

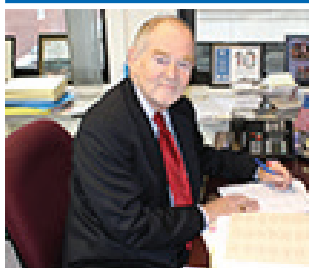


The Advocate

December 2016/January 2017

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THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Thomas J. Gosnell
President, AFT Massachusetts

A Great Victory on Question 2

All of us helped to defeat Question 2 by a landslide margin. Only 16 communities voted yes.

What accounted for this outstanding result? Although many factors contributed, I believe that the following were most critical:

1. The Campaign to Save Our Public Schools, the umbrella organization managing the campaign, had a credible, relevant and consistent message. This message stated clearly that passage of Question 2 would siphon much needed money from the district public schools.

2. Teachers, paraprofessionals, and all those working in the district public schools allied with the parents and students became articulate advocates because they could testify to the truth of the message.

3. The Campaign to Save Our Public Schools was an inclusive and broad based coalition. In addition to AFT MA and the MTA and their locals, other active participants were Citizens for Public Schools (CPS), the

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the AFL-CIO, various parent and student groups, and many others.

4. Those participating in phone banks, home canvassing, and one on one conversations numbered in the tens of thousands. Citizen participation enables democracy to work.

The Final Vote:
No – 2,003,531 (62%)
Yes – 1,220,651 (38%)

5. Our ads were highly focused. They conveyed the central message. The presence and voices of students, parents, and teachers in the ads were a tremendous plus.

6. Although the advocates for Question 2 outspent us by millions of dollars, we raised enough money to spread our message across the entire Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The challenge was great. The victory was great. I thank all of our members.

Challenges aplenty still face us.

President-Elect Trump has nominated Betsy DeVos to be Secretary of Education. If her history is any guide, she will not be a supporter of public education and will act to move money out of the public schools, to create new schools as an alternative to public schools, and to support currently existing non-public schools.

Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers, has

written an op ed piece, reproduced in this issue of The Advocate, which details the positions she has taken.

In 2018 it is likely that on the Massachusetts ballot will be a constitutional amendment to increase by 4% the state income tax on the portion of incomes more than \$1,000,000. For example, if a person's income is \$1,300,000, then he/she will pay an additional \$12,000 on state income tax.

The proposed constitutional amendment has passed the legislature and must do so once more to appear on the ballot. To go into effect a majority of those voting must give their assent in the 2018 election.

This campaign will be a splendid opportunity to fight for public education. We did so in defeating Question 2 and can do so in 2018.

If we stay as united and work as diligently, we shall be great contributors to the preservation and enhancement of public education and to the education of the hundreds of thousands of girls and boys in our public schools.

Have a superb 2017!

If you have questions or comments, you email tgosnell@aftma.net. ■

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RIISING FROM THE ASHES

AFT MA Field Representative Andy Powell, Building Principal Cheryl Merz, and Lawrence Teachers Union President Frank McLaughlin stand with the school materials that were donated by AFT, Famous Footwear, FirstBook, New Balance, and other organizations to help students at the Bruce School in Lawrence rebuild and continue to learn after a fire in the school building (Please see pages 2 and 3)



CRUSHING THE REBELLION

United Teachers of Lowell President Paul Georges with a friend at a No on 2 rally

“A Radical Choice”

Weingarten’s view on Education Secretary nominee

In a December 1, 2016 op-ed in *The New York Daily News*, AFT President Randi Weingarten offered her perspective on President-elect Donald Trump’s selection of Betty DeVos as the incoming Secretary of Education. The entire text of her piece appears below.

Donald Trump vs. public schools:
Betty DeVos is a radical choice.

By Randi Weingarten

Our public schools are the means by which the United States fulfills a collective promise: to take and teach every child seeking an education. While private, religious and charter schools have a place in the educational landscape, this most democratic of promises is unique to public schools.

Obviously, some public schools need improvement. But the vast majority remain the places where we prepare the nation’s young people — rich, poor, native- and foreign-born, and of all abilities — to contribute. They are where we forge a common culture out of America’s rich diversity.

Those aren’t partisan statements; there’s a broad consensus that public schools are a treasure to protect. That’s why reauthorizing the federal education law initiated by Lyndon Johnson 50 years ago was one of the

only things the last Congress and President Obama could jointly do.

And it’s why President-elect Donald Trump’s pick for education secretary, Michigan philanthropist and activist Betsy DeVos, is such a grave threat to what made America great in the first place. She is the most ideological, anti-public-school nominee for secretary of education since the U.S. Department of Education was created.

It’s not surprising that Trump and DeVos, both billionaires who never attended or sent their children to public schools, fail to understand the importance of public education in fostering pluralism and opportunity. But it is deeply troubling.

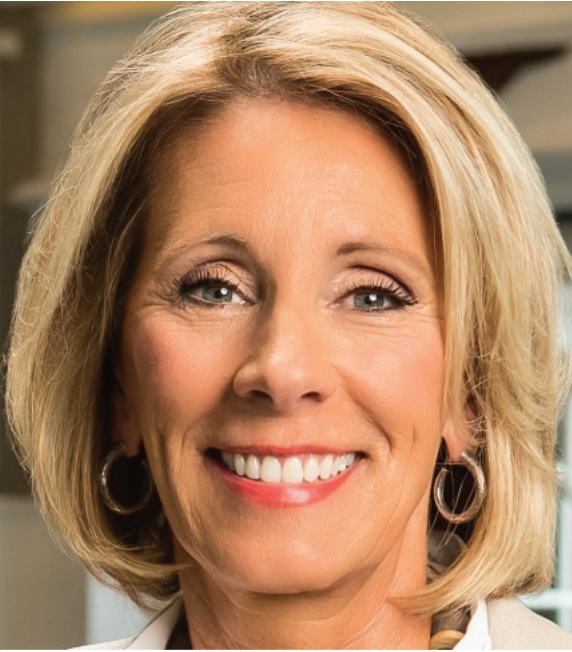
Eight-five percent of American children attend public schools. They deserve leaders who will strengthen them, not destabilize or defund them.

During his campaign, Trump proposed a \$20 billion voucher plan to shift taxpayer dollars to private and religious schools. That would fulfill a decades-long crusade by DeVos, a longtime voucher proponent.

In 2000, DeVos and her husband bankrolled a multimillion-dollar ballot initiative to create school vouchers in Michigan, which voters overwhelmingly shot down. DeVos then shifted her focus to the expansion of public-

ly funded but privately run charter schools.

Her push — and deep pockets — have resulted in an explosion in the number of charter schools in her home state. Michigan now spends more than \$1 billion on charter schools every year. Eighty percent of the charter



THE NEW FACE OF EDUCATION?
Betty DeVos

schools in Michigan are operated for-profit — the highest percentage in the nation. The weak regulation and lack of accountability of those schools landed Michigan a spot in what’s known as the Wild West of charter schools.

A yearlong investigation of two decades of charter school records by the *Detroit Free Press* described the consequences of this lack of

oversight, transparency and accountability. A charter school in the first percentile — barely above rock-bottom among all schools — had its charter renewed. Others closed abruptly, leaving families scrambling to find another school midyear. Nepotism, insider deals and financial impropriety were all tragically common.

Yet last spring, the DeVos family funded efforts to defeat a bill that would have placed both Detroit’s charter schools and its neighborhood public schools under the same oversight authority. The editorial page editor of the *Detroit Free Press* called the move “a filthy, moneyed kiss to the charter school industry at the expense of the

kids who’ve been victimized by those schools’ unaccountable inconsistency.”

As U.S. secretary of education, DeVos would oversee many areas of importance, particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable students. One example is the Education Department’s Office for Civil Rights, whose mission is to ensure equal access to education and to promote excellence through vigorous enforcement of civil rights.

Here, too, her background is troubling. How can DeVos protect and reassure our LGBTQ students when her family has poured money into campaigns against marriage equality and so-called gay conversion therapy efforts? How does she do that for students of color, when she has been a prime mover of education policies that have destabilized the schools in high-poverty school districts that serve large numbers of black and brown students?

The fortune DeVos has spent to sway public policy is one of many proof points that call into question Trump’s call to “drain the swamp.” DeVos wrote in the Capitol Hill newspaper *Roll Call* that her family is the biggest contributor of soft money to the Republican National Committee, and that she has “decided to stop taking offense at the suggestion that we are buying influence. Now, I simply concede the point. . . . We do expect something in return.”

