

## SUMMER CONFERENCE INSPIRES ACTIVISM



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## MTA Today

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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

MTA activism continues to build in the aftermath of the May 20 Rally for Public Education, which is shown in the top photo. Now, members — who gathered at the recent MTA Summer Conference in Amherst and are shown in the bottom photo — are building power through the All In campaign. The rally and the All In effort are just two examples of the many ways the association is taking action both internally and as part of coalitions such as Raise Up Massachusetts. Coverage appears throughout this issue of *MTA Today*, including stories on Pages 3, 4, 6, 7, 10 and 28. Also included in this edition is coverage of the 2017 NEA RA, which was hosted by the MTA. See Pages 12 and 13 for stories on the RA.



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## Quote-Unquote

**"Ending DACA will be devastating for Dreamers and their families in Massachusetts. It was a shameful act by our president."**

**— Attorney General Maura Healey, commenting after Massachusetts and other states filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration for rescinding the DACA program**

# Summer Conference inspires activism

By Scott McLennan

Teachers' unions did not start because educators felt an overwhelming need to have collective bargaining rights. They formed because two teachers got together, saw a problem and asked, "How do we fix it?"

Wisconsin educator and union activist Doug Keillor delivered that humorously pared-down labor history lesson during the opening session of the 2017 MTA Summer Conference.

Keillor's point — that unions at the most basic level are simply people organizing to make things better — was repeated in many ways throughout the conference, which was held at UMass Amherst from July 30 to Aug. 3.

Hundreds of educators participated in workshops and multiday programs that focused on everything from professional development to leadership skills to political campaigns. Social events brought together participants from across the state.

"There is such incredible energy when educators get together and share their experiences," said MTA President Barbara Madeloni. "Talking to each other leads to a shared understanding of the problem and then collective action to fix the problem. I witnessed our members tapping into that collective energy to figure out ways to make their locals stronger and then use that power to benefit students and communities."

For instance, a team of new leaders from the Pioneer Valley Regional Education Association arrived at the conference feeling overwhelmed by the challenges they faced heading into the new school year.

The Pioneer Valley team, participating in the Next Generation Leadership Program, told other participants about rash decisions and drastic actions by the district's leadership that have led to staggering cuts in staff and programs.

"Our story became a case study for the group, and we got so much positive feedback and so many ideas about things we can do moving forward," said Ariel LaReau, president of the association.

Any of the speakers at the opening session could have predicted that member-to-member conversations, which are at the heart of the MTA's All In membership campaign, would generate excitement about actions aimed at building stronger unions, schools and communities.

The panelists included Diana Valles of Culinary Workers Union Local 226, a Nevada affiliate of UNITE HERE; Jennifer Proffitt, president of United Faculty of Florida; and Keillor. Stephen Lerner, who has led many organizing campaigns to improve pay and working conditions for low-wage employees, delivered the keynote address and joined the others for the discussion.

Valles, Proffitt and Keillor shared their experiences in states that are hostile toward organized labor and do not allow for "agency fees," also known as "fair share fees," to be collected from



Photo by Sarah Nathan

Deryn Copeland, a member of the Student Education Association of Massachusetts who attends Westfield State University, Melissa Jones of the Cape Tech Association and Mikaela Buchinski of the Cambridge Education Association, in foreground from left to right, relaxed outside the UMass Campus Center during the President's Reception.

workers who do not join the union but are protected by collective bargaining agreements. A case now at the doorstep of the U.S. Supreme Court could result in public-sector unions — including the MTA — losing the ability to collect agency fees from nonmembers. The case is part of an overall strategy by anti-labor groups to weaken unions.

The guest speakers described how their unions have maintained power — and membership — even when stripped of many legal rights.

"They haven't killed labor in Wisconsin," Keillor said of his state, where educators lost collective bargaining in 2011. "Even without collective bargaining, our union is stronger now than it was 10 years ago." He advised his Massachusetts colleagues to develop a sense of urgency around maintaining union strength before any legal decision alters the landscape.

Valles and Proffitt shared their experiences organizing in states where labor unions' rights have diminished.

Proffitt said a shift in thinking has been key to her union's success. The union is no longer seen as "transactional," but instead as "transformative," she said. This, she added, required organizing on multiple levels — moving potential members to membership, moving members to become activists, and moving activists to become leaders.

In adopting a transformative mindset to unionism, United Faculty of Florida has succeeded in organizing members around issues such as stopping the expansion of private prisons in Florida and getting behind a ban on guns on college campuses.

"Face-to-face conversations with members about issues they care about are the strongest ways of organizing in this fashion," Proffitt said.

Valles likewise emphasized the importance of frequent one-to-one conversations. Her union, which she said has 90 percent membership within the pool of eligible employees, successfully organized last year at the Las Vegas hotel owned by President Donald Trump.

Valles said that conversations include contract trainings that help every member effectively advocate for fair treatment in the workplace.

"The contract has no legs, no muscles. It's just a piece of paper. It's the people who make things happen," she said.

Even as each local and statewide union faces unique challenges, Lerner's keynote address framed the issues that affect all unions as the result of consolidation of wealth into the hands of very few entities. "We live in the richest country, but those at the top want the control without any responsibility to the public good," Lerner said. "Those of us in the public sector may think we are bargaining with the local school board, but we are really bargaining with Wall Street."

He described the ways in which private interests drive tax cuts and other forms of divestment from public responsibility to create a condition that labor activists now call "broke on purpose."

Unions are on the front lines, he added, fighting back against those who would plunder public budgets.

Please turn to **Conference**/Page 26

# Light and hope amid fear and uncertainty

I have struggled with how to begin this editorial. This moment in our history is fraught with anxiety, fear and uncertainty.

Our challenges and threats range from the resurgent boldness of racist violence to the realities of climate disruption to the unrelenting attacks on immigrants to the everyday experiences of educators given fewer resources and ever-increasing pressure to perform tasks that contradict the goals of public education. And this is all taking place within the context of an ongoing effort to destroy unions.



Barbara Madeloni  
MTA President

Yet in the midst of this assault on public education, students, working people and our communities, there are remarkable moments of light and hope.

We saw them in Boston when 40,000 people marched to say no to white supremacists. We saw them when working people gathered on Labor Day to stand strong for union power and the fight for a \$15-per-hour minimum wage.

We see them in stories of educators organizing to push back against bullying leadership, connecting with parents to fight the madness of high-stakes testing, and reaching out to give support to students and families who are fearful of deportation. We see them every day when you go to work and create learning communities in which each student has an opportunity to thrive — when you do this in spite of the mandates that attempt to stifle the deeply human relational work of teaching and learning.

In the midst of the outrageous efforts to tear down our schools and our communities, I find myself hopeful because I see working people reaching out to

each other, organizing and reclaiming our voices. It is here — in building connections, trust, union power and alliances — that we will win a better world.

How do we do this?

Many of you are already engaged in this work. You've reached out to each other in your buildings and at other worksites to talk about the issues that matter most to you and your students, to understand what is happening, and to develop plans to act together to make vital changes.

The MTA understands that we need to support these efforts more directly and intentionally — and give every member the resources and opportunities to build local union solidarity and power. That is why the Board voted over the summer to fund the All In campaign: to reach every member, talk about our issues, and organize to reclaim our schools, our colleges, our voices and our communities.

The campaign will identify several member leaders in each building and help them develop the skills needed to establish relationships with groups of up to 20 other members through one-to-one conversations, as well as small meetings and other types of gatherings.

Through these contacts, members will be encouraged to talk about their work lives, share concerns and ideas for solving problems, and act collectively to resolve issues. This might mean organizing around a contract campaign, or it might mean establishing a committee for member-designed and member-led professional development, or it might mean asserting your rights against oppressive management, or it might mean organizing with parents and students for the schools our communities deserve.

The point is this: We will be supporting members as you build trust, establish goals, and use union power to claim our vision for public schools, colleges and other worksites.

Our power as workers is in our ability to join together around shared concerns, build trust, and use concerted activity to demand a better world.

The forces coming at us — from dehumanizing accountability regimes, state takeovers and “personalized learning systems” to coldhearted austerity budgets and attacks on human dignity and civil rights — are intense. But we know from our work, from our union activities, and from our personal experiences that our power is in and with each other.

The All In campaign commits MTA resources to grassroots building-by-building support for the connections that allow us to experience our power and strengthen our resolve.

As we move forward with All In, the MTA will be working with our coalition partners in Raise Up Massachusetts to collect signatures to put paid family and medical leave and the \$15 minimum wage on the ballot in November 2018. These efforts, which will benefit students and their families as well as educators, will further extend our networks of connection, trust and commitment.

A phrase that I and others often use is “fighting is winning.” Sometimes I worry that people read that as meaning we will win every fight. While we have won some great fights, we will not win every one.

