



The Advocate



December 2013

Pulling into PARCC

MA prepares to “test drive” new assessment system

A new student testing system may be coming to Massachusetts. On Nov. 19, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (the Board) voted 6-3 in favor of a motion presented by Commissioner Mitchell Chester to approve a two-year assessment transition plan, putting Massachusetts on a track to potentially replace its long-established MCAS assessment with a new assessment system being developed by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium.

AFT MA members are absolutely critical to this pilot. Our educators are in the classroom working with students every day, and they know best what does and doesn't work.

- AFT MA President Tom Gosnell

Significantly, the Nov. 19 vote does not immediately replace MCAS with PARCC. Rather, the commissioner's plan outlines a phase-in process that would allow the Board to wait until the fall of 2015—several months after the first operational PARCC tests are given—to officially decide whether to jettison MCAS in favor of PARCC starting in 2015-16 for grades 3 to 8.

Under the plan, PARCC field tests will take place in spring 2014, and then districts will have the choice to administer either MCAS or PARCC in spring 2015. The Board will consider results and feedback from the pilot years before making a final policy decision in the fall of 2015.

Furthermore, as outlined in the plan, all grade 10 students will continue to take MCAS to qualify for the Competency Determination (a requirement for high school graduation) at least through the Class of 2018 (this year's eighth graders). The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) says that any

changes to the CD requirement—for example, tying the CD to PARCC high school tests—affecting the classes of 2019 and beyond will be determined at a later time in the transition process.

PARCC 101

PARCC is one of two national assessment consortia—the other being “Smarter Balanced”—that have been awarded funding from the U.S. Department of Education to develop K-12 assessment systems that are aligned to the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The standards, adopted by 45 states, were incorporated into the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks for English language arts (ELA) and mathematics in December 2010, and educators have been working since then to implement the new standards in their classrooms.

PARCC boasts the participation of 18 states plus the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands. (Learn more at www.parcconline.org.) Smarter Balanced claims the participation of more than 20 states. (Learn more at www.smarterbalanced.org.)

PARCC claims that it is building a “next-generation assessment system” aligned to the the CCSS and “anchored in what it takes to be ready for college and careers.” According to the PARCC website, the assessment system “will build a pathway to college and career readiness by the end of high school, mark students' progress toward this goal from 3rd grade up, and provide teachers with timely information to inform instruction and provide student support.” The consortium's work is being funded by a four-year, \$186 million federal Race to the Top Assessment Grant.

PARCC will have two summative components: a performance-based assessment (PBA) in math (two sessions) and ELA (three sessions) that will feature extended reading, writing, and problem-solving tasks (primarily human-scored); and an end-of-year

(EOY) assessment in math and ELA (two sessions each) that will feature selected-response, short-answer, and other “technology-enhanced” and “innovative” items, all of which will be machine-scored. PARCC is expected to have these tests fully operational by 2014-15.

The precise amount of time required of students to take the tests has not yet been determined, with the field tests expected to help inform the decision. However, current estimates have total test-administration time exceeding 10 hours for the full array of sessions, with student “time on task” estimated at slightly less than 10 hours total for some students and up to 50 percent longer for students who need additional test-taking time.

Notably, PARCC is being designed as a computer-based assessment that will be administered online, although a pencil-and-paper option will be available at least through 2015-16, according to DESE. PARCC's technology demands will require many districts and schools to make significant upgrades to their technology infrastructure.

State Commissioner: PARCC Has Promise But Needs “Test Drive”

Massachusetts Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester, who chairs the national PARCC governing board, is a firm believer in PARCC's potential. In a late November update to the field, he wrote: “PARCC promises to provide clearer signals to educators and students about the readiness of students for the next grade level and, in high school, for college and career. PARCC also will allow us to produce more timely results for districts and schools to assist educators in planning and tailoring instruction for students in the coming year.”

PARCC promises to provide clearer signals to educators and students about the readiness of students for the next grade level and, in high school, for college and career.

- DESE Commissioner Mitchell Chester

Furthering the case for why PARCC has the capacity to be an improvement over MCAS, Chester also noted that “PARCC is designed to build on the strengths of our current testing program and add additional features. These include more open-ended, performance-based tasks to better measure students' ability to think critically and to apply what they know, as well as the use of innovative technology-based items. Further, at the high school level, PARCC intends to assess a broader range of the skills that employers and colleges report as essential

NONPROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Westboro, MA
Permit No. 100

BOSTON STRONG

In This Issue

- 2** President's Column
- 3** FEATURE FOCUS: Support for Legislation
- 4** Diary of a New Teacher: Kayla Morse
- Summa Cum Laude:* Art Singer
- 5** A Seaworthy Resolution
- Honoring Their Own
- 6** On Campus: What Administrators Do
- 7** Retiree Corner: A NEW Year's Resolution
- Educator's Opinion:* Why Unions Matter
- 8** A Day of Action
- Educator's Opinion:* Reclaiming in Lynn

for success after high school.”

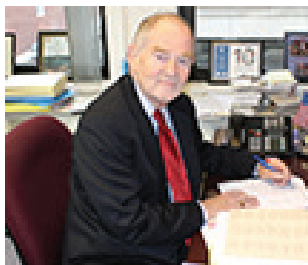
At the same time, Chester says he has heard from the field about the need to “implement PARCC and other reform initiatives in a thoughtful manner.” To that end, he is calling for a “two-year test drive” of PARCC before the state moves to full implementation.

Chester says that “the two-year transition provides for a robust comparison of MCAS and PARCC, so that we can decide in the fall of 2015 whether to sunset the MCAS English language arts (ELA) and mathematics assessments for grades 3-8 and employ PARCC as our state testing program for these subjects beginning in spring 2016. This test drive provides two years to compare and contrast MCAS and PARCC, including the content, format, quality, and standards of performance for the two assessments. It also permits us to transition our accountability uses of the assessment

Continued on page 6



STRIKING A BARGAIN AFT MA President Tom Gosnell (left) stands on the steps of the Massachusetts State House with Lawrence Teachers Union President Frankl McLaughlin and AFT MA Special Assistant to the President Ed Doherty after testifying on behalf of House Bill 2227 - An Act to Promote Collaboration at Designated Schools and Districts. For story, please see page 3.



THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Thomas J. Gosnell
President, AFT Massachusetts

2014 Beckons Us

In recent years significant issues have come forward. 2014 will be the same. This article will briefly highlight two of those issues.

Common Core Standards

Many states have adopted the Common Core Standards. Massachusetts is one of them and hopes to have implementation going forward over the next few years. Consequently, a new assessment, developed by the Partnership for Assessment Readiness for College and Career Consortium, thus commonly called PARCC, is scheduled to gradually replace MCAS.

Randi Weingarten, the President of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), is advocating a three year moratorium on the implementation of any assessment based on Common Core Standards. This is a good proposal because putting the common core standards into effect will require great care and thoughtfulness.

If the state implements the standards and the assessments in a haphazard manner, the results of assessments will create havoc because they will probably distort the students scores in a way that show our students not doing nearly as well as they are currently doing.

The American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts (AFT MA)

will be a vigorous and full participant in the discussion centered around the common core standards and assessments

The lead article in this edition of *The Advocate* explains the issues in great depth.

The 2010 Education Bill and Collective Bargaining

One of the reasons, but not the only one, AFT MA opposed this bill, formally known as an Act to Reduce the Achievement Gap, is that one of its premises was that teachers and other education personnel were the prime reason some students did not achieve as well academically as we would like. Consequently, the bill permitted a significant erosion of collective bargaining rights.

