

**THANK YOU!**  
BAD FOR OUR SCHOOLS

# MTA Today

*A publication of the Massachusetts Teachers Association  
Volume 47, No. 3/Winter 2017*



**BUILDING OUR POWER  
FOR THE FIGHTS AHEAD**

# “HONOR OUR OWN” AWARD NOMINATIONS



## IS THERE AN MTA MEMBER WHO:

- Encouraged you professionally or personally?
- Fostered your involvement in the MTA?
- Mentored you as a beginning teacher?
- Helped you as a student?

## NOW IS THE TIME TO RECOGNIZE HIS OR HER CONTRIBUTION.

Nomination forms for the “Honor Our Own” Award are available at:

[massteacher.org/honorourown](http://massteacher.org/honorourown)

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, E-MAIL OR WRITE:

Bob Whalen, MTA  
2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor | Quincy, MA 02171-2119  
[rwhalen@massteacher.org](mailto:rwhalen@massteacher.org)

Completed nomination forms must be received by the MTA no later than June 2

# MTA Today

## IN THIS ISSUE

<i>A winning strategy on Question 2</i>	3
<i>Editorial: Let's name our vision, speak out and act</i>	4
<i>Educators and parents resist focus on testing</i>	5
<i>Building power for the difficult times ahead</i>	6
<i>Ballot victory marks start of longer campaign</i>	7
<i>EMAC Conference focuses on social justice</i>	8
<i>Members fight test-based evaluation regulations</i>	9
<i>Conference helps empower MTA ESPs</i>	10
<i>New teachers share stories and advice</i>	11
<i>Statements by candidates for NEA Director seats</i>	12-13
<i>MTA-backed bills support education, retirees and economic justice</i>	15
<i>New voices sought for MTA Chorus</i>	16
<i>MTA retirees donate supplies to help students</i>	16
<i>Preconvention meetings to be held in April and May</i>	17
<i>MTA vice president honored as 'Champion for Children'</i>	17
<i>Faculty and staff unions challenge need for cuts at UMass Boston</i>	18
<i>Public employees and retirees blast proposed GIC changes</i>	19
<i>Regional retirement consultations available</i>	19
<i>Rental car coverage for winter travel</i>	21
<i>MTAB welcomes new board members</i>	21
<i>Problems plague Southbridge takeover</i>	23
<i>Obituaries</i>	25
<i>Classifieds</i>	26
<i>Read Across America grants help libraries</i>	28

**This edition also includes the Winter issue of The MTA Advantage**

## 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.

### MTA President

Barbara Madeloni

### MTA Vice President

Erik J. Champy

### Executive Director-Treasurer

Ann Clarke

### Publisher

Ann Clarke

### Communications Director/Editor

James Sacks

### Staff Assistant

Janice Morrissey

### Graphic Designer

Joshua Degregorio

## ON THE COVER

MTA members were out in force on Jan. 21 for the Boston Women's March for America. They drew cheers as they walked behind the association's banner, chanting: "No more misinformation; fully fund public education!" The march — one of many across the nation — occurred as unions and public education entered a difficult era following the inauguration of President Donald Trump. Coverage begins on Page 6. In Massachusetts, Election Night also had a highly positive side. A story on the landslide victory of the No on Question 2 campaign is featured on Page 3. Other articles in this issue explore the growing resistance to excessive standardized testing and the increasing pushback against test-based evaluation regulations. Coverage of these issues is on Pages 5 and 9.



Cover photo by Eric Haynes  
Cover design by Joshua Degregorio



The Massachusetts Teachers Association  
2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor  
Quincy, MA 02171-2119  
800.392.6175 or 617.878.8000  
FAX: 617.742.7046  
[www.massteacher.org](http://www.massteacher.org)



MTA TODAY, ISSN 08982481, is published quarterly by the Massachusetts Teachers Association. Subscription: \$3.21 of MTA members' dues is designated for MTA Today.

Periodicals postage rates paid at Boston, MA, and at additional offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: MTA Today, 2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119.

Copyright ©2017 by the Massachusetts Teachers Association. All material in this periodical may be reproduced by educators for distribution to students or by affiliate associations for their own publications. Unless expressly stated, acceptance of advertising does not necessarily imply endorsement of the product by MTA or MTA Benefits.

## Quote-Unquote

**"My office is challenging the immigration ban to hold this administration accountable for its un-American, discriminatory, and reckless decision-making."**

**— Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey, announcing that her office was joining a lawsuit against President Trump's executive order on immigration**

# A winning strategy on Question 2

By Laura Barrett

At a recent MTA staff meeting, MTA Executive Director-Treasurer Ann Clarke was candid. “Many people thought we were nuts to take on Question 2,” she said.

In early 2016, the forces arrayed in favor of lifting the state’s cap on charter schools were formidable.

Early polls had the “yes” side winning by a substantial margin.

Business and hedge fund leaders backing the campaign announced in January that they were prepared to spend \$18 million to win. They eventually spent about \$26 million, roughly twice as much as the “no” side spent.

Governor Charlie Baker strongly supported the ballot initiative, and at the time he had the highest approval rating of any governor in the country.

By contrast, the “no” camp was a relatively new coalition of unions, social justice organizations, student activists and parent groups working under the Save Our Public Schools umbrella.

But the SOPS campaign had a secret weapon: more than 110,000 MTA members and another 25,000 American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts members who are respected teachers, education support professionals, college faculty and staff and retirees. And they were working alongside groups that had deep ties to their communities.

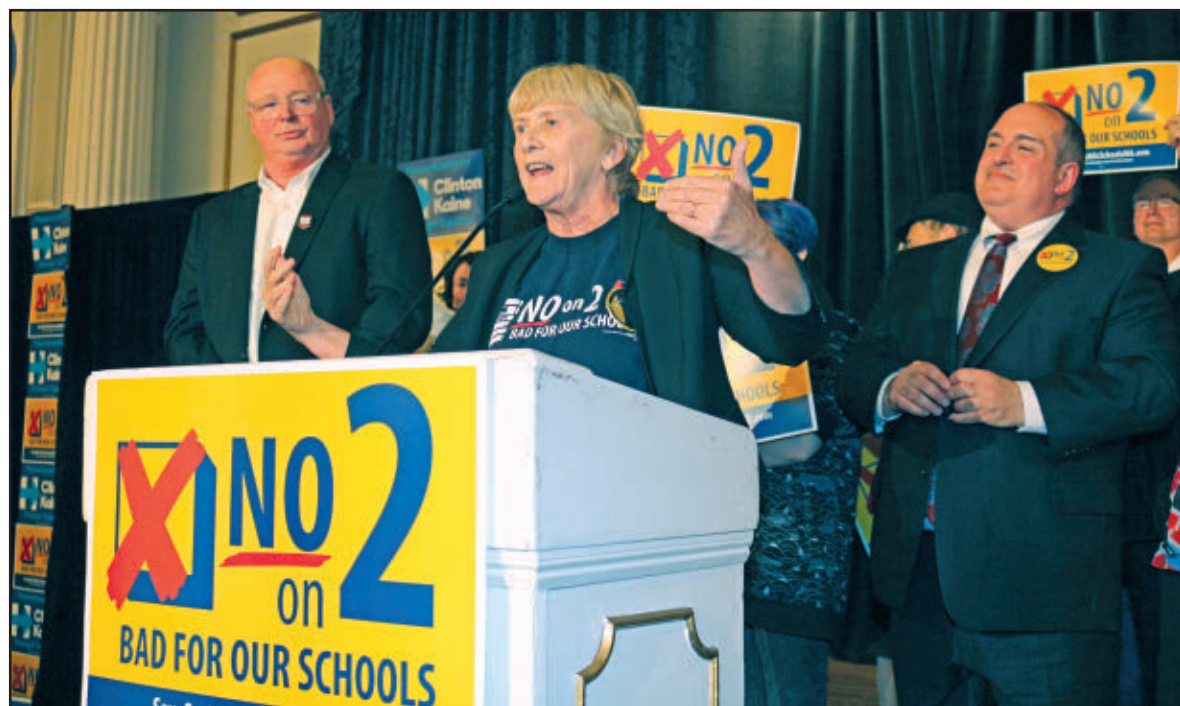
“We knew from the start that we could never outspend them, but that we could — and must — beat them on the ground,” said MTA President Barbara Madeloni. “We also knew that getting members involved was the only way to build a stronger union and a more lasting coalition with other public education supporters.”

The final vote on Question 2 was 62 percent opposed to 38 percent in favor. The lopsided victory was national news, especially since it was a bright spot of progressivism in an election that shocked much of the world with the election of Donald Trump as president.

The “yes” vote won in only 16 of the state’s 351 cities and towns. Most of the 16 are affluent communities — including Weston, Wellesley, Dover and Lincoln — that lose little or no money to charter schools.

“The ‘yes’ campaign greatly underestimated how much people care about their local public schools,” Madeloni said. “The voters made it clear that they don’t want to divert more money from true public schools to unaccountable privately run charter schools that do not serve all students.”

The MTA’s first task was to inform members about the issue. The three key points were that charter schools already drain more than \$450 million a year from public schools, are not accountable to the local communities that pay for them, and fail to serve as many special needs students and English language learners as the district public schools.



Above, MTA President Barbara Madeloni spoke to activists who gathered in Boston on Election Night to celebrate the landslide win by the No on Question 2 campaign. Among those on stage with her were Steven Tolman, left, president of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, and MTA Vice President Erik J. Champy. In the photo at left, Alexizendria Link, a teacher at North High School in Worcester and a former charter school teacher, addressed the crowd.

Photos by Scott McLennan

Stoughton Teachers Association President John Gunning said that the messages worked. “Sometimes I would talk to people who would tell me they don’t have kids in the schools, and I would say, ‘Yes, but you are a taxpayer, so you have skin in the game. Your tax dollars are being spent on schools that are not required to meet the same standards as the public schools and your public officials do not have any oversight over them,’” he said.

Gunning’s local was involved early, meeting before school was out in 2016 to plan for the campaign.

“We knew this was going to be a big fight,” he said. “We tried to mobilize as many people as we could with the intention of getting active as soon as Labor Day hit.”

He estimated that 35 to 40 of his local’s 350 members participated in an organized activity such as phone banking or canvassing, while many others informally spread the word to friends and relatives.

A helpful step was getting the School Committee to pass a resolution against Question 2 about three weeks before the election.

“That was important,” Gunning said. “As an association we haven’t always agreed with the superintendent and School Committee. When people in town heard that we were all in agreement on this, that made a big difference.”

In the end, 215 school committees voted to oppose Question 2, and not one voted in favor.

The SOPS campaign recognized early on the power of having individual educators reach out to voters.

“When I talked to voters on the phone, I often heard people say, ‘I plan to vote against that ballot question because my niece or nephew or daughter or neighbor who is an educator told me it will hurt our local schools,’” said MTA Vice President Erik J. Champy. “It is hard to quantify the impact of those conversations, but we know they were very, very important.”

One challenge was to increase the volume of those conversations by having members join phone banks or canvasses.

Please turn to **Members**/Page 14

# Let's name our vision, speak out and act

*"No more misinformation;  
fully fund public education!"*

The energy of MTA members chanting and the cheers we received from the crowd as we proceeded along Commonwealth Avenue during the Boston Women's March for America serve to remind us of the power of our collective voices.

It is this power that brought us to victory in the No on Question 2 campaign. And it is the power of collective action that will keep our students and communities safe in the years ahead, strengthen our union and win us the schools and colleges our communities deserve.

These are perilous times. As I write, we are watching the confirmation of a nominee for U.S. secretary of education who is opposed to public education. President Donald Trump's Cabinet appointees represent the billionaire class, government offices are being silenced, and our commitments to diversity and justice are under fierce attack as borders are closed and immigrants are threatened.



Barbara Madeloni  
MTA President

All this is taking place as we await Senate action on a Trump nominee for a seat on the U.S. Supreme Court whose confirmation would almost certainly strengthen the nationwide move to dismantle union rights and labor protections.

Meanwhile, each of you strives every day — often under absurd conditions of austerity, mistrust and surveillance — to live up to the ideals that are at the center of our work: supporting the development of young people in all of their complicated and beautiful humanity.

Here in Massachusetts, we already have a secretary of education who does not support public education and who believes that we need a punitive accountability system based on standardized tests. We face constant privatization efforts and other components of an assault that runs from preK-12 schools all the way through public higher education.

What to do? Let's be clear: We face a long struggle. The forces marshaled against us have money and power — and they are committed to undermining our union and our democracy.

But we've been here before. History is filled with oppression, with injustice, with attempts to silence resistance. And history is just as filled with people — working people — coming together

to speak out, to claim a vision of a better world and to fight for it. Now history is calling us, as members of the largest union in Massachusetts, to step up, name our vision, speak out and act.

## The schools our communities deserve

In the No on 2 campaign, we discovered that people value public schools and they value educators' knowledge and expertise. It is time to build on that commitment to public education and that trust in educators.

In the weeks and months ahead, I encourage you to work within your local and community to develop and assert our vision for public education: a vision in which we attend to the whole child, in which educators have the autonomy and respect to do the work we are prepared to do, in which students and educators are free of the madness of high-stakes testing and enjoy a rich and varied curriculum, in which schools and colleges have the resources to provide fair wages and benefits and meet the needs of the diversity of students, and in which all students are welcomed and all families and communities are economically secure.

Hold a forum. Talk to colleagues, students and parents. Ignite a vision worth fighting for.

We won the Question 2 campaign because we engaged in numerous conversations — from the dinner table to the grocery store to the front door of a stranger's home. We need to continue those conversations about testing, funding, the well-being of our vulnerable students and their families, attempts to privatize public education, the degradation of teacher evaluations, and the threats to union rights and protections.

Deepen the conversation by broadening the vision and educating people about why public schools are foundational to democracy.

## Local victories build statewide power

And then fight for that vision in your building, your district, your community and our Commonwealth.

In Revere, educators in the Revere Teachers Association met with the superintendent to call for a stop to demeaning comments that evaluators made when posting in "the cloud" through online teacher portfolios. They read the comments, told the superintendent how degrading they were, and requested that — as her counterpart did in Somerville — she join with educators in sending a letter to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education objecting to proposed changes to the Student Impact Rating system.

That is powerful collective action. That is educators — working people — asserting the right to workplace dignity and respect.

In Hull, Deborah McCarthy, president of the local, is exploring a claim of "conscientious objector" status and asking to be relieved of proctoring high-stakes tests. She says she can no longer participate in what amounts to abuse of students. She is inviting other educators to join her. This is what it looks like when we assert our knowledge, expertise and moral courage.

At UMass Amherst, the Massachusetts Society of Professors, which is the MTA faculty local, held a visioning session on the question, "When we win the Fair Share Amendment, how should the resulting funds be spent for our public colleges and universities?" This is how we build a vision to fight for. And with the Fair Share Amendment, we will have a means to pay for that vision.

