



The Advocate



August 2013

Reclaiming the Promise

TEACH 2013 rallies teachers with hope

While the battle for the hearts, minds and futures of our children raged on in cities like Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit and Boston, dedicated educational change-makers gathered in Washington, DC from July 22 to 24 for the TEACH 2013 conference. Led by AFT President Randi Weingarten and supported by a stellar collection of speakers and presenters, the thousands of teachers and administrators who came together for TEACH left the conference renewed and ready to reclaim the promise that education is every child's right. In fact, reclaiming the promise was the theme for this year's biennial conference.



"It is not a campaign," Weingarten said of the slogan. "It is our core and it must be the center of our work going forward. Only by working together can we reclaim the promise of public education."

"The focus for AFT is taking public schools back," AFT's Educational Issues Department Manager Heidi Glidden emphasized at an introductory session for first-time TEACH attendees. "We have been raked across the coals about so many things- We need to take it back!"

Over the course of the three-day conference, presenters from the worlds of education, labor, government and entertainment shared stories of the teachers who had supported them and offered ideas to support today's teachers. Among the special guests were National Board for Professional Teaching Standards CEO Ronald Thorpe, Ohio State Representative Teresa Fedor, newscaster Ed Schultz, opera singer Denyce Graves, and actor-turned-teacher Tony Danza. There was also music from the Philadelphia-based public school band Home.

In addition to the presenters, panels, and performances, TEACH 2013 also offered a new exposition area that included galleries related to each of the event's four themes (partnerships, Common Core, teacher preparation and developing safe and healthy schools). The exposition space also featured kiosks at which teachers and supporters could take direct actions to support each other and their students. Among the offerings were a student debt calculator, a photo booth where teachers could take and email pictures of themselves at the conference, and a space where participants could sign a pledge to help reclaim the promise of public education.

"We know you guys are down in the trenches," Glidden acknowledged, "so we want to be able to call on you."

There was also a special area dedicated to ShareMyLesson.com, AFT's lesson-sharing platform that celebrated its first birthday and the registration of its 300,000th user at TEACH 2013.

Partners in Promise

Though the conference included thousands of educators and supporters, Glidden emphasized the importance of looking outside of the Marriott Wardman Park for support.

"We know that we will not be successful if we are not having partnerships," she advised. "We have to include the community and they have to be a part of this process with us."

"The fight we are in right now is bigger than any of our individual organizations," suggested panel participant Andi Perez, executive director of Youth for Change.

"We have no choice but to come together." "We need to connect to groups outside the union," added AFL-CIO representative Ruben Hernandez, noting the "hostility against people with good jobs making good wages" that exists these days. "We need to move from defense to offense and create a constructive, positive agenda based on shared values."

Fortunately, TEACH 2013 offered a wide array of opportunities for participants to learn and share and also involved a wide array of people from outside the AFT. Union President Cecil Roberts noted the similarities he sees between his United Mine Workers and the AFT, which he cited as the "United *Mind* Workers."

"There are ties among all workers," he observed.

"Coming together as a community and as labor is something we should not be ashamed of," Perez suggested. In fact, she added, "We are very proud that we are a community labor coalition!"

Professional Promise

Though many who attended TEACH may still feel pride in their profession, the professionalism of the field has been under scrutiny lately. During a panel discussion, Thorpe observed how most other professions are built upon a set of universal standards and noted how relatively few teachers achieve National Board certification. "Professions define themselves by accomplished practice," he suggested, noting how "nobody is accomplished in their first...or second year."

Even so, both Thorpe and Weingarten pointed out that, in contemporary education, proficiency and experience are occasionally purported to be at odds, at least by those who would denigrate teachers.

"Ours is the only profession where experience is disparaged," Weingarten suggested. "We need to remember that we are professionals [and] promote that."

"Why are we the only profession where experience doesn't seem to count?" Thorpe asked.

"Our insights and our experience matter," Weingarten replied. "We are solution driven."

While the solutions may not all be in place, Weingarten emphasized how working to reclaim the promise of public education will encourage educators and others to design and achieve them.

"Instead of wondering how to get rid of bad teachers," Weingarten offered, "nurture good ones!"

In addition to returning the appreciation of achievement to teaching, Weingarten and her colleagues expressed hopes that the theme of reclaiming the promise will also help teachers rediscover the joy and positivity that brought them to teaching in the first place.

"The love of learning and of teaching are no longer there," Representative Fedor observed, urging the educators in the packed ballroom to "let them see your success and let them know what a good job you're doing."

A Public Promise

In her opening remarks, President Weingarten paid tribute to the fallen heroes of AFT, including the teachers of Newtowne, Superstorm Sandy survivors and teachers from tornado-torn Oklahoma. "Their sacrifice was rare and heroic," Weingarten observed. "Their commitment was anything but."

"We know the power of education to change lives, communities and nations," Weingarten continued, thanking all those in the room for helping students "build lives of great purpose and potential."

In reminding the assembled why public education is so important, Weingarten also set it apart from other systems that have seen fit to educate and support only certain students at the cost of all others.

"We recognize that public education is how we fulfill our collective responsibility to assure individual opportunity," she said. "We believe in public education because it is the means by which all children dream their dreams and achieve them. And I mean *all* children."

Weingarten went on to suggest that public education is "a fundamental civil right without which none of our other rights can be fully realized." In the process, she mentioned how she and other AFT representatives plan to participate in the 50th anniversary march on Washington DC which commemorates the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and earlier generations of civil rights supporters. "It is a direct result of the work you do every day," she said. "[It is] the most important work in America!"

As universal civil rights may yet be a dream, so too, Weingarten suggested, is the aspiration for great public education



KEEPING THE PROMISE
AFT MA Member Michael Maguire and his son Alex at TEACH 2013

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for all students.

"Some are using that excuse as a reason to abandon [public education]," Weingarten warned, before changing direction by echoing the theme of the conference, "We must reclaim that promise of a great public education for all children."

Positive Promise

As the promise of public education is "under pressure and under assault," Weingarten suggested that AFT members use the opportunity of TEACH 2013 to pool ideas and resources so that they can get the word out effectively and realize real change in their home districts.

"We have become the first responders," she said.

Though there were references to the challenges that teachers are facing these days (many of which they have faced for years), Weingarten made a concerted effort to focus on the positive premise of the "promise."

"We have made real progress," she acknowledged, "though I know you don't

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THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Thomas J. Gosnell
President, AFT Massachusetts

Citizens for Public Schools

This month, my column is devoted to a fundraising appeal for Citizens for Public Schools (CPS), a resolute ally of ours for 30 years. They are currently working with us to defeat the bill lifting the cap on charter schools.