But in such treacherous times, fighting arm in arm — in trusting relationships across positions and experiences, with integrity and commitment to the greater good — is itself a win. Our commitment to each other and to something bigger than ourselves becomes a victory.

I hope you will join the All In campaign and commit to fighting for the schools, colleges and communities we deserve.

*In solidarity,*  
Barbara

## Fight continues for adequate education funding

By Laura Barrett

The MTA is continuing to push for bills that support public schools and colleges and improve conditions for working families and public-sector retirees, even though state budget allocations for the new fiscal year have fallen short of the association's desired goals.

“When it comes to providing students with the schools and colleges our communities deserve, the fight continues,” said MTA President Barbara Madeloni. “Our legislative team can't secure that goal alone. The team needs strong support from an organized, informed and passionate membership.”

The most promising development this year has been the Legislature's overwhelming approval of the Fair Share Amendment for the 2018 ballot. Final

approval was given on June 14, when legislators voted 134-55 in a second Constitutional Convention to move the proposal to the ballot.

The proposed constitutional amendment, backed by the MTA and other members of the Raise Up Massachusetts coalition, would increase taxes by 4 percentage points on annual income over \$1 million. The funds generated, nearly \$2 billion a year, would be allocated to public education — including higher education — and transportation.

A significant challenge, however, is a plan by the Retailers Association of Massachusetts to pursue one of four potential ballot initiatives that would lower the state's sales tax, currently 6.25 percent. One would cut it to 4.5 percent and a second would cut it to 5 percent. The third and fourth measures would include those reductions

while also instituting a permanent two-day state sales tax holiday each August.

Cuts of this magnitude would offset nearly all of the increased revenue from the Fair Share Amendment.

Please turn to **MTA**/Page 11

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

# ESP of the Year 'has this way about her'

## After success with garden, Haverhill's Nancy Burke starts an orchard

By Jean Conley

**O**n a steaming hot day in July, the learning garden at Haverhill High School is alive with the sounds of Summer Program students and educators watering, weeding the plants, laughing and enjoying the fruits of their labors.

Strawberries are in abundance. Basil, chives, cilantro and summer flowers scent the air. The fruits and vegetables are coming along nicely in garden beds, which are raised to waist height so students in wheelchairs can reach them easily.

The garden, in what was once a trash-strewn interior courtyard, never would have come about without the vision, persistence and direction of Nancy Burke, who was named MTA's 2017 Education Support Professional of the Year in April.

Burke, a paraprofessional who works with some of the school's most challenged special education students in the life skills program, reclaimed the unused space several years ago so she could get her students outside in the fresh air, show them where their food comes from, and help them develop a sense of accomplishment.

Recently, Burke's ambitions have expanded again. This time, she has reclaimed another courtyard in the school, and an orchard has taken root.

"This was another courtyard that was abandoned and not doing anything," says Burke, pointing to a corner of the lot. "Thigh-high grass. Trash. It was disgusting."

The courtyard is now alive with apple, plum and pear trees. "Everything is on a trellis system," Burke explains. "The trees are all dwarf, so they won't get any higher than eight feet." When the trees grow up, she adds, they will grow over the trellis "so anyone in a wheelchair can go down the center aisle and pick all the apples they want. The walkers can be on the outside, and we'll put flowers in the corner and blueberries along the wall."

Burke received a Learning and Leadership Grant from the National Education Association last spring to help with expenses. She said that without the grant, she'd be "struggling to get this done."

There are plans to add benches and a watering system. A shed has been donated, and seedlings will be grown in a brand new greenhouse, a gift from the Class of 2016. On both walls of the hallway leading out to the orchard, art students plan to paint murals.

Fellow educators are equally excited. A math teacher whose classroom faces the courtyard donated money for a patio so she can bring her students outside.

The orchard "will be the most beautiful green space in the school, for everyone to use," Burke says, adding that "a great deal of 'Hillie Pride'" has gone into the project.

"I am truly grateful for all the love and support from the students and staff of Haverhill High School," she notes.



Above, Nancy Burke and Karen Bona, a special needs teacher at Consentino Middle School, work with middle school student Tommy Hardy in the garden. At left, Burke and Ellalandra Arakelow, a senior at Haverhill High School, discuss plans for the orchard. The orchard "will be the most beautiful green space in the school, for everyone to use," Burke says, adding that "a great deal of 'Hillie Pride'" has gone into the project.

Photos by Jean Conley

"My goal here," she adds, "is that I wanted to bring the garden and the orchard to the kids. A lot of students live in a food desert. They do not have exposure to fresh, healthy foods. Some of my kids never get out and go to an orchard. They've never picked an apple or a blueberry in their lives."

"But here's the big thing," Burke continues. "I've managed to get a lot of folks involved. They want to be involved. Everyone from the Student Council to the new Garden Club, the football and wrestling teams, Junior ROTC, they will never forget doing this — and the impact it made on their peers who *can't* do things — for their entire lives."

**E**llalandra Arakelow is president of the Garden Club. The HHS senior is a member of the school's rigorous Classical Academy program and has been busy applying to colleges, but she says that when she met Burke, she had to get involved.

"Nancy just attracts good people. She just has this way about her," Arakelow says. "She took on

so much responsibility to give her students an opportunity for something great."

In late September, Burke's students will hold their fall harvest, rummaging through the potatoes, onions, carrots, peppers, and other late-summer vegetables to find the finest specimens. Those will be entered into the Topsfield Fair, where Burke's students won blue First Place ribbons last year.

With the garden in full gear and the orchard project underway, Burke reflects on how the learning garden she envisioned for her students became a lesson in empathy and giving back for the whole community.

And then she is off again, planning for what should be done with all the food being grown.

"I want us to grow enough to take care of all the programs here at the high school," she says. That includes "students in the coffee café who cook food and serve it to people" and the ESPs "who do the cooking for all the students in the building."

"I have big plans," she says with a laugh. "I do."

# MTA activism enters next phase

By Laura Barrett

Last year's wildly successful No on Question 2 campaign laid the foundation for the current state of MTA activism, while the new All In initiative is designed to take it to the next level.

Thousands of members participated in the No on 2 effort, either informally through conversations with friends and relatives or formally through phone-banking, canvassing, social media messaging and other efforts. They played a critical role in defeating the proposed charter school cap lift by a huge margin.

The challenge after any hard-won campaign is to keep the momentum going.

"We need to continue to build relationships and effective structures in our locals because that gives us power," said MTA President Barbara Madeloni.

So far, the election of President Donald Trump and appointment of U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos have been strong motivators for public education advocates.

Trump administration policies helped drive thousands to the May 20 Rally for Public Education.

Backed by the MTA and other members of the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance, the rally featured student performances, speeches, creative signs and a brass band that led MTA Annual Meeting delegates to Boston Common. The goal was not just to oppose the Trump/DeVos agenda, however.

"People in Massachusetts deeply value public education, and they deeply value the public good," said Madeloni, addressing the fired-up crowd.

"When we are defending our public schools, we are defending our vision for a better world."

Anti-Trump sentiment has aided MTA member turnout at several other large events, including the Boston Women's March for America on Jan. 21, rallies in support of immigrants and the environment, and, recently, the 40,000-strong "Fight Supremacy! Boston Counter-Protest & Resistance Rally" on Aug. 19.

The MTA recommended Worcester teacher Alexizendria Link as a speaker for that event, and she gladly obliged.

"We need to address how the residual effects of slavery cause the disparities we are seeing within the educational system," Link told the massive crowd on the Common. "A Eurocentric curriculum and implicit bias push our children of color onto the margins when they should be in the center. They are not uplifted to a place where they can learn, to a place where they are valued — and it's time we do something different. We can start by fully funding our schools."

Link's path to activism went through her union. She became involved with the Educational Association of Worcester for one simple reason: She was asked.

"There was no pressure," she said. "This person just said to me, 'This might be something you are



Photo by Sarah Nathan

Worcester teacher Alexizendria Link spoke for educators at the Aug. 19 "free speech" counterprotest on Boston Common, saying that "a Eurocentric curriculum and implicit bias push our children of color onto the margins when they should be in the center."

interested in.' And I was." Since then, the high school English teacher has participated in local contract campaigns, served as a delegate to the MTA Annual Meeting and the NEA Representative Assembly, and worked to defeat Question 2.

Thomas J. "T.J." Howell, president of the Belchertown Teachers Association, agrees with Link that engaging members through face-to-face conversations is "huge."

The BTA provides a model for how activism can be channeled into local issues with the right structures in place. He and two colleagues spearheaded changes to the BTA's communication systems after undergoing organizing training at MTA's Summer Conference in 2016.