If confirmed as secretary of education, DeVos may achieve the biggest return on her investment to date — at a terrible and unconscionable cost to America. <http://fullact.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/betsy-devos-trump-pick.jpg> rica’s public schools and the students and families who rely on them. ■

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Brant Duncan,
Secretary-Treasurer

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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
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BOLD PRINT

Last month, the Bruce School in Lawrence was damaged by fire. Many students lost their books and supplies. Please support our colleagues and students by making a donation to aft.org/bruce-school-relief.

□ □ □ □

The hours for the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) ‘Hotline’ (781-381-6600) are now Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM-12:00 PM and 2:00-5:00 PM.

□ □ □ □

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

Rebuilding the Bruce

Lawrence school restocks after a damaging fire

On Monday, November 14, fire broke out at the Alexander B. Bruce School in Lawrence. While the fire was successfully contained to one room and while there were no injuries, with all 525 students and 70 staff members exiting the building safely, the heavy water and smoke damage caused many students to lose their books and other school supplies. The total loss has been estimated at \$300,000.

"I am so proud of the students and staff of the Bruce School for evacuating everyone so quickly," said Acting Fire Chief John McInnis said, noting how fire drills are often seen as "mundane and repetitive," but prove invaluable when the fire is real.

The fire was the second in the school's history, with the previous blaze having been documented in 1951. That fire proved to be the end of the school's original location on Ames Street, which has since been rebuilt in

its current location on Butler Street.

Even though students were able to relocate to the Guilmette School, classes were still cancelled Tuesday. By Wednesday, however, AFT MA and its colleagues at AFT had al-



SHOWING THE WAY
AFT MA Field Representative Andy Powell directs students at the Bruce School in Lawrence towards the supplies that had been donated after the school suffered a fire

ready sprung into action, arranging for an online donation site (<http://www.aft.org/bruce-school-relief>) and also setting up a school supply donation that was carried out personally by many local and national AFT members and supporters, including AFT Deputy Director Barbara Pallazzo, Lawrence Teacher Union President Frank McLaughlin, Building Principal Cheryl Merz, and AFT MA Field Representative Andy Powell.

"Everyone at the Lawrence Public Schools and the

Bruce School has been doing amazing work to reopen the school as soon as possible," McLaughlin said, "but hundreds of students still need our help to replace school supplies that were lost in the fire."

With help from local retailers and national organizations, including Famous Footwear, FirstBook, and New Balance, and FirstBook, the students were presented with new backpacks, books, and other materials in order that they be able to return to their studies as quickly and efficiently as possible. FirstBook (which had also given away books to Lowell public school students just days before) also donated 500 books to restock the school library.

"We're asking our union brothers and sisters and members of the community to help these students at a critical time," McLaughlin says. ■

Rolling the Stones

Multifaceted educator helps others keep dreams alive

In addition to being a liberal arts professor at Berklee and the founder of the internationally-acclaimed educator-enhancement Training Transformational Teachers Program (<http://tttprogram.com>, as discussed in October/November, 2015 issue), which helps educators use the latest research and all manner of information-sharing to engage and enhance outcomes for all learners, Pratt Bennet is also an avid explorer of dreams who sees them not only as a portal to our unrecognized emotions, but also as guides to better dreams and more fulfilling lives.



DREAM WEAVER
Pratt Bennet

While the discussion of dreams can become rather heady (pardon the pun), Bennet has found a novel way to approach it by crafting a family-friendly fantasy book called *Raising Sleeping Stones* (www.raisingstones.com). In this story, two sisters who are having trouble fitting in and living up to the expectations of their future-obsessed town use dreams as a way of initially escaping their difficult lives, then of unlocking new talents and, eventually, entirely new realms. In the process, the sisters and the reader are taken on a fantastic journey where new elements are revealed and new puzzles presented in a way that engages and enchants.

"In addition to being a fantasy-adventure story," Bennet observes, "it's also a manual for how to dream better. If the reader starts trying the basic steps the characters learn, they should start remembering more of their own dreams very quickly, and having really meaningful ones soon after."

Bennet decided to release the book in two formats- a Kindle book for anyone who wanted the usual reading experience, and a multimedia interactive e-book that would heighten read-

ers' enjoyment with unique features, like dream-boosting puzzles, archives, character galleries, and original music that is actually embedded into each chapter. Bennet collaborated with

two Berklee composers - Joao Luis and Leo Langer - to create the first original and complete story score for a novel. Just like a film score, they composed and recorded original music to heighten the emotions of each important moment in the book, timed to last as long as the scene. With over 120 pieces of music, the story score adds exciting new dimensions

to the story. Many readers have told Bennet that they will read a scene first, then go back and read it again with the music and gain new insights into the characters.

When asked what inspired the energetic but busy Berklee prof to spend 11 years putting this complex world together, Bennet explains that it was his daughters and their childhood dreams.

"Many years ago, [my daughters] were both having a series of recurring nightmares that were scaring them and making us all lose a lot of sleep," Bennet recalls. "I showed them how they could quickly change their nightmares to make them less frightening, and they got results so quickly that they begged me to show them what else they could do with their dreams."

As they experimented with different techniques, Bennet's daughters quickly shifted from simply remembering more of their dreams to discovering

what they could do with them. "Soon, they were flying, breathing underwater, even lucidly changing their dreams while they were happening," Bennet recalls with a smile, crediting his daughters with suggesting that he write stories that could help other kids to understand and control their dreams as well.

While dream control may seem new age-y, Bennet has studied lucid dreaming for decades and has come up with a series of dream workshops on dreaming that he created with the help of some of the most noted experts in the field.

"I've got an amazing group of dream authors and experts who contribute their favorite insights and tips," Bennet explains, "and though it's a really different way to share dream skills than through my books, it's equally exciting to hold live workshops and give people things they can put into practice the same night."

Having self-published *Stones*, Bennet is now simultaneously working on distributing that book to libraries and schools and also on getting the sequel, *Battle for the EverSleepers*, ready for publication in early 2017.

"I self-published because I had so many crazy ideas for the app that no publisher could wrap their heads around," he says, mentioning the book's interactive story score and a cover that reveals more illustrations as the reader progresses through the story. Bennet also expresses gratitude

to Berklee and Newbury Comics for awarding him with a substantial seed grant that, along with a successful Kickstarter campaign, allowed him to hire the team of composers, app designers, and illustrators he needed

to make his vision of helping kids develop their dream skills come true.

While Bennet has become a sort of expert on dreaming, he admits that there are many lessons left for him to learn when it comes to publishing. Even so, he is happy to share the insights he has come to about being a first-time author.

"Start with shorter forms and just crank out a lot of stories," Bennet advises. "You need to log in lot of really weak pages before the strong ones emerge."

Perhaps the largest lesson Bennet shares, however, is that, even in a world where dreams are often ignored, it is always important to dream.

"We are all so much more than the grades we get in school, the job we have, the family we are born into," he observes, "but we don't all get the encouragement or chance to discover that. Our dreams hold the keys to what we're capable of, and if we start listening, anything is possible!" ■



ATTENTION NEW(ER) TEACHERS

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Special Education: What next and what now?

Educator Opinion By Ronda Goodale

Since 1975, when the Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) passed, we have seen dramatic changes in the services to and the identified population of students with disabilities. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of students identified with learning disabilities as well as those on the autistic spectrum. More inclusive education is the dominant educational approach now. Even so, inclusion of students in the standard classroom, particularly students with severe disabilities, has become more challenging.

The majority of students in special education are identified as having specific learning disabilities, followed by those with speech and language issues. More than two-thirds of these students spend at least 80 percent of their time in general education. In contrast, almost all students with severe disabilities spend the majority of their time in separate settings at public schools.

The current goal of special education is to have all students access the general education curriculum. Because of the lack of progress reported about special needs students, there was a major change in the law to ensure the progress of students with disabilities in this curriculum. Alternate assessments for students with severe disabilities are required to assess students relative to their grade level in identified areas. Nevertheless, there is

still a huge gap in graduation rates for students with disabilities. About 40 percent do not graduate. They either drop out or are not able to fulfill graduation requirements. Similar to the general education population, many students with disabilities will not attend or complete college. Students with disabilities are less likely to live independently than typical students.

The amount of focus that teachers spend preparing their portfolios diverts them from supporting students' achievement of practical skill goals which are much more essential. For example, a tenth grade student who cannot successfully write a sentence will still have an assessment that focuses on tenth grade goals despite the fact that they are not functioning at that level. There needs to be much more focus on writing and achieving more practical goals and assessments should measure attainment toward those goals. Transition plans that begin at age 16 should include goals that are effectively supported and assessed. Curricula goals should be realistic with a lens on a student's life after high school. Although well-meaning, the shift in focus on special education has often resulted in student time and

teacher preparation that really do not align with what a student really needs to be successful as a learner or employee.