For example, in a level 4 school, which is called an underperforming school, the entire staff might be replaced, thus putting huge emphasis on the view, without any evidence, that the staff is responsible for the underperformance. One can only wonder why, in a state where knowledge is prized, anyone would seek to remove the staff without any hard evidence of its perceived failure to educate.

In level 5 districts, those designated as chronically underperforming, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) can

assume control of the entire district. DESE's position is basically that collective bargaining does not exist.

At a recent State House hearing Frank McLaughlin, President of the Lawrence Teachers Union, Tim Sullivan, Legislative Agent for the AFL-CIO, Ed Doherty, Assistant to the President of AFT MA, and I testified in support of a bill restoring collective bargaining.

I stated that AFT MA fully supports education reform that is good for children, fair to educators and collaboratively done. We want to reclaim the promise of public education to help all children succeed.

I further stated that in level 4 schools and level 5 districts, we have witnessed educators losing their voice on issues as critical as the length of the school year and school day, staff schedules, teacher's preparation periods, and the number of periods teachers must teach, professional development, teachers' salaries, and even on the crucial issue of what is best for the education of their children in their communities.

Where are professionalism and collaboration?

Frank McLaughlin stated that teachers' voices have been silenced in Lawrence and that Commissioner Chester and Receiver Riley do not include teachers in their decision making process.

AFT MA is supporting House Bill 2227 to restore collective bargaining rights. It is a major focus of AFT MA and will continue to be so in 2014.

In the next issue of the newspaper I shall write about other major issues.

If you have any question or comments, please email me at tgosnell@aftma.net. ■

BOLD PRINT

For the fifth year in a row, Massachusetts 4th and 8th graders have earned the nation's top scores in reading and mathematics on the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam, scoring well above the national average.

Congratulations to ALL of our members.

□ □ □ □

Congratulations also to Berklee College of Music, which was recently named the nation's top music school by *The Hollywood Reporter* based on how many Berklee alumni have won Grammys, Emmys, and other awards in recent years.

□ □ □ □

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

CONGRATULATIONS TO CONGRESSWOMAN KATHERINE CLARK!



We at AFT Massachusetts look forward to continuing to support and stand with her as we work together to improve the educations and the lives of our students, teachers, and neighbors.

ATTENTION NEW TEACHERS

Have you been teaching for fewer than five years?

Do you want to share why you entered education?

Do you have life lessons to impart?

Do you want to GET PAID for your efforts?

Write to advocate@aftma.net

The Advocate

The official publication of
AFT Massachusetts, AFL-CIO

Thomas J. Gosnell, President
Mark Allred, Sr., Secretary-Treasurer

VICE PRESIDENTS

Tim Angerhofer
Patricia Armstrong
Deborah Blinder
Kathryn Chamberlain
Brenda Chaney
Kathy Delaney
Catherine Deveney
Patricia Driscoll
Marianne Dumont
Brant Duncan
J. Michael Earle
Margaret Farrell
Jenna Fitzgerald
Richard Flaherty
Paul Georges
Daniel Haacker
Joyce Harrington
Susan Leahy
Francis McLaughlin
Bruce Nelson
James Philip
Joe Poli
Robert Salois
Bruce Sparfven
Richard Stutman
Gale Thomas

Matt Robinson, Editor
38 Chauncy St., Suite 402
Boston, Mass. 02111
Tel. 617-423-3342 / 800-279-2523
Fax: 617-423-0174
www.aftma.net
advocate@aftma.net

c. 2013 AFT MA, ARR

ATTENTION ALL AFT MA MEMBERS AND MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILIES

The 2014 AFT MA Shanker/Feldman/Porter Scholarship Program will be awarding eight (8) scholarships of \$1,500 each to eligible high school seniors who are dependents of AFT Massachusetts Members

For information and an application, please go to www.aftma.net or contact Carmela Dyette at 617 423 3342 or cdyette@aftma.net

FEATURE FOCUS: AFT-MA Support for Legislation

Acting to Support Early Educators

On November 25, the Joint Committee on Public Service heard testimony regarding House Bill 477/Senate Bill 223 - An Act to Improve Quality in Early Education Centers.

Among the many supporters were AFT MA President Tom Gosnell, who testified alongside MTA President Paul Toner and Massachusetts AFL-CIO President Steve Tolman, as well as early childhood center operators, educators, parents and students.

"The purpose of this Bill, first and foremost, is to make life better for our kids," explained Gosnell. "One way it will do that is that it will give the workers a greater voice."

Gosnell went on to tell the story of a "dedicated and passionate" K-1 teacher with a Masters in education who became an early childhood educator despite people who asked when she was going to get a "real job."

"To talk to her is to hear a story of the challenges that face ECE teachers...across the state," Gosnell suggested, noting how many early childhood workers support other families while struggling themselves.

"We are trying to make sure that the [early] education our children get is strong," explained Representative Jeffrey Sanchez, who is co-sponsoring Bill 477, "[and that] the quality of early childhood centers is as strong as our public schools."

As things stand, many early childhood care providers and center directors are undersupported and therefore unable to support both their col-

leagues and the children in their care.

"I filed this legislation because I strongly believe that early education professionals deserve to be paid far better," said Senator Sal DiDomenico, a parent of two in a dual-income household who has "relied heavily on quality early education programs." DiDomenico also cited research that shows how increasing wages for early educators helps reduce teacher turnover "thereby improving outcomes for children."

"It is more difficult to support my teachers so they can serve our children," said Tracy Sheerin, director of KidZone Child Care in Pittsfield, noting that her center loses 2-3 of their most experienced teachers each year to public schools as they are unable to provide the same salary and supports.

Though the issues involved are complicated and vary center to center, Sheerin suggested an easy and catchy



FOR THE KIDS AFT MA President Tom Gosnell (left) testifies before the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Public Service in favor of House Bill 477/Senate Bill 223 - An Act to Improve Quality in Early Education Centers. Next to Gosnell are Massachusetts AFL-CIO President Steve Tolman and MTA President Paul Toner, both of whom also testified.

way to keep them all in mind:

"Parents can't afford to pay," she chanted. "Teachers can't afford to stay. There has to be a better way!"

In his testimony, Senate Minority Whip Richard Ross commented on the number of people who had turned out to discuss this important legislation and then, with the help of another center operator, detailed some of the hundreds of tasks that early childhood care workers need to fulfill in order to assure each child in their care is, as he put it, "safe, loved and learning."

"Directors are not trained in management," Ross pointed out, suggesting that, if this Bill were made law, it

could provide them with sufficient support to allow Massachusetts to be "well on their way to leading the nation in early education."

In his testimony, Tolman explained how his organization represents all working people and therefore has a vested interest in this legislation.

"Part of the mission of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO," he said, "is to

provide a unified voice for all working people, both members of unions and those not yet organized. That is exactly what this bill seeks to accomplish."

The main point of the Bill, Tolman emphasized, is to "give...a voice to the professionals in the critical vocation of early education," noting how the passage of the Bill would support over 5,000 early educators across the Commonwealth by providing them the opportunity to negotiate workforce standards at a statewide level.

"Child care educators and center directors would be involved in these negotiations," Tolman went on, "to ensure that they are a truly open and collaborative dialogue between industry professionals." The Bill would also place ECE professionals and management "on the same side of the table" encouraging cooperation and collaboration, rather than in adversarial positions.

"Early child care educators are critical to the lives of many Massachusetts working families," Tolman pointed out. "Their professional experience and their own education are... closely aligned to the improvement of our state's early education system." Therefore, Tolman concluded, "We need to ensure that these professionals have a voice in setting general and basic standards for early education."