First, they mapped their buildings to enable the local to get information to members quickly. "I'd tell a few people and then they would spread the word to other people, who would pass the message on to their designated contacts," Howell explained. "A lot of people dismiss e-mails and text messages now. Person-to-person conversations are much more effective. They don't just spread information — they build relationships."

They used their new strategies during the Question 2 campaign, and the same structures were in place to help during a contract fight. Educator Cara Lapenas led the crisis team that planned and

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Another way to build power is to create stronger ties with community and labor groups. Donna Johnson, president of the 1,000-member University Staff Association at UMass Amherst, did just that in support of the USA's campaign for respect and equitable benefits for her members.

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implemented actions and developed messages to reach out to the community.

Among other events, the team organized a toy drive and "meet and greets" with parents. At one gathering, two participants became inspired to run for the School Committee, ultimately defeating two incumbents who had not been supportive of the BTA.

Another way to build power is to create stronger ties with community and labor groups. Donna Johnson, president of the 1,000-member University Staff Association at UMass Amherst, did just that in support of the USA's campaign for respect and equitable benefits for her members. Johnson was contacted by a group of women working for labor

Please turn to **Sustained**/Page 11

# Conversations at heart of campaign

By Scott McLennan

Unions across the country are bracing for the impact of a case brought to the U.S. Supreme Court that could strip them of their right to collect “fair share” fees from nonmembers — even though the unions would still be required to represent them and even though nonmembers would still benefit from collective bargaining agreements.

The case, *Janus v. AFSCME*, is named for Mark Janus, an Illinois public employee arguing that paying an agency fee violates his rights under the First Amendment. The fate of the case will not be known for months, since the court has not yet said whether it will hear it.

But the MTA is already helping locals create plans to stay strong and engaged in anticipation of a Supreme Court decision against unions, whether in *Janus* or one of several other cases like it.

“Union members understand the value of belonging to their locals and the power that gives them to shape their workplaces and their students’ learning environments,” said MTA President Barbara Madeloni. “Opponents of organized labor are banking on a financial incentive to make members quit, but people are smarter than that. Our members understand what it means to have a voice in their schools and on their campuses.”

Member-to-member conversations are at the heart of the All In campaign, which locals across the state are designing to keep membership robust and to make clear to new educators and other potential members why joining is so important.

Danette Day, a professor at Fitchburg State University, is a member of the Massachusetts State College Association. She sees unionism as being inexorably intertwined with her work as an educator.

When she began teaching in 1989, taking a job teaching English at Wachusett Regional High School, the full implications of belonging to her local union were not clear to her.

Day said she appreciated the work of her bargaining team in settling good contracts. But over time, as she moved to other jobs in private schools and then worked on advanced degrees before returning to the classroom as a college lecturer, Day’s understanding of unionism deepened.

“As I got older, I understood the power of the union and the power of solidarity,” Day said. “We are empowered to do the right thing for others. I might be in a great place with my work, but that’s because of all the things union members did before me.”

Like Day, Audrey Murph-Brown has experienced a changing relationship with her union over the course of her 25 years in the Springfield



Photo by Scott McLennan

MTA members gathered during an open session at the Summer Conference to begin the work of the All In membership campaign. One-to-one conversations are central to the initiative.

“I see the All In campaign as a transformative opportunity,” said Audrey Murph-Brown, a member of the Springfield Education Association. “If you want the union to do something, don’t call the union office to see what to do. Recognize that *you are the union* and that you can take on an issue.”

Public Schools. Membership, she realized, is dynamic and empowering.

“I see the All In campaign as a transformative opportunity,” she said. “If you want the union to do something, don’t call the union office to see what to do. Recognize that *you are the union* and that you can take on an issue.”

The Springfield Education Association has played a key role in Murph-Brown’s passion for opening avenues of opportunity to educators of color, something she sees as crucial in a community where so many of the students are black or brown.

“Children need that visual. If they see themselves in their teachers, it will improve their

self-esteem. That’s definitely an educational piece that Springfield can do better with,” she said.

Knowing that they have protections against retaliation, educators can question the use of evaluations that influence career growth, Murph-Brown noted.

“Sometimes it’s not about taking on big actions, but just confronting micro-aggressions,” she said.

When a big action is required, however, union power is essential. Such was the case when Everett teachers went on strike in 1989. Richard Liston was president of the Everett Teachers Association at the time and recalls that educators were fighting for more autonomy in the classroom.

“It was not so much about salaries but about things like preparation time and the ability to meet with colleagues for curriculum planning,” said Liston, who is now chair of the MTA Retired Members Committee.

Over the course of his 40 years as a teacher, the union was responsible for improving wages and benefits, Liston said. But just as importantly, the union impressed upon administrators the value of having educators’ voices involved in decisions affecting students and their schools.

Virginia Rutter, an activist at Framingham State University who, like Day, is a member of the MSCA, echoed some of Liston’s sentiments.

Please turn to **MTA members**/Page 19

# Members receive Human and Civil Rights Awards

By Jean Conley

**F**ive MTA members were honored recently for their commitment to civil rights and human relations during a gala event that featured testimonials to their contributions to the common good.

Mary E. Custard, dean of students at Amherst-Pelham Regional High School, and Margaret Costello, a culinary arts teacher at Shawsheen Valley Technical High School, each received the Louise Gaskins Lifetime Civil Rights Award. Kevin Dua, Amber Jackson and Cynthia Massillon, teachers at Somerville High School, received the Kathleen Roberts Creative Leadership Award.

The awards were presented during the 2017 MTA Human and Civil Rights Awards banquet, which was held at the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel in Norwood on June 16.

Human Relations Committee Co-Chairs Dale Forest and Denise LaPolla welcomed the crowd of educators and other guests to the event. The awards, Forest said, are intended to publicly thank the “leaders, activists, advocates, role models, risk-takers, organizers and innovators” who make the world a better place.

MTA President Barbara Madeloni said the recipients were being recognized during a “particularly anxious and uncertain moment” in the struggle for racial equality, but that honoring those who act with “profound integrity, with courage, and with a deep faith in the possibility of human beings” is particularly important during difficult times.

Madeloni recognized longtime MTA leader and activist Louise Gaskins, who was present at the dinner and for whom the Lifetime Civil Rights Award is named, and she sent “deepest regards and good wishes” to former MTA President Kathleen Roberts, for whom the Creative Leadership Award is named. Roberts was unable to attend.

Custard serves as dean of students and is a former athletic director at Amherst-Pelham Regional High School. Forest noted that she has impacted the lives of her students in countless ways — whether by inspiring them as an adviser of People of Color United and the Minority Student Achievement Network or by attending their games and performances.

As a member of the Northwestern District Attorney’s Citizen Advisory Board, Forest added, Custard helps drive conversations about eliminating discrimination in schools and making them safer places in which to learn.

Custard voiced her gratitude to those who supported her nomination and the staff of her school, and she thanked the MTA “for the work it does every day.” She also expressed her worry about the shortage of educators of color across the nation.

“As I contemplate retiring,” she said, “I worry that there will be one less educator of color in my school and in my district. All of our students need to have educators who mirror the diversity of our nation and our world.”



The five honorees gathered with their awards at the conclusion of the evening. From left to right are Mary E. Custard and Margaret Costello, who received Louise Gaskins Lifetime Civil Rights Awards, and Cynthia Massillon, Kevin Dua and Amber Jackson, who received Kathleen Roberts Creative Leadership Awards.

Photo by Jean Conley

Custard said that educators can counteract the negative messages that students are receiving in these confusing times by being “warriors — for kindness and caring, truth and justice, social justice and antidiscrimination, for learning and leadership, for community building and service, for the rights of undocumented students, for LGBTQ rights, for Black Lives Matter, for education as a right and not a privilege.”

Costello was described by Forest as an activist and a teacher with a long history of advocacy on behalf of her students.

Before there were laws on the books protecting LGBTQ youth in Massachusetts, he noted, Costello was “an outstanding role model for students” on LGBTQ issues, student safety, justice and equality. One example of this, he said, was that Costello fought for Shawsheen students’ right to wear the uniform of the gender with which they identified.

Costello is also known for her compassion, he added. After Hurricane Katrina tore through New Orleans in 2005, Costello traveled to the city to provide food for the displaced and the volunteers helping them. She returned in 2007 and again in 2008, each time bringing along students to assist.

**I**n accepting the award, Costello thanked those who have “provided me with help, inspiration and happiness along the way.” She credited her husband, David Costello, with “lighting the way for me with your own incredible service in Mississippi post-Katrina.” She referred to Ruth Allen, her sister and a member of the MTA Board of Directors, as “my champion and oldest friend.”

Costello said her students “continue to renew my faith in the inherent goodness of people every single day,” and she thanked her parents, “who lived their lives with open hearts and minds and inspired the same in their children.”

