

BATTLE AGAINST HIGH-STAKES TESTING GAINS MOMENTUM



MTA Today

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MTA'S MISSION STATEMENT

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

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ON THE COVER

The MTA and fellow members of the Raise Up Massachusetts coalition are conducting a ballot campaign to raise significant revenues for public education and transportation by increasing taxes on income over \$1 million a year. Fall River Educators' Association President Rebecca Cusick, pictured at the MTA Summer Conference, was among the first 10 signers of the initiative petition. Coverage begins on Page 8. Meanwhile, the movement against high-stakes testing is picking up steam in Massachusetts and across the country. Falmouth educator Carol DiAnna was one of many MTA members who testified at the State House during a Week of Action in June in support of House Bill 340, which would place a moratorium on the high-stakes use of standardized tests. A story on the effort begins on Page 7.



Cover photos by Chris Christo and Scott McLennan
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Quote-Unquote

"Is education about the rigor of a high-stakes test score for profit, or is it about engaging, motivating and inspiring our young learners to fulfill their potential and to live a life with purpose and meaning?"

— Excerpt from testimony by Hull fifth-grade teacher Deb McCarthy in favor of House Bill 340, which calls for a moratorium on the high-stakes use of standardized tests

Summits focus on school safety

Educators work with district attorneys to open lines of communication about key issues

By Jean Conley

A mother's heartbreaking story of her son's years of drug addiction — and his death at age 20 from a heroin overdose — served as a poignant beginning to a daylong event late last spring that brought together educators, social and health services providers, law enforcement personnel and other community members to help them confront some of the most troubling issues that schools face.

Ginger Katz, who lives in Norwalk, Connecticut, founded The Courage to Speak Foundation after her son's death nearly two decades ago. She now travels the country, putting her message in front of students, parents and others: Society needs to "break the code of silence" surrounding the abuse of drugs — legal and illegal — that are taking so many young lives.

Katz, whose presentation was part of a Safe School Summit in Worcester on May 28, stressed that in order to successfully fight drug abuse, communication — between teenager and parent, parent and school, law enforcement and the judicial system — is key. "Denial and deception are both part of the disease," she said.

The summit, the latest in a series around the state, was held at Worcester State University and focused on opioid addiction and gang activity.

District attorneys' offices developed the idea of holding the summits several years ago. The events feature workshops and speeches that seek to open up lines of communication, helping professionals foster connections with young people, reach at-risk students and assess and respond to threats and violence in schools. Topics vary widely, from threats, crisis planning and drug use to the concerns of LGBT students and cyberbullying.

The summits have been gaining interest among educators since the MTA received a three-year Great Public Schools Fund grant for \$194,000 from the NEA to help develop and present them.

The collaboration began in 2013 through the initiative of Jean Fay, president of the Amherst-Pelham Education Association and a member of Northwestern District Attorney David E. Sullivan's Citizens Advisory Board. Fay, a special education paraeducator, grew up in Newtown, Connecticut, where 26 students and educators were gunned down in an elementary school in 2012. In addition, her mother was a paraeducator in Newtown.

Fay immediately saw the need to include educators in school crisis planning, so in 2013 she asked the MTA to help with technical support and scholarships for educators so they could attend a Safe School Summit in Northampton.

The MTA provided in-kind services to register participants and process payments, print materials and award continuing education units; a grant from the NEA Education Support Professional



Tina Gaffney, a kindergarten teacher and a member of the Educational Association of Worcester, left, spoke with presenter Ginger Katz before the May 28 summit. Educators have helped shift the conversation at the summits from tactical concerns to meeting the needs of at-risk children.

Photo by Jean Conley

Quality Department covered stipends for speakers, registration fees and other costs.

The current NEA grant, which runs through the 2016-17 school year, allows for expanded collaboration with district attorneys' offices around the state.

Educators, Fay said, have helped shift the conversation at the summits from more tactical concerns — such as securing large spaces and lockdown procedures — to meeting the needs of children who are most at risk. Those discussions bring in issues such as educational equity and alternative disciplinary practices, which require educators' expertise about student behavior.

MTA educators participated in a number of summits last year, including the one in Worcester. In the current school year, the MTA will be involved in six summits, partnerships for three of which are still being identified. Plans are being made for six more next year, along with a final statewide one.

Last November, the MTA teamed up with the Northwestern DA's office to present a Safe Schools, Connected Kids summit in Holyoke. The event focused on topics ranging from bullying to youth suicide prevention, assessing students' risks in schools, and building self-esteem through cognitive-behavioral interventions.

Paul Lyons, a mental health counselor at Amherst-Pelham Regional Middle School, offered two workshops — on threat assessment and creating school safety by developing strong connections with students. He now plans to present on those and related topics at MTA events and other professional conferences.

Lyons said that participating in the summit allowed him to speak to professionals who don't routinely see emotional struggles faced by students, as he does. Building trusting relationships with students, he said, is "the doorway to safe schools."

"If you have an open door," he continued, "the chances are much better that in a crisis, the student will come to you. This adds one other layer of safety and security."

The NEA grant also supported a Safe Campuses Summit last fall that was sponsored by Sullivan's office, as well as a summit on assessing and responding to school threats that was sponsored by the office of Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey. The Worcester event was sponsored by the office of Worcester County District Attorney Joseph Early.

Len Zalauskas, president of the Educational Association of Worcester, said that the current opioid crisis in Massachusetts, which killed more than 1,000 people in 2014, makes having some understanding of the inextricably linked drug and gang cultures essential for school workers.

"Gangs control the drug trade in Worcester," he said. "Drugs are nothing new here." He pointed to the fact that Worcester saw a need for a high school specifically geared toward teens recovering from drug and alcohol addiction.

District Attorney Sullivan said his office has found an important partner in the MTA in trying to make students, schools and communities safer.

"It's everyone working together that makes for a safe school environment. One of the ways we do that is to bring many different disciplines together," he said. "The Safe School Summit idea is really a building block for making positive change."

Norfolk District Attorney Morrissey summed up the value of having educators involved in the summits.

"My father was a teacher, and my wife has worked in the public schools for many years," he said. "I recognize that it is the teachers and other professionals working in the building every day who are best positioned to recognize when something is not right. It is very important for people in those positions to receive the training they need to make those judgments and to make their schools safer."

Visit www.massteacher.org/news/conferences for registration information about upcoming summits.

The incredible power of collective action

We enter this new school year with both a great deal to accomplish and a stronger foundation upon which to build our union. Through our member forums last year, we discovered that from Pittsfield to Bourne, from preK to higher education, our issues look an awful lot alike: inadequate funding, less autonomy and respect, high-stakes testing/accountability, narrowing of the curriculum, fear and uncertainty in



Barbara Madeloni
MTA President

the workplace, and privatization — through charters, receivership and the outsourcing of jobs.

But we also discovered — from the Week of Action in June to the struggles in Holyoke, from organizing around the UMass contracts to voting at the Annual

Meeting in support of opting out, free public higher education and rethinking collective bargaining — that we share a vision and determination to fight for public education and our union.

From these conversations with members, we have designed an ambitious plan to assert our voices as educators, our rights as working people, and our dedication to public education and the public good.

This campaign is built on a commitment to a rank-and-file strategy. That means each of you, each of us, taking a part: talking to each other, reaching out to parents and students, and — through actions small and large — claiming our power and our vision.

Many of these conversations will begin with the issues most pressing to you and your local, whether you are addressing a grievance, planning your collective bargaining platform or articulating the destructive consequences of high-stakes testing. Whatever the issue, it is important that we help each other see how our struggles are connected, why we must care about what is happening in other locals, and how the decisions we make and the actions we take at the local level are part of something much bigger.

The attacks we are under come from the same place — they are a systematic effort by corporate interests to dismantle public education and public-sector unions. We cannot pretend otherwise; we must not pull back from naming

The attacks we are under come from the same place — they are a systematic effort by corporate interests to dismantle public education and public-sector unions. We cannot pretend otherwise; we must not pull back from naming the danger we are in.

the danger we are in. Across the country, we see public schools being closed as charters are opened. We see union rights being legislated out of existence. We see our students and our work being treated as commodities — as products.

But across the country, we also see union members standing up with parents, students and other community members to speak to and fight for a vision of public education that guarantees every student an opportunity for a varied and well-resourced learning environment.

Here at the MTA, we are engaging in this work through a number of specific campaigns.

Millionaires' Tax for Schools and Roads

The MTA is a leader in the Raise Up Massachusetts coalition of unions, community organizations and faith groups working on a constitutional amendment to raise taxes on annual income over \$1 million. This amendment would designate the revenues gained from this tax for public education — for our schools, colleges and universities — and for maintaining our roads, bridges and public transportation systems.

It starts with a signature campaign this fall. It starts with conversations in your local and your community about why we need the funding and why this tax on people who make \$19,231 a week or more is the way to get those funds. Speak to your local leadership and your field representative about plans to make this part of our work this fall.

Less Testing/More Learning

Our work on the Less Testing/More Learning campaign is just beginning. We encourage locals to get school committees to sign on to support a three-year moratorium on the high-stakes use of testing and hold community forums to educate parents and students about the origin and impact of these tests while building a vision for public education. Through the winter and spring, we

will be sharing information about how to opt students out of high-stakes testing with the hope of building the movement in Massachusetts.

Collective Bargaining Summit

At the Annual Meeting in May, delegates voted to have the MTA work with members on open bargaining — a process that brings in more voices and encourages bargaining around big policy issues that have a great impact on our schools and communities, but that too often have been left off the table.

We are holding a collective bargaining summit on Oct. 3 to share ideas and strategies. Whether you are bargaining this year or next, please talk to your union leaders, put a team together and plan to be a part of the conversation.