These are just a few examples of the work we need to do at the local level to begin to win the schools and colleges our communities deserve — and to secure our union rights and protections. Each victory at the local level grows our power — and can strengthen our coalitions — so that when we are demanding that the Legislature take action in the name of public education, our senators and representatives know we will be committed, persistent and unwavering.

## Courage, hope and joy in collective action

Yes, these are dangerous and scary times, but the antidote is right before us. Reach out to each other. Build relationships. Educate each other and the community. Name the context and the vision.

And join the struggle. Here you will find hope, courage and the joy of raising our voices.

*In solidarity,  
Barbara*

### Letters policy

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

# Educators and parents resist focus on testing

By Laura Barrett

Rising frustration with the negative impact of high-stakes testing on teaching and learning in Massachusetts is driving a growing number of MTA members and parents to explore ways of resisting the excessive focus on standardized tests.

By early January, about 40 teachers had told the MTA that they planned to opt their own children out of testing this spring, and more were expected to participate after a meeting scheduled for early February.

“The MTA and NEA’s Center for Organizing are working together to bring testing resistance strategies to locals in Massachusetts and around the country,” said MTA President Barbara Madeloni. “We will be organizing to resist high-stakes testing at the local district level as well as at the state level.”

One educator, Deborah McCarthy from Hull, is exploring becoming a high-stakes test “conscientious objector.” She plans to ask to be reassigned during the 2017 testing period so that she doesn’t have to administer the PARCC-based Next Gen MCAS exams to her fifth-graders.

“I believe that administering these tests is causing emotional harm to my students,” she said. “I’ve had kids get sick, throw up and shut down. I know of kids who don’t feel as if they’re as smart as other kids in their classroom and then we reinforce that message by labeling them underperforming. I just feel that the time has come to not expect parents and students to shoulder the whole burden of resisting this system. It’s time for us to ask, ‘How can I do this on my watch?’”

McCarthy, a 21-year teacher and president of the Hull Teachers Association, has been an outspoken critic of overtesting for several years. Her actions include co-hosting a forum in Hingham, providing information about high-stakes testing to parents in Scituate, and participating in the Less Testing, More Learning coalition.

Several forces have come together to motivate her to take a stronger stand.

She is deeply concerned about the switch to the new PARCC-based testing regimen because it takes more time and resources without providing her with any useful information.

“PARCC is a nebulous beast,” McCarthy said. “Not once have I been given any data from the PARCC test that helps me instructionally, that makes me a better teacher. Yet we will be spending many days on testing, taking time away from teaching and learning.”

Although tests are not administered for an entire day, she said, all of her, her colleagues’ and her students’ schedules are “flipped upside down” on days when high-stakes tests are given. She is particularly concerned that special education teachers are pulled away from meeting the requirements of their students’ Individual Education Plans in order to administer the tests.

Then came Question 2, which sought to drastically expand the number of charter schools.



Photo by Laura Barrett

Deborah McCarthy, a longtime activist who teaches in Hull, is exploring becoming a high-stakes test “conscientious objector.”

“Without Question 2, I don’t think I’d be doing this,” McCarthy said. As she canvassed and phone banked and talked to others about the state’s two-tiered education system, she grew increasingly aware of the role that test scores have played in exacerbating that problem. Charter schools, she said, are offered as a solution to low test scores, but fail to deal with the underlying problems of poverty and inadequate school resources.

A third motivator was spending two weeks teaching about civil rights leading up to the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

“Our students learn so much about people who risked a lot to fight segregation,” she said. “It had me thinking. I’ve been suggesting to parents in other communities that they take a stand and opt their kids out of testing, but I’m not putting myself on the line. I can’t in good faith participate in something I do not find educationally worthy.”

In January, McCarthy still hadn’t figured out how far she was going to push her request to opt out of administering the test, but she said her efforts would be more powerful if teachers in other districts did the same. She has asked the MTA to research how “conscientious objector” actions played out on Long Island, where a huge percentage of students have refused to take the state tests and some teachers have refused to administer them.

Other members are putting their beliefs into action by talking to their own children about opting out of testing.

Bob Erlandsen, who organized the Hingham forum with McCarthy, teaches eighth-grade science in Cohasset. He is planning to opt his seventh-grade son out of testing as a form of protest.

“My son is very successful, a high scorer,” he said. “This is less about him and more about what these tests are doing to students who see themselves as failures.”

Erlandsen said that the tests provide “a one-time look at one specific aspect of my students’ abilities.”

“I could see that there were students who were doing well on the test, but they had done nothing in my class all year,” he said, “whereas I had other kids who didn’t do so well on the test who were so anxious when they took it, but in class they paid attention, were persistent and worked hard. The test was not measuring their true worth.”

“I’m mostly concerned about the special ed population,” Erlandsen continued. “So many of these kids have amazing talents in others areas, but year after year they are being told how dumb they are because of the tests. I see some of them giving up. It’s reinforced when you hear administrators say, ‘Our students did really well, except the special ed subgroup. They’re holding us back again.’ It’s really sad.”

Erlandsen is also concerned about how much instructional time is lost to testing. “We lose a good week and a half of instructional time to do test prep,” he said.

In 2015, he helped organize a forum in Kingston for about 25 parents, teachers and administrators about the schools they wanted to have for their children.

“One of the main results to come out was that everyone supported less testing,” he said. “They want students doing more arts activities and spending less time on test prep.”

Karin Baker and Raymond Paquette are two other MTA members who are planning to opt their fourth-grader out of testing this spring. Baker works in a special needs high school program in Amherst and Paquette teaches math at Gateway Regional High School.

“I don’t find the math MCAS itself a big problem; it’s the way these tests are used to classify students, schools and teachers that I don’t like,” said Paquette. “We also lose an enormous amount of time to testing.”

He added that the long delay between when the tests are administered and when the results come back reduces the utility of the test.

“Long after it stops mattering to you as a student, you find out what the score is,” he said.

Baker said she is in a “double bubble” since Amherst doesn’t focus heavily on standardized tests in general and her special needs program minimizes them even more.

“My reasons for supporting opting out have to do with the fact that the whole testing system is being used as a system of control,” Baker said. “It’s used for privatization and charterization. It becomes an instrument for attacking schools and public employees and the unions.”

“Also,” she added, “the testing industry is a lot about making money off of education.”

*For more information on opting out of testing, go to [www.massteacher.org/optout](http://www.massteacher.org/optout). For more information about being a testing “conscientious objector,” send Deborah McCarthy an e-mail at [dolph352@yahoo.com](mailto:dolph352@yahoo.com).*

# Building power for a difficult era

'Now it is time to plant a flag for our vision and go out and fight for it'

By Laura Barrett

“May you live in interesting times” is both a blessing and a curse, aptly describing the current era for educators. It is a time of tumult and risk, as well as opportunity and strength.

Election Night embodied both, as opponents of Question 2 celebrated victory even as many bemoaned what a Trump presidency would mean for public education.

MTA President Barbara Madeloni’s response is that the MTA needs to draw courage from the Question 2 victory and build power for the difficult times ahead.

“We established that educators are trusted and that people value public education,” Madeloni said. “Now it is time to plant a flag for our vision and go out and fight for it.”

The MTA is encouraging local associations to hold community forums before the end of the school year under the broad umbrella of supporting the Schools Our Communities Deserve. The goal is to foster discussions about what educators and community residents want from their local public schools and to work together to achieve their aims.

Some of the conversations will probably be geared toward a statewide agenda, such as supporting a moratorium on high-stakes testing. Others will focus on local matters.

As *MTA Today* went to press, a forum was scheduled in Dedham to discuss the district’s plan to eliminate reading teachers. Another was set in Brookline, centered in part on the need for better working conditions for education support professionals.

“The success of the Question 2 campaign was that we found a balance between a structured campaign and a certain amount of chaos,” Madeloni said. “We need both. The structure provides guidance and support, but we need to be flexible enough for members to grab issues and make them their own — to lead.”

Women’s marches on Jan. 21 were good examples of combining structure and chaos to support women and oppose the agenda of President Donald Trump, who was inaugurated one day earlier. The marches originated as Facebook posts by ordinary citizens.

No one specified what headgear should be worn, but fabric stores ran out of pink yarn after the idea of wearing pink hats went viral. The origins of the events were local and involved many different people and organizations, but actually pulling them off took a huge amount of organization and structure.

Many MTA members, still feeling the power of the Question 2 victory, jumped at the chance to join the rallies. A large contingent marched behind the MTA banner in Boston, chanting “No more misinformation; fully fund public education!” Madeloni was among the speakers at the event.



Above, members showed their enthusiasm at the Jan. 21 march in Boston as they gathered behind a banner proclaiming the MTA’s commitment to schools, students and union power. At left, Springfield Education Association members Kaitie Eaton, left, Audrey Murph-Brown, center, and Lynn Budd attended a pre-march sign-making session at MTA headquarters in Quincy before heading for the event.

Photos by Eric Haynes

Audrey Murph-Brown, a social worker in the Springfield Public Schools, said at the Boston rally, “We need to sustain our win on Question 2, and we need to get out and let everyone know that we are going to stand strong, no matter what happened” in terms of the presidential election.

“We’re not going to make it easy for the other side,” she added.

Michele Blanchard, a middle school wellness teacher in the Blackstone-Millville Public Schools, said that the Boston rally was her first-ever demonstration, “and it took me 60 years to get here.” She said she joined “so that everyone has a voice and everyone gets heard.”

In Washington, D.C., retired Quincy teacher Linda Monaco carried a sign that read, “Betsy DeVos is no Betsy Ross. Protect our public schools.”

DeVos, Trump’s appointee for U.S. education secretary, is a billionaire who has dedicated herself to privatizing public education through charter schools and vouchers. She is expected to use the power of the purse to support that agenda by seeking to divert federal dollars now used to educate low-income students to private entities.

The Massachusetts Constitution prohibits public aid to private schools, but privatization measures short of vouchers could be advanced here. MTA members

are almost certain to once again have to make the case that public funds belong in public schools.

The Trump administration poses many other challenges for educators and labor, including efforts to weaken unions.

“This is not just about Trump, but about an ideology that is intent on undermining unions, profiting from the public dollar and eroding democracy through privatization of the common good,” Madeloni said.

A U.S. Supreme Court that includes one or more Trump appointees would likely eliminate agency fee requirements. Under those requirements, public employees who are members of a collective bargaining unit currently can be required to pay the portion of union dues dedicated to bargaining and enforcing the contract under which they work. If that requirement is abolished, some employees could become “free riders,” receiving all of the advantages of the contract without paying anything.

The MTA and local associations will need to make a powerful case for membership — and are prepared to do so.

“Members will join if they experience the power of their union,” Madeloni said. “This begins at the local level. We need members talking to each other,

Continued on next page

# Ballot victory marks start of longer campaign

By Scott McLennan

The No on Question 2 victory was not simply the conclusion of a ballot initiative fight. In many ways, it marked the beginning of a longer campaign.

Now, MTA members are using the energy and expertise they gained during the months leading up to Election Day in a number of crucial strategic areas. They're thinking through ways of connecting the grassroots issues that are important in individual schools and districts to a statewide campaign that includes increasing education funding and reducing mandates that don't help students.

In recent weeks, the MTA has been hosting regional member forums around the state. At each session, MTA President Barbara Madeloni used a series of questions to prompt conversations among the participants, who worked in small groups.

Members discussed what it felt like to experience victory in defeating Question 2, which sought to lift the cap on charter schools.

Then they expanded their conversations to talk about other threats and issues undermining their jobs and public education. Those conversations expanded still further into discussions about how educators can connect with their broader communities and take steps to build power.

The forums are a step toward the creation of "The Schools Our Communities Deserve," a vision statement with roots in a new business item taken up at the 2015 MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates. That NBI directed the MTA to hold community forums about what public schools should look like.

Conversations on that topic were interrupted, however, when pro-charter-school forces took their expansion plans to the Legislature, to the

courts, and finally to the ballot box last November.

At a forum in Saugus on Jan. 12, Madeloni praised the work of educators, noting that they "created a space for people to talk about public education" during the charter school debate.

She added that those conversations seeded the landslide defeat of the charter school expansion question — and revealed just how committed Massachusetts residents are to their public schools.

Despite the challenging political landscape ushered in by the election of President Donald Trump, Madeloni said, educators now "have an opportunity to play offense, not defense."

The way to do that, she said, is to assess union power at the local level, develop ways to strengthen it, and then use that power to meet goals at the building and district levels.

With greater power at the base, she said, the statewide union will be better able to tackle funding and regulatory issues coming from the State House, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and various elements of public higher education governance.

Ideas at the meeting in Saugus ran the gamut, from holding informal coffee hours and house parties with parents and community members to engaging local school committees in the fight to have the state meet the funding obligations laid out by the Foundation Budget Review Commission. The commission determined that public education is underfunded by about \$1 billion annually.

Educators' comments about the roadblocks that they encounter focused on the burdensome



Photo by Scott McLennan

The forum in Saugus featured deep conversations.

teacher evaluation process, bullying of workers by administrators, and the high-stakes use of standardized tests.

Robyn Towner of the Cambridge Education Association said another challenge arises in convincing members, especially early-career educators, that the union provides the ability to harness power — not just to fight *against* unfair or damaging policies, but to fight *for* the classrooms that teachers want for their students.

"I know a lot of teachers feel overwhelmed because there have been so many shifts in education. But that's the reason to be in a union; there is so much to fight for," she said.

The next step toward realizing the goals of the Schools Our Communities Deserve effort involves setting up meetings organized by MTA locals that bring together educators, parents and others concerned about public schools.

"As we create coalitions with our community partners, it is equally important to keep building power within our locals and across our union," Madeloni said.

## Members gear up to protect students and advocate for education funding



Photo by Eric Haynes

MTA President Barbara Madeloni gestured to the crowd from the podium during her speech at the women's march in Boston. Standing with her were fellow labor speakers Roxana Rivera, center, and Kindalay Cummings.

Continued from previous page

identifying issues and acting collectively to create the best conditions for teaching and learning."

Part of undoing the Affordable Care Act may include slashing Medicaid funding to states. And given the massive tax cuts Trump has promised to the wealthy and corporations, other cuts in federal funds for state and local services are likely.

Many believe that the blue states that didn't support Trump are particularly vulnerable. Cuts in federal funds would increase competition for state funds that the MTA is seeking for preK-12 schools and public higher education.

MTA members are gearing up to make an effective case for education funding at the state level. "This begins with articulating a vision for the schools our communities deserve at the local level and then creating a shared vision to support our legislative priorities," Madeloni said.

The MTA will be at the forefront of promoting a constitutional amendment in 2018 that would raise

about \$2 billion for education and transportation by increasing taxes on annual income over \$1 million.

Other challenges include protecting undocumented students who are threatened with deportation and making sure that schools and colleges are places where all students feel safe regardless of their religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

"An immediate struggle will be to protect our students, their families and communities from the racism and bigotry of the policies coming down from Washington," Madeloni said.