Patty Hnatiuk of Wheelock College, Ira Fader of the MTA and Clare Hammonds of UMass Amherst were among the many experts on early childhood education who also testified on behalf of the legislation. ■

Protecting Collective Bargaining

On December 10, AFT MA President Tom Gosnell, Special Assistant to the President Ed Doherty, Massachusetts AFL-CIO Legislative and Communications Director Tim Sullivan, and Lawrence Teachers Union President Frank McLaughlin testified in front of the Joint Committee on Public Service in favor of House Bill 2227 - An Act to Promote Collaboration at Designated Schools and Districts.

Referring to established rules regarding awarding and use of State and Federal education funds, Doherty explained that, "When the legislation was passed, it was to give the [administrators]...a little extra flexibility to turn around a school." Doherty was keen to point out, however, that the original ruling stated that, "If they determine that a provision of collective bargaining agreement is an impediment to learning, they will have the authority to amend or change or delete that provision." Doherty saw this specific statement as so vital to the discussion, in fact, that he repeated it for the record.

"We view that as a very limited authority," suggested Doherty. Referring to the situation in Lawrence (where Doherty has served as a lead negotiator), he then suggested that "the Commissioner and Receiver have taken that one sentence and applied it to the entire contract. They have said we have no right to collective bargaining or to talk about salary, working conditions or benefits."

Observing that such practices are more common in lower-performing states, Doherty respectfully reminded the legislators that, "collective bargaining is not an impediment to

students learning," using the fact that Massachusetts (which is the most unionized state in terms of educators) regularly leads the nation in many educational measurements as evidence for this fact.

Gosnell echoed Doherty in his testimony, urging legislators to "restore rights" to schools that had been determined by the Commissioner to be underperforming.

"How did educators lose their voice in the turnaround process?" Gosnell asked, reiterating AFT MA's dedicated support for education reform that is "good for children, fair to educators and collaboratively done," none of which seem to apply in Lawrence.

"We want to reclaim the promise of public education to help all children succeed," Gosnell said, mentioning AFT's national slogan.

Explaining that he was "pinch hitting" for President Steve Tolman, Sullivan stated that Tolman (who, Sullivan noted, was a former State legislator himself) was offering his "full-throated support" for the Bill.

"He was a member of the legislature when the original legislation was passed," Sullivan recalled. "Nobody ever imagined it was intended to take away collective bargaining from teachers."

Building on Gosnell's idea of "voice," Sullivan observed that, "Taking voice away is never the solution to any problem and...cannot be a central tenet to education policy."

He therefore asked the legislature to "Stop the eradication of collective bargaining rights" and emphasized the "need to make teachers a central part of the conversation." This, Sullivan suggested, is "the only way to turn

around schools," for if teachers are worried about their rights, "that cannot be a productive relationship."

As the discussion is so focused on Lawrence, McLaughlin's testimony was perhaps the most prescient and passionate. The long-time social studies teacher began by mentioning how, historically speaking, Lawrence has a special place in the world of worker rights, as it was there where workers first spoke out against unfair practices in the famous Bread and Roses Strike of 1912. A century later, McLaughlin noted, Lawrence is again at the center of a worker's rights issue.

"As you know," he explained, "Lawrence is the only school district in Massachusetts under state receivership."

Though his colleagues already face many unique challenges, McLaughlin was firm in his desire to keep unfair labor practices off the list.

"We desperately want real solutions," he said. "We also want to reiterate our desire to collaborate with the Receiver and the Department of Education."

As evidence of this collaborative spirit, McLaughlin offered the Oliver Partnership School, a pioneering program that combines the efforts and expertise of the State and the city of Lawrence to create a teacher-run school that is the envy of many others, both in Lawrence and across the country. Unfortunately, McLaughlin suggested, that spirit has "not gone beyond that school."

Speaking of the State administrators, McLaughlin said that, "They believe they have no obligation to bargain in good faith." He also noted that the Receiver and Commissioner have explicitly stated that they can "impose all terms and conditions unilaterally"

and can also deny teachers the right to file grievances or to arbitrate.

"All of this calls into question what it means to have a contract," McLaughlin suggested, noting a series of unfair labor practice charges he and his colleagues have filed.

"The teachers in Lawrence deserve to have same collective bargaining rights as every other school," McLaughlin said, noting that his colleagues have not had a contract in over three years and suggesting that the "wholesale destruction" of collective bargaining rights is "more than a legal issue; it is an educational issue and a moral issue."

Building on the theme of voice and on the premise that more organized states deliver better education results, McLaughlin went on to explain how collective bargaining also offers teachers a safe means of advocating for students and maintaining best practices.

"Teachers are in the classroom every day," he observed. "So who knows better what they need than teachers?"

When teachers voices are silenced, McLaughlin observed, bureaucrats who are "far from the classroom" make "bad decisions that hurt the students." Such, he says, is the state of affairs in Lawrence. If it is allowed to continue, he suggested, it will represent a bad precedent from a city that is known for far more positive ones.

"Massachusetts has always been a leader in worker rights," McLaughlin concluded, "and Lawrence has always played a central role in our proud labor history.... On the 100th anniversary of the founding of the labor movement in the United States, it is a shame that teachers are losing collective bargaining rights." ■

Diary

of a New Teacher

Kayla Morse

2nd grade Teacher
William W. Henderson Inclusion
Elementary School, Dorchester

My sophomore year of college, I was headed towards becoming a pediatric physical therapist. I enjoyed the work that I was doing, but I felt empty. I was on the right track to pursuing a career that would offer both financial stability and social acceptance and respect. These were elements that I had been told should be important to me. and that, as a low-income, first-generation college student, I should want and hope for. Upon acceptance into my physical therapy program, however, I became extremely hesitant about my future. It was unclear at the moment, but I knew something just did not feel right.

I was attending a leadership conference at my Alma Mater, The University of Florida, where one of the facilitators asked us to reflect on what brings us alive, what makes us feel whole, and what drives us when we don't have drive. She then asked how those things were aligned with our vision for our career. I was in disbelief that I had lived 20 years of my life ignoring those questions. When I finally answered them, I realized I was in the wrong field, and that I longed to work in schools. I came to the conclusion that I would be a guidance

counselor. I changed my major, spoke to my advisors, and settled into my new career track.

I took the opportunity to work with the educational non-profit Breakthrough Collaborative for the summer after my sophomore year. I welcomed the opportunity to work with kids that were identified, much like myself, as having high potential but being underrepresented. While the teaching element was impressive, I was intrigued most by the mentoring component.

I spent that summer going through the ups and downs that come with teaching. I broke down several times because I felt incompetent, but then I soon realized that others were looking to me for guidance and that I had to model for my students what it looked like when you are faced with challenges. My 12- and 13-year-olds that summer inspired me, challenged me, and made me better. I left that summer internship loving teaching, but still not sure if it were actually the career for me.

I returned the next summer, eager to serve better, be better, and do better. This time, I left convicted that I was meant to be a teacher. My experience in this program left an indelible mark on my life and ignited a fire in me that burned with such a passion that I cannot deny the pull that it has had on my career and philosophy of teaching as a whole.

When I left that summer, I was dedicated to teaching, but still terribly confused about how I was supposed to actually become the teacher that I so desired to be. I found the perfect



FEED THE FIRE
Kayla Morse
found a spark of
inspiration and
now strives to
fan the flames
of passion in her
students

much a part of my stance as an educator because I live it!

Most of my education, I have felt "smart", but very few times have I felt powerful. I want my students to feel powerful. That is what drives me! It wakes me up in the morning, and keeps me going when my strength is gone. This stirring conviction that, in order to change the world as we see it, we have to name the powers involved and question the things that we do

not see. That means starting on the battlegrounds - our classrooms. We have to act based on the belief that all students are critical thinkers, lifelong learners, and active participants in a democratic society. ■

marriage with the Boston Teacher Residency Program. This program spoke to my belief that all students can learn and that all students can succeed.