CPS President Ann O'Halloran has written a letter seeking to expand the membership of the organization. AFT MA is a premier member, but CPS wants a large individual membership. I am an individual member. I urge you to join.

Dear Colleagues,

One of the pleasures of serving as president of Citizens for Public Schools (CPS) is traveling around Massachusetts meeting people like you — teachers, paraprofessionals, and other educational personnel who care deeply about their students and about public education. Your stories inspire me and remind me that my work -- and that of CPS -- is part of a larger movement to protect our public schools.

For more than 30 years CPS has fought for equitable resources for all students. We are an integral part of a growing nationwide rebellion against high-stakes testing mania and efforts to privatize our public schools. That's why I'm urging you to become a CPS

member today.

In the past year I have talked with teachers, parents and students in districts facing the pressures of privatization and high-stakes testing. Our conversations demonstrate both the enormity of the challenges we face and the need to work together to win the battle to save our public schools.

- As a former Boston Public School teacher and AFT MA/BTU member, I care deeply about Boston schools. At public meetings in Boston I've testified with other CPS members against school closures and charter conversions. At every event parents and teachers are excited to learn that CPS exists to set the record straight and connect activists with one another.

- In communities like Lawrence, Fall River, and Brockton, also in the cross hairs of privatization schemes, I've connected with many who recognize that our schools need support and investment, not test-and-punish reforms or divestment in the form of charter expansion. With a larger and stronger CPS, we will be able to work more effectively with activists across the state to push back against destructive reforms.

- Everywhere I go, public school supporters express appreciation for the work CPS is doing, for our

newsletter, web site and listserv, for the speakers we bring, like Jonathan Kozol and Diane Ravitch, and the conferences we organize. Many have found our recent report marking the 20th anniversary of the Education Reform law a valuable resource. One teacher recently told me, "I am so disheartened by what is happening in schools and in the media. Thank you for fighting back!"

CPS is ready to work with you and others across Massachusetts and the nation, part of the growing nationwide rebellion against destructive education policies.

If you join or renew your membership today, you will be helping us build on the work we've been doing for the past 31 years. You can renew or join today at our website, <http://www.citizensforpublicschools.org>. If you prefer, you can mail a check made out to Citizens for Public Schools and send it to 18 Tremont Street, Suite 320, Boston, MA 02108.

Your support and encouragement give me energy for all the work that lies ahead. We rely on support from individuals like you, not grants from the deep-pocketed corporations and foundations pushing destructive reforms. Please feel to contact me via CPS with your thoughts about how we can move forward together. Thank you, Ann O'Halloran, CPS President

P.S. Your contribution to CPS will be completely tax-deductible.

If you have any questions or comments, you can e-mail me at tgosnell@aftma.net. ■



Go to www.aftma.net and send a letter to your representatives to tell them you want the charter school cap kept on in Massachusetts

PROTECT our SCHOOLS
PROTECT your JOBS
PROTECT our STUDENTS

BOLD PRINT

On September 11 at 7 PM, the Boston Teachers Union will host a Mayoral Forum at their Union Hall (180 Mt. Vernon Street, Dorchester). Moderated by analyst and journalist David Bernstein, the Forum is intended to allow AFT MA members to hear from and engage candidates for Mayor of Boston.

As the birthplace of public education and a bastion for excellent teaching, Boston remains both a major power and a pioneer in the world of education. As Boston faces its first Mayoral change in decades, the BTU and AFT encourage all members to be involved.

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AFT MA is offering a Leadership Training Workshop for new leaders and officers who want to refresh and expand upon their skills on September 28 at The Double Tree by Wyndham Hilton in Westborough, M.. Topics will include the duties of the President and Treasurer, how to run an effective Local and how to run a productive meeting.

The workshop will run from 10 AM to 3 PM. Coffee and a light lunch will be served.

For information, please contact Jennifer Daniel at jdaniel@aftma.net by September 13.

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

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Whether you are new to teaching or new to a union, there are certain terms that are helpful to know. In fact, there are many! In the educational spirit, we at *The Advocate* present this collection of definitions and explanations that we hope will make your life in AFT as easy as ABC.

Local (n.) - A locally-based trade union organization which forms part of a larger union. A basic unit of union organization, it has its own bylaws and elects its own officers, but is chartered by the parent union of which it is a part.

Local branches are organized to represent union members from a particular geographic area, company, or business sector. Locals have their own governing bodies which represent the interests of the national union while at the same time responding to the desires of their constituents, and organize regular meetings for members. Local branches may also belong to a local trades council.

In the United States, locals are usually numbered (e.g. AFT MA Local 66).

A Directly Affiliated Local Union (DALU) is a labor union that belongs to the AFL-CIO (please see prior issues) but is not a national union and is not entitled to the same rights and privileges as national affiliates. Article XV of the AFL-CIO constitution authorizes the Federation to issue charters to DALUs although many trade departments of the AFL-CIO do not.

The AFL constitution permitted the formation of DALUs, or federal unions. But DALUs remained few in number until the early 1930s. In 1933, the AFL proposed to use DALUs to organize workers on an industrial basis.

Beginning in the early 1970s, the AFL-CIO adopted an official policy encouraging DALUs to merge with national affiliates. In 1995, the AFL-CIO executive council adopted a policy preventing the charter of new DALUs.

On February 27, 2006, the AFL-CIO and the National Education Association (NEA) agreed to permit NEA local unions to join AFL-CIO state and local bodies as directly affiliated NEA locals (DANLs). The agreement expressly notes that DANLs have the same rights and obligations as any DALU.

Have a question? Want a term defined? Write to advocate@aftma.net.



Exemplary Educators

AFT celebrates its Teacher of the Year nominees

As teachers across the Commonwealth took a well-deserved break, Governor Deval Patrick and members of his administration were hard at work considering hundreds of nominations for the coveted Massachusetts Teacher of the Year Award. Among the top vote-winners were Brian Bates from the Humanities and Leadership Development High School in Lawrence, Seith Bedard from Peabody Veterans Memorial High School, and Shirley Ezerins from Southeastern Regional Technical High School in South Easton.

"I thank these honorees for their deep commitment to preparing our students for success as responsible, productive citizens and as leaders within their communities," said Governor Patrick at the awards ceremony. "Their dedication to teaching is an inspiration to us all. They understand the stake we have in the next generation and are the reason our students lead the nation."

The Teacher of the Year Program is intended to recognize excellent teachers who demonstrate effective learning methods to their students and their colleagues. As so many Massachusetts districts are considered among the leaders in the nation and in the world, competition is always fierce and just being nominated is a great honor.

As a seven-year veteran in Lawrence, Bates is familiar with the challenges his district is facing, but is also familiar with the many talented students who emerge from Lawrence. As a former television reporter, Bates brings not only his desire to teach but a wealth of experience to show his students what can be done with an education and a desire to succeed.

