



The Advocate

February 2013

Assessing the Assessment:

Movement against standardized testing gains momentum

As much of the nation prepares for a new system of curriculum structures (the Common Core), concerns have also arisen regarding the ways in which these new curricula and students' abilities to engage them will be assessed. Many educators and students already complain that most of their time is spent either preparing for, taking, or analyzing data from assessment tests and that many of these tests are given too much weight in determining their futures. As a result, there is a growing outcry against high-stakes assessment in America.

"Assessments are all the rage," observes *New England Journal of Higher Education* Executive Editor Joel O. Harney, "but exactly how to improve on tests is unclear."

This concern is not new. In fact, in many places, it goes all the way back to the earliest days of standardized testing. Today, however, the cries against and the search for alternatives to testing are louder and more far-reaching than ever before.

While many educators, administrators, and parents agree that there is value in the process of assessing what their students have learned, more and more disagree with the methods currently in practice in many states, including Massachusetts. The emphasis on English and mathematics has overshadowed and often squeezed out the benefits that come from focusing on and supporting other subjects (including social studies, physical education and the arts, which continue to suffer as more time and money is put towards more assessable curricula) and has prevented many teachers from using the creativity and passion that inspired them to teach in the first place.

As more and more time is devoted to testing, many educators agree, less and

less is available for actual learning. What makes things worse, they say, is that, due to the limited scope of many assessments, much of their students' performance is being assessed based on subjects and topics that may not excite and engage them. Discouraged by the lack of creativity that is often involved in "teaching to the test" and overwhelmed by pressures to do well on the assessments, many teachers are leaving the field. Clearly, many say, a change must be made.



SUPPORTING STUDENTS
Rep. Carl Sciortino, Jr. (D-Somerville)

In addition to the mounting evidence against standardized testing, there is also a significant amount of evidence demonstrating the benefits of using other assessment methods. Most of the world's top-performing school systems put far less emphasis on high-stakes standardized testing yet still find ways to assess student learning. In his report, "Resistance to High Stakes Testing Spreads," National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest) Public Education Director Bob Schaeffer points out that the United States is "the only economically advanced nation that relies heavily on multiple-choice tests." He compares the

U.S. with such educationally-progressive nations as Finland, who focus instead on performance-based assessments. "Their students are evaluated based on real academic work," Schaeffer notes, "such as essays, projects and activities." What is ironic, Schaeffer suggests, is that, despite the fact that other nations do not focus on multiple-choice assessments, when they do offer them, their students typically do better than ours do!

The issue, therefore, is knowing how to assess learning most effectively and how to use that data to truly improve schools and support teaching and students.

While the path forward may not be completely laid down yet, there are people ready to pave it. At last year's AFT convention, a resolution was passed that encouraged what many see as a new commitment to changing testing in American schools. Calling the current assessment systems "inappropriate," "punitive" and, in many cases, "low quality," the resolution claimed that testing has "eclipsed" teaching as the main priority in many schools. "It's time to restore a proper balance," the resolution suggested, "and to ensure that assessments...inform and not impede teaching and learning."

"Inform not impede," echoed Lynn Teachers' Union President Brant Duncan. "That is the key part!"

In addition to the resolution, the AFT has also prepared a series of petitions and is encouraging members to be vocal and active in this latest push against ineffective and often unfair assessments. Much of the latest information and resources can be found at www.learningismore.org.

Many AFT member districts are also making their own efforts to support the movement. A group of Lynn teachers

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Support Our Schools!

Campaign for Our Communities raises awareness to raise funds

On Tuesday, January 15, over 100 people packed a hearing room at the State House to rally and lobby in support of Campaign for Our Communities (www.ourcommunities.org), a wide-reaching initiative intended to encourage economic recovery and growth in Massachusetts. While the end results of such growth are diverse, a key focus of the Campaign is education.

"An Act to Invest in Our Communities would raise \$2 billion in new revenue that can be used to make investments in excellent schools," said Campaign Director Andi Mullin, noting that the proposed legislation also supports "reliable transportation systems and a strong economy that provides good jobs."

Supported in the Senate by Sonia Chang Diaz (2nd Suffolk) and in the House by Representative Jim O'Day (West Boylston), the Campaign is also being backed by political representatives from across the Commonwealth,

including Representatives Ellen Story from Amherst and Aaron Vega from Holyoke and Senator Dan Wolf from the Cape and Islands.

