

MTA PRIMARY ELECTION RECOMMENDATIONS: GUIDE INSIDE

MTA Today

*A publication of the Massachusetts Teachers Association
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THE WORD:
'NO ON 2'**



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MTA Today

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**This edition also includes
the MTA's 2016 Primary Election Guide**

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

The push to defeat Question 2 on the November ballot has moved into high gear. Northampton parent Deborah Keisch, left, and Easthampton teacher Nellie Donohue spoke with MTA member Clare Hammonds at her home while the pair canvassed in June. Coverage of the campaign against the initiative — which would allow the rapid expansion of privately run Commonwealth charter schools throughout the state — begins on Page 6. This edition of *MTA Today* also includes the MTA's 2016 Primary Election Guide. The primary is set for Sept. 8.



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Cover design by Joshua Degregorio



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Quote-Unquote

"The Yes on 2 campaign's new ad is incredibly misleading. Local school districts are already losing millions of dollars a year to charter schools, and Question 2 would make things much worse."

— Jennifer Francioso, president of the Massachusetts PTA, announcing the organization's opposition to Question 2

Summer Conference a success in new location

By Scott McLennan

Organizing members to defeat the charter school ballot question, practicing union-building techniques, shaping new leaders and simply connecting with fellow educators in a social setting all helped make the 2016 MTA Summer Conference a success.

The annual gathering ran from July 31 to Aug. 4 at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. MTA members took over a northern section of the sprawling campus, making the experience new for everyone, even some Summer Conference veterans who had traveled for decades to Williams College in Williamstown, the event's previous home.

MTA President Barbara Madeloni told attendees at the opening ceremony how good it felt to hold the conference on a public campus. Three unions on the UMass Amherst campus are affiliated with the MTA.

Despite the new location, the conference maintained many of its traditions. After days filled with professional development workshops and leadership training, participants unwound at longstanding events such as receptions, socials and dance parties sponsored by various MTA committees and groups.

ED Talks provided another round of provocative presentations on learning and education. This year's presenters included teachers, librarians and a student, and they touched upon topics from having love and caring be the centerpiece of a public school education to the unexpected ways that crime boss Whitey Bulger sharpened one history teacher's lessons.

Along with established multi-day programs on leadership, early career development and unionism, the Summer Conference also included the MTA Campaign School, a new offering led by veteran political strategist John Walsh for members interested in seeking public office. Higher education members launched initiatives around bargaining strategies and issues that are common to all of the state's public colleges and universities.

The MTA's prominent role in the Save Our Public Schools coalition could be felt throughout the conference. Each day, for example, a drop-in phone bank was held so that participants could make calls urging voters to vote no on Question 2 on the November ballot. The initiative would allow up to 12 new charter schools in the state every year, without end.

"We have to rethink power and what we have to do as unionists. We need to be talking to parents and each other and creating coalitions," Madeloni said during the opening session. "This ballot question is really a gift to us. Those who want to lift the cap are relying on traditional power. But with the power that we are creating through this campaign, we can reclaim not just our public schools, but our communities as well."

John Ford, president of the Jefferson County Education Association in Colorado, gave the keynote address. He linked the fight to keep the cap in Massachusetts to his union's successful campaign to



The MTA Summer Conference provided opportunities for MTA veterans and newer educators alike to rejuvenate and connect. Above, Tammy Johnson, left, an MTA Board member, and Lisa Begley, Haverhill Education Association president, spent time calling voters about Question 2. At left, educators in the New Member Program listened to a presentation.

Photos by Scott McLennan

oust school board members bent on implementing corporate-backed education reform policies that undermined public education.

Ford explained how his association needed to better organize itself and then mobilize to engage residents to vote in a recall election, which involved knocking on more than 90,000 doors.



John Ford

"Public school teachers can have the most powerful voice in the community, and too often we don't use it," Ford said.

Part of one day was given over to finding that powerful voice, as many participants took part in canvassing neighborhoods in Amherst with the "No on 2" message. After a brief training session, MTA members and staff traveled in pairs and trios to knock on doors and talk to voters about the way charters drain resources from

district schools. Several of the canvassers said they had never done any sort of political door knocking before.

"I was absolutely terrified to canvass," said first-timer Heidi Ames, a fourth-grade teacher from the Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District. "My greatest accomplishment was getting someone who was all about charter schools to change his mind and say 'yes' to voting no on 2. I'm not afraid anymore."

Over the course of a few hours, the canvassers knocked on more than 600 doors and spoke to roughly 150 voters who either strongly supported keeping the cap or were leaning toward that position.

Speaking at a forum on politics, Madeloni emphasized her earlier point about building power through conversations and activism.

The conference underscored how that work becomes far less daunting when buoyed by a sense of camaraderie.

Please visit www.massteacher.org/summer for more photos and other information.

No on 2 campaign will help us build power

While some people think of summer as a time of lazy afternoons, I know that many of you have been out knocking on doors, making phone calls, talking to neighbors and holding signs at farmers' markets and grocery stores as part of our campaign to #keepthecap and encourage voters to oppose Question 2, the ballot initiative seeking to radically increase the number of charter schools in Massachusetts. The energy of the campaign — seen in Facebook posts, tweets and conversations — is fantastic.

The ballot question, which would allow up to 12 new charters to be opened each year in the state — further depriving public schools of much-needed funds and destabilizing entire districts — is a profound threat to public education. It threatens union jobs, democratically elected school committees and the very idea that we have a shared interest in the common good.



Barbara Madeloni
MTA President

The urgency of organizing to vote down Question 2 cannot be overstated. And when we win, our victory will assert our strength as

a union. This ballot question offers us a chance to practice, use and build our collective power.

I know that you know how dangerous the ballot question is. You know that lost funding means libraries without certified librarians, students whose individual needs are not being met, larger class sizes, and fewer music, art, physical education and science programs in our schools. But the truth is that I also hear from many of you that the campaign to keep the cap can seem far away when you are faced with a bullying principal, an abusive teacher evaluation system, a lack of safety and autonomy in your workplace, the ongoing burden

For too long, too many of us have felt helpless and fearful.

of mandates and austerity budgets, and the looming threat of deprofessionalization through “personalized learning networks.”

For too long, too many of us have felt helpless and fearful.

This campaign can change that by giving us a place to use the power of our voices and to experience the potential of community alliances. When we win, we will be recognized as a force to be reckoned with both locally and statewide — able to take on the bullies in our districts, in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and in the governor's office.

When I speak to members who have knocked on doors to have conversations with voters about the campaign, they say the same thing again and again: “Talking to voters reminds me that people respect educators.”

In a world where policymakers, the media and too many administrators are disrespectful of our knowledge and expertise and seek to silence our voices, the simple act of knocking on a door and saying, “Hi, I am an educator and I want to talk to you about public education” undoes all of the nonsense we've heard about our profession and our work.

In conversation after conversation — in person or on the phone — we are reminded that our communities support us. Fellow residents of our towns and cities admire our commitment to something bigger than ourselves. They are interested in and trust our opinions.

Through hundreds of these conversations, we build relationships that we can call on for the

struggles that lie ahead — not just the one that looms on Election Day.

I understand that asking you to reach out to parents and take action at a time when many of you already feel beaten down can seem like asking too much. But I am hopeful.

I am also confident that as more of you try your hand at participating in the No on 2 campaign, you will feel your power as educators. And as you build relationships with colleagues through the campaign, you will understand your power as union members so that we not only win in November but are strengthened to win *beyond* the election.