As a teacher in an urban setting who works with students with mild to severe disabilities, I realize that my job starts with content, but reaches to all parts of self. My role as an educator hinges on the belief that all students are critical thinkers, and it is our responsibility to foster spaces that give all of them the opportunity to engage in a rigorous curriculum, think critically, to question the powers that be, and to reclaim the power that is learning in our classrooms. Through my journey of becoming a teacher, I have accepted that my role is not simply a teacher, but a "Soul Educator". I do not just teach for mind stimulation or for kids to simply regurgitate what was told to them. I want to teach to that very thing that stirs a person to act with boldness, to speak passionately, to believe that their voice matters, and believe that they are powerful. It has become so

Want more information?

Want to get more involved?

Go to our website for exclusive information and access.

www.aftma.net



Summa Cum Laude: Art Singer

With its many theatres, television and radio stations and two surviving newspapers, Boston is one of the largest media hubs in the country. Add the Internet and Boston's media world grows exponentially. It is a lot to keep track of. Fortunately, there is local-born broadcaster Art Singer.

Raised in Dorchester, Singer attended the Ather-ton and Christopher Gibson Schools before moving on the Patrick T. Campbell (now Martin Luther King) Junior High School and Roxbury Memorial High School for Boys. These years of study in Boston's public schools prepared Singer well for any opportunities he chose to pursue. It was the teachers he had, however, who directed him into the broadcast booth. Among the most prominent in Singer's memory is his third grade teacher Alice Geary. "She was a very creative teacher," he says, recalling one day when he arrived at school to find a mock radio station, complete with cardboard microphone. "I was so taken by it, that I went home and started doing my own make believe radio programs mimicking the soap operas and children's serials," Singer recalls, thanking Miss Geary for helping him develop a "lifelong interest in broadcasting."

Another passion that was spawned and supported by Miss Geary was that of the theater. As soon as she picked Singer to perform as part of the annual Fashion Shows, Singer was hooked! "I became a regular for the next three years," he recalls. "The theater became a lifelong interest and, in subsequent years, I joined several

performing groups."

As a senior at Roxbury Memorial, Singer took the only co-ed class available- public speaking. It was there, he says, that he truly developed his own voice. "I learned how to articulate and engage an audience with words and



MEDIA MAVEN Art Singer

voice," he says.

It was also during this year that he was chosen to chair the Record Poll Committee. "We conducted a poll to determine the school's top ten most popular songs," Singer explains, "and then went on the air live with Boston's top disc jockey Bob Clayton to present our find-

ings. It was my first live broadcast on a real broadcast station!"

Having started using his writing skills to "educate and influence others" in the eighth grade (again with the support of a special teacher named Miss Rosendahl), Singer also became a regular contributor to the school newspaper at Roxbury and was chosen to be editor his senior year. "It is another opportunity I have always been thankful for," he says, recalling his first "professional" conference at the Copley Plaza Hotel in Boston. "It only increased my interest in writing."

Though many of his memories are positive and have to do with the hard work and effort that was encouraged by his teachers, one profound lesson came as a result of a brief lack of effort. "Once, during Edith De Angelis' ninth grade study class," Singer recalls, "I joined some classmates in

sending notes and, in general, not doing my work. When the bell rang, Miss De Angelis...asked me to stay behind. When everyone had left, I stood before her desk and she looked up and simply said 'How the Mighty Have Fallen!' In that one sentence, she was not just chastising me...she was also telling me...that I was special and that that carried with it responsibility." Over 60 years later, Singer says that he still remembers that "teaching moment" and thanks Miss De Angelis and the rest of his BPS teachers for never letting him do less than his best.

As these are just some examples of how teachers made Singer who he is today, he says unabashedly that the Boston Public Schools "significantly encouraged and allowed me to find my calling and my career in communications and media in all its forms."

After graduation from college, Singer enjoyed a 35-year career in broadcasting that included 14 years as CEO of New Hampshire Public Television. He also gave back to the Boston academic community by serving for 10 years as an Associate Vice President at Emerson College.

"In my own career," he says, "I've also tried to give others opportunities to be creative." As a speaker and author (Singer's book on the great movie houses of Boston is an enjoyable encyclopedic guide and his biography of broadcast pioneer Arthur Godfrey is considered one of the best), Singer strives to "introduce people to individuals and subjects that are hopefully enjoyable and informative."

Seven years ago, Singer found another way to give back when he founded the Massachusetts Broadcasters Hall of Fame. "That exists to preserve the state's long history in radio and television," he explains, naming such

recent inductees as Susan Wornick and Ron Della Chiesa.

Though he has had ample opportunity to work with and learn from such legends, Singer always gives credit where it is due.

"I feel very fortunate that I not only had caring and attentive parents," he says, "but that I had a number of dedicated, knowledgeable, and creative teachers." ■

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!



A Seaworthy Resolution

Lynn teacher digs deep for scientific research

The city of Lynn has long had a strong tradition of exploration and education and has also enjoyed generations of ties to the sea.

Recently, all of these elements were combined when Fecteau-Leary Jr./Sr. High School special education biology teacher Joe Skahan participated in a professional development program aboard the Joint Oceanographic Institutions for Deep Earth Sampling (JOIDES) ship Resolution off the coast of British Columbia.

"I have always been fascinated with the ocean," Skahan says. "Living in close proximity to the ocean has been a blessing. As a child, I spent countless summer days exploring tide pools and swimming."

Despite his years spent by the sea, however, Skahan had never had an experience like that he enjoyed while on the Resolution, a research vessel that uses large drills to extract core samples from under the ocean floor, allowing teams of scientists to look back through time at the development of our planet. From the extinction of the dinosaurs to contemporary climate change, these samples tell the story of our planet and may help us change the next chapters for the better.

"During this trip, we did deep sea ocean core research and documented climate changes," Skahan explains, noting that he had heard of the opportunity while at another professional development at the New England Aquarium. "It was the experience of a lifetime," Skahan says, recalling how

excited he was when he found out he had been selected to participate in a program that is colloquially known as the "School of Rock."

After sightseeing, SCUBA diving, and going on a whale watch near Victoria Island, Skahan made his way to The Resolution.

"I must say I was in awe," he recalls. "The ship was huge, with its der- rick jutting up towards the sky as tall as the buildings in the city!"

Working with colleagues from such esteemed research universities as University of Ohio, UC Santa Barbara, and Deep Earth Academy, Skahan was able to work with other scientists and bring his learning back to his own students.

"It was amazing," he says. "These were teachers, professors, graduate and PhD students...[who] came from all over North America to take part in this program and each person was more interesting than the next."

Over a week's worth of 12-hour workdays, Skahan and his fellow explorers learned about the latest scientific technologies and research

methods and also about how to work with a large and diverse crew. "There were so many jobs on the ship," Skahan says, "and they all had to work together to have the operations function smoothly. It was inspiring to us and helped us learn to work together as one fluid team."

By extracting and examining samples from various parts of the sea floor, Skahan and his team were able to look back into the history of the Earth and also to look forward into what may yet be.

"Once under the microscope a whole new world appeared," Skahan observed. "We were truly opening the doors of Earth's past."

Despite his years of scientific experience, Skahan admits to being a bit overwhelmed by what he found. "There was so much science," he says. "It was incredible to take it all in!"

When the voyage and work were finally over, Skahan could not wait to return to his classroom to share all that he had learned. "This was one of the most interesting, fun, and rewarding experiences I have ever endured," he says. "I was excited to go back to the classroom and share what I had learned with my students."