"The legislation we are filing today represents important steps towards our goal," said Chang Diaz, a former Lynn teacher. "Our proposal...will allow the Commonwealth to recommit to families."

"We're trying to accomplish a good strong future for the Commonwealth," O'Day said.

Among the lay supporters who

spoke at the event were unemployed carpenter Scott Minter from Arlington and Sapphire Castillo, a student at Bristol Community College who lives



AFT MA UNITED AFT MA administrators gather at the State House to support investment in education

a student when public transportation is so lacking in her part of the state. Somerville SPED teacher Jackie Lawrence also commented on the connections between state funding and

education. "We work hard to provide education to the many children we serve," said the president of the Somerville PTA. "Our ability to move forward depends on state funding that is increasingly scarce."

As one of the services being threatened is early education, Lawrence emphasized its importance. "It is far more difficult and expensive to catch children up," she said.

Vivian Moulden, a retired health care worker from Springfield, discussed the importance of arts, sports, and other programs that are being cut. "As a community," she said, "we must do better [and] raise revenues so our children...can get a good education."

So far, nearly 20 municipal legislative bodies (including Boston, Fall River, Lawrence, Lynn, New Bedford and Springfield) have passed resolutions in support of Campaign goals. Still, its supporters stress, more people and communities need to get involved and more needs to be done.

"We must invest in our schools and our communities," Lawrence concluded. "Our quality and quality of life depend on it!" ■



THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Thomas J. Gosnell
President, AFT Massachusetts

Extraordinary Achievement

Thousands of eighth graders throughout the world took the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study test, popularly known as TIMMS, in 2012. Once again Massachusetts students did extraordinarily well and finished number one in the western world. Congratulations to all the teachers and educational personnel who have contributed to this extraordinary achievement.

The American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts (AFT MA) has always advocated that we want what is fair to teachers and good for students. We have also believed that collective bargaining is not an impediment to quality teaching and student achievement. Since public teachers in Massachusetts are overwhelmingly unionized, we can justly claim that our collective bargaining agreements are one of the factors contributing to our students' success.

One can only wonder why some people continue to complain that collective bargaining agreements prevent the implementation of new ideas. One popular idea, though hardly new, is extension of the school day.

AFT MA supports the extension of the school day under the mantra that

we want what is good for kids, fair to teachers, and collaboratively done.

Many maintain that the classroom teacher is the most important in-school factor contributing to student success. Consequently, one can only conclude that management must collaborate with teachers and their unions to determine whether an extension of the school day is desirable, and if so, for what purpose.

Different communities have different needs. Some may want to provide subjects not offered during the regular school day. Some may want to provide more intensive instruction in subjects taught during the school day. Some may want to provide additional professional development for teachers. Some may want to provide time for teacher collaboration and discussion which the school day does not permit. Some may want to do combinations of these or do other things not mentioned here.

Whatever is done, collaboration is essential. The extraordinary talent and knowledge of our teachers will contribute mightily to the adoption of any intelligent course of action.

And of course, AFT MA wants what is fair to teachers. Just compensation is fair. Failure to provide just compensation is a debasement of the profession. Since many maintain that

the teacher is the most important in school factor contributing to student success (as I wrote earlier), how can one deny the assertion that just compensation is not only fair but also a trademark of the profession? This is an American ideal.

NEWTOWN, CONNECTICUT

Newtown is still on our minds. The funerals have happened; the students have returned to school at another location; the pain continues. What can we do to reduce the chances of another agonizing assault?

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten has applauded President Obama and Vice-President Biden for their series of common-sense, balanced proposals that will make our nation safer, including:

- ☐ Banning the sale of the kind of large ammunition clips that were used to massacre 26 children and adults and injure others at Sandy Hook Elementary School;
- ☐ Expanding background checks before purchasing a gun and cracking down on those who lie on background checks;
- ☐ Cracking down on illegal gun trafficking;
- ☐ Banning assault weapons that have no other use but to kill a large number of people quickly;
- ☐ Enforcing current gun laws and investing in research around combating gun violence; and
- ☐ Investing in mental health services.

President Weingarten said, "Under no circumstances should educators have the responsibility of being armed, and schools should not become armed fortresses. The role of

educators is to teach and nurture our children, not to be armed guards."

"In times of great tragedy, Americans have always come together to grieve, to support one another, and to act - to put aside what divides us and take collective action to heal and move our nation forward. Too many of our children have had their lives cut short and their futures denied by gun violence - in their schools and in their communities. We have a set of effective proposals and now we must find the political will to get it done."

