



# The Advocate



August / September 2015

## United in Victory

### Springfield Paraprofessionals win arbitration

Over the summer, the Springfield Federation of Paraprofessionals won what President Catherine Mastronardi called “a huge arbitration” that she says will “positively impact all of the members of our unit.”

Along the way, the Local members had to pull together to deal with such obstacles and frustrations as a lack of response to requests for pertinent information from the district.

“The local reached out to the members and the members responded,” Mastronardi says.

As a result of the arbitration, Local 4098 members who are either dealing with a chronic condition personally or who are caring for a family member with a chronic condition will now be eligible for intermittent leave that is approved by the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA).

“[This] is a necessity that had been denied to them in the past few years,” Mastronardi explains, noting that even members with fewer than .three years of service will now be eligible for leave.

“No longer will the district be able to deny FMLA leave based solely on the 1,250 hour rule and then discipline the individual because of their attendance,” Mastronardi assures, adding that staff evaluations will no longer

be “negatively impacted by FMLA approved leave absences.”

Mastronardi is keen to point out that Springfield paraprofessionals are now eligible for “all benefits of FMLA,” and not just intermittent leave.

“The FMLA entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons with con-

adoption or foster care; health care for a spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition or for the employee’s own health condition; or “any qualifying exigency” that arises from the employee’s spouse, child or parent serving on “covered active duty” in the military. If the spouse, child, or parent is a “covered” service member with a serious injury or illness, the employee may be eligible for 26 workweeks of leave over a 12-month period.

Though she is grateful for the support of AFT MA representatives like Caryn Laflamme and Atty. Harold Jones, Mastronardi gives the lion’s share of credit to her colleagues.

“Without the members joining together, providing their own evidence and helping to collect evidence we would have never won,” Laflamme maintains.

“Cathy and the members really pulled together a lot of information themselves,” Jones agrees, noting that Mastronardi rarely failed to raise the issue at member gatherings. “This is the Local’s victory.”

“A great victory was won by our local...because we worked together against injustice,” Mastronardi concludes. “I can’t say it often enough, when we work together, we make a difference!” ■



**EMPHASIS ON “PROFESSIONAL”**  
Springfield Paraprofessionals work together to support students and each other

tinuation of group health insurance coverage under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had not taken leave,” she clarifies, citing the terms of the Act. Among the entitlements under FMLA are 12 workweeks of leave in a 12-month period for the birth of and care for a child; the placement with the employee of a child for

## Adding to the Library

### FirstBook coming to Boston September 19

Building on the overwhelming success of their partnerships in Lawrence and Lynn (please see the July, 2014, October, 2014, and January, 2015 issues) Boston Teachers Union (BTU) is preparing to partake of the generosity of FirstBook (www.FirstBook/AFT) and to distribute 45,000 brand new books to teachers, students and families.

The books will be distributed on September 19 as part of the second annual BTU Back to School Fair. In addition to the books, the Fair will also offer music, activities, food, and other valuable resources for students and parents from Boston and beyond.

“The BTU is pleased to bring 45,000 new books to the homes of our students,” says President Richard Stutman. “Reading is a fundamental skill and the more the BPS community can do to promote reading, the more improvement our students will show. As professionals who work in our schools day in and day out, our 11,000... members are pleased to continue our commitment to our students.”

In order to prepare for the distribution, BTU members are inviting everyone to join them at BTU headquarters on Mt. Vernon Street in Boston on September 17 and 18 from 3-7 PM to sort the thousands of books.

“If anyone wants to volunteer to help, they get free books too,” assures BTU’s Director of Organizing Jessica

Tang, (who can be contacted at jtang@btu.org), noting that the event also offers a welcome opportunity for student community service.



**A FREE EVENT FOR BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOL FAMILIES!**  
**STOP BY BETWEEN 2:00 AND 5:00 PM ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19TH, 2015**  
**BOSTON TEACHERS UNION & CARSON BEACH**  
**180 MT. VERNON ST., BOSTON, MA 02125**  
(ENTRANCE IS OFF OF DAY BLVD., BEFORE CARSON BEACH)

**FEATURING:**  
**PARENT RESOURCES FROM COMMUNITY PARTNERS**  
**EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS, INCLUDING FREE BOOKS!**  
**MUSIC • ACTIVITIES • FOOD & ENTERTAINMENT**



In order to qualify for the gift of reading from FirstBook, Boston teachers, students, staff and families had to rally together to demonstrate their commitment to literacy.

“We had to get 2,000 new members to register for FirstBook,” Tang explains.

When asked how BTU first heard about FirstBook, Tang credits AFT but

offers special thanks to Lynn Teachers Union President Brant Duncan.

“We were inspired by the giveaway in Lynn,” Tang explains, adding that Duncan actually came to BTU meetings to discuss his successful efforts.

“The members of the BTU are part of just about everything that happens in Boston,” Duncan observes.” The BTU’s distribution of 45,000 brand-new, high-quality books to children in need is the latest example of their commitment to Boston’s children and community. It is truly remarkable!”

While Tang and BTU President Richard Stutman are both grateful to and inspired by Duncan and his colleagues in Lynn, they also wish to thank their own colleagues in Boston, especially the building representatives and paraprofessionals who pushed so hard to achieve their membership and engagement goals.

“We have been working very diligently to get our members involved,” explains BTU Paraprofessional Representative Josefina Loscano. “In order to make this event a success, we have reached out to all the members of the Paraprofessional Council to lend a helping hand.... I can’t wait to continue with this opportunity to provide... books to the children we work with to embrace the love for reading.” ■

**For more on Springfield and FirstBook, please see page 4.**

## Welcome to our NEW bi-monthly 12-page format!

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# THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

**Thomas J. Gosnell**  
**President, AFT Massachusetts**

## Let's Meet These Challenges Together

**H**ello Colleagues. I hope that everyone had time this summer to relax and to take some vacation from work. The remainder of 2015 and 2016 will pose major challenges that will require all of us to respond with resolve and determination. The involvement and commitment of everyone are essential.

### FRIEDRICH'S COURT CASE

The United States Supreme Court will hear this case in October 2015. The plaintiffs are challenging the right of public sector unions to collect dues. Forty years ago the U.S. Supreme Court upheld this right, but the current court has chosen to look at the issue again.

The American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts (AFT MA) and its locals have worked diligently and effectively to raise salaries, to improve working conditions, and to provide the best possible education to the students and the best possible services to the public.

Now those who despise unions work to destroy us.

Our national organization, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), has issued a statement capturing the essence of what is happening:

### AFT STATEMENT

The promise of America means that, with a good education and a level playing field, you have a shot at

achieving your dreams. It means that your children can grow up in safe, nurturing environments that prepare them for life and learning; that you can send your children to a great neighborhood public school; that you can give your kids the advantage of a college education without incurring crippling debt; that you can get good, affordable healthcare and take a day off when you or your family get sick; that you will be treated fairly at work and get real raises; that you can retire in dignity after a lifetime of work; and that you can live in safe communities, free from physical harm and from discrimination and stereotyping, whether based on race, gender, immigration status, physical disability, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

The reality of America is—after deindustrialization, globalization and the last recession—our economy isn't working for everyone. Too many are out of work or paid unfairly. Too many are saddled with crippling debt or faced with unaffordable housing. For too many, the American dream is out of reach. Meanwhile, the rich are getting richer and our government is growing increasingly gridlocked as money drives politics.

We know that when unions were at their strongest, the middle class was at its height. And today, even with the sharp decline in union density, union members make 28 percent more than nonunion workers.

Corporate backed politicians,

understanding that unions give working people power, have launched an all-out assault on unions from statehouses to courthouses. Presently, they are trying to overturn 40 years of legal precedent, challenging the right of public sector workers to organize and raise wages and challenging our unions wherewithal to operate.

Our affiliates also understand that we only succeed through collective power. Thus, we are engaging our communities, advancing proven solutions, and organizing and mobilizing members to repel those attacks and grow a strong middle class.

As a result of this organizing and mobilization, the AFT passed the 1.6 million mark last summer. Nurses affiliated with our union. Charter school teachers and adjunct professors organized. Agency fee payers converted. And the rank--and--file membership continues to grow, as the connection between members and our union is strengthened.

Where our affiliates are doing this work—side by side with their communities and in line with every level of the union, local, state and national—the connection between the union and its members is strong. We have each other's back.

### CHARTER SCHOOL PROPOSAL

Charter school proponents have submitted to the Attorney General's office a proposal to put an initiative

petition on the ballot in 2016. If the initiative petition passes, it will increase the number of charter schools in the state.

While the law establishing charter schools has many weaknesses, its major flaw is the diversion of resources from the regular public schools. This is particularly harmful in communities where the number of children living in poverty is high. Most school systems do not have sufficient resources right now, but in systems with high levels of poverty, the lack of the sufficient resources is particularly acute.

In September ,the Attorney General's office will rule whether the initiative petition meets constitutional requirements. If it does, prepare for a very lively ballot campaign in 2016.

Stay tuned.

I wish you a good September and a work year that will be rewarding. May the fall season be mellow and the harbinger of a mild winter.

If you have any questions or comments, you can email me at [tgosnell@aftma.net](mailto:tgosnell@aftma.net). ■

**We put the**



**in**



**[www.twitter.com/AFTMass](http://www.twitter.com/AFTMass)**

**Help Samira**

Samira Sarkis has sickle cell disease and needs to find a



bone marrow donor. Her parents are Lawrence educators Angie and Tony Sarkis.

For information, contact Leigh Sullivan at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute at 866-875-3324 or [Leigh\\_sullivan@dfci.harvard.edu](mailto:Leigh_sullivan@dfci.harvard.edu), or go to [www.bethematch.org](http://www.bethematch.org). Please use code **Samira2015**.

**The Advocate**

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**It's time to register to VOTE**

To register, go to:  
<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ovr/>

To check your voter registration status, go to:  
<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/Voter-RegistrationSearch/MyVoterReg-Status.aspx>

Questions can be directed to the Elections Division of the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth:  
<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/sec-con.htm>



# Developing a “Culture of We”

## Boston Superintendent Dr. Tommy Chang sets a high bar for all

After a number of months of consideration and deliberation, Boston Public Schools has a new leader.