Keep the Charter Cap

We are proud to be a part of the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance — another coalition of unions and community organizations working for the schools our communities deserve.

Together we are working to organize our communities to fight the attempt to use a ballot initiative and a bill to lift the cap on charter schools. In the months ahead, we will be working to dispel the myths from which charters grow and use the struggle against privatization to increase support for *public* education.

Yes, there is a lot to do. These are the times we live in. But as daunting as it can be, please keep in mind that each step matters, every conversation knits us together as a union, and history gives us lesson after lesson about the power of collective action. Personal experience reminds us of the joy we feel when we use our strength and act on a deep sense of purpose.

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

Barbara

Letters policy

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

'It's been a converting experience'

Summer Conference highlights the impact of one-to-one conversations

By Scott McLennan

Organize to inspire. Inspired to organize. Either could have been the slogan for the MTA's 2015 Summer Conference.

Held the first week in August, this year's Summer Conference was somewhat scaled down in comparison to the events of previous years. But the work that was done during the time members spent together is certain to have a deep and lasting impact.

Those who attended conference programs in Springfield and Natick found themselves being challenged to rethink their ideas about organizing.

They also put theory into practice with visits to MTA members' homes and schools to discuss important union and education issues. "It's been a converting experience. Talking to people one on one, that's powerful stuff," said Heidi Lahey, president of the Wachusett Regional Education Association.

Lahey took part in the MTA Organizing Institute, a new Summer Conference leadership track designed to help locals learn strategies to engage more members in ongoing union activities.

Organizing Institute training culminated in an afternoon of visits to the homes of members of the Holyoke Teachers Association for discussions about the state's decision to put their school district into receivership — and about the implications of that decision for the wider community.

Lahey said she felt skeptical at first about the effectiveness of face-to-face meetings with teachers she did not know. But after listening to a few HTA members, Lahey had a new appreciation for the remarkable work that teachers routinely do in a district whose students struggle with poverty and other obstacles.

Such field work was a new experience for many others, as well. When Wendy MacMillan of the Brookline Educators Union and Pat Partridge of the Belmont Educators Association traveled with a couple of MTA staff members to several HTA members' homes, the Holyoke educators spoke openly about their concerns about receivership.

One pointed out that student growth in Holyoke is actually better than it is in some surrounding communities, yet that did not slow the state's rush to take over the district. Another detailed the devastating effects of poverty he saw in his classroom. Still another drew attention to failing discipline policies.

Both Partridge and MacMillan said afterward that the conversations got them thinking about broader education issues, particularly those they do not routinely encounter.

Holly Silva of the Barnstable Educators Association echoed that sentiment during the Organizing Institute's post-visit debriefing. "It was great to go out, meet people and talk about education," she said. "That's something that when we have kids in front of us, we're too busy to do."



Above, from left to right, Heather Emerson of the Adams-Cheshire Teachers Association, Inna London of the Framingham Teachers Association, Mary McCusker of the Westford Education Association, Christine Mulroney of the FTA and Madeline Chamberlain of the Medfield Teachers Association participated in a program for local leaders. At left, Jie Frye, left, and Claretta Pam, Massachusetts Community College Council members from Bunker Hill Community College, attended a session of the New Member Program.

Photos by Scott McLennan

The Organizing Institute's goal — training union members to become better at identifying what fellow educators see as problems and then collectively coming up with solutions — was also reflected in other Summer Conference programs. Like the institute, longstanding tracks for new members and new presidents took place in Springfield, while the MTA Next Generation Leadership Program was held in Natick.

"Leadership is about being with people and listening and marching together," MTA President Barbara Madeloni told the Summer Conference attendees during a reception on Aug. 3. "We need to get away from the idea of 'leader' as a single person."

In his keynote address, Jackson Potter of the Chicago Teachers Union recounted how educators in his city used their 2012 strike to draw the community's attention to the dire consequences that privatization has for public education.

Potter made connections between the punitive use of standardized tests, the closing of neighborhood schools and the proliferation of privately run charter schools in the city.

He also talked about how businesses are using loopholes to avoid taxes, thus robbing public schools of vital funding. The striking teachers successfully made the public aware of threats to public education.

Please turn to **Trusting**/Page 10

MTA opposes PARCC move

By Laura Barrett

The MTA opposes the switch to PARCC. MTA President Barbara Madeloni and Vice President Janet Anderson sent letters to state education officials in July informing them of the MTA Board's vote in June to oppose the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers tests.

"We are concerned about high-stakes testing in general, and PARCC is just compounding the problem," Madeloni told *MTA Today*. "Members across the state told us that PARCC took even more time away from teaching and learning than MCAS this year — and that's saying a lot."

Among other concerns, Madeloni said that the controversial new tests, administered on computers in many districts, could result in high failure rates for low-income students. This could contribute to a grossly exaggerated sense that public schools are failing and must be privatized in order to save them.

Kalpana Guttman, a literacy specialist in Newton, testified about her experience with PARCC during a public hearing at Bridgewater State University on June 10.

"Not only are the passages too difficult," Guttman stated in her testimony, "the questions are phrased in ways that are confusing. We have found repeatedly that adults — parents and teachers — find the questions on the only practice tests provided by PARCC difficult to understand. This affected not only the English language arts test but also the math test."

In addition, Guttman said that the "technology interface of the computer-based test was not user-friendly," and that "the paper test was equally flawed."

Many teachers testifying at the state's PARCC hearings also said that dedicating a school's computers to administering PARCC was disruptive to the entire school system and that pulling special education teachers away from their normal duties to administer the test deprived students of the education to which they were legally entitled.

Michael Zilles, president of the Newton Teachers Association, and Jackie Lawrence, president of the Somerville Teachers Association, who submitted the new business item to the Board, expressed a concern shared by many PARCC opponents: the loss of local control.

"MCAS, while certainly problematic, is nonetheless a Massachusetts assessment tool," they wrote in their rationale for the NBI. If the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopts PARCC, they wrote, "the MTA would be in a position of having to fight against a national consortium. This would diminish our voices and our power."

On a perfect summer afternoon, area parents, school committee members and educators opted to skip the beach to attend a "test the PARCC" event in Arlington that was sponsored by the MTA and Citizens for Public Schools.



Photo by Chris Christo

As test-takers gathered in Arlington's Ottoson Middle School on Aug. 12, Arlington Education Association President Linda Hanson pointed out instructions for taking the PARCC exam to Judi Paradis, a Waltham school librarian. Paradis said she chose to take the practice test "on behalf of librarians everywhere, to see what we're getting into."

Arlington Education Association President Linda Hanson said that, in general, educators "are just dying to get back to curriculum and instruction."

Waltham school librarian Judi Paradis said she saw "the possibility for lots of technical glitches."

"I can see that a fair amount of time would have to be spent to be successful on this test," she said after the Aug. 12 event.

Jennifer Susse, an Arlington School Committee member with children entering the sixth and seventh grades, said she tried the fifth-grade math test. She saw evidence of "some innovative ways of getting at core knowledge," she said. But "only some of the questions used the new approach to math," which she found confusing. Even though she finished the test, she found that nine of her answers were unscored.

Arlington Education Association President Linda Hanson said that, in general, educators "are just dying to get back to curriculum and instruction." Seemingly endless standardized tests such as the PARCC have become nothing more than "a distraction," she said, taking away educators' precious class and planning time.

President Beth Kontos of the Salem Teachers Union, an AFT Massachusetts local, said she found herself "losing interest very quickly" in the literature selections. A big turnoff for her, she said, was the idea that "behind the test is profit," not the education of children.

Kaspar Kasparian, who spent 30 years as a teacher and guidance counselor — much of that time in Tewksbury and the Triton Regional School District — answered some of the questions on the test and then paused, shaking his head sadly. Students with learning disabilities would find such a test "overbearing and intimidating," he said.

The PARCC test "also creates a great deal of anxiety for staff," he added, especially when results are tied to educator evaluations. He called the test "a distortion of public education" and "damaging to critical thinking and other types of skills, other than narrow test-taking skills."

"It diminishes teaching and learning," Kasparian said.

States across the country have been dropping out of the PARCC Consortium for many of the reasons expressed by Massachusetts educators. While at one time there were 24 states and administrative divisions in the consortium, now there are just seven, plus the District of Columbia.

Despite that trend, it is widely anticipated that Massachusetts Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester will recommend that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopt PARCC. He is expected to make his recommendation in October, and the board is scheduled to vote on it at its meeting on Nov. 17. Chester is chair of the PARCC Consortium Governing Board and has been a strong advocate of the test, arguing that it is a better measure of college and career readiness than the MCAS.

Please turn to **Potential**/Page 18

MORATORIUM EFFORT CONTINUES

Momentum builds in campaign to stop high-stakes use of standardized tests

By Laura Barrett

The movement against high-stakes testing is picking up steam, both in Massachusetts and across the country.

After a highly successful Week of Action promoting a Less Testing/More Learning campaign in June, MTA members and the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance are planning new actions for the coming year, including promoting a moratorium on testing, fighting adoption of the PARCC tests and supporting parents who want to opt their children out of taking high-stakes standardized tests.

As members develop their action plans, they can be confident that much of the public is with them.

A national PDK/Gallup poll released in August is making waves. It shows that a significant majority — 64 percent of Americans and a similar proportion of public school parents — now believe there is too much emphasis on standardized testing. An even larger percentage — eight out of 10 respondents — said that students' engagement in their classwork and their level of hope for the future are better measures of school effectiveness.

"Parents and educators must work together to support the schools our students deserve and end the destructive impact of high-stakes testing," said MTA President Barbara Madeloni. "These tests are narrowing the curriculum, taking time away from more meaningful education activities and taking the joy out of learning. Our students are more than a score."