In addition to bringing back ideas for lessons, Skahan was also able to return to Lynn with actual samples for his students and colleagues to study.

"The students were amazed at all



SHIP-SHAPE SCIENTIST
Lynn teacher Joe Skahan

we had done and were as excited as I was to learn this new information," he says, noting that the lessons and knowledge "translated to the classroom with such ease, it was truly wonderful to share."

When asked why he became a science teacher, Skahan explains that it was his passions for the sea and for sharing knowledge that made it a natural choice. "When the opportunity arose to teach an elective science class," he recalls, "I jumped on [it].... If I could share my passion for this environment with my students and help them understand the coastline that is so close to them is so important, and fragile, and help them create an understanding and care for the oceans then maybe they could help make a difference in caring for the environment themselves."

As for how special education plays into his life, Skahan says that the magic of the sea captures the imaginations of his students just as it has his. "They can see, hear, smell, taste, touch the ocean," he reasons. "Kids can really get involved and active in their learning."

In addition to working with his own students, Skahan was also able to enlighten and inspire other classes as well. "The kids were excited about my trip," he says, "and even more excited upon my return to learn what I had done."

Skahan also says that his time on the Resolution opened his eyes to what is possible in his own education. "This experience was life changing," Skahan beams. "It also expanded my love for professional development and all that there is offered out there for teachers." ■

Honoring Their Own

Salem teachers lauded by peers

Even though Halloween is but a memory, there are still a lot of things happening in Salem. Most of these are thanks to the Witch City's dedicated educators.

In an effort to pay tribute to these hard-working teachers, the State University Council of Presidents and the alumni at Salem State University (SSU) have awarded a pair of outstanding educators with their latest accolades.

As a pioneer in teacher education, Massachusetts has a long and proud history of preparing many of the best teachers in the nation and the world. To mark the 175th anniversary of the establishment of formal teacher education, the

Council inaugurated a new award for active public school teachers. In this first year of the award, the Council recognized Salem first grade teacher Richard Giso.

"He was a unanimous and enthusiastic first choice," explains SSU Professor Mary-Lou Breitborde, who is also the Executive Director of SSU's Center for Education and Community. Among the credentials she cites for this "outstanding" educator are Giso's supportive efforts as a literacy coach and as a model cooperating practitioner. "He also leads the graduate elementary practicum seminar and is an adjunct course instructor in elementary education and reading," Breitborde notes, adding that Giso was "integral" to the development of a summer ELL

program that is run by a partnership of SSU and the Salem Public Schools. "His excellent teaching...combines theory, research and practice in ways that are accessible and meaningful."

Claiming to have been "born to be a teacher," Giso recalls expressing a desire to educate as early as preschool.

"I have never wanted to do anything else," says Giso, who recently moved to the Carlton Innovation School after 15 years at the Bates School. "My career path was paved way before I started kindergarten!"

Such dedication to the craft is what makes Giso and so many other teachers in Salem and other districts so valuable and worthy of recognition. Perhaps this is why Giso has also been awarded the Governor's Outstanding Educator Award, and SSU's Tradition of Excellence Award, among others.

"Teaching is an art form," Giso suggests. "I put a part of myself into every lesson...every classroom... and every student."

In addition to working for Salem Public Schools, Giso has also taught at SSU since 2008. No matter where he teaches, however, Giso says that certain elements remain constant.

"I want my students to feel comfortable in their learning environment so that they are able to take risks," he says. "I want...to spark curiosity. I also want to promote that we are all a part of a learning community."

Though he is often lauded for his individual works, Giso is well aware of the collaborative nature of teaching and learning.

"The demands of the Common Core, differentiated instruction and

matching instruction based on need," he explains, "has lead me to learn that teaching must be a team effort. A classroom teacher cannot close his or her door and expect to gain the level of achievement demanded of us. Classroom teachers need to collaborate with support staff and specialists."

Giso also suggests that, without supportive colleagues, many teachers risk losing sight of their original goal.

"With the focus on state testing [and] teacher evaluation...being a teacher has never been so stressful as it is now," he observes. "These things make it very easy to lose the true meaning of our profession - that we are there for the students."

Speaking of students, Giso is especially grateful for the bright people with whom he gets to learn every year.

"Salem students...really want to learn," he says. "They take great pride in being able to do something new that they couldn't do the year before."

In fact, Giso explains, despite his many awards and accolades, this is how he defines success.

"I consider to have done my job if I get my students to love learning and if I have set a desire for them to want to do their best and set goals for their future," he says.

Another life-long teacher and learner is MaryAnn Grassia who has been teaching first grade at the Witchcraft Heights School for 22 years. She was recently inducted into SSU's Northeast Regional Educators Hall of Fame.

"This award is a tribute to all teachers," she suggests. "The establishment of an 'Educators' Hall of Fame' is a public declaration that educators have value and are worthy of respect. Kudos to SSU for taking a noble stand in honor of educators!"

In addition to sharing the honor of

being recognized by her peers, Grassia also resembles Giso in her dedication to her field.

"I wanted to teach since I was a little girl," said the long-time member of the Future Teachers of America organization. And though life "took a different direction" for a time, Grassia never lost her desire to teach.

"When I became a mom, I went back to school to realize my dream," she explains. Studying at North Shore Community College, SSU and Cambridge College, Grassia earned a Specialized Advanced Graduate Certificate in Applied Neuroscience.

"I started my career in education through a Salem State Science grant that allowed me to set up...the Salem Science Resource Center," she recalls, noting how she also served at SSU as Science Resource Educator. "I became a certified elementary teacher and was hired in January 1992 as a first grade teacher."

That same year, Grassia also became the first elementary teacher to serve on the Board of Directors of SSU's Collaborative for Math and Science Education.

"I am proud to be a public school teacher," she says. "It has given me the opportunity to work with and to learn from dedicated, talented, hard-working professionals."

While Grassia is also thankful for her colleagues, as with Giso, her students always come first.

"On the night of the [ceremony]," Grassia recalls, "I carried on stage with me a listing of all 484 of my first graders. I always said that if I ever had the chance to celebrate my career I wanted to have my students with me, and so they were!" ■



Richard Giso

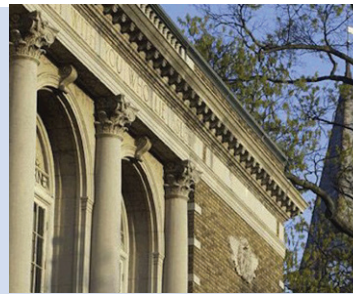


MaryAnn Grassia



On Campus

Dan Georgianna, Political Director
UMass Faculty Federation, Local 1895



What Administrators Do

The college president calls for a strategic planning process and hires consultants to lead the project. After hundreds of meetings and thousands of pages of reports, the president announces a new strategic plan composed of a vision statement, multiple goals, each with multiple objectives. Combined with the separate plans for each college or division, the mass of documents often weights over 20 pounds, but the final report of a few dozen pages, promoted as the school's new strategic plan, is tightly controlled by administrators and their hired consultants.

After 10 years or whenever a new administrator is hired, the previous strategic plan is considered outdated and the process starts all over.

After observing that all campus strategic plans and other administrative decisions look remarkably similar, Johns Hopkins Professor Benjamin Ginsberg, author of *The Fall of the Faculty*, proposed that university administrations combine into what he termed massive open online administrations (MOOAs) that make administration decisions for all of the campuses in the organization. The online administration is patterned after massive open

online courses (MOOCs) that enroll thousands of students in a single online course.

"Currently, hundreds, even thousands, of vice provosts and assistant deans attend the same meetings and undertake the same activities on campuses around the U.S. every day," Professor Ginsberg wrote on the website www.mindingthecampus.com. "Imagine the cost savings if one vice provost could make these decisions for hundreds of campuses."

