

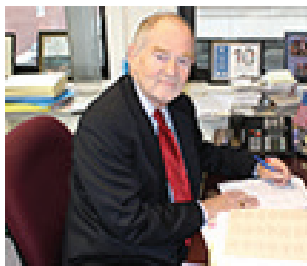


The Advocate

April/May 2017

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THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Thomas J. Gosnell
President, AFT Massachusetts

Four Pillars for Public Schools

Randi Weingarten gave a speech after the inauguration of President Trump in which she reiterated the positions of the American Federation of Teacher's core positions on public education. I believe that it is well worth reading.

- Tom Gosnell

By Randi Weingarten

Education was eclipsed by numerous other issues and controversies during the presidential election campaign. But if there was any question about the importance Americans place on public education, it was answered when Donald Trump nominated Betsy DeVos to be secretary of education. DeVos's nomination galvanized a passionate and dedicated force for our public schools: the public.

DeVos has spent decades as a lobbyist and cheerleader for alternatives to public schools: charter, virtual, private, and home schools. Her record of undermining public schools, her poor performance at her confirmation hearing, and Trump's pledge to pour \$20 billion into private school vouchers all sparked deep alarm. But DeVos's confirmation battle had a major silver lining: the public in public education has never been more visible or more vocal, and it is not going back in the shadows. An example of this is #PublicSchoolProud, a campaign to showcase the great things happening in public schools every day.

I sent an open letter to DeVos one week after she took office, voicing concern about her early actions and statements as secretary denigrating public schools, and inviting her to spend meaningful

time in public schools. I've visited hundreds of schools across the country and have seen firsthand their struggles and successes. The American tradition of local control of public education has resulted in a rich array of approaches, de-

Day of Action
May 20
for information, go to
www.reclaimourschools.org

signs, and programs. But there are common traits among all schools that are working as they should. I call them the four pillars of effective public schools: promoting children's well-being, supporting powerful learning, building teacher capacity, and fostering school and community collaboration. And the new federal Every Student Succeeds Act enables these pillars to become a reality.

Promoting Children's Well-Being

Education starts with meeting children where they are—emotionally, socially, physically, and academically. Every school must provide a safe and welcoming environment for all children. And instead of fixating on tests, we must focus on the whole child. Half of

all public school students live in poverty, so confronting this reality is an absolute necessity. One way to help these students is through community schools—neighborhood public schools that meet kids' needs by coordinating partners and resources. New York City's Community Health Academy of the Heights is a great example. It offers supports like mental health counseling, a parent resource center, a food pantry, and a community health clinic. A variety of indicators, including large gains in academic achievement, attest to the academy's effectiveness.

Supporting Powerful Learning

Society rightly sets high expectations for our public schools—to develop students academically, for

Continued on page 7

In This Issue

- 2 AFT MA Communications Workshop Offers Advice
- 3 BLS Teacher Runs to Raise \$ for Children's Hospital
Lynn Teachers Go to CSI
- 4 Legislator Profile: Sen. Barbara L'Italien
Meet Your Colleague: Kim Barry
- 5 GIC Approves Changes for Health Insurance Rates
- 6 FEATURE FOCUS: Academic Fitness
- 8 Wentworth Program STRIVE-s to Support Others
WriteBoston Helps Students Communicate
- 9 Wentworth Professor Supports Syria
Generation Citizen Promotes Civic Responsibility
- 10 On Campus: Collective Bargaining in Higher Education
State Approves Changes Despite Objections
- 11 Retiree Corner: Important News for ALL
Chelmsford President Has Family Ties to Teaching
- 12 FEATURE FOCUS: The Future of High School



RALLY FOR RESPECT

AFT President Randi Weingarten rallies with BTU teachers and others to demand an equitable contract (Photo by Michael Maguire)

For the **LATEST** news
from **AFT MA** and **AFT**
and other **EXCLUSIVE** content,
visit our **NEW** website
www.aftma.net

Getting the Word Out

AFT MA offers workshops on effective communications

As the debate over what is real and what is fake continues to heat up, it is more important than ever to communicate effectively. Fortunately, AFT MA has in its corner Steve Crawford of Crawford Strategies (www.crawfordstrategies.com), a communications veteran who shared his decades of experience and knowledge through a recent series of workshops at various AFT MA local headquarters.

Having served as the lead consultant for the successful Question 2 campaign, Crawford spoke glowingly about how well that campaign was orchestrated and how the group efforts of the entire AFT MA family allowed our side to prevail over a much more financially-endowed opponent.

"The prior record for spending on a ballot question was \$14 million," he explained, recalling the recent question regarding casinos in MA. "On Question 2, the 'yes' side alone spent \$26 million."

Despite the fact that the teachers' unions and their allies spent a total of just over \$14 million on the campaign against Question 2, Crawford pointed out that the Question passed in only 18 of the 351 communities in MA.

"Clearly," he observed, "something else was involved."

Among the elements that Crawford cited that led to this success were message discipline, a hyper-local focus, and the ability to tell what he termed "real stories."

"We stuck to discussing the \$400

million in lost funding," Crawford observed. "They changed their message repeatedly."

When asked how our opponents "got away" with making questionable claims on television, Crawford observed how "TV stations are struggling like any other media, so if you promise \$18 million in ads, they will run them!"

As money still talks to many, Crawford emphasized how working small and keeping an issue in a local frame can be of great value.

"We sent an op-ed to 36 newspapers across the state," Crawford noted, citing one of the key elements of the "hyper-local" campaign before admitting, "I did not know there were 36 papers!"

With these principles in mind, Crawford then offered advice regarding how to make key points stand out, even amidst an onslaught of information (much of which may be questionable at best).

"Limit your key points," he said, noting that, while some complained that the campaign was not focusing on the issue of teacher licensure and "other important points," polling suggested that the main issue of the \$400 million in cuts was the most important and so the one to focus on and promote the most.

"Are the other issues important?" he asked, "Yes! Will they move people when the other side is spending \$26 million? Probably not."

Crawford went on to suggest that, in order to reach the most people, you need to consider all the various groups of people you need to reach.

"You need to...think not only about what is important to teachers but what is important to parents," he said, by way of example.

While the list of ideas needs to be limited, Crawford explained that it can evolve throughout the course of a given campaign. Crawford noted how

the Question 2 campaign did not talk a lot about school committees at first, "but by the time we got into October," he noted, "we mentioned it as a little nugget so that, thanks to the \$400 million cuts we had been discussing, 200 local school committees opposed charter schools."

When asked about the most effective means of communication, Crawford surveyed the social media landscape and suggested that everyone get on Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms.

"Use multiple methods and messengers," he encouraged, noting that so many AFT MA members are technologically

savvy that the campaign did not have to hire social media consultants.

While Crawford focused on the Question 2 campaign, AFT MA Field Representative Jeremy Shenk noted that the recent student walk out in Boston to protest budget cuts was "fully organized on social media," again exemplifying the power of this tool.

Citing BTU President Richard Stutman's weekly email that goes out to over 18,000 people, Crawford also suggested reaching out to as many people as possible, including members of the local and regional press and local legislators.

"Legislators want to hear from constituents," observed AFT MA Director of Operations Brian LaPierre, "and they like to be thanked as well!"

Crawford also suggested tweeting about interactions with various legislators and reporters.

"It leads to other actions and other things," LaPierre noted.

Citing Stutman again, Crawford offered his thoughts regarding frequency of communication.

"An email every week or 10 days is about right," he observed, adding that, when it comes to simple social media messages, even daily or even multiple times a day is not inappropriate.

No matter when or to whom you

send messages, however, Crawford emphasized the importance of having "quality content."

"Make a point without being nasty and it can make a bigger impact," he noted before cautioning that, "being snarky is a sign that you are in trouble."

Another way that campaigns can "get into trouble" is by having too many media events, for while press conferences can garner a great deal of attention, they often involve and invite attention for the opposition as well.

"They are a lot of work," Crawford said, "and they also give the other side an opportunity to have their voice heard. At any press event they're gonna' get half of the story. That's just the way it goes."

As such, Crawford concluded by reemphasizing his focus on keeping the message fair and focused.

"Identify a specific reporter who you think will do a good job on a story that you have done some research on," he suggested. "And always respond to media inquiries...but be willing to ask them to wait for a reply."

LaPierre added the caveat that ideas and opinions should be checked with the local president to ensure appropriateness and consistency of message.

As far as what campaigns lie ahead, Crawford and his colleagues listed such issues as contracts, budgets, and the Fair Share Amendment that is shaping up to be another ballot battle.

"All of these are great things to rally grassroots campaigns around," Crawford suggested.