Those messages were delivered in local communities across the Commonwealth and at the State House during the Week of Action, which began June 8.

During that week, thousands of educators wore Less Testing/More Learning stickers and posted messages on social media. Toward the end of the week, an overflow crowd of 250 supporters of the testing moratorium packed a State House hearing in support of House Bill 340, filed by Rep. Marjorie Decker (D-Cambridge), which calls for a three-year moratorium on high-stakes tests.

The night before the State House hearing, nearly as many attended a PARCC forum in Bridgewater, most of them opposed to switching to the new test.

"We are at the beginning of a marathon, but we are on our way," Madeloni said.

This fall, MTA members will continue to engage in grassroots efforts begun last spring in support of H. 340. Some local associations are asking their school committees to pass a resolution in favor of the moratorium, while others are holding community forums, film screenings or "take the test" events.

In addition, Madeloni and MTA Vice President Janet Anderson sent a letter in July to state education



Photo by Scott McLennan

A large crowd of activists turned out at the State House on June 11, forcing a hearing on education bills to be moved from a small room to the much larger Gardner Auditorium. The speakers included numerous MTA members and other supporters of a bill to place a moratorium on the high-stakes use of standardized testing.

officials informing them that the MTA Board of Directors had voted to oppose the PARCC tests and that in May, delegates at the MTA Annual Meeting overwhelmingly supported allowing parents to opt their children out of high-stakes standardized tests.

Currently, there are different opinions about the legality of opting out. Nothing in state law specifically requires that students take standardized tests. However, Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester has argued that schools are required to assess student performance, and therefore students must take the tests.

Despite that view, Chester has advised district leaders that if a student refuses to take the test, "the principal should see to it that the student is engaged in an alternate education activity and is not distracting other students during the testing period."

Madeloni said, "The question is not one of legality. It is one of taking a principled stand. Test data is being used as a weapon to undermine public education, our educators and our community schools. Opting out is a critical tactic with which to stop the destructiveness of corporate reform. We stand ready to inform and support parents and students who want to opt out."

Although the opt-out movement has been relatively small in Massachusetts, it is significant in other states, with more than 200,000 students in grades three to eight — or 20 percent of those eligible — opting out in New York state alone.

Carol Burris, a former New York principal who was recently named executive director of the Network for Public Education Fund, was active in her state's parent-driven movement to opt students out of the tests. The tests were developed by Pearson,

the same company that is creating the PARCC tests.

"Three years of data make it crystal clear that the New York State Education Department is giving inappropriate tests, which are, for most students, a prolonged and arduous exercise in multiple guess," Burris wrote in *The Washington Post*.

Meanwhile, a growing number of school committees are passing a resolution posted on the MTA website describing the harms of too much testing and urging the Legislature to approve the moratorium. The MTA is encouraging locals to ask their members to sign a petition in support of the resolution.

Greg Reynolds, president of the Hampshire Regional Education Association, described how his local went about the process, building strength and gaining a greater voice in local education policy in the process.

"Even before the resolution, we made a commitment as an association to start increasing communication with different stakeholders, particularly our School Committee," Reynolds said. "The primary reason was to engage the School Committee in dialogue about what's important to teachers and education in general."

The HREA persuaded the School Committee to accept reports by the union five times a year containing information on positive developments in the classroom and addressing concerns in the six-town regional district. Once each report is received, the union and School Committee will share ideas with each other and with community residents at the next School Committee meeting.

Please turn to **Too many days**/ Page 13

Tax amendment would mean big gains for public education

By Laura Barrett

MTA members have their best opportunity in more than two decades to raise significant revenues for public education — taking a major step to advance the interests of our students, our schools, our colleges and universities, and our communities.

The MTA has joined an effort by the Raise Up Massachusetts coalition to increase revenues for education and transportation through an ambitious amendment to the state Constitution. The process of qualifying the amendment for the 2018 ballot begins with the collection of more than 100,000 signatures by Nov. 18.

“This initiative is a game-changer,” said MTA President Barbara Madeloni. “Our members have told us that new resources will help them create and support the schools and colleges our students deserve and make our public higher education system more affordable.

“It’s time to end the austerity myth that is used to justify depriving some students of an enriching educational experience,” Madeloni continued. “Let’s make Massachusetts a truly great place for students to live and learn, regardless of their ZIP codes.”

Raise Up Massachusetts is a coalition of labor, faith and community organizations that led the successful 2014 earned sick time ballot campaign and is the driving force behind campaigns to increase the minimum wage.

MTA members will be collecting signatures from other members in their schools and on their public higher education campuses, as well as from the general public in locations with heavy foot traffic, such as supermarket entrances and bus stops. Local leaders are working with their MTA field representatives and Senate district coordinators to develop signature collection plans.

The Raise Up Massachusetts amendment filed with the attorney general on Aug. 4 would:

- Create an additional tax of 4 percentage points on the portion of a filer’s annual income in excess of \$1 million. Income tax rates would remain unchanged for the bottom 99 percent of the population.

- Index the \$1 million threshold to inflation so that it would *only* affect the very wealthiest taxpayers.

- Raise more than \$1 billion annually for public schools, public higher education and transportation infrastructure.

Rebecca Cusick, one of the first 10 signers of the initiative petition, said the amendment “is an opportunity to start to level the playing field for kids who live in poor communities.” Cusick, a fourth-grade teacher in Fall River, is president of the Fall River Educators’ Association and a member of the MTA Board of Directors.



Photo by Chris Christo

MTA members attending the 2015 Summer Conference in Springfield gathered around Fall River Educators’ Association President Rebecca Cusick, center right, on the day she became one of the 10 initial signers of an initiative petition seeking a statewide ballot question on raising revenues for public education and transportation.

“This initiative is a game-changer,” said MTA President Barbara Madeloni. “Our members have told us that new resources will help them create and support the schools and colleges our students deserve and make our public higher education system more affordable.”

“For me, a high priority is for more preschool,” she said. “We know that kids who live in poverty experience a lot of stress and trauma that can affect their brain development. Early interventions are very important. Right now, we don’t have universal preschool in Fall River where children can be nurtured and are guaranteed to be fed. Good preschools help children develop their social skills and lay the foundation for what they need in order to engage in academic activities later on.”

Other priorities, Cusick said, include smaller kindergarten class sizes (there are currently 25 to 30 students per class in Fall River), more counselors to deal with students’ social and emotional issues and the return of school librarians to help students learn research skills and select reading materials that inspire them.

Max Page, an MTA representative on the Raise Up Massachusetts Steering Committee, said he’s a strong advocate of using a more progressive tax system to improve education funding at all levels.

“For too long the MTA has had to play defense, trying to prevent cuts to our public schools, colleges and universities,” said Page, a University of Massachusetts Amherst professor. “With the revenue that would be generated by this initiative, we would be able to address some of our big dreams, including fixing the broken foundation budget system, investing in early education, cutting the cost of public higher education and investing in more faculty and staff at our public colleges and universities. These have all been impossible because each year we have heard, ‘There’s no money.’”

Why the wealthiest should pay more

The Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center has documented that income inequality has grown tremendously in the past 30 years. At the same time, the state’s wealthiest residents are paying a smaller share of their income than everyone else in state and local taxes.

- **The top 1 percent of earners pay, on average, 6.4 percent of their income in state and local taxes, while the bottom 99 percent pay 9.4 percent.** Why the disparity? Because low- and middle-income families spend a much higher share of their income on property and sales taxes than do

Continued on next page

Initiative would reduce income inequality

Continued from previous page

the very rich. (Even renters pay property taxes; the taxes are simply rolled into the cost of rents.) With the Raise Up Massachusetts amendment in place, the top 1 percent would still pay a smaller-than-average share of their incomes to state and local taxes (8 percent), but the gap would be narrowed.

■ **The rich have gotten much, much richer, while incomes for everyone else have stagnated.**

According to the MBPC, the incomes of most Massachusetts households have barely increased in inflation-adjusted terms since the late 1970s. But from 1979 through 2011, incomes of the top 1 percent in Massachusetts grew 10 times faster than incomes of households in the bottom 90 percent.

■ **The U.S. has the highest rate of income inequality among all advanced economies.** A 2014 Harvard Business School study found that the average CEO of a Fortune 500 company makes more than \$12 million a year, or 354 times what the average employee of those companies makes. Another study found that a typical worker at a McDonald's or Starbucks has to work for six months to earn as much as each of those companies' CEOs makes in an hour. Yet in Massachusetts, millionaire CEOs and minimum-wage workers are all taxed at the same rate.

Highest priorities for funding

Public opinion polling makes it clear that public education and transportation would be the highest priorities for money raised by a new tax on the very wealthy.

"The voters recognize that for a state to thrive, we need excellent public schools, affordable higher education and much better transportation infrastructure so people can get to their schools, homes and workplaces," Madeloni said.

In addition, these services have been badly underfunded in recent decades because past tax cuts have slashed the revenue needed to support them. In inflation-adjusted dollars, state support has dropped for public schools, public higher education and local aid.

■ Per-pupil state spending on public higher education is down 49 percent between the peak — fiscal year 2001 — and FY 2016. That's a loss of more than half a billion dollars.

■ State spending on K-12 Chapter 70 aid is down 8 percent between the peak year, FY 2002, and FY 2016, when adjusted for enrollment changes.

In inflation-adjusted dollars, state support has dropped for public schools, public higher education and local aid.

■ State spending on other local aid — some of which is spent on education — is down 50 percent between FY 2001 and FY 2016.

■ State spending on early education and care is down 32 percent between FY 2001 and FY 2016.

