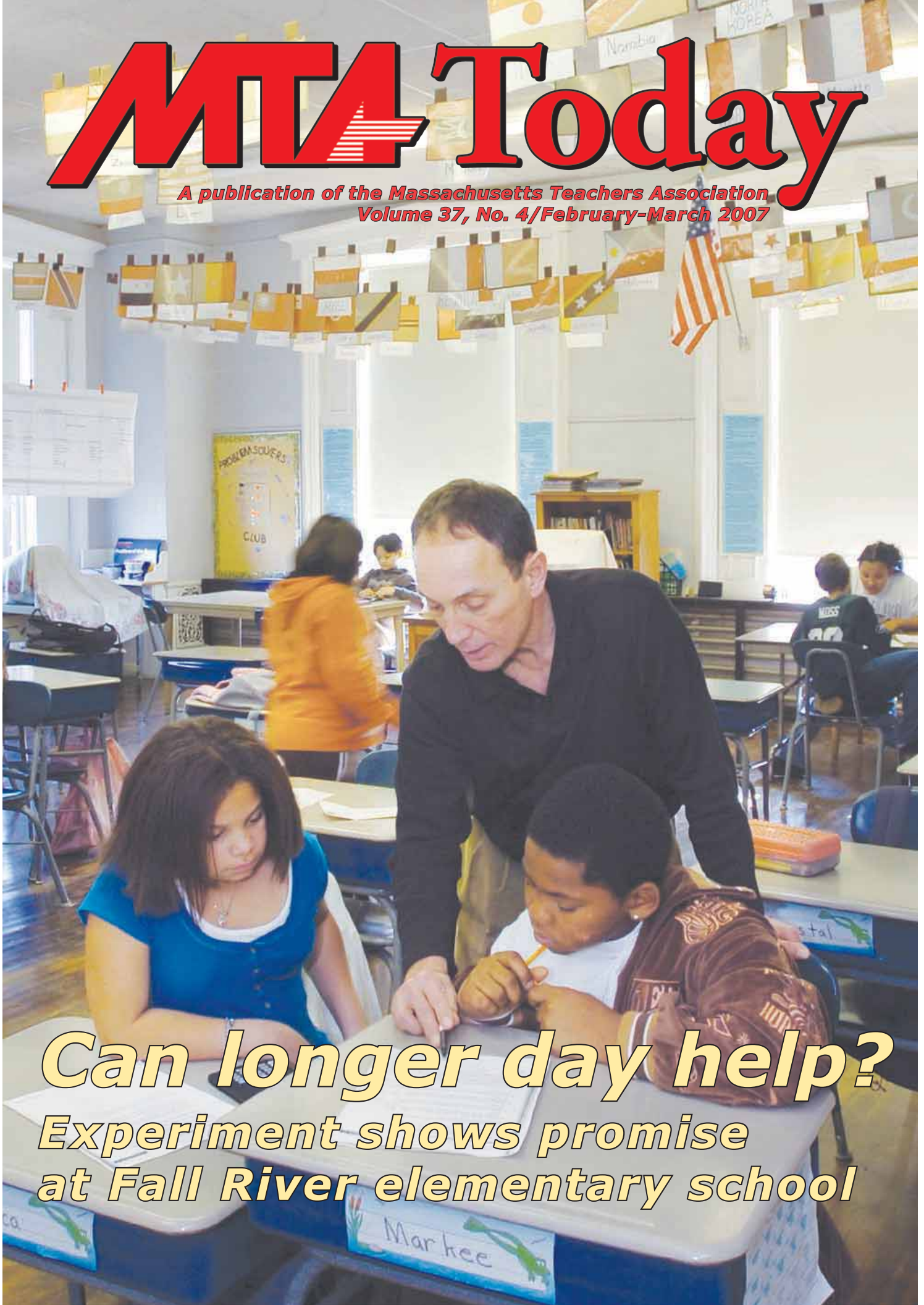


MTA Today

*A publication of the Massachusetts Teachers Association
Volume 37, No. 4/February-March 2007*



***Can longer day help?
Experiment shows promise
at Fall River elementary school***

MTA Today

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

Fifth-grade teacher Richard Borges, who is pictured helping students Markee Malone and Erica Croce, supports the longer day that was implemented this year at the N.B. Borden Elementary School in Fall River. A majority of Borges' students agreed with his assessment. The main reasons cited by both Markee and Erica were that students learn more, don't have to rush so much and have more time to spend with friends — plus they get to take fun classes in the newly created Kids' College. Coverage of the extended day experiment begins on Page 6.



Cover photo by Christine Peterson

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MTA wins public relations awards



The MTA won two top awards at the 2007 conference of the NEA Public Relations Council of the States. A television ad developed by the MTA Public Relations/Organizing Campaign Committee and its media firm, SS+K, received the Norm Delisle Broadcast Award, which honors "outstanding achievement in paid broadcasting." The ad, titled "Declaration," was aired during the spring of 2006. The award is named for the late Norm Delisle of the Connecticut Education Association, who is described by the PR Council as "a true pioneer in association paid advertising." In addition, the MTA Retired Members E-Alert, an electronic newsletter, garnered the first-place award in the competition among NEA's largest state affiliates in the Electronic Media category. The e-alert, which is distributed periodically, is produced by Megan Secatore, the Web content manager in the MTA Division of Communications, and Jo Ann Fitzgerald, MTA's retired members service specialist, who works in the Governmental Services Division. The awards were announced on Jan. 8 in San Diego.

NEA Foundation honors MTA members

Kathleen Keane, a member of the MTA and the Foxborough Education Association, was

honored at the NEA Foundation's 12th Annual Salute to Excellence in Education gala on Feb. 8. She was one of 40 educators nationwide to receive The I CAN Learn — NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence.



Kathleen Keane

Also honored at the event in Washington, D.C., was Suzanne Strauss, a 12th-grade English teacher at Northampton High School. She was the sole recipient of the William G. Carr Award for participating in professional development

activities that enhance the academic skills of herself and her colleagues.

To incorporate Russian and Ukrainian literature into her world literature classes, Strauss traveled to Odessa, Ukraine, to establish an international exchange program and teach a high school course.



Suzanne Strauss

The NEA Foundation awards programs are open to all NEA members, including education support professionals and higher education faculty and staff. The deadline for nominating awardees for 2007 is May 1. For more information, go to www.neafoundation.org.

Quote-Unquote

'As a businessman, I would rather see the state invest our economic development dollars in proven strategies such as strengthening public education and workforce training and protecting vital services than in paying for ineffective tax loopholes.'

—Arnold Hiatt, former chief executive of the Stride Rite Corporation, in a Feb. 23 letter to *The Boston Globe*

Correction

A graphic on Page 7 of the December/January issue of *MTA Today* that accompanied a story about the impact of new MCAS regulations identified 77 percent of "not low-income" students and 45 percent of "low-income" students as scoring 220 and above on the Grade 10 ELA and math tests. The correct numbers are 90 percent and 68 percent, respectively.

Mohler-Faria calls collaboration key

Governor's education advisor sees inspiring, mentoring as part of mission

By Laura Barrett

One of Gov. Deval Patrick's early decisions in office was to appoint Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria, the 59-year-old president of Bridgewater State College, as his education advisor. It was a six-month appointment.

Under this arrangement, Mohler-Faria continues to lead the college while working on education issues for the governor on Beacon Hill for about 20 hours a week. One of his tasks has been to explore possible changes in the education infrastructure to provide greater coordination of services from preschool through college.

Mohler-Faria is the grandson of Cape Verdean immigrants. His father worked in construction while his mother labored in cranberry bogs and factories in southeastern Massachusetts. Mohler-Faria, who grew up in Wareham, was the first member of his family to graduate from high school. He took his education much further, eventually receiving an Ed.D. in higher education administration from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Today, he lives in Mashpee with his wife, Kathy, and their 15-year-old son, Jonathan.

Like Patrick, Mohler-Faria talks about his personal experiences in the context of inspiring low-income children, particularly children of color, to work hard and go to college. Below are excerpts of an interview he gave to *MTA Today* in early February.

Q Please tell me a little about your background.

A I grew up in a small town that had a very high percentage of minority families. It was in the late '50s and early '60s, a very different time. Back then, many students of color were tracked in many ways, and I was one of those. My family valued education, but we didn't really understand the process. It was more about getting through high school and getting a job. I was tracked into a vocational program around carpentry.

Q Do you think the situation has changed for students of color?

A I think it is much improved. I think we still have got some more to do.

Q What do you think of the academic tracking that occurs in most high schools, from honors down to basic courses?

A If you look at the levels that exist based upon academic achievement, that's different than being tracked by race.

Q What did you do after you graduated from high school?

A It was 1965. I did not have the ability nor the desire to go on to higher education.



Photos by Megan Secatore

Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria calls the under-funding of education in the state an "overriding concern."

Vietnam was raging, so clearly for me it was going to be the military. I was a healthy 18-year-old so I knew I was going to get drafted. So, along with a couple of friends, I joined the Air Force. I never went to Vietnam. I was in South Dakota for just about the entire four years.

Q What was your inspiration to go to college?

A I met a young man who had grown up in poverty in South Carolina that was much worse than I had experienced. He was in the Air Force but was taking some classes in his off time. We got to talking, and over time he persuaded me to think about doing that, so I did. I took two courses and did fairly well. I started to realize that if I was going to do anything after the Air Force, I was going to have to go to college. When I left the Air Force, I entered Cape Cod Community College. I went there for two years, transferred to [Boston University], finished my bachelor's degree and then did a master's degree in U.S. History. I didn't know what I was going to do. I thought I would probably teach. I did teach history for years part time, though never full time in a tenure track. Eventually I got a doctorate degree from UMass.

Q Did you figure you would do something in college administration?

A Even before I went to UMass I worked for [former Cape Cod Community College President] Jim Hall. Early on he tried to convince me to take an administrator's track. I can remember as a young man he was telling me I would make a great [college] president someday, which was the furthest thing from my mind. I thought that was out of the realm of possibility. For him to see that early on and encourage me was inspirational. One of the greatest moments of my life was to have him on the platform when I was being inaugurated as president.

Q So it is your view that people need mentors?

A I am a firm believer that we have a responsibility to mentor people. It's one

of the things that I've done before becoming president, and even now I do it more. In addition to providing practical advice about what to study and so forth, a mentor can be inspirational.

Q Do students in the K-12 system get enough mentoring?

A Absolutely not. The demands on teachers in the classroom are incredible. Many of them do mentor students ... but I'd love to see the opportunity expanded for teachers to mentor students.

Q How big a problem is the level of resources available in education?

A For us, we have to first understand what is the appropriate structure to move us to excellence. That is certainly something the governor is spending a lot of time thinking about. ... What is the right level of resources? ... I don't think anybody argues with the fact that we need more resources. There are limitations on the resources we have for any number of critical needs we have in the state.

Q What structural issues in education are you referring to?

A I think it is time for all of us to step back and look at the governance structure from the top to the bottom — what we can develop in collaboration that will work better.

Q What are the biggest concerns in higher education?

A The overriding concern in the Commonwealth is that the system is under-funded. That clearly is an issue in terms of our ability to create the kind of excellence we are capable of.

Q How has that manifested itself in the state?

A It has resulted in higher costs for students, which creates an issue with affordability. We are seeing a lack of a coordinated

It's all about building bridges

When you are treated with disrespect and denied a seat at the table, it is easy to develop a bunker mentality. There is a tendency to try to solve problems on your own, protect what is yours and watch your back. That is what the atmosphere was like for us in recent years.



Anne Wass
MTA President

When you are treated like a friend and a professional, the world looks very different. No, the problems in education haven't all disappeared, and funding has not suddenly materialized, but the atmosphere

is much more open and collaborative now that Deval Patrick has become our governor.

MTA Vice President Paul Toner and I are eager to share our ideas — your ideas — with the new administration. We are also making it a high priority to reach out to other education and community groups to invite them to work with us toward common goals. It is all about building bridges.

We have begun building bridges to the new administration. Back in December, our members participated in several community forums that the governor-elect organized even before he was inaugurated.

In January, we were pleased to introduce NEA President Reg Weaver to our new governor

MTA Vice President Paul Toner and I are eager to share our ideas — your ideas — with the new administration. We are also making it a high priority to reach out to other education and community groups to invite them to work with us toward common goals.

during the NEA's Northeast Regional Leadership Conference. They share a common belief that all children are entitled to a high-quality education.

That month, we had productive meetings with the new secretary of administration and finance and the governor's new education advisor, among other state officials. We attend such meetings in order to listen, as well as to talk. The traffic on these bridges travels in both directions.

We are also building new bridges with other constituency groups within the education community. Even during the Romney years, the big education groups representing teachers, administrators, school committee members and parents stayed in close contact, primarily through a coalition called MassPartners for Public Schools. We are continuing to work with that coalition, but we know we need to do more.

We are working closely with the Department of Education. Even though we do not always agree with the department's policies and practices, we need to share information and ideas with the agency that regulates our profes-

sion. However, we reserve our right to publicly criticize the DOE and the Board of Education when we feel their actions are not in the best interest of public education or our members. And we are continuing to advocate for significant changes in the structure and membership of the BOE.

We are also reaching out to subgroups within education, most recently meeting with the associations representing school counselors and school nurses. We are strengthening our ties to a group called Early Education for All, as well.

As part of our Strategic Direction Initiative, we are asking our local associations and chapters to build more bridges internally and with the outside world. We are stronger when we look out for one another, including those who represent a small percentage of our membership. In any good democracy, the rights of the minorities are protected. The same must be true of our union.

Are secretaries on your campus having a problem? Faculty members, find out what their concerns are and stand by them when they need you.

Are nurses in your school frustrated because they are paid less than teachers even though they are required to have similar qualifications? Teachers, defend the nurses' interests as you would have them defend yours.

Do newer members feel excluded from leadership roles in your local? Invite them in. New members benefit from mentoring on the union side of their jobs as well as the professional side. Though new to our profession, they deserve a voice.

Building bridges is hard work, but it beats the alternative — which is living in that bunker.

Working in unison, JwJ and MTA can help kids and communities

By Megan Secatore

“The premise of Jobs with Justice is that none of us can get what we want by working alone,” says Andrei Joseph. “You show up — not only for your own struggle but for others.”

Founded in 1987 amid the strife at Eastern Airlines and eventual strike by its employees,

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. For additional information, please refer to the guidelines posted at www.massteacher.org/news/mta_today.

JwJ now has 40 chapters in 29 states. Its mission is “to improve working people's standard of living, fight for job security and protect workers' right to organize.”

JwJ sets forth four “Unity Principles” — coalition building, reciprocity, action and relationships. Members are asked to sign this pledge: “During the next year, ‘I’ll Be There’ at least five times for someone else's fight, as well as my own.”

As MTA's representative on the executive committee of Massachusetts JwJ, Joseph, of the Concord-Carlisle Teachers Association, plans to put the pledge into action by encouraging synergy among MTA members and other labor and community organizations in the service of working people at all strata.

For example, Joseph pointed to rising health care costs as “an issue that affects every one of our locals.”

