed by the CRC and are interviewed by CRC members, MTA local presidents, MTA Board and Executive Committee members and Senate district coordinators.

The recommendations in this Primary Election Guide are the result of that process. We hope you will take the guide with you to the polls on September 9 and help elect MTA-recommended candidates. These candidates will listen to educators and act in the best interests of students and public education.

The MTA also urges you to join our Legislative and Political Action Teams and participate in campaigns.

An Election Guide in the fall edition of *MTA Today* will make recommendations for the General Election on November 4.