In presenting the awards named for former MTA President Roberts to Dua, Jackson and Massillon, Forest referred to her as an “extraordinary and selfless educator, community leader and advocate

who has promoted volunteerism, creativity and an appreciation of diversity.”

The three educators are the creators of the “Matter Speaks” series at Somerville High School. The series provides a place for students and staff to openly and honestly discuss and share issues of race, ethnicity, self-awareness and identity.

Dua said students inspired the idea for the series. The students “are the reason that — in the midst of a tense nationwide climate, where it seemed that no one wanted to touch on such issues — we started to talk on these topics,” he said.

The series has turned people of all ages into empathetic learners. “Today, more so than ever before, it is important to us as organizers, educators, adults and people to continue to be on the right side of critical thinking, expression, truth, civic engagement, education and human connection,” Dua said.

Massillon said she has seen Matter Speaks instill a sense of “radical hope” in the students. “There are many truths, many ways of knowing, and many perspectives of the same event,” she added. “Our students are resisting the verbal hegemony that tells them every day that their lived truths are false. This series is an affirmation of their voices.”

Jackson said the award is “for the kids.”

“This whole series has been so much fun because we’re seeing the kids really start to feel that their voices matter, and that’s why we go to work every day anyway — to see the kids empowered,” Jackson said.

She continued, “I have spent so much time after the event, more time after the event than the event itself, just talking to kids and seeing them excited. That is huge.”

As much as the recipients appreciated the award, she said, “I really hope that there comes a day that we don’t have to give awards for these things — because they are just what we do.”

*To read more about each of this year’s honorees, visit [massteacher.org/hcr](http://massteacher.org/hcr). To see more photos from the event, go to <http://masstea.ch/2uCXCGW>.*



## 'Stronger Together' at Boston Pride celebration

MTA members made a strong showing at this year's Boston Pride Parade, which was held on June 10. From left, activists Diana Marcus, Kurt Ostrow and Erik Fearing, chair of MTA's LGBTQ Issues Committee, led the educators who marched behind the MTA banner. The theme of this year's parade was "Stronger Together," and it featured survivors of the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando in June of 2016. Thousands attended the popular parade, as well as the accompanying festival and concert marking Boston's 47th Pride celebration.

Photo by Scott McLennan

## MTA opposes DESE's MAPLE/LearnLaunch partnership

By Jean Conley

In a letter to Jeff Wulfson, acting commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the MTA has expressed its opposition to the department's new effort to reshape public education by scaling up computer-based "personalized learning" practices through an initiative called MAPLE/LearnLaunch.

"The MTA has long supported differentiated instruction and addressing students' social, emotional and academic needs," the kind of personalized learning by which educators "guide students as they ask questions, pursue projects, explore subjects they are passionate about, and work alone or in groups on self-designed initiatives," wrote MTA President Barbara Madeloni and Vice President Erik J. Champy in the letter, dated Aug. 8. "We understand that students learn differently and at different paces — and that good educators will find ways to engage all of their students and build a learning community while addressing individual needs."

"Educators should be the ones making education policy and exploring new, innovative practices. These decisions should be driven by what's best for students, not by profit."

What educators object to, they added, "is a kind of 'personalized learning' that actually *depersonalizes* the classroom by reducing interactions among students and between students and educators, replacing it with computer-based instruction based upon algorithms and what is ultimately a narrow conception of knowledge. Further, this movement deprofessionalizes teaching, seeking to substitute the judgment of distant 'content producers' for the expertise and insights of well-trained professionals."

In May, the MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates adopted a New Business Item on the MAPLE/

LearnLaunch initiative that directed the association to inform the DESE of its opposition.

In the letter, Madeloni and Champy added that members of the association are "deeply troubled" that the DESE selected LearnLaunch as a partner "when the organization is so involved in promoting the sale of educational products."

They continued, "Putting LearnLaunch in the driver's seat of this initiative would be akin to the Department of Public Health putting a consortium of pharmaceutical companies in charge of prescribing regulations. The fox is guarding the henhouse. This is wrong."

The letter concluded, "Educators should be the ones making education policy and exploring new, innovative practices. These decisions should be driven by what's best for students, not by profit."

To read the letter from the MTA, please visit <http://masstea.ch/2vFIBcd>. To read about other New Business Items that were adopted at the Annual Meeting, visit <https://massteacher.org/2017amnbis>.

## JOBS AT THE MTA

The Massachusetts Teachers Association is hiring. To view available job opportunities, please visit [massteacher.org/jobs](https://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.

# MTA activism defeats plan to expand licensure power

By Laura Barrett

Member activism defeated a proposal by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to give the commissioner of education the power to revoke the license of any educator who, in the commissioner's opinion, had behaved in ways detrimental to the profession.

The proposal was originally among recommendations for changes to licensure and license renewal regulations that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education was to vote on in late June.

But an onslaught of opposition caused the DESE to back down.

Petitions signed by 10,000 MTA members, a social media campaign and comments by MTA leadership, the union's legal and education policy divisions and the ACLU challenged this ill-defined new power.

By the time the BESE gathered on June 27 to vote on licensure changes, the revocation language had been dropped.

"When we fight, we win!" MTA President Barbara Madeloni wrote in an e-mail message to members. "In this victory, we named what the DESE was doing and refused it. Naming the madness being inflicted on students, educators and public education is a key piece of our organizing efforts."

Among the changes approved by the BESE were:

■ **License Name Change.** The DESE adopted a name change, dropping Preliminary License in favor of Provisional License. The change to Provisional License matches statutory language while also signaling that the license is short term and issued to individuals who

have not yet demonstrated completion of Massachusetts educator licensure requirements.

■ **Provisional License Five-Year Cap.** A single Provisional License is valid for five years of employment. Under current regulations, educators may use multiple Provisional licenses for continued employment. Starting July 1, 2019, however, educators holding multiple Provisional licenses will have a five-year cap on the total number of years of employment under any single Provisional License or combination of Provisional licenses. Educators employed under a Provisional License are encouraged to take all steps necessary to advance their licenses to Initial as quickly as possible.

■ **License Renewal PDP Requirements.** This change rebalances the required distribution of Professional Development Points required for renewing a Professional License, as follows: 15 PDPs in the content area, 15 in pedagogy, 15 in ESL/SEI, 15 in special education, and up to 90 elective PDPs. Under the previous regulations, 60 PDPs were required in an educator's content area. Educators may not need to make any changes to their current Individual Professional Development Plans if their current PDPs and/or planned activities will satisfy the new distribution.

■ **Changes to License Field Names and Grade Levels.** The BESE approved a number of changes to grade levels and names of specific licenses.

*More information is available at <http://www.mass.gov/edu/government/departments-and-boards/ese/programs/educator-effectiveness/licensure/summary-regulatory-changes.html>.*



Photo courtesy of NEA

High school students from Virginia were among those protesting the president's order outside the White House moments after the decision was announced on Sept. 5.

## Madeloni: Ending DACA is 'inhumane and unconscionable'

On Sept. 5, the Trump administration announced that it would rescind the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which has provided educational and work opportunities for hundreds of thousands of young people brought to the United States by their parents.

MTA President Barbara Madeloni issued the following statement:

"President Donald Trump's decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program is inhumane and unconscionable. It jeopardizes the future of 800,000 'Dreamers' — the young DACA participants who were brought into this country by their parents before they were 16 years old, some of them as infants.

"For Trump to threaten to deport them back to their native countries is cruel to the Dreamers and disruptive to our society. Such deportations would tear families apart and destabilize the schools, colleges, communities and workplaces where the Dreamers are living, studying and contributing to our society in countless ways.

"Educators will do everything in our power to prevent the deportation of these Dreamers as a result of this president's outrageous actions."

*For more information about the program and protecting DACA recipients, visit [educationvotes.nea.org/daca/](http://educationvotes.nea.org/daca/). To read a commentary by MTA General Counsel Ira Fader on the impact of ending DACA, visit <http://masstea.ch/2wc5KL1>.*

## Efforts are underway to help educators affected by hurricanes

As victims of hurricanes Harvey and Irma begin the slow process of rebuilding their lives financially and emotionally, the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers have established relief funds on behalf of fellow educators.

Members' participation — as donors and in encouraging contributions to these funds — will be a big help to colleagues in other states.

Harvey made landfall on Aug. 25 in Texas, causing devastating flooding in the Houston area

and in Louisiana. Hurricane Irma, which hit Key West and other areas of Florida on Sept. 10, was still causing widespread damage as this edition of *MTA Today* went to press.

The NEA and the NEA Foundation have created the Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund and are working with the Texas State Teachers Association to disburse funds.

The NEA has also teamed up with the AFT, which is working with the Florida Education Association to help disburse funds collected for the

AFT Disaster Relief Fund. Proceeds will go directly to educators affected by Irma who live in Florida.