"The challenges ahead of us are very real, but we can fight back — and we will," she continued. "The power and joy of the marches on January 21 can be realized if we work together."

*To see more photos of the Boston march, please go to [massteacher.org/womensmarch](http://massteacher.org/womensmarch). To view President Madeloni's speech at the event, go to [massteacher.org/madeloniwomensmarch](http://massteacher.org/madeloniwomensmarch).*

# Conference focuses on social justice

## 'We don't have the luxury to sit silently,' EMAC chair tells audience

By Jean Conley

Discussions about standing together against bigotry, understanding racism as a system designed to divide and control, and engaging in “difficult conversations” highlighted the 2016 MTA Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee Conference.

The event, whose theme was “Race, Ethnicity and Public Education: Deepening the Conversation,” was held at the Sheraton Framingham Hotel and Conference Center Dec. 2 and 3.

Coming on the heels of a presidential campaign that tapped into a troubling strain of racism and bigotry in America, the conference opened with EMAC Chair Yan Yii reminding participants that “given the current political climate, our mission is more important now than ever.”

“We don't have the luxury to sit silently,” she said as she welcomed a crowd of about 180 people at the opening dinner on Friday night. “We must continue to have these uncomfortable conversations, stand up for equal rights, promote and embrace diversity, and combat racism each and every day.”



Yan Yii

MTA Vice President Erik J. Champy also welcomed the crowd, saying that when he first became involved in the MTA more than 20 years ago, his role models included a long line of ethnic minority activists who paved the way for others to participate more fully in the association.

“Along with MTA presidents, leaders were determined that we must level the playing field for *all* members so that our fine work could continue,” he said.

Champy said that as an NEA director, he was appointed by President Lily Eskelsen García to the NEA School-to-Prison Pipeline Task Force. This opportunity allowed him to become deeply involved with the NEA's commitment to social justice, he added.

Citing the results of the 2016 election, MTA President Barbara Madeloni told the crowd that she felt fortunate “that we have this weekend to begin to have a focused, facilitated opportunity.” We must, she said, think about the new political climate in terms of racial and social justice and public education.

“We don't know what is going to happen, what is going to come at us, but we need to prepare ourselves by forming really strong relationships — and that means we have to have difficult conversations with each other,” she said.

The outcome of those conversations, Madeloni continued, “has to be a sense of understanding and the capacity to trust each other so that as we need to take action as a union, we know who is sitting next



Above, participants listened to speakers during a dinner at the 2016 Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee Conference, which was held Dec. 2 and 3 in Framingham. At left, Claudie Jean-Baptiste, center, made a point during a workshop on cultural competence as fellow educators looked on.

Photos by Jean Conley

to us, who is standing behind us and that we are standing together.”

Friday evening's keynote speaker was Gabriel Tanglao, a high school social studies teacher from New Jersey who leads the New Jersey Education Association's first Minority Leadership Training Cadre. Tanglao currently serves his union in a variety of roles: as local treasurer, as chair of the NJEA legislative action team and as Northeast Regional Director of the Asian/Pacific Islander Caucus.



Gabriel Tanglao

Tanglao described his own family's multiethnic heritage in the Philippines and urged educators to work with their students to “bust the myth of racial superiority” that persists despite scientific evidence — including evidence that humans are 99.9 percent genetically similar, that in nature biodiversity makes for a healthy ecosystem,

and that diversity within a species is key to survival.

Instead, he said, the goal is to begin teaching “racism as a race system” whose purpose is to divide and control, leading to the conquest, enslavement, oppression and exploitation of people of color for generations.

He asked the crowd to begin acting to deconstruct the myth of any one race's superiority using the tools of public education.

“What if educators, shielded by their unions and armed with math and science, languages, arts and culture, in collaboration with communities fighting for social, economic and environmental justice, started a revolution?” he said. “These are the questions that should frame our thinking, our teaching and our organizing.”

“If racism is the weapon that seeks to destroy us, solidarity will be our fortress,” Tanglao added.

After dinner, the conferees were treated to a performance by Grupo Arcoiris, a group of young

Continued on next page



# Members fight test-based evaluation regs

By Laura Barrett

**M**TA members are fighting proposed changes in the regulations governing the “Student Impact Rating” portion of the educator evaluation system.

Those changes, recommended by Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester, would replace the separate impact rating, based on District-Determined Measures and test scores, with a mandate that student test scores and results from “common assessments” would be factored into an educator’s summative rating. The common assessments are virtually identical to DDMs.

The MTA has told state education officials that the current impact rating system is bad and that its proposed replacement is even worse. Members are being urged to organize locally to express their views, and they were asked to submit comments to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education before Jan. 27.

Sharon educators were quick to act. Zach Snow, a Sharon High School teacher and strong opponent of overtesting, said the commissioner’s proposal would worsen problems that are already widespread. “It would lead to more focus on test scores and more stress,” said Snow, a member of the Sharon Assessment Advisory Committee, a group of educators and parents formed by the School Committee to study the impact of high-stakes testing mandates on teaching and learning in the district.

MTA President Barbara Madeloni agreed. “We and other state education leaders have been urging the commissioner to eliminate the mechanistic rating and replace it with a system under which educators and their evaluators reflect on student work as a whole in developing the educator’s plan.

“Instead of eliminating it, Chester doubled down,” Madeloni said. “The cure is worse than the disease.”

Under the proposed regulations, determining whether an educator’s impact on student growth is less than, the same as or more than “expected” would be included in Standard 2 of the evaluation system. As a result, student scores could lower an educator’s overall rating from Proficient to Needs Improvement, putting the educator in a precarious position even if other parts of the evaluation were positive.

The Sharon advisory committee drafted a letter against the proposed regulations, and it was approved by the Sharon School Committee and the Executive Board of the Sharon Teachers Association in early January. The letter states in part, “Now that the Race to the Top program and the No Child Left Behind Act are both defunct — and parents, teachers and students are increasingly repudiating a culture of overtesting — the time is now to reject the practice of linking test scores to teacher evaluations.”

Tom Pinto, president of the Education Association of Plymouth and Carver, invited members to a meeting on Jan. 10 to respond to the proposed changes. About 20 members attended, using most of their meeting time to compose personalized letters to the BESE.

“What would be deemed high growth?” Pinto asked. “Could one administrator look at the results and consider them high and another see them differently?”

Somerville was also quick to act. Jackie Lawrence, president of the Somerville Teachers Association, said of the proposed new system: “It looks just like DDMs with a new name and a new place to put it — and the new place is even worse.”

Lawrence and Somerville’s school superintendent, Mary Skipper, sent a joint letter to the BESE on Jan. 12 that said in part, “This misdirection of the overarching goal of the evaluation system takes away from the spirit of the



Photo by Laura Barrett

Barbara Pagnotti, right, and other members of the Education Association of Plymouth and Carver gathered on Jan. 10 to let state education officials know they oppose using student test scores to rate teachers.

process and shifts the focus from one of progress to punishment.”

The new regulations could be voted on by the BESE as soon as Feb. 28. Since the board usually follows the recommendations of the commissioner, the MTA has a second line of defense: the Legislature. Senator Michael Rush has filed an MTA-backed bill that would forbid the state from requiring districts to use student test scores in the evaluation system.

Madeloni said there is a third line of defense that is even more powerful than the other two — member engagement.

“Working together, members should resist the imposition of any impact rating system within their districts and push back against all demeaning and dehumanizing approaches to teaching and learning in our schools,” she said. “Our power starts at the local level. Let’s use it.”

## ‘We are in need of a radical change to decolonize our thinking ...’

Continued from previous page

people whose dances and songs incorporate merengue, mangulina and other rhythms to celebrate traditional music from the Dominican Republic and other parts of the Caribbean.

On Saturday morning, conferees chose from five back-to-back workshops: “Cultural Competence,” “Islamophobia,” “Minorities on the Small and Big Screen,” “Real Talk with Emerging Leaders” and “The School-to-Prison Pipeline.”

The workshops were followed by a luncheon with a keynote address by Tony Van Der Meer, a senior lecturer of Africana Studies at UMass Boston, longtime social justice activist and co-editor of the book “State of the Race, Creating Our 21st Century: Where Do We Go From Here?” Van Der Meer challenged educators and unions “to recognize the

structure of racism.” Institutions of all types, he said, need to step back and question their own privilege. He said unions, which should work with and support collective initiatives to bring about equity and justice in their work spaces, sometimes instead “engage in a sort of corporate unionism that marginalizes those that are part of the rank and file instead of having a more democratic governance structure.”

He pointed to situations at UMass Boston, including one in which two talented black women professors were denied tenure, that displayed “a level of disrespect that black faculty have to endure all too often.”



Tony Van Der Meer

“We are in need of a radical change to decolonize our thinking about our relationship between our oppression and oppressors,” he said. “Because we have a degree, a job, a home, a car and extra cash in the bank, we think we are not oppressed. We have bought the American dream, which has been a nightmare for many others.”

The conference concluded with facilitated discussions led by members of the NEA’s ethnic minority caucuses: Black, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native and Asian/Pacific Islander, and a final session allowed conference participants the chance to wrap up their discussions.

To see more photos of the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee Conference, please visit [www.massteacher.org/EMACphotos](http://www.massteacher.org/EMACphotos).

# Conference helps empower MTA ESPs

By Jean Conley

Professional development workshops and activities centered on topics that are critically important to education support professionals will highlight this year's ESP Conference.

The two-day event, scheduled for April 7 and 8 at the Sea Crest Beach Hotel in Falmouth, typically attracts hundreds of participants every year.

Leslie Marsland, chair of the ESP Committee, called the conference "a unique convergence of networking, learning, inspiration and fun rolled into a single weekend package."

"This conference gives education support professionals from across the state the opportunity to learn, explore and enhance their skills," she said. "They share their interests and knowledge with other ESPs, form new relationships and strengthen existing ones, and they become empowered."

"If you have not attended this conference in the past," Marsland added, "get ready for a great experience."

One highly anticipated feature of the conference is presentation of the MTA ESP of the Year award.

The award honors an ESP at the state level who is nominated by his or her local as an ardent supporter of workers' rights, who seeks creative and innovative solutions to problems, and who makes a difference in the lives of students.

The winner will be announced at dinner on Friday night. MTA President Barbara Madeloni, Vice President Erik J. Champy and the new winner of the ESP of the Year award will speak at the dinner.

On Saturday, a breakfast buffet will be followed by more than a dozen workshops whose topics include "Para

Power," "Difficult Conversations" and a "True Colors" personality assessment.

A full listing of workshops is available at [massteacher.org/esp](http://massteacher.org/esp).

During a luncheon on Saturday, the NEA's current national ESP of the Year, Doreen McGuire-Grigg, will be the featured speaker.

McGuire-Grigg, who has been a special education paraeducator for nearly three decades in California, was honored as the national ESP of the Year at the annual NEA ESP Conference last March.

She spoke to a crowd of more than 1,000 at that conference and lauded the work done by ESPs around the country.

"We get up every day and the work is tough, and we sometimes don't get the respect we deserve," she said. "But we go to work with our students because it's where we belong."

The conference will conclude about 3 p.m. on Saturday, April 8.

*Early bird registration ends Friday, Feb. 24. Discounted hotel room rates are available until March 8, and the final date to register for the conference is March 24. If your school district or local association does not pay or reimburse your conference costs, you may be eligible to apply for a grant. For more information on costs, hotel charges and registration, please visit [massteacher.org/esp](http://massteacher.org/esp). Other questions can be e-mailed to Jessica Parlon in the MTA Division of Training and Professional Learning at [jparlon@massteacher.org](mailto:jparlon@massteacher.org). Her phone number is 617.878.8153.*



Doreen McGuire-Grigg



**MTA ESP**  
CONFERENCE

April 7-8  
Sea Crest Beach Hotel  
Falmouth

Paid Advertisement



Ready to further your education?

## Graduate Programs FOR EDUCATORS

Early Childhood • Elementary • Middle School  
Arts Education • Occupational Education  
Science Education • Educational Leadership & Management  
Curriculum and Teaching • MAT in English or History

## Special Education Programs

Moderate Disabilities • Severe Disabilities • Guided Studies  
Reading Specialist • Behavior Analyst • Dyslexia Specialist

Graduate and Continuing Education  
**INFORMATION SESSION**  
**April 13**  
5 – 6:30 p.m.

### APPLICATION FEE WAIVER

If you attend the information session and haven't yet applied for admission, we'll waive the fee for your Summer or Fall 2017 application.

Register today at [fitchburgstate.edu/gce/infoession](http://fitchburgstate.edu/gce/infoession)

 **FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY**  
GRADUATE AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

[fitchburgstate.edu/gce/education](http://fitchburgstate.edu/gce/education)  
978.665.3182 • [gce@fitchburgstate.edu](mailto:gce@fitchburgstate.edu)

The two-day event typically attracts hundreds of participants every year. Leslie Marsland, chair of the ESP Committee, called the conference "a unique convergence of networking, learning, inspiration and fun rolled into a single weekend package."

# New teachers share stories and advice

By Scott McLennan

Gene Reiber recalled the first time he had to set up a classroom. The new teacher wanted to break from tradition, so he sought out interesting furniture and eye-catching wall hangings for the room. He was determined not to let his teaching become regimented over time, and he believed that a unique environment would help do the trick.

After teaching for a few years, he changed his mind.

“You, as the teacher, are the defining thing in that room — not the furniture,” Reiber told an audience of early-career educators at the 15th annual Just for New Teachers conference.

Sharing stories and advice is a big part of the conference, which the MTA’s New Member Committee puts on each year.

Reiber, a member of the committee, made his comments during a panel discussion that launched the 2016 event on Nov. 19 at Worcester Technical High School. He and three others from the New Member Committee answered questions put to them by fellow committee member Michael Milton.

The conversation covered both small details, such as the necessity of having a hook to hang keys on, and broader concerns, such as preparation techniques, the pitfalls that first-year teachers face, and the big issues such as curriculum recommendations.

Two cautions emerged during the discussion: Don’t become isolated, and don’t become overwhelmed. The panelists, all of whom told survival stories about their own mishaps early in their careers, recommended utilizing the knowledge of as many veteran teachers as possible, not just those assigned as mentors, and being involved in the local union.

One of the best ways to become a great teacher, they said, is by taking time to step back from teaching.

“Set boundaries,” panelist Miriam Kranz told the audience. “Get a hobby that has nothing to do with teaching and make sure you spend time on it.”

Kranz, for example, routinely goes dancing.

More than 20 workshops were available, keying in on classroom management techniques for different grade levels, inclusion strategies and



Above, veteran educator Blythe Purdin led a workshop on engaging students at the Just for New Teachers conference, which was held on Nov. 19 at Worcester Technical High School. At left, New Member Committee panelists shared insights and stories during a discussion that opened the event. From left to right are committee members Michael Milton, Miriam Kranz, Nicole Roberge, Gene Reiber and Erin Burns.