In March, Dr. Tommy Chang was selected to lead the Boston school system as its new Superintendent. His term leading the nation’s first school district officially began on July 1.

Dr. Chang was most recently the Local Instructional Superintendent, Intensive Support & Innovation Center (ISIC) at the Los Angeles Unified School District, where he oversaw 135 schools and approximately 95,000 students. In his new role, Dr. Chang will oversee 128 schools and more than 57,000 students. While the district may be smaller, however, Dr. Chang is well aware that the challenges are not.

“While we have made strides to improve equity in our system,” Dr. Chang suggests, “there continues to significant and persistent opportunity and achievement gaps. We will address opportunity and achievement gaps from the earliest stages of learning through graduation. Our students’ futures depend on it.”

Before becoming involved in upper management in LA, Dr. Chang was a teacher and principal in a charter school for eight years. His interest in education goes much further back, however.

“Growing up,” he recalls, “I always enjoyed being the ‘teacher’ among my peer group, helping my friends with their homework and explaining concepts in the important topics of math, science and video games.”

While an undergraduate at the University of PA, Dr. Chang studied religion and biology, with the desire to go on to medical school. During his senior year at Penn, however, Dr. Chang says that his goal “took a turn” when he began to learn more about the issues related to educational equity. Combining his proclivity for science with his enduring desire to teach, Dr. Chang became a high school science teacher in Compton, CA.

“My teaching experience was transformative,” he says, “and changed my perspectives on society, my self-view, and ultimately my life trajectory.”

This trajectory has garnered Dr. Chang an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from Loyola Marymount University, and an M.Ed. from the Principals Leadership Institute and Teachers Education Program at UCLA.

“I loved teaching,” he maintains, calling the profession “a difficult art and science” that requires “constant attention to detail, deep reflection, and a deep love for what you teach and whom you teach.

“My classroom experience taught me that when you hold high expectations for youth and provided them the tools to succeed,” he suggests, “they will exceed their own belief in themselves.”

While his students encouraged and supported him every day, Dr. Chang became frustrated about the lack of

support he and his colleagues received from their supervisors and administrators. This frustration eventually led Dr. Chang to enter an administrative role himself.

“I often felt like I was working in isolation,” he recalls, “When I became a principal, I emphasized teamwork and collaboration. I set a high bar for our team and we always lived up to it.”

Dr. Chang hopes to bring this “high bar” to Boston and to inspire his new colleagues as he was inspired in LA

through what he calls a mutually-supportive “Culture of We.”

“As a superintendent of Boston Public Schools, I hope to support the great work that is already happening throughout Boston by building a culture... that is embraced by students, staff, families, and community.”

In addition to uniting all participants and stakeholders in a common culture,

Dr. Chang stresses the importance of uniting everyone in a common set of beliefs.

“We must be united in our belief that all children can succeed,” he posits, “and we will only reach that point if we work closely together.... Schools are only one piece of the puzzle; families and community must be close allies in our pursuit of educational equity and success.”

When asked for specific ideas he hopes to implement, Dr. Chang refers to a well-considered five-part plan that, like the “Culture of We” idea, was developed during his transition from one coast to the other.

“Over the course of the transition process,” he explains, “a diverse and representative team of individuals from across Boston traveled across the city to learn about Boston’s schools and listen to stories of bright spots and areas that need attention to ensure every student achieves excellence.”

After meeting with more than 1,500 community members in and around over 30 schools, the transition team amassed a library of more than 1,000 suggestions and recommendations. “Out of all this information,” Dr. Chang recalls, “eight projects surfaced as key items to tackle in the first 100-days.”

Dr. Chang’s 100-Day Plan (which can be read in its entirety at [http://bostonpublicschools.org/cms/lib07/MA01906464/Centricity/Domain/4/100DayPlan\\_Final%201.pdf](http://bostonpublicschools.org/cms/lib07/MA01906464/Centricity/Domain/4/100DayPlan_Final%201.pdf)) is centered around five value statements, which Dr. Chang has placed at the heart of his approach. These statements are:

1. All youth can and must achieve at high levels.
2. We innovate and transform teaching and learning to inspire excellence.
3. Those closest to students must be empowered and held accountable for making the most critical decisions that lead to student achievement.



EXPERIENCED LEADER  
Dr. Tommy Chang

4. Every child should have access to a high quality school of their choice close to home.

5. We must build a “Culture of We” that is embraced by students, staff, families, and community.

As he prepares for the first day of school, Dr. Chang is admittedly as anxious as most of the students he has come to support.

“Education has become so complex and the needs of youth so great,” he observes, “that we must demand of ourselves to work in more coordination and with greater coherence.”

By keeping expectations for himself and his team high, Dr. Chang hopes to inspire his students as they continue to inspire him.

“The students, teachers and administrators of Boston Public Schools inspire me daily,” he says. “This is truly an incredible school system!” ■

### Do YOU know someone who should be featured in Summa Cum Laude?

Want to recognize a teacher, student, staff member or graduate?

Send their information to [advocate@aftma.net](mailto:advocate@aftma.net)

Thank you!



LEADING IN LAWRENCE  
AFT MA Director of Education Policy and Programs Dan Murphy and Lawrence Teachers Union President Frank McLaughlin at the New England Consortium of State Labor Relations Agencies Conference

# BOLD

PRINT

The Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) is extending its Customer Service ‘Hotline’ hours to include 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. in addition to 2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The direct line is 781-381-6600.

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After nearly 50 years as neighbors, Berklee College of Music and the Boston Conservatory are discussing a possible merger. The proposed merger will involve everything from facilities to faculty and stands to make two of the world’s strongest music programs even better!

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Longy School of Music of Bard College will mark their 100th year this year with a series of concerts and other special events. Part of the festivities includes a series of 100-second compositions, as well as honors from the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce & the Harvard Square Business Association, and nearly \$200,000 in grants for music library expansion, building renovations, and to support educational initiatives

□ □ □ □

Got news to share?  
Send it to [advocate@aftma.net](mailto:advocate@aftma.net)

### Keep up with all of the “Action” on [www.aftma.net](http://www.aftma.net)



# Smile (Anyway)

## Reynolds Center points “Camera” at testing

High-stakes testing has become one of the most overwhelming and daunting issues in the world of education today. In many cases, test days become sick days for students who cannot bear the thought of facing another day of wasted learning time filling out bubbles or tapping on keyboards.

For Chelmsford High School Hall of Famers Peter and Paul Reynolds (see September, 2013 issue), co-founders of the Reynolds Center for Teaching, Learning, and Creativity ([www.reynoldstlc.org](http://www.reynoldstlc.org)), testing has not been just a cause célèbre for their innovative, pro-learning, not-for-profit organization but an opportunity to get creative and use humor to deal with this heated issue.

The result is a new cartoon called “The Testing Camera” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PABNMIG5V-Jc>) in which testing is likened to taking a snapshot of each student. While the “flash” may leave each student dazed, the real lesson to be learned is that no one photo is the complete image of the person of whom it was taken and that there is far more to any individual than can possibly be determined by a single test.

“This film has been brewing for a long time,” explains co-creator Peter Reynolds, recalling the “trigger” moment in high school when he had to go in on a Saturday in order to take a pair of 90-minute “bubble tests.”

“It occurred to me that these SAT scores would be the sum total of my twelve years of school,” he explains, recalling in detail the very room in which the “snapshot” of him and his hapless classmates was taken.

Reynolds also recalls the traditional chant of those who are subjected to these subjective standards.

“I remember kids running up to

each other asking the question, ‘So-What’dya get?’”

Even at 16, Reynolds recalls thinking the whole process was “ludicrous” but not having the words (or the clout) to express his feelings.

“My gut was telling me something was weirdly off about a system that reduced the dozen years of learning, after school clubs, field trips, hobbies, books read for fun in the library, family trips and experiences, and other projects in and out of school to two scores,” he says, recalling the lack of focus on the many subjects and topics he enjoyed exploring just as much as language and math.

As an internationally-known, award-winning author who, along with his brother and a caring and creative team, has been able to support educators through technology and other tools, Reynolds hopes to reach more people and have a greater impact in the process. This film is a means to that end.

At many of his public appearances, Reynolds asks his audience to show their “great license photos.” The

response, he says, is usually uncomfortable laughter.

“Those photos are like high-stakes test score results,” he suggests. “They are indeed you, but only a millisecond snapshot of who you are with a particularly unforgiving lens.”

What makes the “testing camera” worse is the fact that these hyper-focused tests are usually given just when students are discovering their passions..

“They are sticky labels

that take years, sometimes decades to peel off,” Reynolds suggests, “just when students should be feeling the opposite- that anything is possible. That given hard work, focus, creative thinking, mentors, and a dash of luck, you will be heading on a most wonderful journey to discover the best version of you.”

With the new five-minute video, Reynolds hopes that new conversations can be started about testing and about creativity.

“Short stories...are incredibly

efficient ways of making the mission transportable,” Reynolds suggests, noting how animated images especially can make ideas “stickier” and how they can “spark some new thinking about an old paradigm: testing kids at every turn being the answer to improving education.”

Though he may not be behind high-stakes, anxiety-provoking testing, Reynolds is a fan of assessment.

“We should be able to stop along the way and [ask], ‘Is any of this interesting to you?’” he suggests. “Answers to that question are pretty good data!”

After all, he suggests, if the topics and materials being offered are not considered interesting by those to whom they are offered, the answer may be restructuring the curriculum or the teaching modalities.

“Perhaps there is a different way to teach it,” he observes, “or a different door in for that learner. Maybe there will be another point in time that this will be relevant or interesting. [But] until then let’s move on and find out what is interesting to you.”

And while he admits that such “generous” student-centered teaching and learning is not easy, Reynolds observes that it is all the less so in what he sees as “rigid, test-driven environments where it is easy to forget the main goal of helping every learner navigate their true potential.”

Fortunately, Reynolds not only sees change coming, but accelerating. From personalized learning to new STEM and STEAM initiatives (i.e., those related to science, technology, engineering, art, and math), to what he observes as “a general acceptance that creativity is one of the four cornerstones of a 21st century learner” (the other three “C’s” being communication, collaboration, and critical thinking), Reynolds is encouraged that the test camera may soon be as much a thing of the past as Kodachrome.