Medication of students with special needs also requires much closer attention. Medication prescription, monitoring, and compliance must all be evaluated more thoroughly and systematically. Although all countries use medications, the US does so for the large majority of students with ADHD and often to the exclusion of behavioral and cognitive

therapy when medication is prescribed. This is the reverse of what we should be doing. Instead, careful data collection and implementation of a variety of non-pharmacologic interventions should be the *modus operandi* prior to administering medications to students. Medication should only be prescribed when strong behavioral and cognitive interventions have failed to translate into student academic and social access.

About 24 percent of students with disabilities are medicated. When medications are first considered, a careful placebo and drug interventions are used and behavioral data is collected in school and at home. Once medica-

tion taking has begun, careful medication monitoring is often not pursued as conscientiously. Therefore, the duration of a medication prescription, the dosage, as well as careful behavioral data and monitoring should be part of regular practice. In addition, there should be careful planning, support, and discussion with students around the medication(s) prescribed to them. Students' level of medication non-compliance can seriously impact their successful school access. Problems may persist or be magnified as students reach adulthood, at which stage, non-compliance is at around 50 percent. Thus, the importance of building more understanding among students about medical compliance when they are young is critical. Discussion of symptoms and of the positive impact of taking prescribed medications should be addressed in IEPs. For many students with disabilities, noncompliance often impacts their functioning effectively socially, emotionally, and eventually, professionally.

As the issues involved are so complex and complicated, it is clear that inclusive classrooms and prioritizing medical treatments to special education students are two issues that need to be revisited and explored more fully. ■

Ronda Goodale is a retired Boston teacher who now teaches at Cambridge College and other area colleges and universities.



DO NOT TAKE TWO AND CALL
Special needs students need other answers

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From the Stacks

Salotto supports library support staff

Thanks to the efforts of dedicated colleagues like Jenna Fitzgerald, Josefina Lascano, and Cathy Mastronardi (not to mention our own columnist Nancy Win-er), the role and importance of the paraprofessional has remained front and center at AFT MA. What many people do not realize, however, is that, in addition to our experienced and dedicated educators, AFT MA also represents and serves custodians, nurses, and librarians. Fortunately, AFT MA also counts among its membership

people like Lori Salotto, a paraprofessional at the Middleboro Public Library.

With a BA in History from Wheaton College in her hometown of Norton, MA, Salotto entered the field of library sciences in 1999 as the Assistant Manuscripts Curator at the Rhode Island Historical Society Library.

"I wanted to do something that had to do with history," Salotto recalls. "The library field seemed to be the place that would fit." Three years later, Salotto began to serve as a Library Technician in Middleboro. With the 2014 contract, her title was changed to

Paralibrarian.

"I wanted a job closer to home," she reasons, "and felt that the public library field would be a logical progression."



POWERFUL PARA
Lori Salotto

Today, as Head of Technical Services in Middleboro, Salotto counts among her roles the cataloging of the library's ever-expanding collection. She also serves as an assistant to the Children's Librarian.

As is the case with so many AFT MA members, Salotto is not just a member of the staff at her

library. She is also an active member of the MA Library Staff Association (MLSA) and the MA Massachusetts Library Association's (MLA) Paralibrarian Section (www.masslib.org/paralibrarian), for which she has served serves as Secretary and Secretary of the Paralibrarian Section respectively. "Something that has been very close to my heart has been my involvement with the Paralibrarian Section of the MLA," she maintains, citing the Section's mission of supporting paralibrarians who might otherwise be an insufficiently recognized

and underserved subgroup in the field. "The Section advocates for recognition and participation in the library community...[and] also promotes and provides a forum for networking and career development opportunities."

In an effort to expand their reach and emphasize their value, the Paralibrarian Section makes sure they have a presence at MLA events by sponsoring programs and presentations, including their own annual awards for Library Support Staff of the Year and Library Support Staff Advocate of the Year. Beyond the awards, a large part the Section's focus is the PARA program, which Salotto explains stands for Paralibrarian Recognition of Achievement.

"The PARA was created because not everyone wants to (or is able to) obtain an advanced degree to further their library career," Salotto explains. "The MLA Paralibrarian Section wants to encourage professional goals and career development in Paralibrarians." The program began as a voluntary recognition, however, the Section was able to work with MLA and others to make the program a certification.

Such encouragement from affiliated organizations (including AFT MA) has helped Salotto and her paralibrarian colleagues make their mark and make their voices heard in the larger educational and labor debate. She adds that these awards, certifications and accolades also do a great deal for building morale among the membership.

"Along with the satisfaction of

accomplishment is the added bonus of recognition by your peers and your library director," Salotto says, noting that "the ultimate goal of certification would be that it would have a monetary benefit for individuals."

For all their support and all their hard work, the life of paralibrarians (and all library staff) is challenging and often underappreciated. Fortunately, positive changes continue to arise, thanks in great part to the work of AFT MA and its members like Salotto, who thankfully recalls a 2014 grade increase which was won as part of a contract negotiation, the only known pay grade deferential for those holding a MA PARA Certification.

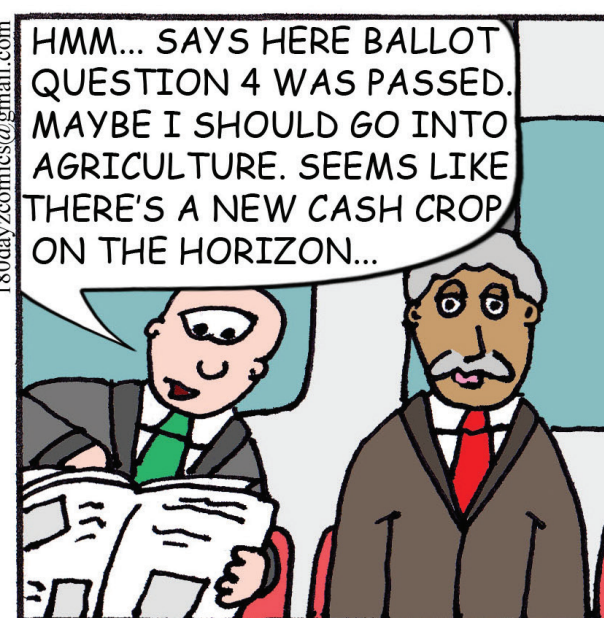
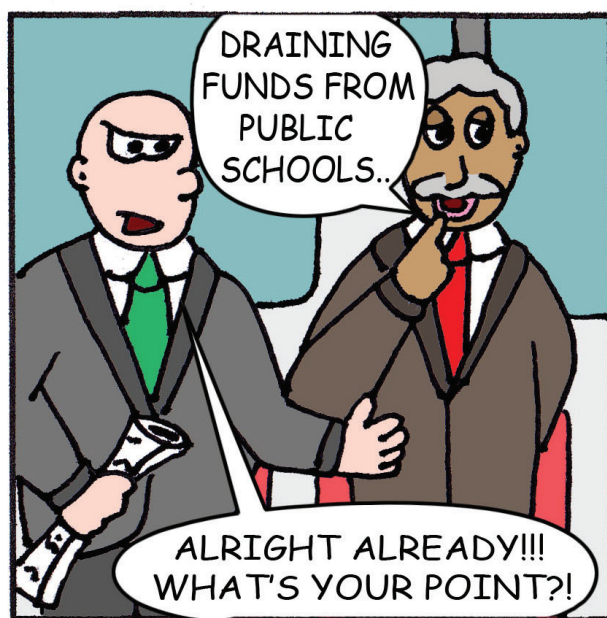
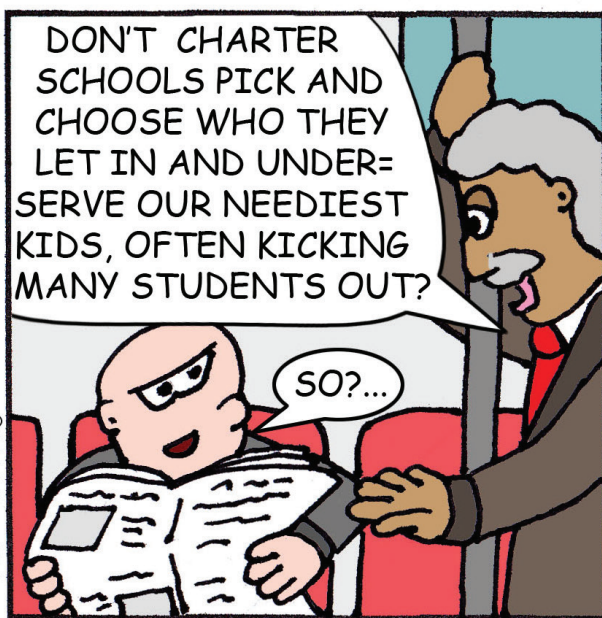
My hope is that I can get the word out on what was accomplished in our library," Salotto says, "and that other people can go back to their libraries and show that it has been done and may be able to propose something similar for their staff. ■

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By Scott Hubeny



The Cap Has Been Kept

Educators and others rally to defeat Question 2

When asked for her official position regarding the MA ballot initiative (known as “Question 2”) that would have allowed a dozen new charter schools to open in MA each year, AFT President Randi Weingarten replied, “taking resources away from public schools robs their students of opportunities to achieve their aspirations.”