Photos by Scott McLennan

---

**“Your role as a teacher is to be there to help students,” said Laura Vago, chair of the New Member Committee. “We are entering strange times, and that role will be even more important.”**

---

ways to engage students, among other topics.

Participants attended morning and afternoon sessions that were separated by a working lunch of sorts.

The MTA’s Executive Committee held its November meeting at the high school to coincide with the conference so the association’s leadership could spend time with some of the newest members of the organization.

MTA President Barbara Madeloni, Vice President Erik J. Champy, Executive Director-Treasurer Ann

Clarke and Executive Committee members joined conference participants for lunch and participated in the discussions at each table.

The conversations at the dozen or so tables were far-reaching. Some dug into what a Donald Trump presidency would look like. Others talked about teaching the subject of history, while still others discussed unionism.

The conference fell just 11 days after an election that produced a decisive victory for the No on 2 campaign — which prevented the expansion of charter schools in Massachusetts at the rate of 12 per year — as well as what many found to be an unsettling outcome in the presidential race.

Those events framed the comments of MTA leaders before the participants headed into their second round of workshops.

“Your role as a teacher is to be there to help students,” said Laura Vago, chair of the New Member Committee. “We are entering strange times, and that role will be even more important.”

Madeloni picked up on Vago’s remarks and added that teachers must make sure that schools are not only safe places, but also just places.

Though the national political landscape is changing, Madeloni pointed to the No on 2 victory, saying, “The union is where we have our power, and it is power in the best sense. Our victory showed that people value public education. We have an obligation to our schools and to our communities to use our power to protect public education.”

Champy urged the new teachers to imagine where their union involvement could lead.

He said that when he was beginning his career in education, he had no idea that he would become a union activist.

“But someone said, ‘Come to a meeting,’ and one thing led to the next,” he said. “It’s not a path I planned, but one that happened.”

---

*To see more photos of the Just for New Teachers conference, please visit [www.massteacher.org/JFNTphotos](http://www.massteacher.org/JFNTphotos).*

# Statements by candidates for NEA Director seats

The MTA is holding an election for two seats on the NEA Board of Directors.

The two open Massachusetts seats will be filled by vote of the active membership in March and April, in tandem with NEA state and regional delegate elections.

The terms last for three years beginning

Sept. 1, 2017, and expiring Aug. 31, 2020, in accordance with the NEA's fiscal year.

Ballots will be provided to all MTA/NEA members eligible to vote.

Candidates were given the opportunity to submit biographical statements and photos. Submissions received in compliance with the

MTA's deadlines are printed on this page and Page 13.

*For further information, please contact John Connelly of the Division of Governance and Administration by calling 617.878.8305 or e-mailing [jconnelly@massteacher.org](mailto:jconnelly@massteacher.org).*

## Candace Shivers — Massachusetts Community College Council

My name is Candace Shivers, and I am asking for your vote for NEA Director. I am currently a full-time faculty member at Mount Wachusett Community College. My union activism has been at both the local and state levels for the last decade, including MTA's Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee, MTA's Board of Directors, Massachusetts Community College Council's Board of Directors, and local chapter president at Mount Wachusett



Candace Shivers

Community College. I also have had the pleasure of representing my local at the MTA Annual Meeting, as well as representing Massachusetts at the NEA RA.

Through my involvement, I have had the opportunity to have conversations with MTA members across the Commonwealth. Though we may approach issues differently, we all have the same core investment in students and our working conditions.

Working in higher education has given me the unique perspective to see how preK-through-12th-grade education affects student success at the higher education level. Our interests are not at all different, even if we go about getting results differently. It all goes back to wanting what is best for our

students and great working conditions. Those things are important to ALL our members — preK-12 educators, ESPs, higher education members and our retirees.

There are issues in education that I hold deeply personal, like making higher education affordable and accessible to all students, but I know that it is important to make sure I have conversations with the people I would represent as an NEA Director. My personal interests will never supersede those of the membership at large that I represent. I pledge to the members of the MTA that I will listen and be solution-driven to continue to move public education forward. I would appreciate your vote for NEA Director, and thank you in advance for your support.

## Dean Robinson — Massachusetts Society of Professors

I am running for NEA Director to bring the voices of rank-and-file educators to our national body. I am convinced that the direction we have taken under the leadership of Barbara Madeloni is right for the simple reason that it is predicated on an engaged membership. This is reflected in our ambitious legislative agenda, opposition to high-stakes testing and successful defeat of Question 2.



Dean Robinson

We now face the daunting task of pursuing our objectives under a hostile presidential administration. The MTA and the NEA need to advance a vision of public education, from preK through higher education, that draws a clear distinction between our view of what quality and accessible public education looks like against the vision of those who want to privatize our schools, take away union rights, and narrowly define the purpose and meaning of education.

While my family's roots are in Dominica in the Caribbean, I spent my first years in the Amherst Public Schools and continued my K-12 education in public schools in Minnesota, Nebraska and California. I am now a professor of political science at UMass Amherst and have spent more than 20

years as an MTA member working passionately for our public colleges and universities.

I have served as a member of the Board and Executive Committee of my local, the Massachusetts Society of Professors. I am currently in my third year of service on the MTA Government Relations Committee, which has developed a progressive legislative agenda for the new term. I see exciting opportunities to bring our vision of attentive, engaged, rank-and-file-driven unionism to the national level.

I hope you will vote for me for NEA Director. Please feel free to write to me if you have questions or want to talk about the issues facing our union and public education.

Paid Advertisement



 Salem | STATE UNIVERSITY

**JOIN THE THOUSANDS OF SALEM STATE ALUMNI WHO ARE LEADERS IN EDUCATION BY ENROLLING IN ONE OF OUR GRADUATE PROGRAMS.**

Choose from our master's degrees, educator licensure programs, graduate certificates and CAGS in Education, depending on your credentialing and content-area needs.

[salemstate.edu/admissions/graduate](http://salemstate.edu/admissions/graduate)  
978.542.6200

# Statements by candidates for NEA Director seats

## Saul Ramos — Educational Association of Worcester

Greetings MTA! It will be my honor and privilege to serve as one of your NEA Directors. I am an Education Support Professional (ESP) with 18 years of service. I work with visually impaired students as their one-on-one Paraeducator/Brailist, reinforcing Braille teaching and guiding them in becoming independent students and, eventually, adults.



Saul Ramos

I have been an active member

in the local, state and national associations for many years now. I have been learning the nuts and bolts of our associations, familiarizing myself with our policies and obtaining the knowledge needed to be a leading voice. My experience ranges from committee member, to local vice president, to trainer, to leadership program graduate, to MTA ESP of the Year (2016), to Red Sox MVE, and so on. I have established personal relationships with leaders from all levels of our associations and continuously speak to them about our concerns here in Massachusetts, bringing awareness.

With the many concerns public education is currently facing and will continue to face, we need someone with the knowledge, experience,

determination and capacity to represent MTA, our members and our students at the NEA level. I know I am that person. I will continue the hard work our previous leaders have so gracefully done and will engage in finding new solutions and avenues to guarantee public education is at the forefront.

We cannot afford to sit back and watch as public education is slowly broken down. We must ensure that all of us and our students are treated fairly, regardless of nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability. I will be your voice and bring your concerns as educators, parents and community members to the national level and will help achieve the success we all deserve. In unity there is strength. Thank you!

## Jacqueline (Jacqui) Perkins — Education Association of Plymouth and Carver

I am running for NEA Director because educational issues are the closest to my heart, and I have (since my youngest is in college now) the time and energy to be committed. If you'll have me, it's my honor to serve and to help Massachusetts lead the national fight to protect public education.



Jacqueline (Jacqui) Perkins

Thank you for your consideration,

Jacqueline J.L. Perkins, J.D., M.Ed

### My Platform:

- Educators should be included as the public policymakers for education.

- Standardized testing and “common assessments” are too flawed to be accepted as a measure of student growth attributable to any one teacher. This is not an issue on which to compromise.

- Sufficient public funds should be dedicated to public education. School funding should be fair and equitable.

- Public education should be open and transparent to parents, communities, school committees and boards, and not in the hands of private or investment groups.

- The NEA should tell the story of public education across the country and organize with us to defeat the

myriad attacks on public education in the nation.

### Experience:

Eleven years teaching English at the secondary level, eight years as a contract negotiator, two years as Vice President of my local, four years on the Executive Committee of my local, four years attending MTA Annual Meeting as a delegate, actively involved in the No on 2 campaign. I have served on two NEASC visiting committees and have attended and contributed to a number of forums on state standards and evaluation systems for the state and for the MTA. I'm an alumna of the MTA Next Generation Leadership Program, and prior to teaching, I was an attorney and owner of an investigative and security business in Boston.

## JOBS AT THE MTA

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

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

Paid Advertisement



### Become a teacher-leader who makes a difference.

Our innovative teacher preparation program is designed for people already working in a school who seek to become exceptional teachers. Besides earning your Initial teaching license in one year, you will also become part of a professional learning community that enhances collaboration, teacher growth and student success.

Become a caring and passionate teacher for all students.

Interested? Learn more at [springfield.edu/wtp](http://springfield.edu/wtp).

**SPRINGFIELD**  
COLLEGE  
Graduate Programs

# Members' action proves vital in Question 2 win

Continued from Page 3

Two Quincy educators at opposite ends of their teaching careers made the leap. One day in the fall, retired teacher Linda Monaco was engrossed in phone banking, something she volunteered to do more than half a dozen times.

"It can get addictive," she said. "My time would be up and I'd say, 'Let me do just one more.' I knew I had information to give and that it was making a difference."

When her session ended and she finally had a chance to stand, she heard someone say, "Mrs. Monaco?" It was K Moy, a first-year Quincy teacher who had been a student in Monaco's fourth-grade class.

"We were both stunned," said Monaco. "I was speechless. I gave her a big hug."

Monaco had been active in the Quincy Education Association, especially during the strike in 2007. She didn't hesitate to volunteer for the SOPS campaign. Moy was not so sure at first.

"I considered myself naive about the issue and I'm very shy," she said. But she had been called by a SOPS organizer who was a former classmate, so she agreed to give it a try.

"I have so much pride in the Quincy Public Schools, I couldn't imagine any of them being dismantled to build charters," Moy said.

When she started phone banking she was nervous at first, and she was offended when people hung up on her. But she grew more comfortable as time went on.

"In the end, it felt very good when I changed someone's mind," Moy said. "I remember talking to a nice lady who listened to everything I said and at the end she said she would spread the word to others to vote 'no.'"

Brendan Sheran, president of the United Educators of Pittsfield, said that the key to getting his members involved was offering them a variety of ways to participate.

Some knocked on doors. Some passed out literature at "3rd Thursday" cultural events. Some wrote letters to the editor.

Getting people to phone bank was the biggest challenge, so in some cases building reps broke up the phone lists, giving members just 10 names each to call — a small enough task for a larger number to take on.



Photo by Laura Barrett

First-year Quincy teacher K Moy, left, and retired Quincy teacher Linda Monaco visited MTA headquarters this winter to talk about their surprise reunion at a No on Question 2 phone-banking session.

Sheran also went to the retirement home where his grandmother lives and spoke to a group of seniors. "They were very receptive," he said. "It really

concerned them a lot that their tax dollars were being spent on charter schools that are not accountable to them as taxpayers. And they vote."

Brendan Sheran, president of the United Educators of Pittsfield, said that the key to getting his members involved was offering them a variety of ways to participate.

A week before the election, the UEP and SOPS community partners held a rally in downtown Pittsfield that was covered by the local press and promoted on social media.

Madeloni said that member engagement was critical to the victory.

"Many members who were never politically active before felt their power during the Question 2 campaign," she said. "They realized how much people relied on their expertise on public education and many other issues. We need to continue to use our voices and engage in these conversations. We have to stay organized and strong in support of the schools our communities deserve."

Paid Advertisement

## Create the change you want to see



### Doctoral Education programs in:

- **Ed.D.** in Educational Leadership with a concentration in Higher Education Administration or PreK-12 Administration

**Contact:** Dr. Lynne Celli at 978.816.7651  
lcelli@endicott.edu

- **Ph.D.** in Applied Behavior Analysis

**Contact:** Allyson Penaloz at 978.816.7642  
apenaloz@endicott.edu

### Master of Education programs in:

- Applied Behavior Analysis • Administrative Leadership
- Autism • Early Childhood • Elementary Education
- Reading and Literacy • Secondary Education
- Special Education

**Contact:** Christopher J. Urbine at 978.998.7761  
curbine@endicott.edu



VAN LOAN SCHOOL  
AT ENDICOTT COLLEGE

[www.vanloan.endicott.edu](http://www.vanloan.endicott.edu)

# A vision for public education and communities

MTA-backed bills support schools, colleges, retirees and economic justice

By Jean Conley

The MTA will advocate for bills in the current legislative session that reflect the association's vision for public education and our communities.

The legislation was developed through a process that included extensive input from MTA members.

Each bill focuses on wide-ranging issues that together articulate a shared commitment to public education, fairness for all workers in our communities, and a secure retirement for public-sector employees.

MTA President Barbara Madeloni said the association chose a targeted lobbying effort for this session to focus on the many large issues facing educators.

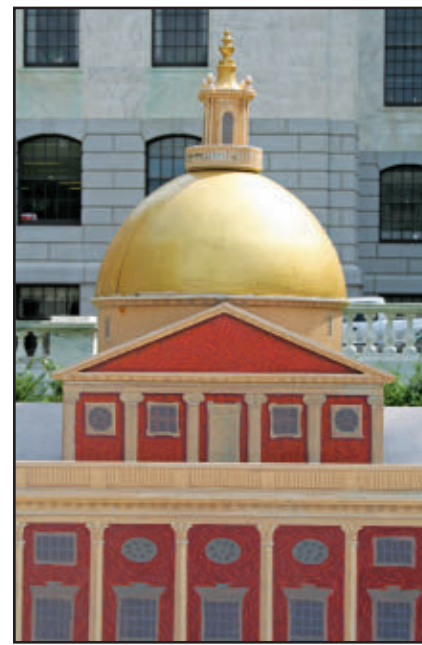
"Free, universal public education was born in Massachusetts," Madeloni said. "Voters in the Commonwealth clearly showed their support for well-funded, publicly accountable schools

by soundly rejecting Question 2 in November.

"Now it is time for legislators to listen to what educators and parents say they want for students — not what bureaucrats say they need to satisfy an ever-growing number of state and federal mandates," she added.

The bills filed for this session are:

**An Act strengthening and investing in our educators, students and communities**, filed by Senator Michael Rush (D-West Roxbury), with Representative Marjorie Decker (D-Cambridge) as the leading House co-sponsor. This bill helps students in all public schools in Massachusetts by seeking to provide the schools our communities deserve. It makes crucial updates to the state education funding formula, mandates a moratorium on and replacement of the state's high-stakes testing regime, promotes community collaboration in improving schools, and provides services critical to student academic and social-emotional development, such as recess for grade-



schoolers and appropriate bilingual education services for non-native speakers.