Cuts in state funding for public education and other local aid have varied across districts, but in many cases have led to fewer elective courses, new fees for athletics and extracurricular activities, poorly maintained technology, large class sizes, limited professional development opportunities for teachers and demands for givebacks at the bargaining table.

At the higher education level, impacts have included a dramatic decline in the percentage of courses taught by full-time faculty, continued poor compensation of adjunct faculty, skyrocketing costs and debt for students, and contentious battles to get the state to make good on promised pay and benefits packages.

"The austerity narrative that denies income inequality and tells communities and colleges to do more with less no longer holds," said Madeloni. "We are ready to imagine more for our Commonwealth and do what's needed to access the resources to do it. This is about the common good — about economic justice."

The amendment process

The Raise Up Massachusetts initiative is for a constitutional amendment, not simply a law change, because of a provision in the Massachusetts Constitution. Article 44 states that taxes "shall be levied at a uniform rate throughout the commonwealth upon incomes derived from the same class of property."

Previous efforts to amend the Constitution to allow for a more progressive tax system have gone down in defeat, largely because many voters didn't trust the Legislature to allocate the money where it was most needed and worried that it would apply higher rates to income earned by low- and middle-income taxpayers.

These two concerns are addressed in the amendment crafted by the Raise Up Massachusetts coalition this year.

The proposed amendment states, "There shall be an additional tax of 4 percent on that portion of annual taxable income in excess of \$1,000,000 (one million dollars) reported on any return related to those taxes."

In addition, the threshold is indexed to inflation. The Constitution would continue to prohibit applying differential rates to income below the adjusted threshold.

The amendment also spells out where the money is to go: "To provide the resources for quality public education and affordable public colleges and universities, and for the repair and maintenance of roads, bridges and public transportation ..." Thus, it is clear that education and transportation are the services that must benefit from the increased revenues.

To amend the Constitution, the supporters have to collect 64,750 certified signatures this fall. Because so many signatures are disqualified for one reason or another, the campaign is relying on volunteers to collect more than 100,000 signatures and turn them in to city and town clerks' offices at different checkpoints through the November deadline.

Once certified, the petition forms must be picked up and delivered to the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office by Dec. 2.

Assuming that effort is successful, the initiative must then be approved by one-quarter of the state's 200 representatives and senators — at least 50 of them — during constitutional conventions held in two consecutive legislative sessions.

"It is a lot of work to amend the state Constitution," Madeloni said. "It is work that can only be done through a people's movement. It is a grassroots effort that must involve tens of thousands of MTA members."

"A grassroots campaign does more than just get us the signatures we need," she continued. "It is also the best way to educate ourselves and others about the serious problems in our society caused by inadequate funding of our education system coupled with our country's staggering — and growing — income inequality. This is an opportunity to deepen our coalitions, to build power and to show ourselves and our communities that we have a shared interest in and willingness to work for the greater good."

For more information on the campaign, visit www.massteacher.org and www.raiseupma.org.

Trusting relationships are key to building authentic union power

Continued from Page 5

"You need to learn to take fear and turn it into anger, and turn that into action," Potter said.

Make that collective action.

Like the participants in the Organizing Institute, the members in the Next Generation Leadership Program — which ran simultaneously — spent time engaged in one-to-one conversations.

Organizer Ellen David Friedman, who worked with MTA staff at the Next Gen training in Natick, had participants in that program interview Framingham Teachers Association members at a school site about their union activities, communication strategies and capacity.

Friedman worked with MTA members from several different locals on moving from a mobilizing model to an organizing model.

"Organizing is about building the union," she said. "It's about making trusting relationships."

Through deep organizing, she said, locals and the MTA as a whole will grow their power authentically. That power then drives the myriad activities — including nuts-and-bolts union work such as contract bargaining — that were explored by both new members and presidents.

The success of this year's Summer Conference was noteworthy, given that planning was detoured twice. First, the conference was moved to UMass Amherst after Williams College informed the MTA that it could no longer host the event. Then in May,



Photo by Scott McLennan

Maria Palmieri, left, a member of the Educational Association of Worcester, and Bob Erlandsen, vice president of the Cohasset Teachers Association, react to organizer Ellen David Friedman, right, during a discussion that was part of the Next Generation Leadership Program.

delegates at the Annual Meeting voted to cancel the conference at UMass because of a contract dispute between the university and several of its unions. Then Springfield was chosen as the main

venue, and the 2015 MTA Summer Conference successfully brought together several hundred members from locals across the state for training programs, union building and socializing.



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Meehan agrees to pay retroactive wages

By Scott McLennan

After months of concerted action to hold the University of Massachusetts administration accountable for contracts it settled but did not fully fund, MTA members and other union workers could finally claim victory in late August when UMass President Martin Meehan agreed to pay all retroactive wages withheld by his predecessor, Robert Caret.

“Our members and members of the other unions on UMass campuses are finally receiving the money owed to them. Throughout this process, they demonstrated solidarity with each other and to union principles and ultimately prevailed,” said MTA President Barbara Madeloni. “This type of solidarity and strength works for our students, our schools and colleges, and all working people.”

Between late last year and early summer, UMass settled contracts with the Massachusetts Society of Professors, the Faculty Staff Union, the Classified Staff Union, the University Staff Association, the Professional Staff Union, the Maintenance and Trades Union and the Classified/Technical Union, all of which are MTA affiliates on the Amherst, Boston and Lowell campuses. UMass also settled contracts with many other unions, including those on the Dartmouth campus affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts. Those unions worked closely with the MTA during the contract enforcement campaign.

Throughout the past year, members have been out in force at meetings of the UMass Board of Trustees to express their frustration with the handling of the contracts, and they conducted other public demonstrations largely aimed at Caret.



During a meeting of the Board of Trustees in April, Randall Phillis, president of the Massachusetts Society of Professors at UMass Amherst, left, and Henry Cornu, president of the Maintenance and Trades Union at UMass Lowell, displayed messages from employees demanding that the university fund the contracts it has negotiated.

Photo by Scott McLennan

In May, delegates to the Annual Meeting decided to cancel plans to hold the MTA Summer Conference on the UMass Amherst campus, where it had been scheduled to take place, because of the labor dispute. The main venue was moved to Springfield.

The MTA affiliates filed an unfair labor practice charge against UMass with the state Department of Labor Relations, which issued a complaint and scheduled hearings in the case for November. The unions will withdraw the complaint if all retroactive wages are paid by an agreed-upon deadline. As *MTA Today* went to press, UMass had agreed to provide the retroactive pay to employees by the end of October.

Caret, who quit the presidency to become president of the University of Maryland, had refused

to pay the negotiated salaries, claiming that the Legislature did not sufficiently fund the university's collective bargaining agreements. The three-year contracts are retroactive to July 1, 2014. Meehan is still pursuing additional state funding for UMass, but he said UMass is obligated to honor the negotiated contracts.

“President Meehan made clear that he respects the power and validity of labor contracts, and he kept his word to us that he would resolve this issue as quickly as possible,” Madeloni said. “He and I are both pleased that we could resolve this issue without it lingering into the new school year. The MTA looks forward to working with President Meehan on securing the necessary funding from the Legislature to make UMass both accessible and top-quality.”

Bill focuses on need to invest in adjunct faculty

By Scott McLennan

Faculty members and education advocates who testified at a recent legislative hearing described the harsh working conditions that many adjunct instructors at public colleges endure and how students are affected.

“Adjuncts are the sweatshop workers of the higher education system,” Kate Archard, a full-time faculty member at UMass Boston, told the Joint Committee on Higher Education during her testimony in support of House Bill 1055, “An Act to Invest in Higher Education Faculty.”

Representative Paul Mark (D-Peru) is the lead sponsor of the bill, a piece of priority legislation for the MTA. Mark has two public higher education campuses in his district.

During the June 17 hearing at the State House, he told the committee about the low pay attached to adjunct faculty members' work. He noted that in order to make enough money, adjuncts often have to shuttle between multiple campuses, sometimes

working out of their cars because they lack office space.

“They are serving our students with great dedication, and it is our responsibility to make sure they are paid fairly and given opportunities to advance,” Mark said.

The bill calls for adjunct faculty members to be paid at a rate commensurate with that of their full-time colleagues. It also lays out pathways to benefits, such as health insurance, and requires public colleges and universities to increase the number of full-time faculty, ending their over-reliance on adjuncts. At community colleges, for example, part-time faculty members teach more than two-thirds of the courses offered.

MTA President Barbara Madeloni was among those testifying in favor of H. 1055. She praised the work that adjunct faculty members do across the public higher education system and lamented their exploitation. She said the legislation would correct an imbalance in higher education staffing and address the poor treatment of highly trained workers, but she stressed that legislators should

make those corrections without increasing tuition and fees for students.

“The public clearly knows the value of — and in fact demands — high-quality public higher education. It is your job — and ours — to find the courage to generate the revenue necessary to achieve this goal,” Madeloni said.

Faculty members from the UMass system, state universities and community colleges told the committee that adjuncts are typically unable to give students the same support services, such as office hours, that full-time faculty provide. Without access to office space, adjuncts often are not obligated or expected to meet with students outside of class, so they are not able to provide them with sufficient mentoring.

Faculty members also testified that the increased use of part-time instructors in the UMass system has reduced the number of professors engaged in research.

“When you exploit adjuncts and there are not

Please turn to **Adjuncts**/ Page 23

Charter school battle heats up

By Scott McLennan
and Laura Barrett

As the MTA presses legislative efforts for a three-year moratorium on Commonwealth charter school expansion, a pro-charter advocacy group is pushing a ballot initiative that would open a path to the rampant growth of the publicly funded, privately operated schools.