"I have taught ninth grade ELA since starting in Lawrence and love every minute of it," Bates said. "The kids keep me young and active!"

When he heard he was nominated, Bates was "shocked and humbled" and deferred much of the credit.

"I see this award as a recognition of the hard work that not only I put in every day, but the hard work and dedication of the teachers, faculty, and most importantly the students," he suggested. "In a time of change in Lawrence, it recognizes the excellence that is going on here. It begins at the top with the administrators and flows all the way through the students. I honestly don't see this award as all about me.... It is more about the school community I am part of."

In his letter to the voting committee, colleague Eric Allshouse cited Bates' "tremendous work ethic" and a level of involvement that went "beyond the classroom."

"Brian has a unique ability to connect with his students in an inspiring and motivating way that most teachers

cannot," Allshouse suggested, recalling a story in which a former student credited Bates with helping her not only "turn her academic life around" but with "sav[ing] her life" by taking the time to work with her and by helping her see her own value and ability.

"Brian is such an effective teacher," Allshouse said, "that his students are able to learn to...teach each other."

As director and lead teacher of the Peabody Learning Academy (a technology-driven program for high school students that has been cited by Principal Ed Sapienza as "the answer to the charter schools concept"), Bedard has ample opportunity to engage students who may not be engaged elsewhere. When asked why he works so hard, Bedard recalled his most recent graduation. "Seeing the look on each of their faces makes all of the long work hours, parent phone calls, weekend events, and early morning meetings more than worth it," he said.

Though he had no "blue print" for the pioneering program that is

dation and the American Red Cross, which named him 2012's Education Hero of the Year.

"To say that Mr. Bedard is dedicated to our school would be a gross understatement," said fellow Academy teacher Sarah Murray, calling Bedard "a leader and role model" in the community.

"In addition to fulfilling the necessary tasks of an educator," Murray continued, "Mr. Bedard takes the extra step to make sure our students stay motivated to succeed.... Furthermore, Mr. Bedard teaches our students to hold themselves accountable...[and] ensures that students get both support and structure they need."

Erin Dukeshire from the Orchard Gardens K-8 School in Roxbury was also nominated to be one of three finalists for the 2012 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). Established by Congress in 1983 and overseen by the National Science Foundation, PAEMST has become

the highest honor bestowed by the United States government specifically for K-12 mathematics and science teaching. It recognizes teachers with high-quality instructional programs that enhance student learning.

"I think I was nominated because I am one member of a talented

team of teachers at Orchard Gardens," Dukeshire suggested, modestly deferring praise to her colleagues, many of whom worked to have her nominated. "Together, we help the students achieve and engage as learners." Using her training to bring her students "authentic, student-driven science experiences," Dukeshire also strives to build relationships with students through what she sees as a "shared fascination with science."

When asked to express her feelings about the PAEMST award, Dukeshire said, "[it] is validation for hard work, developed skills, and a creative approach to teaching science. Like many of my colleagues, I am motivated by recognition for effective teaching."

Whether or not they won the awards for which they were nominated or even receive the credit and accolades they deserve, one thing was clear about all of the educators who had been called to the State House for the ceremony- they were all part of the reason why Massachusetts public schools remain at the top of the charts nationally and around the world.

"The best teaching in the country is happening in Massachusetts," said Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester. "The individual educators we are honoring...bring a passion and commitment to their craft and to improving results for all students that I see in classrooms across the Commonwealth." ■

Continued from page 1

always hear about it"

Citing a number of new studies (including the AFT study that was released at TEACH 2013) that strongly suggest a dampening of enthusiasm for charter schools and high-stakes testing, Weingarten encouraged her fellow educators to continue to do what they do so that this country can continue to enjoy the gifts they provide.

"Public education for all is one of America's greatest achievements," she suggested. "Reformers are not in it for better education. They are in it to make a buck."



AFT President Randi Weingarten

Though she admitted that "data is important," Weingarten was firm in her proposal that it has to be the "right" data. "In America," she observed, "the policy has been to invest the dollar in evaluation; not in preparation.... Now, we have started to see what that does."

"There are other ways to gather information," added Stuart Kahl, founding principal of Measured Progress, "and provide meaningful feedback that helps advance learning."

Looking forward, Weingarten suggested that we need to find "a pathway for all students to become winners" and suggested that public education is "the embodiment of a country's belief that all children are important."

While she admitted that the reform movement may have deep pockets, Weingarten proudly pointed out that they are lacking when it comes to other vital resources. "They don't have you," she said, "and they don't have results!"

Speaking of results, Weingarten then mentioned the recent AFT movement to halt the progress of high-stakes testing related to Common Core.

"I realize teachers do not have time to match lessons to standards," she said. "That is why I recently called for moratorium on stakes related to Common Core standards."

Joined by over 27,000 AFT educators, Weingarten and her team were able to convince Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to hold off for now while the new assessment systems are reassessed. "Because of all those letters," Weingarten noted proudly, "Secretary Duncan gave states an extra year to get it right before making Core-aligned tests count."

Such is the power of public education and of the people who make it work.

Speaking of standards, Weingarten explained that, while she is certainly in favor of high standards, they must be matched with high levels of support, both for students and teachers. "We must be sure that every child had the opportunity and the support to achieve...at every point in his or her education," she said, emphasizing that this is the heart of the promise and that the AFT is the group most dedicated to keeping it.

"You are the key to what will work in this next phase," Representative Fedor charged the teachers in attendance, "and our children are depending upon you." ■



TOP TEACHERS: Flanked by Education Committee Co-chair Representative Alice Peisch and Secretary of Education Matt Maloney (left) and Governor Deval Patrick and Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester (right) were AFT members Seith Bedard (third from left), Erin Dukeshire (fifth from left), Brian Bates (sixth from left) and Shirley Ezerins (third from right).

actually sponsored by Simon Malls and housed in the Northshore Mall, Bedard saw the opportunity as a "dream promotion" and jumped at the chance. This energy has not abated and Bedard continues to do all he can for each and every one of his students.

"As an educator, I have a deep passion for helping kids achieve their goals and helping a student receive their diploma was simply not good enough," He said. "I knew was that I somehow had to find a way to motivate students."

In the same way that many of his students are also asked to fill the roles of parent or caretaker, Bedard has had to wear many hats himself. "My title is the director," he explained, "but I also teach in the classroom, act as the school psychologist, guidance counselor, curriculum developer, nurse, bus driver, custodian, and mentor." Handling everything from morning pickups to after-school enrichment, Bedard goes above and beyond in multiple ways at once.