Indeed, after the vote in November, we will have developed the structures and confidence in our power to:

- Organize in our buildings and end abusive teacher evaluations.
- Join with our parent and student allies to win fair funding.
- Bring our confident professionalism and powerful union voices into the offices of our legislators and demand an end to District-Determined Measures and the madness of high-stakes standardized testing.

From the beginning, I did not want a deal to be cut on charter schools — in part because we do not build union power behind closed doors. We build union power by standing up, speaking out and stepping out together.

This ballot campaign is a chance to do just that. Please participate fully.

Contact your local president, field representative, Senate district coordinator or Save Our Public Schools organizer for more information — or just pay a visit to massteacher.org/charterschools or SaveOurPublicSchoolsMA.com.

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

Barbara

Letters to the Editor

Commissioner punts question on pay parity for adjunct faculty

To the Editor:

Thank you for your coverage of the MTA Higher Education Conference in the Spring edition and for including information on my questioning of Massachusetts Higher Education Commissioner Carlos Santiago during the question-and-answer session.

When I asked the commissioner whether he supported equal pay for equal work, I was trying to get him on the record for our upcoming contract negotiations. I was partially successful.

We adjuncts are seeking pay parity with full-timers, which shouldn't be much of a stretch for the Department of Higher Education, as it knows that our teaching work is identical. (Full-timers also advise students, serve on committees, etc.)

We meet the same credentialing requirements, supply comparable syllabuses, use the same textbooks and teach in the same classrooms. Credits from our classes count equally, and students can't tell an adjunct from a full-timer.

Commissioner Santiago said he *does* support equal pay for equal work. Then I asked if he'd help us negotiate a contract with pay parity. But he punted that one, saying he doesn't handle contracts.

Gee, you'd think the commissioner would have *some* influence on negotiations!

Jeff Seideman, Vice President
Massachusetts Community College Council

Letters policy

MTA Today welcomes letters to the editor from MTA members. Letters should be no longer than 200 words. Each letter submitted for publication must address a topic covered in *MTA Today*, must be signed and must include the writer's telephone number for confirmation purposes. Opinions must be clearly identified as belonging to the letter-writer. We reserve the right to edit for length, clarity and style. To submit a letter, mail it to *MTA Today*, 2 Heritage Drive, 8th floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119, or e-mail it to mtatodayletters@massteacher.org. For additional information, please refer to the guidelines posted on www.massteacher.org.

MTA continues to fight DDM mandate

By Laura Barrett

Outside the halls of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, you'd be hard-pressed to find very many people who believe it is possible to create accurate "student impact ratings" for all licensed educators based on "District-Determined Measures" and standardized test scores. The MTA is continuing to fight the mandate, which is supposed to take effect in some districts this fall.

"The overwhelming number of people representing teachers, school committees and superintendents are saying this is a bad idea," said Ed Doherty, the labor representative on the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, speaking at a BESE meeting on the issue on June 27.

BESE member Margaret McKenna shared his concerns.

"These [DDMs] have to be created for how many teachers and how many different subjects?" she asked rhetorically. "And they have to be valid, reliable and comparable. And if they're not, then they're not worth creating. That is creating thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of instruments. I don't think I said enough thousands, actually. That is a huge burden on people who don't have the expertise to do this. That's very concerning."

McKenna added, "There's something about the feds eliminating this requirement and then for me to hear that it is opposed by the association of school committees, the association of school superintendents, the two teachers' unions and the state Senate. ... It seems to me somebody is saying, 'Hold on, this is not the right thing to do. This is an enormous burden for little reward.'"

The special BESE meeting on DDMs was convened at the request of Doherty, who wanted both the MTA and AFT Massachusetts to have a chance to air their concerns. Although the unions were given just 10 minutes to make their case, several BESE members seemed convinced. However, Commissioner Mitchell Chester was not.

Chester said, "I can't imagine a system that doesn't pay attention to student learning."

Beverly Miyares of the MTA's Center for Education Policy and Practice responded by noting that a student learning goal is already an important part of the educator evaluation system and that the addition of an impact rating is not necessary.

"We'd be the last people to say that educators have no impact on student learning," she said. "The



Educators gathered outside a special Board of Elementary and Secondary Education meeting on DDMs on June 27. MTA members from several locals attended to show their opposition to the mandate. The meeting was convened at the request of the board's labor representative, but unions were given just 10 minutes to make their case.

Photo by Laura Barrett

question is how to parse that out with the measures that are part of the requirement and then be able to say with any kind of credibility, 'You're low, you're moderate and you're high.'"

Asked if any districts have created an operational impact rating system that can do that, Chester hedged, saying that "virtually every district has made progress on this."

If so, progress appears to have ground to a halt. MTA field staff members report that most superintendents and local associations have turned their attention to other issues in the hope that the impact rating mandate will be eliminated.

The MTA and AFT Massachusetts are working closely together to eliminate the mandate, either through a regulatory change or legislation.

Doherty made a motion to strike the regulatory requirement that is scheduled to be discussed at the BESE meeting on Sept. 27.

Meanwhile, a legislative solution came tantalizingly close to passing in the spring. On May 27, the Senate approved an MTA-backed budget rider to ban the mandate. Despite receiving a barrage of e-mails from MTA members, however, legislators in the House failed to follow suit, and the amendment died.

At a legislative briefing in early May, Quincy Education Association President Allison Cox said, "For the past three years we — joint labor and management — have done everything any district and local union could possibly do to make these things work. And where are we now? We are stuck.

We cannot find a way to get from DDM raw data to a rating of low, moderate or high impact."

Cox said the DESE has not provided answers to a multitude of questions that her members have, such as how to attribute growth for students who leave for a month in the middle of the year, or who are pulled out of class for English language learner instruction, or who score well on a pre-test and thus don't have much room to "grow" for the post-test.

There were audible groans in the room when Cox described how the latter scenario plays out for a DDM being used to judge middle school physical education teachers. The students are required to run a mile in September and again in May, and the difference in time is considered "growth" that is attributed to the teacher.

"How many parts of this 'growth' are not within the control of the educator?" Cox asked. "What about a student who runs a 20-minute mile in September and a 10-minute mile in May? You may say, 'Oh, that's tremendous growth!' But what about the student who starts at a 6-minute mile in September and runs a 5.5-minute mile in May? Is that less growth? This student is already performing at a high level. He has less room to grow. And what if it turns out to be a very hot day in May when they do the post-test?"

Chester inadvertently handed opponents a strong talking point when asked by a BESE member how a nurse's impact on student learning would be calculated.

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The Massachusetts Teachers Association is hiring. To view available job opportunities, please visit massteacher.org/jobs.

The MTA is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We value our diverse workforce and welcome applications from minorities, women and persons with disabilities.

Making the case against Question 2

MTA members take to the streets to oppose initiative to expand charter schools

By Laura Barrett

Heidi Lahey lives in the small, fiscally conservative Central Massachusetts town of Holden, which is part of the Wachusett Regional School District. She's a special education teacher, the president of her local association and a newly elected member of MTA's Executive Committee. And she wants to shore up public support for her woefully underfunded district.

In July, Lahey volunteered to canvass in Holden against Question 2, the ballot initiative to lift the cap on charter schools. Out of 321 districts, Wachusett's per-pupil spending ranks seventh from the bottom. More charter schools would make her district's budget problems even worse.