Had Question 2 passed, these additional schools would have meant millions of more dollars of public education funding would have gone to support these new schools, potentially crippling many already overstretched public school districts.

Fortunately, 62 percent of MA voters voted “no.” In the process, they not only defeated this initiative, they also sent a message about how important American public education is in the place of its birth.

“Our broad coalition of stakeholders worked together seamlessly to protect and preserve the 96% of the children that attend our regular public schools,” observes AFT MA Political Organizer Brian Lapierre. “My hat goes off to the collective efforts of so many of our members, parents, students, community partners and organized labor that sent a resounding message on Nov. 8th that our school districts are not for sale.”

“By defeating Question 2,” observed AFT MA President Tom Gosnell, “MA voters have said that we support public education and students in the public schools.”

Another benefit, AFT MA Special Assistant to the President Ed Doherty suggested, was that the campaign helped the public learn about the issue and also learn who charter schools do and do not serve.

“The public began paying attention,” he said.

According to Gosnell, there were five main reasons why the opponents of charter expansion were victorious.

First among these was the fact that our message that charter expansion would involve taking funds away from district schools and thus hurt education as a whole was “consistent, relevant, and credible.” Gosnell also noted how “everyone working in schools” (by which he meant not just AFT MA members or even just teachers, but

Gosnell said proudly.

“We knocked on about 20,000 doors and made twice as many phone calls,” observes Nick DiPardo, who had come from AFT National to support the efforts. He also notes that members of the BTU did their own canvassing and calling as well.

Looking to our professional support

on 2” supporters might have imagined, another possible result of this crushing defeat is that state legislators may not be as keen to revisit the charter school cap for the foreseeable future. Some public school supporters go so far as to suggest that it might help energize the debate about restructuring the school funding formula in MA so that the schools that exist can be more fully funded and more effective in engaging and educating all students, including the many students with language and learning challenges that often fail to thrive in charter schools.

“It does generate a conversation that needs to continue about education funding and what we want our schools to look like,” said Barbara Madeloni, president of the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA).

Though charter proponents may claim that this is but one battle in a larger war and that the charter issue will return, MA legislators and movement leaders are not so sure.

“The public has spoken loud and clear on this one,” said Senate President Stanley Rosenberg. “It will be very difficult for them to get any attention given how strong...the vote was.”

As MA is the birthplace of public education in America, some are even predicting that this vote will have repercussions across the country and may stall the pro-charter movement elsewhere as well. In an interview with the New York Times, MIT professor Parag Pathak claimed the decision “will send shock waves throughout the United States”

and posited that, “If the voters reject more urban charters here, then it’s not clear what more the charter movement can do to convince opponents and skeptics.”

No matter what the impact is elsewhere, the results in MA are firm and incontrovertible.

“The people of MA have clearly and overwhelmingly rejected the expansion of a separate and unequal education system that would cause irrevocable damage to the public schools that educate all children,” echoed Juan Cofield, president of the New England Area Conference of the NAACP and chair of the Campaign to Save Our Public Schools (SOPS) which spearheaded the “no on 2” campaign. “Now we must move past this wasteful and divisive ballot question and work together on investing in our local district public schools and the future of all students across Massachusetts.”

Across the Commonwealth, Question 2 was set up to be a battle of many grassroots Davids against one well-funded Goliath. On the one hand were supporters, who used \$20 million in untraceable “dark money” (\$17 million of which came from out of state). Among the largest donors to the pro-charter side were New York-based organization Families for Excellent Schools and Walmart heirs Alice and Jim Walton. On the other hand, organizations including AFT MA, MTA and CPS, as well as individual teachers, parents, and other concerned individuals united under the SOPS banner to do phone banks



SUPPORT PUBLIC EDUCATION? NO QUESTION!

MA Senator Elizabeth Warren, State Senator Barbara L'Italien, Attorney General Maura Healy, Lawrence Mayor Dan Rivera, SOPS organizer Joshua Alba, Lawrence activist Lisa Rajczyk, and AFT MA Political Organizer Brian Lapierre join other AFT MA members and colleagues from MTA and other members of the Save Our Public Schools (SOPS) coalition in the successful campaign against Question 2

administrators, parents, and students) “knew the message was true.”

“They became apostles...and advocates,” Gosnell observed.

Third was the fact that, over and above our members and affiliates, we had strong grassroots support from organizations including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Citizens for Public Schools (CPS), and many parent and student groups.

Overall, volunteers for the No on Question 2 campaign were active in more than 300 cities and towns across the state.

“We had over 3,000 members participate in our telephone town hall,”

teams, Gosnell also credited our savvy advertising and public relations administrators who helped educate the public at large about the issue and our stance on it.

“They emphasized the message that district schools that educate 96 out of 100 students were being hurt,” Gosnell says.

The last reason was the money. Though our opponents spent a total of over \$23 million, the fact that opponents of Question 2 were able to raise and make effective use of \$15 million is, as Gosnell put it, “incredibly significant.”

As the margin of victory far exceeded what even the most optimistic “No



LIBRARIANS UNITED AGAINST QUESTION 2

Leaders from the MA Library Staff Association (MLSA) stand up in support of the “No on 2” movement



ONE IF BY LAND...
A No on 2 supporter rolls through a Roslindale parade

and canvassing that reached hundreds of thousands of voters in more than 300 districts.

“Our opponents outspent us with a record breaking \$23.1 million,” noted SOPS Field Director Marisol Santiago, “but that didn’t stop our dedicated group of parents, educators, students, and community members in standing up and saying ‘No.’”

“Grass-roots efforts by parents, educators, community groups and students succeeded in safeguarding the promise of public education as a public good, rejecting ideologies and others who sought to divert and drain resources from public education,” Weingarten maintained.

“This was a victory for public education, a vote to protect our public schools, and a testament to what can happen when we have millions of one-on-one conversations to educate people about the real consequences of charter expansion in MA,” observed Citizens Executive Director Lisa Guisbond.

More than 200 school committees also voted to oppose Question 2,

joining 32 mayors, the Massachusetts PTA, the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, the Massachusetts Elementary

School Principals’ Association, the Massachusetts Municipal Association, Progressive Massachusetts, and the Progressive Democrats of Massachusetts.

“Despite being outspent with millions of dollars,” Guisbond noted, “our thousands of volunteers in communities across the state won this election by having conversations with their neighbors, friends, and families. This campaign showed the true power of grassroots energy, and now it’s time to turn that energy toward improving all of our schools.”

By voting no, voters decided to use their tax dollars to support the district schools that exist rather than to create and fund new charter schools. As so many new and existing charter schools fail to deliver on their promises of better test scores and more comprehensive services for



TIME TO STAND UP
Boston Teachers Union President Richard Stutman makes sure his colleagues arrived on time for their No on 2 rally



NORTH SHORE SUPPORT
Peabody Federation of Teachers members, including Patty Nizwantowski, Barbara Brown, President Bruce Nelson, Sean Story, Eric Blake, Matt Brennan, and Sarah Takis-Welch, turned out for a visibility Standout prior to the PVMHS vs. Lynn English football game

students (let alone teachers, none of whom need be certified and few of whom enjoy union protections), this was the wiser choice.

While charter school proponents often suggest that their schools are especially attractive in urban areas (where they allegedly represent a “choice” for students who may struggle in other settings), and note how many communities have not yet reached their state-imposed limits on charter expansion, even cities like Boston (which currently has permission to add only 250 more charter school seats for next fall) still soundly rejected the initiative. In fact, Question 2 was defeated in every region of the state, including

arise, Guisbond suggested that we all take at least a moment to give thanks for and to celebrate our victory. “Our movement of urban, suburban and rural teachers, parents, students and others was a beautiful thing to behold and be a part of,” she says, noting that her organization plans to continue to “keep this movement together and build upon it to fight the inevitable battles ahead...[and] for equitable and adequate school funding and for less testing and more learning.”