As many of his students face financial as well as academic obstacles, Bedard has even worked to find funding for them. "I partner with local community leaders to raise money for scholarships," he explains. "To date we have awarded more than \$80,000 in scholarships."

In addition to being nominated for Teacher of the Year, Bedard was also recognized by the Simon Youth Foun-

Rethink RETELL:

A Letter to Commissioner Mitchell Chester from AFT MA President Tom Gosnell

July 18, 2013

Mitchell Chester, Commissioner
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148-4906

Dear Commissioner Chester,

On behalf of AFT Massachusetts, I am writing to express our deep concerns regarding the implementation of the Commonwealth's Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners (RETELL) initiative.

Before detailing our concerns, I want to reiterate AFT Massachusetts' strong support for the goals of the initiative. We recognize the urgency of improving educational opportunities for English language learners (ELLs) and believe that ELLs should receive instruction from highly qualified and skilled educators. We support the idea of equipping educators with the latest research and strategies for effective ELL instruction, and believe that that the SEI course has the potential to provide educators with an important learning experience that will enhance their practice.

We also acknowledge the pressures created by the U.S. Department of Justice's review of SEI instruction in Massachusetts—and the agency's subsequent guidance and recommendations.

All that said, our concerns regarding the implementation of the RETELL initiative are serious, and we hope that we can work with you and your staff to adequately address them.

Concerns Stemming from the 2012-13 Cohort Year Implementation

Based on feedback we received from AFT MA leaders and members, implementation during the 2012-13 cohort year had serious flaws and created confusion and dismay. The major issues that surfaced last winter/spring were as follows:

- The immense amount of reading and homework associated with the course. The amount of "seat time" in the course is 45 hours – quite significant in itself – but the near-universal response of course participants was that the extensive readings and homework assignments were overwhelming, particularly with the course compressed into a short time period. While the SEI course is important, we must recognize that a teacher's primary obligations during the school year should be to his/her students. Teachers already face intense pressures and responsibilities outside the regular school day which include lesson planning, reviewing and correcting student work, grading, professional development commitments, extracurricular obligations, and outreach to parents and families.

We need to respect these primary responsibilities and design SEI course schedules and workloads so that they do not detract from a teacher's ability to meet his/her core duties. We understand that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has acknowledged the immense workload generated by the initial SEI course design and is making adjustments. We urge your staff to continue to listen to educators' feedback. If educators continue to report that the workload is compromising their primary teaching duties, then additional action must be taken to strike the proper balance.

- Districts pressuring educators into SEI course sections, on short notice, with little regard to their personal or professional lives. While DESE guidelines (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/retell/sei-guidelines.pdf>) urge districts to "establish dialogue with educators in the district to identify competing priorities and minimize conflicts," it is our understanding that some educators in some districts were pressured into courses and subsequently had to withdraw from courses due to personal or professional conflicts. Our immediate concern now is that such educators be removed from DESE's "cohort year" records, if this hasn't already occurred, thus ensuring that these educators do not face any licensure penalties down the road. I ask that you consult with your staff to make sure this has been done.

We understand that some of these problems will be addressed going forward by moving to a "voluntary" self-enrollment system, but this new system presents major issues as well, as will be discussed later in this letter.

- An unnecessarily punitive tardiness policy. We learned from course participants that educators could have their final grade negatively impacted if they were even 5 minutes late for class. This policy was an insult to professional educators, many of whom had to leave their school buildings in the late afternoon and travel a significant distance in heavy traffic to the course location. We were told that this policy has been abandoned—thankfully—but we remain alarmed that this policy was written into the course syllabus.

Concerns about the Enrollment Process for This Summer and Fall

We understand that DESE is moving to a self-enrollment system, beginning this August, and will be relying on this system to meet the district-by-district course enrollment targets. We have deep concerns about this process, many of which were expressed to your staff in a meeting at DESE on June 19 involving Boston Teachers Union (BTU) President Richard Stutman and BTU Vice President Patrick Connolly; Lynn Teachers Union President Brant Duncan; Lowell Teachers Union President Paul Georges; AFT MA staff member Dan Murphy; and Jonathan Landman, Bob Bickerton, and Maureen LaCroix from DESE.

Based on the report that was given to me by the AFT participants, the main concerns expressed at that meeting were as follows:

- The lack of clarity in DESE's June 12 letter to core academic teachers. As you know, DESE urged districts to send a DESE-written form letter to core academic teachers before the end of the school year explaining the new enrollment system that will debut this summer. But, in our view, the letter was in many instances unclear and confusing. For example, it was never explained to teachers that their district may have multiple cohort years during which teachers can access the course at no cost. Thus, the letter created the false impression that all teachers needing the Endorsement must enroll in a course this coming school year. At the same time, the letter downplayed and provided scant details on the possibility that teachers could be involuntarily assigned to a cohort year if their district falls short of its pre-determined target.

The letter also provided insufficient guidance to teachers who may be considering one of the alternative pathways to the SEI Endorsement, such as the ESL license or a degree/graduate-level training approved by DESE. No information was provided in the letter regarding how and when such alternative-pathway teachers should apply for the SEI Endorsement; teachers were simply told to call the licensure office phone number, which routinely experiences significant delays.

- The risk of sending critical communications to educators in August, when many administrators and teachers are away. It is our hope that the planned August 1st communication to "eligible" and "available" core academic teachers with ELLs urging self-enrollment will be clearer and more effective than the June 12 letter, and we offer our assistance in drafting and editing the letter. But, even if the letter is clearer, we have grave concerns about communicating such important information in the middle of the summer. Will districts communicate the information to the appropriate teachers in a timely manner? What if they do not? What if district records about teacher assignments are faulty, resulting in some teachers receiving the letter who should not and others not receiving the letter who should? Who within the district will determine teacher "availability" and based on what criteria? Will teachers with the ESL license and/or appropriate degree/training be excluded from the letter or at least be told how to apply for the SEI Endorsement without enrolling in a course? Whom should teachers contact if they have questions? We would like to have further communication with your staff as soon as possible to address these issues and others.

- The fast-track timeline that may result in the hasty and punitive involuntary assignment of teachers to cohort years. Jonathan Landman's June 13 letter to districts says that if a district, as of August 23, falls short of its enrollment target, DESE will require the district to submit by August 30 a list of all eligible core academic teachers of ELLs "who are available in SY 2014." The Department will then, by September 6, select teachers from this list and notify them that they have been involuntarily assigned to the SY 2014 cohort year. We are concerned that under this plan teachers who do nothing wrong—and perhaps do not even receive a communication about the SEI courses or understand that the possibility of involuntary assignment even existed—will be "punished" with the severe threat of losing their license absent completion of an SEI course in 2013-14. We ask that you put yourself in teachers' shoes and imagine what it would feel like to return to school

in September and receive such a notice from DESE. Why does DESE see the need to move to the involuntary assignment option so quickly, or at all? We urge you and the Department to make every good-faith effort possible to encourage voluntary enrollment before resorting to the action of involuntary assignment. This could include extending the period for voluntary enrollment beyond September 6 to enable further communication with educators once they are back to work.