Armed with the greater understandings of how media works and what tools are available, workshop participants were better prepared than ever to lead these and other campaigns and to work together so that, even if we are not as financially endowed or if our opponents try to spread misinformation, we can still prevail. ■

A video of a training is available at <https://youtu.be/Qa6uDWm-HluM>

Effective ways to communicate:

1. Keep the message focused
2. Keep it local
3. Keep it disciplined
4. Use "real" stories
5. Use every available method of dissemination

The Advocate

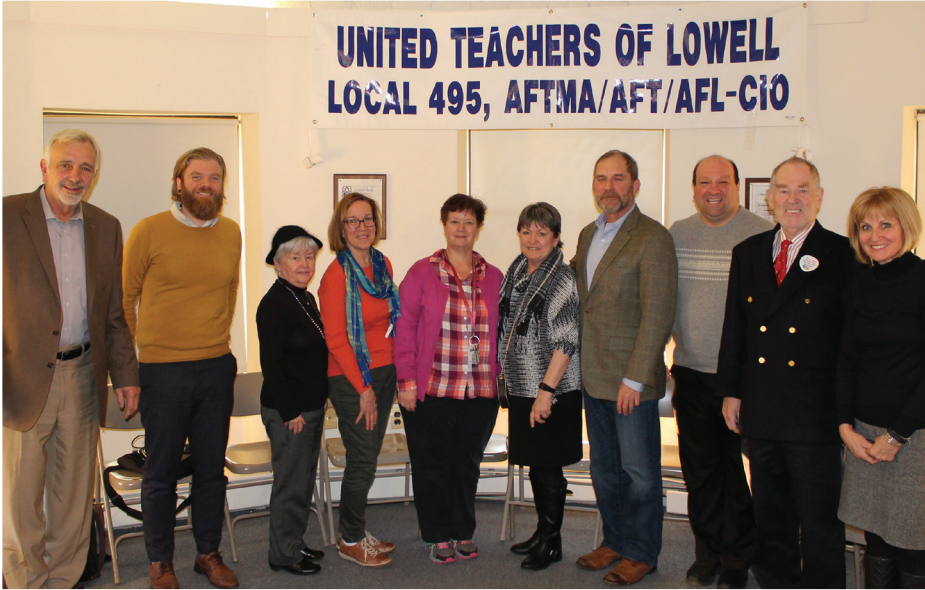
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LEARNING TO SPEAK OUT

AFT MA members and administrators gathered with communications expert Steve Crawford (fourth from right) to discuss effective means of making our issues known at a recent workshop at UTL headquarters

BOLD PRINT

April 3-7, Berklee's Institute for Creative Entrepreneurship and Revlon's American Crew will present a celebration of Elvis Presley. For information, visit: www.berklee.edu/elvis.

□ □ □ □

On May 4, buildOn will celebrate 25 years of supporting Boston students and fighting world poverty at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Boston. For information, go to www.buildon.org.

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Got news to share? Send it to advocate@aftma.net

Running for the Kids

Boston Latin teacher gives his all for others

When he is not running around the halls or the fields outside of Boston Latin School, math teacher and football coach Tim McQuade is running around the streets of Boston preparing for his next marathon. And just as he always goes the extra mile for his students when at BLS, McQuade also does more than most as a runner by raising money for Children's Hospital.

Having moved to the area in 2003 after graduating from the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, McQuade's earliest and happiest memories of Boston came on Marathon Monday.

"Most years I was fortunate enough to get Red Sox tickets for the annual Patriots Day game," he explains, "and my friends and I would come out of Fenway Park to watch the thousands of runners come down the home stretch.... I knew the marathon was something I wanted to participate in someday."

McQuade began his running career by training for the Hyannis Half Marathon.

"When I told my mom that I was running 13.1 miles as a training run for the 26.2 miles of the Marathon," McQuade recalls, "she laughed and reminded me that I was a former football player who really only ran as punishment!"

As his time was not fast enough to officially qualify for Boston, McQuade began to investigate charities who offered bib numbers.

"Boston Children's Hospital seemed appropriate," he reasons, "because I had studied pre-medicine in college hoping that I would one day be a doctor for kids with cancer."

In 2007, McQuade was accepted to the Miles for Miracles team (www.childrenshospital.org/bostonmarathon).

"I had no idea how profoundly it

would affect my life," he says, looking back at 10 years of consistent running and over \$50,000 in funds raised. "I am amazed at the generosity of so many people in my life. I am truly inspired by the strength and courage that the patients and their families embody each day. And I know that I have truly been a part of something greater than myself when I realize how many people lives have been affected by the great work done by the doctors and nurses at Children's."

McQuade is also keen to mention the encouragement he has received from his BLS

family, his family along the course in Natick, and his colleagues and friends as well.

"It has been a blessing to be able



LEADER OF THE (WOLF)PACK
BLS teacher and coach Tim McQuade runs the Boston Marathon to raise funds for Children's Hospital

to share this exciting event with my students each year," he says, "and I have been inspired by their consistent support." ■

To help Tim's efforts directly, go to <http://fundraise.childrenshospital.org/goto/mcquade2017>.

For the LATEST news from AFT MA and AFT, visit our NEW website at www.aftma.net

Lynn Teachers Investigate Improvement

CSI Institute offers ideas and encourages collaborative culture

By **Jamie Barbuzzi, Amanda Feliz, Patricia Marcus, and Amy Vernava**

The leadership team from Lynn's Robert L Ford Elementary School attended the Center for School Improvement Leadership Institute (CSI) from January 26th -29th in New York City. During the Institute, the team participated in sessions to foster a collaborative culture among students, educators, administrators, and community partners to improve the learning experiences of students at the Ford School.

The team consisted of members with various connections to Lynn Public Schools and included Lynn School Committee Vice Chair Patricia Capano, Lynn Business Education President Gale Thomas, Cobbet School Principal Susanne Garrity, Lynn Teachers Union President Brant Duncan, Ford School Principal Joanne LaRivee, Ford Program Specialist Elizabeth Crowley-Burns, Ford Special Educator Amy Vernava, Ford Reading CIT Patricia Marcus, Ford ELL Specialist Amanda Feliz, and Grade Four Teacher Jamie Barbuzzi.

AFT President Randi Weingarten opened the Institute outlining four pillars to achieve powerful, purposeful public education: promoting children's well-being, supporting powerful learning, building teacher capacity and fostering cultures of collaboration. "Guided by our innovation, our experience and our collective wisdom of what works," she said, "we can create trust, enable risk-taking and foster shared responsibility to ensure that all children have the opportunity to achieve their dreams."

During the conference, members of the team had opportunities to hear valuable insight from AFT staff, ed-

ucators, students and administrators from across the country. Students currently in the public school system were among the speakers. These students shared how their school experiences impacted their lives. The team also participated in professional

2014 CSI experience. "CSI leaders provided follow up professional development for the Cobbet teachers during the summer to build a cohesive team to implement the plan and achieve the goals. We have seen tremendous growth in our students and teachers

community partners as part of your team, it's a win for students."

Principal LaRivee stated, "In order to build on the four pillars as outlined during the CSI conference, teachers need the tools and strategies to prepare students to be able to work together to solve problems, think critically, and communicate effectively. As the educational leader of the school, I realize that powerful learning is that which can be produced when teachers collaborate and share their ideas collegially. At the Ford School we have been working together to analyze data and then use the data to inform the planning of lessons that are challenging to students and that bring about desirable outcomes such as increased student achievement. At the New York conference, we worked as a team to learn about the different data we can use to make decisions when designing instruction to include strategies that motivate and engage students. We also learned about different instructional approaches that can be used to support the high expectations we have for our students. It was exciting to be able to return to school and share the enthusiasm from the conference with staff. We will use our action plan as a guide for the next three years to promote the well being of our students by engaging them in powerful learning."

Institute participants are eager to share their experiences with colleagues and to begin the work of implementing a plan that reinforces fostering cultures of collaboration for the goal of developing powerful learning experiences for all students. As Helen Keller said, "Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much." ■



CSI LYNN

From left to right: LTU President Brant Duncan, Cobbet School Principal Susanne Garrity, Lynn Business Education President Gale Thomas, AFT Executive Vice President Mary Cathryn Ricker, Lynn School Committee Member Patricia Capano, Ford School Principal Joanne LaRivee, Ford Reading CIT Patty Marcus, fourth grade teacher Jamie Barbuzzi, ELL Specialist Amanda Feliz, Ford Special Educator Amy Vernava, and Ford Program Specialist Elizabeth Crowley-Burns

development. During our sessions we focused on the principles and practices of effective communication, team building, data-informed decision-making, professional development and team action planning. The conference also gave participants an opportunity to come together with Lynn community partners in order to collaborate and strengthen our connections.

"The CSI and their continual support helped the Cobbet School by setting attainable, relevant goals," Principal Garrity said of her team's

due to the goal setting process and professional development. Going back to New York with the Ford team allowed me to pay this experience forward. I am a team player and was pleased to mentor this hard working team in developing an action plan for the school, which is now being implemented. I am excited for another Lynn school to have the same opportunities that Cobbet experienced. When you have several stakeholders including the superintendent, school leaders, teachers' union, school committee representative, teachers and

Legislator Profile:

Sen. Barbara L'Italien

Growing up in the Merrimack Valley and studying in Andover public schools and at Merrimack College, State Senator Barbara L'Italien knows her community, the ins and outs of the political arena, and the great importance and benefits of public education.

When she transferred from a Catholic elementary school to Andover High School, L'Italien recalls an "eye-opening" experience.

"For the first time...I was with peers of all ethnic [and] religious backgrounds," she recalls, adding that she has "never forgotten" the impact of seeing special education students at lunch but then not seeing them the rest of the day as they were kept in substantially-separated classrooms.

Another memorable moment from her high school years was hearing then congressional candidate Paul Tsongas (late husband of Representative Niki Tsongas) address her class.

"That sparked my imagination," L'Italien recalls. "I was really captivated by the concept of politics and policy...[and] took every history and social science class I could!"

As the high school was on a quarterly system, L'Italien was afforded the opportunity to serve as an intern at the State House, where she worked for four days each week.