With his modest proposal, Professor Ginsberg advances his idea that administrators have seized control of America's colleges and universities by sheer numbers, pushing aside the faculty and raising student costs with their high salaries. He states that, "Studies show that about 30 percent of the cost increases in higher education over the past twenty-five years have been the result of administrative growth."

While Professor Ginsberg's idea of MOOAs entertains, he misses the central point of strategic planning and other forms of governance supposedly shared between administration, faculty, and staff. Administrative control of teaching, learning, and research does not result from administrative deci-

sions, but from the supposedly shared decision-making process that leads to decisions that administrators want.

The business model that created the division of labor between managers who control the work process and workers who do what they're told has been applied to college campuses through carefully controlled shared governance processes that result in rules transforming the way that faculty and academic staff teach, research, and serve the surrounding community. Strategic planning processes also supply the new administrators the additional management tasks required by the strategic plan.

The latest fad in academic strategic planning is based on the business model for fundamental change made popular by Harvard Business School Professor John Kotter in his book *Leading Change*.

Professor Kotter's original 1995 article in the *Harvard Business Review* involved systems engineering applied to business in a folksy manner, presented as "eight steps to transforming your organization." It basically involved unified vision and clear goals created and followed by focused teamwork within a sufficiently powerful coalition

of leaders pushing the change.

Professor Kotter's 2012 version (as detailed in his book) reveals the dark side of corporate power; the iron fist in the velvet glove. He labels people as "snakes" who create mistrust and reluctant players who won't join the coalition. For an important person in the organization with a combination of these traits, he suggests that, "negotiated resignation or retirement is often the only sensible option."

This may be good advice for corporate CEOs who want to get rid of those who disagree with him or her. It is not useful advice for a university, which is commonly defined (according to *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*) as "a community of teachers and scholars." The university community requires reasoned debate on scholarly issues, including the scholarly issue of strategic planning.

University administrations have plenty to do: raise money, account for spending and revenues, monitor results of faculty and staff, reward productivity in teaching, scholarship, and service to the university, and coordinate activities of the university. Control of teaching and scholarship should not be on the list. ■

PARCC

Continued from page 1

results while maintaining trend lines that link back to pre-PARCC performance."

AFT MA: Cautious Approach is Wise

Tom Gosnell, president of AFT Massachusetts, says that a thoughtful and deliberate approach to PARCC implementation is prudent.

"The jury is still out on PARCC," said Gosnell. "Will the items and questions be better than those on MCAS? What will be PARCC's impact on teaching and learning? Will PARCC generate data that are useful to educators, parents, and students? Will PARCC contribute to a narrowing or widening of the achievement gap? We really don't know yet the answers to these questions and many others. That's why we need to view the next two years as a genuine pilot, with no preconceived notions. AFT MA members will experience the PARCC pilot first hand, and it will be essential for state policymakers to hear their voices."

One way that AFT Massachusetts will ensure that educators' voices are heard is through participation in a PARCC Advisory Committee that is being assembled by DESE. Gosnell has appointed two seasoned educators to represent AFT Massachusetts: Erik Berg, a second-grade teacher at the John D. Philbrick Elementary School in Boston, who will bring to the table more than 20 years of elementary-school teaching experience; and Brant Duncan, president of the Lynn Teachers Union, who taught math and computer science in the Lynn Public Schools for nearly 15 years before becoming president of his local union.

It is anticipated that the committee will tackle numerous implementation issues, with technology readiness at or near the top of the list. For example, a recent DESE brief estimates that roughly 650 school buildings in Massachusetts need significant upgrades in their technology infrastructure in order to participate in the PARCC

I'm very concerned that teachers generally are not receiving the time and assistance they need to prepare for the instructional shifts demanded by Common Core and PARCC.

- Lynn Teachers Union President Brant Duncan

online assessments, at an approximate cost of \$75 million.

"It is important that the designers of the PARCC tests listen closely to practicing teachers and ensure that the tests, including the technology challenges that they present, will work in real classrooms and real schools," said Berg when asked about his upcoming work on the committee. "In particular, test designers need to consider schools in low-income communities which have less access to technology in homes and classrooms."

Another commonly voiced concern is whether educators will have the time and support to implement the Common Core standards effectively before a new high-stakes test like PARCC is instituted.

"I'm very concerned that teachers generally are not receiving the time and assistance they need to prepare for the instructional shifts demanded by Common Core and PARCC," said Duncan. "Teachers need books and materials aligned to the Common

Core. They need time to plan new lessons and collaborate with peers. And both teachers and students need an opportunity to understand the new test, including the format, types of questions, and role of technology. The state should avoid attaching consequences to PARCC before these and other issues are worked out. Put the brakes on high stakes."

Testing the Test

Under the approved plan, the first step in the transition process will be extensive field testing in spring 2014. According to DESE, roughly 15% of Massachusetts students in grades 3-11 representing approximately two-thirds of Massachusetts schools will participate in a PARCC field test. A small number of classes in each participating school have been randomly selected to field test typically one and, in some cases, two components of PARCC in one content area (ELA or math), according to the following schedule:

- Performance-based assessment (PBA) in ELA and math: March 24 to April 11
- End-of-year assessment (EOY) in ELA and math: May 5 to June 6

Out of concern that administering both the MCAS and PARCC field test could take valuable time away from instruction, and to provide an option to avoid the double-testing of students, DESE is allowing districts at their discretion to waive the MCAS testing requirement for those students who take the PBA component. This waiver option applies to grades 3-8 and only in the same subject as the PARCC PBA. Students participating in the EOY component only are not eligible

for an MCAS waiver.

As of mid-December, however, state officials report that a large majority of districts—close to 75 percent—have indicated to DESE that they will decline the waiver option, electing instead to administer both the PBA field tests and the full MCAS. As for the districts that do choose to waive portions of the MCAS for qualifying students, there will be less MCAS assessment data to inform school and district accountability determinations, such as whether a school or district is Level 1 to 5 under DESE's framework. While DESE is working with these districts to mitigate the potential problem of missing MCAS data, there is no perfect solution.

Educator Engagement Key

The potential replacement of MCAS with PARCC promises to be a major story over the next two years, and AFT Massachusetts will keep members fully updated on the latest news and developments. One certainty is the urgent need for educators to play a front-and-center role in any possible transition to a new testing system.

"AFT MA members are absolutely critical to this pilot," said Gosnell. "Our educators are in the classroom working with students every day, and they know best what does and doesn't work. Whether you're talking about MCAS, PARCC, or any testing system for that matter, assessments must be perceived by teachers and other school staff as high-quality, aligned to the curriculum, developmentally appropriate, unbiased, and useful for teaching and learning. We shall see over the next two years if PARCC passes muster on these and other criteria." ■



Retiree Corner

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



SENIOR SEMINARS

How to Protect Your Nest Egg and Plan for Your Family

This seminar, presented by Elder Law Attorney Mary Howie, discusses wills and trusts, gifting, Medicaid Qualifying Trusts, probate, joint tenancy, direct transfers upon death, and much more. Howie is a member of both the MA and NH Bar Association, National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, NH Conflict Resolution Association and the National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys.

Wilmington - 314 Main Street, Unit 105
Saturday, January 11, 10-12
Snow Date: Saturday, January 18

Preparing for Retirement

This two-hour comprehensive presentation for those within 10 years of retiring. Offered to all those retiring with a MA pension.

Methuen - 184 Pleasant Valley Street, Suite 1-204
March 20, 2014, 3:30-5:30

Lynn - 679 Western Avenue
April 7, 2014, 3:15-5:15

We are in the process of finalizing a seminar in Billerica for January. Go to the MRU website: (<http://www.retireesunited.org/>) and click on "seminars" to find the date and location.