“But this issue can't be resolved by MTA alone,” he said. “The legislation that we file deserves the support of labor and community groups across the state. And MTA, in turn, should join other public-sector workers, private-sector workers and health care workers to

Jobs with Justice sets forth four “Unity Principles” — coalition building, reciprocity, action and relationships. Members are asked to sign this pledge: “During the next year, ‘I’ll Be There’ at least five times for someone else's fight, as well as my own.”

address the long-term need for a single-payer system.”

MTA's affiliation with JwJ began under past President Meline Kasparian, who was a Springfield teacher. More recently, Joseph said, past President Catherine A. Boudreau walked a picket line in support of a living wage for Boston janitors.

Please turn to 'Being there'/Page 25

Inaugural event thrills kids, educators

Governor tells students to stay involved, praises teachers for 'lighting a spark'

By Sarah Nathan

On the campaign trail, candidate Deval Patrick promised to engage the students and teachers of the Commonwealth. On inauguration day, Gov. Deval Patrick kept his word.

A few hours after taking the oath of office before thousands at the State House, Patrick convened another event — a Youth Inaugural — for more than 1,000 high school students and teachers at The Citi/Shubert Theatre in downtown Boston.

His message was twofold. He told the students to persevere and stay involved, and he praised the teachers of Massachusetts who go to work in their classrooms “every day with the idea of lighting a spark.”

The words were warmly welcomed by the educators in attendance, who had endured years of gubernatorial administrations in which criticism, rather than praise, set the tone.

“It made me feel great,” said John L. Reed, an equity officer who has worked at Barnstable High School for 33 years. “That’s why I come to work every day. I come to work every day for the kids.”

Reed said the event, during which several students had



During the Youth Inaugural at Boston’s Citi/Shubert Theatre on Jan. 4, Gov. Deval Patrick urged students to show persistence and take the steps needed to succeed. The audience was treated to a rousing rendition of “Sing, Sing, Sing,” performed by the Brockton High School Marching Band.

Photos by George Abbott White

a chance to speak directly to the governor and ask questions, gave young people a voice.

“We tend not to listen or to put words in people’s mouths,” Reed said. “We tend to direct. I think it

is essential that young people have their say because these ideas may never come to adults.”

The students who traveled to Boston with Vincent Macrina, longtime music director for the

Brockton Public Schools, were heard loud and clear. Macrina brought 80 members of the Brockton High School Marching Band, which performed a brassy version
Please turn to **Brockton**/Page 27

MTA retiree helps determined mother make difficult trek to polls

By Jo Ann Fitzgerald

During his inaugural address in front of the State House, Gov. Deval Patrick shared a story about Leatrice Dratfield, an 82-year-old voter who made an extraordinary effort to cast her ballot on Election Day.

Dratfield, who needs to use a walker after recovering from cancer and several fractured bones, lives on the sixth floor of a Worcester high-rise. Because of a broken elevator, the only way she could get to the polls was to walk down six flights of stairs.

Dratfield was so committed to voting for Patrick that she made the long descent — with help from her daughter, MTA Retired member Stacy Amaral.

Patrick first learned of the effort it took Dratfield to reach the polls when he received a letter from Amaral, he told the Boston crowd on Jan. 4.

“It is time for a change,” the incoming governor declared to applause. “That frail 82-year-old did not walk down six flights of stairs for us to conduct the business of government the same old way.”

Amaral was home baking cookies in the same inner-city Worcester neighborhood where she has lived for 30 years when she heard Patrick talk about her mother and her own role in assisting her on Election Day, and she was thrilled.

Before retiring in 2006, Amaral spent many years as an educator in the Worcester Public Schools. She started in 1969 as an English as a Second Language tutor at the secondary level and later was an elementary adjustment counselor.

Amaral has also put her educational skills to use in other settings.

She has worked for social service agencies, including Youth Opportunities Upheld Inc., a leading child welfare and behavioral health organization in Central Massachusetts. And concern for students who were at risk of dropping out led her to become a founding member of Casa Maria, which helps keep young men and women in school.

“Many Latino youth at the eighth-grade level were in danger of leaving before completing high school,” Amaral said. “There was — and still is — a need for programs to prevent this from happening.”

Along with co-workers and her supervisor, Judy Thompson, Amaral helped develop a program that stressed collaboration between the Worcester Public Schools and the state Department of Social Services. The local initiative was part of a larger one called the School and Community Support Program.

“Foster children tend to move frequently, and this presents challenges for students and school systems,” Amaral said. “We need to make better connections with at-risk students.”

Amaral hasn’t slowed down even now. She currently is certified to work as a medical interpreter.

Her mother, by the way, was not the only member of the family to be impressed by Deval Patrick.

To Amaral herself, Patrick came across as someone who was talking about connecting to people and meant what he said.

Connecting to the people in her community and making her voice heard at the ballot box are things that Amaral expects to be doing for a long time, no matter how much effort it takes.



Stacy Amaral

Feedback positive for school's

By Laura Barrett

The N.B. Borden Elementary School in Fall River is one of the oldest public school buildings in Massachusetts, but it houses one of the Commonwealth's newest and most ambitious educational experiments — a substantially longer day designed by the staff, supported by the union and funded by the state.

Though the building's infrastructure could use some updating, N.B. Borden Principal Timothy Lifrak takes a certain pride in the fact that his school was constructed in 1868, three years after the Civil War ended. He is also proud to point out that the lack of a modern facility has not prevented the staff from implementing an eight-hour school day redesigned to meet 21st-century educational demands.

The N.B. Borden is one of 10 Massachusetts schools to receive a state Expanded Learning Time grant to increase instructional time by 30 percent starting this year. The initiative was spearheaded by Massachusetts 2020, a non-profit organization. The MTA endorsed the pilot program once provisions were in place requiring school staff to have input, options and more pay for more work.

And interest is continuing to grow: Twenty-nine new districts have been awarded planning grants



Photo by Christine Peterson

Implementing a longer day at the N.B. Borden School has been exciting and challenging, according to Principal Timothy Lifrak, kindergarten teacher Grace Farias (center) and reading specialist Erin Pavao. Even with more time, Farias sometimes wonders how they can accomplish everything they need to get done.

to develop proposals for ELT programs starting next fall or in the following year.

The experiences at the N.B. Borden and the other ELT schools could help them decide whether to

proceed and how to move ahead if they do.

The N.B. Borden is a 140-student K-5 school in a brick building typical of the Victorian era in

which it was built. The ceilings are high, and the banisters are made of large slabs of woods that you don't find in many buildings today.

There are not a lot of amenities. One small room serves triple

ELT grant process requires involvement, flexibility

The Expanded Learning Time program was initiated by Massachusetts 2020, a non-profit organization co-founded by former gubernatorial candidate Chris Gabrieli and former Clinton administration official Jennifer Davis. Now a state-funded program administered by the Department of Education, the initiative helps schools and districts figure out how to redesign their educational programs with additional time.

This year, 10 ELT schools were opened in five districts: Boston, Cambridge, Fall River, Malden and Worcester. Others had considered applying, but decided not to for a variety of reasons, including lack of engagement with the local association and teachers, parental resistance, inadequate time for planning and concerns about whether state funding would dry up in the near future.

Although state funding is only guaranteed for one year at a time,

'Make sure staff members are involved early on in the planning, because if it comes from the administration on down, it's not going to work,' said Gerard Ruane, president of the Malden Education Association.

Gov. Deval Patrick frequently spoke of the need for a longer school day on the campaign trail and is a supporter of the ELT program.

In October, planning grants were issued to 29 districts for programs in 84 schools that will begin in the fall of 2007 or the following year, if they are ultimately submitted and approved. The required increase in instructional time has dropped from 30 percent to 25 percent, and many schools are taking two years to plan rather than just one.

The central requirements of the program remain the same, however: The longer day must include a combination of core academic

instruction, enrichment and more time for teacher collaboration and professional development.

Gerard Ruane, president of the Malden Education Association, said the planning process was time-consuming and sometimes controversial in his district, but, he believes, ultimately worth it. One of two schools that began the process decided not to apply for the grant. The Salemwood School in Malden did proceed and implemented the program this year.

The Salemwood is a 1,200-student K-8 school and has posed more logistical challenges than the much smaller N.B. Borden School

in Fall River. Ruane said that educators have grappled with scheduling problems and have reduced the number of enrichment services that were offered at the beginning of the year. Despite the challenges, he believes that the staff will support applying for the grant's renewal next year.

His advice to districts in which new programs are being considered is to "make sure staff members are involved early on in the planning, because if it comes from the administration on down, it's not going to work."

That involvement must continue throughout the year, and the educators overseeing the process must remain flexible.

"They have to continually ask if students are improving academically in the way that the program was designed to help them improve," Ruane said. "And don't be afraid to admit mistakes and make changes."

experiment with longer day

duty as a cafeteria, auditorium and gym, and there is no swing set in the yard. But Beverly Pavao, a Title I facilitator for Fall River and a member of the N.B. Borden School Council, is not complaining.

"We try not to cry about what we don't have," she said. "We try to be proactive."

They have to be. The N.B. Borden has among the lowest MCAS scores in the state. The scores are persistently, maddeningly low, despite impressive gains in parental involvement, the implementation of Reading First and other educational initiatives and, by all accounts, a dedicated staff and principal.

On the 2006 grade four English Language Arts test, for example, no student scored in the Proficient or Advanced categories, 59 percent scored in Needs Improvement, and 41 percent in Warning/Failing.

"Every April or May when they take the MCAS I say, 'This is the year our scores will start to go up.' But they don't," Lifrak said. "Every year we try to analyze why."

He is genuinely troubled. The principal of the N.B. Borden for 15 years, Lifrak is a small, wiry man with a pepper-and-salt beard. He is determined to crack the toughest nut in education: how to raise achievement levels and improve the life prospects for his students, 92 percent of whom are low-income and a third of whom speak English as a second language.

"In August of 2005 I was looking at the Internet and I saw information about the Expanded Learning Time grant," Lifrak said. "As soon as I read it I said, 'I'm



Photo by Christine Petersen

The fifth-graders in Richard Borges' class have a lot of ideas about what they want to do when they grow up. One student wants to become an astronaut, and another aspires to be an archaeologist. They will need to master more than just the basics to achieve their dreams.

going to do whatever I can to be part of this."

With help from Massachusetts 2020, Lifrak pulled together a team of faculty and school district staff to develop a grant proposal. The plan was supported by the Fall River Educators' Association, then

led by Bill Kaylor. Union buy-in is a requirement of the program. Lack of communication with teachers and with the union are the main reasons some of the other plans never got off the ground, according to Massachusetts 2020.

After nine months of planning,

'We try not to cry about what we don't have,' said Beverly Pavao, a Title I facilitator for Fall River and a member of the N.B. Borden School Council. 'We try to be proactive.' They have to be. The N.B. Borden has among the lowest MCAS scores in the state. The scores are persistently, maddeningly low, despite impressive gains in parental involvement, the implementation of Reading First and other educational initiatives and, by all accounts, a dedicated staff and principal.

Lifrak left for summer vacation thinking his school was not in the running. He was shocked to receive a call from a colleague who had read in the newspaper that the N.B. Borden and two other Fall River schools had won ELT grants.

"Two things went through my mind," Lifrak said. "'This is great!' And 'I'm not going to have another day off this summer.' And that was true."



Implementing the program took a lot of effort on the part of the entire staff. The ELT grants provide \$1,300 per pupil in additional state funds and require a complete restructuring of the day,

Please turn to **Longer day**/Page 10

Educators would like chance to provide more input

The MTA asked the teachers and education support professionals at the N.B. Borden school to participate in an anonymous survey to gauge some of their views on the pros and cons of the Expanded Learning Time program. Nearly all of the staff involved with the school responded: 10 teachers and six ESPs.

The following are some of the results.

■ Nearly nine out of 10 staff — 87 percent — said they support continuation of the ELT program at their school. All of the teacher respondents and all but two of the ESP respondents supported its continuation. One respondent wrote, "This program has had a significant impact on the students, parents and staff." Another commented, "This program has been a gift for these children."

■ A majority — 56 percent — said they did not have adequate opportunity to help design the ELT program. That may be in part because some of the planning occurred during the summer. However, 44 percent say they currently do not have adequate input into how the program is being implemented. One respondent wrote, "There needs to be more down time in between subjects. It would have been nice to have some input into the program. ... Only testing will show the results of the longer day."

■ Additional compensation for staff who work the longer day and more time focused on academics topped the list of program components identified as "very important."

■ Participants were asked to rate reasons for not having an ELT program. They were divided over whether the day is "too long" for at least some of the students, but only 13 percent (two respondents) felt that was true for "most" students. Two-thirds felt that it is "not" or "rarely" true that the day is too long for teachers.

■ Although most respondents had rated the increased focus on academics as "very important," some apparently do not feel that the mix is just right. Two-thirds (69 percent) said that there is too much focus on academics at the expense of enrichment for most or some of the students.

One respondent commented, "I wish the students were able to have more music, gym and arts, especially due to the child obesity problem." Another called for "more enrichment for students ... for example, Kids' College two times per week rather than only once." Two-thirds also said that it is true for "some" or "most" that there is not enough collaborative planning time for teachers.

EMAC leader says it's her turn to get other members involved

By Sarah Nathan

Susan Baker is a longtime teacher but a relatively "new" union member. "New" meaning involved.

Baker, who was appointed chair of the MTA Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee in September, is a veteran teacher with 24 years of classroom experience. A native of Cape Cod, she has taught in several states, including Florida, North Carolina and South Carolina. She has worked in public schools throughout her career and has always held a union card.

But, as she explained, she didn't "get it" until she moved back to Massachusetts.

"In all the places I lived ... yes, I paid my dues. Yes, there was a contract," said Baker, who will turn 50 in June and is the mother of three daughters, two of them grown. "But I didn't know why. Here in Massachusetts, there is a different feeling ... People talk about the contract and working conditions."

Baker, a sixth-grade teacher at Morse Pond School in Falmouth, attributes her rise from rank-and-file member to committee chair to good mentoring. Learning from the advice and guidance of others, she has had a first-rate education on the importance of the labor movement. That experience, she said, was what motivated her to get involved.

"I know now that the contract is something I need to work with and know that it is fair," she said.



Photo by Sarah Nathan

Susan Baker, chair of the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee and a sixth-grade teacher, wants members "to feel that they are the MTA."

"I think getting involved has improved my professionalism."

Baker added, "The more I learn about the union, the better off I feel and the more secure I feel in my professional life. This gives me the security I need, knowing that I can provide for my 9-year-old daughter, Taylor."

Baker got her feet wet four years ago when Rachel Zaino, a colleague and the former treasurer of the Falmouth Educators Association, enlisted her to be a delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly in Washington, D.C. While there, Baker got reacquainted with Julia Monteiro-Johnson, an MTA Board member and president of the Den-

nis-Yarmouth Educators Association, who showed her the ropes at the RA and in the years to come.

"I probably wouldn't have gotten involved if Julia hadn't brought me along," Baker said.

Baker learned of the EMAC — previously called the Minority Affairs Committee, or MAC — when co-worker Bill Andrade, who teaches physical education at the Morse Pond School and is a former local vice president, brought her to a conference in 2004. She joined the committee in 2005 and served as its secretary before being appointed chair.

The committee, established to give minority members a voice in the MTA, offers educators the opportunity to swap ideas and share different approaches to multicultural education.