"That really allowed me the opportunity for experiential learning," she says, noting the unfortunate lack of such opportunities in many schools today, "and solidified my feeling that, at some point in time, I would run for office."

What L'Italien remembers most about Andover High, however, are the many amazing teachers who inspired and encouraged her.

"What I loved about my teachers

is that they really encouraged critical thinking," she maintains, noting how the current emphasis on standardized testing has also stolen this benefit from many students.

After graduating from Merrimack College with a degree in political science, L'Italien worked in the MA Home Care program in Lawrence and Woburn and also in Philadelphia, serving the elder community.

"I had a number of aging aunts and uncles who had never...left the familial home that we needed to help with aging in place when I was in my late teens and early 20's," she recalls. "I really enjoyed interacting with them and that is why I decided to go into elder services."

When her first child was born, L'Italien left the paid workforce and began volunteering. Serving on the PTO, L'Italien also filled in for teachers so they could take time for common planning and helped raise funds for school improvements. During her term with the Andover School Committee, L'Italien met many parents who were struggling to support children with special needs. As her own eldest son has Autism, she became deeply engaged in these battles as well.

"These parents had to engage in protracted legal battles," recalls the Advisory Board Member of the New England Center for Children who has also served Andover's A Better Chance (ABC) program and the Andover Youth Foundation, as well as a board member for Autism Speaks,

"and that is not good for anyone because it costs schools and families a lot of money and children really suffer!"

Partnering with the Aspergers Association and other advocacy groups, L'Italien (who has served as Chair of the Autism Commission and as a board member for Autism Speaks), worked with members of both parties to protect children on the spectrum from bullying, to create an Autism division within the Department of Developmental Services, and to pass

legislation to establish an Autism Federal Medicaid Waiver, all so that other families could enjoy the benefits and support she wanted for her own.

"I want to give them more of what they need to succeed," she says of both the parents and the children who are dealing with Autism and other challenges. In addition to helping establish an Autism Omnibus bill that provides for an optional autism

endorsement for teachers, L'Italien has also has filed legislation to help students with Dyslexia by establishing a protocol for early identification and for adopting best practices to help them succeed.

"I think it is a great thing that we are trying to include as many students as possible," L'Italien suggests, noting that she also supports graduating students who pass local standards so that deficiencies in one subject do not derail potential for success, "but the teachers need the tools and the access to training necessary to help them feel supported to meet those needs."

As she had never given up her vision of legislative service, when a redistricting created a new seat in her area in 2002, she was encouraged to run and, after knocking on doors with her then eight- and ten-year olds, she eventually won in a hotly contested election.

"It has allowed me to go forward and weigh in on special and general education," she suggests.

Having served the 18th District from 2003-2011, L'Italien became a senator in 2015 and currently represents Andover, Dracut, Lawrence, and Tewksbury. She is also Chairwoman of the Legislature's Joint Committee on Consumer Protection & Professional Licensure and the Joint Committee on Elder Affairs, and serves on the Joint Committees on Health Care Financing and Education and the Senate Committee on Redistricting.

"I will serve on the Education Committee again this session," she is keen to point out, voicing concerns regarding such issues as high-stakes testing, the burgeoning concept of so-called "empowerment zones," and what the future of charter schools will be now that Question 2 has been defeated.

"I am concerned that, in our rush to test...we are taking away critical learning time that helps students learn how to show creativity and engage thoughtfully," L'Italien observes, noting her strong support for the proposed moratorium on high-stakes testing. "I want to be sure that we can focus on letting students learn in a 21st century way that focuses on small-group, project-based learning. My fear is that the focus on high-stakes testing is not where we ought to be."

Though she has a great deal of experience that helps her form her opinions and support public educators as she has for so many years, L'Italien is also keen to thank her supporters at AFT MA for helping her establish a sense of "what is happening on the ground" and preparing her for Education Committee hearings and other arenas.

"I want to be sure that our teachers are fully mentored and assisted and to help feel supported so they want to stay in the field," she maintains. ■

Meet Your Colleague: Kim Barry

For Kim Barry, Lawrence is not only where she went to school as a young child, it is also where she has worked and served other students for 16 years.

"My Dad was Irish and from South Lawrence, and my Italian Mom was from another world in North Lawrence," Barry says of her parents, whom she describes as "high school sweethearts" who always valued education.

As soon as she began her teaching career in Lawrence, Barry knew she was in the right place doing the right thing.

"When I focused my attention on the community that had been the root of my families' upbringing, I didn't have to go any further," she says, recalling her years of teaching ELA and serving as a Writing and Reading Specialist in Lawrence. "Working with the students and the teachers of Lawrence was an instant and ongoing awakening."

While she has many positive memories of her years in Lawrence, Barry also recalls the "heart-wrenching" inequities and injustices she encoun-

tered when she began and the hard work it has taken to overcome them.

"As my awareness of these challenges grew," Barry explains, "so did my vision for change. I started to become more informed about these issues [and] began engaging in ongoing conversations with my... building representative...and started to attend monthly membership meetings."

When asked what prompted her to become more involved with union life, Barry thanks LTU Treasurer and

fellow board member Kathy Delaney, who repeatedly encouraged her to take on additional roles, including building representative, Convention delegate, and recording secretary.

"Without those asks," Barry admits, "I may not have committed myself to those positions, which makes me very grateful!"

In addition to working with AFT MA, Barry also works with the literacy support organization known as Andover Bread Loaf (ABL), which works with public and private school educa-

tors (including those at Phillips Academy in Andover, where the program is based) to enhance the teaching of writing and to help support educational renewal.

"As a participant in the ABL Teacher Workshop," Barry explains, "I became connected with a network of teachers who...engage students through writing to empower them, to help bring more rights to our schools, students, and communities. I connected with actions that were good for both students and teachers."



GIVE 'EM A BIG CHEER!

For the second year in a row, the Assabet Cheer team was named Grand Champions at the South Hadley Cheer Competition, having recently been named the winners of the Wachusett competition.

While she knows that Lawrence (and many other districts) are places where "the need for advocacy keeps growing," Barry is confident in her own abilities and in her ability to rely on colleagues to help support her.

"I am supported by the best advocates for the issues that are important to the teachers and students of Lawrence," she says. ■

This is the sixth in a series of pieces intended to introduce AFT MA members to Executive Board members.

GIC Approves Changes

New rates to engage July 1, 2017

Responding to the high cost of the healthcare and the rise of the healthcare costs, the Group Insurance Commission has once again adopted a series of benefit changes for the upcoming plan year. This year's changes comes on the heels of a steady approach of cost-shifting by the GIC.

"The constant shifting of costs is not addressing the real problem, the exceptionally high cost of healthcare in Massachusetts" says Andrew Powell,

AFTMA's healthcare expert. "The erosion of GIC benefits breaks the promise of the state program offering affordable comprehensive coverage", Powell adds citing that higher copayments and deductibles add a significant burden to those who need healthcare the most.

In response to this newest slate of changes, the MA AFL-CIO has organized a labor coalition representing public employees to develop strategies

on how to address healthcare costs and preserve quality benefits for our workers and retirees. AFTMA encourages all of our members who are in the GIC to contact their legislators to support our efforts to stop cost-shifting in response to costs, provide adequate funding to the GIC, and to preserve benefits for the nearly 400,000 people covered by GIC plans. ■



As we continue to improve and expand upon our website, we also continue to encourage members to make use of it and, in the process, to save paper.

If you would like to receive an electronic version of the Advocate, send an email to advocate@aftma.org.

ATTENTION NEW(ER) TEACHERS

Have you been teaching for fewer than five years?

Do you want to share why you entered education?

Do you have life lessons to impart?

Do you want to support your colleagues and community?

Do you want to be published and paid to write?

Contact
advocate@aftma.net

GROUP INSURANCE COMMISSION SUMMARY OF BENEFIT CHANGES FISCAL 2018

Non-Medicare Plans (Active, non-Medicare retirees)

Benefit Type	Fiscal 2018 Changes
Deductible	*Fiscal Year Deductibles: \$500 Individual / \$1,000 Family (regardless of family size) *Fallon Health Direct and Select plans Deductibles: \$550 Individual / \$1,000 Family (regardless of family size)
Plan Choice	No new enrollment in: Harvard Pilgrim Independence POS, Tufts Navigator POS, and Fallon Select HMO
Prescription Drugs	Harvard Pilgrim Independence and Primary Choice plans – will change to a closed prescription drug formulary similar to the other plans. This means certain prescription drugs will be excluded from coverage, but will have alternatives available that are more cost effective.
Prescription Drugs	New Prescription Drug Deductible for Non-Medicare Plans (except Fallon Select/Direct HMO): \$100 Individual / \$200 Family
Tiering of Primary Care Physician Office Visits	\$10 / \$20 / \$30 PCP office copayments for Harvard Pilgrim and Tufts Health Plans (POS and HMO's)

Medicare Plan Changes

Benefit Type	Fiscal 2018 Changes
Prescription Drugs	Harvard Medicare Enhance, Health New England MedPlus, and Tufts Medicare Complement: Prescription drug coverage will be moved to the GIC's SilverScript EGWP program
Office Visit Copayments	\$15 copayment for physician office visits, all Medicare plans with the exception of Unicare OME
Deductibles / Emergency Room	Unicare Indemnity Plan (OME); Eliminate the \$35 calendar year deductible. Increase Emergency Room copayment to \$50

AFT MA and GIC
At the recent meeting of the Group Insurance Commission (GIC) were (standing, from left) Salem Teachers Union President Beth Kontos, United Teachers of Lowell (UTL) representatives Micki Dumont and Midge Farrell, AFT MA President Tom Gosnell, UTL representative Martha Leary, AFT MA Special Assistant to the President Ed Doherty, AFT MA Legislative Agent Mike Canavan and (in front) AFT MA Field Representative Andy Powell



FEATURE FOCUS: Academic Fitness

Springfield Paras “Spark” Student Success

Partnership with Reebok program offers a big boost

Especially in urban and larger suburban districts where classroom crowding is a major issue, paraprofessionals can make the difference between a student getting lost and finding themselves. In many districts, paraprofessionals take it upon themselves to not only find ways to support their classroom colleagues but to seek out opportunities for student support.