We are confident that teachers will be eager to sign up for the SEI courses in sufficient number, following clear and effective communications, if they are given adequate time and opportunity to choose course sections that fit their professional and personal schedules.

Ongoing Concerns about the RETELL Rollout

In addition to the concerns expressed above, I would like to reiterate some of our ongoing concerns about the initiative, most of which were also expressed at the June 19 meeting:

- Graduate credit. The SEI course appears to involve far more seat time and homework than your typical graduate course. At the June 19 meeting, Paul Georges raised the possibility of the course being worth more than three graduate credits. Jonathan Landman agreed to explore the matter and get back to us on the question.
- The need to facilitate/accelerate other paths to the SEI Endorsement. As mentioned earlier, there is the ESL path and the degree/graduate training path, but teachers have not yet received any information on how to apply for the Endorsement using one of these paths. Teachers need that information as soon as possible. Likewise, we have been told that an SEI MTEL test may be ready by spring 2014—can this timeline be accelerated, or can another test be used until the new MTEL is ready? Educators would also benefit by being able to enroll in SEI courses offered through colleges, universities, and other third-party providers, but DESE must move quickly to “certify” these courses so teachers can easily discern what “counts” for the Endorsement and what does not.
- The discrepancy between the workload associated with the SEI Teacher Endorsement course and that for the SEI Administrator Endorsement course. The teacher course includes 45 hours of seat time vs. only 15 hours for the administrator course. Yet, administrators are expected to supervise and evaluate teachers based, in part, on teachers’ use of effective ELL teaching strategies. How can administrators effectively evaluate SEI teachers if they haven’t acquired for themselves the full repertoire of strategies that teachers will learn through the teacher course?
- Addressing the needs of teachers on the preliminary license who are seeking to advance to the initial license. As you know, the regulations say that, as of July 1, 2014, applicants for an initial license as a core academic teacher must possess an SEI Teacher Endorsement. We have repeatedly raised the question of how incumbent teachers on the preliminary license will earn the SEI Endorsement if they cannot access the SEI course through their district. As we are now less than one year away from the July 1, 2014 deadline, the question is gaining urgency. At the June 19 meeting, Bob Bickerton indicated that DESE will grant extensions to such teachers who, through no fault of their own, cannot access the course. We would appreciate having this policy put in writing.
- The need to ensure adequate capacity/resources/trainers for the initiative. The regulations say that, as of July 1, 2016, a core academic teacher must possess the SEI Endorsement if assigned ELLs or must obtain the Endorsement within one year of assignment. Furthermore, DESE has appropriately committed to providing every core academic teacher of ELLs with at least one no-cost opportunity to complete the SEI course. Making good on this commitment will require sufficient resources and trainers. It was discouraging that two course sections in Lynn were cancelled last spring due to the unavailability of trainers. AFT Massachusetts remains committed to working with you to ensure that all core academic teachers with ELLs are provided an opportunity to complete the course free of charge, and we anticipate the need to extend no-cost training beyond the planned cohort years that run through 2016.
- The lack of any guarantee to educators that the SEI Endorsement will “hold up” over time. As we have stated before, the RETELL initiative must avoid the same fate that befell the “category trainings.” Many teachers completed the category trainings in good faith, only to later learn that the trainings were “inadequate” and that further training was needed. Reneging on an initiative takes a terrible toll on teacher morale and trust. Teachers who are now pursuing the SEI Endorsement in good faith should have assurances that, this time, their work will be fully honored. While we understand the delicate nature of your discussions with the U.S. Department of Justice, DESE should position itself as an advocate for the educators in the field who are completing the SEI coursework on top of their already challenging day-to-day duties.

Thank you for your attention to this letter and our concerns. We very much want to work with you and your staff to make the RETELL process as smooth and productive as possible because, in the end, students will benefit. We also want the process to be fair and respectful to the educators who are doing the difficult and demanding coursework on top of a teaching job which requires extensive preparation and sustained commitment. I look forward to speaking with you further on this matter.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Gosnell
President

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On Campus

Dan Georgianna, Political Director
UMass Faculty Federation, Local 1895



Cooling Student Costs

The good news is that Massachusetts' universities and colleges will not raise tuition and fees for the next year due to an increase in the Commonwealth's appropriation for public higher education.

The bad news is that tuition and fees at Massachusetts' public universities and colleges remain among the highest in the nation, about 30% more than the nation's average state college and university and 50% more than the average community college.

The better news would be a decrease in tuition and fees.

The budget increase followed an informal deal between UMass President Robert Caret and Governor Deval Patrick to keep tuition and fees constant for two years if the Commonwealth increased funding from 43% to 50% of educational costs at UMass campuses. Five years ago, the state paid 60% of educational expenses and almost 80% in the late 1980s

Shored up by support from the AFT MA and the MTA and lobbied for by a coalition of students, alumni, faculty and staff known as the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts, Governor Patrick's budget increases for higher education survived with few cuts in the Legislature. The state's universi-

ty and college presidents kept their part of the bargain with a freeze on student tuition and fees, at least for next year.

The steep and steady decline in the state's share of educational expense followed the political transformation of public education from public good to private benefit. The government decided that students should pay for college from the increases in their income over high school graduates, which is widely quoted as more than \$1 million over their lifetimes.

Privatizing public higher education in Massachusetts also allowed the state to cut taxes in a state known throughout the political world as "Taxachusetts," which cost three candidates from the Commonwealth to lose the U.S. presidency over the past 20 years.

Sacrificing funding for Massachusetts colleges and universities was a mistake.

A new study by Michael Ash called "Economic Impact of Investment in Public Higher Education in Massachusetts" shows that cutting higher education appropriations actually costs the state revenues and reduces the quality of life of its residents. Dr. Ash, Professor of Economics and Public Policy at UMass Amherst, uses input/output models and previous studies to show

that state spending for higher education generates more jobs at higher pay than tax cuts, building casinos, or increasing health care, the major competitors for state revenues. In fact, state spending for public colleges and universities generates more than twice the number of jobs than an equal amount of tax cuts, because the jobs are created here. Most of the tax cuts spent by taxpayers buys goods and services produced outside Massachusetts.

Graduates also contribute to the state's economy over their lifetimes. State college and university graduates pay about double the state income taxes, property taxes and sales taxes paid by high school graduates. College graduates are also less likely to add to state spending on welfare costs, Medicaid, unemployment compensation, criminal justice, and public healthcare.