Part of the committee's mission is to identify, develop and empower the MTA's minority members. Baker said the committee also aims to help those who feel they have been disregarded or harmed.

"If you need a voice because you feel you have been slighted racially, let me know," Baker said. "We are here to help."

As chair, Baker is focused on broadening the committee and the MTA's connection with minority educators throughout Massachusetts. She wants to host regional EMAC meetings as a way to get more people of color involved in the association. "I want people to feel that they are the MTA," she said.

This spring, the EMAC is hosting a two-day conference with the theme, "Involvement: Let It Begin With Us."

The conference, slated for Saturday, March 31, and Sunday, April 1, at the Sheraton Hotel in Needham, will include a series of workshops and speakers sharing ideas on how to foster greater minority involvement in the MTA and the NEA.

Baker hopes that conference participants use the opportunity to "learn how to use their voice" and, as she did, get involved.

"Now it is my turn to bring someone else along," Baker said.

'Let It Begin With Us' is theme of EMAC conference

The MTA's Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee, formerly known as the Minority Affairs Committee, is hosting a two-day conference this spring that is aimed at fostering involvement among minority members.

The theme of the conference, scheduled for Saturday, March 31, and Sunday, April 1, is "Involvement: Let It Begin With Us." The conference will be held at the Sheraton Hotel in Needham.

On March 31, attendees will have an opportunity to go to sessions on leadership development, increasing minority participation and school-based multicultural programs.



Rebecca Pringle

Workshops include: "What's Going on in Other States," with Arkansas state Rep. Linda Chesterfield and Eleanor Coleman of the Arkansas Education Association; "Cape Verde Sister City Project," with Wareham Middle School teacher Sandra Bell; "Your Right, Reason & Responsibility to be Involved with NEA," with organizational development specialist Dennis Slaughter; "Creating Your Image for Leadership Success," with Dr. Michael Walker-Jones, an MTA regional manager; and "Afghanistan Sister School," with Fred Goldberg, who teaches at the Squannacook Elementary School in Townsend.

Rebecca Pringle, a two-term member

of the NEA Executive Committee, will deliver the keynote address during the evening. The Boston Community Gospel Choir will perform at a reception.

Participants will also have opportunities to meet with MTA leaders. An hour is set aside for lunch with members of the MTA Board on the opening day. On April 1, MTA President Anne Wass will take part in an open forum during the morning.

For more information or to register for the conference, members may contact Linda Ferrari of the MTA's Braintree office at 1.800.479.1410 or log on to www.massteacher.org/emac.

The fee for the conference is \$40, and the registration deadline is March 15.

Inspiration from orbit

Hometown astronaut's mission is classroom fare for Needham fifth-graders

By Bob Duffy

When Angela DiNapoli tells her students they can accomplish anything they set their minds to, she can point to someone she once taught as an example: astronaut Sunita "Suni" Williams, who currently lives on the International Space Station.

Williams has been sending regular e-mail updates from space to DiNapoli's fifth-grade class at the Newman Elementary School in Needham.

In December, shuttle mission STS 116 delivered Williams to the space station, where she is spending six months as a flight engineer working on wiring, participating in a fitness and nutrition study and taking on other responsibilities. Her work involves a series of spacewalks, several of which she has successfully completed.

The station, which will be finished in 2010, is the largest international scientific project ever conceived. Built by the United States, Russia, Japan, Canada and 11 other countries, it will serve as a platform for Earth and space observation and for experiments that can only be done in microgravity.

All told, more than 50 missions will be required by the U.S. space shuttle and Russian Soyuz programs to transport and assemble all the components of the ISS. The first module was launched in 1998, and since Nov. 2, 2000, a rotating crew has lived on the station.

Williams, who attended the Naval Academy after graduating from Needham High School in 1983, included a Needham flag and a Needham Public Schools T-shirt, as well as a Patriots hat and a Red Sox World Series hat, in her personal preference kit to remind her of home during her stay in space.

DiNapoli told *MTA Today* that the children in her class are really enjoying their interaction with the astronaut.

"She has been a real inspiration for my students and everyone in Needham," she said. "She has a way with kids and has said she would love to teach after she retires from the astronaut program."

DiNapoli has been fascinated with science and space travel since childhood, when she watched John Glenn's first flight.

"I have always been very enthusiastic about science, and space is a great way to get my kids excited about science," the veteran educator said.

Over the last 30 years, DiNapoli has consistently pursued her strong interest in science and space. She has been to Space Camp, participated in the U.S. Space Foundation's summer program and attended NASA conferences on how to incorporate space into teaching. She even has a pen-pal who works as an engineer at the Johnson Space Center.

Since finding out that her former student was preparing to join the space program, she



Photo courtesy of NASA

Sunita Williams now holds the record for the number of spacewalks taken by a female astronaut.



Teacher Angela DiNapoli tries out a capsule on display at the John F. Kennedy Space Center.

has involved her classes at every step along the way.

Williams was selected by NASA in 1998. DiNapoli followed her progress through Astronaut Candidate Training, then kept in touch while she worked in Moscow with the Russian space agency on plans for the ISS.

Two years ago, Williams talked to DiNapoli's class while she was home visiting relatives for Thanksgiving.

Williams used her journey to becoming an astronaut as an example of the value of happenstance and persistence. She originally wanted to be a Navy diver, but was unsuccessful and set her sights on becoming a jet pilot. When she was not ranked high enough in flight school to be selected as a jet pilot, she settled on being a naval helicopter pilot.

'I have always been very enthusiastic about science, and space is a great way to get my kids excited about science.'

—Teacher Angela DiNapoli

"I tell kids that maybe you want something, but you get something else, but if you make the best of it, things sort of work out," Williams remarked in a preflight interview posted on the NASA Web site.

In the months leading up to the launch, the NASA flight engineer sent DiNapoli's students updates about her training for the mission. In November, she had an hour-long teleconference with the class.

Williams also invited DiNapoli to attend her shuttle launch in Florida. In addition to watching her former student blast off into space, the teacher received a VIP tour of the John F. Kennedy Space Center and a NASA briefing, and she attended an exclusive reception for family members and friends.

"The launch was very cool, and the memory of one of my students going into space is a dream come true and is just incredible," DiNapoli said.

She remembers Williams as an "excellent student who was well liked and interested in everything." She said she doesn't know if her own passion for space rubbed off on Williams, but remembers that she was very interested in astronomy.

Since Williams arrived at the space station, DiNapoli and her students have been in regular contact with her via e-mail and have been tracking every aspect of her mission.

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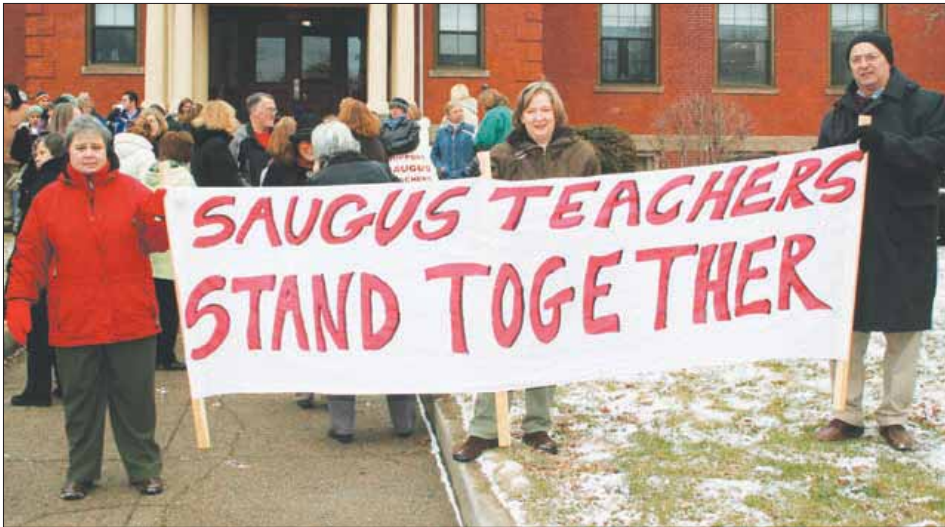


Photo by Laura Barrett

Saugus teachers rallied for a new contract on Jan. 23, 16 months after their previous contract had expired. Following a long and difficult battle that reached a crisis point in January, an agreement on a two-year contract was finally reached. It was ratified by the members on Feb. 1. The dispute in Saugus is echoed in many communities. The town claimed that it was broke, while the teachers maintained that local and state governments have an obligation to provide students with a quality education — and that means paying teachers fair salaries and benefits. The debate is not over in Saugus. Bargaining must begin again right away because the new contract will expire in August.

Conference is set for MTA ESPs

Event provides chance to learn and network

Education Support Professionals are being offered the opportunity to participate in a great experience this spring — the 2007 MTA ESP Conference.

The conference, which will be held May 18-19 at the Radisson Hotel Plymouth Harbor in Plymouth, features a packed agenda that includes sessions on leadership, crisis prevention, dealing with difficult people, making a difference in the community and many other subjects.

On the first evening, participants will learn the identity of the recipient of the highly coveted ESP Award and have a chance to socialize. On the second day, they will hear a lunchtime address by MTA Vice President Paul Toner.

There also will be plenty of time to network and strategize.

“We’re encouraging all ESP members to join us for this year’s conference,” said University Staff Association President Donna Johnson, who serves as chair of the ESP



Committee and is a member of the MTA Executive Committee. “If you have attended before, please come again — and tell your fellow ESPs how much you learned and how much fun you had. If you haven’t come to the conference in past years, we urge you to attend this May so you can take part in all of the wonderful workshops, raffles and opportunities to get to know your colleagues.”

The registration deadline for the conference is April 13. Within a week or two, all MTA ESPs will receive fliers in the mail that outline the program and provide a sampling of workshops.

The conference costs \$105 per person for those staying in double- or triple-occupancy rooms at the hotel and \$75 for those commuting. The fee for either includes Friday and Saturday meals, workshops and a social event.

Workshop subjects will include:

- “You Can Make A Difference: Front-line Communications for ESPs.”

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Longer day experiment going well so far

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not simply tacking on enrichment activities or MCAS test prep at the end. ELT schools are expected to use the additional time — nearly two hours a day — for a mix of enrichment, instruction in core academic subjects and teacher professional development. Teachers at the N.B. Borden were given the option to work the added hours or not. All but one chose to work all the additional hours, receiving pay increases proportional to the additional time invested.

“The additional money is just one way to get teachers to agree to participate in any program,” said current FREA President Sharron Machamer. “New opportunities to help students succeed and an improved school climate are also valuable incentives to these caring individuals.”

Many things must fall into place for the program to work, she said, adding: “Local teachers must be involved in the planning process from the start. School district administrators can avoid top-down failed initiatives and enhance the prospects for creating successful programs by using a collaborative approach.”



When the grant award was announced to the staff, fifth-grade teacher Richard Borges realized he had better prepare himself for the rigors of working an eight-hour

day at the N.B. Borden, in addition to the usual hours spent grading papers and preparing lessons after school and on weekends.

“I had to get my energy level up,” he said. “I changed the way I worked out and what I eat.”

Erin Pavao (no relation to Beverly), a reading specialist, said that most teachers were initially worried about how they would cope.

“Teachers were saying, ‘We’re already tired at 2:30, so can you imagine how we’ll feel at 3:30?’ It went through all of our minds,” Pavao said. “But as we planned we became excited about the different things we were going to do, so that motivated us.”

Four months into the program, Pavao and other teachers in the school said that exhaustion has not been a big problem, either for themselves or for their students, perhaps because the extra time gives everyone a chance to slow down a little.

“With the old schedule there was never enough time for everything,” said kindergarten teacher Grace Farias. “Now I say to myself, ‘How did I fit in the things that I’m doing now?’ Everything was always a rush. ‘I’ve got to get this done. I’ve got to get that done.’ Now there’s time. There’s time for science, for social studies, for nutrition. There’s more time for reading and writing. There’s more time to spend with the kids.”

Harry Hassoun, an adjustment counselor for the N.B. Borden and two other Fall River elementary schools, said he has seen a definite change in the atmosphere.

“There is less stress here,” Hassoun said. “There is more time to do what you have to do. There are fewer behavior problems. The kids seem to be more part of the school. They seem to be closer to the teachers and closer to the principal and happy that they are spending positive, occupied time in the afternoon instead of going home to the streets.”

Lifrak said he is not aware of one child being pulled out of the school in response to the longer day. In fact, he said, the parents tell him they love the program. But what about the targets of all this attention and resources — the students?



Borges allowed this reporter to take over his class for 15 minutes on a January afternoon and talk to the students about their views on the ELT experiment. When asked if they preferred the longer day or the shorter one, all but four of the fifth-graders raised their hands for the extended one, defying the stereotype that kids can’t wait until the dismissal bell rings.

“A longer day is better,” said 10-year-old Janae Fortes. “We get to learn more. It’s fun, and we

Please see **‘You’**/next page

Higher ed bargaining under way

PHENOM members gather at State House to push for access, affordability

By Sarah Nathan

Bargaining season has officially begun at Massachusetts' public colleges and the University of Massachusetts.

Two of the MTA's higher education affiliates, the Massachusetts Society of Professors and the Faculty Staff Union, which represent full-time faculty and librarians at the Amherst and Boston UMass campuses, began negotiations in January.

The majority of the higher education unions, with the exception of two that negotiated deals last year, will start to hammer out the terms of their upcoming contracts this month and continue through the spring, leading up to June 30, the day their current agreements will expire.

"We are all intrigued this time by the fact that we are going to the bargaining table with a governor who is much more education-friendly," said Donna Johnson, who is chair of the MTA's Higher Education Leadership Council and president of the University Staff Association, which represents clerical and technical employees at UMass-Amherst. "The one thing that we are all looking forward to is getting the bulk of bargaining done by the end of our current contract."

During the last round of negotiations, the members of USA did not reach an agreement until six months after their contract had expired. With Gov. Deval Patrick now in office, Johnson has confidence that the public higher educa-



Paul Johansen/Iguana Photo

During a State House event on Feb. 22, Max Page, president of the Massachusetts Society of Professors at UMass-Amherst, put out the call for 20,000 signatures in support of the five basic principles of the newly formed Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts.

tion unions will be treated with more respect.

"For so long we have been dissed ... it is almost as if what we do is not important," Johnson said. "By the statements that Governor Patrick has made, he has let us know that we are important and what we do is important to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts."

While Johnson has hope that this round of contract talks will go more smoothly than past ones and will go a long way to improving morale on campuses across the state, she also noted that things won't change all at once.

"While I believe Deval Patrick is going to be the champion for public education, it isn't going to happen overnight," Johnson said. "If everything we hear about the state's budget situation is true, then he is not going to be able to fulfill all our needs right away."

The Massachusetts Community College Council, which represents full- and part-time faculty and professional staff at 15 community colleges, and the Association of Professional Administrators, which represents administrators

at the nine state colleges, are the two unions that are not negotiating this spring. Those contracts were funded as part of a \$20 million supplemental budget that was approved by the Legislature and signed by Patrick in February.

The supplemental budget also includes enabling language for the distribution of the final installment of retroactive raises for eligible employees from UMass and the state colleges who retired or left in 2001-2002. Those raises had been on hold because of a veto by former Gov. Mitt Romney.