AFT MA applauds President Weingarten for her thoughtful participation in the debate about how to curb gun violence against children.

If you have any questions or comments, you can email me at tgosnell@aftma.net

BOLD PRINT

Governor Patrick has signed into law an expansion of current CORI background checks to include fingerprint-based checks. The law applies to teachers and school employees in public and private schools with direct contact with children, applicants for educator licensure and early education workers. Volunteers at schools remain subject to the current requirement, state CORI checks at least every three years.

This bill goes into effect in the 2013-14 school year for new hires. Checks must be conducted within three years for current employees. The bill also establishes a one-time fee of up to \$55 per applicant for teachers and up to \$35 for non-certified employees. Fees may be waived by districts. Your local can bargain with districts over how to address payment of these fees.

□□□□

Governor Patrick also signed a bill restoring health insurance to approximately 80 Lawrence long-term substitutes and building-based educators. After a difficult struggle, this home rule petition rectifies an unintended consequence of Lawrence's transfer to the Group Insurance Commission under the financial stability bill.

With the help of AFL-CIO President Steven Tolman, and AFTMA's Tom Gosnell, Ed Doherty, and Haidee Morris, Lawrence Union President Frank McLaughlin and his team were able to get health insurance reinstated for members "I was thrilled," McLaughlin stated. "It was a long time coming!"

□□□□

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

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The ABC's of aft

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

American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (n.)

The largest federation of unions in the United States.

Having merged in 1955, the combined A F of L and C of I O (commonly referred to collectively as the AFL-CIO) is made up of 56 national and international unions (including the American Federation of Teachers) and represents more than 11 million workers.

As a voluntary federation, the AFL-CIO has little authority over its member unions, but often supports members in resolution of disagreements and other protective measures. Oft-portrayed as the "House of Labor," the AFL-CIO's only membership restriction excludes any unions whose policies and activities tend towards or support any activities or ideas that suppress individual liberties and freedom of association.

While it exists for the purposes of its members, the AFL-CIO is also governed by them. Every four years, members meet to elect delegates, who in turn elect officers, debate and approve policy, and set dues.

In addition to supporting their constituents, the AFL-CIO is a noted force in political campaigns as well. Headed by President Richard Trumka since 2009, the AFL-CIO remains a formidable political force, thanks in great part to its "get out the vote" efforts and influential "slate cards" that advise members as to which candidates to support.

The AFL-CIO also has a long and influential history in the struggle for civil rights. Though the AFL originally excluded workers of color, after joining with the CIO, the organization began to pay more attention to these vital workers. Today, the AFL-CIO stands united in support of all workers who seek their support, including the millions of educators, administrators, medical and public workers who consider the AFL-CIO "their" union. ■

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

Playing Their Own Tune:

Troubadour supports students with song

As high-stakes testing pressures schools and school systems to focus more on English and mathematics, many other popular and productive subjects have suffered. Perhaps most notable of these are the arts which have been proven time and again to be supportive of learning and general development in children of all ages.

Fortunately, there are some ingenious entrepreneurs who have been working to buck this troublesome trend and use the arts to support all subjects, including English and math.

Since 1981, Chestnut Hill-based Troubadour, Inc. (www.Troubadour.org) has been using music and lyrics, poetry and prose to help support literacy and learning for students and teachers in underserved schools across the Commonwealth.

“Our goal is to improve the teaching of literacy,” explains artist Victor Cockburn, who co-founded Troubadour with educator and author Judith Steinbergh, with whom he also pioneered the “Arts-in-Education” movement in Massachusetts. “We envision Troubadour as a recognized leader in providing...literacy programs that inspire and empower children toward greater academic accomplishment while helping to close wide achievement gaps.”

In its 30-year history, Troubadour has reached nearly 200,000 students in over 50 Massachusetts districts with their unique Literacy Through Writing and Song programs (all of which are compliant with Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and the Common Core). These programs dynamically empower teachers to strengthen instruction in the literary arts through use of other arts. “The ability to read, comprehend, write and communicate is fundamental to all other learning,” Cockburn notes, “Our most at-risk children must master these skills if they are to...compete successfully in the 21st century economy.”

Through poetry and verse, Cockburn and his Troubadour team model techniques to “use language as a tool,

not only to open up the beautiful subtleties and the uses of language through poetry and song, but...to learn to use these creative writing techniques.”