These lifetime benefits generate about \$50,000 for the state per graduate after deducting the state costs for educating a graduate.

Furthermore, college graduates have higher job satisfaction, suffer less unemployment, report better overall health, vote more often, and take more interest in community affairs. Fewer smoke and fewer are arrested. Spending and investment by college graduates increase jobs and income for high school graduates. College graduates also educate their children, improve

their health, and produce other social benefits.

Almost all of these benefit result from college education rather than from higher income.

Private colleges and universities, a major sector of the Massachusetts economy, also generate employment and public benefits for the Commonwealth. Their graduates pay higher taxes over their lifetimes, cost less in public services, and improve the quality of life for themselves and their communities. But most leave the state. Over 85% of public college and university graduates stay in Massachusetts.

Ash argues that an increase in college graduates would be the main benefit from more state spending on public higher education. Using state appropriations to cut tuition and fees would put college within the reach of more qualified students. Inability to pay is the main reason given for dropping out of school, and benefits from college drop off sharply for students that drop out.

Ash makes a strong case for funding public education, but state spending on higher education is a good investment only if state colleges and universities spend state funds wisely. Besides cutting tuition and fees, state colleges and universities have to show improvement in graduation and student retention rates. ■

Diary

of a New Teacher

John Rolfe

History Teacher/Debate Coach
East Boston High School

I always wanted to be a teacher. I think most of us who become teachers have long harbored the desire. However, after high school, my plan was to work my 30 years, then retire and launch a second career in education. I made it through 18 years and numerous reorganizations. I spent six years selling real estate and then went into telecommunications. All the time, my dream of teaching stayed with me.

Starting in January, 2009, I took classes at night to get my Masters in education. I enjoyed my classes, but couldn't really put them to any practical use. It was just interesting theory. My idea of teaching was being a content area expert who spouted historical knowledge to a rapt audience. It was a history geek's fantasy with little basis in reality.

My wife is an English teacher, so her influence and support through the whole degree process and actually putting it into action in the classroom cannot be underestimated. Not to mention that she is a far better typist than I am, so this article (and many of my papers for my degree, my lesson plans, my tests and handouts) would

literally not exist without her help. She has also helped me put my vision in perspective. "Your content is just the flavor," she often says, "the particular variety of core knowledge that may appeal to a certain group." In reality, the real things we teach are the same-thinking, engagement, personal investment, etc..

"You don't teach history," she suggests, "You teach kids."

In September 2010, I became a full-time substitute at my wife's school. Being in the classroom, interacting with the kids, seeing school culture in action finally gave me something real to connect with the theories of graduate school. As a sub, I got to meet almost every student in that school. I was thrilled to hear their dream and plans, their aspirations and goals!

I subbed for two full school years, sometimes on a day-to-day basis and sometimes in longer positions. During the 2012-2013 school year, I started a year-long substitute assignment that converted to a full-time, contract position in December. Daily lesson planning, group work, grading, after school activities — it all started to make sense. But boy was I beat at the end of the week!

Teaching is nothing like a corporate job. Teaching is exponentially more difficult. As a corporate employee, some days I could coast by sending a few e-mails, doing some surreptitious web surfing, and enjoying a relaxed lunch. There is no such easy way in education. You are "on" in front of an

audience all day. No corporate executive makes an hour-long presentation or leads an hour-long meeting four to five times a day, 180 days a year. I finally truly understand my wife's exhaustion and the occasional need for a 2:30 happy hour.

Despite the long hours and hard work involved, however, there has not been one day when I got up and said to myself, "I just don't want to do this today." Working in an urban district, I see the particular challenges of our population. Some of our kids are first-generation English speakers. Others work full-time to help support their families. Some are caretakers for their younger siblings. Many live here alone while the rest of their families remain behind in their native countries. They have so many concerns besides getting an education, but helping them get that education is still my primary function. My job is to help get them ready for life beyond high school. I feel like this is where I can really speak from experience, but I know that my words often get ignored. I



LIKE NO OTHER JOB
John Rolfe left behind years of corporate striving to pursue his dream of teaching...and has never looked back

was a teenager once and I remember how smart I was back then. Why did I need to listen to adults, especially some blowhard teacher? I see that same reaction in my students' eye rolls. But sometimes, the eyes don't roll. Sometimes, they pause and listen briefly. In that pause, I can see that I have done my job. ■

Do YOU have a story to tell or a lesson to share?

We are looking for "new" teachers (i.e., educators in their first 1-3 years of experience) who want to join our team for the 2013-14 year.

Please send your name and ideas to advocate@aftma.net.

Thank you!



Retiree Corner

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

Check out the Retirees' section and other EXCLUSIVE content at www.aftma.net

We All Value Independence

Very early in their lives, people begin to claim their independence. It is amazing how quickly children want to feed themselves, dress themselves, and do all of the things that they can to show they are independent. As people age, independence is still a major concern.

One of the greatest fears people have as they grow older is the loss of independence. On a list of the ten things seniors fear most as they age, half of them are related to losing independence and relying on others. Consequently, we all need to be educated and informed about ways to help seniors remain in their own homes and control their own lives. We need to be conscious of their fear of losing independence. We also need to be aware of available services that our communities provide.

Most communities have senior centers that offer hot meals. For those who cannot go to the center, Meals on Wheels and other delivery

services can bring food. There are also many state services available to eligible seniors to help with household chores, transportation to medical appointments, shopping, and home health care. Most of us do not investigate the services that are out there until someone we love desperately needs them. That is why it is always the right time to see what is available.

It is also incumbent upon all of us to think through what will help seniors to keep their independence as long as possible. At some point, most seniors face the question about whether they want to remain in their homes or consider alternative possibilities. There will be a time when they may no longer want the responsibility of caring for and living in their home. In order to be prepared and to make a successful transition, they should investigate and consider alternatives that they are willing to entertain before the time comes to entertain them.

In 2007, MRU did a survey of 5100

of the oldest retirees whose pensions were below \$19,000. The study found that the income level to qualify for subsidized housing is surprisingly high. To qualify for public housing in 2013, the income limits are over \$40,000 for an individual, and over \$50,000 for a family of two. The rent is usually less than one-third of their monthly income after certain deductions are considered. For those who do their homework well in advance of needing this service, seniors may find they can rent an apartment in a private home, a new apartment complex or in other locations and not be limited to traditional, senior public housing.

Instead of seniors worrying about losing their independence, we all need to look at how we can help them maintain it. Children have to work at earning their independence; so, too, seniors must work at maintaining theirs by thinking, researching, and exploring ways that will help them to keep it. ■

Women at Work

EMERGE and WILD to unite September 7

As Congress continues to be stuck in neutral, many people are looking for new ways to be heard and to get things done. Perhaps realizing that they may not be able to fight city hall, some are going so far as to try to work there themselves!