In addition to negotiating new contracts, higher education members will be out in force this spring lobbying for MTA-supported legislation for a \$400 million increase to fully fund public higher education over the next seven years. If passed, "An Act Supporting Access and Excellence" would provide an additional \$57 million in the coming fiscal year.

The legislation is intended to provide an adequate, stable and reliable funding mechanism for all three segments of public higher education.

Largely similar versions have been introduced in the House and the Senate. The House measure provides campuses with more flexibility by giving them the ability to set fees and tuition to ensure adequate funding if the state fails to meet its obligations. The MTA supports this provision.

As the budget deliberations get under way, a new group has begun a campaign for a more affordable and accessible public higher education system.

Members of the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts, which is reaching out to students, faculty, staff, parents and alumni representing all 29 public colleges and university campuses, held a founding convention at the State House on Feb. 22.

PHENOM, born out of the campaign and successful election of Gov. Deval Patrick, is based on five principles: fund public higher education so it can serve the Commonwealth; make higher education affordable; make higher education accessible to all; hire more teachers, researchers and staff; and honor and expand democratic institutions of governance for public higher education.

Max Page, president of the Massachusetts Society of Professors at UMass-Amherst and one of the founders of PHENOM, said the new organization is "a sleeping giant in Massachusetts that is about to wake up."

Dana Mohler-Faria, who serves as Patrick's education advisor, welcomed PHENOM members to

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'You get to hang out with your friends and you get to learn more'

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think more schools should try it. We learn things to play, like in math we learned a math fractions game, so we can play that at home if we want to."

"Yeah, it's fun," added her friend Chuelsia Carvalho. "You get to hang out with your friends and you get to learn more. Kids' College is my favorite part. I'm taking cake decorating."

The school day at the N.B. Borden runs from 7:25 a.m. (45 minutes earlier than before) until 3:32 p.m. (an hour later than before). The students begin by having breakfast with their teachers and other school staff members.

Along with their food, they get

lessons in healthy eating, thanks to a collaboration with the University of Massachusetts Extension Nutrition Education Program. As part of the ELT grant, N.B. Borden teachers receive three hours of PD 12 times a year, with training offered in nutrition education, literacy and math instruction.

For a school system that has no health educators, the nutrition program has proven to be a real boon, teaching students how to read labels and divide foods into the categories of "Go," "Slow" and "Whoa."

One student sounded much older than her years when she explained the concept: "Vegetables

and fruits you can have every day, but if it has a lot of sodium or saturated fat, you shouldn't have it very often," she said. Nearly all of the students said they now ask their parents to provide healthier snacks than they used to get.

During the morning meetings, the students and educators also talk about expectations; then, at the end of the day, they review what they have accomplished.

After breakfast, the students turn their attention to the usual subjects, but sometimes in different ways and for longer blocks of time. For instance, students in all grades participate in the Writers' Workshop. There, they work on reading comprehension and varied

kinds of writing, including poetry and biography.

For math, they have additional time for instruction, plus extra small group help for students who need it. They have a little more time for social studies and science, as well.

"In science, we used to just have one period, but now we get to have two," Janae said. "It's really fun. Right now we're learning about electricity."

"Janae is the electricity queen," her friend Chuelsia chimed in.

"We have to connect wires to build a light," Janae explained. "I'm always the first to build my light."

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Photo by Bob Duffy

State Rep. Willie Mae Allen, left, who represents Boston, stands with MTA President Anne Wass and Rep. Steven D'Amico, who is the newly elected representative from Seekonk, during an MTA reception for freshman legislators that was held on Jan. 24.

MTA outlines priorities for new legislative session

By Bob Duffy

The MTA recently held a reception to welcome new lawmakers and discuss the association's 2007 legislative program, which revolves around increasing state funding for public schools, studying the real cost of educating students, boosting funding for higher education and raising the cost-of-living allowance for retirees.

"Money does matter in education," said MTA President Anne Wass. "We believe that continued strong funding from the state is essential to ensuring that our entire system of public education, from kindergarten to graduate school, provides a quality education."

The event, held in late January, drew recently elected legislators, along with some staff members.

One key piece of MTA-supported legislation, titled "An Act to Fulfill the Promise of Education Reform: Adequate Funding for Student Success," addresses the need to provide adequate funding for all school districts through the Chapter 70 program. It would establish the Education Resource Study Committee, which would be charged with contracting for an independent study to determine the resources needed for students to achieve state education standards. The assessment would be used to guide Chapter 70 funding for future years.

The bill seeks \$600,000 for the study, which would have to be completed no later than Sept. 1, 2008. It also would increase Chapter 70 funding for the fiscal year beginning July 1 by \$300 million over fiscal year 2007 by raising the foundation budget. The state foundation budget sets the minimum amount of money each school district must spend to provide an adequate education to all of its students.

In calling for a study, the MTA is asking the Legislature to examine whether the current foundation budget provides adequate resources. The MTA contends that as things stand, there is not enough funding for essential programs and initiatives, such as reducing class sizes in kindergarten through grade three, operating alternative programs for

disruptive students, providing full-day kindergarten and expanding preschool programs.

"We can and should do better," said Wass. "Our local school districts continue to struggle with increasing class sizes, program cuts and fewer teachers."

Another vital piece of legislation is "An Act Supporting Access and Excellence in Public Higher Education," which calls for the state to dedicate approximately \$400 million over seven years to fully fund each state college, community college and University of Massachusetts campus.

The legislation is intended to provide an adequate, stable and reliable funding mechanism for all three segments of public higher education. Versions have been introduced in both the House and the Senate.

The House measure provides campuses with more flexibility by giving them the ability to set fees and tuition to ensure adequate funding if the state fails to meet its obligations. The MTA supports this provision.

"We must reverse the recent pattern of severe and chronic under-funding of public higher education in Massachusetts," Wass said.

"An Act Relative to the Calculation of Retiree COLAs" increases the base on which a retired public employee's annual 3 percent cost-of-living adjustment would be computed from \$12,000 to \$25,000, a figure that approximates what Social Security uses for its base when calculating an annual COLA.

The COLA base was set at \$6,000 in 1971 and has only doubled to \$12,000 during the past 36 years. Meanwhile, the cost of living in Massachusetts has increased more than fivefold since 1971.

While retiree advocates have tried to improve the COLA law over the past several years, it is still deficient for many retired educators.

"Retirees are finding it increasingly difficult to keep pace with inflation, and that is not fair," Wass said. "The cost of prescription drugs, out-of-pocket medical expenses and monthly health insurance premiums continues to increase at a double-digit pace year after year."

Funding crisis is focus of new initiative

Schools and colleges need help from state

By Sarah Nathan

The State House is much more than a golden dome filled with elected political leaders. In fact, it is a locale for educators to put their advocacy skills to use on behalf of their students.

That is one of the themes of a new MTA campaign designed to have an impact on the way members approach legislative issues, including the funding crisis that keeps public education from receiving sufficient resources.

The effort, titled *Education Counts*, emphasizes the significance of the state's role in providing funding for public education at all levels. It also urges members to view the State House as a place where they need to consistently apply their negotiating and advocacy abilities.

"All of our members should think of themselves as part of the larger MTA team on Beacon Hill," said MTA President Anne Wass. "When the call goes out asking you to send a postcard, make a phone call or meet with your legislator, please respond in the same



way you would if you were called on to help with negotiations in your own community.

"We can move mountains for our schools and our students when we are unified and have the facts on our side," Wass added. "In this case, our mission is to make sure everyone understands just how much education counts for our state's future. We must advocate for the resources needed to help all Massachusetts students succeed, and we must make sure the state does its fair share."

Riding the momentum of the successful campaign to elect Deval Patrick as governor, the MTA initiative is aimed at using the voices of educators to make the case that public education is badly in need of additional state aid and that the Legislature should provide an adequate and stable funding stream for public schools, public colleges and the University of Massachusetts.

The cornerstone of the campaign for preK-12 members is an MTA-supported bill called "An Act to Fulfill the Promise of Education Reform: Adequate Funding for Student Success." The legislation would increase Chapter 70 education funding by \$300 million in the coming fiscal year and would create a study committee to examine what resources are needed to ensure all students receive a high-quality education.

On the higher education side, the MTA is supporting legislation entitled "An Act Supporting Access and Excellence in Public Higher Education" that calls for the state to increase funding by \$400 million over the next seven

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For the love of books

Across the nation, educators and kids prepare for Dr. Seuss celebration

Celebrities, political leaders and top athletes will be cracking the books for kids in the days ahead — and they will be green-egged on by educators across the nation who are hamming it up and donning their red and white stovepipe thinking hats to come up with creative approaches to promote the love of reading.

It's all part of the NEA's 10th-anniversary Read Across America program, and everyone is encouraged to participate.



As MTA Today went to press, the NEA was finalizing plans for a

special red carpet event to be held March 2 at the New York Public Library. Television personalities, actors, musicians, sports figures and public officials were among those set to join the Cat in the Hat and read their favorite books to hundreds of students.

After the gala, the books will be autographed and auctioned off, with all proceeds benefiting public schools nationwide through the NEA Foundation.

Read Across America is planned around the birthday of Springfield native Theodor Geisel — better known as Dr. Seuss — who wrote such classics as *The Cat in the Hat* and *Green Eggs and Ham*. The prominent children's

New season for reading game just around the corner

The Read Across America celebration serves as the kickoff for a series of activities designed to get Massachusetts students excited about books and promote literacy throughout the year.

The centerpiece is the MTA Red Sox Reading Game, which is now entering its seventh season.

The game encourages students in kindergarten through eighth grade to pledge to read nine books over the summer, one for each position on the baseball field. It is a team effort that involves representatives of the Sox — including All-Star catcher Jason Varitek, the contest spokesman — and MTA members from throughout the Commonwealth.

Reading game bookmarks, which also serve as contest entry forms, and Jason Varitek Literacy Champion posters will be delivered to K-8 schools statewide in mid-May. The names of students who make reading pledges are entered into a drawing for tickets to a late-summer Red Sox game and other prizes.

A relatively new feature of the collaboration is the Most Valuable Educator program, which honors outstanding high school educators and their students.

A relatively new feature of the collaboration is the Most Valuable Educator program, which honors outstanding high school educators and their students.

The MVE program, which will enter its second season this year, gives high school students the chance to write essays nominating teachers and other educators for recognition. The essays are judged by Red Sox representatives on the merit of the accomplishments, as outlined by the students. The winning educators and the students who nominate them receive tickets to games at Fenway Park.

Information on all aspects of the MTA Red Sox Reading Game will be available this spring on the association's literacy Web site, www.readingmatters.org. The site has contest details, reading tips, suggestions for activities and links to a wealth of resources to help promote the love of books. Downloadable entry forms will be posted soon for both the K-8 reading contest and the high school MVE Program.

author was born in 1904 and died in 1991.

The nation's largest reading celebration includes activities around the country that excite and encourage students. As is the case each year, Read Across America has inspired numerous events in schools and other venues throughout Massachusetts. Examples, including the following, have been listed in recent weeks on the NEA Web site, www.nea.org.

- In Belchertown, parents will read to every class, and students will be sending birthday cards to the Cat in the Hat.

- The Freetown-Lakeville Middle School is holding a celebration in which families are being invited to share breakfast with their sixth-graders and then enjoy a program featuring choral readings by the students, guest readers and the sharing of the Readers' Oath.

- The Governor Winslow El-

ementary School in Marshfield will transform its library into "Seussville" — with life-size characters from books written by Dr. Seuss. The school will also hold a parade, for which students will make hats based on their favorite books.

- The Crosby Elementary School in Pittsfield is inviting parents and visitors from the local business community to read to children and celebrate books at an all-day event.

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Kids' College inspires creativity and participation

Continued from Page 11

Most of the fifth-graders who spoke to *MTA Today* agreed that their favorite part of the week is Kids' College. For this program, the students pick a different elective each term.

These fun courses are facilitated by all of the staff in the school, including the custodian, classroom assistants and Lifrak himself.

Kids' College facilitators make up their own courses, depending on their personal interests and skills. Options this term include dance, book club, films, cake decorating, arts and crafts and a special class conducted by staff from nearby St. Anne's Hospital to help students who may have trouble socializing with their peers.

"When Mr. Lifrak told us about Kids' College, I was wondering what it was all about," said Markee Malone, 12. "Were we going to a college on a bus? But he explained it to me and I liked it."

While the students think of Kids' College as fun, the staff members see it as a chance to plant the seed with these children that they, too, can aspire to go to college, even if their parents never attended.

When Borges' fifth-graders were asked if they want to go to college someday, all but three or four raised their hands again. Like kids everywhere, they have big plans for their future careers, including becoming an architect, FBI agent, astronaut, rapper, archaeologist, teacher, hair stylist and marine biologist. Two girls said they want to go to Princeton University, and one had already looked it up on the Internet.

At the end of the day, Lifrak knows that to reach their lofty goals, his students are going to have to excel in school.

"We're in a poor area," he said. "Our goal is to help everybody who walks through the door succeed. Yes, we want the enrichment programs. They are important. But we have to enhance our reading and writing because that is at the foundation of everything. Our focus this year is to turn reading fluency into reading comprehension. If they are not able to comprehend what they read, what will they be able to do? I have to believe that this program is going to help."

For the latest news of interest to MTA members, visit www.massteacher.org.

Two presidents and a governor



Photo by Bob Duffy

NEA President Reg Weaver, center, and MTA President Anne Wass met with Gov. Deval Patrick at Northeastern University on Jan. 19 to talk about educational issues. Brendan Ryan, Patrick's deputy chief of staff, is seated in back. Also at the meeting were MTA Vice President Paul Toner, Executive Director-Treasurer Edward P. Sullivan and Governmental Services Director Joanne Blum.

SEA settlement among state's largest in '06

An MTA lawyer and the Springfield Education Association made the top 10 in the list compiled by *Massachusetts Lawyers' Weekly* of the largest verdicts and settlements in 2006.

Attorney Sandra Quinn was the lead counsel in the case known as *Springfield Education Association, et al., v. Springfield School Com-*

mittee, et al., in which the plaintiffs argued that the school committee had unlawfully withheld back wages from Springfield educators.

Judge Constance M. Sweeney agreed and ordered the city to pay public school teachers and administrators \$2.2 million in back wages, plus 12 percent compound interest and court costs, for illegally freezing wages in fiscal year 2004.

The wage freeze had been instituted by former Mayor Michael J. Albano and was continued through fiscal 2006 by the Springfield Finance Control Board.

This settlement was the fifth-largest in Massachusetts last year.



Sandra Quinn

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Three candidates seek NEA seats

Two Director posts to be filled for three-year terms through mail balloting

Robert V. Travers, Jr., Cambridge Teachers Association

Public education is under attack both in Massachusetts and across the country. Words like privatization, ESEA (No Child Left Behind), and high-stakes testing are becoming commonplace in our vocabulary.

These words focus on the challenges educators face every day. School employees are caught in a web of greater demands, less funding, and infringement on our right to collectively bargain.

In Massachusetts, MTA has been proactive, as well as reac-

tive, to these challenges. We have actively and successfully advocated at the State House to ensure that members are protected against laws that affect both them and our students.

But Massachusetts advocacy is not always enough. We need NEA! More and more, laws that impact state education originate at the national level.