"I wanted to experience what my members will experience before I ask them to do it," Lahey said, explaining why she agreed to go canvassing on her own. "I wanted to experience the strangeness of being on foot in suburbia, where you don't see a lot of people out and about."

That day in July she visited 43 houses, leaving door hangers if no one was home and talking to 11 people. Many said they didn't know anything about the initiative. After she talked to them for a few minutes, most told her they'll vote "no" in November.

"Some people looked a little suspicious when they first opened the door, but I quickly explained that I live in town and was not there to sell them anything," Lahey said. "I told them I am a public school teacher and I shared with them how difficult it is to get our school budget passed. I pointed out that we lose \$400,000 to charter schools, which would pay for the librarians we have lost."

"Most conversations didn't have to go much farther than that," she said. "This is a very Republican town and there are concerns about how money is being managed. When I pointed out that no one in the community has oversight over how charter schools spend their money, that was convincing."

Lahey said there is more to be gained from door knocking than just persuading voters to oppose Question 2, as important as that is.

"It was empowering. As president of my local, I want to give our members the opportunity to interact with the community and feel the support that I felt talking to parents," she said. "We are heading into a contract year. We could do a lot of good for ourselves by getting out into the community."

MTA President Barbara Madeloni shared a similar message, saying, "As we organize to win at the ballot box and stop this dangerous privatization scheme in November, we will be building member power for the future."

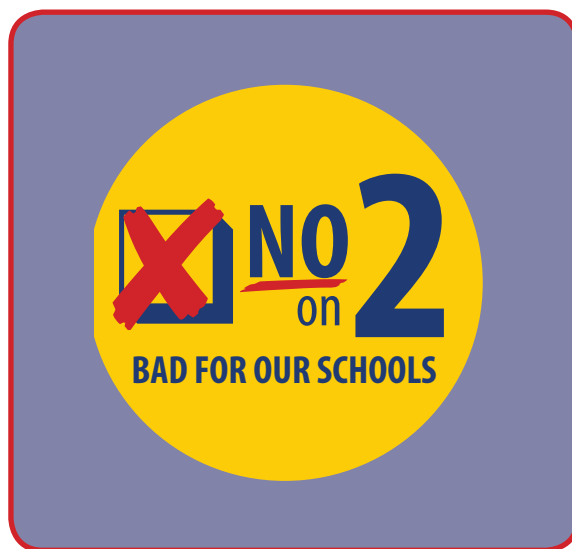
Widespread backing for cap

The MTA and AFT Massachusetts are major backers of the statewide Save Our Public Schools campaign.



Photo by Scott McLennan

Wachusett Regional Education Association President Heidi Lahey, left, and Donna Conroy of the Chicopee Education Association gave "No on 2" literature to a voter in Amherst on Aug. 3. They were among the members who participated in canvassing during the MTA Summer Conference.



Other groups opposing Question 2 include the New England Area Conference of the NAACP, Citizens for Public Schools, the Massachusetts PTA, the Massachusetts Municipal Association, the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, more than 70 individual school committees, and several town and city councils.

Over the summer, SOPS organizers enlisted volunteers to canvass and phone bank, hold community forums and distribute literature at subway stops, farmers' markets and other locations, as well as at the Massachusetts Democratic Convention.

MTA members joined these efforts, and the MTA recently launched its own phone-banking operation.

The outreach is designed to spread the following messages:

- **Funding:** Public schools across the state already lose more than \$400 million a year to charter schools. If the ballot question passes, that total could rise to \$1 billion in just six years, with no limit on potential losses in the future. Charter school spending is causing significant budget cuts and the loss of staff and services in our public schools.

- **Local control:** Charter schools are often approved over the objections of the local residents who have to pay for them. Once approved, charters are not accountable to locally elected officials.

- **Equity:** Charter schools fail to serve as many high-need students as the local district public schools, creating a "separate and unequal" system of education. Through the use of high suspension rates and other practices, charter schools push out students they don't want to serve.

Question 2 is supported by Great Schools Massachusetts, a coalition of political, anti-tax and business groups, with resources from the Wall Street-backed Families for Excellent Schools. FES funders include the ultraconservative Walton Family Foundation and the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation. Governor Charlie Baker is a strong supporter of Question 2, as is his secretary of education, James Peyser, who used to serve on the FES board.

The Boston Globe has reported that Great Schools Massachusetts plans to spend \$18 million on the ballot campaign, much of it on ads produced by

Continued on next page

How to talk to voters: Lessons from a Malden music teacher

By Laura Barrett

Malden music teacher Deb Gesualdo has canvassed, phone banked and worked at tables several times over the summer to oppose lifting the cap on charter schools. Most people she talks to are persuaded to vote “no” once they hear how much money the public schools are losing: more than \$400 million across the state each year — and \$8.4 million in her own district. In addition, Gesualdo has other compelling arguments against Question 2.

The following is her description of how a typical canvassing conversation might go.

Hi, my name is Deb. I teach here in Malden. I'm here to talk about one of the ballot questions coming up this fall. Have you heard about Question 2, which would lift the cap on charter schools?

Did you know that Malden's public schools lose more than \$8 million a year to the Mystic Valley Regional Charter School?

Mystic Valley has a brand new athletic facility at a time when our public schools are facing \$2.5 million in cuts. We can't even afford to buy enough supplies, textbooks and pencils, while Mystic is buying up real estate in Malden.

If someone says, "I don't have kids in the schools so why should I care?" I say, "I don't have kids either, but I care as a taxpayer. We have to pay for this charter school whether we want it or not, and there's nothing our School Committee



Photo by Bob Duffy

Deb Gesualdo brought the No on 2 message to the Danvers Farmers' Market in July.

or City Council can do about it. That's taxation without representation."

If I need a third message, I let them know it's a civil rights issue. I tell them, "The charter school doesn't serve the same kids — especially not kids with special needs. That's just not right. And when they do get kids they don't want, they send them back to the district quickly — usually right after Oct. 1. It's basically a private school that we taxpayers are paying for."

In addition to being the only music teacher at the K-8 Linden STEAM Academy, Gesualdo

serves as vice president of the Malden Education Association and as a Senate district coordinator for the MTA.

She credits her mother — an educator also named Deb Gesualdo who works in Carver — with inspiring her to become involved. “I’ve always been interested in politics,” Gesualdo said. “My mother taught me the importance of being part of the community. I learned that if you want to see change, you have to be part of the change.”

Here are some additional tips for conversations with voters.

- Make it clear that voting “no” won’t affect existing charter schools. It will just maintain the current cap — which hasn’t even been met yet.

- If voters express concern about “helping” kids in Boston by approving more charters, let them know that even Boston Mayor Marty Walsh — a charter supporter — is strongly against Question 2. He testified at the State House that the initiative would “wreak havoc” on the city’s finances, undermining its ability to support either new or existing schools.

- Let voters know that the Massachusetts PTA, Citizens for Public Schools, the Massachusetts Municipal Association, the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, the NAACP NEAC, the MTA, AFT Massachusetts, and more than 70 individual school committees, along with a number of town and city councils, oppose Question 2.

Passage of Question 2 would undermine public education

Continued from previous page

SRCP Media. That agency is infamous for creating the anti-John Kerry “swift boat” ads, which have been described as “misleading” and “vicious.” The SOPS campaign is also running ads and sending direct-mail pieces.

The charter campaign is expected to break ballot initiative spending records in Massachusetts.

A devastating impact

There are currently 69 Commonwealth charter schools operating in Massachusetts, and more can be opened under current caps. But Question 2 supporters are looking to expand the number of schools dramatically.