*Visit [nea.org/harvey](http://nea.org/harvey) for more information about donating to the Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund, as well as to find classroom resources and tips for helping students. Go to [aft.org/disaster-relief-fund](http://aft.org/disaster-relief-fund) for information about donating to the victims of Irma. Watch [nea.org](http://nea.org) and [massteacher.org](http://massteacher.org) for further information on ways to help fellow educators affected by severe weather.*

# MTA takes strong stands on legislative measures

Continued from Page 4

Both the additional income tax on the very wealthy and sales tax reductions have received strong positive ratings in recent polls.

“We are going to have to work just as hard as we did during the Question 2 campaign to explain why the Fair Share Amendment is both fair and necessary — and how harmful it would be to lose revenues from a sales tax reduction,” Madeloni said. “Our members are the best people in the state to make this case.”

The MTA also strongly supports the Language Opportunity for Our Kids bill, which removes the restrictive mandate requiring Sheltered English Immersion as the default “one-size-fits-all” model for English language learning. The LOOK bill would give school districts the flexibility to establish programs based on the educational needs of their students.

The House and Senate have approved versions of the bill, and differences are being hammered out in a conference committee. The Senate version of the bill contains language nearly identical to that contained in the MTA-backed Senate Bill 308, *An Act Strengthening and Investing in Our Educators, Students and Communities*.

## Other updates

■ **Funding.** Despite strong advocacy by the MTA in support of increased education spending, the current state budget includes just a 2.5 percent increase in Chapter 70 public school funding and a 1.2 percent increase in public higher education campus spending. Governor Charlie Baker also cut funding for several critical education programs, including literacy and after-school services and a program that supports English language learners in Gateway Cities.

■ **Senate 308, MTA’s omnibus education bill.** Several of the bill’s

provisions were passed as part of the Senate’s fiscal 2018 budget package, including language that addresses shortfalls in the foundation budget, requires daily recess in the early grades, and eliminates the state’s mandates related to using student test scores in the educator evaluation system. Despite strong MTA advocacy, however, these policies were not included in the House version and were not part of the final fiscal 2018 budget signed by the governor. The MTA will continue to advocate for this legislation, which would help provide the schools our communities deserve.

■ **House 639, MTA’s higher education bill.** There was a strong showing of MTA members and public higher education students at the State House in June in support of legislation to improve pay, benefits and opportunities for adjunct faculty members in our public higher education system and to create a Finish Line Grant program that would provide students with one free year of higher education.

■ **Senate 1481, MTA’s public retiree benefits bill.** The bill would ensure that pension benefits are better able to keep up with inflation by increasing the annual Cost of Living Adjustment for retirees. It would also stabilize municipal retirees’ insurance premium payments and create a mechanism to cap out-of-pocket expenses for retirees who are not eligible for Medicare.

Legislators cited a lack of resources for failing to approve better funding for preK-12 and public higher education, giving voters a compelling reason to support raising — not cutting — revenues in 2018.

*More information about MTA’s legislative priorities can be found at [massteacher.org/legislation](http://massteacher.org/legislation). A story on other key issues appears on Page 28.*



Photo by Scott McLennan

Cara Pekarcik, a science teacher at North Quincy High School, was applauded by students last May when she was named the Massachusetts Teacher of the Year. Pekarcik was among the educators honored at the Excellence in Teaching Awards ceremony at the State House in June.

## Members are recognized for excellence in teaching

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

Cara Pekarcik was honored as the 2018 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year. Pekarcik, a member of the Quincy Education Association, has taught biology at North Quincy High School since 2006.

Kevin Dua, a history teacher at Somerville High School since 2012 and a member of the Somerville Teachers Association, was named the 2017 Massachusetts History Teacher of the Year.

Among finalists for the Massachusetts Teacher of the Year award were Kathy Boisvert, a prekindergarten teacher at Millville Elementary School and a member of the Blackstone-Millville Regional School District Education Association; Todd Paul Kefor, an English teacher at Norton High School and a member of the Norton Teachers Association; and Brian A. Sheehan, a music teacher at Salemwood School in Malden and a member of the Malden Education Association.

Semifinalists included Lisa Brown, a special education teacher

at Nauset Regional High School in Eastham and a member of the Nauset Education Association, and Jasmin DiRusso, a second-grade teacher at the Martin E. Young School and a member of the Randolph Education Association.

The Massachusetts finalists for the 2016 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching were also honored. Finalists included Jennifer Lee Donais, a sixth-grade teacher at the Dr. Paul Nettle Middle School in Haverhill and a member of the Haverhill Education Association; Karen Walsh Fortin, a kindergarten teacher at Florence Sawyer Elementary School and a member of the Nashoba Regional Education Association; Lorie Hammerstrom, a fourth-grade teacher at Merrymount Elementary School in Quincy and a member of the Quincy Education Association; and Laura Richardson, a first-grade teacher at the Edith C. Baker Elementary School and a member of the Brookline Educators Union.

The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy said that announcement of awardees for 2016 was expected “in the near future.”

## Sustained activism and connection to communities are key to winning

Continued from Page 6

organizations in the Northeast who wanted to support the campaign. “I explained some of our issues,” said Johnson, “like how professional staff get 26 weeks of paid maternity leave while members in our unit only get two weeks paid.

“Does the administration think it takes less time for someone in my unit to bond with a baby than someone who is a professional?” she asked.

About 150 USA supporters staged a flash mob dance and marched to the chancellor’s office, where they turned in a petition in support of

the campaign. Johnson was deeply moved by the outpouring, telling the local newspaper, “I can be a tough old broad, but I was pretty emotional yesterday when people from all walks of life from all over the Northeast came here to support us.”

“When we fight, we win,” said

Madeloni. “But we fight better and win more when we create the structures to sustain continued actions even after a crisis is averted. And we always do better when we are connected to our communities, our students and our brothers and sisters in the labor movement.”

# 'Wonderful team effort' makes RA a success

By Jean Conley

Months of planning by the MTA Host Committee combined with the enthusiasm of a capable band of volunteers from age 14 to age 80 helped make this year's NEA Annual Meeting and Representative Assembly — the first ever held in Boston — go off without a hitch.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you," Host Committee Chair Julia Monteiro Johnson said recently as she reflected on the "wonderful team effort" that made the week a success.

More than 7,000 delegates representing state and local affiliates converged on the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center for the event, which was held from June 30 to July 5.

Monteiro Johnson said volunteers from all MTA member categories stepped forward. "We met our targets," she said.

The Host Committee and volunteers had plenty to do during the RA. They ran the telephone network that keeps delegates in communication with the stage, helped disabled delegates, checked badges, assisted with conferences and celebrations such as the two-day NEA Retired Annual Meeting and the Human and Civil Rights Awards dinner, offered directions and advice, and handled reward distribution for the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education.

Monteiro Johnson's assessment was seconded by Host Committee Treasurer Richard Liston, who called the six days "the experience of a lifetime."

"I feel we showed the rest of the country that the MTA is indeed a class act," Liston added.

To read more about the 2017 RA, please visit [ra.nea.org](http://ra.nea.org).



Members of the Host Committee gathered in front of the stage at the NEA RA. Pictured from left to right are MTA Retired members Julia Monteiro Johnson, Sheila Hanley, Richard Liston, Jackie Gorrie, Sherley Phillips, Lois Jacobs, Kathi Rogers, Maureen Carlos and Ron Colbert.



Photo by Laura Barrett

A large crowd of NEA student and Retired members turned out for the community fair, which was held near Everett High School.

## LEGACY Project fair draws a crowd

By Laura Barrett

More than 400 NEA Student and Retired members gathered at Glendale Park in Everett on a sunny day in late June to volunteer at a community fair for Everett students.

The event, called the LEGACY Project, was organized in conjunction with the NEA Annual Meeting and Representative Assembly. It drew

volunteers from across the country who came to Massachusetts for the RA and related activities.

Members of the MTA's Student Education Association of Massachusetts — aspiring educators enrolled in Massachusetts colleges and universities — were enthusiastic participants, cheering and high-fiving elementary-age students as they got off buses and ran through an arch that was formed

Please turn to **LEGACY Project**/Page 23

## Victory of 'No on 2' campaign figures prominently in video

By Scott McLennan

The defeat of Question 2 in Massachusetts figured prominently in an inspiring call to action that capped the business session on July 2 at the NEA Representative Assembly in Boston.

A video produced by the NEA showing significant victories for public education across the nation opened with MTA President Barbara Madeloni recounting the statewide effort that decisively stopped the ballot initiative, which sought to radically expand charter schools. The "Yes" campaign drew millions of dollars of corporate funding and strong support from Governor Charlie Baker, but lost heavily throughout the Commonwealth.