**An Act investing in Public Higher Education**, filed by Representative Paul Mark (D-Peru)

and Senator Eileen Donoghue (D-Lowell). This bill makes critically needed investments in public higher education. It creates a Finish Line Grant to cover the cost of one year of tuition and fees for Massachusetts residents attending a public institution of higher education. Importantly, it also provides adjunct faculty with a path to tenure, access to health and pension benefits and pay parity with full-time faculty.

**An Act to provide fair and affordable public retiree benefits**, filed by Senator James Timilty (D-Walpole). This bill delivers protections to retired public employees. It would provide a modest increase in the cost-of-living adjustment and protections from increasing health costs.

**An Act establishing a family and medical leave insurance program**, filed by Senator Karen Spilka (D-Ashland) and Representative Ken Gordon (D-Bedford). This bill creates a paid family and medical leave program for Massachusetts residents.

**An Act to improve the Commonwealth's economy with a strong minimum wage and a strong tipped minimum wage**, filed by Representative Daniel Donahue (D-Worcester) and Senator Ken Donnelly (D-Arlington). This bill increases the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2021 and increases the tipped minimum wage over eight years.

Another key legislative priority is the Fair Share Amendment, which would bring in approximately \$2 billion annually for public education and transportation. Revenue would be raised through an additional 4 percent tax on annual income over \$1 million.

Fair Share legislation did not need to be re-filed in the current session. The initiative passed its first vote before a joint House and Senate constitutional convention last May, but it must pass a second vote during the current session in order to appear on the ballot in 2018.

More information is available at [www.massteacher.org/legislation](http://www.massteacher.org/legislation).

Paid Advertisement

**LEGOLAND DISCOVERY CENTER BOSTON**  
ASSEMBLY ROOM SOMERVILLE

## The Ultimate LEGO® Classroom!

Inspire your students with educational play that harnesses the limitless creative possibilities of LEGO® bricks. LEGOLAND® Discovery Center Boston has collaborated with LEGO® Education to provide unique, high-quality learning experiences.

in association with  
**LEGO education**

	Price per Child	Time with Education Team	Fast-Track Entry	Resource	Certificate	Teacher Planning Tickets	Follow-Up Activity Worksheets
<b>Only</b>	<b>\$10</b> <small>(per child)</small>						
<b>Workshops</b>	<b>+\$3</b> <small>(per child)</small>						

One **FREE** chaperone for every five students. Additional adult tickets **\$15**

For more information, visit [www.LEGOLANDDiscoveryCenter.com/boston](http://www.LEGOLANDDiscoveryCenter.com/boston)  
Call 866.228.6439 to book.

LEGO, the LEGO logo, the Brick and Knob configurations, the MiniFigure and LEGOLAND are trademarks of the LEGO Group. ©2016 The LEGO Group.

## New voices sought for MTA Chorus

New members are welcome to join the MTA Chorus, which will perform at the MTA Annual Meeting in May.

The Annual Meeting will be held May 19 and 20 at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston.

The chorus performs before the Call to Order. It will also sing the national anthem and a selection of patriotic songs.

Choral Director Robert Lague stressed that no audition is necessary. Rehearsals will be held at 7:30 p.m. on three Monday nights — April 3, April 24 and May 15 — at Lague's home at 9 Cronin Way in Woburn.

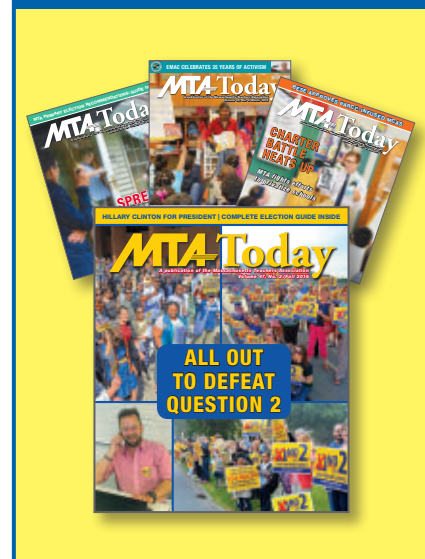
A dress rehearsal and sound check will be held on the morning of May 19 in the convention hall.

If you are interested in joining the chorus, please notify Lague by e-mailing [neaorgan@aol.com](mailto:neaorgan@aol.com).

Please indicate whether you are a new or returning chorus member, identify your district, and state whether you sing soprano, alto, tenor or bass.

Returning members should bring folders from past performances to the rehearsals.

Find back copies of MTA Today online!



[www.massteacher.org](http://www.massteacher.org)

## MTA retirees donate supplies to help students



Photo by Bob Duffy

A staple of the MTA Retired Gathering each September is the donation of school supplies to a district with a high level of need. On Nov. 28, retired members brought boxes of supplies to the Southbridge Public Schools administration building. At the dropoff, from left to right, were Southbridge Education Association members Joan Sullivan and Peg Lanctot; MTA Retired member Christine Coughlan; MTA Retired Organizer Robert Whalen; SEA members Julianna Robb and Becca Tsitsilianos; Kathy Harrigan of the MTA Retired Members Committee; Southbridge Public Schools Finance, Human Resources and Operations Director Dan Deedy; and MTA Field Representative Lois Mason.

Paid Advertisement

Step up your game

without setting aside your life.

### NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED AND TAILORED TO YOUR NEEDS

At Worcester State University, we've been supporting teaching and administrative excellence in Central Massachusetts schools since 1874. Today, we're one of only four universities in the state university system to use the nationally recognized Education Specialist (EdS) designation. And with a typical class size of fewer than 20, we can customize your research and practicum opportunities to your specific teaching environment and professional objectives.

We offer flexible graduate programs in education designed for students from a variety of educational backgrounds who wish to pursue an Initial or Professional teacher license. If you're ready to step up your game without setting aside your life, join us!

[WORCESTER.EDU/GRADUATE](http://WORCESTER.EDU/GRADUATE)



WORCESTER STATE UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL



# Preconvention meetings to be held in April and May

Regional preconvention meetings have been set for elected delegates to the 2017 MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates.

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

Each meeting is scheduled to begin at 4:30 p.m., with registration starting at 4.

The following is a list of locations and dates for the 2017 preconventions:

- Tuesday, April 25: Central Region, Hilton Garden Inn, Boston/Marlborough.
- Thursday, April 27: Northeast and Metro Regions, Crowne Plaza Boston-Woburn, Woburn.
- Tuesday, May 2: Southeast Region, Holiday Inn Taunton-Foxboro Area, Taunton.
- Wednesday, May 3: Western

At these preconventions, the delegates will receive information and materials critical to their decision-making on organizational matters. Each meeting is scheduled to begin at 4:30 p.m., with registration starting at 4.

Region, Hadley Farms Meeting House, Hadley.

Thursday, May 4: Cape Cod and Islands Region, Cape Codder Resort, Hyannis.

The Annual Meeting of Delegates will be held May 19 and 20 at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston.

Further information will be provided to delegates as it becomes available.

## 'Champion for Children'



Photo by Bob Duffy

MTA Vice President Erik J. Champy was honored on Oct. 25 as a Champion for Children by the Joint Committee for Children's Health Care in Everett. The organization praised Champy's "diligent work, support and dedication" as an advocate for students' health and well-being. The JCCHCE is dedicated to health care access and education for individuals and families in Everett and its surrounding communities. Champy is pictured with MTA member and Massachusetts PTA Health, Safety and Wellness Chair Jacqueline Coogan, who is on the board of the JCCHCE.

Paid Advertisement

**CURRY COLLEGE**  
*Closer to your goals.*

**JENNIFER VALENTINO**  
*Master of Education, Curry College 2011*

### Where teachers go to the head of the class

With cohort learning for lifelong connections, flexible schedules and fixed tuition, Curry College brings you closer to your goals.

M.Ed., Principal & Supervisor licensure, and CAGS programs are available.

CAMPUSES IN  
MILTON &  
PLYMOUTH

Apply at [Curry.edu/TEACH](http://Curry.edu/TEACH)  
or call 617-910-3357

Paid Advertisement

**Salem's Most Visited Museum**

**The Ideal Field Trip!**

**Salem Witch Museum**

On Historic Salem Common • Open Year Round  
19 1/2 Washington Square North • Salem, Massachusetts 01970

Français, Deutsch, Italiano, 日本語, Español, Русский, 官话

978.744.1692 • [salemwitchmuseum.com](http://salemwitchmuseum.com)

# Trustees urged to cover UMass Boston 'deficit'

By Scott McLennan

The three MTA-affiliated unions representing faculty and staff at UMass Boston continue to question the state's assertion that the campus is truly weighed down by a \$26 million deficit that requires deep across-the-board budget cuts.

Even if UMass Boston is facing greater costs due to ongoing construction projects related to expansion, union members argue that UMass as a system has the financial ability to offset that spending spike without causing harm to specific campuses.

The UMass Board of Trustees is asking the Boston campus not only to close the questionable budget gap, but to set aside savings. As of now, the campus library has ended some of its academic subscriptions, classes with fewer than 12 students have been canceled, hiring has been frozen, and the number of non-tenure-track faculty members has been reduced.

"This is killing UMass Boston," Marlene Kim, an economics professor who is president of the Faculty Staff Union, told the trustees' Committee on Administration and Finance during its meeting on Nov. 30 "We are cutting faculty, offering fewer courses, increasing student-per-faculty ratios, and cutting budgets needed to do our work. We are abandoning our urban mission."



Photo by Scott McLennan

Protesters gathered outside a meeting of the UMass Board of Trustees' Committee on Administration and Finance on Nov. 30.

Anneta Argyres, vice president of the Professional Staff Union, also addressed the committee. She challenged the trustees' use of "depreciation" as a cost to UMass Boston.

"We know that as we open more buildings, the 'value' of that depreciation is only going to get bigger," she said. "Insisting on it being part of a balanced budget will put a larger and larger stranglehold on our campus's programs and students — and for no good reason."

The MTA Division of Higher Education commissioned an independent analysis of the

UMass budget. That report showed that there are sufficient revenues to offset the cost increases in Boston attributable to construction. The study also concluded that the UMass system could assist the Boston campus without hurting its bond rating or reserves.

In addition, the report flagged UMass Boston for the proportion of funding that goes to maintaining higher-level administrative salaries compared to the amount dedicated to instruction.

Janelle Quarles, president of the Classified Staff Union, said that front-line staff and educators are being unfairly targeted by the trustees' call for cuts.

"I worry about cutting so much that students won't be attracted to UMass Boston, which would undermine the whole reason for all of the construction and growth happening now," she said.

Those leading the campus fight against the cuts are urging the UMass trustees to back the proposed Fair Share Amendment. If the constitutional amendment makes it through the constitutional convention process and is approved by voters in 2018, it would generate approximately \$2 billion annually for public education and transportation. Revenue would be raised through an additional 4 percent tax on annual income over \$1 million.

"Invest in us — in our programs, our students and our employees," Argyres urged the committee, adding: "We're worth it."



## Today's Lesson: IDENTITY THEFT PROTECTION



With so much personal information being shared in the world these days, it's nice to know that someone is looking out for you. The MTA wants you to know that LifeLock will do more than free credit monitoring to help protect your identity. LifeLock alerts\* you to suspicious uses of your identity — and if there's a problem, a U.S.-based team of specialists will work to fix it.

MTA members get 30 DAYS FREE + 10% OFF LifeLock membership.\*

Visit [LifeLock.com](http://LifeLock.com) or call 1-800-LifeLock and use promo code: MTA

No one can prevent all identity theft.

\* LifeLock does not monitor all transactions at all businesses.

\* Credit card required at enrollment. At the end of the no-cost 30-day trial period, if you do not cancel, your card will be billed automatically on a monthly or annual basis depending on what you elect at the time of enrollment. Offer is for new LifeLock members only. Offer is available for LifeLock Standard™, LifeLock Advantage™ and LifeLock Ultimate Plus™ memberships only. Not combinable with other offers.

©2016 LifeLock, Inc. All rights reserved. LifeLock and the LockMan logo are registered trademarks of LifeLock, Inc. MPA0983

## Members of the Massachusetts Teachers Association,

# I joined Sprint.

Hey, I'm Paul, the guy who used to ask if you could hear me now.



It's 2017, and every network is great. In fact, Sprint's reliability is now within 1% of Verizon's. And that's not because I said so. It's based on recent data from Nielsen, the world's foremost independent authority on mobile network measurement.

Your membership qualifies you for an 18% discount on select, regularly priced monthly data service using corporate ID GMCT3\_MTA\_ZZZ.

[sprint.com/save](http://sprint.com/save)

## Can you hear that?

— Paul, new Sprint customer



**Activ. Fee:** Up to \$30/line. Credit approval req. **Reliability Claim:** Based on Sprint's analysis of latest Nielsen drive test data for average network reliability (voice and data) in top 106 markets. **SDP Discount:** Avail. for eligible company employees or org. members (ongoing verification). Discount subject to change according to the company's/org's agreement with Sprint and is avail. upon request for select monthly data svc charges. Discount only applies to data svc for Better Choice Plans. Not avail. with no credit check offers or Mobile Hotspot add-on. Limit one SDP discount per account. **Other Terms:** Offers and coverage not available everywhere or for all phones/networks. See [sprint.com/coverage](http://sprint.com/coverage) for details. Restrictions apply. © 2016 Sprint. All rights reserved. Other marks are the property of their respective owners.

N165499  
MV1234567

# GIC's proposed changes are blasted at meeting

By Scott McLennan

Higher education, preK-12 and retired MTA members joined several hundred fellow public-sector employees and retirees in filling Rabb Hall at the Boston Public Library on Feb. 1 to protest health insurance changes provisionally accepted by the Group Insurance Commission.

As *MTA Today* went to press, a final vote was pending. The changes would take effect July 1.

Commissioners at the meeting explained the plan design changes, which include higher out-of-pocket costs for doctor visits and prescriptions, as well as freezing Tufts and Fallon plans to new subscribers.

The GIC's decision on the freeze prompted an outcry from public employees and elected officials from Haverhill and Hingham, which recently joined the GIC based on the availability of Tufts Navigator.

"Freezing access to Tufts Navigator and Fallon Health is a 'bait and switch' for employees who agreed



Photo by Scott McLennan

The audience applauded MTA President Barbara Madeloni's remarks.

to join the GIC because those plans were available during their decision-making process and were a large factor in deciding to go into the GIC," said Alec Porter, president of the Hingham Education Association.

"It's chilling to sit here and hear these stories while the GIC tries to present an austerity narrative," MTA President Barbara Madeloni said after several speakers described

how rising out-of-pocket costs for medical expenses will hurt families and retirees. The crowd rose in applause when Madeloni chastised the commission for not holding a legitimate public hearing before accepting the changes.