Massachusetts NEA Directors must protect the rights of all educators — teachers, ESPs, higher education and retired — by ensuring

that Massachusetts employees of public education receive the special consideration they deserve. As an NEA Director, I will strive to safeguard our rights to maintain collective bargaining, fund and reform ESEA, fight aggressive testing, work against privatization, ensure that the Social Security offsets are repealed, and fight to win the professional respect we deserve.

I have had the honor to serve you on the MTA Board of Direc-

tors, NEA Resolutions Committee, and several other MTA and NEA committees. As such, I know the duties and obligations necessary to be an NEA Director. I feel that my commitment and experience will serve to enhance my success as your NEA Director. I am dedicated to representing you, our MTA members, to the best of my ability.

I ask you for your support and your vote in order to be your voice in Washington, D.C.



Catherine A. Boudreau, Massachusetts Community College Council

Dear Colleagues:

During my tenure as vice president and president of the MTA, I realized the importance of the relationship and connection between the NEA and the MTA. NEA's support of initiatives in Massachusetts has been invaluable, and, on many occasions, it has allowed MTA to use its limited resources on local and state activities.

Though NEA works on education issues at the national level,

too often our members have little understanding of what exactly NEA does for them and the MTA as an organization. At the same time, however, a large portion of our members are aware of how hard the NEA is working to change the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision (GPO/WEP) in Congress.

One of my goals as an NEA Director will be to focus on working with the team of NEA Directors from Massachusetts to increase members' awareness of:

- **What the NEA has done.**
- **What the NEA does.**
- **What the NEA can do.**

My other goal will be to get a better sense of what the members would like from NEA and carry that message to the NEA.

I believe with my leadership experience within my school, my local, and the MTA, I bring a unique perspective to this position, and I will work to find ways to bring the NEA closer to the members.

I am a faculty member in the Computer Technology Information Management Department at Massachusetts Community College and a member of the Massachusetts Community College Council (MCCC) local.

I appreciate your consideration of my candidacy, and I ask for your vote on the mail ballot you

will receive.

Thank you.



John McGuinness, Nantucket Teachers Association

My name is John McGuinness, and I am running for NEA Director. Currently, I am on the MTA Board of Directors representing Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. I have attended the Annual Meeting for the past eight years and the Summer Leadership Conference for the past four years.

Locally, I have held the positions of president, vice president, and building representative. I have negotiated a number of contracts and have been active in the grievance procedure, sick bank

committee, and rewriting our local bylaws.

I have been teaching a wide variety of social studies courses at Nantucket High School for the past 11 years, and previously taught special education at the elementary school level for eight years.

I am a product of public education from grade one through my master's. I have a B.A. in Philosophy (with minors in History and Political Science) from Bridgewater State College and an M.Ed. in Special Education (concentration

in Severe Needs) from Fitchburg State College.

My family is also very much involved in public education. My wife is a kindergarten teacher and has taught special education and first grade.

The areas of strength, the things I think I would bring to the NEA, are a broad vision, a willingness to listen to all sides of an issue, and a drive to elevate the discussion on public education.

My role as an NEA Director would be to ensure that the voices of Massachusetts' educators are heard by the NEA, the public, and our elected officials, both at home and in Washington. I believe that the future of public education is in Washington. I think that Massachusetts needs informed and passionate leadership.

I believe that I can provide that leadership. I ask that you support my candidacy for NEA Director.



Mark your calendar today for the MTA Summer Conference!

There may still be frost on the windows today, but warmer weather is ahead — and so is the MTA Summer Conference, which gives members a unique opportunity to escape to the beautiful Berkshire Hills in Western Massachusetts for a few days in August. During the conference, you will have the chance to network, experience thought-provoking and energizing presentations, share ideas and strategies with colleagues and collect PDPs, PTPs and CEUs. This year's Summer Conference is set for Aug. 5-9 on the campus of Williams College in Williamstown, so mark your calendar today. A full guide to conference workshops and other offerings will be mailed with the April-May issue of *MTA Today*.



Persistence needed on offsets

Effort to repeal GPO and WEP is back on the agenda as new Congress gets to work

Two members of Congress — Reps. Howard L. Berman, a California Democrat, and Howard P. McKeon, a California Republican — reintroduced the Social Security Fairness Act on Jan. 4, the first day the new Congress was in session.

The measure, House Bill 82, would completely repeal both the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision, two Social Security regulations that are unfair to educators and other public employees in Massachusetts and a number of other states.

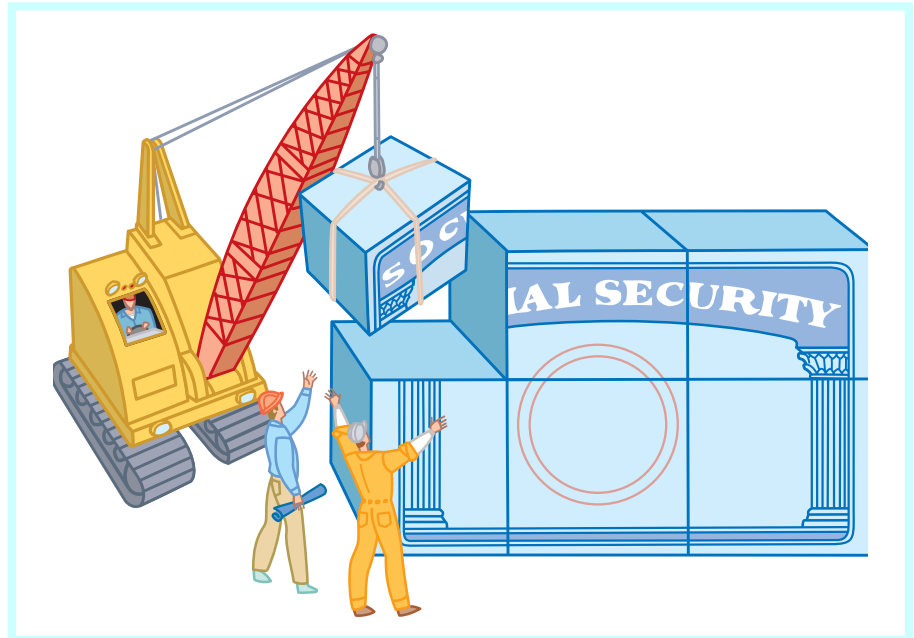
The bill's rapid introduction signified the importance of the issue to the sponsors — and interest is already high, with more than 220 members adding their names as co-sponsors.

In the Senate, action to repeal the GPO and the WEP also occurred quickly. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Sen. Susan M. Collins (R-Maine) reintroduced the Social Security Fairness Act in the Senate on Jan. 9. In that chamber, the measure is S. 206. So far, 15 senators are co-sponsors.

Enactment of the repeal legislation remains a major priority for both the MTA and the NEA.

The WEP causes hard-working people to lose a significant portion of the benefits they have earned themselves. Nine out of 10 public employees affected by the GPO lose their entire spousal benefit, even though their husbands or wives paid Social Security taxes for many years.

The following members of Congress from Massachusetts are co-sponsors of H. 82: Michael E. Capuano, William D. Delahunt, Barney Frank, Stephen F. Lynch, James P. McGovern, Martin T. Meehan, John Olver and John F. Tierney. As this issue of *MTA Today* went to press, U.S. Reps. Edward J. Markey and Richard E. Neal had not signed on to H. 82. Both have been



The bill's rapid introduction signified the importance of the issue to the sponsors — and interest is already high, with more than 220 members adding their names as co-sponsors.

co-sponsors of repeal legislation in the past.

Sen. John F. Kerry is a co-sponsor of S. 206. At this time, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, a longtime supporter of repealing the offsets, is not a co-sponsor.

Ongoing action is needed:

- If your representative is a co-sponsor of H. 82, contact him, thank him for his support and tell him why this legislation is important to you.
- If your congressman is not yet a co-sponsor, contact him, urge him to become a co-sponsor and tell him why this legislation is important to you.
- Share your concern with Senator Kennedy and urge him to co-sponsor S. 206.

Use the following MTA Web site link to contact the Massachusetts congressional delegation about the offsets: <http://capwiz.com/nea/ma/state/main/?state=MA>.

Regional retirement consultations available

The MTA conducts retirement consultations throughout the state to assist members. Proof of membership must be submitted when requesting retirement services.

This schedule is in effect from September to June. In the event of inclement weather, it is advisable to call consultants in advance.

ASHBURNHAM — Robert Zbikowski: second Tuesday of each month (**walk in**), 4 to 8 p.m., Overlook Middle School (library), front entrance, 10 Oakmont Dr., Ashburnham; 978.827.1425, or at home, 978.297.0123; e-mail: zibstar702@verizon.net.

AUBURN — Louise Gaskins: first and second Saturdays of each month (**walk in**), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Central Office, 48 Sword St., Auburn; 508.791.2121, or at home, 978.448.5351.

BOSTON — Harold Crowley: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays (**by appointment only**), 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., MTA, 20 Ashburton Pl., Boston; 617.742.7950, ext. 8240, or 800.392.6175, ext. 8240.

BRAINTREE — Mary Hanna: second Saturday of each month (**walk in**), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Metropolitan Office, 100 Grandview Rd., Braintree; 781.380.1410, or at home, 781.545.2069; e-mail: hmjhanna@cs.com.

CAPE COD — Rose Merritt: second Saturday of each month (**walk in**), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Barnstable Teachers Association (BTA), 100 West Main St., Suite #7, Hyannis; 508.775.8625, or at home, 508.759.4725.

HOLYOKE — Dennis O'Connor: third Saturday of each month

(**walk in**), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Western Office, 55 Bobala Rd., Suite 3, Holyoke; 413.535.2415, or at home, 413.737.7509.

LYNNFIELD — Mary Parry: third and fourth Saturdays of each month (**walk in**), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Northeast Office, 50 Salem St., Bldg. B, Lynnfield; 781.246.9779, or at home, 978.372.2031; fax, 978.372.2035.

NORTHAMPTON — Dennis O'Connor: second Saturday of each month (**walk in**), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., 38 Gothic St., Northampton; 413.584.8313, or at home, 413.737.7509.

PITTSFIELD — Ward F. Johnson: second Saturday of each month (**walk in**), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Berkshire Office, 740 Williams St., Williams St. Plaza, Pittsfield; 413.499.0257, or at home, 413.443.1722; e-mail: wardman33@aol.com.

RAYNHAM — Sandra Stephenson: third Saturday of each month (**walk in**), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Southeast Office, 90 New State Highway (Rte. 44), Raynham; 508.822.5371, or at home, 508.747.2234; e-mail: rockowl@aol.com. Edward Nelson: fourth Saturday of each month (**walk in**), 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Southeast Office, 90 New State Highway (Rte. 44), Raynham; 508.822.5371, or at home, 508.853.5769.

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HIGHER ED AT-LARGE — Edward McCourt, Mass. Bay Community College, Wellesley; 781.239.2207; e-mail: emccourt.mccc@gmail.com.

Defined benefit plans work well for employees and taxpayers alike

Defined benefit plans — such as the Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement System retirement plan — have recently become a popular topic of discussion for the news media, think tanks and elected officials.

When looking at the issue of *defined benefit* plans versus *defined contribution* plans, it is important to keep in mind the facts about defined benefit plans in the public sector.

The following points of information help explain why defined benefit plans have a history of serving the public good.

1 The bulk of public pension benefit funding is NOT shouldered by taxpayers.

Employer (taxpayer) contributions to state and local pension systems over the last two decades have made up only one-fourth of total public pen-

sion revenue. Earnings from investments and employee contributions comprise the remainder. This ratio has improved over time. In 2004, investment earnings accounted for 77 percent of all public pension revenue; employer contributions were 15 percent. Unlike corporate workers, most public employees are required to contribute to their pension plans.

Important information about the MTRS

For many Massachusetts educators, MTRS benefits are very important — the MTRS is their retirement plan.

It is important for participants to know the system, since the MTRS may well be the key to their financial future.

The plan provides the following types of benefits to eligible members:

- Regular "service" retirement benefits.
- Disability retirement benefits (ordinary and accidental).
- Survivor and accidental death benefits (if a participant dies while an active member).

Under the MTRS "defined benefit" plan, a participant's retirement benefit is determined according to a set formula, and the amount is guaranteed regardless of fluctuations in the pension fund's performance. Likewise, the benefit amount is guaranteed for life and cannot be adjusted downward.

In contrast, a "defined contribution" plan is dependent on the contributions made by the employee, and possibly by the employer, and the growth of those assets over time as they are invested in the financial markets. A defined contribution plan is very susceptible to fluctuations in the market; nothing is guaranteed.

2 Public retirement plans attract and retain the workforce that provides essential public services.

There are more than 20 million working and retired state and local government employees in the United States. Retired public employees live in virtually every city and town in the nation (90 percent stay in the same jurisdiction where they worked). Active public employees comprise more than 10 percent of the nation's workforce, and two-thirds are employed in education, public safety, corrections or the judiciary. Retention of experienced and trained personnel in these and other positions is critical to the reliable delivery of public services.

3 State and local pension plans are an integral component of national, state and local economies.

Public plans distribute more than \$130 billion annually (an amount greater than the total economic output of 22 states) in benefits to over 6 million retirees, disabled and beneficiaries with an average annual pension benefit of roughly \$19,500. These steady and continuous payments provide a strong economic stimulus to local economies throughout the nation. A 2004 study for the Wharton School Pension Research Council found that state and local government pension distributions contribute 2 percent more to GDP (over \$200 billion) than if they had been invested in self-directed 401(k)-type retirement accounts.

4 State and local plans are subject to comprehensive oversight.

While private-sector plans are subject solely to federal regulation, state and local government plans are products of state constitutional, statutory and case law and must comply with a vast landscape of state and local requirements, as well as industry accounting standards. These plans are accountable to the legislative and executive branches of the state, independent boards of trustees that include employee representatives and/or ex-officio publicly elected officials, and, ultimately, the taxpaying public.

5 Public pension plans are in good financial condition.

As a group, state and local pension systems have nearly 90 cents for each dollar they owe in liabilities. These assets are professionally managed and invested on a long-term basis using sound investment policies.

6 State and local pension funds earn competitive investment returns.

For the 3- and 10-year periods that ended on June 30, 2005, public pension funds generated strong investment returns of 9.67 percent and 9.15 percent, closely tracking returns generated by corporate pension plans.

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Cambridge College licensure programs are approved by the Massachusetts Department of Education, which has reciprocal licensure agreements with many states.

The information presented here is drawn from the MTRS Advisor for Retired Members, Winter 2007.

Lack of state funding has 'real-life impact' on students

Continued from Page 12

years. For the fiscal year beginning July 1, the legislation would mean an additional \$57 million.

In the weeks ahead, all members will be receiving direct-mail pieces that include tear-off postcards to send to their legislators. There are separate mailings for preK-12 members and higher education members. All are urged to send the cards in right away to their senators and representatives.

In addition, the MTA and local leaders will be organizing regional meetings and encouraging members to attend. To follow up, there will be face-to-face meetings with legislators in many districts.

Approximately 40 percent of all K-12 education funds in Massachusetts come from the state, while over half is from cities and towns. Federal funds account for only 7 percent of total K-12 revenues.