If the pro-charter question passes, said MTA President Barbara Madeloni, “then over time public schools in any given district — currently governed democratically by local school committees — could be wiped out and turned over to private charter school operators over the strenuous objections of local residents and elected officials.”

The ballot initiative would give the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, whose members are appointed, the authority to approve up to 12 charter schools annually by getting around existing caps. Supporters of the initiative are aiming to have it included on the state’s November 2016 ballot.

Current law limits the number of Commonwealth charter schools to 72 and controls how much a district can spend on tuition.

As legislative activity picks up again, the MTA is advocating for Senate Bill 326, filed by Senator Marc Pacheco (D-Taunton), which would place a moratorium on all charter school expansion while the state assesses the impact of these schools thus far. The bill would also require all teachers hired by Commonwealth charter schools to obtain teaching licenses. A hearing on that measure and other charter school bills is scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 13, at the State House.

The MTA is also working with community and parent groups to ensure that all public schools have adequate resources and are governed by locally elected representatives.

Communities that send students to Commonwealth charter schools lose large amounts of crucial Chapter 70 state education funding through tuition payments to the charters. Initial data for fiscal year 2016 shows that approximately \$423 million from Chapter 70 — the major source of state public school funding — will be spent on charter school tuition.

In addition to the money being spent on Commonwealth charter schools, the list of criticisms against them is long.

Locally elected school committees have no authority over Commonwealth charter schools. Instead, charter schools are overseen by boards of trustees.

For the most part, charter schools do not have to hire fully licensed educators, and staff members are employees at will, not represented by a union.

In communities such as Brockton and Fitchburg where charters were recently proposed, local residents and elected officials have banded together

State House hearing is set for Oct. 13

The Legislature’s Joint Committee on Education will hold a hearing on an MTA-supported bill calling for a moratorium on Commonwealth charter schools at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 13.

The hearing provides an opportunity for public school educators, parents and other community members to speak out about how charter schools are affecting students and school districts across Massachusetts.

The session — which will focus on other bills related to charter schools as well as on the key MTA-supported bill — will be held in Gardner Auditorium at the State House.

Senate Bill 326, “An Act establishing a moratorium for Commonwealth charter schools,” is two-pronged. It places a three-year moratorium on charter school expansion and requires all teachers hired by Commonwealth charter schools to obtain teaching licenses.

The bill is sponsored by Sen. Marc Pacheco (D-Taunton) and co-sponsored by 26 other legislators.

It’s important for legislators to hear from members on this issue.

Here are some questions to consider:

- Has your school or district lost funding as a direct result of a charter school opening in your district? Have programs, teachers and staff been cut?

- Have students been accepted into a charter school and then returned to your district as a result of minor infractions?

- Has a charter school in your district turned away a student with special needs or an English language learner?

To learn more, to testify at the hearing or to submit testimony, please call MTA lobbyist Julie Johnson at 617.878.8315 or e-mail her at jjohnson@massteacher.org.

‘Charters are deeply undemocratic and sap funds from public education. Massachusetts must not fall into the trap that allows private corporations to profit from public funds through ownership of schools that systematically push out students.’

— MTA President Barbara Madeloni

in opposition, arguing that charter schools drain funding and hurt the education being provided to students in traditional public schools.

In 2014, a report by the Office of the State Auditor concluded that charter schools have not met their intended goal of developing curriculum models and teaching practices and sharing that information with district public schools. The auditor’s report also found that the charter waiting lists kept by the state are inflated and inaccurate.

Another major criticism is that many charter schools artificially boost their student test scores by using enrollment practices that allow them to serve a disproportionately small number of English language learners and special education students.

“Charters are deeply undemocratic and sap funds from public education. Massachusetts must not fall into the trap that allows private corporations to profit from public funds through ownership of schools that systematically push out students,” Madeloni said.

She said that an increase in Commonwealth charter schools means that “public schools, committed to serving all students, are left with fewer resources to serve our students.”

“Charters are a theft of public funds,” she said. “Lifting the cap will mean our students, public schools and communities will suffer.”

Somerville special education teacher Jackie Lawrence, president of the Somerville Teachers Association, said she has long been concerned about charter schools’ poor record of working with students who are on Individualized Education Programs. She said she knows of families with students who were selected by lottery to attend a charter school and then told that the charter school was not equipped to provide sufficient services.

“These kids end up losing valuable time in getting the resources they need,” Lawrence said.

In addition to disrupting the education of students who are pushed out, charter schools take a toll on all students because of the amounts taken from districts’ traditional public schools to pay for them.

“We don’t have librarians in our K-8 schools anymore,” said Bonnie Page, president of the Malden Education Association.

Page added that the loss of Chapter 70 funds to the charter school enrolling students from her district has led to staff cuts and increased class sizes.

“The charters were supposedly started for innovation and sharing, and I haven’t seen that anywhere,” she said.

“There must be no lifting of caps on charter school expansion,” said Madeloni. “We see how they are undermining public education and fostering a two-tiered education system that does not serve our students or our communities.”

For more information and updates, please visit www.massteacher.org/charterschools.

Too many days lost to testing

Continued from Page 7

"In less than a week we got all our members to sign the testing resolution," Reynolds said. "The School Committee asked for more information. I and two other members compiled a brief, bullet-style report, giving the main points made at the national and local levels. Our district serves students in grades seven to 12. Over that time, our students spend nearly 100 hours either taking a test or staying at home because their peers are taking a standardized test. And that's just taking the test — not preparing for it. We're a district that scores well, but those days are a loss.

"As a French teacher, I would love to travel more with students," Reynolds said, "but it's really challenging to find time on the calendar with such a focus on testing."

A sample resolution, fact sheets on the moratorium bill and other materials can be found at massteacher.org/testing.

Panel's initial report calls for adjustments

By Scott McLennan

The commission charged with reviewing whether the state has set adequate spending levels for K-12 school districts is extending its work until November. It has already recommended immediate adjustments, however, to calculations used to determine expenses for employee health care and special education.

The Foundation Budget Review Commission issued a preliminary report on June 30 after holding six public hearings across the state. The commission found that school districts are spending far more on health insurance and special education than is assumed in the state's foundation budget formula.

The state's calculation of a "foundation budget" for each school district reflects the cost of providing students with an adequate education. After local contributions are figured in, the state allocates Chapter 70 funds to districts to ensure that foundation levels are met. The formula takes into account several factors, among them student need, special education and health insurance for employees.

The Foundation Budget Review Commission issued a preliminary report on June 30 after holding six public hearings across the state.

The formula was created under the Education Reform Act of 1993, but it had not had a thorough review until the Legislature revived the Foundation Budget Review Commission in 2014.

The commission is chaired by Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz (D-Boston) and Representative Alice Peisch (D-Wellesley). MTA President Barbara Madeloni serves on the 19-member panel.

During the public hearings, educators and municipal officials repeatedly told the commission that the escalating costs of health insurance and special education consume a lot more of local school budgets than the foundation formula factors in.

In the case of health insurance, the commission has recommended linking the formula to the average rate set by the Group Insurance Commission.

In the area of special education, the report noted that the foundation budget understates the number of children receiving in-district services and that

school systems spend far more than is allotted for out-of-district placements.

The commission will continue to examine funding issues concerning mental health and wraparound services for students, English language learners, full-day preschool, class size and technology.

"I'm glad we are continuing to work on a funding model that will address the needs of all public school students and work to ensure that every student is receiving a high-quality education," Madeloni said.

"Educators have known for years that the state funding formula and budget assumptions were way off," she continued. "We now have a chance to correct the formula, as well as make sure that we value all school districts equally by providing them with the necessary funding for arts programs, small class sizes and enrichment opportunities.

"Of course," Madeloni said, "these formula changes will require more revenue, but our work on the amendment to fund public schools and transportation through taxing the highest-income earners can make these changes in the formula a reality."

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Educators receive Human and Civil Rights Awards

By Jean Conley

A retired special education teacher from Cape Cod and an ELL teacher from Amherst shared the spotlight at the annual MTA Human and Civil Rights banquet and awards ceremony.

Harwich resident Diane Turco received the Kathleen Roberts Creative Leadership Award for her three decades of activism in educating New Englanders about the safety concerns surrounding the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station in Plymouth.

Alicia Lopez, who teaches English language learners at Amherst Regional Middle School, received the Louise Gaskins Lifetime Civil Rights Award.

MTA President Barbara Madeloni welcomed the crowd at the Westin Waltham-Boston Hotel on June 19 and acknowledged the stark contrast between a night in which “we celebrate those who make sure to make spaces for humanity, for civil rights and for justice” and the hate crime just two days earlier that took the lives of nine people at a church in Charleston, South Carolina.

The shooting deaths in South Carolina, Madeloni said, “make me embrace this evening more deeply. In a world where we still struggle so much with the story of racism and injustice, we celebrate the fact that there are people out there who — in big ways and small ways — say no to injustice and racism and yes to our shared humanity.”

Human Relations Committee Chair Dale Forest said Turco and Lopez were chosen for their efforts to make the world a more just, tolerant place and for “enriching the lives of those they serve.”

Roberts and Gaskins, for whom the awards are named, were on hand for the festivities, as were longtime MTA activists Anne Wass and John Reed, who summarized the 33-year history of the Human Relations Committee and the association’s Human and Civil Rights Awards.

Turco, the co-founder of a group called the Cape Downwinders, has coordinated lectures and symposia and written petitions — and she once staged a sit-in in the office of then-Governor Deval Patrick — to draw attention to the health dangers posed by Pilgrim.