If passed, Question 2 would allow the state to approve 12 new Commonwealth charter schools each year serving up to 1 percent of the school-age population, or about 9,500 students.

Question 2 would also eliminate current spending caps. Under those caps, charters can divert no more than 9 percent of funds from most districts and no more than 18 percent from districts with the lowest test scores. Under Question 2, there is no limit to how much they could lose: Entire districts could be “charterized” in just one year.

“Funding charter schools out of local school district budgets is devastating to the services

Calling all callers!

The MTA is holding phone banks until Election Day at regional offices, MTA’s Quincy headquarters and other locations. Those phone banks will generally take place from 5 to 8 p.m. most Mondays through Thursdays. Some weekend phone banks also will be scheduled. For information about specific phone banking opportunities in your area, go to massteacher.org/phonebanks.

that our public schools can provide to students,” said Madeloni. “Study after study confirms what educators know: Charters are undermining our ability to give every student the school that she or he deserves.”

A new study in Michigan found that the proliferation of charter schools had undermined the fiscal viability of that state’s traditional public schools — a destabilization that Moody’s Investors Service has warned about.

Even Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, a charter school supporter, testified at the State House that the ballot question “would wreak havoc on municipal

finances, undermining our ability to support either new or existing schools in Boston.”

Despite those warnings, there are powerful forces behind the charter model.

Public education is a multibillion-dollar market. Charter operators stand to make a lot of money, especially because most charter schools aren’t unionized and keep wages low by hiring young, inexperienced teachers who are willing to work long hours.

Turnover is high for both teachers and students. Teachers are driven out by overwork, lack of job security and a lack of voice in their schools. Students are driven out by hyperdisciplinary policies that weed out students who don’t fit the charter mold.

“Right now, charter schools drain more than \$400 million from district public schools to serve just 4 percent of students,” said Madeloni. “We think the state should spend more time and money supporting the other 96 percent — the students who attend the schools that educate *all* students, no matter when they arrive, what language they speak or what kinds of services they need. That’s what truly *public* schools are all about.”

To learn more about the No on 2 campaign, please visit www.massteacher.org/charterschools or www.SaveOurPublicSchoolsMA.com.

'Extraordinary dedication' honored

Educators and students applaud winners of Human and Civil Rights Awards

By Jean Conley

More than 130 educators and students gathered on June 17 to applaud the presentation of the 2016 MTA Human and Civil Rights Awards.

This year's awards banquet was held at the Westin Waltham Boston Hotel. Such ceremonies have taken place annually for 34 years to honor "those who have shown extraordinary dedication to civil rights and human relations."

Representative Ellen Story (D-Amherst) received the Louise Gaskins Lifetime Civil Rights Award. Story, who is serving her 12th full term representing the Third Hampshire District, will retire at the end of the current legislative session.

Those receiving this year's Kathleen Roberts Creative Leadership Awards were Lois Ahrens, the founder of the Northampton-based Real Cost of Prisons Project; the late Rosemary "Betsy" Sawyer, a Groton-Dunstable teacher who inspired her students to create the biggest book on Earth dedicated to world peace; and Frederik Bommer, who has worked as a volunteer math assistant in the Barnstable Public Schools for more than 20 years.

Roberts and Gaskins, the educators for whom the awards are named, were on hand for the festivities.

MTA Human Relations Committee Chair Dale Forest told the crowd — which included family members and friends of the honorees, as well as social justice students from Concord-Carlisle High School — that the award recipients were chosen for their efforts to make the world "a more just and tolerant place."

He called for a moment of silence for people who died in the past year after dedicating their lives to fighting for human and civil rights. They included Sawyer, who died in April after a battle with leukemia, and Gladys Durant, a former member of the committee who passed away recently.

MTA President Barbara Madeloni welcomed the crowd and made note of the recent killings of 49 nightclub patrons in Orlando, as well as violence in the workplace and the oppressive forces that are perhaps less obvious but no less insidious in society today — those that, she said, "narrow our capacity to know one another."

Despite such tragedies and issues, she said, those who fight for human and civil rights go out every day "and do the work to build relationships — making a place for peace and for justice."

"As educators, we do this every day," Madeloni continued. "Tonight we honor specific individuals, but together, all of us, as we knit the fabric of a better world, will overcome violence and oppression."

Story, the first woman to represent Amherst in the Legislature, said she was thrilled to be receiving the Louise Gaskins award, especially after meeting Gaskins in person.



Photos by Jean Conley

In top photo, MTA activist Louise Gaskins, left, greets Representative Ellen Story, who received the Lifetime Civil Rights Award. From left to right above are honoree Lois Ahrens; Ali Sawyer, who accepted an award on behalf of her late mother, Rosemary "Betsy" Sawyer; and honoree Frederik Bommer, who is pictured with his wife, Dolores.

"This is a big deal for me," Story said as she accepted her award. She noted that she had attended public schools throughout her education. "Public education is the cornerstone of democracy," she added. "We can't forget that."

Before becoming a legislator, Story spent 17 years at the Family Planning Council of Western Massachusetts, eventually becoming associate executive director. She was also a member of the Amherst-Pelham School Committee.

Ahrens has been an organizer for social justice for more than 50 years. In 2000, she founded the Real Cost of Prisons Project, which advocates for an end to extreme sentencing, supports the humane treatment of incarcerated people and educates policymakers and the public about the cruel conditions of confinement that still exist in our nation's prisons.

"I've tried to do all I can so that each of us can live up to our potential. Up until this moment — literally — my work has come with no official award, but it has come with great rewards: working

with, learning from and occasionally teaching thousands of occasionally brilliant, often inspiring, visionary, resilient, persevering women and men — many of whom are incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people."

She said that she was recently speaking to a class and was asked by a student about her philosophy of organizing.

"It isn't complex," she responded, "and it isn't glamorous — but it does help to be relentless. I said, 'Be informed. Think of every single thing you can do, every person you can call, everyone to connect with, and do it. Do everything.'"

Sawyer, for her part, was so committed to teaching and to peace that the two fit together perfectly when students in her after-school club said they wanted to make the biggest book in the world. The result was the "Big Book: Pages for Peace."

The book weighs more than a ton and is 12 feet long and 10 feet wide. Contributors include the Dalai

Please turn to **Winners**/Page 21

Foreign language teachers open global windows

By Jean Conley

Dr. Edward Zarrow, a numismatist by training, is happiest in a museum coin room. The Westwood High School Latin teacher is drawn to coins because they connect him in a very tangible way to the history, language and culture of a region during a particular time.

As the 2016 National Language Teacher of the Year, Zarrow has had almost a year to speak around the country about the connections among languages, history and culture. The honor has also provided him with the opportunity to make his case — passionately and publicly — that all students should be required to study at least one foreign language by the time they graduate from high school.

“The study of a language itself should not be a choice,” says Zarrow.

He explains his thinking this way: “Foreign language study is the principal window through which we explore world cultures. If we really want to say that we value critical thinking, that we value tolerance, that we’re adequately preparing our students to be ready for the global stage — we can’t think global without putting languages first.”

Zarrow is the first Latin teacher — as well as the first teacher from Massachusetts — to be honored as National Language Teacher of the Year by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, or ACTFL.



Dr. Edward Zarrow, the 2016 National Language Teacher of the Year, chats with Nancy Aykanian, who was named the Massachusetts French Teacher of the Year by the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association. Zarrow and Aykanian both teach at Westwood High School. “The study of a language itself should not be a choice,” says Zarrow.