According to independent research, students who experience Troubadour programs see increases in their MCAS scores of up to 22 points. Some of their resource albums (available on the website) also received Parents’ Choice Awards and have been used by such major educational publishers as Scholastic, MacMillan, Harcourt-Brace, and Curriculum Associates.

As their programs involve multiple cultures and languages, Troubadour is able to engage students from a wide array of backgrounds. “The challenge is to motivate and empower students of diverse backgrounds and abilities,” Cockburn suggests, “including those who are not native English speakers.”

Though professional development, artist-in-residence programs and other partnerships with participating schools, Troubadour can also support teachers over time, helping them fill gaps in their curricula and thereby narrow any gaps in student achievement. “[We] show teachers how to engage all students...using a range of innovative teaching tools and strategies,” Cockburn says. “We take a multi-faceted approach to engaging students...[and] work closely with teachers, specialists and administrators to address specific school and

classroom needs and objectives.”

Among the educators who have seen first hand what Troubadour can do is Rick Rogers, a former principal for the Murkland School in Lowell. Having first met Steinbergh when she was serving as a poet-in-residence in

Brookline (where he now serves as principal of the Lawrence School) Rogers invited Stienbergh and Cockburn to come to the Ambrose School

in Winchester in 1989. His experience with Troubadour was so profound and productive that Rogers is now an active advocate for their programming. In 2007, he drafted a letter of support for a Troubadour grant proposal in which he wrote, “The faculty of Murkland School is eager to build on and extend our previous work with Troubadour...to promote excellence in literacy instruction and support cross-cultural awareness and understanding.”

As the Murkland has traditionally served some of the most underserved students in Lowell (over 80% are students of color and over 85% live in poverty), and as over 33 percent

of Murkland students are English Language Learners, being able to use music and poetry to support language development proved to be a great idea or the school and the community. With help from Troubadour, Murkland students raised the percentage of students achieving the benchmark on the GRADE standardized reading assessment by 45% in one year!

“Our school was one of only three reviewed by the [Massachusetts Department of Education] that year that was not designated ‘underperforming,’” Rogers recalled.

As vocabulary and oral language were “areas of weakness” for Rogers’ students and as many were unfamiliar with poetry, he saw Troubadour as a means of targeting those areas. Rogers also credits Troubadour with supporting students understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, poetic techniques and figurative language, vocabulary, and development of their writing skills. “Because I hold Troubadour’s work in such high regard,” Rogers said, “I have found ways to bring them to each of the three schools in which I have served as principal.”

Though he realizes that test scores may have their place, Rogers is a strong supporter of learning in general and for its own sake. That is why he is such a supporter of his long-time colleagues at Troubadour. “We must be tenacious in helping raise student achievement to meet standards,” he admitted, “but we will not get there if we do not do so in a way that inspires a love of learning.”

“There is empowerment in words,” Cockburn asserts. “Creative uses of language inspire us to realize dreams, embrace ideas, and to physically change our world.”

“We owe it to our students,” Rogers says, “to help them discover the joy of learning.” ■



SING TO ME, MUSE Victor Cockburn of Troubadour writes lyrics with students at the Taylor School in Dorchester

Countdown to Common Core

New software supports study system

With the coming of the Common Core, many teachers are scrambling to realign curricula with the new standards. As everything from recommended readings to assessment systems will be changing, there is a lot to be done!

Fortunately, educational consultant Sarah Cherry Rice has been just as fast with coming up with a new tool to support her fellow educators. With an M.Ed. from the University of Pennsylvania and years of experience in the classroom and also with such organizations as Achievement Network (for whom she served as Director of School Support) and Teach for America, as well as work with such districts as Lawrence, Rice knows what teachers need and has the experience and entrepreneurial spirit to do what it takes to help. Her latest venture is called Countdown for Teachers (www.countdownforteachers.com), a computer-based scheduling system that not only helps teachers in the school environment but helps the environment as well!

“Throughout the last few years, I have become extremely frustrated watching teachers plan,” Rice explains, recalling many sleepless nights spent editing multiple copies of her lesson plans.

In order to save both time and paper, Rice began to work on devising a new way to plan. After consulting with many of her peers, the result was Countdown.

As it is pre-loaded with all the new standards, Countdown helps teachers create and modify lessons that are in alignment. It also allows and encourages teachers to share their lessons so that others can save time and expand their repertoire as well. This sharing feature also allows teachers to prepare ELL and SPED colleagues ahead of time so that their combined efforts can be more streamlined and successful. It also encourages backward planning, not just a unit at a time, but for the entire year.