After 33 years as a special education teacher, Turco said, she



Photos by Jean Conley

Above left, Amherst ELL teacher and award winner Alicia Lopez, left, attended the event with family members, including her mother, Dr. Sonia Nieto, right. Nieto is a previous MTA Human and Civil Rights Award winner. In the photo at right, award winner Diane Turco, left, and her sister, Roberta Colyer, right, enjoyed the evening. Colyer nominated Turco for her decades of activism in trying to close the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station.

retired early in order to spend more time on activism. As a mother and grandmother, she explained, she feels responsible for the environmental safety and health issues that are being left for future generations.

She has been arrested and jailed several times for her civil disobedience,

which stems from her deep conviction that Pilgrim should be closed — once and for all.

Each Mother’s Day, she organizes a rally and march to Pilgrim. She had just completed a “Close Pilgrim Now” march from Pilgrim to the State House a few days before the Human

Relations Committee event. She told the crowd that she is committed to doing her work until the plant is closed for good.

“Let’s give our children the promise of a safe and healthy future and work together to get that reactor

Continued on next page

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Technology education in action

Oakmont Regional High School in Ashburnham hosted an invitational robotics tournament on May 21. All told, 11 teams — including the host squad, pictured at right — put their science, technology, engineering and math skills to the test during the event by designing and building their own robots, then having them engage in competition. This year's challenge was the brainchild of technology engineering teachers and Ashburnham-Westminster Teachers Association members David Lantry, Greg Secino and John DeCicco. The AWTA secured a grant from the MTA Public Relations/Organizing Campaign Committee to help fund the competition. To see the teams and their robots in action, visit <https://youtu.be/StP9c7IUA7E>.

Photo by Bob Duffy



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Honoree: 'Let's make democracy a verb'

Continued from previous page

shut down this year," she said. "Let's make democracy a verb."

Lopez, a member of the Amherst-Pelham Education Association, has been an ELL and language teacher for 20 years.

She is also a founding member of the Tradiciones Dance Troupe in Amherst and is the Summer Institute director of the Western Massachusetts Writing Project.

In addition, Lopez has served as the faculty adviser for the Latinos Unidos student organization at the middle school, and she writes a blog, *Maestra Teacher*, in which she shares her love of teaching and her thoughts on social justice. In her blog, she also explained to her readers about her decision to opt her own children out of taking high-stakes standardized tests.

Lopez told the crowd she gets her strength from her husband and her three children, as well as from her students, who "inspire me every day with their stories."

What drives Lopez, who is from a family of educators — including her mother, Dr. Sonia Nieto, a previous

'We need to take back education and start to feel empowered again.'

— Alicia Lopez
HCR Award winner

Human and Civil Rights Award winner who attended the banquet — is her devotion to helping her students meet the challenges of navigating life in the United States.

Lopez called on the Legislature to "pay attention to calls for less testing and more learning."

"We need to take back education and start to feel empowered again," she said.

To see more photos from the 2015 Human and Civil Rights banquet, visit flickr.com/mtacommunications. To read Alicia Lopez's *Maestra Teacher* blog, visit <http://www.maestrateacher.com/blog>. To read more about Diane Turco and the *Cape Downwinders*, visit www.madownwinders.org.

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The 2015-16 **MTA Benefits & Discount Directory** has been mailed to members.

This year we have more than 30 additions! Some of these discounts are so new they didn't make it into the directory, including the book "Dinogirl: The Story of a Girl and a Dinosaur," by Denise Porcello, an MTA member; The Woman's Workout Company in Hyannis; and Merry Maids. All discounts can be found at mtabenefits.com.

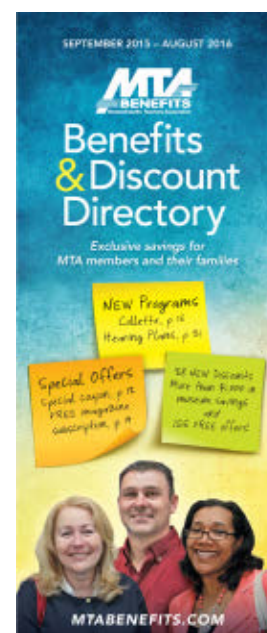
A year of giveaways

This school year, MTA Benefits will run 10 online giveaways with a variety of prizes,

including \$500 American Express gift cards, \$100 Home Depot and BJ's gift cards, an iPad and an Apple watch. You can find all the details at mtabenefits.com.

Be sure you're registered on our website. Each month we have a random drawing among newly registered members for a \$25 gift card for the 99 Restaurant & Pub. In addition, this year we'll hold two drawings for all registered members and award a \$200 American Express gift card.

Registration definitely has its rewards!



MTA members receive top educator awards

By Jean Conley

Eleven MTA members have recently received national or statewide recognition for teaching excellence.

Suzanne Kubik has been named the recipient of a Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching. Kubik, a teacher at Middleborough High School and a member of the Middleboro Education Association, teaches AP statistics,

geometry and algebra. The presidential award was announced by the White House on July 1.

On June 11, the Excellence in Teaching Awards at the State House honored other top Massachusetts educators.

David McGlothlin, a Provincetown middle school teacher, an MTA Board member and a member of the Provincetown Association of Educators, was named the Massachusetts History Teacher of the Year.

Also honored were the 2016 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year — Audrey Jackson, a fifth-grade teacher at the Manning Elementary School in Boston who is a member of the Boston Teachers Union, an affiliate of AFT Massachusetts — and finalists and semifinalists for that award.

Among the finalists were David Kujawski, a sixth-grade science teacher at Bird Middle School in Walpole who is a member of the Walpole Teachers Association, and Jennifer Ormerod,

who teaches second grade at Palmer River Elementary School in Rehoboth and is a member of the Dighton-Rehoboth Teachers Association.

Semifinalists included Deven Antani, an English teacher at Dighton-Rehoboth Regional High School who is also a member of the Dighton-Rehoboth Teachers Association, and Pamela Dalton, an art teacher at Cole Elementary School in Boxford and a member of the Boxford Teachers Association.

Anthony Petrelis, a fifth-grade teacher at McGlynn Elementary School in Medford and a member of the Medford Teachers Association, was named a 2014 Milken National Educator.



Suzanne Kubik



David McGlothlin

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The ceremony also honored Massachusetts finalists for the 2014 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. The award alternates between teachers of students in kindergarten through sixth grade and those teaching seventh through 12th grade.

Among the finalists for the 2014 award were:

■ Mary Cowhey, a Title I teacher at the Jackson Street School in Northampton and a member of the Northampton Association of School Employees.

■ John Heffernan, technology coordinator for the Williamsburg Public Schools, and Karen Schweitzer, a sixth-grade teacher at Dunphy Elementary School in Williamsburg. Both are members of the Williamsburg Teachers Association.

■ Nicole Hoyceanyls, a sixth-grade science teacher at Pierce Middle School in Milton and a member of the Milton Educators Association.

Potential move to PARCC raises many questions

Continued from Page 6

If approved, the plan calls for PARCC tests in English language arts and mathematics to be administered statewide next spring except in grade 10. Grade 10 students would be required to pass the grade 10 MCAS tests through the Class of 2019. The MCAS science tests would also be retained.

In light of the fact that many districts cannot meet PARCC's technological demands, PARCC would be available as both an online and paper test next year.

Chester has said that even if the BESE rejects PARCC, he will direct the MCAS test makers to modify that test in ways that reflect the kind of learning PARCC is supposed to measure.

Reinforcing the truism that "politics makes strange bedfellows," many traditional opponents of educators' unions are on the same side as the MTA on this issue. For example, the conservative Pioneer Institute shares the MTA's opposition to PARCC, but disagrees with the

union on most other matters related to education, charter schools, unions and fiscal policies.

Governor Charlie Baker and Education Secretary James Peyser both have ties to the Pioneer Institute, but both have said they want to hear from all parties before making up their minds on the PARCC.

Meanwhile, the PARCC Consortium and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education have their work cut out for them in setting "cut score" levels, trying to equate PARCC results with MCAS results (for one thing, PARCC will have five levels while MCAS has four), and figuring out how all these results will affect school and district accountability ratings and the educator evaluation system.

Before this past spring's testing season, the BESE decided that results from 2014-15 PARCC tests could not be used to lower school and district accountability ratings. No such commitment has been made for the 2016 results, however, even for

schools and districts that would be administering the test for the first time.

Educators also have questions about the legitimacy of using results from this new and highly controversial test for purposes of determining Student Growth Percentile ratings for use in the educator evaluation system.

"State education officials are spending an enormous amount of time and money slicing and dicing results from standardized tests — tests that in no way reflect student learning or

the quality of a school experience," Madeloni said. "The harsh reality is that our students would be much better off if the federal, state and local governments ended the onslaught of high-stakes testing. We need to stop the madness and give ourselves and our students the gift of time and of educator autonomy. These will unleash teachers' creativity and professionalism so that they can add depth, richness and cultural relevance to their teaching."

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PLEASE NOTE:

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

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

BOSTON — Harold Crowley: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., MTA, 20 Ashburton Place, Boston; 617.878.8240 or 800.392.6175, ext. 8240.

BRAINTREE — Mary Hanna: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Metropolitan Office, 100 Grandview Road, Braintree; 781.380.1410, or at home, 781.545.2069.

CAPE COD — Lawrence Abbruzzi: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Barnstable Teachers Association (BTA), 100 West Main St., Suite #7, Hyannis; 508.775.8625, or at home, 508.824.9194.

FITCHBURG — Robert Zbikowski: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Fitchburg Teachers Association office, 21 Culley St., Fitchburg; 978.790.8864, or at home, 978.297.0123; e-mail: zibstar702@verizon.net.

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

HOLYOKE — Ron Lech: third Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Western Office, 55 Bobala Road, Suite 3, Holyoke; 413.537.2335, or at home, 413.893.9173.