In Springfield, paraprofessional Kate Iacolo and physical education teacher Jessica Fournier have supported their students through partnering with the Reebok Foundation’s Build Our Kids’ Success (BOKS) program to get kids moving in the morning and performing better mentally, physically and emotionally at all times.

The goal of BOKS (www.bokskids.org) is to enhance student perfor-

mance and overall health through physical activity. BOKS was inspired by Harvard Medical School’s Dr. John Ratey’s book “Spark,” which suggests that daily physical activity helps students in all aspects of life.

“Dr. Ratey states that exercise is the single most powerful tool that we have to optimize the function of our brains,” Fournier explains. “BOKS prepares children for a day of learning and is an important step in helping children gain an appreciation of the benefits of exercise and healthy choices that will last a lifetime.”

BOKS provides two 12-week sets of curriculum developed to be run three

days a week before school. Twelve Springfield schools currently run the program, but the goal is eventually for every school to get their kids moving with BOKS.

“I love all the activities,” says a Springfield student. “It really wakes up my brain to exercise before school.”

In addition to developing them physically, Iacolo attests that BOKS helps students grow in other ways as well.

“Many of the kids started the program as very shy students,” she observes, “and have become more outgoing, willing to branch out and make new friends.”

The program, which is typically run by moms, dads, P.E. teachers, para-

professionals, and other volunteers, is simple to implement, and BOKS is currently in more than 2,200 schools around the world.

“The program promotes fitness but also a better understanding of nutrition,” Iacolo explains, observing how many of the students in the program are able to bring their knowledge and healthy habits to the entire community. “[It also] promotes fitness, nutrition, team work, and positive behavior....[and] the curriculum [is] fun for both us and the kids.”

“Seeing the difference in [our students] from week 1 to week 12 is incredible,” Fournier adds. “We have created a comfortable, energetic, and safe environment with our BOKS students and it has been a very rewarding experience!” ■

Stronger Teachers Make for Stronger Students

T.E.A.C.H. Fitness program supports health and wellness

As the list of demands on teachers continues to grow (and their stress levels as well), it is more important than ever for teachers to take care of their own health so they can help their students do the same. Unfortunately, these same demands make it more difficult for many teachers to find time to care for themselves.

Enter T.E.A.C.H. Fitness (www.teachfitnessboston.com), a new program founded by teacher and trainer Angela Gentile to help her fellow teachers include fitness in their workday.

“Healthy schools begin with healthy teachers,” Gentile suggests, “because whole people can do the best work.”

In order to help them feel “whole,” T.E.A.C.H. Fitness (which stands for Train, Educate, Align Curriculum for Heath) offers a menu of curriculum-aligned classes that not only help participants build their bodies but also build community.

“[We] allow...participants to take risks in a safe and supportive environment,” suggests Gentile, who holds an M.S. in Educational Leadership and group fitness instructor certification.

Gentile started T.E.A.C.H. Fitness as part of her graduate thesis. Overwhelmed by the demands of her own academic program, she sought a way to regain her mental balance and physical health.

“I started moving as much as I could,” the two-time Boston Marathon runner explains, “which lead to the idea of running a wellness program.”

Today, T.E.A.C.H. Fitness hosts programs at schools across the city, as well as at the BPS Bolling Building.

“School districts offer the programs for their entire staff on a drop-in or class-by-oclass basis,” Gentile explains. From cardio and dance to weight training and yoga to the “signature” program called “The MBS Experience” (which takes into account mind, body, and soul), Gentile has developed a wide range of classes that

fulfill the needs and improve the lives and careers of teachers with varied abilities and fitness levels.

“The health benefits of regular exercise are endless,” Gentile observes, “and can lower the amount of sick time and also increase alertness and productivity at work.”

As teachers improve their own health, they are also better able to model for their students and others.

“Teachers are modeling behavior for positive self care, practicing self worth and setting an example for a healthy lifestyle,” Gentile suggests.

As she was an early participant who became involved when the program was simply known as “teacher bootcamp,” Boston Latin Academy teacher Fabienne Mondesir is a big fan of T.E.A.C.H. Fitness and also a proponent of what it can do for teachers and students alike.

“Like many public school teachers, I have too many responsibilities and very little time...to accomplish all the tasks,” explains Mondesir, who currently supports five sections of 30 students each.” Because of Angela’s...unwav-

ering persistence and the accountability factor from my colleagues, I made teacher fitness and wellness a part of my weekly routine.”

Participating in a bi-weekly high intensity training program (each of which has a “daily class objective” that combines curriculum guidelines with popular Crossfit lingo), Mondesir and her colleagues were able to lose weight and gain insight into how to live more healthfully and productively and to pass these benefits on to others.

“I’ve noticed teachers encouraging, supporting and holding one another

accountable for coming,” Mondesir says, noting how participants often discuss goals when passing in hallways and how students also inquire regarding their progress and the lessons they have learned. “Developing a sense of collective responsibility for teacher wellness was the impact that the program had on our school.”

Even when she was pregnant, Mondesir’s fellow BLA teacher Lillie Marshall yearned to join her colleagues in the T.E.A.C.H. program.

“For years, I heard colleagues talk about how much they loved Angela’s fitness classes,” she recalls. “After I had my second baby, I decided to see what all the buzz was about.”

Marshall found the workouts

helped increase her energy and also fit back into her “pre-baby” clothes.

“More important than losing that weight,” she emphasizes, “I feel so much stronger [and] more confident.”

She also mentions the “additional perk” of the bonds that she was able to form with her colleagues through

this communal activity.

“There’s something about sweating and pushing physical boundaries together that creates human connections on a deeper, more enjoyable level than any traditional professional development I’ve ever attended,” she observes. “I look forward to T.E.A.C.H. Fitness classes every week because they’re fun and actually don’t feel painful or too hard, even though I’m getting a deep, full workout.”

BLA’s Katherine Fogarty taught with Gentile for 10 years and knew that, even at age 62, she would be in

good hands.

“Angela shows me how to modify the moves so that I won’t hurt myself,” Fogarty attests. “She also pushes me to give it as much as I can.”

Boston Day and Evening teacher Aaron Stone has known Gentile for six years and is a long-time fan as well.

“I tend to not engage with group fitness,” Stone admits, citing coaches who “bark defeating orders.” However, when he first attended Gentile’s class, “it was clear...that the class was not about her ego, but about helping participants reach their...goals.”

As Gentile is a teacher, Stone suggests, she understands what teachers need and what resources they can dedicate to achieving those goals.

“She gets it,” he says. “For a teacher to take time to work on themselves often takes a large amount of convincing...[and] debating whether taking the time...is ‘okay’ to do, instead of grading more papers, researching new approaches to teaching...or calling home to a parent to report their child is steadily improving.”

As Gentile’s classes are so perfectly geared to her fellow teachers, they make the decision to do for oneself easier than it might otherwise be.

“Angela begins her classes acknowledging our time, and understanding our days are packed,” Stone observes, noting that, like a good lesson plan, Gentile’s classes involve warm-ups and appropriate rigor that is scaffolded to ensure maximal success and benefit for all involved. “She empowers participants to become the best versions of themselves.”

Stone and his colleagues were so impressed with Gentile’s program that they made her part of Boston Day and Evening Academy’s Health and Fitness month last October.

“Working out with your staff is an incredible energizer and team builder,” Stone asserts, observing how it is “easier to collaborate with a colleague when just yesterday, you reached up high for a sweaty high-five.” ■



PUMPING THE BOOKS
T.E.A.C.H. Fitness brings health back into the classroom

Four Pillars

Continued from page 1

work, for civic engagement, and to lead fulfilling lives. The path to accomplishing these goals lies in powerful learning—learning that engages students and encourages them to question and collaborate. One way to inspire such learning is through project-based instruction, like in Corpus Christi, Texas, where students investigated the potential for humans to live on other planets. Career and technical education can also deeply engage students and help them to develop skills and knowledge they can use in the world of work.

Building Teacher Capacity

Becoming an accomplished teacher takes time, support, and an intentional focus, key features of the teacher residency model described in a new report by the Learning Policy Institute, which is excerpted in this issue of American Educator. New and veteran teachers alike benefit when they have opportunities to share their expertise with colleagues. Teacher evaluation

can also build capacity, and the AFT has fought against the broken test-based evaluation systems of No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top and pushed for evaluation systems that support both teacher growth and student learning.