Photo by Jean Conley

As the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association’s Teacher of the Year for 2015, he became the state association’s nominee for the national award.

In November, Zarrow will often occupy center stage at the national organization’s annual conference, which will take place in Boston. The event typically attracts 7,000 to 8,000 language educators from around the nation.

As the school year neared its end in May, Zarrow and his Westwood High School colleague, Nancy Aykanian — who is MaFLA’s Massachusetts

French teacher of the year and an MTA Board member — discussed what they see as their role as advocates for foreign language study.

“There’s a lot of lip service being paid to ‘being a global citizen,’” said Aykanian. “But absent knowing other languages, that statement doesn’t really go very far. It’s empty rhetoric.

“Teaching is not just imparting skills,” she added. “It’s also about teaching our students how to think critically about the world around them.”

Please turn to **Teachers**/Page 17



SAVE THE DATES



2016 MTA ETHNIC MINORITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE CONFERENCE

FRIDAY-SATURDAY DECEMBER 2-3

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Unions and students take a stand against cuts

By Scott McLennan

Unions representing educators, staff and graduate students at UMass Boston are banding together to take action against staff cuts and tuition and fee increases.

Since last spring's commencement, the campus has been roiled by layoff notices that went out to 400 non-tenure-track instructors, claims of budget deficits, a sharp increase in tuition and fees, and the midsummer announcement that the state's secretary of education, James Peyser, has been invited to welcome students back on Sept. 15.

The choice of Peyser as convocation speaker came as a shock to campus activists; even some UMass officials earlier in the year had complained to a reporter for *The Boston Globe* that Peyser does not show support for public colleges, considering them to be inferior to the private schools in the area.

The news about Peyser sparked a lengthy post by Faculty Staff Union member Joe Ramsey on the Save UMB Facebook page he has been maintaining since approximately one-third of the university's teaching staff received notice in the spring that they may not be assigned classes for the fall semester.

Ramsey called Peyser an "enemy of public education," citing the secretary's opposition to the Fair Share Amendment, which would add a 4 percentage point tax to annual income above \$1



Photo by Scott McLennan

Marlene Kim, president of the Faculty Staff Union at UMass Boston, testified at the June meeting of the UMass Board of Trustees.

million in order to generate revenues for public education and transportation.

The FSU has worked with other MTA affiliates at UMass Boston — the Professional Staff Union and the Classified Staff Union — and has reached out to unions representing graduate students and campus police to form a coalition that now meets regularly to share information and action plans.

Union members leafleted at graduation ceremonies to spread information about the layoff notices that were sent to all adjunct instructors. Shortly after that, coalition members, along with students and UMass Boston graduates, demonstrated at a UMass Board of Trustees meeting in June.

FSU President Marlene Kim told the board that deep staff cuts would have a devastating impact on students, many of whom are first-generation college students. She spoke of the personal connections that all instructors — including adjuncts — form with their students to help them succeed. She and others pointed out that tuition hikes create yet another barrier to students' success.

MTA President Barbara Madeloni criticized the proposed faculty cuts and urged the board to fight for adequate state funding rather than contemplate cuts. "The work we do as educators is human work," she told the trustees. "It takes place in a human context and it's about growing our communities."

At its meeting on July 14, the board raised tuition and fees nearly 6 percent.

The FSU has questioned how the university could unveil a deficit amid an aggressive expansion of facilities on campus.

In late July, Kim said that the university had begun the process of calling back some of the instructors who were initially told they may not get fall class assignments, but she said that many of those who received notices have found work elsewhere.

"People need to know if they are going to have jobs. They need to plan for their lives," she said. "Even as people get called back, this is very disruptive to staff and students and should not have happened."

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Worcester Technical High School

MTA recommends Clinton for president

The MTA Board of Directors voted on July 31 to concur with the National Education Association's recommendation of Hillary Clinton for president.

The MTA is the state affiliate of the NEA.

The MTA represents more than 110,000 educators who work in public schools and public higher education institutions in Massachusetts.

The NEA Representative Assembly voted on July 5 to recommend Clinton for president.

The MTA Board's vote to concur with the NEA decision came on the heels of the Democratic National Convention, at which Clinton was named the nominee with support from her main rival, U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders.

Educators receive recognition for contributions to students

Thirteen MTA members received recognition at the Excellence in Teaching Awards at the State House on June 15.

Susan Miller, a teacher at Middleborough High School and a member of the Middleboro Education Association, was named the 2016 Massachusetts History Teacher of the Year. She automatically becomes the nominee from Massachusetts for national History Teacher of the Year.

Michelle Ryan, a social studies teacher at Randolph High School and a member of the Randolph Education Association, was named a 2015 Milken National Educator.

Among finalists for Massachusetts Teacher of the Year were Kathryn Contini, a sixth-grade teacher at Blanchard Memorial School in Boxborough and a member of the Acton-Boxborough Regional Education Association, and Mary-Margaret Mara, a prekindergarten teacher at the Chandler Magnet School in Worcester and a member of the Educational Association of Worcester.

Semifinalists included Sandra DiPalma, a second-grade teacher at Palmer River Elementary School in Rehoboth and a member of the Dighton-Rehoboth Teachers Association; Kathleen Duran, a second-grade teacher at Hyannis West Elementary School in Barnstable and a member of the Barnstable Teachers Association; Jamie Hulke, an English teacher at East Bridgewater Junior-Senior High School and a member of the East Bridgewater Education Association; Alicia Lopez, a teacher of English language learners at Amherst Regional Middle School and a member of the Amherst-Pelham Education Association; Jacqueline Prester, a business and technology teacher at Mansfield High School and a member of the Mansfield Educators Association; and Rachel Stavely Hale, a math teacher at Northampton High School and a member of the Northampton Association of School Employees.

The event also honored Massachusetts finalists for the 2015 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. The awards alternate between teachers of students in kindergarten through sixth grade and those teaching seventh through 12th grade.

Among finalists for the award were Catherine Dollard, a science teacher at Northampton High School and a member of the Northampton Association of School Employees; Neil Plotnick, a special education math teacher at Everett High School and a member of the Everett Teachers Association; and Keith Wright, a science teacher at Springfield Renaissance School and a member of the Springfield Education Association.

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MTA working to implement Annual Meeting decisions

By Jean Conley

MTA members and staff are working to implement decisions that were approved at the MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates in May.

The two-day event at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston featured elections, a vote by delegates to approve the association's recommended share of the Save Our Public Schools campaign against the expansion of charter schools, and changes to the association's bylaws and resolutions.

More than 1,640 delegates representing the association's 110,000 members attended.

Barbara Madeloni was elected to a second two-year term as president, and Erik J. Champy was elected to a two-year term as vice president. Their terms began July 15.

The delegates' vote to dedicate \$9.2 million to the Save Our Public Schools campaign underscored the association's commitment to fighting the pro-charter initiative, which is on the ballot in November.

The measure would add up to 12 Commonwealth charter schools per year without end, potentially leading to the loss of billions of dollars in public school funding to charters. The MTA is a leading member of the Save Our Public Schools coalition.

The delegates adopted the following new business items:

- The MTA will actively support striking sections of the Massachusetts Acts of 2012 concerning how seniority is used in layoff and related personnel decisions.

- The MTA will lobby the state Legislature to repeal sections of the Acts of 2012 related to the current educator evaluation framework.