“I hope my film inspires that,” he says. ■



**MORE THAN A SCORE**  
An illustration by Peter Reynolds

## Want more AFT MA? Check out our website



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

## Paras Bringing Books Springfield FirstBook delivery Aug 29

As reported in our previous issue by Christina Bartalomeo (“FirstBook Comes to Springfield,” July, 2015), FirstBook will soon be delivering thousands of books to the children of Springfield.

According to Springfield Federation of Paraprofessionals (SFP) President Catherine Mastronardi, the books will be unpacked and sorted on August 18-20 at Central High School.

“We plan on having about 200 volunteers helping to unpack and sort the books,” Mastronardi says. The books will then be distributed on August 29 from Central High School during the Back to School celebration.

As is the case with all such First Book projects, members of the communities that desire deliveries must register thousands of new members at [www.FirstBook.org/AFT](http://www.FirstBook.org/AFT). While most communities get off to a strong start, the last few registrants can often be difficult to find.

“We got right on board when Cathy announced the initiative,” recalls SFP Treasurer Fay A. Borgatti. “I literally nagged the staff at my school into signing up!”

In addition to convincing colleagues at Springfield schools, Borgatti and other members of her team spread the word to churches, libraries, and other community centers, eventually gathering enough registrants to

move the plan forward. SFP Secretary Connie Long also notes that she and her colleagues will hand out bookmarks to acknowledge the important role that the SFP, AFT Massachusetts, AFT and First Book played in bringing the books to Springfield. The bookmarks will also provide valuable “Tips for Reading with Your Child” in English and Spanish.

When asked how they first came to learn of First Book, Long explains that many first heard of it from AFT MA Director of Education Policy and Programs Dan Murphy at an executive board meeting in November of 2014.

“It is an exciting adventure that we, as Para-educators, want to take part in,” Long says. “Our president, Cathy, has been the force behind First Book and our Executive Board and membership supports her on this venture.”

According to Long, the SFP’s continuing mission is to ensure that “every child will have a book in their house that they can read.”

“We all have worked so hard to get this project up and running,” Long observes. “I hope that by informing the public of the importance of reading with our students, that we will fulfill our goal, get the books to the children of Springfield and help to improve literacy.” ■



# The Doctor is In (Touch)

## “Dr. Milo” uses science to ease anxiety

Anxiety is a growing problem for students of all ages and backgrounds. Fortunately, many are helping to educate students and others about the causes and potential solutions for this nervous disorder.

In addition to the work being done at the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital (see June, 2015 issue), there are others who are working specifically with students to support them and others in the community.

Dr. Nada Milosavljevic (a.k.a., “Dr. Milo”) is a Board-certified physician and faculty member at Harvard Medical School. In addition to conventional medicine, Dr. Milo practices Integrative Medicine (e.g., acupuncture, herbs and supplements, etc.) to help with cognitive and behavioral conditions. As the founder of the Integrative Health Program at Massachusetts General Hospital, the former attorney works with a set of school-based clinics to help high-school students who suffer from anxiety.

“Stress is stress,” Dr. Milo maintains. “When stress goes unchecked and becomes chronic, it can lead to a serious anxiety disorder in addition to...other health hazards,” all of which, Dr. Milo suggests, are increasingly prevalent among young people.

“Teens face stressful situations at school, at home, in social interactions, and as a result of after-school work or other activity,” Dr. Milo says.

While treatments exist, there are often obstacles that prevent those who need them most from benefitting.

“Exciting high-tech advances ...ffer

a wealth of treatment options to patients,” Dr. Milo suggests, “but limited access to care, rising healthcare costs, and fears of potential long-term effects...require alternatives that make care more accessible, more affordable, and minimally invasive.”

In her latest research, Dr. Milo focused on the design and implementation of treatment programs by working directly with high school students.

“The use of integrative protocols and sensory therapies such as acupuncture and aromatherapy offers many benefits to teens suffering from anxiety disorders,” Dr. Milo observes, “including self-empowerment, self-care, and long-term preventive care.”

Over the course of a three-year study, Dr. Milo worked with students who had been referred by teachers,

parents, and health care providers for anxiety.

“There was a need among high school students for healthy, natural options to manage stress and anxiety and a paucity of research that could effectively evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of...protocols,” Dr. Milo explains when asked why she undertook this study. “This was the first study of its kind in the U.S. to collaborate with school clinics, manage school-based pro-



SCIENCE FOR STUDENTS  
Dr. Nada Milosavljevic

grams, and conduct a research study evaluating and providing integrative... treatments.”

So far, over 100 students have participated in 10-week protocols and all have reported improvement in their mental state and wellbeing.

“In fact,” Dr. Milo says, “many participating students achieved a 30% reduction in stress levels!”

After a series of 30-minute sessions, participants are offered individualized treatment plans that were designed to minimize disruption of the school day while allowing and encouraging access to appropriate care. Not only did the program not get in the way of the students’ attendance, it actually increased attendance by decreasing absenteeism for offsite clinical appointments.

“One of the goals of the study was to build a workable model that could offer cost-effective on-site care,” Dr. Milo explains, noting that the early adopter schools were “eager to explore

beneficial and unique programs to further the health and wellness of their student populations.”

In addition to working with students, Dr. Milo also supports teachers and administrators by educating them about the wide array of available therapies and how to use them most effectively.

“When I started the research,” Dr. Milo explains, “I realized that a community-based approach was likely to have

the greatest impact.... We decided to reach out to the places where the patients (in this case students) were

located, so high schools made the most sense.”

Now that the study has proven so useful, Dr. Milo hopes that the program can be put to work in all 41 school-based health centers in MA and hopefully even beyond the Commonwealth’s borders. Having already published and presented her research, Dr. Milo is confident that others are learning of her work and will soon come calling.

“We are optimistic that the program can expand throughout the state of Massachusetts,” she says, “and into other states with similar facilities that can accommodate replications of this groundbreaking program.”

“The school-based health center has been providing comprehensive primary care, including behavioral health services, to the students since 1990, explains Jordan Hampton, who has been the pediatric nurse practitioner and program manager of the MGH Student Health Center at Chelsea High School.

As the school population has “high rates of trauma,” Hampton recalls being excited to be involved when she was first approached with the idea of participating in the study.

“Trauma...affects their school performance and general well being,” she observes, noting that many students are “resistant to traditional talk therapy and psychotropic medicine to address their issues,” thereby making them ideal candidates for so-called “alternative” modalities.

“The program has been a huge addition to the services provided at the school-based health center,” Hampton says, “and I am thrilled that we were the first to offer it!” ■

# Summa Cum Laude: Josh Ramirez

For most students, being the first to graduate from a new program would be accolade enough. For Wentworth Institute of Technology graduate Josh Ramirez, however, it was just the beginning!

In addition to being Wentworth’s first graduate in Computer Information Systems (CIS), Ramirez was the station director of Wentworth’s Internet Radio Experience (WIRE), president of the Wentworth Improvisational Theatre Club, and was also involved in an array of other professional and personal pursuits. Currently, Ramirez is starting a business that manufactures high-end desktop computer cases.

When asked when he first became interested in technology, Ramirez rapidly replies that he cannot remember a time when he was not interested. Early days playing “classic” video games with his father captured Ramirez’s attention. In middle school, that “passion” spread to computers and web development. High school brought programming and PC assembly.

“During my senior year in high school,” he explains, “I had the unique opportunity...to [teach] other students the fundamentals of computer hardware and software.” Developing a series presentations that involved students and guest speakers, Ramirez helped transform what he calls “relatively tech-illiterate individuals,” into computer engineers who could build a PC from parts.

“By the end of that week,” he recalls, “every student was able to build a new computer...unassisted, and then take it home. I still consider it one of my most enjoyable projects!”

With technology and teaching in his busy background, it may be no surprise that the Ramirez found his way to Wentworth.

“Funnily enough,” Ramirez laughs, “I toured Wentworth completely on a whim after leaving [another] tour early. My parents had noticed that Wentworth had a co-op program... and that they happened to be running campus tours the same day I was in Boston - so we figured that we might as well stop by.”

This fortuitous change in itinerary would lead Ramirez further down his road of passionate discovery.

“By the end of that tour, I was immediately convinced that Wentworth was the school for me,” he says, noting the school’s “robust” co-op program and their strong emphasis on lab work and hands-on approaches to learning. “The ethos of the school really spoke towards a pragmatic, practical approach to learning that I really appreciated. It was clear that Wentworth was intensely geared towards giving students the resources and education necessary to graduate as competitive, competent, and thoughtful engineers. And that’s precisely what I was looking for in a degree program.”

Having started as a Computer Science (CS) major, Ramirez chose to change to CIS as soon as he heard that the new program was being developed.

“While I enjoyed my first year of classes as a CS student,” he explains, “my interest in technology went beyond the intricacies of programming. What I found most interesting, in fact, was everything that surrounded the development I was doing.”

Eager to support development as

much as he loved doing it, Ramirez worked on methods that would allow and encourage his colleagues to be more efficient and happy.

“I wanted to be able to look at technology from a strategic, broad-based perspective,” he explains. “When I had conversations with teachers about this and learned about the forthcoming CIS program, I knew immediately that it was the exact discipline I was looking for.”

As he was the first to graduate from the new program, Ramirez feels the

way many pioneers do. “It was exciting,” he maintains, “but a little scary. I transferred to the new program over a semester before it officially launched... actually...before Wentworth officially adopted the major!”

In addition to leading the way in this new concentration, Ramirez also found time to lead the school broadcasting team to new heights as well.

“Before WIRE, my only real experience in the realm of audio was that of listening to podcasts,” he admits. “I had an interest in online radio beforehand, but not much experience.”

Even so, he was able to help his *alma mater*’s station win national awards and increase listenership.

“I ended up entering a leadership role at the station...in a matter of weeks,” Ramirez recalls.

When he arrived at WIRE, campus construction had relegated much of



LEADING THE WAY  
Josh Ramirez

the equipment to storage and had also removed the station from its former home. “Membership and listenership were incredibly low,” Ramirez recalls, “and most within WIRE expected that the various challenges facing the station were insurmountable.”