A LEGACY OF SUPPORT
AFT MA Special Assistant to the President Ed Doherty rallies with his daughter, BTU teacher Allison Doherty, to support BTU teachers in their fight for a fair contract (Photo by Michael Maguire)

Fostering School and Community Collaboration

Collaboration among educators, parents, and community partners is the glue that holds all this together.

This is evident in the Progressive Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence program in New York City, also featured in this issue. Collaboration is essential—schools with parents, educators with administrators, and schools with community partners. When schools struggle, the response too often is “disruption”—mass firings, school closures, and district or state takeovers. Those approaches are indeed disruptive, but they are not effective.

The Path Forward

Advocates for public education were handed a stinging defeat in the presidential election. But out of defeat has emerged a dedicated and diverse alliance in support of public education as a public good—uniting parents, educators, students, civil rights groups, faith leaders, and many others. I believe that not only will my fellow champions of public schools be paying close attention to the actions of this administration, but that public education forever will be a driving factor whenever they cast a vote. ■

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STRIVE-ing to Serve

Wentworth and BPS combine to help students and community

While many programs and discoveries at Wentworth Institute of Technology positively affect the entire world, the school is also committed to making life better within its own community.

Among the manifestations of this desire is the Wentworth Training Program (WTP). WTP is a component of the Boston Public Schools' Supported Training to Reach Independence Through Vocational Experiences (STRIVE) program, which supports BPS's Acceleration Agenda by providing pre-vocational, vocational, and transitional services for students with special needs.

STRIVE has been a part of BPS for over 35 years. For the last 26 years, STRIVE has partnered with Wentworth to support students through a comprehensive training program. The services STRIVE students provide to the city go far beyond the Wentworth campus. The training the students receive affords them the opportunity to be competitively employed in a variety of settings including: Federal court houses and administrative buildings, area hospitals, hotels, retail establishments, and even at BPS schools and administrative offices.

While WTP works to develop independence for every student, they all require varying levels of support. "Some students come in with paraprofessionals and teachers," Aexplains Brenda Tanón-Jackson, who has been an employee of BPS since 1987 and came to STRIVE in 2007, "while others travel directly from home to work independently using public transpor-

tation."

Though they started with only three students, WTP has expanded to serve thousands and currently oversees much of the Wentworth campus. WTP participants do everything from cleaning the common areas in the dorms to collecting and dealing with over 500 recycling receptacles in 25 campus facilities. Each receptacle is taken to the central processing space, where the contents are sorted, cleaned, and, in the case of cardboard, bundled and baled.

"The students learn all sorts of skills in the program," Tañón-Jackson says, noting that the students must inventory, clean and repair their own tools and supplies, punch in and out on the same system the rest of the Institute uses, as well as navigate their way around campus and to and from their work sites (with appropriate support when necessary), and also budget and be responsible with their paychecks. As WTP students must interact with Wentworth students and

administration, they also work on vital communication and social skills as well.

"They go into the President's office," Tanón-Jackson Recycling Program Supervisor Craig A. Ramsey, Sr., notes, "and they know how to handle themselves."

Of the many cohorts of students aged 18-22, who have participated in

WTP, over 90 percent have been able to find post-program employment and most are still employed.

"WTP is a safe place for students to fail and learn from their mistakes without

being subject to disciplinary actions in an unsupported environment," Tañón-Jackson explains.

The partnership that exists between the BPS students and the Wentworth students is one of symbiosis. The students have a supported environment to learn important life skills and the campus benefits from an inclusive workforce providing meaningful services.

"We meet their needs and they

meet ours," adds Recycling Program Supervisor Craig A. Ramsey, Sr., who started at BPS in 1983, working at the Hubert Humphrey Occupational Resource Center at Madison Park High School. "Our students are the best around!"

In order to recruit the "best kids," the WTP team relies on STRIVE colleagues who engage the community directly through home and school visits and other outreach efforts.

"We have to convince parents to trust us with their children," Tañón-Jackson explains. "When they see what we do, they are very happy!"

While much of the program runs according to established norms, each group of students brings its own dynamics and contributions.

"Students learn to voice their own opinions and we respect their input," Tanon-Jackson explains.

In order to authentically duplicate a competitive employment opportunity, WTP insists participants show up on time and follow both BPS and Wentworth rules. In an effort to make the transition to employment more successful, WTP staff act as supervisors and coach students on how to deal with work-related conflicts. They also encourage participants to interact with students who may have different backgrounds and goals than they do.

"Wentworth students learn to understand, accept, and respect our students understands our population," Tañón-Jackson maintains. "They are generous enough to have host us and we do all we can to support them the campus in return." ■



STRIVE-ING FOR MORE
BPS students support the Wentworth community

Getting it Write

Write Boston helps students speak out and write more effectively

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, only about one-quarter of students perform at the "proficient" level. With the rise of social media platforms that limit the number of available characters and do not offer spelling or grammar support, many say that the level of discourse in America has dropped considerably.

Fortunately, there are programs like WriteBoston (www.writeboston.org) that are dedicated to helping students see the value of written communication and learn how to use it most effectively.

WriteBoston was created by former Mayor Thomas M. Menino as a response to low scores on the MA Comprehensive Assessment System

(MCAS). Since 2002, WriteBoston has supported over 15,000 teachers and students through curricula that engage topics ranging from using rubrics and science writing to the Writing Process and also through long-term coaching and on-site writing centers. From individual tutoring and support to school-wide offerings, WriteBoston helps take students from where they are to where they want to be through the power of language. In the process, they have raised the English Language Arts MCAS score by an average of 27 percent in the schools in which they have served.

"My students' writing changed in that they discussed their ideas...more articulately, both in terms of vocabulary and sentence structure, as well

as in the overall organization," says English High School teacher Quenna Lalonde who collaborates regularly with WriteBoston's English Writing Center and tutors. "Students that had worked with the tutors were more likely to explore and balance different points of view. The students' writing was also less riddled with errors and misunderstandings from their research. I would not have been able to teach

the class and get the same quantity of completed projects and the same caliber of student writing and research without the tutors."

In addition to providing teacher training about writing, WriteBoston also offers students opportunities

to write. Among these is *Teens In Print*, a student-produced publication that not only opens the world of journalism to students but also gives them opportunities to share their ideas and to be rewarded for their editorial efforts.

"Whether it's through our newspaper...our writing centers, or our powerful professional development for educators, schools, and districts," says Deputy Director Jessie Gerson, "WriteBoston exists to center and amplify the voices of youth in Massachusetts."

Despite the name, WriteBoston has expanded its work outside of Boston to include Gateway Cities such as Chelsea and Revere. Though the program has done a great deal for a great many, WriteBoston is always looking to grow its impact further. On April 27, WriteBoston will host its annual fundraising gala – Pros & Conversation – at the Genzyme Center in Cambridge's Ken-

dall Square. At this event, guests will be invited to celebrate all WriteBoston has done and to help plan and prepare for the program's future. Among the guests scheduled to participate are former U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky,

author and commentator Kim McLarin, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Dick Lehr,

2016 City of Boston

Artists in Residence and BPS educator Jenifer DeLeon (please see October/November 2015 issue).

"[WriteBoston] shows the difference journalism can make in the lives of students," says Northeastern University's School of Journalism Director Jonathan Kaufman, "and the contributions students can make to good journalism." ■



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Preserving the Future

Wentworth professor brings students to Syria

While the charter school debate may have topped many educators' priority lists, there have also been other challenges and fights going on in the world. Among the most tragic of these is the battle in Syria.

Despite the facts that Aleppo is one of the oldest continually-inhabited cities in the world (dating back as far as the sixth millennium BCE) and was named the Islamic Capital of Culture as recently as 2006 and also a World Heritage city, the combatants seem to have little regard for its significance and have been destroying with impunity.

Fortunately, there are concerned people like Wentworth Institute of Technology Professor Weldon Pries who are combining professional skills and personal passions to

keep Aleppo alive.

"The realm of sacred and symbolic architecture has always been central to humanity," Pries posits, noting that "much secular architecture draws from the symbols and architecture of sacred precedents."

While in Syria during a sabbatical

"I traveled to Syria because of my interest in the historical importance of Aleppo and Damascus and the quality of culture and urban design in these cities," Pries recalls, noting that he has since travelled annually to the region with his students as part of a Master of Architecture studio design course.

A professional architect since 1974, Pries has taught at Wentworth since 1989. Last spring, he taught a course called "Aleppo, The City and the People – Rebuilding the City and the Architecture of Humanity." This course engaged the city through both architectural and historical approaches and dealt with the tragic losses that have transpired there. During the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS) event that was recently hosted by Went-

worth (see December, 2016/January, 2017 issue), Pries presented his latest findings, discussing the tragic destruc-



ANCIENT ARCHITECTURE FOR CONTEMPORARY CURRICULA
Professor Weldon Pries (far right) and students in Aleppo, Syria

leave in 2008, Pries came to appreciate the city, not only in terms of its historical import, but also an early and enduring center of civilization.

Making Model Citizens

Generation Citizen returns civics (and civility) to schools

As the role of government continues to be debated and as facts in the debate continue to be questioned, it becomes ever-more important to be civically responsible. Sadly, the current emphasis on testable knowledge (much of which is taken from the realms of ELA and math) serves as an obstacle to a more well-rounded education.

Fortunately, there is Generation Citizen (www.generationcitizen.org), an organization created at Brown University that has since served over 30,00 students nationwide by offering them opportunities to engage issues in their communities while learning about the role of the public in governance.