Looking to the future, Gosnell was firm in setting the path for education in the Commonwealth.

“It’s time to end education policies that pit one group of families against



...TWO IF BY SEA
United Teachers of Lowell President Paul Georges shows his support

cities such as Fall River, Holyoke, New Bedford, Pittsfield, Quincy, Worcester, and Boston, where it was defeated by more than 60 percent.

“The defeat of Question 2 is a victory for those of us who believe in equal and open access to all our public schools,” said Boston Teachers Union President Richard Stutman. “Our public schools perform well, and will continue to thrive and improve with the vote of confidence our citizens have given us.”

Many suburban and rural districts also voted against the initiative, despite the fact that charter supporters also suggest that new charters will have no effect on regions that already enjoy strong schools.

“Don’t use charters as a weapon against public schools,” advised Weingarten, “especially when Massachusetts public schools rank among the best in the nation.”

While the organizing may have been handled by the adults, many students made sure to make their voices heard even if they could not do so in the voting booth.

“As young people we aren’t able to vote in elections,” said Boston student Gabi Pereira. “This was especially hard this election when it’s our futures written on the ballot.”

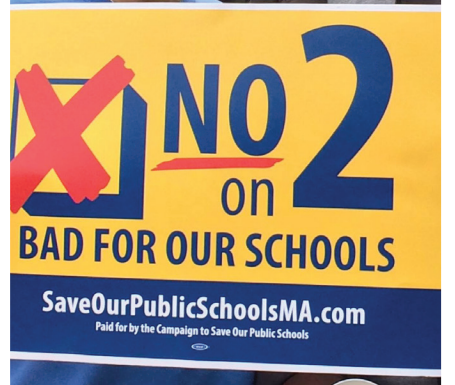
As students are savvy enough to cut through the untruths and propaganda and realize when their schools were being threatened, they are among the most grateful for the result and for the hard work that was contributed by so many for this one cause.

“Schools like mine across Massachusetts are losing too much to charter schools,” Pereira astutely observed. “So thank you all for hearing us for, supporting us and voting on behalf of us.”

Though future challenges are sure to

another,” Gosnell suggested. “It’s time to ensure that all our district schools have the resources they need to educate all students. It’s time to end waiting lists for preschool and ensure that all students have access to the education and resources they need to thrive.”

“Every Bay State child should have the opportunity to get a high-quality public education,” Weingarten agreed, “so we look forward to working with the governor, teachers, parents and students to improve public schools through proven, evidence-based approaches: creating community schools, including restorative justice practices in curriculum, promoting career and technical education programs, and supporting—not demonizing—educators.” ■



SPRINGFIELD SUPPORTERS
Springfield parents and teachers stood united against Question 2

Assabet Comes in FIRST

School hosts regional robotics challenge inspired by Dean Kamen

Many of us grew up building with LEGO blocks. Others played with miniature robots. In recent years, these childhood activities have matured a great deal and become a major source of school pride and learning.

On November 19, hundreds of students from Wakefield, Weymouth, North Attleboro, Mendon, and Marlborough gathered at Assabet to take their favorite LEGO blocks to new heights in a collegial competition

known as the FIRST LEGO League (FLL). The event was an offshoot of the FIRST organization, which was created by inventor Dean Kamen.

As science, technology, engineering and math (a.k.a., “STEM”) skills are more in demand than ever, many schools and educational programs are focusing on and encouraging them. The full title of Kamen’s organization is For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (www.firstinspires.org). Since 1989, the Manchester, NH-based 501(c) (3) has been designing accessible, mentor-guided programs and competitions that are intended to inspire students and educators from kindergarten through high school to engage these skills more intently and to use

fun activities like building with LEGO blocks and developing simple robots to encourage further engagement later in life.

“We want to transform our culture by creating a world where science and

approached last year by FIRST administrators to serve as a host for a LEGO event. In 2015, 18 regional teams had participated. This year, that number rose to 23.

“We do it because it is fun, it is good for kids, it shows off our school,” Zomar says, noting that Assabet has its own version of the competition called the First Robotics Competition (FRC).

While competition often drives development, FIRST programs are based on the concepts of what Kamen calls “gracious professionalism” and “coopertition,” in which mutual respect and the spirit of collaboration are held above all other ideals. In addition to encouraging mutual appreciation and support, the program also offers older students and mentors a chance to help younger ones. In fact, Assabet’s high school team offered to mentor a middle school team for the 2017 edition.

In the meantime, Assabet will also host the kick-off event for the 2017

FRC Challenge on January 7, 2017. For this event, the Assabet team will have six weeks to conceptualize, design, make, build, test, and learn to drive a 120-pound remote-controlled robot.

“We have won four major awards in the last two years,” Zomar says proudly. ■



INSPIRING YOUNG MINDS BRICK BY BRICK
Assabet students Brianna Williams and Alden Vedder talk to robotics mentor Shamus Hughes during an FLL qualifying event

technology are celebrated and where young people dream of becoming science and technology leaders,” Kamen explains.

“Kamen decided kids needed idols in the STEM fields and began FIRST,” says Assabet Admissions and Public Relations Coordinator Cindy Zomar.

According to Zomar, Assabet was

The Social Language Slide

Educator Opinion
By Anna M. L. Williams

If you are reading this and remember the days of telephones with cords, hanging out at the mall with your friends and being afraid to talk to someone new face-to-face, then you will understand the differences between our generation and the current one. Among them are that we had social language or pragmatic skills to help us understand that the tone of someone’s voice and their facial features or body language play an important role in understanding the message they are communicating. We understood that if someone was standing with their hands on their hips and had a stern tone of voice, they were not pleased with our behavior, and that if our parent gave us a certain look, we were in trouble.

Technology has connected today’s students to the vast world of cyberspace, but disconnected them from social communication. Text messages eliminate the tone of voice, facial features, and body language that accompany verbal messages. People cannot tell if someone is being sarcastic or funny in a situation, unless an emot-

icon is attached, and as there are so many to choose from, it can be difficult to pick the appropriate one. Often, the recipient of these visual messages is as unsure as the people sending them!

Facebook is another arena in which people communicate. While it is a wonderful tool in many ways, it has also changed our ability to use social language. Individuals can now chat and learn about someone from their

posts long before they have to meet or even talk to them in person. While this distance may lessen the social awkwardness and anxiety of getting to know someone, it also eliminates the valuable lessons involved with learning to understand others. Is it a positive change to be able to decide if the first encounter with someone is worth the effort before it happens or does it make us more selective about an indi-

vidual’s personalities and attributes and less tolerant of their differences? In either case, it decreases our face-to-face, social interactions and also our experiences (and experience) with those kinds of interactions. Similarly, while Snapchat (now called just “Snap”) helps depict a person as they are right this instant, it does not allow for the intimate nuances that accom-



SOCIAL SUPPORTER
Anna M.L. Williams



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

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

**Look for our
NEW
website
at
www.aftma.net**

identify tone of voice or body language as factors of intent? Or better yet, can we afford to see a whole generation of individuals who have such limited personal interactions that they use so-called “text lingo” during an actual conversation?

It is becoming more apparent that the world of technology has great advantages. However, we need to understand the effect technology is having on our social language and pragmatic skills before it is too late. We need to help others to understand that, in order to become an efficient communicator in our world, face-to-face contact is necessary and social language and pragmatic skills are valuable tools for understanding the speaker’s intent and for responding appropriately and effectively. We need to teach social etiquette for cell phones and social media sites, and remember how our words impact the world around us.

Our recent election has clearly demonstrated that using social media to state opinions without face to face contact can impact vast numbers of individuals. If nothing else, this election has shown that we need to embrace the impact of communication in a new world of technology and teach our students how to use it with the same courtesy and respect we teach them to use in face-to-face interactions. ■

Anna M.L. Williams is a 32-year, ASHA certified SLP veteran with the Lynn Public Schools.

Revolution Coming to Wentworth

National architecture FORUM arrives December 28

Technology is often defined as any tool or activity that forms or creates a culture. While simple hand tools may be the earliest forms of technology, it was what was eventually done with these tools that allowed and encouraged certain cultures to rise above the rest. As developments in architecture have allowed and encouraged people and civilization to literally rise higher, it is no surprise that a school based in technology would have a vaunted department for this science.