Instead of looking at things as they were, Ramirez looked at what could be and dedicated himself to leading the way forward, just as he was doing academically.

“I ended up spending more and more of my time representing the station, and advocating for changes that would support our content creators and en-

courage people to tune in,” he recalls. “This eventually culminated in my being elected the Assistant Station Director, and then the Station Director a short time later.” Whether he speaks of his advances in major development or in audience development, Ramirez hopes that his legacy at Wentworth is one of open-mindedness and forward thinking.

“I only hope that my contributions to WIRE, and my experience as a first-generation CIS major, can afford future students the opportunity to find happiness, find their passions, and find themselves, both inside and outside the classroom,” he says. “The prospect of having been able to make someone’s day a little better, or a student’s future prospects a little brighter, is incredibly fulfilling, and remains a source of pride for me.” ■



# Meet Your Local Leader: Beth Kontos

On her LinkedIn profile, recently-elected President of the Salem Teachers Union Beth Kontos describes herself thusly:

I am an educator seeking to keep public schools free from charter and private takeovers. Public schools should be a place for all students to learn and grow. I am working to eliminate high stakes standardized testing from the public schools in the United States and to push the profiteers out of our schools.

While this is clearly a lofty and obstacle-strewn mission, Kontos has the passion, skills, and local connections to make a serious go at it.

After working in technology for many years, Kontos began to feel uninspired and to look for something more meaningful. As she had taught Sunday school for 12 years while her children were young, Kontos had experience in the classroom and knew what profound differences quality teachers could make.

“I realized that those hours of Sunday school preparation and teaching each week were a pure joy and the best part of my...week,” she explains. “So, I decided that it was time to make a switch into education.”

While still working and raising a family, Kontos returned to her alma mater of Salem State University to garner her Masters in history. Graduating in 2004, she found opportunities to teach at Lynn Classical High School and then at Salem High School.

“I was fortunate in both schools to find mentors to guide me through the first years in the classroom,” Kontos recalls, admitting (but not recommending) that she had begun teaching without enrolling in a student-teaching program.

“I had to rely on my own child rearing and volunteer experiences to help me,” she says, again thanking supportive colleagues like Patti Frey and Bob Bua for guiding her through the challenges of new teacher-dom.

“I fully endorse future teachers

going through the traditional methods of teacher preparation,” Kontos adds, noting that she has since completed a series of education pedagogy classes at Salem State and that she is also taking classes to help her more effectively support English Language Learners.

When asked what prompted her to teach history, Kontos ebulliently discusses her love of the Constitution and the Progressive Era in American History and the special place in her heart and her curriculum for labor rights and the Civil Rights Movement. “These topics are intertwined and have continued to be relevant,” she maintains.

When asked about Labor in particular, Kontos suggests that many people have become “[so] accustomed to the benefits of the Labor movement...that [they] have taken it for granted and allowed some of the strength of unity slip away.”

From mandatory public education to the minimum wage to the weekend, many elements of daily life that all workers count on were won for them by the Labor movement. And yet many now see fit to challenge and even dismember the very organizations that granted them these privileges.

“I began to see the teachers around me become discouraged by negative press and difficult, sometimes unrealistic, working conditions,” Kontos says when asked how and why she became actively involved in Union work. After stepping ion mid-year for a retiring vice president, Kontos soon realized that long-time President Joyce Harrington was preparing to retire as well.

“I took this opportunity to run,” she

explains. “After all, I figured, if not now, when? If not me, who?”

In her new role, Kontos looks forward to building upon the strengths of the past and moving public education and Labor forward.

“My personal goal is to join with the voices calling for more strength to the individual workers,” she explains, “and less control in the hands of the billionaire families.”

What is even more fortunate is that



**A STUDENT OF HISTORY**  
**Salem Teachers Union President Beth Kontos**

Kontos is far from alone.

From AFT MA and Citizens for Public Schools to the North Shore Labor Council and myriad parent groups, Kontos has support in her quest to stop the “testing mania” and end the push for charter schools.

“We must not lift the cap on char-

ter schools,” she stresses, admonishing those who would privatize public services and hire those who know little about education to run schools. “Privatization and the testing that comes with it are destroying education across this nation. We have to stop it in Massachusetts then continue the movement...across the country!”

While many decry the “achievement gap,” Kontos echoes many in AFT in pointing out that the real gap is an economic one. “The real civil rights violation in education,” she suggests, “is that our schools with the neediest students are not funded properly and too much of our budgets are spent on testing instead of direct services to our students.”

Instead of spending so much time, money, and other resources on preparing for tests that most often make those who are less fortunate financially feel that way otherwise, Kontos suggests spending more on arts, health, reading and Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) programs, as well as technology and wraparound services for all students.

“I want free afterschool activities and intermural sports for all students,” she says, suggesting that the only way students will be able to see the value of taking care of themselves and their world is if things such as physical activity and math and science clubs are available without financial obligation. “We need to encourage the whole child; body, mind, and soul.”

While many suggest that public school teachers are unable to provide these services and benefits even when they are “fully funded,” Kontos observes that, when teachers are treated with respect, everyone benefits.

“Respect is the number one result every worker wants,” she maintains, adding that “being paid a fair wage can translate into respect so we can best support our families.”

As the new Local head, Kontos is dedicated to maintaining this respect among her peers and for earning it from those outside as well.

“I will also continue to work so that all our employees receive fair evaluations based on their work in the classroom and not on the results of a test we see as unfair, biased, and out of our control,” she says, suggesting that it is “unfair to judge a worker based on the performance of others just as it is unfair to judge a student by an unproven method.”

With over a decade of classroom experience behind her and all of her colleagues behind her as well, Kontos looks forward to facing the challenges facing public education and to do all she can to maintain the spirit that makes public education great.

“Communities thrive when our education system works,” Kntos observes. “I look forward to the challenges ahead!” ■

# Meet Your Local Leader: Don Dabenigno

The world of accountancy has led many great people to great fame. Most of them, however, achieve that recognition within the field. For newly-elected Chelsea Teachers Union President and AFT MA Executive Board member Don Dabenigno, the story is somewhat different.

After graduating from high school, Dabenigno entered college to pursue a degree in accounting. While attending classes, he began to spend time working with school-age children as part of various recreation and athletics programs.

“The enjoyment I had working with and educating youngsters convinced me that I wanted to be a teacher,” he explains. “At the end of my freshman year, I transferred schools and pursued a degree in education.”

As a child, Dabenigno was taught by his parents to believe that all people should be treated fairly and that those

with experience should help those without.

“Throughout my professional and personal life I have maintained these beliefs,” he says. As an educator, Dabenigno has often found himself not just giving out advice to students,



**BEING ACCOUNTABLE**  
**Chelsea Teachers Union President and AFT MA Executive Board Member Donald Dabenigno**

but also being sought for advice by colleagues.

“Many colleagues would seek advice

from me,” he explains, “not only about student engagement and classroom management but about fairness in the workplace.”

As he became more and more educated on such topics, Dabenigno found himself becoming more and more interested in union work.

“Knowing that some of a union’s many roles are to promote outstanding working conditions, uphold fairness and protect its membership’s rights,” he says, “becoming involved with AFT MA was a priority.”

After a few years of teaching in Chelsea, Dabenigno had an opportunity to run for building representative and then for the office of Local President.

“I saw it as a chance to put my beliefs into action,” he explains, suggesting that his years of experience in and out of the classroom have granted him a perspective that has often proven useful in negotiations and other union matters.

“I bring a variety of strategies,” he says, “and saw...this leadership role as an opportunity to reach out to a much larger group of col-

leagues.”

In both of his new roles, Dabenigno hopes to continue the “great work” that has been carried out by Local 1340 and by AFT MA.

“To achieve this,” he advises, “we need to continue to educate our membership about the opportunities the local provides and increase the level of confidence in the local’s leadership.”

Dabenigno also hopes to continue to engage colleagues and to encourage more of them to become involved as well. “I will be asking all members of the local to explore new ideas in an effort to further unite our members,” he says.

Another major goal for Dabenigno is to use the power of the union to support our educators and our students.

“I want to oversee and safeguard the numerous gains the local has made over the years on behalf of its members,” he says, “in order to provide outstanding education to the children of our city.” ■



# Educator's Opinion: Five ways to recharge your batteries

By Nasrin Samadi

At the end of every school year, I feel like I've gone through a marathon, crawling to get to the finish line. June 29th was a very far-away light at the end of a long tunnel. I had a particularly rough year with a number of challenging students. Every sincere effort to spark their intellectual curiosity seemed to fail. Usually by June, I feel pride in seeing progress. This year, however, only a few students showed up for the last days of school and nobody said "Goodbye" or "Thank you."

In my ninth year of teaching, I have finally realized not every class will be perfect and that some students will be difficult to reach. Some will blame the teacher for not trying harder, for not thinking of an innovative way to motivate the students, or for not coming up with a better incentive. In any case, it is hard to recover from an emotionally draining year, where negative circumstances can make you question your own competency and ability to do your job. That is why it is so important to keep yourself healthy and well and to do all you can to maintain your dignity, pride and passion, so that, even on your worst days, you can do your best.

But how do we recover and recuperate? Here are some suggestions:

### 1. Body Recovery

Sleep. Just sleep. Rest up. Be lazy. Be a complete sloth. Our minds cannot begin to recover without physically recharging our bodies.

### 2. Be good to yourself

Teachers rarely make time for themselves. Even during the summer, when we ostensibly have all of this unstructured time, it is often difficult to allow ourselves the freedom to do absolutely

nothing- to enjoy the peace of silence, alone in complete solitude.

It always surprises me how concerned people are with being unoccupied for so long. It must be so lonely!

I rather enjoy the solace of not having to live by bells, to go shopping when the malls are empty and brunch places are not packed. It is okay to not have every minute filled with a productive activity. No one should make you feel guilty for taking time for yourself, especially when the school

year will consume all of your free time- and more! While regular 9-to-5-ers enjoy their week-ends throughout the year, teachers are grading notebooks, calling parents, creating more lesson plans, and uploading artifacts for administration. You deserve a break! Take it!