C.J. O'Donnell, president of the Massachusetts State College Association, took issue with the fact that the GIC has been severely

underfunded through several state budget cycles.

The solution is not to shift health care cost increases onto workers, he said.

Phyllis Neufeld, a retired MTA member, told the GIC how out-of-pocket costs have skyrocketed into the "thousands of dollars" since her community joined the GIC.

Janelle Quarles, president of the Classified Staff Union at UMass Boston, defended the right of workers to have quality health care that is affordable. She said that it would make more sense for the GIC to work with public employees to fight rising costs rather than simply pass along increases.

Marlene Kim, president of the Faculty Staff Union at UMass Boston, said that the weakening of insurance benefits, coupled with other austerity measures on her campus, will hamper the school's ability to attract the best instructors and researchers.

"This will have an impact on our students," she said.

## REGIONAL RETIREMENT CONSULTATIONS AVAILABLE

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

### PLEASE NOTE:

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

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

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

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

**FITCHBURG** — Robert Zbikowski: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Fitchburg Teachers Association office, 78 Franklin Rd., Fitchburg; Call 978.297.0123 or e-mail: [zibstar702@verizon.net](mailto:zibstar702@verizon.net).

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

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

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

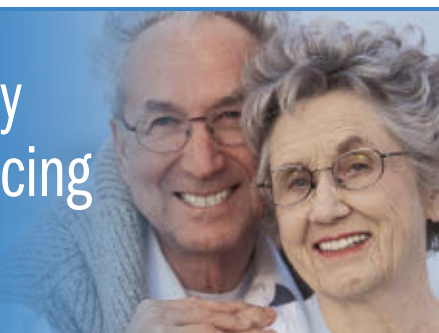
**PITTSFIELD** — Ward F. Johnson: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Berkshire Office, 188 East St., Pittsfield; 413.499.0257, or at home, 413.443.1722; e-mail: [wardman33@aol.com](mailto:wardman33@aol.com).

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

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

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

## Are you or a family member experiencing hearing loss?



The Hear In America plan offers MTA members savings of up to **70%** on the purchase of hearing aids, plus:



- Free annual screenings
- Three-year repair warranty
- Lifetime clean-and-check office service
- Three-year loss and damage coverage
- Three years' worth of batteries

**Call 800.286.6149 for more information or to register for the program.**

Don't risk permanent damage by putting off a hearing screening. Encourage your family members to take advantage of this new program!



# Cut your utility bill with solar power!



A Solar Power System will:

- Save \$1,500+/year on utility costs
- Increase your home's value
- Cut your carbon footprint

MTA members and their families receive a 10% discount.

Take advantage of the great new low-cost loan in Massachusetts starting at 2.5% — with no upfront costs. This first-come, first-served loan won't last long. Call today to reserve yours!

American-made, union-built solar power systems

Call **617.945.8054** for a free assessment  
or visit ASP online at [www.americansolarpartners.com/mta](http://www.americansolarpartners.com/mta)

# Rental car coverage for winter travel

As February comes to an end, you might choose to escape the brisk winter air — or continue to embrace it. Whether you plan to travel south to sit by a pool and bask in the warm sun or head north to enjoy the mountains and winter activities, Educators Insurance wants to help ensure that you have the coverage you need if you plan to rent a vehicle.

Before you rent a car, it's important to consult with a licensed advisor at Educators to review current coverage included in your auto policy. Many people don't realize that in some cases they may already have coverage that extends to a rental car. In this case, buying additional protection from a rental company would only duplicate your coverage.

If you're renting a vehicle for leisure and you have an accident, your policy provides coverage just as if you were driving your own vehicle. This means collision, comprehensive and liability coverages, as described below, would apply if provided by your policy:

- **Collision coverage** may help repair your rental vehicle if it's damaged when you collide with another vehicle or object.

- **Comprehensive coverage** may help repair your rental vehicle if it's damaged as a result of an occurrence such as theft or a weather hazard.

- **Liability coverage** may extend to cover any bodily injury to others caused by an accident.

If you don't have comprehensive or collision coverage on at least one auto on your policy, however, you are not covered for physical damage to the rental car. Even if you do carry comprehensive and collision coverage, you are subject to your policy deductible for these coverages.

You may also be eligible to purchase an additional coverage option, **DriveSmart Advantage**, from Educators Insurance.

As long as collision or limited collision and comprehensive coverage apply to at least one of your



autos, **DriveSmart Advantage** covers loss of use, diminished value and reasonable fees for which you are liable in a rented auto.

Although collision, comprehensive and liability coverages extend to rental cars, they don't cover all expenses. That means you might want to purchase **Loss Damage Waiver** coverage offered by the rental company for several reasons. These include:

- **Loss of Use:** This is the cost charged to you by the rental car company for the time a damaged rental car cannot be used and is being repaired. Depending on how long the repairs take, the cost can really add up. For example, if you get into an accident and the rental repair takes 10 days, the rental company is losing money for 10 days that someone else could have been utilizing the vehicle.

- **Diminished Value:** If the rental car is severely damaged, the rental company will often not repair it or return it to the shop. The company

will call it "totaled," and you, the customer, could be responsible for the difference between the actual cash value and the salvage value that the rental company obtains.

*As always, licensed representatives at Educators Insurance are available at your convenience, from 7 a.m. to midnight Mondays through Fridays and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays. Representatives are ready to help ensure that you have the coverage you need to protect yourself and your family during winter travel. Call 888.908.6822 today or visit [www.educatorsinsuranceagency.com](http://www.educatorsinsuranceagency.com) to learn more.*

All products are underwritten by The Hanover Insurance Company or one of its insurance company subsidiaries or affiliates ("The Hanover"). Coverage may not be available in all jurisdictions and is subject to the company underwriting guidelines and the issued policy. This material is provided for informational purposes only and does not provide any coverage. Educators Insurance Agency ("EIA") is a member of The Hanover Insurance Group, Inc. For more information about The Hanover, visit [www.hanover.com](http://www.hanover.com). EIA also offers products through Andover Insurance Company, which is not a member of The Hanover Insurance Group, Inc. LC 2016-494



## MTAB Annual Meeting

MTA Benefits welcomed new board members on Nov. 16 and said goodbye to MTAB's longest-serving director, Richard Liston. Seated from left to right are MTA Vice President Erik J. Champy, MTA President Barbara Madeloni and MTAB Directors Robert V. Travers, Jr., and Kathleen Meltsakos. Standing from left to right are Director Jacqueline Gorrie, MTA Executive Director-Treasurer Ann Clarke, MTAB President Maryann C. Robinson, Director Ryan Hoyt and Liston. Directors Donna Johnson and Gerard Ruane are not pictured.

Photo by Bob Duffy

**MTA members:**  
 You **deserve** a  
**checking account**  
 that **works as hard**  
 as **you do.**

**MEMBERS  
 GET MORE**

Family member  
 benefits and  
 discounts<sup>1</sup>

Open an Elite Relationship  
 Checking Account and  
**receive up to \$125<sup>2</sup>**

Available to new Berkshire Bank  
 customers and current Berkshire Bank  
 customers without an existing checking  
 account relationship.

- » \$25 if you enroll in direct deposit
- » \$25 when you pay a bill through online banking using Bill Pay
- » \$25 for signing up for online statements
- » \$25 if you refer a family member who opens an Elite Relationship Checking Account
- » \$25 when you turn in your old debit card and replace it with a Berkshire Bank debit card

**MTA members give so much of themselves.  
 Now it's Berkshire Bank's turn to give back.**

We are proud to offer you a special **Elite Relationship Checking Account** package, which is only available to MTA members and their immediate families. Features include an interest-earning account<sup>3</sup> with a \$10 minimum balance, no minimum service charge fees and unlimited check writing.

Giving you a chance to earn and save more is our way of saying thanks for the work you do!

**Elite Relationship Checking benefits:**

- » **FREE** Debit Cards
- » **FREE** Mobile Banking<sup>4</sup>
- » **FREE** Bill Pay
- » **FREE** Online and Telephone Banking
- » **FREE** eStatements
- » **FREE** Access to MyBanker Concierge Service
- » **WAIVED** Foreign ATM Fees When You Establish a Direct Deposit.<sup>5</sup>

**Additional benefits:**

- » Turn in your bank's checks and we'll replace them with a free first order.
- » Receive a .50% APR discount with a Berkshire checking automatic loan payment or a .25% APR discount without an automatic loan payment.<sup>6</sup>

**Plus, we'll make it even easier for you  
 to move your account to Berkshire Bank.**

For more information, call or visit your local Massachusetts branch.



800.773.5601

**Life is exciting. Let us help.®**



**Banking Products are provided by Berkshire Bank: Member FDIC. Equal Housing Lender. Berkshire Bank is a Massachusetts chartered bank.** <sup>1</sup>Immediate family member is defined as mother, father, sister, brother, son, daughter or the surviving spouse or domestic partner of a deceased active or retired MTA member who is not otherwise eligible for active membership. <sup>2</sup>In order to qualify for up to a \$125 cash bonus, you need to be a new Berkshire Bank MTA customer or current Berkshire Bank MTA customer without a checking account relationship: (1) establish at least one direct deposit to your account, with a minimum opening deposit of \$10, (2) set up and pay a bill through online banking using Bill Pay, (3) enroll in eStatements at account opening, (4) refer a family member who opens a free checking account, (5) turn in your bank's debit card and replace it with a Berkshire debit card. Berkshire replacement checks limited to initial order of standard wallet-style only. Limit one \$125 bonus per individual. Limit of one \$25 bonus available to individuals when a family member opens a new Elite Relationship Checking Account. The direct deposit, debit card and bill payment bonus will be credited within seven days of your notifying us that the transaction(s) have occurred. To notify us, visit a branch or call us at 1.800.773.5601. The \$25 Refer-A-Family-Member bonus is credited when the family member opens the checking account with a Refer-A-Family-Member coupon. The value of the bonus may be reported on a 1099-MISC form. Other fees may apply. This offer may be withdrawn anytime. When a family member is referred, you and the family member waive the right to privacy and disclose you are customers for this transaction. <sup>3</sup>As of 10/27/16 the Annual Percentage Yield, (APY) is 0.10%. \$10 minimum balance to obtain APY and open account. At our discretion, interest rate and APY may change at any time after account is opened. <sup>4</sup>There is no charge for mobile banking and mobile deposit from Berkshire Bank. Consult your mobile carrier for any fees it may charge for Internet usage or receiving texts. <sup>5</sup>To qualify for waived foreign ATM fees, you must establish at least one direct deposit to Elite Relationship Checking for each qualification period (monthly statement cycle). If you qualify, we will credit all non-Berkshire Bank ATM surcharges at the end of your monthly statement cycle. Your surcharge (non-Berkshire Bank ATM fee) credits may be reportable on a 1099 MISC. <sup>6</sup>Customer must qualify for a new consumer loan product for discount of .50% APR with automatic payment from an Elite Relationship Checking Account or .25% APR without automatic payment from an Elite Relationship Checking Account. Consumer loan discount applies to auto, motorcycle, boat, ATV, snowmobile and watercraft loans. The consumer loan discount does not apply to home equity line-of-credit products. Offer is valid until 3/31/2017 and subject to change.

# Problems plague Southbridge takeover

By Scott McLennan

The Southbridge Education Association is raising the concern that the state's takeover of the Southbridge Public Schools is causing unnecessary problems, leaving many essential teaching positions unfilled and subjecting a large number of teachers to a so-called receiver's review.

One veteran Southbridge educator

SEA President David Williams said that what is happening in Southbridge merely seems to mirror plans in place in Holyoke and Lawrence. "We were hoping that the state wouldn't just apply a cookie-cutter approach to this," he said.

expressed her frustration, saying, "Rather than looking at ways to improve teaching, we're being forced to prove we're teaching."

SEA President David Williams said that a higher proportion of Southbridge teachers landed on the review list than in Holyoke and

Lawrence, the two other districts under the control of the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education.

Williams said that many veteran educators who were targeted by the review opted to retire early or leave the district.

The union has filed a class-action grievance related to the criteria used to place some of the teachers on the review list in the first place.

The state Department of Labor Relations has also issued complaints in response to SEA charges that receiver Jessica Huizenga violated the law when she implemented parts of her school "improvement plan" without engaging in collective bargaining with the union.

Hearing dates are being set for those complaints.

A year ago, the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to place the town's schools into receivership and appointed Huizenga as the receiver. At the time, the board highlighted the lack of leadership in the district as the biggest detriment to meeting students' needs.

SEA members were heavily involved in drafting a turnaround plan given to the receiver, but Williams said that what is happening in Southbridge merely seems to mirror plans in place in Holyoke and Lawrence.

"We were hoping that the state wouldn't just apply a cookie-cutter approach to this," he said. "We're seeing the same playbook."

That has meant a persistent shortage of staff and an over-reliance on substitute teachers.

The SEA is also concerned that students in programs for English language learners and special education are not getting the services they need because of the lack of qualified staff.

"Coming into this process, educators expressed the need for more support for English language learners, more opportunities for early childhood education and more outreach from the schools to parents and the community," Williams said. "So far, we have seen none of that from our new administrators, and we remain concerned about the needs of our students going unmet."

## INTEREST-FREE SHOPPING



**PAY NO FEES<sup>†</sup>**

**NO CREDIT CHECKS**

**LOW, CONVENIENT PAYMENTS**

Find thousands more products at [mypaycheckdirect.com/mta](http://mypaycheckdirect.com/mta)

\*The price per payment shown is based on 26 payments and doesn't include shipping and taxes. Your payment may vary based on the number of payments you make a year. To see your payment amount, visit your website or see details on your installment agreement generated during the checkout process.

†See details on your installment agreement generated during the checkout process.

PayCheck Direct® is operated by Bluestem Enterprises, Inc.

26 payments of **\$14<sup>23</sup>\***

26 payments of **\$65<sup>38</sup>\***

26 payments of **\$38<sup>46</sup>\***

Powered by **PAYCHECK DIRECT**

# Natalie and Tyler

## Excited Fans of Berkshire Bank Home Lending



“Berkshire Bank and its representatives were knowledgeable and were with us every step of the way. As first-time homebuyers, we found that dealing with people who care alleviated much of the uncertainty about the process. Thanks, MTA Benefits, for working with the caring professionals at Berkshire Bank.”



If you want to buy or refinance,  
call **866.475.4663(HOME)** today.

**BERKSHIRE BANK**

America's Most Exciting Bank®

Home Lending

**X** Life is exciting. Let us help.®



Banking products are provided by Berkshire Bank: Member FDIC. Equal Housing Lender. Berkshire Bank is a Massachusetts chartered bank. Loans are subject to credit approval. NMLS Registry Number – 506896. Berkshire Bank has a financial relationship with MTAB to offer products and services to MTA members and their families and this couple's experience generally depicts expected results.



# Obituaries

**Alma Elizabeth Andrews, 97**, of West Harwich. Was a kindergarten teacher in Weston for 25 years and worked for seven years in the Barnstable Public Schools. Dec. 26.