To register for any of these seminars email Marie Ardito at mardito@retireesunited.org or call 1-781-365-0205. In both instances, please give the seminar you wish to attend, your name, phone number and the number attending. This call registers you. There will be no call back unless you request one. Thank you!

A NEW Year's Resolution

It is both unbelievable and exciting that another year is quickly coming to an end. Is it really a sign of aging when time passes so quickly or is it the sign of a life that is full and active? Many of us are pondering New Year's resolutions and wondering if we can select one that for once will not be broken. How about making a different kind of resolution for the upcoming year? I offer this for consideration.

The other day I received an invitation to be part of "60 cups of tea." A former neighbor, to honor his wife's sixtieth birthday, sent it. Instead of the traditional birthday party, he was asking 60 people to schedule a tea with her sometime next year. What a wonderful and appropriate way to herald in a decade. For the years during which she was my neighbor, oftentimes my phone would ring wondering if I was in the mood for tea. The response was always, "Put the kettle on. I'll be right over." In those impromptu sessions, so much was discussed and in the relaxing atmosphere so many worthwhile thoughts were exchanged.

It was over a cup of tea with this neighbor that I spoke of my dream; being involved with seniors in retirement and helping them to learn to deal with the many important and often complicated issues that they faced. I remember her telling me, "Get them before they retire, Marie." She reminded me of her father who had recently retired and how miserable he was in retirement because he had never given thought to how he would spend his time in retirement. The initiative of our Preparing for Retirement Seminars was born over that cup of tea! These seminars not only prepared thousands to give serious thought to what they would do in retirement, but they gave me a way to continue in retirement doing what I loved doing most—teaching.

All of us have people whose company we enjoyed and with whom we no longer have much contact. Let your New Year's resolution be to make that phone call or that visit, whether for a cup of tea or just to catch up. How often we promise that we will not allow

so much time to go by in making the next phone call, but then things get in the way of people and we lose touch.

Maybe there are people we know who are in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, or alone at home unable to drive. Think of what it would mean to them to have a visit from you or to go for a ride with you. Just once this year reach out to them.

Perhaps some have moved out of state, or maybe we have, and distance prevents face-to-face visits. Remember, all are still as close as your telephone, and many of you carry that phone in your pocket.

We all find time to watch our favorite programs, play computer games, or watch sporting events for relaxation. This year, let's be different. Go Ahead! Make that resolution to contact that person who was so much a part of your life in the past. Put the kettle on, relax, touch base, and there will be two lives enriched by your new resolution and it will be a happier New Year for all! ■

Why Unions Matter

Educator's Opinion By Michael Maguire

We have all seen the charts that show the correlation between the decline of labor unions and the shrinking of the middle class. Union membership is at an all time low, and not surprisingly the gulf between the rich and poor is the widest it has been since the Roaring '20s.

While the number of dues-paying union members is small, our impact is mighty. Non-union workers enjoy many of the benefits that we have worked so hard to secure, such as the 40-hour workweek, workplace safety, health insurance, and sick time.

What I hear most often from friends and neighbors is, "Unions once had a place in society, but no longer do." While it is true that manufacturing jobs are a thing of the past, labor can organize today's equivalent jobs.

Here in Massachusetts our economy is anchored around education, health care and retail sales. Our task, then, is to organize these workers. SEIU's Adjunct Action campaign and Jobs with Justice's Our Walmart Organizing program are successful examples. If we do not try, then we have only ourselves to blame.

So let us try. In education we have numerous university workers and a growing number of charter school employees. Who knows urban education better than AFT MA? Our knowledge base has never been the issue; it is our approach that needs modernization.

The 2004 World Series is a great example. Like many New Englanders, I purchased the DVD of the '04 games. I watched them every day and night while caring for my first-born. I do believe those games were the first electronic images my son saw. Now and again I still watch them. My son

is older and can now understand what he sees, except for one prominent advertisement: AOL.

"Dad, what's AOL?" he asked. "What's a keyword?"

Every inning of that series begins with a yellow stick figure running on the screen. The voice over is for America On Line, the former giant of the Internet. While AOL pioneered email and Internet access for millions of us, it is all but non-existent today. What happened? Simply put, AOL did not adapt quickly enough to the changing computer world.

Today Google and Facebook fight for our time and usage. The more we use either of these sites, the more advertising we see. Therefore, it is in their best interests to keep us focused on their product. Google was a search engine, then it added email, and has recently replaced Google documents with today's Google drive. Facebook keeps reinventing itself to be easier to use and share.

Twitter is revolutionizing the news cycle. Plus it has replaced email as the teenagers' main mode of electronic communication. Twitter's IPO last month has the next generation of social media investors salivating. More change and innovation is inevitable.

The lesson for us as unionists is to constantly adapt to the changing needs of our members and to the changing circumstances in our communities. We no longer have textile workers who needed unions in order to secure pensions, workplace safety, sick days, and other vital rights and privileges. We now have workers in schools, hospitals, and retail stores. To-



MOTIVATING MEMBER
Michael Maguire

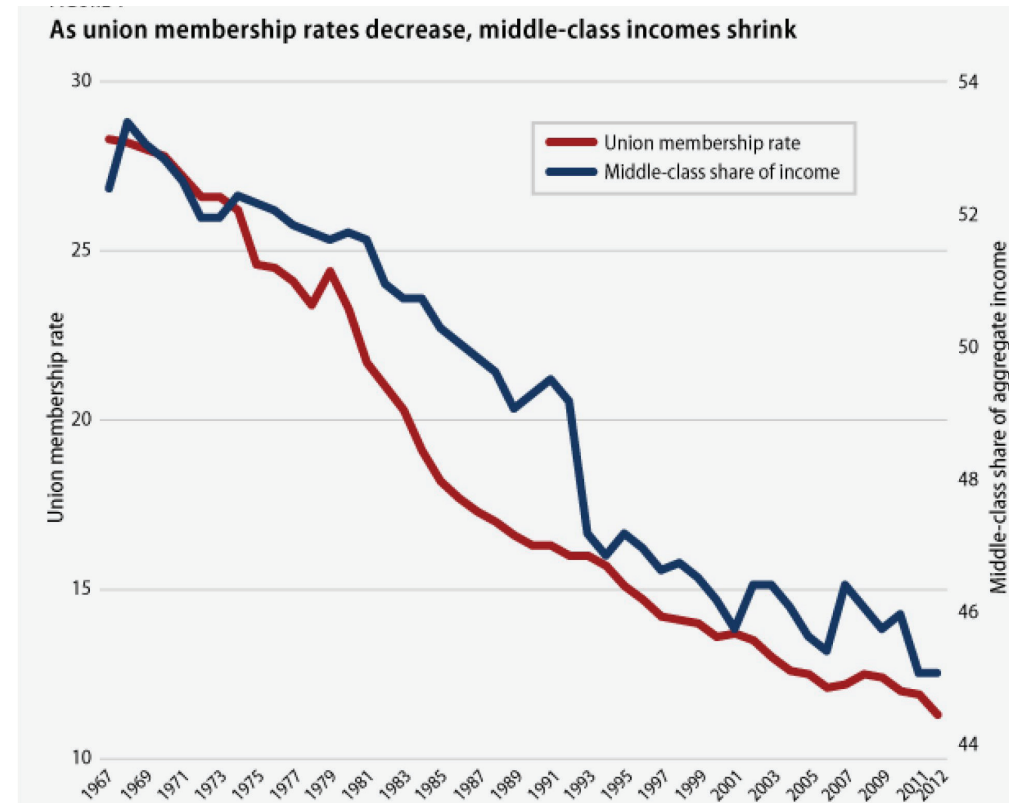
day's workers' needs are not much different. Pensions may have been replaced by a 401k or 403b, but workers still struggle to secure stability in old age. Paid sick days are not enjoyed by all. Health insurance is a concern of all workers and employers.