**Generation Citizen's
Civics Day is May 12
at the State House**

According to MA Executive Director Gillian Pressman, students engaged with Generation Citizen (GC) are helped to use research to speak and write persuasively. They also come to understand how government agencies work, what each is intended to do, and the impact that individual citizens can have on them and vice versa.

"Students take away more than just a civics education," asserts Boston University Democracy Coach Mai Mazan. "They learn how to work in groups and present information. It is amazing what the students can accomplish after just one semester with GC!"

Through its rigorous, standards-aligned "action civics" curriculum, GC encourages 7th-12th graders to select and engage relevant issues and then to analyze their causes and identify decision-makers and draft action plans. In addition to helping

develop solutions, GC students also develop their own critical thinking, media literacy, and social skills. At the end of each semester, students showcase their solutions to fellow students and also to local business, community, and legislative leaders during Civics Day, which will be held for this current semester on May 12 at the State House.

"My students have met with state senators, city councilors, and community activists...[and] have become deeply engaged in some of the most complex issues facing Boston," says Brighton High School teacher Paula Bowles. "I have seen many of them grow from marginalized and disengaged members of society into young citizens who now recognize that their voice matters to people in power. Watching my students participate in such important and authentic learning has been one of the highlights of my career!"

"I am in awe of the strength the GC curriculum has and the engagement it creates through action civics," says Josiah Quincy Upper School teacher Mike Andrews.

Among the greatest strengths and benefits of the program, Andrews suggests, is its ability to overcome the common belief among students that they are too young to make a difference in their own worlds.

"GC has empowered my students to make incredible change in their local communities," Andrews observes, "from actually researching the real-world issues that impact them, to creating a working network of profes-

sionals and elected officials in order to change the *status quo*."

This past year, Andrews' seventh graders used GC to deal with the issue of affordable housing.

"As city residents, my students were seeing their neighbors - and even their own families - being evicted without cause," Andrews recalls. "With the help of city officials, my students were able to make continued progress

towards changing the eviction process in Boston."

Among the skills that were involved in the students' campaign were conducting persuasive letter campaigns and public speaking.



CIVIC PRIDE
A GC student at the State House

180Dayz www.180dayz.com

By Scott Hubeny



**Ancient Greece-
Labyrinth of Crete**

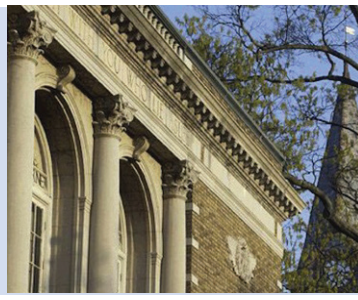


**Present Day-
Any School**



On Campus

Susan Krumholz, President
UMass Faculty Federation, Local 1895



Collective Bargaining in Higher Education

At this time of year, many of us are beginning the negotiation process and many are finding that collective bargaining is a right that is at risk in this country.

Collective actions, which included workers organizing and working together to raise wages, stems from the 19th century, not long after the emergence of the so-called Industrial era. Politically and legally there was a good deal of resistance to the notion of workers organizing (as there continues to be nearly 200 years later!). The Massachusetts Supreme Court was among the first to offer a positive legal view. In the early 19th century, it was widely believed that organizing was akin to a criminal conspiracy. However, in the 1842 case of *Commonwealth v. Hunt*, the Court found “that as long as collective bargaining remained peaceful, it was not an unlawful conspiracy.” Sadly, few courts followed suit, and unions and collective bargaining continued to be considered to represent a threat of violence.

The Federal government entered the picture in the early 20th century with the passage of the Railway Labor Act of 1926 and the landmark National Labor Relations Act of 1935. Public sector collective bargaining emerged

in 1960 when the first enabling legislation was passed (ironically in Wisconsin) where Act 10 (passed shortly after Scott Walker became governor in 2010) virtually eliminated collective bargaining for public employees. In the 1950s, about one-third of the labor force was covered by collective bargaining agreements. In 2016 10.7% of workers belonged to unions- 6.4% in the private sector and 34.4% in the public sector. According to the AFL-CIO, about 8 million private sector and 8.5 million public sector workers are covered by collective bargaining agreements.

Unions entered higher education in the early part of the 20th century, but these unions were primarily for support of academic freedom, for advocating in support of increased overall financial resources for the university, and for encouraging sharing governance. Collective bargaining didn’t really emerge on campus until the 1960s. In the next decade, there was rapid growth in unions’ presence in both public and private institutions of higher education.

A significant defeat came in 1980, when a divided Supreme Court upheld a Court of Appeals ruling that Yeshiva University faculty where not

entitled to unionize pursuant to the National Labor Relations Act. They opined that authority at the “typical ‘mature’ private university” is not clearly divided between administrators and faculty, and that faculty have a “managerial” role in the running of the institution and therefore cannot unionize. The Yeshiva case has been used as a powerful tool to inhibit private higher education unionization, but in fact a reading of the case, and a review of subsequent National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) decisions indicate that the opinion was a rather narrow one. As the Court noted, the faculties’ “authority in academic matters is absolute. They decide what courses will be offered, when they will be scheduled, and to whom they will be taught. They debate and determine teaching methods, grading policies, and matriculation standards. They effectively decide which students will be admitted, retained, and graduated.” In fact, the NLRB has recognized those limitations in a series of cases in the last few years (e.g., *Pacific Lutheran* and *Point Park*) where they have reconsidered the impact of the Yeshiva ruling. They have recognized that adjuncts’ are not “managerial employees” and have indicated a recognition

that the role faculty plays on campuses has changed dramatically since 1980.

Covered by state laws and not by the NLRB, unionization in public higher education has continued to grow since the 1960s. By 1972, 37 states permitted public sector unions. Though the number was up to 44 states and the District of Columbia in 2014, legislation in four of those states severely limited collective bargaining. Still public higher education represents the bulk of unionization; in 2012 it was estimated that 386,000 college faculty were covered by collective bargaining agreements, 344,762 of those in public institutions. More recently there have been aggressive organizing efforts among contingent workers and graduate students who have been adding to our ranks.

So here we are, heading into another round of collective bargaining. We will be negotiating topics ranging from compensation (always at the top of our members list!) to delegation of responsibilities to measures of effectiveness. We have lots of ideas about how to improve our collective work and, in the end, our entire university.

Wish us luck! ■

State Approves Changes Despite Teacher Objections

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) voted 9 to 1 at its Feb. 28 meeting to approve Commissioner Mitchell Chester’s recommendations to amend the educator evaluation regulations, despite objections to a core component of the changes from AFT Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA).

In a positive step, the amended regulations eliminate the long-criticized requirement that districts issue a separate “impact on student learning” rating of low, moderate, or high to all educators based on so-called district-determined measures (DDMs) and other measures of student learning such as MCAS scores. Furthermore, districts will no longer be required to create at least two DDMs in every grade and subject, nor will they be required to report any additional ratings to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) beyond the summative ratings of exemplary, proficient, needs improvement, or unsatisfactory.

The troubling news is that the amended regulations replace the separate impact rating with a new Student Learning Indicator under Standard 2 of the Teacher Evaluation Rubric. The new indicator will be one of five indicators that can inform a rating on that standard. A teacher has always needed a proficient or better rating on Standard 2 to receive a proficient or better rating overall, and the amended regulations maintain that rule.

The new Student Learning Indicator

will assess whether a teacher demonstrates “expected impact on student learning based on multiple measures of student learning, growth, and achievement,” including “common assessments and, where available, statewide student growth measures.” Evaluators will exercise their “professional judgment” to determine whether the educator is having expected impact, comparing “anticipated student learning gains” to actual gains. In a nod to the complexity of teaching and learning, the amended regulations say that an “evaluator’s professional judgment may include...consideration of the educator’s student population and specific learning context.”

Problems Continue Under New Framework

The new policy framework poses several problems, says a joint letter from AFT MA and the MTA that was submitted to the commissioner and Board members shortly before the Board’s vote. “Placing a Student Learning Indicator under Standard 2...elevates the stakes around student test outcomes and hinders the ability of evaluators and educators to have authentic, educationally valuable conversations about student learning,” the letter states, adding that “the regulations compromise the very activity they purport to encourage.”

The amended regulations also “create the same hurdles that have made the Student Impact Rating impossible to implement,” the letter continues.

“Determining an ‘expected impact’ for each educator—including developing methodologies to measure impact in a valid, reliable, and fair manner—persists as a significant issue that has proven impossible to resolve. The final proposed regulations simply replicate the flaws inherent in the current system, and it is likely that the same implementation problems will ensue.”

Given these significant problems, it is unclear how and when the new system will be implemented. Commissioner Chester issued a memo on March 10 to delineate some of the next steps, saying that “the Department will provide guidance for evaluators on using the new student learning indicator to provide meaningful feedback to educators about their impact on student learning.” Meanwhile, AFT MA maintains that any use of the new Student Learning Indicator to make judgments about teachers must first be negotiated between the district and local union.

“Like nearly all educators across the state—including superintendents, administrators, and teachers—we are pleased that the separate student impact rating has been eliminated,” says Dan Murphy, AFT MA’s director of educational policy and programs. “However, we are disappointed that the Department chose to disregard the thoughtful alternatives that were put forward by AFT Massachusetts and the MTA, organizations representing more than 100,000 teachers statewide. The result is a policy that poses a whole new set of questions and chal-

lenges. As always, AFT Massachusetts stands ready to assist our local leaders and members.”