### 3. Rediscover your

#### bucket list

Once you've allowed your body and mind to recuperate, it is time to feed your soul again. In a matter of weeks, we will be back in class. There will be a new group of kids who deserve a happy teacher that is passionate about their content area. In order to give them that, you need to give yourself something as well.

Summer is your chance to start over again and rediscover your love for the subject you teach or just to feel a sense of accomplishment and joy in doing something new and different. It is imperative to regain a positive outlook and to find joy in the things you do. Remember- the energy you have in the summer transfers into the fall months.

Do something to spark your inner child and to increase your sense of excitement. Take a weekend trip somewhere new. Try a new sport or make time for that project you have been putting off. Traveling is a great way to

take time off, to gain a new perspective on life, and to disconnect from technology. Think back to what made you interested in teaching to begin with. What got you hooked? Maybe it was seeing mummies in a museum or watching your first Shakespearean play. I have always been fascinated with ancient civilizations and so have made an effort to see something new each year. From the Great Pyramids to the Parthenon, seeing history come alive is truly incredible. It reignites my spirit, curiosity, and wonder with the world, and inspires me to share it with my students. I know that when I am enthusiastic and passionate about a subject, it will be infectious. And in the same way, if I do not regain my positive spirit, it can lead to a very negative year.

### 4. Pace yourself and plan ahead

When you are able to rediscover your spark, it is time to put that creative, productive energy to use. Unfortunately, summer cannot be entirely play time. A good teacher needs to plan ahead for the year to come. Fortunately, this can be done slowly, using just a few hours a week. Take a calendar out and start mapping your first units. Set goals for how much you realistically want to complete each week so that by the time the last week of August rolls around, you are not having nightmares about the first day of school. Putting in the work early prevents the stress that will ensue from procrastination.

### 5. Practice your regular school schedule and routines

When school starts, the hardest thing to adjust to is a normal sleeping pattern. Do not wait until the night before to try to get to sleep early. At the end of August, start changing your eating times and increase your physical activity to make yourself tired earlier so that you can begin sleeping at a normal time. Set an alarm and do not sleep in too late! Gradually, start your day earlier and allow your body time to adjust. Make a list of weekly

chores that need to be done, and figure out what days you will consistently do them. Planning out the small stressors in life can help make the entire year less stressful and allow you to focus your energy on more important things.

As with all things that are important to do, doing any of these things is easier said than done. However, a little discipline can go a long way to ensuring a smooth start to the school year.

Nasrin Samadi teaches English and Civics at the Edwards Middle School in Charlestown. ■



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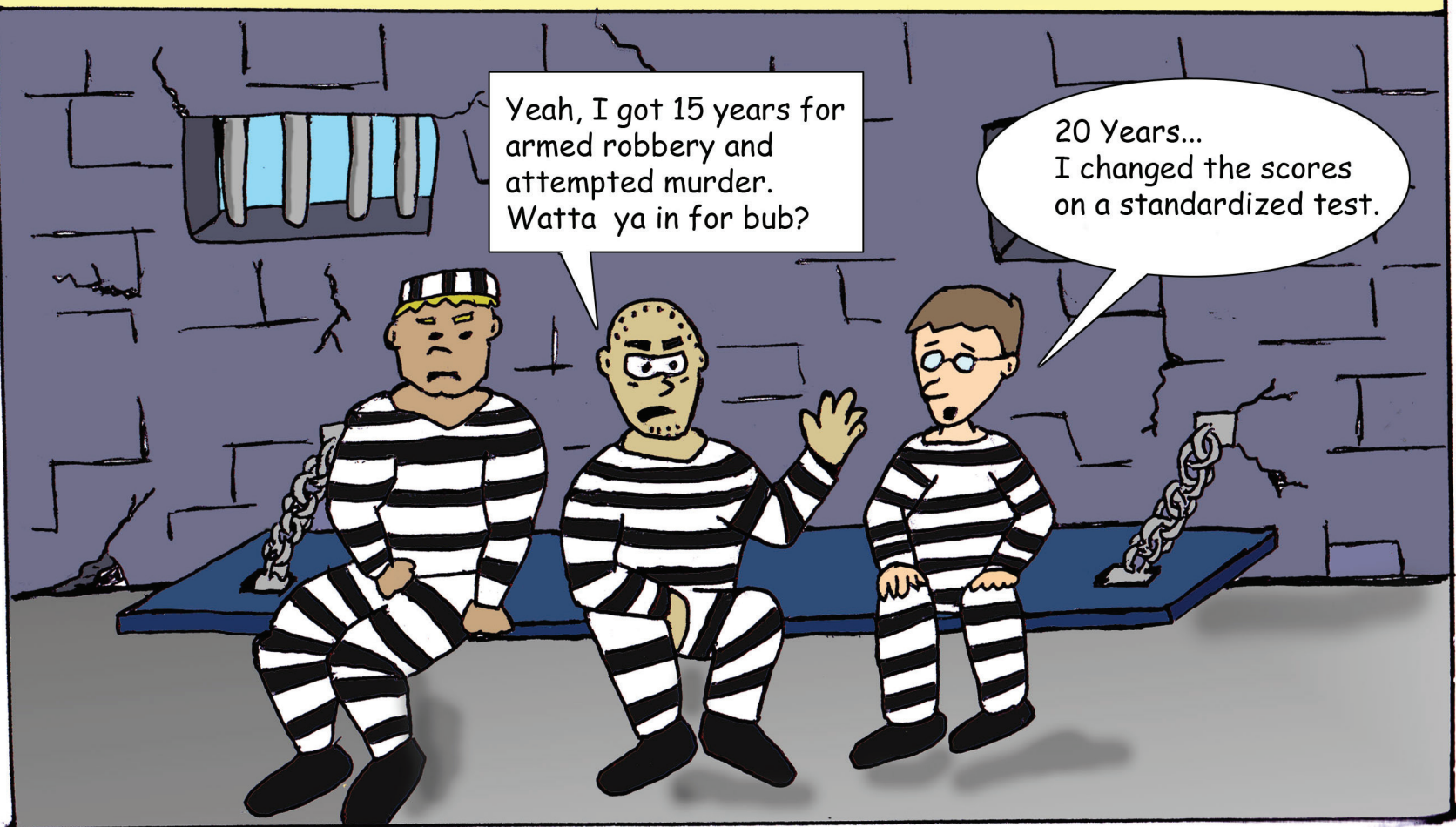
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By Scott Hubeny

## Somewhere Inside a Maximum Security Prison in Atlanta





# Supporting Safety in Schools

## New legislation helps students and teachers focus on learning

Safe and supportive school-wide cultures are needed more than ever. The research is clear that if we want to prevent School violence and ensure that all of our children are achieving at high levels in school, then we must support our educators to help children feel safe and connected to the school through making friends and having good relationships with adults, learning to self-regulate their emotions and behaviors, and by addressing their mental health needs. Often, those who perpetrate the most heinous crimes are those that never got the social, emotional, academic, and mental health support when they needed it most. It is also imperative that schools and legislators work together to ensure the maximum level of security and safety in schools so that students feel safe physically, as well. After all, if students and teachers do not feel safe and supported, they cannot focus on learning.

On August 13, 2014, a new law was signed that was intended to support schools in the creation and maintenance of “safe and supportive schools” (MGL c 69 Section 1P) so that students will be better able to focus on improving their learning. The law known as “safe and supportive schools” (which was part of a larger gun violence-reduction act that had been inspired by the tragedy in Newtown, CT) provides a framework to integrate such important elements of school safety as bullying, truancy, and dropout prevention, as well as social-emotional education into a strong foundation for learning. It also established a statewide Safe and Supportive Schools Commission to advise the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) on proper implementation.

This new law is innovative in that it not only requires DESE, advised by the newly established Safe and Supportive Schools Commission, to develop the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework which will guide the development of helping schools become safe and supportive schools, but it also requires the development of an on-line self-assessment tool to help schools engage in this process. The Safe and Supportive Schools framework and self-assessment tool is organized by six elements of school operations. These elements are the role of leadership, professional development, appropriate and accessible resources, academic and

non-academic strategies, policy and protocol and family collaboration. By involving everyone from administrators to parents and appointing members from key stakeholders in the state, The Commission is tasked with encouraging engagement and support from all possible stakeholders in order to assure students and teachers the maximum support so they can focus on their primary jobs of teaching and learning.

Commission members include Angela Cristiani from the Boston Teacher Union in addition to designees by the Secretary of Education, the statewide student advisory committee, and appointees by the Mass Association of School Superintendents, Mass Association of School Committees, Mass School Psychologists, Mass Nurses Association, the Mass Elementary Principals and Secondary Principals



**PASSIONATE PIONEER**  
**BTU's Angela Cristiani**

Associations, the Administrators for Special Education, Mass School Counselors, the Parent Professional Advocacy League, Mass Organization of Educational Collaboratives, the Mass Teachers Association and Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC). The Committee is also tasked

with making recommendations for additional legislation as needed to implement the Safe and Supportive Schools framework statewide.

The Commission is co-chaired by the Commissioner of DESE and one elected member. Susan Cole, director of the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) was elected the first citizen co-chair. TLPI (<http://traumasensitiveschools.org>) is a joint program of Harvard Law School (HLS) and Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC) whose goal is to ensure that all children traumatized by adversity succeed in school. Cole, the lead author of *Helping Traumatized Children Learn* and a longtime advocate who started her career as a teacher in MA and CT says that, “the new law provides an enormous opportunity for all stakeholders across the Commonwealth to reach consensus on how to make schools safe for all children not only through traditional safety measures but also by supporting all children to feel included, and

supported emotionally so that they can behave appropriately and reach their highest achievement levels.”

Among the most ardent supporters of the legislation and the movement surrounding it is Boston Teachers Union Political Director Angela Cristiani, who says that the new school safety legislation provides the “missing piece” in the gun violence reduction legislation and makes “real reform” possible.

“I’ve helped lead this statewide and was one of the lobbyists that helped get this passed,” Cristiani explains, noting that she also worked with Governor Patrick’s Behavioral Health Task Force and that she now serves as the AFTMA representative on the commission.