On Saturday September 7, from 8:30 AM to noon, women from all regions and all sectors will gather at the SEIU office at 150 Mt. Vernon Street in Boston for the first combined meeting between Emerge Massachusetts (www.emergema.org) and the Women's Institute for Leadership Development (www.wildlabor.org).

At "A Taste of Emerge," women from across the Commonwealth will be invited and encouraged to find their own paths into politics so that they can take more control of their own lives instead of leaving so many vital decisions up to others.

"While women and people of color are better represented in labor leadership than they were...years ago," observes WILD Executive Director Kathy Casavant, "the movement is still largely led by white men, so creating spaces where women...can come together around our struggles is still badly needed."

According to Casavant, women in the Massachusetts labor movement have been coming together through WILD for nearly 30 years.

"WILD was founded in 1986 by women labor activists and educators to empower women to become effective leaders in their workplaces and in the Massachusetts labor movement," Casavant says, noting that nearly 2,500 women from 150 union locals and other organizations have participated in WILD programs. "WILD has helped to form and support union women's committees at local, regional

and state levels...[and] has provided a vehicle for [many] immigrant women...to learn about unions in the U.S. and their rights as workers"

As the only organization in Massachusetts with a specific focus on developing women's leadership in the labor movement, WILD fills a unique and vital niche in labor and community organization. With this event, they hope to continue and build upon that

role while encouraging more women to become involved so they can support each other more effectively.

For the past six years, Emerge Massachusetts has been recruiting and training women to run for office. "We have trained over 100 women," says Executive Director Taylor Woods-Gauthier, noting that 20 of the 30 women that her organization has helped prepare have won their elections.

This year, Emerge has candidates running for a wide array of positions in a great number of communities. "We have alumnae running this year for city council in Boston, Cambridge, Worcester, and Lowell," Woods-Gauthier says, and other municipal offices across the state."

By combining forces with WILD, Woods-Gauthier hopes that her organization can find more women who have the ideas and drive to succeed in public service yet who may never have even considered it before.

"This is our first formal partnership with WILD," Woods-Gauthier says. "We are thrilled to work with their network of women labor leaders!"

As the Emerge training program involves a six-month commitment, Woods-Gauthier is also excited to be able to offer a sample at the event so that the women who choose to participate will have an idea of what they will

experience.

"The event will give attendees a chance to see what an Emerge training looks like before they commit," Woods-Gauthier says. "We will have an overview of the organization and our trainings, a sample training session, and alumnae speaking about their first-hand experience of Emerge."

AFT organizer Maggie Brown became involved with Emerge after some time spent working as a community leader with various grassroots organizations. "I had worked with Boston Jobs Alliance," she explains, recalling many visits to the State House on behalf of her constituents. "I figured I could work from the inside, so I decided to run for the Governor's Council. That is what prompted me to get involved with Emerge.

As soon as she went to her first meeting, Brown was impressed and eager to get more involved.

"I thought it was great," she recalls. "The process that they use gives you a sense of what you will have to do as a candidate and the information they provide is very helpful."

Among the many Massachusetts women who have had positive experiences with WILD is Mary Frances Best, president of the MA Library Staff Association (MLSA). "I have been going to WILD [events] for over 20 years," Best recalls, noting how many Boston teachers and other colleagues she has met at the organization's many events. "Everyone loves it!"

Best first became involved with WILD soon after being elected President of Local 4928. "The emphasis is on training women to become leaders," Best says.

Another leader who has benefited from work with WILD is Sherry

SENIOR SEMINARS

How to Protect Your Nest Egg

This seminar, presented by Elder Law Attorney Mary Howie, deals with wills and trusts, gifting, probate, joint tenancy, direct transfers, and much more. Atty. Howie is a member of both the MA and NH Bar Associations, as well as the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, NH Conflict Resolution Association and the National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys.

These seminars will take place on Saturday, September 21 and Saturday November 2 from 10 AM to noon at the MRU office at 314 Main Street, Unit 105, in Wilmington, MA.

To register for either of these seminars, email mardito@retireesunited.org or call 781-365-0205. Please mention the seminar you wish to attend and leave your name, phone number and the number attending. There will be no call back unless you request one due to a question or need for directions.

Preparing For Retirement

This two-hour seminar covers material you need to prepare for retirement. The first seminar of the fall season will be held on Tuesday, September 24 at North Attleboro Middle School (564 Landry Ave North Attleboro) from 3:50-5:50 PM. Please register with Nicole Reminder at president@naft.org.

Any local presidents wishing to book a free two-hour seminar may contact Marie Ardito at mardito@retireesunited.org or at 781-365-0205.

Pedone, who now heads the BTU's Women's Rights Committee..

"It was through WILD that the concept of the women's rights committee went from a thought to a concrete action plan," Pedone explains, noting how WILD encouraged her to brainstorm with women from far beyond Boston in order to make her dream a reality. "Formulating the committee with subcommittees who would organize and shape our purpose and finally carry out planned events was a direct result of the inspirational women of WILD."

In an effort to pay it forward, the Committee now hosts its own annual events at which women are encouraged and shown how to more effectively lead. "Every March, [we] honor people who advance the awareness of women's rights," Pedone explains. "We have thus far honored Boston City Councillor Ayanna Pressley as well as Massachusetts State Representative Marjorie Decker for their contribution to the rights of women and girls."

"One of the great things about these programs is meeting women from different unions or community groups who broaden one's outlook and help one understand other perspectives," Best suggests. I have been helped immeasurably by...WILD!" ■

Summa Cum Laude: Gianna Simone

Having grown up in East Boston, Revere and Chelsea, actress/model/fashion entrepreneur Gianna Simone is now boldly going where few have gone before.

After appearances on such popular shows as “Law & Order: Criminal Intent” and “Chuck,” Simone landed on the famous bridge of the U.S.S. Enterprise in the smash action drama “Star Trek Into Darkness.”

While this might be the dream of a lifetime for most actors, it seems to be just part of the trajectory for this rising star who lives by the motto, “You never become old and wise if you aren’t young and crazy.” An avid snowboarder and bungee jumper, Simone (who often doubles as a stunt driver in her various projects) has also recently jumped into the world of fashion with a set of handmade hats.

After graduating from Boston Latin Academy, Simone went to Bunker Hill Community College to take business classes while working most of the time in the business we call show. As a model, she has appeared in campaigns for such diverse clients as the American Dental Association and Dunkin Donuts, New Balance and Reebok.