LYNNFIELD — Mary Parry: third and fourth Saturdays of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Northeast Office, 50 Salem St., Building B, Lynnfield; 781.246.9779, or at home, 978.372.2031.

PITTSFIELD — Ward F. Johnson: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Berkshire Office, 188 East St., Pittsfield; 413.499.0257, or at home, 413.443.1722; e-mail: wardman33@aol.com.

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

HIGHER EDUCATION AT-LARGE — Edward McCourt, Wellesley; 781.325.2553; e-mail: emccourt.mccc@gmail.com.

MTA working to implement Annual Meeting NBIs

By Jean Conley

As the school year begins, the MTA is working to implement nine new business items that were adopted by the 2015 Annual Meeting of Delegates, which was held May 8 and 9 in Boston.

Among other important issues, the items focus on informing parents and supporting their right to opt their children out of high-stakes standardized testing; reaching the goal of free, fully funded public higher education; and rethinking collective bargaining beyond bread-and-butter issues to include demanding the schools our students deserve.

Over the summer, work began in many areas, including planning, sending letters and forming work groups. Implementation reports on the NBIs will be presented at the 2016 Annual Meeting.

Summaries follow.

The full wording of each motion will be posted on the MTA website at www.massteacher.org/NBI.

The adopted items require:

Among other important issues, the items focus on informing parents and supporting their right to opt their children out of high-stakes standardized testing; reaching the goal of free, fully funded public higher education; and rethinking collective bargaining beyond bread-and-butter issues to include demanding the schools our students deserve.

■ That MTA President Barbara Madeloni and Vice President Janet Anderson send a letter to Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester, state legislators, local association presidents and the media stating that parents deserve the opportunity and choice to opt their public school students out of high-stakes standardized assessments, that districts should be required to provide all parents with yearly written information explaining their right to opt their children out, that students who opt out should not be included in data used by state or federal entities in “grading” schools, that no parent or student should be penalized for opting out, and that no educator should be

disciplined for discussing opting out with students, parents or community members. The delegates directed the MTA to develop a document appropriate for distribution to parents with questions about opting out and to support parents and students who do so.

■ That the MTA publicly voice support for the policy goal of free, fully publicly funded public higher education in Massachusetts, including all two- and four-year public colleges and universities. The delegates directed Madeloni to convey the MTA’s support for free public higher education to the governor, the president of the Massachusetts Senate and the speaker

of the House, and via the MTA website. The delegates also urged the MTA to assist interested MTA chapters in organizing community forums on the issue.

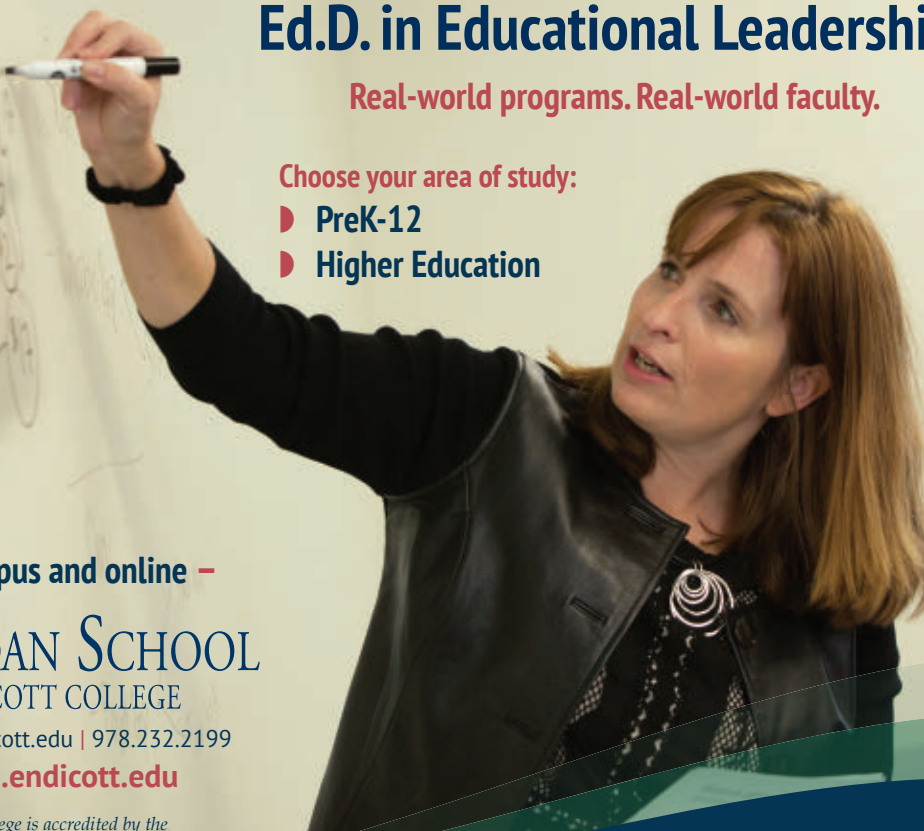
■ That the MTA file legislation requesting the Pension Reserves Investment Trust to conduct a comprehensive study “in a timely manner” of its existing holdings in fossil fuel companies to determine the value of those holdings and the projected impact of divesting on the financial health of that fund.

■ That the MTA focus its organizing training and development resources on rethinking collective bargaining to be open and transparent. The NBI directs the MTA to develop training and hold summits that train locals to bring big issues to the bargaining table; teach locals how to implement the “open bargaining” model, which includes bringing members and community allies into the process as observers; build school-site organizing structures that increase member engagement, activism and leadership; and forge community alliances that strengthen union power.

■ That, in partnership with community groups across the state, the MTA gather opinions on the present assault on public education and research-validated alternatives to it. The delegates directed that a draft version of a report, “The Schools Our Children, Families and Communities Deserve,” be written. Member-led regional and local forums with members, parents, students and community members will be held to discuss the negative impacts of current policies on public education and solicit recommendations to confront them.

■ That the MTA continue to promote and develop the “Schools Our Children Deserve” initiative in districts under the immediate threat of receivership. The delegates directed the MTA to support community and membership organizing and research the consequences of receivership, as well as tell the stories of teachers, students and community members who are affected by the takeover of public schools. The delegates also directed the MTA to continue to vigorously oppose high-stakes testing and the consequences for educators and communities struggling with economic inequality.

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'As Schools Match Wits' victory a source of pride for city

By Bob Duffy

Holyoke High School took home the trophy for the 2014-15 academic year as the champion of the long-running public television quiz show "As Schools Match Wits."

The fast-paced championship match ended after four lightning rounds against five-time champion Longmeadow High School.

"Neither a playoff match nor a championship match's outcome has ever been determined by overtime lightning rounds before; it's a first in the show's history," said WGBY-TV producer Tony Dunne.

The MTA is a sponsor of the academic game show, which has been on the air for 54 years.

Similar in format to "Jeopardy," the program pitted 48 high schools — most of them located in Western Massachusetts — against one another over a 24-week season.

Although the championship round was taped in March, it didn't air until June 20 — and contestants were sworn to secrecy regarding the outcome.

Educators said the timing of the victory has provided a new source of pride for Holyoke, which has been reeling since a state takeover of the city's public schools in April.

"It's amazing how proud the entire city of Holyoke is over this victory," said Kate Hebert, a



Holyoke High School's "As Schools Match Wits" victory was described as "a real shot in the arm for the entire city." Pictured from left to right are coach Kate Hebert; alternate Eric Pasternak; team members Emma Price, Nick Edwards, Brendan Kelly and Patrick Morrison; and coaches Kevin Bechard and Mark Todd. The MTA is a sponsor of the academic game show.

Photo courtesy of WGBY

Holyoke High School English teacher. She coached the team along with music teacher Mark Todd and social studies teacher Kevin Bechard. All three are members of the Holyoke Teachers Association.

"The victory was a real shot in the arm for the entire city," said Todd. "People stopped the team members everywhere they went this summer, thanking them for what they did for the city."

The team included Nick Edwards, a senior; Brendan Kelly, a senior and valedictorian of the

Class of 2015; Emma Price, a junior; and Patrick Morrison, a freshman. Alternates were Maggie Brady, a junior; Joey Cavanaugh, a freshman; and Eric Pasternak, a senior.

Hebert said that as stressful as the competitions could be, "we tried to keep the practices low key."

"We'd just get together with some snacks, play trivia and laugh a lot," she said.

The championship match can be viewed at <http://video.wgby.org/video/2365511772/>.

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A summer of uncertainty for Holyoke educators

By Scott McLennan

As participants in the MTA Summer Conference Organizing Institute made home visits to members of the Holyoke Teachers Association in August, what emerged in conversations was a great deal of uncertainty resulting from the fact that the Holyoke Public Schools are now under the control of a state-appointed receiver.

“I just hope my colleagues are doing all right,” Holyoke High School teacher Peter McAndrew told Organizing Institute members during their visit.

Despite strong opposition from the community to a state takeover, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted in April to place Holyoke’s schools into receivership. Donald Willyard and Mary Ann Stewart — the two BESE members who actually visited Holyoke schools before the vote — joined labor representative Ed Doherty in voting against the takeover.

In June, Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester appointed former Wakefield Superintendent Stephen Zrike as the receiver for the district, effectively ending any oversight by locally elected representatives. Since beginning his work in July, Zrike has laid out few plans for the district, though he has been given many suggestions.

As required by law, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education convened a

“I just hope my colleagues are doing all right,” Holyoke High School teacher Peter McAndrew told Organizing Institute members during their visit.

Local Stakeholder Group. The group included HTA President Gus Morales and members Briget Reilly and Shelley Whelihan. The HTA members were vocal throughout the process, raising issues about diversity, funding and wraparound services for students.