Chapter 70 aid to school dis-

tricts, which is where the majority of state funding comes from, is almost \$500 million less than it was five years ago, when enrollment changes and projected inflation are taken into account.

"Educators have a unique perspective and can explain the real-life impact that legislators' decisions have on our schools, our colleges and our students," Wass said. "It is important for teachers, education support professionals

and higher education faculty and staff to tell their stories to their state representatives and senators, as well as the people in their communities.

"They need to hear your voice because you represent not only yourself, but the students you teach," she concluded.

For further information on the Education Counts campaign, please watch the MTA Web site, www.massteacher.org.

Workshops for ESPs cover wide range of engaging topics

Continued from Page 10

- "Crisis Prevention & Behavior Management."
- "What Would You Do? What Should You Do?"
- "ESPs Can Lead the Way: To Teach Is to Lead."
- "Share the Message."
- "Rankism in the Workplace."
- "Mobilizing & Organizing Your Local."
- "Collective Bargaining/Contract Negotiations" (must attend both).
- "Digital Photography Basics."
- "The Bumpy Road That Leads to Healing & Succeeding."
- "What Is So Special About Special Ed?"
- "How to Deal With People You Can't Stand."

Johnson noted that for many ESPs, the weekend conference has become a highlight of spring.

"We try very hard to make sure there is something for everyone, and we have been pleased by the feedback," she said. "We try each year to present workshops that cover a broad range of interests and address a variety of professional development needs."

"Everyone comes away with something new to use on the job," Johnson added, "and people really enjoy the surroundings."

Some of the workshops offered will qualify participants for paraprofessional training points and continuing education units.

In a new development this year, registration is being conducted through the MTA Web site. For details and to register, please visit www.massteacher.org/esp07. For answers to questions, or to receive a paper registration form, call MTA ESP Consultant Nancy Robbie at 1.800.542.5504, or e-mail her at nrobbie@massteacher.org.

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— Michael McCabe, Principal, Thompson School

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- MTA Retired Lifetime membership may be purchased by any MTA member who is at least 40 years of age. In order to be eligible for retired membership, a person must have been an active member for at least five consecutive years immediately prior to retirement.
- NEA Retired Lifetime Dues are currently \$200. This membership can also be purchased prior to retirement.
- MTA Retired membership provides members and their families with the opportunity to continue to participate in a vast array of competitive programs offered by MTA Benefits.
- Members who choose to purchase retired lifetime membership prior to retirement continue to pay dues as active members until retirement.

OPPORTUNITY TO UPGRADE RETIRED MEMBERSHIP

- Current MTA Retired members who pay for membership on an annual basis can upgrade their annual memberships to lifetime memberships. The upgrade to MTA Retired Lifetime for \$225 must be completed prior to July 1, 2007.

APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIPS

- Requests for membership applications should be directed to Wini Peterson at MTA, 20 Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108. She can also be reached by calling 617.878.8254 or e-mailing wpeterson@massteacher.org. Please provide your full name and address.

QEA seeks fair contract



Photo by Sarah Nathan

"We've never asked for anything in bargaining that we didn't think was reasonable," Quincy Education Association President Paul Phillips told the Quincy School Committee in January. Prior to the meeting, more than 750 Quincy teachers rallied outside on a freezing cold night to protest the city's efforts to double the teachers' contribution to their health insurance plan. The Quincy teachers, who have adopted the motto "No Pay Cut," have been working without a contract since September.

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MTA backs teacher-quality bill

The MTA has joined a group of education, civic, public policy and business organizations in crafting an ambitious bill aimed at enhancing teacher quality by making numerous systemic changes in how teachers are trained, licensed, hired, evaluated and supported throughout their careers.

"An Act to Ensure Educator Excellence" was filed by Rep. Lida Harkins (D-Needham), though it had been initiated by former Rep. Peter Larkin, who has since left the Legislature but is now helping to lobby for the bill. The latest incarnation of the measure has been drafted with help from Teachers21, a national non-profit education advocacy and professional development organization.

MTA Vice President Paul Toner, who served on the committee that drafted the bill, said the MTA Board voted to support it because the association "wants to be proactive in addressing issues of teacher quality in our Commonwealth."

"The most important factor in the formal education of our students is the quality of the educators in our classrooms," Toner said. "Unfortunately, many of our best educators are retiring, and we are having difficulty attracting and retaining qualified replacements. This bill seeks to support and develop preK-12 educators at every stage in their careers."

Teachers21 describes the bill as the "third leg of the stool for education reform." The first leg is "standards and accountability," and the second is "equitable funding for school districts."

Nora Todd of MTA's Center for Educational Quality and Professional Development said that some of the proposed changes are meant to reinforce existing policies, such as the requirement — often ignored — that districts provide new teachers with comprehensive induction and mentoring services. Other changes are more groundbreaking.

The bill initially would allocate \$5 million to pilot the various initiatives in a small number of districts, but ultimately calls for incorporating the increased funding into the Chapter 70 formula for all districts.

Many of the key proposals concern teacher preparation and licensure.

The bill would establish district-based advisory boards com-



'The most important factor in the formal education of our students is the quality of the educators in our classrooms.'

—MTA Vice President Paul Toner

posed of teachers, higher education faculty and district administrators that would work with teacher preparation programs to ensure that the programs match the needs of the districts. In another provision, districts would evaluate the skill levels of incoming teachers and the Department of Education would be responsible for collecting and publishing the information.

"There must be much better coordination between what is taught in our teacher preparation programs and what knowledge and skills districts feel their teachers must have to be successful," Todd said. She added that in recent years the Board of Education has placed a greater emphasis on content knowledge than on pedagogy, but that both are essential elements of a teacher preparation program.

For example, Todd noted, under state law, students with limited English skills are now quickly mainstreamed into regular classrooms, requiring virtually all teachers to have more training in how to educate these students. Teacher preparation programs will need to make adjustments in the face of these new conditions.

Todd said that state licensure standards would also be changed to be consistent with changes in teacher preparation requirements, and the DOE would be accountable for efficiently administering the process, which has been cumbersome in recent years.

The MTA is also backing a separate bill that would create an independent standards and licensing board, as is common in most professions, Todd said.

"This independent board would create a structure for educators to engage in a much-needed overhaul of the entire Massachusetts educator licensure system," she said.

Other changes would concern evaluation, dismissal and instructional leadership.

Evaluation: New teachers would still be evaluated every year for the first three years. For teachers who have attained Professional Teacher Status, the two-year evaluation system would be replaced by a four-year professional growth cycle in which goals were spelled

out and progress was evaluated by multiple measures.

These measures may include, but are not limited to, observations, communication with parents, student products, unit plans and evidence of student progress through standardized tests or classroom assessments.

"Most evaluation systems today just offer a snapshot in time," said Todd. "This change would encourage people to see evaluations as part of an ongoing process of improving teaching and learning."

Dismissal: The bill clarifies administrators' and teachers' rights and obligations in dismissal cases.

"Administrators complain that dismissal cases can drag on for years, while teachers complain that school districts do not provide them with the clear expectations

and support services they need to improve," said Toner, who was president of the Cambridge Teachers Association until he became MTA vice president last July. "This bill addresses both concerns."

If a teacher received an unsatisfactory evaluation, the district would be obligated to develop a plan that specified what improvements were needed and to provide the necessary remediation services. After a year of remediation, districts could dismiss teachers who continued to be rated as unsatisfactory. Districts that failed to provide the needed remediation services would not be allowed to dismiss teachers with unsatisfactory ratings, but would be permitted to assign them to non-teaching duties until such plans were fully implemented.

"By supporting this bill, we are reaffirming the position the MTA has always held," Toner said.

"There is no place in our schools for poorly performing teachers. Teachers who receive an unsatisfactory rating should have an

Please turn to **Bill**/Page 23



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Starting in the Spring of 2007, we will be accepting students into a fully online program. Students will complete all coursework through SSC online. This program is taught by the same faculty as the on-site program, and students receive the same degree. The online program is limited to 15 students, who will complete the program as a cohort. These 15 motivated self-starters agree to take 2 courses per semester, plus 1 per summer in order to complete the program in 2.5 years. The degree will be earned by Spring 2010. This program may be completed either online or on-site.

The Library of Media Studies program is accredited by NCATE-AASL. Completion of the Master of Education - Library Media Studies program gives students the necessary qualifications to meet the Commonwealth of Massachusetts requirements for initial library teacher licensure.

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Licensure varies by program. Please contact the Graduate School for further clarification.

No money down for the American dream

First-time homebuyers take advantage of a creative mortgage program

An estimated 43 percent of first-time homebuyers in 2005 used 100 percent financing, allowing them to buy a home without a down payment. According to Paul Gershkowitz, president of MTA-endorsed Greenpark Mortgage, the statistic is staggering, considering the program was only introduced to the market five years ago.

"This program is in high demand because it offers first-time buyers significant advantages," said Gershkowitz. "With no money down, they can own a home that will most likely appreciate significantly over time. As renters, they are subject to the whim of a landlord who may decide to raise the rent or ask them to leave."

Buyers can choose between a 100 percent mortgage that requires private mortgage insurance or an 80 percent first mortgage and 20 percent second mortgage at a higher interest rate, but without the insurance cost.

"The good news for 2007 is that mortgage insurance premium payments will be deductible for homeowners with adjusted gross



Maghan and David Hickok of the Brockton Education Association purchased a home through the MTA Home Mortgage Program.

incomes of less than \$110,000," Gershkowitz said. "In some cases, the tax savings may allow buyers to afford a more expensive home."

Highly recommended

Newlyweds Maghan and David Hickok, both with the Brockton Education Association, recently bought a home through the MTA Home Mortgage Program with 100

percent financing from Greenpark.

"It was our first big investment, and we were somewhat apprehensive," said Maghan Hickok. "How was it going to work? What new responsibilities would be involved? These were some of the questions we had. Chris Cowher, our Greenpark mortgage specialist, addressed all our concerns. He was fantastic, explaining everything in detail and

'More than 2,000 MTA members have taken advantage of exclusive member savings and our competitive mortgage programs.'

—Paul Gershkowitz
President, Greenpark Mortgage

responding immediately to all our calls and e-mails. We would highly recommend Greenpark to other MTA members."

According to Gershkowitz, Greenpark is all about doing the right thing for buyers.

"This philosophy has helped buyers and has also helped us grow," he said. "Buyers become 'raving fans' who tell others about our services. More than 2,000 MTA members have taken advantage of exclusive member savings and our competitive mortgage programs."

For more information on how the MTA Home Mortgage Program can help you finance your American dream, call Gershkowitz at 866.475.4663, Ext. 125.

PEM center highlights ties between art and nature

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes."

— Marcel Proust

With its interactive exhibition and program spaces, the Art & Nature Center at the world-class Peabody Essex Museum in Salem takes visitors on journeys that awaken the imagination and excite the emotions.

The museum's art collections are presented in conjunction with the natural history collection, showing the vital and complex relationship between art and nature.

Designed primarily for families and children, the Art & Nature Center taps into the museum's rich resources for its two interpretive areas: the Connections Zone and Natural Inspirations.

Exciting spaces

The Connections Zone features exhibitions that incorporate interactive stations, multimedia and art by regional artists and from PEM

collections. The current exhibition, on display through June 3, is *A Sense of Place, An Artist's Tribute to the Seven Continents*, featuring seven large textiles by artist Betsy Sterling Benjamin, one representing each of the continents. Created as a celebration of the planet, these works of art draw connections between people and their neighbors and between people and animals. Benjamin's textiles are complemented by artworks and hands-on stations.



Peabody Essex Museum's Art & Nature Center takes visitors on journeys that awaken the imagination and excite the emotions.

Natural Inspirations focuses on the local region's natural heritage, as well as the influence that nature has had on culture and art. Typical of its exhibitions was the recent *Owls in Art and Nature*, which included artworks, a display of more than 75 local bird species with an accompanying DVD station, activity boxes, games, puzzles and related books for all ages.

In addition to the Art & Nature Center school programs, PEM offers a wide range of school programs for K-12 students and professional development opportunities for educators. For information, visit www.pem.org or call 978.745.9500, Ext. 3060.

Auto Quote Giveaway winner gets \$500 Cranwell gift certificate

Stephanie Toolin, winner of the recent Auto Insurance Quote Giveaway and a member of the Pembroke Teachers Association, received a \$500 gift certificate to the Cranwell Resort, Spa and Golf Club, a luxurious all-season resort in the heart of the majestic Berkshires.

Reminiscent of an English country manor, the hotel features 107 distinctive guest rooms and suites and elegant restaurants. A new 35,000-square-foot spa includes a state-of-the-art fitness center and glass-enclosed indoor heated pool and walkways.

"I'm very excited," said Toolin. "This is the first time I've won anything. The Cranwell will be a wonderful getaway."

The April giveaway

MTA members who go on line to www.mtabenefits.com and request an auto insurance quote by April 10 are automatically entered in the next Auto Quote Giveaway, featuring another \$500 gift certificate to the Cranwell Resort. The winner will be announced on April 11.

Obituaries

Leo R. Bachant, 69, of Holden. Created and taught in the Industrial Arts Department at Clinton High School. Served as assistant principal for more than 20 years, retiring in 1984. Nov. 29.

Beatrice Baker, 92, of Springfield. Was an elementary teacher for many years in the Springfield school system. Dec. 17.

Joseph G.L. Bourgeois, 77, of Easton. Taught science, including biology, ecology and oceanography, at Randolph High School for over 30 years. Jan. 3.

Loretta Collins, 88, of Plymouth. Taught for more than 20 years in Plymouth and other communities. Dec. 18.

Yolande S. Croteau, 76, of Springfield. Was an accounting professor at Springfield Technical Community College for 25 years, retiring in 1994. Nov. 29.

Gertrude A. Dermody, 65, of Taunton. Taught in the Taunton Public Schools for 28 years. Nov. 19.

John P. Dillon, 85, of Worcester. Taught at several Worcester elementary schools and then was principal of Millbury Street, Columbus Park, Bloomingdale and

Mill Swan schools before retiring in 1985. Jan. 12.

Anna DiPietro, of Somerville. Taught and was vice principal for 25 years at Northeastern, Western and Southern junior high schools in Somerville. Was a guidance counselor for 10 years, retiring in 1995. Nov. 24.

Joseph J. Fallo, 69, of Waltham. Was a science teacher for many years in Waltham. Taught at Waltham High School and the Kennedy and Central middle schools. Oct. 3.

Wallace Gleekman, of Newton. Started his career as a chemical education teacher and housemaster at Brookline High School, where he taught for more than 30 years. Nov. 23.

Rhoda H. Graves, 98, of Spofford, N.H. Taught in the Orange, Mass., school system for more than 30 years. Dec. 12.

George R. Griffin, 77, of Rutland. Started his career at West Boylston High School, where he taught mathematics for 20 years. Was a lecturer at Anna Maria College in Paxton and later served as director of institutional advancement and associate dean

of academic affairs. Returned to classroom teaching before retiring in 2000. Jan. 8.

Eugene D. Hilton, 86, of Agawam. Was an elementary teacher in Sturbridge for over 20 years. Jan. 23.

Michael J. Hubbard, Sr., 63, of Worcester. Was an educator for 34 years, working as a teacher, guidance counselor, athletic director and coach, among other positions. Spent 14 years at Worcester Vocational High School. Served as dean of students at Bay Bath Regional Vocational Technical High School in Charlton, retiring in 2005. Sept. 10.