- The MTA will oppose any efforts by the governor or Legislature that would adversely affect current and future members' health care coverage upon retirement, including changes to minimum eligibility age, years of service required, and/or percentage of premiums to be paid, and the MTA will work with fellow

unions and other allies in an effort to defeat such potential attacks.

The delegates approved an operating budget of \$45,786,576 for fiscal 2017 after adding \$10,000 for The Massachusetts Child. A Public Relations/Organizing Campaign budget of \$2,591,400 was also adopted.

Bylaws that were adopted called for a reduction in the dues of higher education members who work less than half time or who teach less than

three credits per semester; a reduction in the dues of active members with base salaries of less than \$18,000; and an increase in the number of district directors for the Massachusetts State College Association. All four of the proposed amendments to the MTA Resolutions were adopted.

In addition to deciding statewide leadership contests, the delegates also filled positions on the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors and the Retired Members Committee.

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Lexington Learns Together: Rewriting the PD script

By Zachary Del Nero
and Joshua Olivier-Mason

Educators in the Lexington Public Schools experienced a professional development reboot in 2014 when the district's Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Learning reimagined the landscape for such programs.

The result was a full day of workshops in fall 2015 run by administrators, faculty and staff in a variety of fields. Aptly named Lexington Learns Together, the event seems destined to become a tradition in the district.

Our goal in this article is twofold: describing our experiences as both teachers and students during Lexington Learns Together and promoting professional development that comes from *within* a district. This model of district or schoolwide PD honors the expertise of faculty and staff — and pays dividends well beyond the day itself.

Fueled by the philosophy of educators teaching educators, the workshop model is authentic, invigorating and good for school culture and morale. The enthusiastic Twitter feed generated from that day (#lexingtonlearns15) includes the voices of educators from throughout the district: administrators, general and special education teachers, liaisons, counselors and specialists.

'Session A is underway!'

While waiting outside the doorway to our classroom on a bright morning in October, we overheard snippets of conversations, such as "I had yoga for my first session" and "Do you know where 'Positive Psych' is?"

Clutching their schedules, the students — our fellow educators, actually, but students this day — talked excitedly, confirming that they had found the right room. After the bell rang and the hallway crowd thinned out, we turned to the eager faces and began the last session before lunch: "Podcasting in the Humanities Classroom."

Fueled by the philosophy of educators teaching educators, the workshop model is authentic, invigorating and good for school culture and morale.

Every fall, this scene plays out on university campuses all over the country. It is now a familiar one for those working in the Lexington Public Schools.

The day consisted of three 75-minute sessions. Educators had submitted proposals to offer workshops for a range of courses that varied widely, from "Art and Archetype" to "A Public School's Journey with Yoga" and "Photoshop Basics." Participants signed up for sessions based on interest and availability. With 147 sessions offered, the difficulty was in deciding what *not* to take.

A two-way learning experience

We co-taught the "Podcasting in the Humanities Classroom" session, which was a valuable experience for many reasons. It was energizing to teach together and to work with teachers outside the department. Lexington Learns Together created bonds between various faculty members and administrators, making cross-disciplinary collaboration one of the day's most noteworthy aspects.

Giving participants the opportunity to *make* something was a crucial ingredient in the success of many of the workshops. As facilitators, we didn't simply tell people about podcasting.

Participants produced a multitrack audio file. After playing clips from several student models, we ran a quick tutorial on the software — the same software we provide for our sophomores. Participants found a poem online to read aloud and record. We then helped them find music to complement their recording, import it into GarageBand, and fade it into the background.

During this stage, everyone in the room was

working together and sharing his or her progress. Ultimately, the day inspired us to refine our own teaching based on real-time feedback from fellow educators.

In traditional PD settings, teachers can be the most resistant students; a common refrain runs along these lines: "We've seen it all before." Part of the problem is the term itself — professional development. The phrase sounds like something out of a management textbook.

Professional development, as term and concept, was popularized in the mid to late 20th century, and the model for it hasn't changed much since then. As Tim Walker described the problem in *NEA Today*, "For many classroom teachers, the words summon bad memories: the valuable instruction time that was wasted listening to a so-called 'expert' who hasn't spent a day in their classrooms."

As educators, we are aware of the importance of active learning. Much current research recommends project-based approaches, collaboration and student-centered classrooms. Why do these ideas go out the window when it's time to schedule professional development?

Teachers are encouraged to help students pursue their own lines of inquiry. Why should we exclude ourselves from that experience?

The Lexington Learns Together model offers other school districts a chance to create PD that doesn't feel like PD. Lexington Learns Together is easily exportable. Your experts are your educators. By empowering them to organize sessions specific to the needs and interests of their district, you provide a professional learning experience uniquely tailored to your audience.

It's OK to have fun

Having finished our podcasting workshop, we took part in the final session of the day — "Art and Archetype," in which K-12 educators learned how to use supplementary visual sources to define character

Please turn to **Lexington**/Page 15

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MVE recognition is a thrill to be remembered

By Bob Duffy

After the national anthem is sung, Red Sox home games often feature recognition of a Massachusetts educator for his or her hard work with students.

Saul Ramos, a paraprofessional in the Worcester Public Schools and this year's MTA Education Support Professional of the Year, said the applause he received when he was honored during a pregame ceremony on May 21 was very moving.

"I was in awe when I was brought down to the field and saw all the spectators out in the seats," Ramos said. "Hearing my name, a description of what I do as an educator, and the applause and cheers of the crowd made me tear up and feel so grateful to be there."

The MTA Red Sox Most Valuable Educator program provides opportunities during the baseball season for educators to be recognized as all stars.

The program is open to educators in all grades. An MVE nominee can be a teacher, an ESP, a library media specialist, a counselor, a social worker, a coach, a school nurse or anyone else who has gone above and beyond the call of duty to promote student achievement.

Potential MVEs can be nominated for teaching a unique lesson, managing a noteworthy after-school program, coordinating a special event or



Saul Ramos, a paraprofessional in the Worcester Public Schools, stood with mascots on the field at Fenway Park during a ceremony on May 21 in which he was honored as an MTA Red Sox Most Valuable Educator. Ramos, MTA's ESP of the Year for 2016, is the 1st vice president of the Educational Association of Worcester.

Photo courtesy of Boston Red Sox

doing virtually anything else that has a positive impact on students.

Jill Sifantus, a biology teacher at Brookline High School and the recipient of Brookline's 2016 Ernest R. Caverly Award for Excellence in Teaching, was also honored in front of the fans at a Red Sox game this season.

She called the recognition on July 2 "a wonderful

experience" and a personal honor. "It is also great public recognition for the whole teaching profession," she added.

In addition to working with the Boston Red Sox, the MTA partners with the Boston Celtics on its Honor Roll Club and the Boston Bruins on its I.C.E. School Program to help teach students the importance of doing well in school.

REGIONAL RETIREMENT CONSULTATIONS AVAILABLE

The MTA provides individual retirement consultations throughout the state to assist members. **Proof of membership must be submitted when requesting retirement services. This schedule is in effect from September to June except at MTA's Quincy headquarters, which is staffed during the summer and school vacations.**

PLEASE NOTE:

All consultations are now by appointment only during the hours listed.

AUBURN — Louise Gaskins: first Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Central Office, 48 Sword St., Auburn; 508.791.2121, or at home, 978.448.5351.

QUINCY — Harold Crowley: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., MTA, 2 Heritage Drive, 9th Floor, Quincy; 617.878.8240 or 800.392.6175, ext. 8240.