Amended Regulations Follow Year of Intense Debate

The final amendments cap off a full year of intense policy debate and discussion over the role of student learning in teacher evaluations.

Commissioner Mitchell Chester faced strong pressure from AFT MA, the MTA, the state superintendents’ association and other stakeholder groups to eliminate the separate impact rating. AFT MA and the MTA issued a joint white paper on this topic in April 2016 and gave joint testimony to BESE in June 2016.

Commissioner Chester responded by proposing revised regulations in November 2016. While the proposed revisions eliminated the separate impact rating, they included the new Student Learning Indicator, a provision that AFT MA and the MTA strongly opposed in formal comments to the Department.

While Chester did agree to some further modifications in the final version of regulations approved by the Board, the problematic Student Learning Indicator remained, making it impossible for AFT MA and the MTA to endorse the changes. Only one member of the Board, Dr. Ed Doherty, heeded the unions’ recommendation to vote against proposed revisions. ■

More information and materials can be found at www.aftma.net.



Retiree Corner

Marie Ardito, Co-founder
Massachusetts Retirees United
www.retireesunited.org



Attention Active AND Retired

In the past, MRU has focused primarily on informing retirees of legislation that is being filed on their behalf. As many of you will have more years ahead of you in retirement than in the workforce, we urge you all to read the following information.

Twenty years ago, Governor William Weld signed a bill to allow veteran's working in the public sector to receive credit for up to four of their military years toward their creditable service. Those already retired by July 24, 1996 were left behind. We want these men and women who sacrificed so much for us to have their service recognized. Most of them served in World War II and Korea. Many were drafted and all put their life on hold for us. It is time to have this service recognized! Bill H1389, filed by Representative Ken Gordon, and S1429, filed by Senator Tom McGee, address the correction of this oversight.

The penalties for those who retired prior to July of 2004 and took an Option B, Option C or are a survivor of Option C are double or triple the penalties of those who took the same option after that date. Legislation filed by Senator Ken Donnelly (S1408), and Representative Tom Golden (H2554) would increase the retirement allowance for those who retired prior to the above date.

H2554 and S1408 make the following yearly increase to the pensions of those who retired prior to July of 2004 and took the above-mentioned options:

Teachers:

- Option B, \$542 increase
- Option C \$1800 increase
- Option C Survivor \$1200 increase

State Retirement System:

- Option B \$395 increase

- Option C \$1200 increase
- Option C Survivor \$900 increase

Any of the other 104 retirement systems who elect to accept the provisions of this act will use the figures of the State Retirement System.

Presently, for most of us, our Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) is based on the first \$13,000 of our pension. That means our increase, if approved by the legislature, is \$390 a year. This increase went into effect in 2012 and was the first increase in the base amount since 1998. We are supporting S1450, the COLA Bill filed by Senator Marc Pacheco that raises the COLA Base to \$14,000 in fiscal year 2018, \$15,000 in fiscal 2019 and \$16,000 in fiscal year 2020. This is a bill that ALL actives should be working to get passed as it directly affects your futures.

If you want to return to a public sector job in MA after you retire, you are limited to what you can earn. Massachusetts Retirees United (MRU) had the amount increased by \$15,000 once one is retired one full calendar year. Senator Michael Rodrigues has filed a bill (S1451) that will increase the hours one may work if returning from 960 hours to 1500 hours. Remember, both of these amounts are calculated on a calendar year and not a contract year.

So often when I am doing a seminar, the question arises about "non-public" school service and what can be done to acquire this service. S1464, filed by Senator Michael Rush, addresses this by allowing those who have such service to be able to purchase four of these years toward their creditable service once they have reached 10 years of service.

We are initiating a petition drive in which we encourage you to get signatures of relatives, friends, colleagues,

etc. We hope you will have people take these petitions to work, senior centers, family gatherings, and ask others to get petitions signed for whichever of the above bill(s) you want to see passed. Just email me at mardito@retireesunited.org and ask for whatever copy of a petition that you want to address the bill you want to see passed. It will be sent to you as an attachment. If you do not have email, just contact me at 781-365-0205 and tell me which petition(s) you would like mailed to you. Be sure to speak your name, and full address clearly and leave a phone number so I can call you back.

Finally, there is a new edition of the Complete Repeal of the Government Pension Offset (GPO) and Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) filed in the 115th Congress (HR1205) by IL Congressman Rodney Davis. In just a month since it was filed, 91 members of Congress have already signed on as co-sponsors. As of the time of this writing, Congressmen Bill Keating, Steve Lynch, Richard Neal, Seth Moulton, and Mike Capuano of MA have not signed on. I encourage you to call them and tell them how important this is to you. That 91 have already signed is a very encouraging sign and a good number, especially for so early in the process. I have been involved in the complete repeal of the WEP and GPO since the bill was first filed in July 2001. We have re-filed the other bills mentioned in this article a number of times.

All of the above bills address issues of justice and we will persevere until we are heard and the issues are resolved!

Winston Churchill once said "Never Quit" and we not only won't quit but do not care if it is Beacon Hill or Capitol Hill- You can't wear us down! ■

Like Mother...

Chelmsford President has roots in education

Growing up with a mother who was in education, Chelmsford Federation of Teachers (CFT) President Jen Salmon knew early on that she too wanted to teach.

"I knew when I was three," she recalls. "My mom inspired me."

In addition to teaching, Salmon tries to inspire others as a personal trainer and spinning instructor.

"I like to push people past where they are comfortable," she says.

As she continues to deal with the challenges that face a new union leader, Salmon continues to push herself and her colleagues toward more effective communication and collaboration.

"I am able to deal with the challenges because of my executive board and [AFT MA Field Representative] Eric Blanchet," Salmon says, again giving credit to her supporters. "These

individuals push me to be better and support me no matter what!"

When asked what prompted her to get into leadership, Salmon again cites her mother, who is still a VP of the United Teachers of Lowell.

"She has also been vocal and involved in the union," Salmon says. "I knew we had so many concerns and wanted to part of

changing the culture here in Chelmsford."



A FAMILY TRADITION
CFT President Jennifer Salmon and her mother, retired educator Pina Maggio

Though she has done a great deal to change things for the better in Chelmsford, when asked what her greatest accomplishments have been, Salmon does not pause before re-

sponding, "my three boys," who she also credits as constant inspirations.

"I push myself daily to be a better person and they inspire me to do so," she says. "If I want them to be strong, dedicated individuals and stickup for what is right, then my hus-

band and I have to model that everyday, even when it is challenging."

SEMINARS

Preparing for Retirement

These free seminars deal with most of the issues one should address when preparing for retirement from a public sector job in MA. They are open to all.

Tuesday April 4, 2017
2:15-4:15 PM
Wilmington High School Library
159 Church Street Wilmington, MA

Thursday April 6, 2017, 4-6 PM
Lawrence Teacher's Union Office
1 Market Street, Lawrence, MA

Wednesday April 12, 2017
3:30-5:30 PM
Wilmington High School Library
159 Church Street Wilmington, MA

Wednesday April 26, 2017
3:30-5:30 PM
Robert Adams Middle School
323 Woodland St. Holliston, MA

Tuesday May 2, 2017, 3:15-5:15 PM
Salem High School Library
77 Wilson St. Salem, MA

Wednesday May 10, 2017
2:30-4:30 PM
Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School, Cafeteria Annex
65 Pleasant Street Upton, MA

Monday May 15, 2017, 3:30-5:30 PM
Lynn Teachers' Union Hall
679 Western Avenue, Lynn, MA

Saturday June 24, 2017, 10 to noon
Presidential Park
314 Main Street, Unit 105
Wilmington, MA

Protecting Your Nest Egg

This free seminar by Elder Law Attorney Mary Howie deals with such vital issues as wills, trusts, gifting, Medicare, probate, joint tenancy, direct transfers upon death, and much more

Saturday June 17, 2017, 10-noon
Presidential Park
314 Main Street, Unit 105
Wilmington, MA

To register, call MRU at 781-365-0205 or email contact@retireesunited.org. Please give the name of the seminar, your name, phone number and the number of people attending.

When asked what challenges lay ahead, Salmon again deals with the personal more than the professional, speaking of how important it is to push oneself before pushing others.

"Every day my alarm goes off at 4am and I go the gym," Salmon explains, offering a point of inspiration for others, just as she thanks the many people who have inspired her. "This helps me focus, think about my day, my goals and wrapping my head around how I am going to tackle daily challenges by not backing off."

By keeping her body strong, Salmon is able to deal with the challenges that come in her position and that come every day in the life of a public school educator.