“I pledged that in 2013 things would change,” Rice explains, “so I created this new tool for teachers.” ■



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Diary

of a New Teacher

By Robert Tobio
Math/Special Ed Teacher
Mary Lyon Pilot High School
Brighton, MA

Meet the 2012-2013 New Teacher Diarists

The following new teachers will be contributing to the New Teacher Diary during the 2012-2013 school year. The *Advocate* thanks all of these fine teachers for sharing their experiences.

Bradford Green

English Language Arts teacher,
Pickering Middle School, Lynn

Chaya Harris

Fifth grade teacher, Mather School, Boston

Himilcon Inciarte

Fourth grade Spanish teacher,
Dever-McCormack, Elementary, Boston

Karina Dise

Paraprofessional,
Zanetti Montessori School, Springfield

Bill Madden-Fuoco

Humanities teacher,
Urban Science Academy, West Roxbury,

Eliana Martinez

Social studies teacher,
Lawrence High School, Lawrence

Amanda Perez

Middle school teacher,
Sarah Greenwood School, Dorchester.

Robert Tobio

Math and special education teacher,
Mary Lyon Pilot School, Brighton

Test Score

Continued from page 1

are working on a calendar that will clearly show how many days were used for assessments and how few days were left for actual teaching. “In addition to DESE’s mandated MCAS and ACCESS for ELLs,” Duncan notes, “quarterly/trimester benchmarks, DIBELS, [and] MAZE are administered.”

“Students are tested all the time,” Duncan observes. “How much testing is enough?”

While many educators are still discouraged about the current state of high-stakes testing, as the movement against high-stakes testing grows, so too does the sense of encouragement among educational leaders. AFT President Randi Weingarten is one of the foremost critics of overreliance on standardized testing and has written many editorials and position papers on the topic, as well as speaking in districts across the country.

“The first thing we have to do is move off the test fixaton,” Weingarten said in a 2012 interview in *The Nation*. At the AFT’s national conference last year, Weingarten stated that high-stakes testing should be used to inform, not impede, instruction and led the Federation in its unanimous passage of a resolution that claims that the focus on standardized tests has “undermined” education.

With the AFT unified in its resolution, the call for more effective assessments has continued to be heard from other

After my first year of teaching, the school where I was employed was closed. That experience taught me a lot about teaching and a lot about the union.

Being the only new teacher in the school the year it closed, the union did not have much good news for me. Even so, it represented the one straightforward voice in the whole process. That meant a lot!

Today, I am in the middle of my third year teaching. And while I am in a new school, I am still part of the Boston Public Schools (BPS), and I still feel positively about my union membership.

Like most urban districts, Boston has had a difficult time retaining young teachers. I earned my master’s degree through the Boston Teacher Residency with a cohort of 70 other teachers. When we graduated, we all hoped to work for BPS. While I am glad to say that I still work alongside many of those colleagues in BPS, I have also seen many move on to other districts, other roles or other fields completely. It is a tough reality to face that three years ago we were hopeful, committed and prepared for careers in education and now some of us are leaving or have already left.

I do not know everyone’s personal situation, nor do I intend to pick on anyone for moving on from teaching to another career. However, I do see the trend and I do believe we need to address it.

Inevitably, more experienced teachers will retire, and take with them years of experience, skill and knowledge they have developed over the course of their careers. We cannot keep replacing retiring teachers with new teachers and expect the quality of our schools not to suffer. We need to maintain a group of teachers who are diverse in every way, including years of experience.

interested parties as well. FairTest Executive Director Monty Neill recently stated how heartened he felt by “the explosion of resistance to high-stakes standardized testing across the nation.” As his organization was behind the National Resolution on High Stakes Testing (<http://timeoutfromtesting.org/nationalresolution>), which also appeals to administrative and government agencies to “reexamine” accountability systems and to develop new forms of assessment that do not require “extensive standardized testing” and that “more accurately reflect... the broad range of student learning,” Neill is especially encouraged by the way his resolution, along with the AFT’s and many others, have helped support local parent, student and teacher groups who question the billion-dollar behemoth that is the testing industry.