Mary I. Kiley, 97, of Pittsfield. Taught mathematics at the C.T. Plunkett Junior High School in Adams for many years. Jan. 18.

Jane B. Liptak, 74, of Westfield. Was a teacher aide at Westfield High School for 28 years. Dec. 5.

Laura McClentic, 93, of Attleboro. Taught second grade at the Finberg School in Attleboro for 19 years, retiring in 1974. Jan. 2.

Carolyn M. (Nyquist) Olson, 89, of Petersham. Was a third-grade teacher for over 30 years in Barre,

Holden and Worcester, retiring in 1981. Jan. 14.

Katherine A. Paradis, 52, of Franklin. Worked as a special needs teacher in Franklin for several years, retiring in 2004. Jan. 11.

Patricia A. Phaneuf, 77, of Salem. Was a teacher at several schools in Massachusetts and New Hampshire until her retirement from the South Row School in Chelmsford in 1989. Dec. 23.

Mary G. Spinney, 74, of Saugus. Worked as a school psychologist in Wakefield for 30 years. Dec. 27.

Betty Jean Haskell Spragg, 79, of Norfolk. Was an elementary teacher for many years in Wrentham. Oct. 28.

Elaine Dyson Taylor, of Springfield. Taught in the Longmeadow Center School for 20 years. Jan. 3.

Leonard A. Walsh, Jr., 64, of Marlborough. Taught for 35 years in the Marlborough Public Schools, both at the Bigelow School and the Marlborough Middle School, where he was a science teacher. Dec. 1.

Patricia A. Walsh, 70, of New Bedford. Worked at the Carney Academy until her retirement. Dec. 18.

William J. Wilcox, Jr., 75, of Plymouth. Worked at Hanover High School and had taught in the Marshfield and Cheshire school systems. Dec. 10.

Bill provides support for instructional leaders

Continued from Page 20

opportunity to improve. If they do not improve after receiving added support and supervision, they should be dismissed."

Instructional leadership: Improving instructional leadership in the ranks of teachers is one of the six initiatives that would be supported under the bill. There are an increasing number of roles critical to school and district performance that are not administrative, including those of mentor, content coach and professional development and curriculum leader.

Principals would facilitate the development of plans that would support more teachers taking on these roles. The plan also calls for increasing the amount of time teachers work together to analyze and improve their performance.

The bill will be sent to the Legislature's Joint Committee on Education, and a public hearing on it will be held this spring.



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DELEGATES WANTED: MTA ANNUAL MEETING

Do you want to help set the policies, approve the budget and the dues and elect the leaders of your state association — the MTA?

If so, then run for election as a delegate to the MTA Annual Meeting, which will be held

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, MAY 11-12

at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston. Delegates will stay at the Sheraton Boston Hotel.

Is your local running an election? If not, why not? Every local association is entitled to at least two delegates. All active members, including education support professionals, are eligible to run.

The Annual Meeting is a great place to meet fellow educators, share experiences, debate issues, decide how your dues dollars are spent and help shape the direction of the 106,000-member MTA.

For more information on how to run for election as a delegate and to find out what local funding is available for you to attend the Annual Meeting, please contact your local association president.

In addition, the MTA Communications Division is producing a video that will feature information about the association, the Annual Meeting of Delegates and the MTA Summer Conference. The video will be distributed to local association presidents and be posted on MTA's Web site, www.massteacher.org.



Preconvention meetings scheduled for delegates to MTA Annual Meeting

Sessions provide information on issues to be addressed

Preconvention meetings have been set for elected delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates in May.

At these preconventions, the delegates will receive advance information and materials critical to their decision-making on organizational matters.

The following is a list of locations and dates for the 2007 preconvention meetings:

- Monday, April 23: Central Region — Worcester Hotel and Conference Center.
- Tuesday, April 24: Western/Berkshire Regions — Clarion Hotel & Conference Center, Northampton.
- Wednesday, April 25: Northeast/Metro Regions — Holiday Inn Select, Woburn.
- Monday, April 30: Cape & Island Regions — Cape Codder Resort, Hyannis.
- Tuesday, May 1: Southeast/Metro Regions — Holiday Inn, Taunton.

The preconvention meetings usually begin at about 3:30 p.m. The brochure containing sites and driving directions will be disseminated in March. Further information will be provided to delegates as it becomes available.

The Annual Meeting of Delegates will be held May 11-12 at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston.

Astronaut's mission provides lessons for Needham students

Continued from Page 9

"Each week she sends a picture that she took from space and asks the students to try to identify what is in the picture," DiNapoli said.

The kids compute the number of miles she travels each week in the space station and are also tracking her fitness routine while in space. DiNapoli is encouraging her students to create their own fitness goals and track them along with the astronaut, who exercises between 10 and 11 hours a week.

Williams is participating in a fitness and nutrition study designed to reduce the loss of bone and muscle mass from living in zero-gravity environments. The results will help NASA prepare for manned flights to Mars.

"How to work in a low-gravity environment and how to work in an environment that is not habitable for us — that will take us to the next place: maybe Mars and then beyond," Williams said during the preflight interview.

Perhaps it will even be another one of DiNapoli's students, inspired by her love of science and space, who will help blaze the trail to Mars.

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Voicing concerns on NCLB



MTA President Anne Wass and MTA NEA directors met recently with U.S. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy in Washington, D.C., to discuss MTA's concerns about the No Child Left Behind law's unrealistic accountability requirements, punitive sanctions and inadequate funding. With Kennedy and Wass, left to right, are John Reed, Barnstable; Zach Galvin, Natick; Jackie Gorrie, Taunton; Maureen Carlos, Worcester; and Eileen Cleary, Brockton.

Public higher ed 'one of the top priorities'

Continued from Page 11

Beacon Hill and lauded them for their efforts.

"It's about time," Mohler-Faria said. He said that working with the governor is a refreshing change and "despite all the pressures," Patrick continues to "place public higher education as one of the top priorities."

"He keeps saying that we have to find a way," Mohler-Faria added.

Before the convention concluded and PHENOM members went in different directions to

visit their state representatives and senators, Diana "Donnie" McGee, who serves as vice president of the MCCC, gave those present a short lesson in lobbying.

"We're here because there is a crisis," McGee said.

She told the group to view the process in the same way that they view bargaining. "You are trying to work with legislators to improve our education system," she said.

PHENOM is working to collect 20,000 signatures in support of its five principles.

'Being there' is key principle for Jobs with Justice

Coalition with the MTA will help kids, workers

Continued from Page 4

In addition to health care, Joseph sees immigration as an issue around which MTA members and community groups should coalesce.

He points to the people involved in the Massachusetts Brazilian Immigrant Center as an example.

"Their single issue is obvious. But what happens to these kids and their families is going to have an impact in our classrooms," Joseph said. "There's the potential to have some work done between some of these groups and our locals."

He envisions the MTA supporting programs and services that would benefit immigrant communities, and immigrant communities supporting

educators in their own contract struggles.

"I think it's a valid premise that no single-issue group

is going to be able to get the job done," Joseph said. "I'm pleased that (current MTA President) Anne Wass sees this, too."

"Working with Jobs with Justice is one of the ways we can 'be there' for our students ..."

—Anne Wass
MTA president

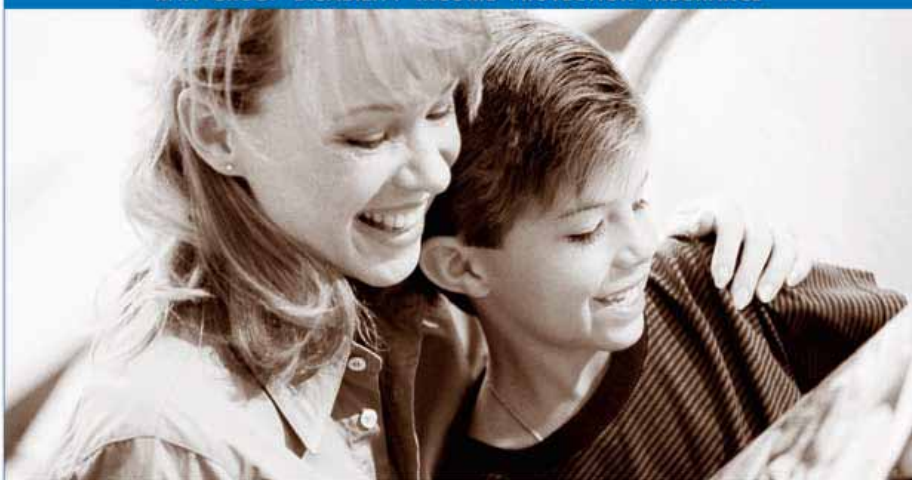
"Working with Jobs with Justice is one of the ways we can 'be there' for our students, so that they arrive for class healthy, well fed and ready to learn," said Wass. "When we speak out for the dignity and welfare of workers, we speak out for all workers."

For more information about Jobs with Justice, visit the Eastern Massachusetts Web site, www.massjwj.net, or the Western Massachusetts Web site, www.wmjwj.org/.

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Advisor says 'benign neglect' has hurt colleges

Continued from Page 3

effort to address capital needs. After many years of benign neglect, we are seeing a real depth of capital needs that we're going to have to address. I will give you an example at Bridgewater. We have a science building built in 1964 for 800 students. Today, we have nearly 10,000 students. That's an example of the kind of thing that we're faced with. There are tremendous capital needs at UMass, as well.

Q What are the greatest needs in preK-12 education?

A I think it is clear that there needs to be some additional funding. We also hear a need for better coordination and collaboration. We don't see the kind of collaboration we need across the spectrum, from early childhood education to K-12 to higher education.

Q What is the impact of these coordination problems?

A What we see now in higher education is a very high percentage, in some cases as high as 50 percent, of the students coming from the K-12 system who are not college-ready. That is not to say that we're not doing a decent job in our K-12 system. It's really about coordination. We need to have a discussion about what college readiness is so that when these students do graduate, they are college-ready.

Q Isn't that what MCAS was supposed to do?

A MCAS was really not intended to measure college readiness. It was a standard that was set to determine certain levels of competency, but it was never linked to college readiness. Many students in the higher education system who have passed MCAS and done well in high school are not college-ready.

Q How would you judge if students are college-ready?

A There are other ways of doing that. For example, in higher ed, we use the Accuplacer test to determine [students'] readiness in math and English and to place them in the right courses and to look at the kind of remediation they might need to succeed. Something like that, maybe at the 10th grade, which then begins to help us prescribe what they need during the next two years in high school to get them college-ready. I don't know. My point here is that collaboration and coordination do not exist to ensure success for every student in the Commonwealth.

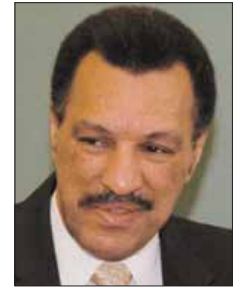
Q What about issues related to early childhood education?

A The data is there that the investment in early childhood reaps tremendous ben-

efits for a young person's ability to succeed through the system.

Q What do you hope will be different in education in Massachusetts four years from now?

A My hope is that we would have a well-coordinated, streamlined system of education in the Commonwealth that is clearly articulated and that provides the opportunity for every young person in this Commonwealth to access higher education.



Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria

Q Is it your intention to return to Bridgewater full time?

A My intention right at this moment is to return to Bridgewater. I think my greater intention here is to help and support this governor in whatever way I can, whether I'm here or at Bridgewater. I think one of the things that [Governor Patrick] was masterful with in his campaign was awakening the notion in many of us that we can't sit on the sidelines.

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Brockton students give surprise performance

Continued from Page 5

of the Louis Prima classic "Sing, Sing, Sing." The band, which closed the event, was not announced in advance or listed in the program, so when the students, outfitted in their official game-day uniforms, began marching down the aisles of the theater, those in the audience were taken by surprise.

"It was awesome," said Macrina, who has been with the Brockton school system for 36 years. "It felt like this big, huge revival rally."

Macrina, like Reed, has hopes that Patrick will be an advocate for teachers and recognize the need for students to get a well-rounded education.

"I think Governor Patrick is certainly going to be a plus for the education system," Macrina said. "I just hope that he will really take a look at what is going on today. There is so much focus on the MCAS ... I hope the administration leaves room for the arts. It makes such a difference in kids' lives."

"Priority one for the new governor is getting parents involved in their kids' education," Macrina said. "Schools can't do it all."

Patrick spoke to the crowd about the importance of establishing connections between educators and students.

"I think a good education is about the whole child," he said. "It is not about how you do on a single test. It is about creating the conditions that allow you to have a relationship with a single teacher."



'Priority one for the new governor is getting parents involved in their kids' education. Schools can't do it all.'

—Vincent Macrina, Brockton music director

Patrick also noted that several of his former teachers — from third, seventh, ninth and 10th grade — were at his inauguration ceremony.

"I got something from these teachers: how important it is to take a chance and step out there," he said. "There will be all kinds of forces that will discourage you from taking that step."

"Take it anyway," Patrick urged.

Motivated by Patrick's charisma and commitment to civic engagement, George Abbott White, a longtime teacher in Newton and faculty advisor to the student newspaper at Newton South High School, joined with journalism teachers and about 40 students from seven other Massachusetts high schools to produce a unique on-line newspaper devoted to coverage of the inauguration of Patrick and Lt. Gov. Tim Murray.

White took Newton students to nine of the events surrounding the Patrick-Murray inauguration and gave them the opportunity to work with their own teachers and other student journalists, taking pictures and asking questions of the new leaders. Patrick and Murray directly invited students on at least four different occa-

sions to join with media representatives at press conferences and availabilities.

"At every event we went to — in Hyannis, at UMass-Dartmouth and at Merrimack College — Deval gave the students access, and, if time permitted, an interview at the end of it," White said.

"This administration has made it clear that they want youth involved," he added. "Involving student journalists in these unique inaugural events was a test. It was so exciting for the kids that we may continue the project with regular press conferences for the students."

Throughout the events at the theater and other locations, Patrick's presence brought out a tangible sense of excitement.

"I think he reaffirms what I thought I was doing when I started this — opening the windows and doors for kids and helping to create citizens," White said. "He reaffirms a Jeffersonian idea that a really democratic society must keep renewing itself, and an independent press helps make this possible."

To read *The Mass Youth RedEye Gazette*, the on-line newspaper produced by the students, visit denebolaonline.net.

Greenpark Mortgage gave Leanne Lovell a great mortgage and outstanding service. No wonder she's a "raving fan."



Leanne Lovell, member from Orange, Mass., who bought her home through Greenpark Mortgage

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Educators honored for work with students

State House ceremony held for Presidential finalists, Cotsen Award winners

Massachusetts educators were honored at a recent State House ceremony for helping students learn science and mathematics and for their work with children with Asperger's syndrome.

The math and science teachers are finalists for the 2006 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. In each state and U.S. jurisdiction, one award goes to a math teacher and one to a science teacher.

The awards are administered by the National Science Foundation. They are given to kindergarten-through-grade-six teachers in even-numbered years and teachers of grades seven through 12 in odd-numbered years. The winners will be announced in the spring.