**Genevieve M. Atkinson, 73**, of Pittsfield. Taught elementary school in Norwood and at the Pomeroy and Crosby elementary schools in Pittsfield. Sept. 19.

**Patrick J. Barry, 59**, of Quincy. Was employed for many years in the

Quincy Public Schools. Nov. 6.

**Richard Connole, 72**, of Millbury. Was an elementary teacher and guidance counselor in the public schools in Leicester and Worcester, retiring after 35 years. Nov. 7.

**Jeanne B. Cullen-Cronin, 78**, of Stoneham, formerly of Woburn. Was a teacher in the Winchester Public Schools for many years. Oct. 14.

**Jerome B. Cullen, 78**, of Stoughton. Was a teacher and head

coach of the football team at Stoughton High School. Nov. 8.

**Diane E. D'Olimpio, 80**, of Lancaster. Was an elementary teacher in the Sterling and Clinton public schools for close to three decades. Dec. 31.

**Dr. Leonard C. "Lefty" Harlow, Jr., 90**, of Dover, Delaware, formerly of Gardner. Served as principal of the former Gardner Junior High School. Also was a professor at

Boston University, Fitchburg State University and the University of Massachusetts Lowell before retiring in 1999. Oct. 31.

**Patricia Izzi, 64**, of Warwick, Rhode Island. Taught at Barrington Junior High School in Rhode Island and at Attleboro High School for 39 years. Served as math department coordinator and as treasurer of the Attleboro Education Association. Oct. 1.

**Shirley K. Jennings**, of Melrose. Was a language arts teacher at Melrose Middle School and Melrose High School for 19 years. Oct. 8.

**William F. Kaylor, 67**, of Westport. Taught physical education in the Fall River Public Schools for 35 years, coached various sports teams over the years and served as president of the Fall River Educators' Association for 10 years before retiring in 2006. Dec. 5.

**Marie A. Kergaravat, 100**, of Lenox. Taught French in Old Forge, New York, for five years before moving to Lenox, where she taught French, English and Latin for many years, retiring in 1981. Nov. 21.

**David Korowski, 68**, of Goshen. Worked for 28 years at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in several areas of academic administration and served as an elected chief steward. Dec. 15.

**Victor J. Ladetto, 83**, of Dartmouth. Was a teacher in the Dartmouth Public Schools for 10 years and served as principal of the Cushman Elementary School in Dartmouth for 29 years. Nov. 14.

**Marilyn F. Smart, 74**, of Marshfield, formerly of Watertown. Was an elementary school teacher in the Watertown school system for 31 years. Nov. 25.

**Terry L. Smith, 66**, of Stoughton. Taught at the Maria Weston Chapman Middle School in Weymouth, the Brockton Christian School and in Portland and Bath, Maine. Oct. 10.

**Robert A. Szlyk, 75**, of Northborough. Was a business teacher at North High School in Worcester for 28 years until he retired in 1997. Jan. 4.

**Eleanor O'Neil Taff, 83**, of North Adams. Taught at Drury High School and the Mark Hopkins School for 35 years. Oct. 28.

Did you know that as an educator you may be eligible for **reduced student loan payments** or even **loan forgiveness**?

It's true! Learn all of your options through this exciting, new self-help portal!



Being a teacher is hard enough without the burden of student loan debt weighing on you, too. The **MTA** has partnered with the **Financial Counseling Association of America** and the nonprofit debt-relief agency **Cambridge Credit Counseling Corp.** in an effort to guide teachers to take maximum advantage of the many programs available to them.

As a member, you have **exclusive access** to an online student loan portal that will provide a customized report listing all of the programs you're eligible for — **at a discounted price!**

You may be able to **dramatically reduce your monthly payments**, so the faster you act, the faster you can start saving money!

[www.mtabenefits.com/student-loan-counseling.htm](http://www.mtabenefits.com/student-loan-counseling.htm)

**EXCLUSIVE OFFER  
FOR MTA MEMBERS!**

Get **FULL** access for only

**\$29.95**

Self-paced, easy-to-use portal  
Get a customized report with all of  
your repayment options

Find out if you qualify for loan  
forgiveness or reductions of up to  
\$17,500



## Classifieds

### BOOK/BAKE SALE

SATURDAY, APRIL 22 — From 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Over 30,000 fiction and nonfiction books, including an extensive collection of children's books in good to excellent condition! Add to your classroom library at very low cost. For more information, visit <https://norfolkmalibraryfriends.org/>.

### EMPLOYMENT

EXTRA INCOME OPPORTUNITY! — Provide room, board, friendship and tutoring for a foreign student of English in your own New England home (within three hours of Boston). Average pay \$600 per week. Please review details at <http://www.HLI-HostFamilies-Boston.com>. E-mail [info@HLI-HostFamilies-Boston.com](mailto:info@HLI-HostFamilies-Boston.com).

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

TAP INTO YOUR CREATIVE CORE IN THE WEST OF IRELAND — Professional development workshops. Fiction and memoir writing retreats. Inis Mór Island and Doolin on Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way. July and September 2017. Includes private room, workshops, walking ancient sites, most meals. Explore | Create | Rejuvenate. Visit [www.TheCreativeWritersWorkshop.com](http://www.TheCreativeWritersWorkshop.com) or e-mail [office@TheCreativeWritersWorkshop.com](mailto:office@TheCreativeWritersWorkshop.com).

### TRAVEL

YEAR-ROUND TRAVEL — Durgan Travel, an award-winning tour operator, has a full schedule of mostly or all-inclusive tours throughout 2017, including jet tours (featuring Europe, especially Italy) and cruises (domestic and international). We have the highest-value, best-priced tours in the industry! Group/leader specials. Call Durgan Travel at 781.438.2224, visit [www.durgantravel.com](http://www.durgantravel.com) or e-mail [retailsales@durgantravel.com](mailto:retailsales@durgantravel.com).

ALLOW US TO SERVE YOUR TRAVEL NEEDS — Small/large groups with group leader specials: Start a group! We arrange vacations with the best rates and service on jet and cruise vacations. Groups: Absolutely highest value, lowest price, most inclusions, flexible group leader remuneration. Call Durgan at 781.438.2224, visit [www.durgantravel.com](http://www.durgantravel.com) or e-mail [info@durgantravel.com](mailto:info@durgantravel.com).

ALL-INCLUSIVE CUBA CRUISES — Weekly departures on the *Celestial Crystal*, 40 percent to 60 percent savings over land tours! Seven-night cruise includes four ports of call, including two nights in Havana. Daily sightseeing included, beverage package, all meals, flights, transfers. Book now to take advantage of early booking discounts! Call Durgan Travel at 781.438.2224, visit [www.durgantravel.com](http://www.durgantravel.com) or e-mail [info@durgantravel.com](mailto:info@durgantravel.com).

SUMMER 2017 TRAVEL to Germany, Czech Republic and Hungary (July 5-19). Join Salem State University for a 12-day study and travel institute on World War II and the

Holocaust in Central Europe. Berlin, Dresden, Theresienstadt, Prague, Brno and Budapest. \$2,939 per person includes airfare. E-mail [cmauriello@salemstate.edu](mailto:cmauriello@salemstate.edu) or call 978.542.7129 for information.

### TRAVEL STUDY

SEMINAR — Education in Ireland (six graduate credits), June 29-July 22. National University of Ireland, Galway. Study aspects of the Irish education system and the history, literature and culture of Ireland. Write Barney Keenan, NUI coordinator, 127 Glen Road,

Gorham, NH 03581. Call 603.466.2972 or e-mail [Lilysky@ncia.net](mailto:Lilysky@ncia.net). The Trip of a Lifetime!

### VACATION RENTALS

WATERFRONT TOWNHOUSE ON LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE in manicured Samoset Resort at the Broads with a view guaranteed to take your breath away! Overlooking sandy beach. Two pools, marina, tennis courts, large deck, 2.5 bedrooms, two baths, Wi-Fi, laundry and air conditioning. Sleeps five to six. Check out

<http://LEASULO.wix.com/waterfront-townhouse>. Call 508.616.9838 or e-mail [LeaSull@aol.com](mailto:LeaSull@aol.com).

CAPE COD, EASTHAM — Pondfront and pool! Immaculate three-bedroom, two-bath cottage with panoramic sunset view overlooking a kettle pond's sandy beach. Enjoy cabana shower, granite kitchen, dishwasher, Casablanca fans, wicker, Wi-Fi. Lovingly landscaped, deck, association tennis court and washer/dryer. Near national seashore, rail trail and Provincetown. Visit <http://www.easthampinecottage.com>. E-mail [LeaSull@aol.com](mailto:LeaSull@aol.com) or call 508.616.9838.

## IT'S OPEN ENROLLMENT FOR 2017 DISABILITY INSURANCE!

Speak with a Benefits Counselor to learn about disability coverage.

New Members May Enroll Now!

OPEN ENROLLMENT IS MARCH 1 – MAY 12

### MTA's Disability Insurance program:

- Guaranteed issue – no medical questions asked during open enrollment
- Short- and long-term coverage available
- Benefit payments are tax-free and 60% of salary
- Helps supplement sick days



Call 888.646.1972, ext. 104, to find out if you're eligible. [www.mtabenefits.com](http://www.mtabenefits.com)

DID YOU KNOW? **3/10** AMERICANS

The Social Security Administration estimates that **three out of 10** Americans entering the workforce today **will become disabled before they retire.**



**90% NOT** WORK-RELATED

Nearly **90% of disabilities aren't work-related** and therefore don't qualify for workers' compensation benefits.<sup>1</sup>

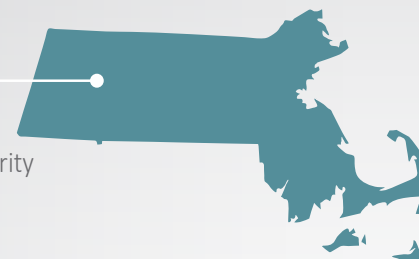
**10%** OF AMERICANS

More than **10% of Americans** between the ages of 18 and 64 **have a disability.**<sup>2</sup>



EVERY **10 MINUTES,** 700 Americans suffer an injury requiring medical attention.

Teachers in Massachusetts are not eligible to collect Social Security disability benefits.



Underwritten by Unum Life Insurance Company of America

<sup>1</sup> National Safety Council, Injury Facts, 2008 edition

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Selected Social Characteristics in the United States, 2009



## At Educators Insurance *Members Matter*

Are you planning to go on a well-deserved vacation with your family this season? Whether you're driving your vehicle to your destination or renting one when you arrive there, it's important to carry the right coverage with you.

With this in mind, our licensed advisors are always here to help ensure you have the right protection.

### **Our exclusive program for MTA members includes:**

- Unique group discount
- Convenience at your fingertips, including extended hours of operation
- Personalized advice from experienced insurance advisors tailored to your needs

**CALL US TODAY AT**

**877.284.7646**

**to discuss your current  
auto insurance coverage  
and learn more about  
the flexible options  
available to you.**

*We're available from 7 a.m. to  
midnight Monday through Friday and  
9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays.*

All products are underwritten by The Hanover Insurance Company or one of its insurance company subsidiaries or affiliates ("The Hanover"). Coverage may not be available in all jurisdictions and is subject to the company underwriting guidelines and the issued policy. This material is provided for informational purposes only and does not provide any coverage. Educators Insurance Agency ("EIA") is a member of The Hanover Insurance Group, Inc. For more information about The Hanover, visit our website at [www.hanover.com](http://www.hanover.com). EIA also offers products through Andover Insurance Company, which is not a member of The Hanover Insurance Group, Inc. Privacy Policy LC 2016-495





**massteacher.org**



**youtube.com/  
massteacher**



**twitter.com/  
massteacher**



**flickr.com/  
mtacommunications**



**facebook.com/  
massteacher**



**instagram.com/  
massteacher**

# Read Across America grants help libraries

By Jean Conley

When Susan Teixeira heard about the National Education Association's Read Across America School Library Grant program last fall, she jumped at the chance to help her students.

Teixeira, a fourth-grade classroom teacher at City View Discovery School in Worcester, had been looking for a way to get more up-to-date literature into the hands of her students.

"While we have some fabulous books in our school library, I noticed that some were not very current," she said.

City View is an extended-day school that serves preK-through-sixth-grade students. The school qualified for the NEA grant because it serves disadvantaged students. Teixeira said 94 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price school lunches.

So when the Educational Association of Worcester publicized the 2017 grant program, Teixeira got busy.

"Anything I can do to get them reading as much as possible, I'll do," she said.

The NEA established the grant program in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, which destroyed or damaged schools along the Gulf Coast in 2005. The program provided much-needed help to those devastated school libraries — and since then it has funded more than \$500,000 in grants to restock library shelves nationwide.

The program runs in conjunction with Read Across America, a reading motivation and awareness program that calls for every child in every community to celebrate reading on March 2, the birthday of children's book author Theodor Seuss Geisel — the legendary Dr. Seuss.

Teixeira was one of four educators in the Worcester Public Schools to receive the \$1,000 grants. The others were Christine Rovezzi of the Gates Lane School of International Studies, Michaela Hannon Curran of Burncoat High School and Margaret Sokolowski of the Gerald Creamer Center Alternative High School.



Library media specialist Michaela Hannon Curran, left, worked with Silvana Konda, an English as a Second Language and anatomy teacher, and 12th-grade student Firdous Nourhussien at Burncoat High School. Burncoat was among dozens of schools nationwide that received grants this year from the NEA to restock their library shelves. The grant program is run in conjunction with Read Across America.

Photo by Bob Duffy

Teixeira will use the money to order books from a list of 25 that have been nominated for the Massachusetts Children's Book Award for 2016-17.

She chose the books because she knows that those titles represent quality literature, but there was an added incentive as well: Children reading at least five of the books on the nomination list can become part of the voting process and actually have an impact on choosing the winner of the Children's Book Award.

Rovezzi, a longtime first-grade teacher and now a primary focused instructional coach, said her plan for the grant is to initiate and develop a leveled reading program for kindergarten and first-grade classrooms. She also has a long-range plan to add a grade level each year so that ultimately the school can offer a complete leveled reading program to all students.

"We need to replace and add new reading materials for our students, but fiscal restraints have not allowed those needs to be met," said Rovezzi. "The Read Across America grant will help our students to have these essential reading materials."

Hannon Curran, a library media specialist at Burncoat, agreed that the Worcester Public Schools have been suffering under severe budget constraints this year, adding that the demands on Burncoat's budget "are staggering."

She wrote in her application for a grant that "scarce funding prevents us from purchasing new books for the library and impacts how much book

promotion we can do." Ultimately, she wrote, "this reduces the amount of pleasure reading our students take part in."

Hannon Curran said the grant will enable the school to purchase new novels and novels in all formats — including graphic novels. Among them will be the top-selling and highest-rated books from the Young Adult Library Services Association's lists of best books and book awards.