"Everyday I try something new and uncomfortable to push myself," she says. "Being better than you were the day before...not giving up even when you want to...perseverance, when it really counts- That is what makes it work!" ■

FEATURE FOCUS: The Future of High School Rearranging BPS

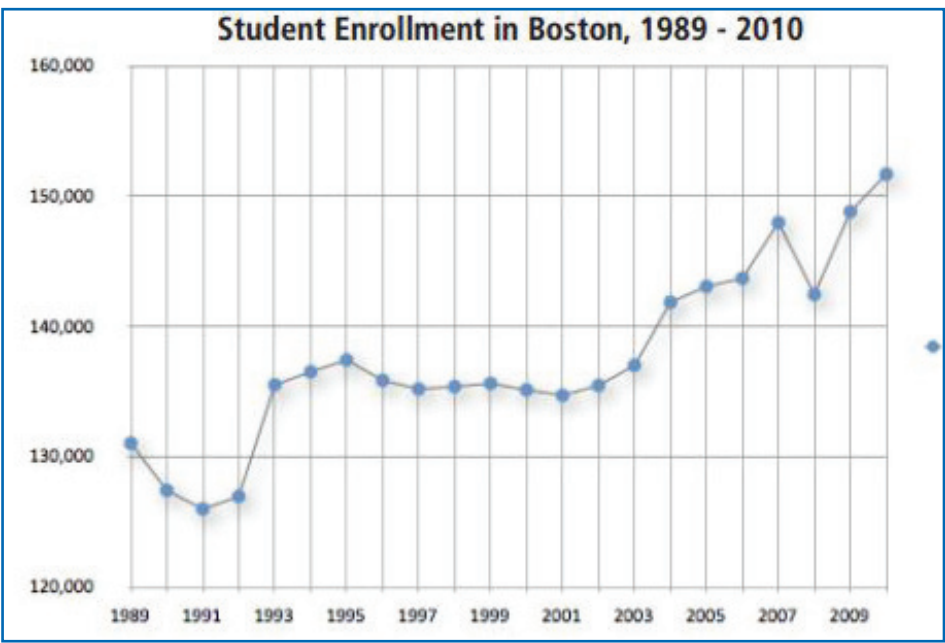
Educator Opinion

By Michael J. Maguire

After years of focusing on early childhood education, Boston is finally looking at High School Redesign (HSReD) in a proactive way. The most significant indicator of this is Superintendent Tommy Chang's proposal to reorganize Boston's school structure to become K-6 and 7-12.

I like Dr. Chang's idea. All three of Boston's exam schools are 7-12, but they also allow a small percentage of new students in the ninth grade and, in the case of the John D. O'Bryant, additionally in the tenth grade. (In the interest of full disclosure, I attended and have only taught at one of Boston's exam schools.) Making secondary schools 7-12 will solve several problems at once. First, it will give students more time to prepare for high school. Second, it will solve a population/assignment problem. Third, it will end a self-imposed middle school self-esteem crisis.

The most sought after schools in Boston – the three aforementioned exam schools – begin high school in seventh grade. Students and parents have two years to adjust to the rigors of high school academics before their important GPAs are tabulated for grades 9-12. Having the extra two years also means that students get a head start in preparing for AP courses and those ubiquitous standardized bubble tests. More importantly, the extra years allow students to spend extra time mastering their subjects, especially foreign languages. This allows them to go deeper than a traditional 9-12 school can provide.



Presently, Boston public schools face under-enrollment in high school but an inundation of applications for kindergarten and first grade. By morphing our district into K-6 and 7-12 schools, we can solve a major assignment issue. By shifting grades 7 and 8 into high schools, we free up much needed space in the elementary schools. Sadly, Boston currently loses hundred of families to the suburbs over kindergarten enrollment. While Boston's new assignment process seeks to equitably place students in the best school closest to home, it does not add seats to the district. Shifting grades 7 and 8 to high school does add seats by freeing up valuable classroom space. More kindergarten classes

means more middle-class families staying in Boston.

High school closures and consolidations would be less common if seats were filled with seventh and eighth graders. Stability is needed to build community. The annual turmoil of morphing and moving high schools breaks important social and psychological bonds. The addition of more grades into secondary schools would not only stabilize the aforementioned yearly migratory patterns, it would also add commitment and loyalty to the schools themselves.

As it stands now, many K-8 schools change their student populations drastically in grade 7. Many former sixth graders enroll in the exam schools, causing vacancies in their sending schools. Those vacancies are often filled by students transferring from other schools. The resulting mix of students creates a virtual new upper school with two real sets of difficulties. One difficulty is that the students who did not move on to an exam school often feel inadequate. Their self-esteem takes a hit during their formative teenage years. Equally traumatic can be the adjustment of the recently-arrived students into the established culture of the school. The continuing 7th and 8th graders know the school's norms, routines, staff, and most importantly each other intimately, whereas the transferred students can feel like strangers in their new home.

These feelings of disconnect can be alleviated by having all students move to new schools at once. Some students will go to the exam schools; others will also start high school in a new building, hopefully with a curriculum of their choice. All students would start

their high school careers together, and Boston would gain the stability it desperately needs.

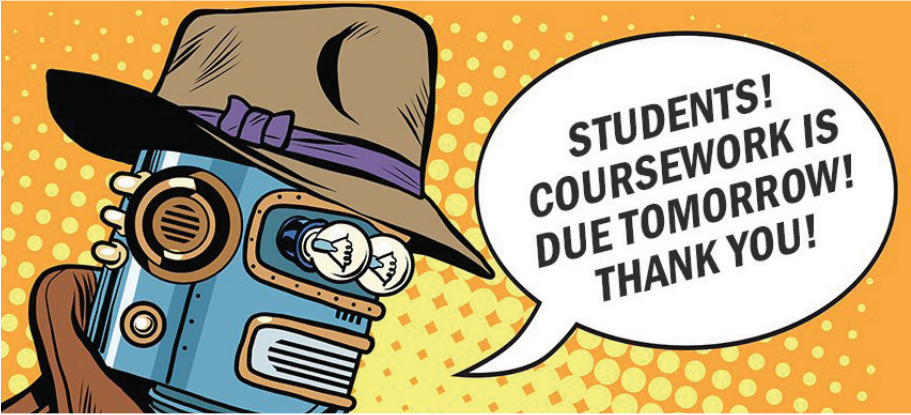
No solution is perfect or can take place overnight, but we have the established infrastructure, an increased and increasing interest in the early grades, and a few years to make a gradual and smooth transition. Soon, the term "sixies" (a BLS and BLA term for seventh graders) could become as common as "freshmen". ■

Michael J. Maguire teaches Latin and Ancient Greek at Boston Latin Academy, where he was a "sixie" in 1983.

Educator Opinion

By Ronda Goodale

The school year is half-over for more than 25,000 public high schools and 10,000 private secondary schools. Almost 15 million students attend our secondary schools. For the majority of our high schools, technology, problem-solving and group work are now integral parts of each school program. There are still many classrooms that use lectures and presentations as a major part of their teaching too. There is also still a lot of tracking in the majority of high schools (particularly in the suburbs), with Advanced Placement and Honors tracks and other opportunities for students (especially seniors) to access college-level curricula while still in high school.



THE WAY OF THE FUTURE?

These days, about 88 percent of students graduate from high school. For students with disabilities, there is a much lower completion rate that ranges from 21 percent to 62 percent, depending on the state. This is despite the fact that students who do not access a general education curriculum comprise only about 5 percent of the population. For minorities, the completion rate is from 70 to 75 percent. Although the majority of students complete high school, we lag behind other countries (e.g., Japan, Russia, and Israel) in our high school completion rates.

Since technology has become an integral part of our world, our schools need to consider what the focus of our schools needs to be in the future. In determining what the focus should be, we need to examine what kinds of jobs will be sustained and increased as technology becomes increasingly more integrated into our society. The elimination of many factory, service, and even farm jobs translates into a different type of focus and emphasis in our high schools. Jobs that are projected to be with us include care-giving and health-related fields, sales and marketing, and technology-related jobs. What will be needed, therefore, are individuals who have strong media literacy and social intelligence. The need for life-long learning will be also be increasingly important. With all of this forecast, what kind of high school should we be considering?

Despite all the changes that continue to develop in curricula and technology, many high schools still maintain a structure that is hundreds of years old. The structure should be revisited to see if it still meets our needs. Many cities have already revisited and changed the opening of high schools to a later time to adjust to the time when

adolescents are more alert. In addition to changing the school day, an entire year that might be totally revamped is the senior year. For students accepted to colleges in March, the end of the year has generally been far less productive than other times in school. Administrators and community members might consider turning that year into a time for supervised internships or opportunities to take courses in local colleges. Students could also serve as mentors for new freshman and other younger students. The opportunity to be involved in these activities and experiences could provide students with meaningful education and training. Schools could also provide debriefing experiences where students would have support in honing their social intelligence and media literacy, as well as opportunities to explore

possible areas of interest. Among the educational elements that could be highlighted are scheduling, budgeting, and career planning. Courses could also be offered in investing, home repair, and other skills that will serve students well long after they graduate. With seniors out of the school, more time could also be devoted to other students, especially the freshman, who often make up the largest group of dropouts.

As another way of embracing technology, many of these courses could be enhanced by online elements. Schedules for students who are at least sophomores could include some days at school and some volunteering or working in the community. Schools could open early and stay open late, providing an opportunity for students to attend school in the evening so that they can also hold down jobs or help their families and communities in other ways.

These ideas can support a range of diverse learners and learner preferences. A flexible schedule with more credit for community experiences could foster an excitement for lifelong learning where learning is linked to real-life problems. No matter what it looks like or what it offers, the high school of the future needs to be flexible and responsive, providing maximum opportunities, support and learning experiences translated into high graduation rates and the road to life-long learning. ■

Ronda Goodale teaches Spanish at Boston Latin Academy, where she also serves as the faculty advisor to the Student Government and the Gay/Straight Alliance, and organizes with Boston's Teacher Activist Group.