"The victory of our grassroots campaign sent the message that your money won't buy your agenda," Madeloni said in the video as she recounted the 62 percent to 38 percent defeat of Question 2 on Nov. 8.

The lopsided win over charter school expansion was achieved by the Save Our Public Schools coalition, in which the MTA partnered with the AFT Massachusetts and other unions,

"The victory of our grassroots campaign sent the message that your money won't buy your agenda," MTA President Barbara Madeloni said as she recounted the 62 percent to 38 percent defeat of Question 2.

along with organizations representing parents and students and many other advocates for the schools our communities deserve.

When NEA Executive Director John Stocks called on the 7,000-plus NEA RA delegates in the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center to "give it up for Massachusetts," they did — offering a standing ovation directed toward the MTA delegation.

The NEA video also featured victories for public education that unions and their allies helped achieve in Georgia and North Carolina. Stocks, calling on the crowd to cheer on their delegations as his speech proceeded, ticked off numerous other successes for public education and the

Continued on next page

# Delegates urged to unite and support education

By Jean Conley

**M**TA member Saul Ramos, the 2017 National Education Support Professional of the Year, brought his fellow NEA delegates to their feet — and many to tears — as the Worcester paraeducator and self-taught Brailist delivered a heartwarming and passionate speech during the RA.

“My fellow delegates to this Representative Assembly, it is more important than ever for all of us to unite and support public education,” Ramos declared on July 3 to the thousands of educators attending the event, which was held in Boston.

“We must all stand strong together and let our elected leaders know what we need as educators to nurture successful students,” he continued.

Ramos thanked the leadership of the NEA and the MTA, his local association and his many union mentors, as well as his colleagues, family members and friends.

He acknowledged the quiet strength of his mother, and he recognized Keefe Bangert, a teacher of the visually impaired and fellow member of the MTA and the Educational Association of Worcester.

The two have worked closely together for 18 years, educating visually impaired students in the Worcester Public Schools.

Bangert, Ramos noted, made many of the materials that he used when he became interested in learning Braille.

Ramos spoke with equal warmth about one of his students, Thien Nguyen, whose success story, he said, “is one of my favorites.”

“At an early age, Thien faced the kind of obstacles that would make most of us here today feel overwhelmed — maybe even defeated,” Ramos said. “But Thien has something special inside that compels him to look at his challenges a little differently.”

Ramos said Thien has never seen the trials of his life as stopping points, but rather as steppingstones. Born three months prematurely and legally blind, Thien was given little chance of survival. But his parents demanded that Thien be kept on oxygen, “and their baby boy survived,” Ramos said. “Today, his incredible story is being shared with 7,000 educators.”



NEA ESP of the Year Saul Ramos, a Worcester paraeducator, gave a heartfelt address during the RA in Boston.

When Ramos started working with Thien, the student sat in the back of the classroom, isolated from the rest of the students. “But the more time I spent with him, the more he trusted me, and the more he trusted me, the more he opened up,” Ramos said.

“Today, I’m proud to say that Thien needs only minimal assistance,” he continued. “Thien has taught us all what it means to have the audacity to hope and believe that nothing is impossible.”

Ramos continued, “Some call what I do a job. Others say it’s a career. But I have always believed that what I do is a calling. You see, when you have a calling, you don’t ask the world what it needs. You instinctively go and do what makes you come alive.”

**R**amos acknowledged the “countless other inspiring and amazing educators” he has worked with over the years, as well as those he has met through the NEA.

Ramos said that includes ESPs such as “Tim Bell, from Utah, a custodian who did everything he could to ensure the safety of his students.”

“He would arrive hours before his start time just to open the doors for students who were dropped off early and had no place to go,” he said.

“And there’s Marty Alvarez from Traverse City, Michigan,” added Ramos. Alvarez is “a bus driver who goes far beyond what is asked of her. She makes sure her students get safely to and from school, has books for them to read, holds spelling bees, and has snacks for them.”

This past winter, he said, Alvarez noticed how many of her younger students had no socks, so she held a sock drive, gathering thousands of pairs.

“I have learned that leadership is taking what is given to you and moving it forward,” Ramos said. “Leadership is not a big or fancy title, and it doesn’t start on the stage. It starts off way in the back ... in ordinary places, often with small beginnings.”

“This is the story of our ESP members. We don’t choose which students we work with. We don’t select and disregard the rest — we take the students we are given and pour our hearts and souls into their lives.”

Ramos shared with the crowd that a few years ago, he was diagnosed with glaucoma. “My doctor explained that through treatment, it could be controlled, but that nothing was guaranteed and one day, I might lose my sight,” he said.

“That moment revealed to me why it is so important to have a calling in your life,” Ramos said, “because when you have a calling, there are no real setbacks or obstacles, policies or politicians that can get in your way.”

“I may lose my sight, but I will never lose my vision for my students and for public education.

“Vision is unlimited. Vision is discovering something to die for, not live for,” he said. “Vision clarifies your purpose, empowers your direction, and makes you believe in a better world.”

He concluded:

“Friends, we must:

“Always have hope.

“See ourselves and our students as the winners that we are.

“Know beyond any doubt that if we are united, if we work together — nothing is impossible and everything is possible.

“Our hearts and spirits are in the right place. We are full of passion and purpose and we will continue to work together to make a difference in the lives of our students and the future of our nation.”

## Defeat of charter school initiative featured as example of collective power

Continued from previous page

labor movement that NEA state affiliates were involved in from coast to coast.

The victory over Question 2 was national news last fall, especially since it was a bright spot on a night that also included the election of Republican Donald Trump as president.

Dismay and anger over the policies of Trump and U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos were

expressed by several speakers during the RA session in which the video was shown.

But educators from Massachusetts and other NEA affiliates also made it clear that they were ready to fight back — and to stop the Trump/DeVos agenda in its tracks.

NEA President Lily Eskelsen García noted as part of her speech to RA delegates during the morning that the defeat of Question 2 was an

example of how to exercise union power and build coalitions that can act successfully to protect public education.

“All year long, you’ve been using the power of our collective voice to fight and to win,” Eskelsen García said. “Right here in Massachusetts, the MTA, with an amazing coalition of true believers in public education, fought back an initiative on unaccountable charter expansion — and you won!”



# SAVE THE DATES



## 2017 MTA ETHNIC MINORITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE CONFERENCE

FRIDAY-SATURDAY  
DECEMBER 1-2

SHERATON FRAMINGHAM  
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# Educators invited to health and wellness summit

By Jean Conley

The Massachusetts Parent Teacher Association will present its second annual health, safety and wellness summit, "Taking Action! Keeping Children, Schools, Families and Our Communities Healthy," on Thursday, Nov. 16. The MTA is a major sponsor of the event.

Active and retired MTA members are invited to attend the summit, which will be held at the Conference Center at Waltham Woods in Waltham.

The summit will feature workshops, panels and speakers on a wide variety of topics, ranging from head injuries and concussions in school sports to helping students make healthy food choices and "Minding Your Mind," a session on suicide prevention.

Jackie Coogan, chair of the PTA Health and Safety Committee and a former classroom teacher and elementary school counselor for the Everett Public Schools, said the PTA is looking forward to including as many educators as possible to "ensure involvement and stronger partnerships with the 'T's' in the PTA."

Massachusetts PTA President Jennifer Francioso said the MTA's sponsorship of the event this year allowed the organization to invite more speakers and presenters.

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"We are thankful to the MTA for joining forces with us to partner in such a worthy endeavor," said Francioso. "We are dedicated to promoting effective health education programs and services in schools and communities in order to offer children and families the skills, tools and abilities they need to make healthy choices."

Speakers for the event will include Jessica Minahan, a behavior analyst and special educator who is the author of "The Behavior Code: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Teaching the Most Challenging Students"; Dr. Katherine Grimes, a psychiatrist, children's health services researcher and director of the Children's Health Initiative at the Cambridge Health Alliance; National PTA President James Accomando; and MTA Vice President Erik J. Champy.

Champy, a former president of the Massachusetts PTA, will co-present a workshop titled "Gender Identity and Expression: A Personal Perspective." The workshop will feature students and parents speaking about laws, policies and best practices for supporting transgender and gender-nonconforming students.

The event will open with registration, a breakfast buffet featuring healthy options and opportunities for networking.

Two morning workshop sessions and a plenary session featuring keynote speakers will be followed by lunch, a "Taking Action" keynote session and closing remarks.

To see the full agenda and learn about presenters for the event, visit [www.masspta.org](http://www.masspta.org). To register, go to <http://masstea.ch/ptahealthsummit>.

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## 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** — Edward Nelson: 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, 774.239.7823.

**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](mailto: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](mailto:wardman33@aol.com).