According to Cristiani (who has been an integral part of the movement since its inception), the language that was included in the recent gun violence legislation is “the first-of-its-kind... in the country... as far as behavioral health goes.” She also suggests that it is “the most comprehensive” and notes that, by introducing it, Boston was actually “ahead” of the State law. “

“We were first,” she proudly posits, “and that’s a really big deal!” In Boston, it’s referred to as the ‘Comprehensive Behavioral Health Model’ (CBHM). “My colleagues in the Behavioral Health Services Department have vision, understand the comprehensive behavioral health and mental health needs of the children in our classrooms, and their day-to-day multifaceted, integrated behavioral health work focusing on children is the CBHM model. What has been achieved and implemented, to date, is the result of the most unique joint union-management/public-private sector collaboration I’ve ever seen. All egos are left at the door. Professionals trust each other. Our collective work, like the CBHM Model, is integrated, seamless, and based on data that helps all children.”

In addition to being pioneering in terms of timing, Cristiani suggests that the language is progressive in its embracing of academic frameworks and higher-order thinking.

“The language is tied to frameworks approved and integrated at DESE,” she says. “It is [also] tied to a grant program, so each school has the

autonomy to develop a plan.” As a comprehensive framework, the new language covers everything from accountability, behavioral health and bullying to sensitivity training and truancy prevention.

“As these are all integrated,” Cristiani explains, “it allows for access to resources and services and provides leadership and professional development, as well as academic and non-academic strategies and collaboration with families.”

Cristiani will serve as a representative of AFT MA on the Safe and Supportive Schools Commission. As she is a school psychologist who still works with children pro bono outside of Boston (so as not to conflict with her political work on behalf of the BTU), she brings a unique and useful perspective and expertise to the organization.

“My particular charge has been developing resources to implement the program,” she says, noting that funding has already been increased from \$200,000 in 2014 to \$500,000 this

year. This will allow for up to 40 schools to receive funding to assess the needs at their schools and develop plans to improve their school-wide culture. It provides funding to DESE to create a community of practice around safe and supportive school culture across the Commonwealth. “My hope is to see this fully funded.”

One of the reasons for the increased support by the legislature is the early proof of success. Using the be-

havioral health model, Brighton High School was able to lower its suspension rate by 44% in one year. Still Cristiani maintains, there is much more to be done.

“The goal is that all schools across the Commonwealth will be safe and supported,” she says. “It recognizes that children need support and that schools need to be healthy and safe learning environments that allow children to develop healthy relationships and to regulate their emotions and behaviors so they can achieve academic and non-academic success in school while maintaining physical and psychological health and well being.”

As the new program is so comprehensive, it not only helps each individual in a variety of ways but has the potential to help the maximum number of individuals as well.

“Every child benefits,” Cristiani observes, “and that is rare, especially in this day and age.” ■



**SAFETY SUPPORTER**  
**TLPI Director Susan Cole**

## Dan Georgianna Named “Distinguished Alumnus”

University of MA Dartmouth Professor and long-time *Advocate* contributor Dan Georgianna has been selected as a Distinguished Alumnus by his high school, Christian Brothers Academy (CBA), in Syracuse, NY. The annual award is granted based on career accomplishments, including community service.

While at CBA, Georgianna was an honor student and star football player who helped his *alma mater* win the division championship football team.”

At UMass, Georgianna taught for 35 years and served the UMass Faculty

Federation and AFT MA as an advocate and regular contributor. In addition to his column in the *Advocate*, Georgianna published over 50 other articles and books.

In a letter of recommendation that was sent to the school on Georgianna’s behalf, AFT MA President Tom Gosnell called Georgianna “an outstanding human being and professional” and observed how he has “en-

riched the lives of his students by challenging them to think beyond conventional boundaries and use their abilities to make a better society.”

Among Georgianna’s many achievements as a representative of AFT MA has been helping to obtain health insurance and retirement benefits for part-time faculty at UMass, an achievement that, according to Gosnell, was “magnified



**AWARD-WINNER**  
**Dan Georgianna**

by the fact that very few universities provide health insurance coverage for part-time faculty.” Gosnell also cited Georgianna’s “commitment to social justice and the underdog, particularly his passion to obtain quality education for all students.

“He fully recognized that every child needed a quality education to have a fulfilling life and to be an active citizen,” Gosnell said. ■



# Moral(e) Education

## Goldin Foundation supports those who support our students

Even in the best of schools, many educators do not get the credit they deserve for the effort and expertise they bring to the classroom and the community .

Fortunately, there are a number of organizations who do all they can to recognize and encourage our excellent educators.

Founded in 1990 by long-time educator Harriet Goldin, the Goldin Foundation for Excellence in Education (<http://www.goldinfoundation.org>) is focused on recognizing great educators in MA and far beyond. The Foundation also works to help keep these great teachers teaching and to encourage potentially great teachers to enter the field.profession.

When she created the Foundation with the support of her husband and children, Goldin says that she was “very aware of the financial issues facing schools that were leading to...layoffs of many educators, and reducing options for students such as electives and other enrichment opportunities.”

Citing low morale, Goldin took it upon herself to create a new means of encouraging excellent educators to continue to encourage and support their students.

“I felt the need to give back to the teaching profession,” Goldin recalls. “The design of the Foundation is to recognize excellence of educators who, nominated by their peers, have made significant positive impact on students. It is also vehicle to: show respect for educators, retain quality teachers and share their best practices, and inspire others to be educators.”

Originally established in coordination with The Education Cooperative (TEC), a consortium of 15 public school systems, the Foundation has since expanded to include additional school systems in MA as well as some in CA and TX. Each year, participating districts are encouraged to nominate superlative educators. The selected award recipients a set of superlative educators who share their projects, visions, and insights at an annual regional Goldin Foundation Educators Forum; and each receives a cash award.

Among the recent winners from Boston are Joy Bautista, Janet Ferone, Leslie Gant, Mark Lonergan, Deidre O’Halloran, and Marlene Veldwisch.

According to her nominators, Bautista (who teaches science at Boston Arts Academy) is “an innovative, interdisciplinary teacher” who believes that problem-based, inquiry-based learning “helps to level the playing field for urban students.” In addition to teaching, Bautista was cited for her

to join the Foundation Board to help select other worthy recipients.”

As she has had the pleasure and honor of working with and recognizing so many excellent educators, Ferone has seen how these teachers are otherwise rewarded and encouraged, and the view is not always so encouraging.

“Those of us in education do not always receive recognition or reward for their hard work,” she suggests, noting how friends in other fields receive

large annual bonuses and other incentives. As such, even the modest financial reward that comes with the Goldin Foundation Award is validating, as is having the opportunity to learn of what colleagues really think of one’s achievements. While Ferone had an idea about the type of impact she had been able to make on students over her 30-year career working with inner-city students with significant behavioral and emotional challenges

(for whom she used the award money to provide a vacation party), she was still moved by the letters she received from colleagues who also felt that she had made a difference in their lives. As a member of the Foundation Board, Ferone is now able to pass on the good feeling and support that she received from so many when she was nominated.

“Being on the board allows me to contribute to acknowledging educators who have gone above and beyond for their students and their schools,” Ferone says. “It is so rewarding to be able to provide the validation I was so happy to receive to fellow educators.”

As she works in development, Veldwisch also supports educators. As she is not in the classroom on a daily basis, however, she was all the more honored to be recognized by her peers.

“It is rare that those of us in non-traditional education positions are recognized for our contributions to not only our school but also the education community,” she observes. “To be nominated for the Goldin Award by the principal and a teacher leader that

I was mentoring meant a tremendous amount to me [and] to then be chosen for the actual award and celebrated by the Goldin Foundation and my friends/family is an honor that I will long treasure!”

In addition to hosting the Forum and presenting the annual awards, the Foundation also supports a network of affiliated educators that encourages the sharing of best practices among award recipients. It also hosts a series of leadership seminars that allow and encourage recipients and others to further expand upon their realms of expertise. A recent project, Baby Brain Connection: Parenting for Early Childhood Literacy provides outreach for less privileged parents and their parent providers including workshops and a website.

No matter how people become involved or remain engaged, however, Goldin maintains that the real winners are the students. “Students are the ultimate recipients,” she observes, “a result of a big ripple effect by excellent teaching and greater morale.” While he says that he did not enter the teaching field searching for accolades and admits that he went into the field knowing that victories can sometimes seem to be “few and far between” and that most of them are private, Lonergan is grateful for the work the Foundation is doing and the work it encourages among his colleagues.

“I think Harriet and the Goldin Foundation are doing important work by shining a light on the positive contributions educators are making in their schools,” Lonergan says. “The Goldin Foundation is celebrating the work of educators and the profession as a whole.”

In addition to representing a rare moment in the spotlight, Lonergan says the ceremony offered an opportunity to meet and collaborate with talented colleagues and a reminder that, accolades aside, “the work never ends.”

“In this line of work,” Lonergan observes, “there are no laurels to rest on. Every day brings a new set of challenges and, if we’re lucky, another small victory.” ■



ENCOURAGING EXCELLENCE  
Mickey and Harriet Goldin

facility with progressive educational models and her in-class coaching talents. Fellow educator Kimberly Conrad credits Bautista with inspiring her to teach and with being a trusted mentor early on. Among Bautista’s award-worthy accolades were her piloting the Museum of Science’s engineering curriculum, collaborating with Children’s Hospital to test a curriculum that had been designed by the the National Institute of Health (NIH), and incorporating the arts into the popular union of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and pioneering the growing STEAM movement (which adds art to the acronym).

“Joy Bautista is a remarkable educator,” applauds Foundation Advisory Board member Charles MacLaughlin. “[She is] someone whom all educators...can be truly proud.... She makes me wish I was starting my career over, with her as my mentor.”

Ferone first became aware of the Foundation in 2013 when she was nominated by colleagues in BPS to receive the Award for Excellence. “Later that year,” she recalls, “I was invited

## Educator’s Opinion: Moral Compass

By Shirley Jones Luke

Teaching is a profession that requires great skill, patience and sacrifice. Teachers need to be presenters, facilitators and content experts. We need to be able to handle multiple personalities, provide advice and manage people, content, and more. We spend long hours preparing lessons, grading tests and researching ways to create an engaging classroom environment. Unfortunately, in today’s high-stakes, high-tech world, teachers are being treated as the problem rather than the solution to society’s obstacles and ills.