The other honorees each received the Cotsen Award, which is



Photo by Sarah Nathan

Gov. Deval Patrick, center, joined educators at a Jan. 30 ceremony at the State House. Massachusetts finalists for the 2006 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, from left to right, are Patricia Juranovits, Anne Tyman, Judith Cournoyer, Kara Frankian, Laurie McCabe and Glenna Pearson. Other educators won awards for working with children with Asperger's syndrome.

given by the Asperger's Association of New England's Educators' Advisory Group. The educators are nominated by parents for helping their students succeed in school.

The Presidential Award finalists are:

- Judith Cournoyer, a first-grade teacher at Eastford Road School in Southbridge.
- Kara Frankian, a first-grade teacher at Floral Street School in Shrewsbury.
- Patricia Juranovits, a sixth-grade teacher at C.D. Hunking

Middle School in Haverhill.

- Laurie McCabe, a third-grade teacher at the Fannie E. Proctor School in Northborough.
- Glenna Pearson, a sixth-grade teacher at West Boylston Middle/High School.
- Anne Tyman, a second-grade teacher at the William McKinley Elementary School in Revere.

The Cotsen Award winners at MTA schools include:

- Special education teacher Aimee Caldeira, third-grade teacher Grace Franco and paraprofessional Paula Higgins, who work as a

team at the Wampatuck Elementary School in Scituate.

- Jen Miller, special education coordinator at Monument Mountain High School, which is part of the Berkshire Hills Regional School District.

• Diane Mikush, a special education teacher at Apponequet Regional High School, which is part of the Freetown-Lakeville Regional School District.

- Ann Thurber, head of special education for kindergarten at the Mary E. Finn School in Southborough.



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EDUCATION/LICENSURE

TWO-COURSE PROFESSIONAL LICENSE program for elementary education teachers has been approved by the DOE. Completing teachers do not need master’s degrees, although courses carry master’s-level credit. For information, contact the educational association or collaborative that services your school system. Or contact: Dr. Arnold Good at agood1221@rcn.com.

ADMINISTRATOR LICENSURE PROGRAM — If you are looking for a district-based, cost-effective program for licensure as an administrator, consult the Web site of The Education Cooperative (TEC), located at www.tec-coop.org, and click on “Licensure.” Courses are offered in Dedham, in cooperation with Boston University.

TEACHER LICENSURE PROGRAM — If you have Preliminary licensure at the secondary level and are seeking Initial licensure, The Education Cooperative (TEC) has a program for you. Go to our Web site at www.tec-coop.org and click on “Licensure.” Courses are offered on weekends and during the summer at our Dedham site.

NTCA PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE PROGRAM — Have an initial? Want to earn a professional license? Norfolk County Teachers Association/Framingham State College offer DOE-approved programs in elementary, early childhood, special education and middle school math and/or science. Contact program director Judy Riley Brown at 617.733.1782 or e-mail grandma_moses@comcast.net.

NORFOLK COUNTY TEACHERS ASSOCIATION courses providing Framingham State College credit are offered three times yearly. Courses offered both on-site and on-line. Low costs. A course meeting weekends during March entitled “Social and Emotional Learning” will be held at North Quincy High. For complete information, visit www.nctateachers.org or phone 781.986.5628. Summer registrations start June 1.

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EDUCATORS-IN-TRANSITION: Know how to leverage your instructional and other transferable skills into business, non-profit and public service positions? We do. Ask us! R.L. Stevens has helped educators make successful career changes for 25 years. Contact us for a confidential career analysis: 781.647.4888 or www.interviewing.com/educators.

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ALTERNATIVE FAST TRACK TO INITIAL TEACHING LICENSE WITH SCHOLARSHIPS! Do you know someone who would be a great math or biology teacher? This urban program is designed for career changers or recent college graduates. For information, contact Carol Radford at 774.929.3028 or read “TEACH! SouthCoast” at www.umassd.edu/cusp/.

LEARN TO TUTOR FOR THE SAT — Offer a class at your school or tutor privately. Summer weekend workshops for teachers offered near Boston at the Brookline Marriott: July 14-15 SAT Math and July 28-20 SAT Verbal/Writing. For info or to register, call New Leaf Learning Center 413.584.0075.

CONFERENCES

BECAUSE WRITING MATTERS, the Massachusetts Writing Project’s spring conference, will feature *Sonia Nieto*, author of *Why We Teach*, as keynote, and five workshop strands: English Language Learners, family literacy, teaching with technology, responding to student writing, teacher research. Saturday, May 5, at the Crowne Plaza, Worcester. For details, visit www.masswritingproject.org.

CHILDREN AND VIOLENCE: Prevention, Insight and Creative Solutions Conference: March 23 at Marriott Hotel, Burlington. Speakers: William Pollack, Ph.D., addressing violence in our schools; Eugene Beresin, M.D., Ross W. Greene, Ph.D., Elizabeth Englander, Ph.D., and others. Presented by Franciscan Hospital for Children. Call 617.254.3800, Ext. 1510.

FIELD TRIPS

IN-SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS — Social studies presentations, hands-on workshops and living history programs. “Hands-on” geography (K-6); Ancient China; Ancient Greece; Ancient Civilizations Archaeology; Pioneers; Colonial School; Voyage of Columbus; Alaska; Africa. Now Voyager Educational Programs 781.784.5197; www.nved.com.

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AMALFI COAST, MINORI, ITALY. Oct. 25-Nov. 2 with Maestro John Cheney. For retired teachers who enjoy the beauty of the wonderful Amalfi Coast. For flier, call John at 413.443.4758.

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND — Join Me and Bobby McGee Tours on another great trip down under. Seventeen days including round-trip air U.S.-Australia, flights in Australia and New Zealand,

centrally located hotels, meals. Many references available. Departure June 27. \$2,779 per person double occupancy. E-mail Meandbobbymcgee@aol.com.

TRAVEL/STUDY

SEMINAR: Education in Ireland (6 Graduate Credits) — July 5-July 28, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland. Study aspects of the Irish educational system and the history, literature and culture of Ireland. Call or write Barney Keenan, coordinator, 127 Glen Road, Gorham, NH 03581; 603.466.2972; or Lilysky@ncia.net. The Trip of a Lifetime!

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WINTER RENTAL — Venice, Florida. New condo, third level w/three bedrooms, 2 baths, granite kit., garage & elevators. Minutes to great beaches, quaint downtown shopping, fine dining and golf. 3-month minimum. \$2,800/month. Available 2007 or 2008. Go to www.jcsellsrealestate.com and click on Tuscany Lake condo, or call 978.808.1597.

FOR RENT KISSIMMEE CONDO — 3 bedrooms, 2 baths, 4 miles from Disney. Sleeps 8. Handicap accessible. \$75/night. E-mail smk98@verizon.net for availability.

NAPLES/BONITA SPRINGS, FLA. — Furnished condo. 3 bedrooms, waterfront. Tennis, pool, kayaking, fitness, beach island, sailing. \$3,000 monthly; \$1,500 monthly with lease. Owner: 617.686.4630.

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CAPE COD, WEST YARMOUTH — Colonial Acres Resort on Nantucket Sound. Sleeps 4. 8/4-8/11, 8/11-8/18. Call for price and details: 781.335.6849.

EAST FALMOUTH. Sunny 3-bedroom, 1-bath Cape. Cathedral ceilings, w/deck, outside shower, washer/dryer. Stroll to secluded bay beach, picturesque walkway & public boat landing. Less than a mile to Bristol & Falmouth Heights beaches. Close to shopping. \$1,000 weekly. 508.872.5870.

LOVELY CHATHAM — 4-BR/2-BA. Sleeps 8. Near scenic Harding’s Beach, downtown shopping. Quiet

Continued on next page

Classifieds

Continued from previous page

street, great back yard, deck, outdoor shower all make for an affordable, memorable Cape vacation! See www.cyberrentals.com #105919 for photos/rates/availability. 978.874.6177.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, CANADA — Three beautiful, secluded cottages on private white sand beach. Spectacular views, warm water, safe swimming, golf nearby.

Fully equipped, including linens. Two bedrooms and three bedrooms. \$1,300 CAD-\$2000 CAD weekly. Off-season rates June and September. Phone 902.357.2661. E-mail clairrest@pei.sympatico.ca.

BOCA RATON, FLA. — Furnished 2-bedroom, 1½-bath, gated community, great clubhouse, pools, tennis, newly painted and carpeted. Available monthly, March through November. Call 781.326.2252.

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CAPE COD HARWICH — Ready for a get-away? Fall and spring on Cape Cod are delightful! Lovely 3-bedroom home, non-smoking, all amenities included. Nice setting on cul-de-sac adjacent to bike path. Off season rates \$700 per week, \$125 per day with two-day minimum. Picture upon request. 508.432.8825 (h); 508.941.4529 (c).

RENT MARSHFIELD OCEANFRONT — September 2007-June 2008: commute to any South Shore town; family or adult group welcome; new renovation — 5 bedrooms, 2 full baths, spacious open living areas; fully furnished and appliances incl. washer/dryer, dishwasher. No smoking. \$1,800 mo. & utilities. Call Annette, 508.339.8262.

CAPE COD, OCEAN EDGE RESORT, Brewster, Mass. — Perfect vacation resort setting. Spacious, nicely appointed villa, spiral staircase to large loft; 2 baths, sleeps 6. Excellent location within resort, steps from indoor/outdoor pools, tennis. Nearby beaches, shopping, bike trails and more. Available summer weekly, off-season spring/fall weeks or weekends. 413.594.4056.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, CANADA — Incredible Oceanview Cottage sleeps 6+; walk to beach, fishing, golf, restaurants, shopping. Only \$550/wk. Call Jay, 813.767.3567, or e-mail jaygcp@tampabay.rr.com.

MARTHA'S VINEYARD gingerbread cottage. Weekly (\$1,750) or weekends: June/September. Five bedrooms, living room, dining

room, kitchen. 2 baths. 2 blocks to beach, ferry, town. Families only. No smoking or pets. 781.659.7279.

DEER ISLE, MAINE — Spacious sunlit cottage near the sea: 3 bedrooms, 2 baths, walk to ocean and boat landing. Large airy rooms, fieldstone fireplace, newly painted interiors, fully equipped country kitchen, hardwood floors. Country setting, 1½ acres. Sleeps six. Dogs welcome. \$750-950/week, June-September. More at www.hardyshillcottage.com. Call 978.283.3738. E-mail hardyshillcottage@verizon.net.

CAPE COD, Marstons Mills — 3-bedroom/2-bath (max 6) home with beach rights to Middle Pond, tennis court, hiking, minutes to shopping. No smoking, no pets. July-August. \$1,200/week, \$400/weekend. Call 508.428.3402 or e-mail: rakulo@comcast.net.

N.H. LAKES REGION — Winnisquam lakefront home sleeps 6. Dock, sandy beach, sun porch, large private yard. Pet and child friendly. Minutes to outlets and attractions. Available weekends May and June, \$350; weekly July-August. \$1,400. Inquiries: dconlon@rcn.com.

NOVA SCOTIA, SOUTH SHORE. Retired teachers offer fully furnished, equipped summer home. Utilities included. \$425 week. 203.393.2037. 201 Bear Hill Road, Bethany, Connecticut 06524.

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Take a (tax) break ...

Deduction is extended for educators' classroom expenses

By Megan Secatore

This tax season, educators nationwide can benefit from a \$250 federal tax deduction on qualified classroom expenses, thanks to a last-minute extension by Congress.

To this news, Judy Sampson, a special education teacher for the Southern Worcester County Educational Collaborative, says, "Yea!" Her sister works for a tax preparation service and told a disappointed Sampson last year that the deduction had expired.

Congress first gave educators the \$250 federal tax deduction in 2002. The temporary relief has been extended several times, most recently in December 2006, and is currently set to expire at the end of the 2007 tax year.

Unfortunately, the latest extension came too late for the deduction to be included on printed tax forms, according to the IRS Web site. But you can visit <http://www.irs.gov> for IRS Tax Tips and instructions on this issue.

According to the NEA, an "eligible educator" works "at least



TAX DEDUCTION LINKS

Information from the NEA
<http://www.nea.org/member/educatortax.html>

Information from the IRS
<http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=165783,00.html>

Advocate for a permanent deduction
<http://www.nea.org/lac/edtax/index.html>

900 hours during a school year in a school that provides elementary or secondary education, as determined under state law, and is a kindergarten-through-grade-12 teacher, instructor, counselor, principal, or aide."

"Qualified expenses" are "unreimbursed expenses paid or incurred for books, supplies, computer equipment (including related software and services), other equipment, and supplementary materials

that you use in the classroom."

Meanwhile, the NEA is urging Congress to make the deduction permanent by passing the Teacher Tax Relief Act, House Bill 549. This measure, filed by Rep. Dave Camp (R-Mich.), would also increase the deduction to \$400 and expand it to cover professional development expenses.

A 2005 member survey conducted by the Springfield Education Association found that nearly

all respondents spent their own money on teaching-related supplies. More than 50 percent spent between \$100 and \$500 each year. Another 25.5 percent spent up to \$1,000, and 14.4 percent spent more.

Susan Fielding, SEA treasurer and a member of the MTA Board of Directors, is typical in her spending for students. A special education teacher at Balliet Elementary School, she buys "books, storage containers for materials, little trays, crayons, scissors, pencils, erasers and little devices to manipulate — common, everyday materials."

"I know my spending comes to more than \$250. I keep track up to that point," she said. "The fact that I can claim it helps a lot. But there are times when I resent that I'm spending my own money. To help myself in my duties, and have materials for my kids, I have to do it."

Sampson agrees that the deduction is nice to have, but it hasn't changed her spending habits.

"I'm going to buy what I need to buy," the 28-year veteran said. "I always have."

Performance survey gives state high marks

How well are Massachusetts students performing? Very well compared to the nation as a whole, according to data compiled by the highly regarded journal *Education Week* for its 2007 "Quality Counts" survey.

Education Week ranked Massachusetts first in the nation under the category "Elementary and Secondary Performance." This ranking looks at achievement levels on the National Assessment of Educational Progress math and reading tests in grades four and eight, the achievement gains on the NAEP tests, the size of the "poverty gap,"

high school graduation rates and scores on Advanced Placement exams.

Massachusetts is given high marks in all categories except two. The size of the state's "poverty gap" — test-score differences between poor and non-poor students — is at the national average. However, Massachusetts is one of few states that saw that gap decline between 2003 and 2005.

In addition, the state's graduation rate is above the national average — but that rate dropped between 2000 and 2003.

On the plus side, Massachu-

setts students are at or tied for first place on the NAEP math and reading tests. They also have relatively high AP scores. The Massachusetts Department of Education announced in January that one in five students (19.8 percent) in the Class of 2006 scored a 3 or above on at least one AP exam, besting the national average of 15 percent.

Despite the continued good news about the high performance of public students in Massachusetts, the number of schools listed as "in need of improvement" under state

and federal accountability laws continues to grow.

"Maybe we need to be looking at one more indicator," said MTA President Anne Wass. "We could call it the 'perception vs. reality' gap."

Wass added that changing the way schools are judged under the federal No Child Left Behind law is a high priority for the NEA and its state affiliates.

"Too many schools are labeled deficient, and too little help is provided to the small number of schools that really do need help," she concluded.

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