**RAYNHAM** — Edward Nelson: third Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Southeast Office, 756 Orchard Street, third floor, Raynham; 508.822.5371. Call Nelson at home: 774.239.7823.

**HIGHER EDUCATION AT-LARGE** — Edward McCourt, 781.325.2553; e-mail: [emccourt.mccc@gmail.com](mailto:emccourt.mccc@gmail.com).

**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.

# Protecting your important investments

Fall is an exciting time for new beginnings. The foliage might inspire you to become a photographer. You might join a seasonal sports league. You might even get married.

No matter how you plan to enjoy the season, you might find yourself investing in valuable items such as camera gear, sports equipment or an engagement ring.

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The Scheduled Personal Property Endorsement extends beyond what is available under a basic policy, providing coverage for physical loss and eliminating deductibles. While adding this endorsement may result in a higher premium, it adds benefits that are not usually covered under your homeowner's policy to further the reach of your coverage.

Your personal property investments create value as well as risk. With the endorsement, you can enjoy your valuables without having to worry about them accidentally breaking or being lost. For example, accidentally losing your wedding ring while working out at the gym would be covered as scheduled property.

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To insure such belongings under personal property coverage, you would need to identify each item you want included.

An extension to this endorsement is the Scheduled Personal Property Agreed-Amount Endorsement.

This coverage values your property according to its appraised amount, ensuring that you're fully covered. Insuring property with this endorsement requires you to list the appraised amount for each item you want covered so that an appraisal can be agreed upon before designating it on your policy.

While items such as your wedding ring may have a consistent value, other items such as fine art or collectibles may fluctuate in value over time — so regular appraisals by an expert are prudent

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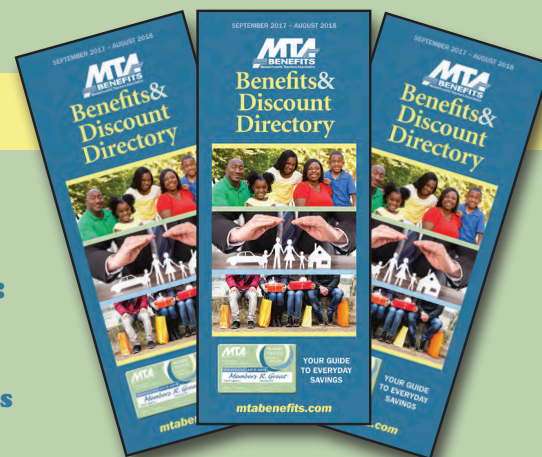
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# MTA members are All In on campaign to build power

Continued from Page 7

“It’s not necessarily ‘us against them’ all the time,” she said. “The union is my means as a worker to make sure that the concerns of the employees are understood.”

Rutter is a professor of sociology, and she sees in union activism the practical application of her theoretical work about groups and movements.

“I see how belonging enhances my own work,” she said, pointing to a month-long teach-in that she and about 90 of her colleagues put together on race and black history last year, connecting the subject matter to the Black Lives Matter movement.

“I reached out through the MSCA to engage others, and soon we had a network of faculty across the campus spreading ideas and practices related to social justice,” Rutter said.

While the power of unionism can uplift members one by one, it can also change the dynamic of a whole local.

Consider what happened to Donna Vanasse, a veteran employee at UMass Amherst and member of the University Staff Association. Returning from a short leave to deal with a family member’s illness, Vanasse was told that her position as a program coordinator was eliminated and that she was laid off.

Vanasse, who is an education support professional, said that she not only lost her job —

she also lost her confidence. But she turned to her union, which met with management and pursued legal options before the university reversed its decision. Within three weeks, her position was restored and she was back at work.

That episode prompted the USA to make fair layoff language a priority in contract bargaining — and Vanasse has stepped up into a leadership role in the local.

“I always knew that the union was there, and I was always happy to pay dues. But I decided it was my time to give back,” she said.

Today, the Swampscott Education Association is building upon the camaraderie and connectedness it experienced last year during a contract campaign. The local formed an action committee and organized rallies, one of which drew more than 100 members to a School Committee meeting in the midst of heated negotiations. Members wore buttons and voiced their concerns in the media.

“Our union is the place to celebrate what we do, and what we did last year showed the public what it is we do,” explained SEA member Kate Thomas Shanahan.

SEA member Lauren Skelton-Leard said that the local will foster the relationship it built with the community by circulating a public newsletter to keep people informed about the work being done by Swampscott educators. Veteran SEA members are

“Our union is the place to celebrate what we do, and what we did last year showed the public what it is we do,” explained SEA member Kate Thomas Shanahan.

also engaged in working with new educators to make sure they understand why belonging to the union will make them better educators.

“We fight for what is important for our students,” said Thomas Shanahan.

MTA Vice President Erik J. Champy said the All In campaign amplifies the work that is being carried out through other MTA initiatives to let educators help each other along their respective career paths.

“For many years, I have been very fortunate to work with MTA members across our Commonwealth,” Champy said. “I have seen the extraordinary talent and passion of our public school educators. The ability to build relationships as union members is a tremendous benefit of our association. We have many opportunities to share ideas and experiences that ultimately benefit the students whom we educate.”

For more information on the All In campaign, visit [massteacher.org/allin](http://massteacher.org/allin).

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Rev: 8/14/17

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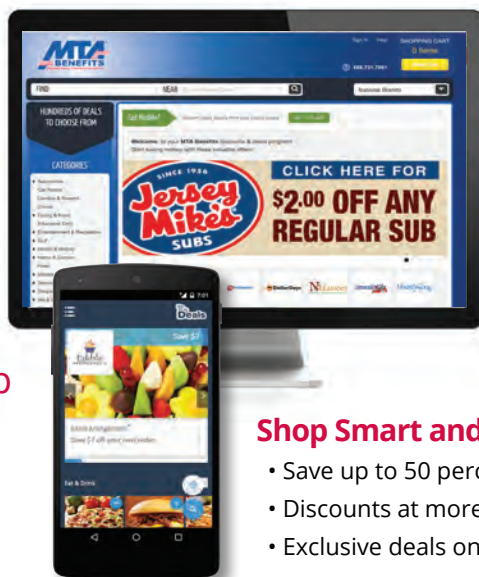
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# LEGACY Project fair provides services for students

Continued from Page 12

by volunteers' arms. They then proceeded to different activity stations.

Sylvia Nkrumah, an education major at Holyoke Community College, said during the June 29 event that she had lacked self-confidence during her first year of college and wasn't sure what she wanted to do in the field. But being part of SEAM has connected her with other education students — not only at HCC but at other institutions as well, especially Westfield State University. Along the way, she has gained more confidence in her abilities.

"Being part of this group has been amazing," she said. "It's the first time I connected with my major in a serious way."

She was proud that her chapter won a club award at HCC and that she personally won an award honoring her commitment to the program and her chosen profession.

Tricia Kiefer, faculty adviser to the HCC SEAM chapter, said that the club has brought students together, providing them with a social network as well as professional support. The HCC chapter is the first SEAM chapter at a community college.

It's harder to organize on community college campuses, Kiefer said, because students commute. Many also have jobs and family to take care of, so their schedules vary. For those reasons, they may need the connections even more, Kiefer added.

For one activity, the chapter screened portions of a film titled "School of the Future" and brought in a panel of professionals to talk about trends in education practices. The chapter has also done professional development in brain development, technology in education and combating summer learning loss. In addition, the chapter held a fundraiser and book drive to benefit Holyoke students.

Ashley Linnehan and Katie Morris are two other MTA members who took a day out of their summer to volunteer at the fair. The Westfield State University students were brimming with enthusiasm. They were excited that the MTA offers free workshops for students, including sessions on the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure, classroom management, bullying and institutional racism. "We all get along so well and we're all so passionate about teaching," Linnehan said. "It's amazing."

They joined aspiring teachers from other states at a pre-RA conference and learned about similarities and differences. From an Alabama contingent, they learned how to line dance. And what did they teach other students about Massachusetts? "We taught them to appreciate Tom Brady," Morris said.

Activities at the community fair were both fun and supportive. Options included an obstacle course, dancing, arts and crafts, talking to local firefighters about how to prevent fires, and having their teeth and eyes checked by medical professionals.

At one station, students played a game designed to help them recognize symbols related to health and safety, such as street signs. The booth was run by the Joint Committee for Children's Health Care in Everett, an organization founded in 1994 by MTA member Jackie Coogan, who taught in the community.

Speaking of the fair, Coogan said, "I think it's absolutely wonderful. It brings the NEA, the MTA and the Everett Teachers Association right down into the community."

Kim Auger, president of the ETA, felt the same. In brief remarks before the students arrived, school officials praised the union for providing stability and making Everett an attractive place to work. Auger returned the favor by expressing appreciation for support from the administration for activities that show educators in a positive light.