There is more talk in society about firing teachers than helping them deal with the growing demands of colleges and employers for skilled workers. Millions upon millions of dollars are spent on creating national education standards, such as the Common Core, and producing increasingly challenging tests such as PARCC. But every year, teachers are fired for being “bad” and many more simply leave the pro-

fession out of stress and frustration. In other countries, such as Japan and India, teachers are not only treated as respected professionals, but are revered for their knowledge.

In the U.S., teachers encounter ven- detta prone administrators, disinterested parents and ap- athetic students. Teachers suffer from verbal and increasingly physical abuse in their class- rooms. Schools often make their own rules when it comes to disciplining students leaving teachers feeling doubly victimized. Academics can be seen as a two-sided coin – schools need to show progress on standardized tests but some of the neediest students still struggle

with reading, writing and mathematics.

In my nearly 13 years of teaching, I have witnessed the effects of meet-

ing state and federal testing goals and the struggle to improve the academic abilities of students. In the classroom, creativity is on life support. Teachers are focused on testing strategies rather than holistic learning. Students have turned to their cell phones to escape the lack of engaging lessons. Teacher morale is low – but

no one cares.

I have seen too many students not reach their academic potential. There are many reasons for this. Some is due to a lack of motivation. Achieving success often takes more work than it did 20 years ago. Some is due to



attitude. Many students see education as being in the way rather than being a way to something better. Some is due to skill. If you are a senior in high school and cannot write a sentence or spell elementary-level words, that is a problem. It is an even bigger problem if the student does not care!

What can be done? The answer is complex. There needs to be a change on multiple levels. Testing can no longer be the focus. Districts need resources to help academically challenged students. Teachers need more autonomy in the classroom. No one knows better about how to reach disengaged students than a teacher. Teachers need to be able to have flexibility to adjust curriculum to meet their students’ needs. Parents need to be more involved with the schools. Students need to recognize their strengths and focus on improving their weaknesses. If everyone works together, education in America can have a better future. ■

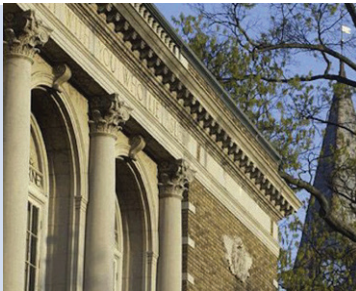
Shirley Jones-Luke is an educator in the Boston Public Schools.





# On Campus

**Susan Krumholz, President**  
**UMass Faculty Federation, Local 1895**



## I Know What You (Really) Did Last Summer

**A**ny one who teaches has heard what a “cushy” job they have—After all, we have summers off!

I do not deny that we do have wonderful jobs. During the school year, interactions with students feed my soul, and I wouldn’t change the flexibility of summers for almost anything. On the other hand, the suggestion that we have easy jobs, or do not work hard or enough is profoundly discouraging and insulting, and contributes to the falling national esteem teachers face.

Folks who work in other professions — such as engineering or nursing — work hard, but when they come home, they are generally done. Teachers are expected to take their work home! A study of K-12 teachers conducted by the Center for Teaching Quality found that teachers work an average of 50 hours a week, including 12 hours of “grading papers, bus duty, and club advising.” John Ziker, an Anthropologist at Boise State University, conducted a study of faculty work called the Time Allocation Workload Knowledge Study (TAWKS). It found that faculty work 61 hours a week, 10 of those on weekends. About 50% of faculty time is spent on teaching-related work, 17%

in meetings and 13% on email. The study found that securing funding, research, and writing comprised 17% of the work-week and 27% of week-end work. A mere 59% of our work is actually done on campus. Despite all this, there is enormous pressure on faculty to increase the time spent in all three arenas—teaching, which is highly visible and generates tuition; research, which institutions value largely for the external funding it generates; and administration.

For those of us whose wages are annualized, we receive income over the summer, but that is based upon a nine- or ten-month wage. Wage analysis studies show that teachers’ starting salaries are below those of other similar professionals and that, as they gain more experience the wage gap only widens. Overall teachers’ wages have declined 13.1% since 1979. And the myth that our benefits make up for this is dispelled by observations that employers often pay lower payroll taxes and that teachers have less opportunity for overtime pay. Overall benefits have not increased at the rate salaries have declined. A recent study by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI)

confirmed that, “the benefits of other workers would not have declined as much in recent years if they had the protection of a union, collective bargaining, and an independent voice on the job — like public school teachers.”

So, what do we do with our summers?

— We do research. It is apparent when looking at the allocation of faculty time that any large-scale research or meaningful writing must take place at a time when teaching and administration duties aren’t constantly competing. Uninterrupted thinking is a requirement for writing.

— We attend professional conferences and classes. Most of us spend time during the summer preparing for and attending conferences, or continuing our own education. Teachers are lifelong learners, especially K-12 teachers who are obligated to continue professional development. Summer learning includes keeping up with mandated curricular changes and learning new technology skills.

— We teach. We might take on a course or do enrichment work with our students, sometimes because we need the summer money.

— We develop curriculum, planning our classes for the coming year. Classes don’t just happen. Summer is spent reviewing books, writing syllabi and lesson plans, and finding new ways of engaging students. For K-12 teachers, this often includes setting up the classroom and purchasing supplies; spending an average of \$500 of our own money.

— We read. Knowledge is being constantly generated (isn’t that what we are publishing for?). There is a lot of reading to be done simply to stay current and relevant.

— We meet. Administrative work doesn’t end when the school year ends. We meet with colleagues to plan curricular modifications. We work with students, advising during orientation sessions throughout the summer. We plan for events that we will bring to campus during the academic year, that enliven the campus community.

By the time you are reading this, you may be well into the new school year. I hope that you found some time to relax and maybe even take a vacation. But mostly, you better have had a productive summer if you expect to survive the school year. ■

## Legislator Profile: Jamie Eldridge

**T**hroughout his career, Senator Jamie Eldridge has done things with other people (and, in fact, *the* people) in mind..

In November of 2002, Eldridge became the only candidate in Commonwealth history to win an election according to “clean election” rules, meaning that he did not take any money from special interests. In 2009, he was elected State Senator for the Middlesex and Worcester districts. Regardless of his office, Eldridge’s commitment to his constituents has been unshakable. Among his top priorities are such excellent elements as the economy, environment, ethics and public education.

When asked what his own early experiences in education entailed, Eldridge recalls his kindergarten teacher spending extra time with him in order to support his learning despite what Eldridge terms a “mild learning disability.” “Growing up in a middle class community, surrounded by well-educated adults, reinforced how the environment you grow up in shapes your destiny,” Eldridge reasons, grateful for his own upbringing and dedicated to helping those who did not enjoy similar circumstances.

Noting that many of his colleagues (and others) like to toss around the term “achievement gap,” Eldridge maintains that the real “gap” is the one that begins “when you’re not receiving daily, clear social signals that your education can continue beyond high school.”

Eldridge recalls college being a topic of discussion among his family and his peers as far back as first grade and assures that, had he not had the early support he did, he never would have been able or interested to pursue his current path.

“I would never have dared imagine a life in politics without several key teachers in my life,” he posits, noting that his own mother taught kindergarten in his native Action for 27 years. In fact, Eldridge adds, his mother was not just an inspiration to her hundreds of students, but also to him on a very personal and profound level.

“Throughout her time teaching, I remember getting a sense of the difference a person could make in public service,” Eldridge recalls, noting that he still has people come up to him today to recall with reverence the difference his mother made in their lives.

Eldridge also thanks a sixth grade teacher who instilled in him a love of current affairs and even foreign policy. “He taught us that history was being made each and every day,” Eldridge recalls. A high school history teacher also helped bring history to life for Eldridge and inspired him to become involved in policy himself.

“I pretty much knew by age 16 that I wanted to get involved in politics, and hopefully run for public office,” Eldridge explains. “I learned in school...that participating in politics was something I could actually do. I didn’t just have to be a spectator in influencing public policy and making a difference in people’s lives.”

Thanks to the writing support he garnered from his high school English teachers and the “tough love” he received from many of his teachers who

saw great potential in him, Eldridge was able to internalize their high expectations and make the best of his life both in and after college.

After graduating from Johns Hopkins University and BC Law School, Eldridge began to take more inspiration from colleagues like Pam Resor and Bob Durand (for whom he had volunteered while in high school).

Looking at students today, Eldridge is discouraged to see how few of them take advantage of such opportunities or even know they exist. He also decries the back seat that subjects like civics have taken to high-stakes testing and other pursuits.

“I think it is important that students receive a solid humanities-based education that helps them become better citizens, and give back to their community, state, and country,” he says, noting that, these days,

“there may be less time dedicated to these subjects by teachers, because of administrative work or the increase in standardized testing that has risen in Massachusetts public schools.”

Eldridge even admits that civics were a minor concern even when he was in school.

“I don’t remember much instruction on civics at all,” he says. “If it hadn’t been for my fascination with history and politics, and the influence of my mom as a community-oriented kindergarten teacher, I doubt that I would have finished my K-12 studies with much social consciousness. Basic concepts such as the importance of voting, of participating in local government,

of running for public office, were barely touched upon, if at all.”

While he would like to see a resurgence in civic studies and involvement, Eldridge is more concerned with the havoc high-stakes testing has wreaked on public schools.

“There is less time for creative learning or teaching,” he observes, noting that he regularly receives calls and emails from parents and teachers asking him to stand up against PARCC and other programs.

“I received...calls...from all ranges of the political spectrum,” Eldridge explains. “I also hear from students that they are over-scheduled [who] feel immense pressure to maintain their school work and get into a top college.”

By mentoring students as he was mentored, Eldridge hopes to encourage involvement and engagement so that more people can speak up for themselves and achieve their goals.

“I hope to contribute by providing more resources,” Eldridge says, mentioning efforts to reform the state’s Chapter 70 education funding formula. “I also hope to play a role in evaluating the true value of state and federal testing regimens and how that has impacted true learning by young people.”

