



New Member Committee

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How Do I Prepare for the School Year?

by Alex Hoyt

As a new teacher, you are probably learning that there is no one correct way to do most things. Among the many challenges of teaching, one of the most daunting can be preparing for a new school year. Some teachers I know take July to enjoy their summer and spend most of August getting ready for the coming school year. Others do both during the whole summer, switching back and forth between work and play. Still others hardly prepare at all. They save it for the last few days! Here is what I usually do.

1. Set up the classroom. It's no fun for kids to come in on day one to a sparse or disorganized learning space! I usually spend a day or two putting together bulletin boards, labeling parts of my room, and decorating the walls with things that show my students who I am. I try to keep it authentic. And don't worry about comparing it to the 20-year veteran's room down the hall that looks like an Instagram post!

2. Prepare 1-2 weeks' worth of activities to build community and establish classroom norms.

I don't dive into curriculum on day one. The foundation of powerful learning is relationships between and among you and your students. I do things such as a classmate scavenger hunt (a list of "find someone who...") that help kids share about themselves and learn about others while getting to move and talk. Because remembering names can be really difficult, name games are a good option. I give students time to be creative and make personalized name tags.

3. Learn about your students. It's important to take time to read any notes that have been provided about your incoming students! Make sure to carefully read through IEPs and 504s. Meet with guidance counselors to get a heads up on students with particular needs.

Beyond these things, my personal style is to take things one step at a time. During the week of "get to know you" activities, I'll start planning lessons, editing seating charts, etc. But that is just me! I encourage you to read what other teachers do, to talk to colleagues and seek their advice, and to experiment until you establish a routine that works for you!

Interview with Zena Link of the New Member Committee

by Ashley Adams

Please tell us a little about yourself, how you became a teacher, what you teach, and why you teach.

I am a second-career teacher with a background in nonprofit and community organizing. As a community activist for family, school and community partnerships, I found myself advocating for more educators of color in public schools, so I decided to become one. I currently teach high school English but have also taught the subject in middle school.



Zena Link

As a member of the New Member Committee, you've been involved in the statewide work of the MTA. Has that improved your practice as a teacher? If so, how?

My statewide work with NMC has been advocating on behalf of students by insisting our state provide *Schools Our Communities Deserve*. The work has improved my practice because I was able to build relationships with local union members and parents that provided additional support to our schools and classrooms.

How did you get involved in the New Member Committee?

I was asked to apply for the New Member Committee after attending the National Education Association's Representative Assembly in Washington, D.C. While there I expressed concerns and challenges about my personal experience of becoming a new educator as a second career.

Why did you go to the Summer Program?

Once I was on the NMC, I began to learn the multitude of advantages to being part of the Massachusetts Teachers Association. Not only did I find a community of love and support, I learned of the various educational and professional development trainings such as the Summer Conference.

Was there anything in particular that you liked about going through the New Member Summer Program?

Networking was my favorite part of the Summer Program. I really enjoyed being among my colleagues and having access to various levels of expertise regarding union involvement and sustainability.

Please tell us about one or two activities that you have been involved with in our New Member Committee.

As a member of the New Member Committee, I've been active in several statewide campaigns. I had the privilege to work on the "No on 2 Campaign" and I'm currently advocating for the *Fund Our Future* campaign. My involvement has included a television ad and presenting at the Massachusetts State House.

You've changed locals. How has being engaged with the union helped you with that transition?

Being part of the union has allowed me to realize I don't have to settle for my first employment option. As a new educator I have certain rights and it is okay to seek a school district that is a good fit for my skill set and interests.

Many of our newer members aren't sure about whether to get involved in their union – either locally or state-wide with the MTA. What would you tell them about the benefits of getting involved?

My greatest reward for getting involved with the union has been the reduction of stress and isolation within the profession. Not only is there power in numbers, there are numerous benefits to being involved in a strong and effective organization with expertise in negotiations, professional development, union building, and information from districts, such as worksite data and FOIA – Freedom of Information Act requests.

If you were to name one experience as an active member of the union that has meant the most to you, what would it be?