Hannon Curran said she is looking forward to "creating a buzz for reading" — including using a Twitter hashtag dedicated to online book discussions and encouraging a growing monthly book club for students and staff at the school.

The grant will also enable creation of one- to two-minute "video book reviews" by students recommending their favorite books to their fellow students.

"With the grant funds, our students will benefit from new books, updated titles, and the best of young adult materials," said Hannon Curran. "I'm very excited."

*Go to [nea.org/grants/67161.htm](http://nea.org/grants/67161.htm) for the full list of 2017 Library Program Grant recipients. To see suggestions, resources and reading lists to help boost reading and celebrate Read Across America, go to the "Grants and Events" section of the NEA website at [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org) and the NEA Read Across America Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/neareadacrossamerica](http://www.facebook.com/neareadacrossamerica).*

# THE MTA Advantage

The MTA Advantage is a publication of MTA Benefits, a subsidiary of the Massachusetts Teachers Association

## Six myths about life insurance

Don't let these misconceptions prevent you from carrying the insurance coverage you may need

Chances are that you already understand the value of life insurance. If you or a loved one dies, life insurance can help pay off final expenses and debts, provide a steady income for a period of time, or fund college tuition, for example. Yet only six in 10 Americans have life insurance\*, according to the insurance and financial products company LIMRA.

In its continuing effort to promote awareness of the importance of life insurance, NEA Member Benefits would like to debunk six common myths about life insurance coverage:

### 1 Only breadwinners need life insurance.

If you're not the main wage earner in your family, you might think you don't need coverage. Think again. Even if you're not the breadwinner, you still earn valuable income or provide services to your household. Stay-at-home parents perform tasks that would either need to be



supplemented or replaced. The breadwinner might need to work less or take a different job while the family adjusts to a one-parent household.

**2 Investing my money is a smarter move than buying life insurance.** If you have \$1 million in liquid assets, you might not need life insurance. Relying solely on your investments can be risky, however, especially if you have children or a spouse who depends on your income.

**3 You don't need more coverage than your employer provides.** Many employers may

provide a great free or low-cost supplement. But these policies may not provide enough coverage in most situations.

**4 I don't need life insurance if I don't have dependents.** Funeral expenses, medical bills and debts are transferred to the next of kin upon a person's death. Having coverage protects your legacy by helping to ensure that you don't leave a financial burden for your loved ones.

*Continued on page 2*

**Coming  
Soon**

## Your chance to get important protection when prevention isn't possible

Accidents and injuries happen every *single day*. You have the chance **now**, for a limited time, to learn more about disability insurance and why it's so important.

**Disability open enrollment runs from March 1 through May 12**

We think a disability won't happen to us. But we all know someone who has slipped on ice and broken a limb, injured his or her back or developed a debilitating illness. If you have disability coverage, you can still receive a portion of your income.



The best time to get this coverage is before you need it.

Members in participating districts who aren't currently covered under the plan are encouraged to take a few minutes to meet with a disability enrollment counselor who will show you how the plan's benefits can help.

Local presidents in districts that don't currently offer the insurance can find out in just a few minutes how easy it is to provide interested members with the opportunity to obtain coverage and protect their families. Call Tom Colbert at 888.646.1972, ext. 101.

# Combating student loan debt — do you know your options?

**O**utstanding student loan balances in the United States climbed to \$1.2 trillion by the end of 2016. Student loans have surpassed credit cards and auto loans to become the second-largest form of debt in the country — outdone only by mortgages. Twenty years ago, roughly half of all graduating students left college with about \$10,000 each in debt. Now, that figure has tripled and exceeds \$35,000. To pay off a debt that size through a 10-year standard repayment plan, graduates would have to make payments of approximately \$351 a month.

For teachers and other public servants, however, there are many opportunities available to repay student loans.

## Teacher loan forgiveness

You may be eligible for forgiveness of as much as \$17,500 of your subsidized or unsubsidized Direct or Federal Family Education Loan Program loans.

In order to be eligible:

- You must have qualifying loans: Direct or FFEL Program loans.\*
- You must not have had an outstanding balance on Direct Loans or FFEL Program loans as of Oct. 1, 1998, or on the date you obtained a Direct Loan or FFEL Program loan after Oct. 1, 1998.
- You must be a full-time teacher in a low-income elementary or secondary school for five years OR be a full-time worker in an educational service agency for five years.

\*Please note that PLUS loans are not eligible for this option.

## Public service loan forgiveness

The Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program encourages individuals to seek employment with government and nonprofit organizations by offering loan forgiveness after borrowers have made 120 qualifying monthly payments under an eligible repayment plan while working full time. These 120 payments do not need to be consecutive. Let's break this down:



- Qualifying loans — Any loans received under the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan (Direct Loan) Program.
- Loans received under the FFEL Program or the Federal Perkins Loan Program do not qualify for public service loan forgiveness, but they could become eligible if they are consolidated into a Direct Consolidation Loan.\*
- Government employment could be at any level: federal, state, local or tribal.
- A nonprofit organization is one that is tax exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
- Qualifying payments are those made after Oct. 1, 2007, under an eligible repayment plan for the full amount due on the bill and no later than 15 days after your due date.
- Full-time work could be the employer's definition of full time or at least 30 hours a week, whichever is greater.

\*Please note that consolidation will restart the 120-payment clock, so consult with a counselor before considering that option!

MTA Benefits has partnered with the Financial Counseling Association of America to provide an online portal for members. Using the portal, you can receive an in-depth report on the programs you are eligible for with instructions on how to pursue them. With the report in hand, you may speak to a certified credit counselor who will help you review your options and answer your questions. Visit [mtabenefits.com/student-loan-counseling.htm](http://mtabenefits.com/student-loan-counseling.htm) today to get started!

## Six myths about life insurance *Continued from page 1*

**5 Life insurance is expensive.** Many people overestimate the cost of life insurance. When you're researching what kind of policy to purchase, think about why you need the coverage and what the money would replace. Depending on your answers, a lower-cost plan that carries minimal coverage might be ideal for you. Compare quotes to ensure that you're getting the best deal. Keep in mind that the buying power of large groups such as the National Education Association can help make coverage more affordable.

**6 I'm healthy. I don't need life insurance.** The best time to buy life insurance is when you are young and healthy. Premiums only increase as you age and have more health problems. Even if you are healthy today, you don't know when the unexpected, such as a car crash, could happen.

Keep in mind that all insurance is not alike. A financially sound company will more likely be there to pay claims when needed. Visit [www.mtabenefits.com](http://www.mtabenefits.com) for more information.



\* Source: [http://www.limra.com/uploadedFiles/limra.com/LIMRA\\_Root/Posts/PR/\\_Media/PDFs/2015-LIAM-Fact-Sheet.pdf](http://www.limra.com/uploadedFiles/limra.com/LIMRA_Root/Posts/PR/_Media/PDFs/2015-LIAM-Fact-Sheet.pdf), LIMRA website, 2015.

Life Insurance coverage is issued by The Prudential Insurance Company of America, Newark, N.J. 0286516-00001-00



**Editor:** Elizabeth A. Bejoian  
The *MTA Advantage* is published three times a year as a supplement to *MTA Today* by MTA Benefits, Inc.

2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119  
Tel: 800.336.0990 • Fax: 617.557.6687  
Website: [www.mtabenefits.com](http://www.mtabenefits.com)

No dues dollars are ever used to market MTA Benefits programs.

# Tip Sheet

All discounts listed in the Tip Sheet can be found at [mtabenefits.com](http://mtabenefits.com)

## Avoid going stir-crazy during winter months

If you're not familiar with our partnership with **Access**, a nationwide discount provider offering more than 350,000 discounts nationwide, it's time to get acquainted. You'll find any number of discounts to help you pass the cold winter days. In order to obtain these discounts, follow redemption instructions on the Access website, [mtabenefits.accessdevelopment.com](http://mtabenefits.accessdevelopment.com).

### Plan a movie night

Order a few tins of your favorite popcorn flavors from **The Popcorn Factory** and save 10 percent on your purchase. Choose from traditional favorites such as butter, cheese or caramel — or be a little more adventurous and try a specialty flavor, such as birthday celebration confetti, Buffalo ranch, s'mores or toasted coconut. Once the popcorn arrives, head to your nearest **Redbox** location and rent one Blu-ray Disc or DVD and get another free for the first night.



### Dinner and a movie

If you prefer to be out and about even in cold weather, discounted movie tickets are available from **AMC Theaters, Cinemark** and **Regal Entertainment Group**. Make dinner plans either before or after the movie at one of thousands of restaurants. The long list includes **Applebee's, Papa John's, Acapulco's, John Harvard's Brewery** and **Texas Roadhouse**. Discounts vary by location; be sure to follow specific redemption instructions.



## Maximize your savings on your next trip

If you just can't stand the cold for another moment, book a trip using your MTA Benefits travel discounts and save on everything from car rentals and hotels to vacation packages. You can even save on group travel.

Car rentals can be expensive, but with your MTA member discounts you'll save up to 25 percent. **Hertz** offers up to 20 percent off of a rental, as well as a free Hertz Gold Plus Rewards® Membership. Rent through **Budget** and receive a discount of up to 25 percent. Savings are also available through **Alamo, Avis, National** and **Zipcar**. Many of these discounts can also be combined with coupon offers.

Don't spend all of your vacation money on accommodations. You have the local cuisine to savor, excursions to experience and mementos to bring home! Our brand new program through **HotelStorm** offers savings of up to 55 percent on more than 100,000 properties worldwide. Choose from popular hotel chains such as **Sheraton** and **Marriott** or book a smaller bed and breakfast for a more intimate setting.

**TNT Vacations Powered by Funjet Vacations** is your one-stop shop for booking a vacation package. Whether you're looking to book just a flight, a flight and hotel package, or an all-inclusive resort stay, you'll find everything you need at a discount. The Last Minute Deals section of the website is a great place to discover even greater savings. You can plan your excursion right on the website, whether it's a snorkeling adventure in Aruba, a Greek folk dancing lesson

*Continued on page 4*

## Daytime fun

If you have little ones looking to release some pent-up energy, **Chuck E. Cheese's** offers discounts on tokens, pizza and drinks at many locations. With kiddie rides and Skytubes® for the younger ones and high-tech simulator games and a laser challenge for older kids, hours of fun can be had — without draining your wallet. At **Color Me Mine** in Mashpee, children of all ages can paint their own ceramics. Save 15 percent on the total bill with an Access coupon. Many bowling alleys across the state, including **Greylock Bowl & Golf** in North Adams and **North Bowl Lanes** in North Attleboro, also offer discounts through Access.



## Spruce up your living space

Has your time indoors this winter made you want to refresh your space? If so, this doesn't need to be an expensive project. Head to a **Sherwin-Williams** store and choose from more than 1,500 paint colors and all the painting supplies you'll need. The options are endless and are meant to showcase your individual style. So whether you want a bold purple for your front door, a neutral gray for the bathroom or a vibrant green for a piece of accent furniture, the choice is yours. Invite a few friends over, order some pizza, and before you know it, your space will feel brand new! Save \$10 off a \$50 purchase.

# Berkshire Bank — big-bank resources, small-bank attention



**B**erkshire Bank, America's Most Exciting Bank®, is thrilled to continue its partnership with MTA Benefits in offering MTA members and their immediate families a suite of banking opportunities that saves time and money.

## Expansion increases accessibility

Berkshire Bank is a wholly owned subsidiary of Berkshire Hills Bancorp, which has its corporate headquarters in Pittsfield. Since the beginning of its partnership with the MTA, Berkshire Bank has significantly enlarged its service area, growing in both assets and the number of branches. There are now 99 full-service branches prepared to provide all financial services. As the bank continues to grow, its footprint has expanded toward the Greater Boston area. Berkshire Bank's mortgage officers cover all of New England.

With an increasingly large retail presence in the state, the bank has become even better able to service customers' needs, with deposit products such as Elite Relationship Checking and consumer, home equity and mortgage loans. Priority service and product benefits have been extended to MTA members and their families. The bank is also committed to maintaining local bank values and a personal touch, no matter how large it grows.

## Recognition for quality service

The bank has been acknowledged for its dedication to quality customer service. In 2016, the research and business ranking website

*AdvisoryHQ News* recognized Berkshire Bank as one of the Top 10 Best Banks in Massachusetts. *AdvisoryHQ News* based its decisions on a number of factors, including the advantages, benefits and value creation of products and services provided by financial institutions. *AdvisoryHQ News* looked deeper than the obvious fees, ratios and metrics; it also examined the quality and value of the products and services offered by the banks it reviewed.

## Giving back to the community

Berkshire Bank and the Berkshire Bank Foundation are also dedicated to the communities they serve. On June 7, the bank held its first Xtraordinary Day. The bank closed all of its retail locations and operations centers for half the day, allowing all employees to volunteer in the communities served by the bank. The employees selected, planned and completed 56 group service

projects. Ninety-five percent of Berkshire Bank's workforce participated in this day of service, which directly affected more than 100,000 individuals. During 2016, Berkshire Bank achieved 100 percent employee participation in its corporate volunteer program, the XTEAM®.

Due to their continued support of their communities, the bank and its foundation were recognized by the Financial Marketing Awards with Gold Community Champion Awards in the categories of overall philanthropy and civic involvement. The awards recognized the bank's charitable giving, XTEAM® employee volunteer program, scholarship program and in-kind donations, as well as the overall impact that the foundation and bank have had on communities. Berkshire Bank and the Berkshire Bank Foundation provide more than \$2 million annually for important community causes, including scholarships for high school seniors with financial need and a record of academic excellence. The bank and foundation are also committed to helping to improve the environment through the AMEB Green Sustainability initiatives.

Berkshire Bank realizes the importance of everyday banking relationships that provide consumers with the strength and resources of a big bank combined with the personal attention of a community bank. Retail teams are available to help make the most of the exciting moments of Berkshire Bank customers' lives. Life is exciting. Let Berkshire Bank help.

## Tip Sheet

*Continued from page 3*

with dinner in Athens or a rainforest hike in Kauai. Destinations include Mexico, Hawaii, the Caribbean, Europe and Central America.

Take the planning out of your next vacation and book a trip through **Collette**. As the expert in guided travel, Collette delivers the freedom to explore combined with outstanding guest service. Experience land tours, river cruises, rail journeys and small-group tours at destinations spanning the seven continents. Tour the English countryside with the British Landscapes package. Witness the tropical splendor of Australia's Great Barrier Reef in the South Pacific Wonders tour or discover Peru's archaeological treasures with Peru: Ancient Land of Mysteries.

Get ready to pack your bags for the trip of a lifetime. New luggage is always a nice treat before a vacation, and Access provides a discount of 15 percent on a purchase of **Samsonite**. For details on these and all other discounts, visit [mtabenefits.com](http://mtabenefits.com).



All program and pricing information was current at the time of publication (February 2017) and is subject to change without notice. To find out what may have changed, please call MTA Benefits at 800.336.0990.