At Wentworth Institute of Technology (www.wit.edu), the Department of Architecture embraces and encourages what it calls “the art of making” through multiple courses of study, each of which combines the traditions of the past with the latest technology in order to design a build a more productive and prosperous future. As the architecture of Boston ranges from pre-Colonial to post-modern, it acts as a giant classroom for Wentworth’s students, many of whom are involved in town-and-gown partnerships through the schools’ innovative EPIC program (see December, 2014 issue).

From December 29, 2016 through January 1, 2017, architecture students and thought leaders from across the country will gather at the Westin Copley Place Hotel for the 2016 FORUM of the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS). This annual event is not only the largest on the AIAS calendar but also the largest gathering of architecture students in the world, regularly attracting many of the organization’s nearly 7,000 international members.

When asked about the FORUM, AIAS President Sarah Wahlgren observed that, “architecture education doesn’t just happen in your classroom,” and suggested that, the diverse

students, opinions, exposures, settings and experiences that participants experience as part of FORUM “will allow [them] to explore the full potential of [their] education.”

For 60 years, AIAS has served as an independent, nonprofit, student-run organization dedicated to providing information, and resources related to and to promoting excellence in architectural education, training, and practice. Through its school-based programs, AIAS also strives to foster an appreciation of architecture and related disciplines.

At the 2016 FORUM, members will explore the innovative evolution of the architecture profession and engage the individuals who have moved the discipline forward. In the process, it is hoped that the current crop of creative will be further inspired to build bigger and better in the future.

According to Wentworth Chair Jared Guilmett, the process of bringing AIAS to Wentworth began in November of 2014, when the AIAS chapters at Wentworth and Massachusetts College of Art and Design were nominated by members of AIAS’s National Committee for Special Events to compose a bid proposal to host the 2016 FORUM.

“Our chapters are both experiencing strong growth and development,” Guilmett maintains, “and have shown increasing attendance and engagement in national initiatives.” Working with faculty, staff, and students from both schools, the bid committee assembled the necessary items and information, compiling a 103-page book that included a history of the city of Boston, letters of support from community officials, and a proposed schedule of events

“We had never put together a piece like this before,” Guilmett says, “and we were very proud to show our peers

at the conference all of our work.”

At AIAS’s 2014 FORUM in Nashville, the team presented their proposal alongside teams from Portland, OR and New Orleans. Over the course of the entire four-day conference, the Boston team responded to questions about their proposal and made the case for the so-called “Hub of the Universe” to be the center of AIAS for 2016.

“For our largest presentation, we gave the crowd a game of FORUM Jeopardy,” Guilmett recalls, “in which we showcased little known facts about Boston, providing members an understanding that Boston has more to it than sports and tall buildings; that we have a rich, vibrant culture unique to our city.”

When asked about the high points of the process, Guilmett also reflects upon how the campus-wide effort encouraged students to “engage with their faculty, department, institute executives, and city officials” and upon the “positive outcome[s]” the process had for the school, even before their wish was granted.

While this FORUM has the potential to be the biggest in AIAS’s 60-year history, Guilmett also notes that it is not the first to be hosted by Wentworth. In fact, he recalls, Wentworth had that honor for the organization’s 50th anniversary as well.

“[That] was the largest attended conference to date,” he explains, noting that; MassArt recently hosted AIAS’s smaller but still significant networking event called the NorthEast Quad conference.

Among the scheduled events at the 2016 FORUM will be discussions regarding the various realms of architecture, as well as tours of area firms and examples of Boston’s world-famous structures, including Faneuil Hall and Government Center. There will also be an evening celebration of AIAS’s six decades which will be held at Fenway Park, a special New Year’s Eve party, and a FORUM closing event at King’s Bowling. Keynote addresses will be delivered by such notable colleagues

as Alan Ricks of MASS-Design Group, Autodesk VP of Strategic Industry Relations Phil Bernstein, FAIA, Handel Architects Founding Part-

ner Gary Handel, FAIA, and Architera President Ellen Watts.

“The people you know in school will graduate into the same profession as you and they have a lot to say about the world you will be living in,” Wahlgren suggests. “FORUM is a platform to join a movement bigger than yourself.” ■



DESIGNING THE FUTURE

Wentworth Professor Elizabeth Ghiseline with students during the College + Career Expo at FORUM 2015.

Faith in the Future

New Teacher Diary

By Steven Dunmire

What have I learned in the past year and a half of teaching?

Being a “new teacher” was an identity I anticipated holding for many years. The plan began forming at 14, when I realized how much I loved working as a teaching assistant for a youth theatre program. It solidified in college, when teaching middle school students for the Breakthrough Collaborative program cemented and confirmed every desire I had to enter the education field. It sustained me through graduate school and a year-long teaching placement, finally coming to fruition in September of 2015. A little over a year ago now, I joined the ranks of Boston Public Schools as a sixth grade teacher.

Spending so many years in anticipation of being a new teacher gave me plenty of time to think about

what the job might actually be like. I spent years of my free time in college trying to understand what it meant to prepare for the teaching profession.

Much of what I read and heard was alarming: stressful first years, teacher burnout, and high numbers of new teachers leaving the field before achieving their full potential as master educators. With that information under consideration, I entered the profession with the question of how to survive and succeed constantly on my mind.

Now several months into my second year of teaching, I am proud of the work I have done and the progress I have made as an educator. I have also learned the importance of having community in order to sustain yourself as a new teacher. I’m

incredibly thankful for the teachers, school leaders, coaches, and friends who supported me during year one. Thanks to the Early Career Teacher Network (a community of alumni and teacher educators within the Boston Teacher Residency program), I have



WELL PREPARED
Steven Dunmire

been fortunate to experience professional development, coaching, and other learning opportunities specifically geared to support new teachers. Among many other things, participating in the Network has taught me how inspiring it can be to be guided toward new and innovative teaching practices and how empowering it feels to

do so in a group of peers at the same level of development as me. I am also thankful to my school. As one of the only new teachers last year at the Lilla G. Frederick Pilot Middle School, I was motivated everyday by the profes-

sional knowledge and compassion for students shown by the adults around me. I am grateful for our school leaders, who are balancing pushing our practice in bold new directions with responding to the needs of teachers and students on the ground.

These colleagues, mentors, and personal experiences are helping me shape my core beliefs about what it means to be a teacher. More than anything, I am learning to think about my long-term goals. Remembering that becoming the best teacher I can be will be a journey of years helps me let go of short-term anxieties and daily ups and downs. By remaining steadfast in my pursuit of improvement and holding tightly to my conviction to stay in teaching, I have faith that I can reach this goal.

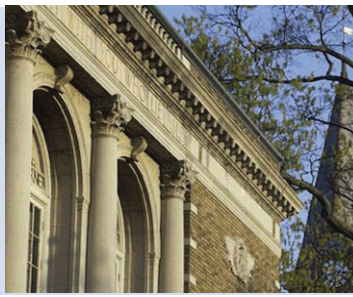
And with the community around me, I know the day will come sooner rather than later. ■

Steven Dunmire teaches sixth grade ELA and Humanities at the Lilla G. Frederick Pilot Middle School in Boston.



On Campus

Susan Krumholz, President
UMass Faculty Federation, Local 1895



Looking Ahead

What will higher education look like in four years? As I see it there will be four areas that need to be explored: leadership at the Department of Education, tuition, grants and student debt, unions in general, and research funding.

We now know that the nominee for education secretary is Betsy DeVos. In a recent editorial (please see page 2), AFT President Randi Weingarten said about DeVos, “She is the most ideological, anti-public-school nominee for secretary of education since the U.S. Department of Education was created” and that she is “a grave threat to what made America great in the first place.” She has used her family’s wealth to advocate against the interests of public schools, and against the interests of the most vulnerable children. We know very little about where she stands in regard to higher education, but there is a great deal of speculation. What is suggested by friends, supporters and critics is consistent; if confirmed DeVos is likely to focus on transparency and performance, workforce development, for-profit institutions, support of free speech on campus, and reducing Pell Grants.

Let us look at each of these points in turn.