We in the greater labor movement need to do a better job of reaching all workers. We in education unions need to connect with charter

school teachers, parents, and especially our own members in every way we can.

The more we talk to other people, the more we discover that our goals are similar. If we do not talk to them, we risk turning the AFT into AOL. ■

Michael Maguire is a Latin and Classics teacher at Boston Latin Academy.



Happy, healthy new year from your friends and colleagues at



A Day of ACTION

AFT and AFT MA reclaim the promise of public education

On Monday December 9, teachers and administrators across the Commonwealth and across the nation participated in the Day of Action. For AFT members, the Day was an opportunity to reclaim the promise of public education and to share our strength with others who need support as well.

"Today's National Day of Action is the largest coordinated action to reclaim the promise of public education in recent memory," said AFT President Randi Weingarten. "Parents, teachers, students and community members are taking part in the Day of Action because they know that the market-based ideologies of privatization, austerity, division and competition are failing our children. They want to reclaim our schools and improve public education for all."

Though AFT maintains its "overall goal to prepare students for life, career and college," Weingarten emphasized that "we need a new path paved with early childhood education, project-based learning, wraparound services, teacher autonomy, professional development, parent and student voices, fair funding formulas and more." The Day of Action was intended in great part to be the first step on this path and to jumpstart a new movement dedicated to reclaiming the promise of public education.

Across the country, thousands of AFT members and other union representatives participated in nearly 100 separate but connected events. Thousands more showed their support by participating in the Day of Action online. In Boston, the AFT MA and the

Boston Teachers Union (BTU) hosted a town hall meeting at Madison Park High School.

"The diversity of Boston was clearly evident among the youth, families, educators, community and union members who attended," observed education consultant and Boston parent Karen Kast-McBride, who noted that Boston Public Schools Interim Superintendent John McDonough was among the community leaders in attendance.

"We were thrilled that over 250 parents, students, educators, and community members came out...to participate in our town hall," said BTU Director of Organizing Jessica Tang. "Different stakeholders don't want to be divided anymore and we want to be able to have dialogue that brings us together and helps us to find common ground to improve our schools and propose our solutions. [The Day of Action] was a start for that."

At the meeting, which was organized by the Boston Truth Coalition and which also included representatives and support from such partners as Citizens for Public Schools, Jobs with Justice, Greater Boston Labor Council, and the Boston Student Advisory Council, a copy of the recently-drafted Principles That Unite Us (which can be read at our website, www.aftma.net) was presented and attendees were asked to pledge to support and defend these principles, which include the premises that cooperation and collaboration are more productive than competition, that strong public schools create strong communities and that public schools

are public institutions that need to respond to the needs of all; not just a selected few. Participants were also asked to work on coming up with new solutions to the many problems public schools and public school teachers face, such as the corporatization of education and the relentless and often misdirected emphasis on testing.

Among the themes discussed at the meeting were what Tang termed "over-testing" and the "narrowing" of curriculum, as well as the need for stronger links between parents and the community, concerns around discipline policies, "too much top-down decision making," and the under-funding of public school districts.

In her remarks, AFT Executive Council Vice-President Francine Lawrence (who had come to Massachusetts just for this event) told the group at Madison Park that they were not alone in their efforts. "All across the country today," Lawrence said, "actions have been organized [that] all have one common goal- to work together as one community to forward our schools and our children's futures."

Earlier in the day, Lawrence had visited the Oliver Partnership School in Lawrence, MA, where she met with the teachers and staff who are running this pioneering program and also with many of the students who have found a new reason to go to school and to strive for greatness thanks to the dedicated efforts of the AFT and its members.



GETTING INVOLVED AFT Executive Council Vice-President Francine Lawrence encourages students at the Oliver Partnership School in Lawrence to Reclaim the Promise of public education.

heard," Lawrence suggested.

"I think that the children and teachers were very excited to see Fran," says Lawrence Teachers Union President Frank McLaughlin, who noted that Mayor-elect Dan Rivera was also in attendance to show his support for Lawrence teachers. "We showcased the Lawrence Public Schools and had a conversation...about working together to make sure every child...receives a great education."

Weingarten also used the Day as another opportunity to ask AFT and other union members to call upon their leaders to "listen to those closest to the classroom about what's best for our children."

Based on the great success of this initial event, future meetings are being scheduled so educators and community members can continue to work on reclaiming the promise of public education for all of our students.

"Today is not just a single day of action," Lawrence emphasized. "It is the latest demonstration of a growing movement of teachers unions, teachers, parents and community members demanding a new direction for our schools."

"December 9 was just the start, Weingarten added. "We must reclaim the promise of public education...by sharing highlights from the Day of Action... and asking [others] to join us in this movement." ■



PRINCIPLE-D STUDENTS Boston Public School students present the Principles That Unite Us to the over 250 attendees at the Day of Action Town Hall at Madison Park High School

Reclaiming in Lynn

Educator's Opinion By Robin Newhall

December 9 was a raw, rainy night, but it did not stop a number of concerned participants from gathering for a roundtable discussion in Lynn that was intended to help devise ways to "Reclaim The Promise" of public education for every Lynn student.

The event was sponsored by The Lynn Teachers Union, North Shore Labor Council and Jobs with Justice. Other groups represented in the discussion were Lynn Parents Organizing for a Better Education, Economy Justice and the Dominican Development Center. In addition to Lynn Teachers Union President Brant Duncan, Jeff Crosby of the North Shore Labor Council and Jobs with Justice representative Russ Davis participants included area parents, high school graduates from Lynn English and Lynn Classical High Schools, as well as Lynn Public School teachers (active

and retired), therapists, social workers and paraprofessionals.

Among the many issues discussed were school safety, parental involvement, the demands of high-stakes testing and the problems related to teaching to the test, lack of educator input in the creation of Common Core, teachers' overwhelming workload, the inequity of public schools versus charter schools, the lack of enrichment and gifted programs, and the negative effects of labeling "Level IV" schools.

Many parents who participated were concerned with the lack of support they feel when wanting to be a part of the school environment. Some complained about not being heard or included in decision-making or problem-solving processes. Many also discussed how they would like to see

more unity between themselves and the schools. Some noted how different schools have different "climates" of inclusion and how they would like all schools to more actively welcome and engage their involvement. They also stated that they would like to see more



PROMISE KEEPER
Robin Newhall

challenging, enriching classrooms for their children. Parents of students with special needs stated that they would like to see less demand on teaching to assessments and to allow their children to have more hands-on, socially-engaging, multi-sensory experiences. Members of Lynn's significant ELL population said that they want to see higher graduation rates and more support for ELL's, including undocumented students.

Further into the night's discussion, President Duncan turned the group's attention to the document, "The Principles That Unite Us" that

was being shared across the region as part of the Day of Action. Duncan gave some background on the creation of this piece and it's purpose. Davis also shed some light on the "corporate agenda" that was behind many of the issues that were being discussed. He talked about how corporations are creating schemes to profit from public education and gave the example of the testing companies who make money from the many tests that public school students are made to take. Davis also discussed how many of these companies set out to destroy unions because unions support just and vital causes like immigration and labor laws.

The night's discussion ended with some of the participants volunteering to create a more focused agenda based on discussion points and a vision for the group. There will be another meeting set for January with this new more focused agenda, at which time we look forward to another Day of Action. ■

Robin Newhall is a first grade teacher at the Drewicz School in Lynn.