As each day gives him the opportunity to use the skills and states of mind that were instilled in him from his earliest days, Eldridge says he feels privileged to serve the community as a legislator.

“I love my job immensely,” he says. “I feel blessed to have a role tackling these challenges and creating progress. We need every single person in society to be involved with that, if we want to have a chance to redefine the *status quo*.” ■



**CIVIC-MINDED LEADER**  
**Senator Jamie Eldridge**





# Retiree Corner

Marie Ardito, Co-founder  
Massachusetts Retirees United  
[www.retireesunited.org](http://www.retireesunited.org)



## Just Think About It

All of us want our kids and grandkids to be healthy. We pray in the months and days before their birth for a healthy baby. We rejoice when both mother and baby are well at birth and we become the child's chief pediatrician as they grow.

One thing time has shown is that what appears to be a healthy baby at birth can be a youngster born with some mutated gene or birth defect. The effects of these genes and defects may not make themselves felt until a child is into their teens, twenties, forties or even later.

There are more than 4,000 different kinds of birth defects, ranging from minor ones that need no treatment to serious ones that cause disabilities or require medical or surgical treatment. According to the March of Dimes, 1 out of every 33 babies born each year in the United States has a birth defect.

Each year approximately 40,000 babies are born in the United States with a congenital heart defect. Thousands of them will not reach their first birthday and thousands more die before they reach adulthood. There are an estimated two million CHD survivors in the United States and more

than 50% are adults.

There are dozens of other defects that a person can be born with that makes them have problems later in life as far as illnesses. At the time of discovery the problem could make the person not eligible for life insurance, or at the least have to pay very high premiums.

The intent of this article is to get those of you who are parents and grandparents thinking of a wonderful gift to buy for the little person in your life--- a life insurance policy. I am not a salesperson but an observer of what is going on around me.

During a recent conversation with a bank manager, the discussion came around to life insurance, as I knew Savings Banks had SBLI that can be inexpensive for what they offer. I was familiar with the twenty-year payment life that is paid up in twenty years, with reasonable yearly payments, and if you have the dividends keep reinvesting in the policy, you will keep increasing the value of the policy. She told me about the one premium insurance that was new to the market at the time. For a few thousand dollars, depending on the age of the person

and gender, one premium pays in full for a policy that will increase in value over the person's lifetime.

Many receive life insurance from their employer while they are working. In many instances the insurance ceases, or decreases, when one leaves the job or retires. At that time to buy a policy on ones own would be expensive and all too often the person may not be insurable. The policy one buys for a youngster will stay by them throughout their lifetime.

It is sad to see the family of a person who died having a fundraiser because they did not have life insurance and the family could not absorb the cost. It is sadder when this happens with a youngster.

This is just written to give you food for thought. We all hope this will never happen to us and that we will have no need to have a child or grandchild need such protection. But what we hope for and what can happen are two very different things. It is better to have taken the precautions and not need them than to need them and not have taken them. Life is unpredictable and uncertain. Just think about it. ■

## Policy Perspective:

### What does the MCAS test?

By Cory O'Hayer

Massachusetts, along with 22 other states, requires passing a standardized exam as one of its necessary requirements to graduate from high school. Withholding a student's diploma until the student scores whatever the state has deemed to be a proficient score has designated these exams as being "high-stakes" and they have become an integral part of the education reform movement.

Those in favor of high-stakes testing have argued that unless the students have a serious investment in the exam, then there is no method that programs and policies can be measured other than by equating the students' performance to four years of high school education. They argue that having one test, and a threshold required of all students, is the only effective way that student progress, and teacher efficacy, can be ranked.

The MCAS has been used as a graduation requirement since 2003, and few would say that education quality has improved as a result. Over 38,000 students have been denied a diploma due to not having passed the MCAS, 25,000 of whom were enrolled in special education courses. A disproportionate number of these students have come from low-income backgrounds, and a comprehensive assessment for students with special needs has not been developed. Of the 964 students who took the special education English Language Arts alternative assessment in 2014, only one student received a passing score. Rather than provide further insight into teacher effectiveness and student ability, results such as these only show that using a standardized exam, de-

signed for comprehensive assessment, as a graduation requirement should be called into question.

There are several bills presently before the Massachusetts legislature that would bring drastic and needed change to the way in which standardized tests are evaluated in the Commonwealth. One bill, House Bill 340 by Representative Marjorie Decker, seeks to place a three year moratorium on using either the MCAS or the PARCC as a graduation requirement for students in Massachusetts public schools. While the ultimate desire may be to eliminate using assessment based exams as a graduation requirement, a three year moratorium will save many students the indignity of being denied a diploma that they had otherwise earned, while allowing the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education the time to create a more valid, and less punitive, student assessment. This moratorium is not without precedent, as legislation with very similar language was passed in Rhode Island that prohibits the use of standardized tests as a tool for student graduation until 2017, when the issue will be revisited.

In June, stakeholders from around the Commonwealth came to voice their support for the elimination of the high-stakes testing graduation requirement. As with all political issues, there is strength in numbers. At the urging of their students, friends and colleagues, many more contacted their elected representatives on Beacon Hill to voice their opposition to students being over tested and under educated. While assessments and testing deserve careful review and reevaluation for a number of reasons, many of these can be best assessed were the legisla-

ture to enact a three year moratorium on high-stakes testing in our public schools. Without delay, students in urban, suburban and rural schools would equally benefit from the elimination of what for many has become the principal barrier to their graduation.

An often cited adage against high-stakes testing is Campbell's Law, which states that the more that a quantitative social indicator is used for decision-making, the more susceptible it is to corrupt outside pressures. Since the introduction of high-stakes testing in Massachusetts, we have seen an increase in teaching to the test and a reduction in classroom innovation. Other states have seen major cheating scandals, which under such intense pressure is inevitable. Massachusetts can only remain the nation's leader in public education through innovation, and sometimes that innovation means a radical departure from the status quo. Rhode Island's enactment of a moratorium on high-stakes testing is emblematic of the beginning of a national trend against the continued tampering with children's futures for what has ultimately become invalid data collection. Either the legislature will act to remove an unnecessary and harmful requirement, for only a three year trial, or the Commonwealth will risk losing its status in the vanguard of public education in the nation. ■

Cory O'Hayer has a Master's degree in urban education policy from Brown University and works in the Boston Public Schools.

#### SENIOR SEMINARS

##### Preparing for Retirement

Tuesday, September 15, 2015 , 4-6 pm  
North Attleboro Middle School Cafeteria, 564 Landry Avenue, North Attleboro

Tuesday, October 13, 2015, 4-6 pm  
Butler Middle School, 1140 Gorham St. Lowell

Thursday, October 29, 2015, 3:30-5:30 pm  
Medway (Location TBA)

November 17, 2015 , 3:15-5:15 pm,  
Lynn Teachers' Union Hall, 679 Western Ave Lynn

These free seminars, presented by Marie Ardito, deal with issues one should address in preparing for retirement from a public sector job in MA. They are open to ALL.

##### How to Protect Your Nest Egg

Saturday June 27, 2015, 10 am-noon, 314 Main Street, Unit 105, Wilmington

Saturday September 19, 2015, 10-noon  
Saturday October 24, 2015, 10-noon  
314 Main Street, Unit 105  
Wilmington

This free seminar by Elder Law Attorney Mary Howie deals with wills, trusts (irrevocable and revocable), gifting, probate, joint tenancy, direct transfers upon death, and much more.

##### Living in Retirement as an Informed Retiree

Monday September 28, 2015, 10-noon  
Methuen Education Association Office  
184 Pleasant Valley St. Methuen Suite 1-204

This free seminar presented by Marie Ardito deals with such topics as working in retirement, Social Security and Medicare benefits and possible penalties, pension tax structure, avoiding double taxation of TSA, 403b, legislation that affects you as a retiree, and more.

To register for any seminar, call 781-365-0205 or email [contact@retireesunited.org](mailto:contact@retireesunited.org). Please give the name of the seminar you wish to attend, your name, phone number and the number of people who will be attending.

Thank you!

#### ATTENTION TEACHERS:

At the initiative of AFT MA, the Non-Public School Bill has again been filed.

H2426, filed by Representative Timothy Toomey, Jr., will allow one to purchase up to FOUR years of non-public school service.

As I am often asked about this service at seminars, I wanted to make the knowledge of the bill available to you. Contact the Rep at [Timothy.Toomey@mahouse.gov](mailto:Timothy.Toomey@mahouse.gov) and let him know of your interest in the bill and to be made aware when a hearing will be conducted. Make your Representatives and Senators aware of your interest in the bill and ask them to support it.





**Recently, Staples has been offering special incentives to entice educators to shop at their stores.**

***But postal workers say:***

# **Don't buy school supplies at Staples!**

Staples and the U.S. Postal Service have cut a deal that jeopardizes thousands of living-wage jobs – as well as your mail service.

A no-bid deal between Staples and the Postal Service set up postal counters inside 82 of the office-supply stores in four test markets – staffed with untrained, low-wage Staples employees.

Staples and the USPS plan to expand the program to Staples' 1,500 locations nationwide.

## **The Staples deal is bad for workers and consumers.**

The sweetheart deal is replacing highly-trained, uniformed postal workers – who have taken an oath to safeguard the privacy and security of your mail and who earn a living wage – with Staples' retail employees, who earn about \$8.55 an hour.

Already there have been cutbacks in service hours at dozens of Post Offices around San Francisco, one of the test areas for the program.

## **Teachers and school workers understand.**

Educators know all too well what privatization means to the public and to public employees: Less service, higher costs, lower wages, and the elimination of good, stable jobs. It's true for those who work in the classroom and it's true for postal workers.

If it is allowed to continue, the Staples deal will replace public post offices with private, for-profit companies whose decisions will be motivated solely by the bottom line. And it will replace good, stable jobs our communities need with low-pay, high-turnover, part-time positions that hurt our economy. That would be bad news for workers, consumers and the American people.

***So when you shop for supplies – for your classroom or your home – don't shop at Staples.***

***Most other office- and school-supply chains honor Staples coupons.***

# ***It's easy – don't buy supplies at Staples.***



***[www.stopstaples.com](http://www.stopstaples.com)***