The experience that has meant the most to me has been participating as a Board member for the MTA, as well as learning how to mobilize members and use collective action to solve everyday problems and improve working conditions for educators and learning conditions for our students.

If a few new teachers came up to you and asked for some words of advice from you, an experienced teacher, what would you say to them?

You are not alone. The union is your friend. You can save a lot of time and alleviate frustration by utilizing the resources of the union. ■

Have an idea for a column in this newsletter? Interested in having more New Member activities or trainings in your local?

Please let us know! Contact our New Member Organizer, Ashley Adams, at adams@massteacher.org, 617-878-8314.

Help Reach New Members in Your District!

by Erinne Silver



Think back to when you first joined your district as a teacher. How was your first introduction in the union? Was it a positive experience? We're working on trying to make this a great experience for everyone! Here's a list of things you can do to help reach out and engage your new members in your local! Make sure to work with your local leadership team to get their help!

- Don't forget to distribute new member packets. Make sure to mention the Early Career Educators Conference!
- Start planning a New Member Social!

Beginning of the School Year:

- Attend new hire orientation. If your district allows it, use this time to sign up new hires!
- Follow up with new hires. Now that you've met them, start having useful (what is useful? To be discussed at first training) conversations with them!
- Finalize your RSVPs for the training! See if your local will provide reimbursement for refreshments.
- If you haven't done so already, work with your summer outreach team to sign up all new members.
- One day before the training, do an outreach reminding each person of training.
- Start to recruit for the November 16 Early Career Educators Conference! ■

During the Summer:

- N.E.W. News: Let your local's new members know about our newsletter!
- Reach out to Ashley Adams, the MTA's New Member Organizer, to schedule some trainings. A good one to start with would be Professional Teacher Status training!
- Prepare your leadership for new hire orientation. Confirm who will be going to this meeting.
- Contact building reps to prepare for immediate outreach to new hires in the building.

MTA Benefits' Notes for New Members

We know you'll have a lot on your plate with as the school year approaches, so before you're in full "back-to-school mode," learn how MTA Benefits can help you save money, simply by being an MTA member! Here are a few tips:

Create an account on our website

You'll be able to access our bimonthly giveaways, which include Visa, Lowe's and Fandango gift cards, as well as sports and entertainment tickets and the BJ's Wholesale Club discount application. When you create an account, you can opt into our e-newsletter, *Savin' Haven*, to stay up to date on all of the benefit programs and discount news throughout the year.

Sign up for the Office Depot/OfficeMax webinar on August 8

School supplies are expensive, but as an MTA member, you receive a discount when you shop with Office Depot/OfficeMax. On August 8 at 9:30 a.m., join us for a 30-minute webinar that

will explain all the ways you can save with this program. Visit www.mtabenefits.com/officedepotofficemax to register.

Summer savings

With hundreds of local discounts and more than 180 free offers, our discount directory has everything you need for summer fun at an affordable price. You can get free admission to museums, a discount at your favorite bookstore and a better rate on tickets to Six Flags New England, Canobie Lake Park and more.

For details on all of our programs and a full list of discounts, visit www.mtabenefits.com. ■





A conference for educators in their early years of practice and for prospective teachers enrolled in an educator preparation program

MTA's **Early Career Educators Conference** presents the perfect opportunity to meet with fellow educators and get tips on everything from classroom management to supporting students with a wide variety of needs.

This one-day conference, brought to you by MTA's New Member Committee, will also offer workshops on Professional Teacher Status, teaching students with trauma, and strategies for mindfulness and stress management.



**The conference will be held from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
at Mountview Middle School in Holden, MA.**

To register and see the full program, go to
www.massteacher.org/newmembers

The conference is offered at no charge for MTA or SEAM members.
Morning refreshments and lunch will be provided.

Please note: This conference is appropriate for school district and teachers' use as part of induction programs for all new teachers (603 CMR 7.00). The MTA will provide all conference participants with a record of attendance.



**We welcome you to the education profession
and the Massachusetts Teachers Association!**

FIGHTING FOR THE SCHOOLS OUR COMMUNITIES DESERVE