When asked what she took from her Boston-based school years, the popular performer replies that school was made up for her of wonderful people. “Some of my best memories from school were the people I met,”

Simone explains. “People make such an impact on you and you don’t quite realize it...until years later.”

Though Simone took her studies seriously, sensing how important an education is for people who have to memorize lines and often handle their own business affairs, she says that she always wanted to be in showbiz. “I always wanted to be a model ever since I can remember,” she explains. “I was about 3 or 4 years old... and my baby sitter was trying to talk to me about what I wanted to be when I grew up. I said a doctor, and she said, ‘You should be a model!’”

With one statement from an early fan, Simone’s path was set. The next few years were filled with pretend stages made out of blankets and pillows and performing imaginative routines for her family, friends, or just herself.

“I would be in heaven when ever I did this,” she recalls. “Looking back on that makes me know in my heart



A BOLD STAR Gianna Simone keeps her hat on straight in the crazy world of showbiz

that this is what God created me to do!”

While she may have been set on her path by a babysitter, Simone credit her family and her teachers with supporting her along the way.

“The really good teachers I’ve had in my life gave me inspiration and belief in myself to achieve anything I set my mind and heart on,” she says. “People don’t realize that just an act of kindness or a few caring, genuine words can truly impact someone’s life forever.”

While her path to performance may have been established early on, Simone’s career has already had multiple acts. In addition to working with modeling agencies and casting groups all over the country, Simone also oversees her own fashion business.

“I began making these floppy hats when I just wanted a hipster looking hat for myself with no intention to sell them,” she recalls, pointing the curious to her website www.Etsy.com/shop/LameUP. “As I started to

wear it out... people would ask me where I got it. I even got asked to make one for somebody!”

Again, a simple bit of encouragement, combined with her own smarts and, helped Simone start down another challenging but rewarding road.

“I’ve always been a pretty savvy business woman,” she suggests, “so I knew the things I would have to do in order to make this a business. I created a name...spoke with a patent attorney and BAM I have a business now!”

As much of her modeling work keeps her on the cutting edge of fashion, Simone hopes to combine her passions while helping each one of them to grow.

“I plan to either market or sell these once they get too much for just me to make,” she says, musing, “Maybe I will create my own line of clothing one day, too!”

No matter what she does, it seems that Simone can only succeed. Backed with an education from one of the best districts in the nation and the love and support of family, friends and fans, Simone is set to take her own enterprises as far as she wants.

“It takes years of nose to the grindstone,” Simone advises, “but I think the more projects you do [and], the more people see [you]...that’s how you become well known.” ■

Gear-ing Up for the New Year

By Shirley Jones-Luke

Another school year will soon be upon us. And while most of us are enjoying the “dog days” of summer, we can still hear the school bell ringing in the distance. A new year means new students, new curriculums, and new instructional strategies. But every year, thousands of teachers are also forced to deal with the ever-expanding and ever-more-expensive problem of providing classroom supplies.

Even in the best-funded districts, many teachers routinely spend money out of their own pockets in order to provide for their students. In fact, according to a nationwide survey conducted by Adopt-A-Classroom, over 90 percent of teachers reported purchasing things for their students that ranged from food and snacks to personal care items like toothbrushes and soap.

Each year, teachers spend hundreds if not thousands of dollars of their own money to provide basic supplies to their students. That is a lot of pens, pencils, and notebooks! If a teacher has a more equipment-heavy subject such as science, they may have to add the cost of microscopes, test tubes, and safety gear. Art and music? Try paint, canvases, or even instruments! The contribution teachers make to ensure that their students have the tools they need to succeed in the classroom is a burden many teachers struggle to bear. Fortunately, there are ways to cut costs without cutting care.

One organization that has greatly helped teachers acquire classroom supplies is Donors Choose (www.DonorsChoose.org). This online charity makes it easy for anyone to help students in need by allowing teachers to post wish lists to which anyone can contribute. According to the organization’s website, when a project reaches its funding goal, the materials are

shipped to the classroom or school in need. Donors get photos of the class receiving and using the items, as well as a letter from the teacher, and insight into how every dollar was spent. If donors give over \$50, they will also receive hand-written “thank-you” letters from the students who benefitted from their generosity.

The mission of DonorsChoose.org is to engage the public in public



schools by offering a simple, accountable and personal way to address educational inequity. The organization envisions a nation where children in every community have the tools and experiences needed for an excellent education.

Another organization that helps teachers with supplies is the Kids in Need Foundation (www.kinf.org). This 501(c) (3) charity was founded in 1995 to provide free school supplies in order to help ensure that every child is prepared to learn and succeed. In addition to donating supplies through its national network of resource centers, Kids In Need also awards grants to teachers for innovative classroom projects and develops community supply donation programs.

Adopt-A-Classroom (www.AdoptA-Classroom.org) is another organization that provides free classroom supplies to teachers by connecting donors with teachers and schools in need. Adopt-A-Classroom was founded by James Rosenberg, a mergers

and acquisitions attorney who became involved with education support as a mentor for students at a school for physically and mentally delayed children. Rosenberg was astounded by the lack of resources in the classrooms in which he worked, especially in contrast to the wealth in corporate America that he witnessed in his professional life. He started Adopt-A-Classroom to provide members of the community with an easy way to help teachers. In 1998, Rosenberg left the law and dedicated himself to his cause full-time.

Teachers in Lynn and the surrounding area are extra fortunate to have a terrific resource right nearby. Extras for Creative Use (www.extrasforcreativereuse.org) is a membership-based organization that collects and redistributes donated materials, saving them from landfills and putting them to good use in classrooms and art studios throughout the area. From recycled foam and gently used textbooks to lined paper and wrapping paper to classroom and home office furniture, Extras helps teachers and others go that extra mile and stretch their budgets extra far.

While these organizations go a long way towards supporting students and teachers and bridging gaps of inequity, they are fortunately just a few of the many such sources of support. In addition to online searches, teachers might be wise to check out area arts and craft stores, dollar stores, thrift stores, and even yard sales, as they often hold treasures that can be picked up inexpensively. Many national retailers, such as Staples and Barnes & Noble, offer discounts for educators and many others will do so if you just ask. Also, a number of local libraries collect and donate books and other supplies. Once you have stocked up, see if you can trade with colleagues so that everyone gets everything they need. All you need to do is be creative

and keep your eyes open. And when you find a good deal, be sure to tell a colleague or two. It will surely come back to you!

No matter how we go about procuring our supplies, teachers must continue to do all we can to make sure that every student has all they need to learn and succeed, regardless of fiscal challenges. While districts can help by providing more basic supplies or by reimbursing teachers for personal expenses, many teachers are left greatly on their own and so must rely on their colleagues and their creativity to make sure they do the right thing and provide the right things for their students. ■



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

Thank you!