CAPE COD — Lawrence Abbruzzi: second Saturday of each month, 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, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Fitchburg Teachers Association office, 78 Franklin Rd., Fitchburg; Call 978.297.0123 or e-mail: zibstar702@verizon.net.

HOLYOKE — Ron Lech: third Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Western Office, 55

Bobala Road, Suite 3, Holyoke; 413.537.2335, or at home, 413.893.9173.

LYNNFIELD — Mary Parry: third and fourth Saturdays of each month, 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.

PITTSFIELD — Ward F. Johnson: second Saturday of each month, 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.

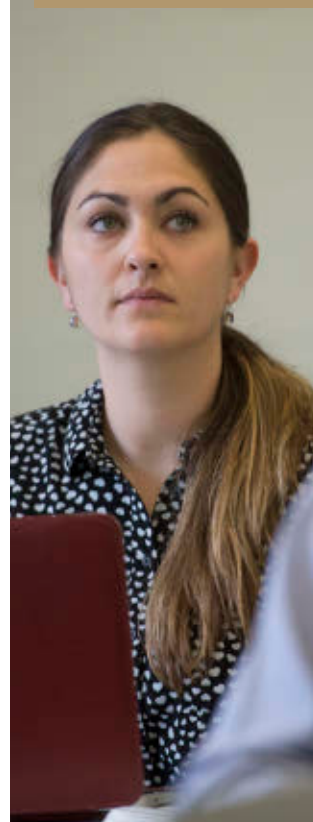
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Note: If your association would like to schedule a retirement workshop at your school, your local president should call Harold Crowley at 800.392.6175, ext. 8240. Please be aware that the MTA consultants do not have records of your service, so members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

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Pride marchers carry a message



Photo by Sarah Nathan

The MTA marchers in the Boston Pride Parade on June 11 did double duty — showing support for the LGBTQ community and spreading the #keepthecap message to the crowd along the route. Holding the banner for the group were Hull teacher and MTA Board member Deborah McCarthy, Lexington student Lucy Sabian and Revere Teachers Association President Erik Fearing.

Lexington Learns Together should be a model for PD

Continued from Page 13

archetypes in myths and legends. As the session wrapped up, there was little doubt that those in the room could implement and adapt the methodologies highlighted by the instructor.

Anyone walking into the classroom halfway through would have seen a group of adults engaged in a vibrant, authentic conversation about what characters in a painting might do later that evening. But what was so striking was that we were not discussing the painting solely in terms of tomorrow's lesson plan or learning objective. We were talking about this painting because it was fun. Educators don't have to think in the language of learning objectives and Common Core all day long.

Lexington Learns Together is *fun* — and that's OK. Teachers who have fun in the PD classroom are more likely to translate what they've learned to their own classrooms.

Lexington Learns Together was first presented to us as innovative, and it is. But it shouldn't be. It should be the norm. When professional development works, we develop more than just our professional selves.

Del Nero and Olivier-Mason are English teachers at Lexington High School.

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Teachers say understanding other cultures is crucial

Continued from Page 9

Years of standardized test prep and rubrics have left many students unable to think for themselves, Aykanian said. When they face an open-response question, that's when they need to draw on their knowledge and demonstrate a capacity to think critically and be creative, she said.

She and Zarrow also consider students' "moral education" to be integral to their practice and the lessons they create. "What matters most is not just being bright or getting into an Ivy League school, but being a good person, a good citizen; in the foreign language classroom, this translates as learning to become a responsible global citizen," Aykanian said.

Aykanian became an MTA Board member a month after she organized an exchange program between her students and students at a French high school. During that trip, her students met and shared a stage with French President François Hollande.

It was the type of experience that students don't forget, she said.

She said she became more active in the union because she had grown tired of all the state mandates that were not informing her practice — "and which couldn't be further from the project-based learning experience that my exchange embodied."

She said that as an MTA member she finds it refreshing to be advocating for the profession and for

Zarrow and Aykanian say that as issues of racial and ethnic intolerance have become central to many of their discussions with students, being conversant with other cultures is imperative.

workplace rights, resisting irrational district or DESE mandates, and placing a high value on social and political justice.

Zarrow's national stint — the next Teacher of the Year will be named at the November ACTFL conference — has also provided a steady stream of opportunities for him to gain a wider perspective on the state of foreign language education outside of Massachusetts.

"It has been incredibly uplifting to see what people are doing across the U.S., especially in districts that serve large communities in poverty that don't have our resources," he said. Those communities "have placed a high value in being interculturally competent. Their goal is to graduate

as many people as they can — regardless of background, race, ethnicity or income — who are bilingual or multilingual."

One goal of Zarrow's is to see Massachusetts adopt the Seal of Biliteracy, which has been adopted or is close to adoption by close to two dozen other states. The seal honors students who have studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages by graduation.

Zarrow and Aykanian say that as issues of racial and ethnic intolerance have become central to many of their discussions with students, being conversant with other cultures is imperative.

"There are many people out there who are intent upon savaging the humanities," says Zarrow. "They call into question people who speak a language other than English or think those people are to be feared or mistrusted."

"What we're doing," he continued, "is trying to show how language is not merely a part of culture. Language is culture. When we speak another language, when we put ourselves into the culture of someone else, we're growing in our empathy, we're growing in our tolerance, and we're showing people the true value of diversity."

A full list of 2015 MaFLA teaching awards can be found at mafla.org/contest-awards-2/winners/scholarship-winners/.



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Obituaries

Richard K. Connor, 74, of Winthrop. Was a middle school teacher in the Revere Public Schools for 32 years. June 25.

Ann C. Davidson, 85, of Concord. Was an elementary and middle school teacher in Concord for many years. Served as president of the Concord Teachers Association for 10 years and as a supervisor in the teacher certification program at Simmons College. She had also worked in Williamstown, New Hampshire and Connecticut. April 12.

Marguerite F. Decker, 93, of Ludlow. Was a librarian and English

teacher at Chicopee Comprehensive High School, retiring in 1988. April 14.

Patricia Dolan, 92, of Worcester. Was an elementary teacher in Auburn and in the Worcester Public Schools for 38 years, retiring in 1988. June 9.

Gladys Durant, 75, of Norton. Was a teacher in the Attleboro Public Schools for more than 30 years. Served as treasurer of the Bristol County Educators Association and remained active in the MTA after retiring. In 2010, her activism was recognized with an award from the Retired Members Committee. June 4.

Everett J. Lahey, 81, of Framingham. A math teacher in Florida and Newton for several years, he served for more than 20 years as the manager of the Northeast Regional Office of the MTA. June 24.

Michele A. Oshman, 32, of Millbury. Was a social studies teacher at Leominster High School for the past 11 years. April 24.

Gale L. Palmer, 71, of Weymouth. Was a teacher and women's basketball coach at North Quincy High School for many years. July 1.

Rosemary "Betsy" Sawyer, 60, of Shirley. Taught fifth grade at

Groton-Dunstable Middle School and was the guiding force behind her students' creation of a massive volume of essays, poetry and artwork on world peace. April 3.

Jolene L. Tewksbury, 31, of Lynnfield. Was a fourth-grade teacher at the Birch Meadow Elementary School in Reading. July 5.

Andrew J. Tivnan, 85, of Clinton. Was a secondary school teacher of chemistry and behavioral science for 35 years. He was the first chairman of the Science Department at Tahanto Regional High School, from which he retired in 1991. June 20.