The first of these can be read as measurement and assessment. While workforce development is not an altogether bad goal, it is still one that prioritizes skill over knowledge. When it comes to for-profit institutions, need

I mention the devastation brought about by the collapse over the past decade of several for-profit schools? There is also reasonable speculation that DeVos “may push for federal funding that would make its way more toward private and religious institutions at the expense of public institutions.” Free speech on campus has been a major hot point of late. While “free speech” used to mean the ability to criticize institutions, now it seems to mean the ability to criticize individuals by spewing racism, misogyny, and other forms of hate speech. (By the way, when did hate groups get politely renamed “alt right”?). As for reducing Pell Grants, these grants have been providing a significant source of funding for low-income students, to the tune of about \$30 billion annually. As both the costs of education and the number of eligible students rise, there is temptation on the part of lawmakers to reduce the program. However, any constriction will impact the most vulnerable students (who are often the same students who choose to attend public institutions). Up until now, attempts to cut Pell Grants have been unsuccessful. The future is uncertain. More certain, perhaps, is the revocation of Obama’s regulations that removed banks from the lending and collection of federal student loans. Trump advisors have said that they expect to get the government out of student lending and hand it over to the banks. If we consider that there is also an intention to remove most of the

regulations on banking, student loans may be readily available, but rates will be high and repayment options limited. If we combine that with a desire to de-fund public higher education, we can see that the real goal is to keep the poor uneducated.

Let’s talk about Unions. I expect that others in this newsletter are addressing this, so I will be brief. Despite the President-elect’s claim that he has just saved 1000 union jobs in Indiana, there is no indication that anyone in this collection of billionaires supports unions. The Vice-President elect and Governor of Indiana defended his predecessor’s passage of a state “right-to-work” law, and he himself repealed Indiana’s prevailing wage laws which created a common wage for most state construction work. According to a recent article in the *Washington Post*, several of the recent labor victories were executive orders or regulations that can easily be undone. These include the Fair Labor Act that raised the cap on salaried workers that could be exempt from overtime pay, and an NLRB ruling that allowed graduate teaching and research assistants to unionize. And then there is the Supreme Court. It is difficult to comprehend the devastation of rights that can occur if the next administration has the ability to make numerous court appointments. But it will likely only take one – which is inevitable – to result in a case similar to last year’s *Friedrichs* case (i.e., one designed to cut to the heart of public unions), to see some degree of success.

Though federal research grants have

been trending downward for the past 15 years, the expectations being placed upon university faculty for receiving grants has steadily increased. While no one knows exactly what is to come there is good reason to believe that the Knowledge Economy will be one of the casualties of the incoming administration. Trump has spoken disparagingly of the National Institute of Health (NIH), an agency that, according to the *Boston Globe*, “funded \$2.5 billion of medical research in Massachusetts last year.” Also, the President-elect’s assertion that climate change is a hoax, and his list of cabinet appointees that include prominent climate change deniers, doesn’t bode well for any environment-related research funding. And at a recent gathering for about 4500 criminologists, there were constant references to upcoming cuts in research funding on treatment, diversion, or any other alternative to incarceration. Further decreases in federally sponsored research projects will have a chilling effect on faculty who are increasingly expected, often required, to bring grant money to campus.

In the days since the election, I have had frequent conversations with friends and colleagues wondering how we will get through. The two best pieces of advice I can share are spend lots of time and energy with those you care about most and who are most supportive, and re-activate. We can’t sit back and relax. It’s time for every one of us to find our inner activist! ■

Editing Engineer

Wentworth professor helps colleagues go to press

For the past 23 years, Francis J. (“Jerry”) Hopcroft has been teaching environmental and civil engineering at Wentworth Institute of Technology. As a Registered Professional Engineer who served in every New England state and a Licensed Site Professional in MA, Hopcroft knows well the subjects about which he teaches and also knows the region well.

Perhaps it is no surprise, then, that Hopcroft has written a series of reference manuals that are used by colleagues throughout New England and elsewhere and that he also supports others in creating their own texts.

“I am the Collection Editor for a series of books on environmental engineering topics being published by Momentum Press,” explains Hopcroft, who recently retired from full-time teaching but still contributes to the Wentworth community as an adjunct professor and in other ways as well.

“As such, I am always looking for professionals to write books on any environmental topic not already under contract.”

As the series Hopcroft is assembling consists of reference manuals and not textbooks, he suggests that it is not only a potentially lucrative pursuit but

also an interesting one that allows and encourages colleagues to take what they know and share it in a unique way.

“They are more ‘how-to’ books than theory-based manuscripts,” Hopcroft advises, noting that each text consists of a maximum of 110 pages, including all images and graphs.

Among Hopcroft’s own books are

Engineering Economics for Environmental Engineers and *Wastewater Treatment Concepts and Practices*. Whereas the former provides a basic understanding of the time value of money and how to use it when consid-

ering proposals and projects, the latter focuses on the chemistry and biology of wastewater treatment and discusses common techniques for effectively treating wastewater.

“Currently, I am working on a third book...that will provide 4,300 unit conversion factors for engineers and engineering students,” Hopcroft explains, “along with...translations of a series of environmental engineering terms currently being translated by Wentworth students into 14...languages to assist foreign students taking engineering courses in the US and US students taking engineering courses or working abroad.”

When asked how he became an editor for an entire group of books, Hopcroft explains that the process began when a representative of Momentum Press (www.Momentumpress.net) showed up in his office.

“They were looking for someone to write a book or two on an environmental engineering topic,” he recalls. “After a bit of discussion, and agreement to write the book on wastewater treatment, the discussion turned to the role of Collection Editor.”

In this role, Hopcroft identifies suit-

able topics, finds appropriate authors, develops a table of contents, and assists each author with their proposals and preparation. After reading every word of each text to ensure proper English and solid engineering are being used, Hopcroft passes the book on to the publisher.

Among the current topics with which Hopcroft has been involved are wind and hydraulic power, and climate change.

“Topics for the books are selected from the knowledge and background of the Collection Editor and from topics suggested by others,” he says, noting that many arise either from new ideas and pursuits in the field or from potential authors proposing topics (which, Hopcroft notes, can be done by emailing him at hopcroftf@wit.edu). “The process of becoming an author is actually very simple...and all the books are published as e-books and as individual paperback print copies, which are available through various outlets, including directly from Momentum Press, Amazon, and others.” ■



COLLECTING COLLEAGUE
Francis “Jerry” Hopcroft



Retiree Corner

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



Full Honors

If your loved one was a veteran and passed away, you may be entitled to a burial benefit that you did not know existed. Because this is a federal benefit the state in which you reside when death occurred does not matter. A veteran's agent told me this benefit has been around for at least 30 years. The amounts have increased over the years, as the Department of Veterans Affairs sees the need to increase it. Presently, the amount is \$335. Whether the death is service or non-service related also doesn't matter. A spouse, child, parent, executor/administrator of an estate, or another can apply for this benefit.

Call your veteran's agent from the Department of Veterans Affairs and ask him/her to file the form entitled "Application for Burial Benefits" (Under 38 U.S.C. Chapter 23). My town's veterans' agent said it could take up to six months to receive the benefit. He also said he would do the filing once he received the necessary paper work from the funeral director.

I have talked to a number of people who lost someone who qualified for this benefit and they never remember getting it. I told them to contact the veteran's agent and start the process no matter when the person passed. I have since learned that you must apply within two years of the veteran's passing, but let your veteran's agent tell you that.

I sent this information as an email to our members, as I did not want someone to lose out on the benefit by a few months because of waiting for The Advocate or our newsletter, Matters.

I have heard from some who told me their veteran's agent told them they had to die in a VA Hospital to get it. This is not true. Another said it was only for those who died from a war related cause. That is also not true. This benefit is for anyone classified as a veteran.

I mentioned this at a bereavement meeting of seven women, six of whom had lost husbands - all veterans. None of them knew of it. The seventh had lost her father, but told the group to pursue the benefit and not believe that the death had to be in a VA Hospital or under certain circumstances. She said her mother-in-law had been given misinformation as well, but kept pursuing it and received the benefit. If you have trouble with this contact me at: mardito@retireesunited.org and I will refer the matter to a veterans' agent who is knowledgeable about the situation.

I would never have known about this or applied if my husband had not put together a booklet telling me what to look into on his passing. So, if you have vets that are still in your life record this information somewhere for further notice.

In order to get full military honors for a veteran all you have to do is request this of the Funeral Director when you are making the funeral arrangements. They will take care of this for you and there is no charge for this. Also, let the Funeral Director know you want a plaque put on the grave that will contain the vets name and the war/time in which they served. You will be asked if you want the plaque in bronze or granite. The Funeral Director will send it off. You notify

the veteran's agent in the community where the internment occurs in order to get the flag and flag holder put on the grave.

MRU continues to have a commitment to the fine men and women who served our country and were left behind when those actively working were allowed to count up to four of their military years toward their creditable service on retiring. That includes all those who retired prior to July 24, 1996. In a future issue of The Advocate we will provide you with information on this bill as well as other bills we are asking to have filed.

Veterans Day is more than one day a year - November 11 and we should remember their sacrifice more than on one day in May. MRU truly believes that the best way to show our gratitude to our veterans is to acknowledge their service by granting this creditable service and helping vets get all that they are entitled to receive. If you served this country in uniform, thank you for this service, and if you are a family member of one who served thank you as well.