The HTA formed an advisory group with representation from all of the district’s public schools so more members could contribute their ideas. At the end of the five scheduled LSG meetings, the HTA had a far more detailed and comprehensive set of recommendations than the one officially released by the LSG to Chester and Zrike.

The HTA released its recommendations along with a letter that said in part: “The state, acting through its education commissioner and appointed receiver, must now step up, address the real issues in Holyoke, and provide the resources to give every Holyoke student the education guaranteed by the Massachusetts Constitution.”

MTA President Barbara Madeloni said the state’s insistence that funding is not an issue for Holyoke is “an outrage.”

“If the Holyoke Public Schools had received the resources they needed from the start, they would

not have been put into a position for this type of undemocratic takeover,” she said. “We will hold Commissioner Chester and his receiver accountable for providing Holyoke educators and students with the resources they need to succeed.”

Moreover, Madeloni said, “Attention to the struggles within Holyoke must address economic and racial injustice within the larger community.”


Among the HTA’s recommendations for improving the schools were hiring sufficient numbers of counselors and social workers, making sure that educators who work with English language learners and students with special needs are allowed to carry out education plans instead of being pulled away to proctor standardized tests, providing at least one field trip per year for all classes, creating an alternative school for students with behavioral problems, ending the K-to-8 model for schools, and restoring career development programs.

The LSG voted to include the HTA’s recommendations as an appendix to the official report, which was submitted in July. In their cover letter, HTA representatives noted that their recommendations deserved to be more than an appendix.

Meanwhile, the HTA saw a wave of educators departing throughout the summer due to nonrenewals, retirements and moves to other districts.

Please turn to **DLR**/Page 23

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Adjuncts' struggles are subject of testimony

Continued from Page 11

enough full-time professors, you are not building a high-quality, accessible higher education system," said Max Page, a professor at UMass Amherst and a member of PHENOM, the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts.

A panel of full- and part-time faculty members from Bunker Hill Community College brought up a number of concerns. The speakers described the financial challenges faced by part-time faculty and the devastating impact of their struggles when, for example, they can't get health insurance.

Then there is the matter of respect. Michael Dubson, an associate professor of English at BHCC, described how differently he is treated since becoming a full-time faculty member after years as an adjunct.

"No longer do I have to fear or tolerate insult and abuse, swallowing things that no dean or chair would dare say to me today," said Dubson,



Photo by Scott McLennan

Bunker Hill Community College faculty members Michael Dubson, Robert Whitman and Eric Estevez, left to right, testified in support of a bill to improve working conditions for adjunct instructors at public colleges and universities.

who now has a role in shaping department policy and participating in programs vital to the college.

"Most importantly, I am able to be there, on campus all day, all week for my students."

MTA working to implement business items

Continued from Page 19

■ That the MTA reaffirm its commitment "to eliminate discrimination in public education" and to "prevent any encroachment on basic civil and human rights"; develop materials for members on the impact of mass incarceration, police violence and the school-to-prison pipeline on students of color; and provide staff support for locals that want to engage their members, students and communities on these issues.

■ That the MTA continue to oppose the uploading, collection and storage of personal data from Massachusetts prekindergartners and kindergartners by third-party private contractors and work legislatively to overturn the selective mandate for Teaching Strategies GOLD as part of the Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment program.

■ That the MTA not hold its 2015 Summer Conference at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and do no business with the university until such time as all salary increases are paid, including the retroactive component.

Delegates also referred two new business items to the Government Relations Committee: support for striking sections from Chapter 71 of the Massachusetts General Laws that infringe on teacher tenure or seniority and lobbying the Legislature to direct the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to scale back its regulatory requirement for the teacher evaluation system.

DLR issues complaint over Morales dismissal

Continued from Page 21

One of the nonrenewals was sent to Morales, and the HTA fought back. In late August, the Department of Labor Relations found that there was probable cause to believe that Morales was illegally fired because of his activism as a union leader. The DLR will hold a hearing on the complaint.

McAndrew and other educators visited during the Organizing Institute's work said that they had not been informed about what to expect in the new school year.

"I think that the union now is more important than ever," McAndrew said.

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Obituaries

Frances Allen, 100, of Grafton. Was a teacher for 38 years in the Bellingham, Framingham and Grafton school systems. May 13.

Rodolfo Altobelli, 85, of Agawam. Taught at Agawam High School for 30 years. Was a former adjunct professor at Springfield Technical Community College. March 8.

Alvan R. Benjamin, 88, of Warren, Vermont. Was director of

public relations at the MTA for many years. May 30.

Russell P. Burbank, 84, of Lewiston, Maine. Was a writer and editor for the MTA for 14 years. July 7.

Margaret "Maggie" A. Burke, 64, of Holden. Was an elementary school teacher at May Street, Granite Street and Chandler Street elementary schools in Worcester. May 29.

Terence P. Carrigan, 74, of Worcester. Taught mathematics in the

Worcester Public Schools for 34 years. March 27.

Joan Marie Ford, 80, of Fitchburg. Was a social studies teacher at Oakmont Regional High School and a teacher at Overlook Middle School in Ashburnham for 20 years, retiring in 1998. March 17.

Karen George, 63, of Taunton. Was a mathematics teacher in the Taunton Public Schools until she retired in 2010. April 15.

Verna M. Kaifer, 74, of South Hadley. Was a high school teacher in South Hadley until her retirement. April 13.

Ruth E. McCarthy, 89, of Worcester. Taught for 43 years in the Worcester Public Schools. May 10.

Sally J. Mucica, 67, of North Andover. Was a teacher in the Reading Public Schools. July 5.

Joseph Notaro, Sr., 87, of Clinton. Was a teacher and guidance counselor in the Lancaster, Hudson, Natick and Maynard school systems for 30 years, retiring in 1991. July 3.

Virginia Partridge, 91, of Rye Beach, New Hampshire. Was an elementary school teacher for many years in the Wakefield Public Schools. June 28.

Pasquale J. "Pat" Quitadamo, 82, of Worcester. Was a mathematics teacher and served in many administrative positions, including as principal of Doherty Memorial High School in Worcester, before retiring in 1992. June 18.

Paul J. Riordan, 80, of Auburn. Was a teacher in Winchendon and Natick, then spent 29 years as a guidance counselor at Holliston Middle School. Also taught psychology at Quinsigamond Community College and Becker College. June 11.

Norman B. Stanikmas, Sr., 87, of Worcester. Was an industrial arts teacher at Doherty Memorial High School for 20 years. April 3.

Nancy Tyler, 85, of Cumberland, Rhode Island, and West Harwich, formerly of Worcester. Was a guidance counselor for 20 years in the Worcester Public Schools. Worked at Burncoat Junior High School, Sullivan Middle School, North High School and Doherty Memorial High School. March 14.

Mary Margaret Wilson, 49, of Ayer, formerly of Chelmsford. Was a kindergarten teacher at the Page Hilltop Elementary School in Ayer for five years. May 4.

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Canine companion helps educator do her work

By Scott McLennan

When students meet with Rose Rash, they also meet with Billy.

Billy is the affable, highly trained standard poodle that has allowed Rash to continue her work as a diagnostician at Rockport Elementary School and enjoy a quality of life that was being compromised by a neurodegenerative disorder known as spinocerebellar ataxia.

"I was falling a lot," Rash said, describing the toll that the disease was taking.

Now, with Billy by her side, Rash has both the physical support and the confidence to remain active. Billy is trained to help Rash avoid stumbling and to assist in an emergency.

About two years ago, Rash learned about service dogs like Billy at a convention for people with various movement-related conditions.

"The wheels started turning," Rash said. She made a trip to Virginia, where the Jasmine Charitable Trust trains standard poodles and connects them with people they can assist.

Rash says that she did not choose Billy. Billy chose her.

"He was all over me," she said. Because poodles are hypoallergenic, Rash also felt that Billy was the perfect choice for someone who works around hundreds of children.

Before the start of the 2014-15 school year, some members of the Rockport School Committee had raised the issue of allowing Rash to have a service dog accommodation, and they suggested that early retirement might be a better option. School Superintendent Rob Liebow supported Rash and the Rockport Teachers Association, however, in making sure that the accommodation need was met.

"Awareness is a big issue," said Jodi Goodhue, president of the RTA. "When we think about accommodations, we typically think about the students. But staff members need accommodations, too, and we need to make sure that people who need them get them."

Goodhue said that Rash's situation underscores how important it is for locals to be aware of members'



Photo by Scott McLennan

Rose Rash, left, shares a moment with her service dog, Billy, and Rockport Teachers Association President Jodi Goodhue. The RTA made sure Rash's need for an accommodation for her medical condition was met so that she could keep working as an elementary school diagnostician.

RTA President Jodi Goodhue said that Rash's situation underscores how important it is for locals to be aware of members' rights, such as those provided under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

rights, such as those provided for under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Rash said the school year with Billy unfolded without any problems. The students first met Billy at a school assembly held at the beginning of the year.

As the school's diagnostician, Rash meets with children who need various evaluations. When they visit her office, Billy rests in a separate spot while Rash works.

"The children are wonderful around Billy," Rash said. On one occasion when she was working with a child who is nervous around dogs, Rash simply had Billy wait in an adjoining office.

But for the most part, Billy is a familiar presence at team meetings and by Rash's side in the school's hallways. Billy even attended an RTA contract ratification meeting.

After worrying about her condition and then the possibility of having to change jobs or take early retirement, Rash is thankful that she found a solution to both her health and career concerns, as well as for the support she received in gaining acceptance for her canine assistant. She and Billy are both back in school as the year opens.

"Life is good," Rash said.