Winners of Human and Civil Rights Awards are honored at banquet

Continued from Page 8

Lama, Maya Angelou and Nelson Mandela.

Ali Sawyer accepted the award on behalf of her mother, saying her passion for teaching "led her on a mission to create a more peaceful world — for her students and for students across the globe."

"Her legacy lives on for every single person she touched and inspired," she said. "It is up to us now to carry on her message of peace in a world that needs it so much."

Bommer, the recipient of the final Kathleen Roberts Award that was presented during the evening, started working with students in Barnstable

shortly after he retired to Centerville more than 20 years ago.

He became a volunteer assistant teaching math, and his word puzzles and other math games became his signature. Over the years, students and staff learned a lot of math from Bommer, but they also learned a lot about history, perseverance and the

value of giving back. Bommer left the classroom in 2014 and received a long scroll bearing the names of all the students he had reached. Two years later, he decided he missed the students, so he returned — at age 87 — to volunteering one day a week.

During the awards banquet, he unrolled the list, and it stretched across the ballroom. "I love kids, and doing something different," he said.

Also on hand was Dr. David Nurenberg, an MTA member who teaches at Concord-Carlisle High School. Nurenberg uses "The Justice Project" to help his honors English students build their skills and knowledge around an area of social injustice that they feel has affected them personally.

Nurenberg and five of his students took a few moments to explain their projects to the attendees. Working alone or in groups, the students researched the many aspects of their chosen issues and proposed their own solutions. The point of the project for Nurenberg was to help the students with research, argumentation and presentation — "and then get out of their way," he said.

Madeline Franck and Daria Pietropaolo researched the issue of child soldiers in Uganda; Deedy Chang and Liana Shames studied the experiences of Chinese children adopted by white American families; and Benny Thomas brought awareness to how society constructs racial categories according to skin color.

To see more photos from the event, visit massteacher.org/hcrphotos.

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MTA to continue fight against DDMs

Continued from Page 5

“Nurses very much want to be part of this,” Chester said. “A good measure for nurses could be how quickly they get students back to class.”

MTA President Barbara Madeloni later wondered, “Is this really the most important measure of quality for school nurses — how quickly they can get sick, injured or emotionally upset children out of the infirmary and back to class? Does the commissioner think this is what parents value? I don’t believe it is. I believe parents want a school nurse who takes the time to find out what’s ailing their child and who does everything in his or her power to make that child feel better. Similarly, they want teachers who inspire their children to be thinking, creating, caring human beings. You can’t reduce these qualities to an algorithm.”

Madeloni said she will ask MTA’s Government Relations Committee to discuss options for pursuing a legislative solution in the upcoming session if BESE refuses to eliminate the mandate through regulations.

The MTA will be alerting members about how they can participate in upcoming advocacy efforts as they develop. For more information, please visit massteacher.org/ddms.

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BEU builds coalition as contract fight continues

By Scott McLennan

While they remain locked in a tough contract battle with the School Committee, Brookline educators have had great success in building a coalition with parents and residents who are concerned about the amount of standardized testing and data collection taking place in the town's public schools.

"Parents and teachers are struck by the new possibilities of this alliance that we've created to really improve the schools and make the kinds of schools our children deserve," said Brookline Educators Union President Jessica Wender-Shubow.

Educators spent all of the last school year without a contract — and they'll be starting 2016-2017 in the same situation. BEU members are adamant about reducing local mandates for standardized testing and data collection, which educators say do little to nothing to help students and have cut too deeply into time spent on authentic learning.

As a mediator was brought into contract negotiations in the spring, members of the BEU made a concerted effort to reach out to parents to enlist their support for a fair contract that addresses educators' concerns.

Wender-Shubow said the BEU intentionally avoided large meetings in favor of building-level efforts that allowed for more personal conversations between educators and parents.

"We wanted true conversations," she said. "We decided that it was time to tell parents what was going on hour by hour and day to day in the schools. We found that they were thirsty for this information."

As parents talked to teachers and to each other, they realized what educators are up against in terms of administering assessments and gathering data. Educators shared concerns about their lack of preparation time and opportunities to work one on one with students.

Parents began advocating for the BEU by speaking out at School Committee meetings and submitting letters of support to local newspapers.



Photo by Scott McLennan

Parents and other Brookline residents have joined BEU members in packing School Committee meetings and speaking out in favor of settling a fair contract. Some parents are growing concerned about the committee's indifference toward educators.

'In Brookline, we love our teachers. The School Committee seems indifferent to the concerns the teachers are raising.'

— Parent Nancy Rhei

"The teachers are not allowed to be the best that they can be," said Scott Jacobson, who has three children at the Devotion School. "The relationship between the student and the teacher is the best thing our schools have to offer. All of the dictates our teachers face put up a barrier to that."

Town resident Nancy Rhei said an increasing number of parents are upset with the School Committee.

"In Brookline, we love our teachers," she said. "The School Committee seems indifferent to the concerns the teachers are raising. The School Committee came to our school to talk to parents and

all they talked about was money. This isn't about money at all."

Rhei, who has two sons at the Runkle School, has been active in creating lines of communication within that school and in nurturing the new Brookline Parent Organization.

"I don't want any parent in my school saying, 'I just didn't know,'" Rhei said.

The BEU has used this surge of coalition building to better organize members within their workplaces and to make sure members at all of the schools are connected to the larger planning and activism that are necessary to bring about a new contract.

"This coalition building has given teachers the opportunity to share their experiences from a position of authority," Wender-Shubow said, adding that the union has grown in strength itself through the process.

2016 Primary Election Guide



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HOW THE MTA RECOMMENDS CANDIDATES

MTA's member-elected Candidate Recommendation Committee establishes policies and procedures for recommendations in elections, which are reviewed by the MTA 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 for open seats — and in some legislative races with contested incumbents — fill out questionnaires developed by the CRC and are interviewed by CRC members, MTA local presidents, members of the MTA Board and Executive Committee, 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 Sept. 8 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.

A guide in the Fall edition of *MTA Today* will make recommendations for the General Election on Nov. 8.



All MTA-recommended candidates in this Election Guide
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Question 2 on the November ballot would allow the state to approve 12 new Commonwealth charter schools every year forever, eventually draining billions of dollars from our local public schools. The initiative would encourage charters to expand into areas where they don't exist now, taking critical resources away from successful public schools.

The MTA is a key backer of the Save Our Public Schools campaign to defeat Question 2. Save Our Public Schools is a grassroots coalition of education, parent, student and community groups that oppose lifting the cap on privately run, publicly funded Commonwealth charter schools.

Why Lifting the Cap Is Bad for Public School Students

LOST FUNDING

This year alone, charters will divert more than \$400 million from public schools. That's money districts desperately need so they can offer more science, technology, art and music classes, as well as preschool services and smaller class sizes. The money should be kept in the public schools for the benefit of *all* students.

NO LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Charter schools are not accountable to their local communities. The state often approves them over the united opposition of the communities where they will be located. That's wrong. Local communities should have the final say on what kinds of schools they want.

'SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL' EDUCATION

Charter schools are divisive, creating a two-track system described by the NAACP as "separate and unequal." They typically underserve English language learners and special needs students, leaving public schools with fewer resources to educate a higher-need population.

How You Can Help

Pro-charter groups have millions of dollars from hedge funds and corporate backers. We are relying on people power to fight this assault on public education. There are many ways that you can help. Local associations are organizing community forums and canvassing, and MTA offices around the state are hosting phone banks. Please talk to your local association president today about how you can help!

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