NEA Secretary-Treasurer Princess Moss may have been thinking ahead to the RA when she told the assembled crowd, "Thank you for being willing to disrupt the status quo." But in Everett on Thursday, the spotlight was on fun.

*The LEGACY Project — Leaders Empowering Grassroots Advocacy for Communities and Youth — is part of the NEA Student Leadership Conference for the NEA Student Program. For more information, go to <https://ra.nea.org/delegate-resources/the-legacy-project/>.*

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## Help on the way for members cut from RetirementPlus

**H**elp is on the way for thousands of MTA members who were recently told by the Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System that they are not enrolled in the RetirementPlus program, although they believed they were enrolled.

This problem only affects members who transferred into the MTRS from another Massachusetts public employee retirement system.

In response to member anger and concern, the MTA's Legal Services Division filed more than 300 cases for members in about 80 local affiliates and has met with the MTRS executive staff to secure corrective action for these and other affected members.

The MTA and MTRS are jointly working on a solution that will avoid litigation, correct the law and secure the RetirementPlus rights of thousands.

*For updated information, go to [massteacher.org/legal](http://massteacher.org/legal).*

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# Conference generates energy and enthusiasm

Continued from Page 3

“We need to think big,” Lerner said. “We need to organize to create the country that we want, to create the communities that we want, to create the schools that we want.”

MTA members at the Summer Conference were up to the task.

New leaders and new local presidents took part in tracks aimed at sharpening skills and exploring ways to strengthen and promote their locals.

“While working with the new presidents and their teams, I witnessed the incredible wealth of talented leadership within our association,” said MTA Vice President Erik J. Champy. “The New President Leadership Institute prepares leaders with the knowledge and strategies to strengthen our local affiliates. Our new leaders

have demonstrated a commitment to serve and organize our members in the days ahead.”

Union Academy, a new Summer Conference offering, examined the intersection of traditional collective bargaining issues and progressive advocacy. Many Union Academy participants canvassed in Amherst to promote Raise Up Massachusetts’ agenda of raising the minimum wage, establishing paid family and medical leave for workers, and adding a 4 percent tax on annual income over \$1 million to generate revenue for public education and transportation. Other activists traveled to Chicopee to bring attention to the Chicopee Education Association’s contract fight.

Mersh Lubel Kanis of the Sandwich Education Association,

Eileen Terwilliger of the Dennis-Yarmouth Educators Association and Deborah Mousley of the Methuen Education Association joined Madeloni in the door-to-door canvass in Amherst.

Though Terwilliger and Kanis were new to canvassing, they rapidly became comfortable advocates. “The people we met were happy we were there and wanted to talk to us,” Kanis said.

Madeloni said that member-to-member conversations will keep the union intact even as it comes under assault.

“So long as we stay connected, MTA members will be strong enough to make our voices heard and win the schools and communities that we want,” she said. “With this work, we are moving forward and building



Photo by Scott McLennan

Mersh Lubel Kanis, left, and Deborah Mousley were among the members who canvassed in Amherst.

on the victories we have already experienced.”

To see more photos of the 2017 MTA Summer Conference, please go to <http://masstea.ch/2w2Bo1R>.

## Obituaries

**Caroline M. “Bonnie” Bresnahan, 64**, of Pittsfield. Taught at Pittsfield High School before becoming a middle school teacher in the Adams-Cheshire school system until her retirement in 2009. July 5.

**Helen M. Cerrone, 76**, of Worcester. Taught elementary school in the Worcester Public Schools for more than 35 years. Was a Title I math teacher at the Chandler Magnet School for 20 years before retiring in 2007. May 28.

**Carol J. Cooney, 82**, of Leominster. Taught elementary and middle school in the Ayer-Shirley Public Schools for 40 years. April 23.

**Maureen Cox, 72**, of Centerville. Was employed by the Massachusetts

Teachers Association for many years. June 18.

**Liette M. Fregeau, 98**, of Brockton. Taught in Walpole and West Bridgewater, as well as in Vermont. July 25.

**Doris “Dorie” M. Kelley, 83**, of Brewster. Was a teacher in Chelmsford and an early childhood educator in Yarmouth for more than 28 years, retiring from the MacArthur Elementary School in 1997. May 5.

**Carol A. Manganaro, 66**, of Harvard. Was an elementary school teacher for several years at the Henry Whittemore Elementary School in Waltham, retiring in 2008. May 18.

**Matilda S. Mann, 87**, of Great Barrington. Taught at the Sheffield

Center School for many years, retiring in 1988. March 30.

**Laurie S. Pieterse, 85**, of Longmeadow. Taught for 30 years in the Springfield school system, retiring from Central High School. June 1.

**Evelyn Rapoza, 90**, of Largo, Florida, formerly of Taunton, Raynham and Barnstable. Taught business education for 33 years at Norton High School, retiring as chair of the business department. April 14.

**Joan M. Sampson, 84**, of Marshfield and Kingston. Was an elementary school teacher in Scituate and taught reading in Marshfield. April 24.

**Janet M. Santerre, 63**, of Plymouth. Was an elementary school

teacher at Governor John Carver Elementary School in Carver for more than 35 years. June 23.

**Carolyn P. Schindelwig, 77**, of Taunton. Was an elementary school teacher in Attleboro and Taunton. She retired after 25 years at the Elizabeth Pole School in Taunton. Nov. 2.

**Salvatore J. “Sal” Uglietta**, of Medford. Was employed by the Massachusetts Teachers Association for 23 years. July 24.

**Ty Vignone, 79**. His 51-year career as an educator included more than 30 years at Newton North High School, where he taught history until last year, and many years teaching at Day Junior High School in Newton. Nov. 27.



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# Educators back initiatives to ensure fairness

By Scott McLennan

**M**TA members are playing a vital role in campaigns to improve the lives of working families through paid family and medical leave and a \$15-per-hour minimum wage in Massachusetts.

Educators were among the thousands of demonstrators in Boston on Labor Day supporting striking fast food workers, who are attempting to unionize as well as fight for the higher minimum wage and paid leave.

Bills now before the Legislature — House 2365 and Senate 1004 — would increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2021. And they would include municipal employees, who have not benefited from previous statutory minimum wage increases.

On a parallel track, Raise Up Massachusetts is gathering the signatures necessary for initiative petitions that would add paid leave and the \$15 minimum wage to the 2018 ballot. The MTA is a member of the Raise Up coalition, which has already succeeded in getting the Fair Share Amendment on next year's ballot.

"The MTA is proud to be a member of the Raise Up coalition," said MTA President Barbara Madeloni. "Our members understand the impact on the children we educate when a family struggles financially. Increasing the minimum wage and allowing paid leave for someone to care for a child or relative are reasonable steps we can take to greatly improve our communities."

The coalition successfully spearheaded a previous campaign to raise the state's minimum hourly wage — now at \$11 an hour — and led the effort to establish earned sick leave for workers.

Madeloni said that preferably the Legislature will pass the minimum wage bills currently before it.

Because of Proposition 2½ guidelines, extending an increase in the minimum wage to public employees via legislation requires either passage by a two-thirds majority of lawmakers or a sufficient budget appropriation.

If the measure is placed on the ballot instead of being resolved at the State House, municipal



Photo by Scott McLennan

Educators were among the marchers in Boston on Labor Day supporting fast food workers, who are attempting to unionize as well as fighting for a \$15-per-hour minimum wage.

employees would still need a bill passed making them eligible for the higher minimum wage. Many MTA members who are education support professionals currently earn less than \$15 an hour.

"If the minimum wage does not rise for all, Massachusetts will be penalizing countless public employees, including many of our education support professionals, who deliver vital health, safety and education services," Madeloni said.

According to a report by the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, raising the minimum hourly wage to \$15 would benefit close to 1 million workers, or about 30 percent of the state's workforce.

Raise Up will seek at least 200,000 signatures by late November to place the two measures before voters. After the necessary signatures are gathered, the Legislature has until June 2018 to act.

Raise Up proposes a Paid Family Leave and

Medical Leave Insurance Program that would cover up to 16 weeks of job-protected paid leave to care for an ill or injured family member or a new child — and up to 26 weeks of job-protected leave for one's own serious illness or injury.

The Fair Share Amendment ballot question will ask voters to approve an additional 4 percent tax on annual income over \$1 million. Projected revenue, estimated at nearly \$2 billion a year, would be used for public education and transportation needs.

"I look forward to joining my MTA brothers and sisters and our Raise Up partners in collecting signatures and doing this crucial work to help students, families and our communities," Madeloni said.

*For updates and further information, please visit [raiseupma.org](http://raiseupma.org) and [massteacher.org](http://massteacher.org).*