We have all attended performances in which those who served their country were asked to stand when the song was played for the branch of the military in which they served and be recognized for their service. They stand tall and straight with great pride no matter how bent their aging bodies are or how long ago it was that they served. It is about time that we stand up for them and get a benefit that was due them twenty years ago. Let's serve our VETERANS as well as they have served us! ■

SENIOR SEMINARS

Preparing for Retirement

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

Thursday March 30, 2017

3:30-5:30 PM

Methuen Educational Association

184 Pleasant Valley Street, Suite 1-204

Methuen, MA

Please note that, due to the schools being very involved with Question 2 on the ballot, I was unable to get commitments for seminars. Please check the MRU website (www.retireesunited.org) for further listings, which will be updated as soon as I receive the commitment,

To request or register for seminars, call MRU at 781-365-0205. Please give the name of the seminar, your name, phone number, and the number of people who will be attending. You may also email us to make arrangements at contact@retireesunited.org.

REMEMBER:

**Apply for
AFT MA
Scholarships
by
December 16
at
www.aftma.net**

Legislator Profile: Rep. Christine Barber

As the daughter of a retired AFT member who taught reading at the elementary level, Rep. Christine Barber knows both the vital benefits endowed by public school teachers and also the challenges they face.

When asked why she feels so strongly about supporting public education, the Representative serving Somerville and Medford recalls the many contract disputes in which her mother was involved.

"She spent a lot of time on the picket line," Barber says.

Education was always important in the Barber home, but it was also something that Barber loved.

"I remember when I was young a friend accused me of being someone who 'loved school,'" she recalls, smiling, admitting that the assessment was accurate. For while many of her friends enjoyed the social aspects of

school or the opportunity to participate in sports and the arts, Barber says, "I loved the learning part too."

Growing up, Barber was involved in many social justice issues. After college, she became a community

organizer working with low-income women. This prompted Barber to pursue an advanced degree in public policy. During her time in graduate school, Barber served as an intern for two state representatives, Anne Paulsen and Ellen Story.

"They were not like any politicians I had ever met," Barber explains. "They were passionate about the issues I cared about,

stood up for what was right, and were great mentors."

After a few years with these inspirational mentors, Barber moved on to the MA Health Care Financing Committee. "There I got to be part of the team that drafted the landmark health

care reform law that created near-universal coverage," she recalls proudly. "Being a part of such a historic event showed me that good policy change is possible."

Barber's next stop was at the non-profit health advocacy organization Community Catalyst where she served as a health policy analyst. "I worked with patients' groups and advocates to make sure that they had a voice in improving the health system," Barber explains, "and that benefits and costs met their needs."

While working across the country, Barber also kept close political ties to her home community of Somerville. She served as a member of the Democratic City Committee and the Progressive Democrats of Somerville.

"I also have worked on bringing affordable fresh food, expanding public transportation, and creating more affordable housing in the area," she notes.

In early 2014, Barber's own representative stepped down, leaving a vacancy. After discussing the possibility with friends and neighbors in her community, Barber decided to run and

is grateful for the support she received from AFT MA for both of her victories.

In addition to social justice and education, Barber is involved in a number of other areas of legislation as well. A member of the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture and the Committee on Personnel and Administration, she is an ardent supporter of expanding affordable housing, and expanding the MBTA's service to her constituents. She is also a champion of quality early childhood education and has been a leader in expanding vision screening for young children so that they can read and learn.

Recalling a recent elementary school book fair that she attended, Barber says she still gets excited when she is in a school and still looks for the students who, like her, are excited to learn as well.

"I had many great teachers who contributed to my interest and to my success," she says. "My hope is that every kid finds even some part of school to love." ■



SCHOOL-O-PHILE
Rep Christine Barber

AFT MA CONGRATULATES

The American Federation of Teachers MA wishes to congratulate our endorsed candidates on their hard-fought victories and to offer continued support to those who were not successful. We look forward to working with and supporting all of you as you support us.

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

| | |
|------------|------------------------|
| DISTRICT 2 | U.S. REP. McGOVERN (D) |
| DISTRICT 3 | U.S. REP. TSONGAS (D) |
| DISTRICT 4 | U.S. REP. KENNEDY (D) |
| DISTRICT 5 | U.S. REP. CLARK (D) |
| DISTRICT 7 | U.S. REP. CAPUANO (D) |
| DISTRICT 9 | U.S. REP. KEATING (D) |

ENDORSED STATE REPRESENTATIVE AND STATE SENATOR INCUMBENTS

- REP. CHRISTINE BARBER (D – Somerville)
- REP. GERRY CASSIDY (D – Brockton)
- REP. TACKEY CHAN (D – Quincy)
- REP. BRENDAN CRIGHTON (D – Lynn)
- REP. DANIEL CULLINANE (D – Dorchester)
- REP. JOSH CUTLER (D – Duxbury)
- REP. MICHAEL DAY (D – Stoneham)
- REP. MARJORIE DECKER (D – Cambridge)
- REP. DIANA DiZOGGIO (D - Methuen)
- REP. RADY MOM (D-Lowell)
- REP. FRANK SMIZIK (D - Brookline)
- REP. PAUL TUCKER (D – Salem)
- REP. STEVEN ULTRINO (D-Malden)
- SEN. PATRICIA JEHLLEN (D – Somerville)
- SEN. BARBARA L’ITALIEN (D – Andover)
- SEN. ERIC LESSER (D – Longmeadow)
- SEN. JASON LEWIS (D – Winchester)
- SEN. THOMAS McGEE (D – Lynn)
- SEN. MICHAEL MOORE (D – Millbury)
- SEN. PATRICK O’CONNOR (R - Weymouth)
- SEN. KATHLEEN O’CONNOR IVES (D - Newburyport)
- SEN. MARC PACHECO (D – Taunton)

ENDORSED NON-INCUMBENTS

- FOR REP. MICHAEL CONNOLLY (D-Cambridge)
- FOR REP. PAUL JACQUES (D – Rehoboth)
- FOR REP. JACK LEWIS (D – Framingham)
- FOR REP. JOAN MESCHINO (D – Hull)
- FOR REP. JENNIFER MIGLIORE (D – Saugus)
- FOR REP. KARA NYMAN (D – Hanover)
- FOR SEN. ADAM HINDS (D – Pittsfield)
- FOR SEN. WALTER TIMILTY (D - Milton)

Meet Your Colleague: Brenda Chaney

Many students can think back to the teacher who helped them get through a difficult time and to achieve goals they thought they would never be able to achieve. For AFT MA Executive Board member Brenda Chaney, it was a person outside of school who allowed her to achieve her goals of helping others. Though Chaney says that she “always wanted to be a teacher since I was a little girl,” she was not able to realize this dream until she had married and started a family. In fact, had she not followed this path, she may have very well been on quite another one. The man who made it possible for Chaney was her late husband , Hay-



OUTSIDE INSPIRATION
Brenda Chaney

wood. In addition to caring for their seven children and managing the household, Haywood worked full-time and still made time to take his wife to the library so she could study and prepare for her degree in education. “I would not have been able to go and complete school without his help,” Chaney says. Once her path had been set, Chaney followed it with gusto, attending her first union meeting in only her second year in the profession. “I became interested in what was going on,” the former teacher at the Donald McKay School in East Boston explains, “and started

attending on a regular basis.” Two years later, Chaney became a building representative at the Dearborn School, where she also began to participate in a number of committees, including many of Boston Teachers Union’s Intervention Teams. When asked what prompted her to become a member of the Executive Board, Chaney names another personal inspiration, colleague Joan Devlin, whose encouragement kept Chaney focused on her goal even when she did not win a seat after her first campaign in 1990. Since 1992, however, Chaney has been a devoted Board member and a formidable force on behalf of AFT MA’s goals. “I feel that I’ve represented the people who have elected me over the years,” she says, suggesting herself as an especially strong voice for middle and high teachers who enjoys “talking

and advocating for the real issues that teachers face in the classroom every day.” When asked what the most prevalent issues have been in her long tenure, Chaney replies that, among them are the lack of value teachers are afforded in many communities and how their expertise is often discredited. “All of the individual creativity of teachers and students is stifled,” she observes, blaming testing as the main reason why quantity is being favored over quality in many schools and districts. “Some testing is needed to check what your students needs are,” she admits, “but this excessive testing is not how you help your students grow.” ■ This is the fourth in a series of pieces intended to introduce AFT MA members to new Executive Board members.