In addition to educational organization, there is also support for assessment reform from many district and state legislators as well. Rep. Carl Sciortino, Jr. (D-Somerville) recently introduced a bill (currently marked House 1955, though a new bill number may be coming) that is intended to reform the assessment and accountability system. In the preamble, House 1955 suggests that Massachusetts “has yet to fully realize the letter and spirit of the Education Reform Act of 1993,” which, it claims, “called for a comprehensive assessment system composed of a variety of instruments and methods that are sensitive to different learning styles and barriers to learning.” House 1955 also claims that, in order to



GROUP THINK

Boston math and special education teacher Robert Tobio suggests that, in order to support each other and our students most effectively, we have to think like a union

So how do we stop the trend of new teachers leaving after only a few years?

First, we need to think of this problem as a union. We are all in this together. This is not “their” problem. It is all of ours. We are all guilty of blaming struggling colleagues for their struggles. It is time to start helping and supporting them.

Commonly, it is issues related to classroom management that keep new teachers up at night, so rather than being mad that the students who come into our rooms riled up after having Mr. A’s class, we should try to help Mr. A develop better skills when it comes to management. It seems obvious, but most of us feel that we are too busy with our own work to spend any time supporting our colleagues. If we commit to help each other, however, the effort will be well worth it. It will be easier on all of us to help Mr. A. improve than to go through the same thing with Mr. B, Mr. C and Mr. D later on. Also, the stronger we help Mr. A feels the more he will be able to help us!

In addition to looking at and helping our neighbors, we also need to look at and help ourselves. Nobody is a perfect teacher. You can be great

for one student, and mediocre for the next. That is the nature of our work, but we can always get better. If we look at our colleagues and take notice of their skills, we can help each other improve by honest discussion of the things that we want to work on.

To me, it is this working together while keeping our own interests and goals in mind that make a strong union. Improving and working on our practice apart from formal evaluations will make us stronger, closer, and better for ourselves and our students. A school environment like this would not be hard to stay in, either; rather, it would be hard to leave.

I do not expect my ideas are going to stop all struggling teachers from leaving our profession, but I do think it might help some of them. Experienced teachers need to share their knowledge, experience and skills when they can. And younger teachers need to accept that we can learn from those around us and be willing to ask for help. You do not have to like everything other teachers do, but you should be able to understand why they do it. If not, I hope you can at least have a good discussion trying to sort it out. ■

House 1955 would “restore...initiative and creativity,” “return to teachers the authority to develop strong, engaging curriculum, while providing the means to ensure the quality and effectiveness of their curriculum and instruction,” and it would also “release educators from the pressures to overly emphasize the narrow range of knowledge and skills measured by the MCAS tests.” Perhaps most importantly, Bill 1955 would “prioritize forms of evaluation...that can assess the full range of knowledge and skills required by colleges, skilled employment and effective citizenship.”

When asked what prompted him to propose House 1955, Sciortino replied, “I filed the MCAS Reform Bill because I share concerns of many parents and educators that high-stakes testing is being misused. Too-heavy a reliance on a single indicator of achievement skews the emphasis from meaningful learning and skill-building to a system where the skill being taught is test-taking. This bill would help balance the incentives for real learning while enhancing our accountability system with other measures of performance.”

Despite the fact that House 1955 would reduce the amount of tests most students take each year, it is interesting to note that most of them would still be subject to more assessments than students in many other countries.

“The question is how much is enough,” Duncan suggests, “and why we are doing this.” ■

Summa Cum Laude: Dr. Linda Nathan

Massachusetts is fortunate to be the home of many of the world’s foremost minds on education. Even so, it is difficult to go too far down that list without mentioning Dr. Linda Nathan.

As the founding headmaster of Boston Arts Academy, Boston’s first public high school for the visual and performing arts (and one of the district’s most acclaimed and awarded schools, with a 94 percent graduation rate), Nathan is also an acclaimed lecturer and author who strongly supports arts education, equity, and teacher support. In addition to shaping the future of education as with her class on building democratic schools at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, her 2009 book, *The Hardest Questions Aren’t on the Test: Lessons from an Innovative Urban School*, is used a guide for many school administrators in urban and suburban schools alike.

When asked what inspired her to enter the education field in the first place, Nathan recalls growing up in Cambridge amidst a family of educators and the impact that had on both her childhood and her entire life.

“My mother was...a reading teacher [who] worked with students with learning disabilities,” Nathan explains. “I thought she was God-like in her ability to teach very troubled young people to decode and read.”

In addition to her family, Nathan was privileged to work closely with many other educational heroes while still in grade school. “I met Jonathan Kozol at a young age,” Nathan recalls. “I worked in his classroom when I was in fifth or sixth grade and later read his first book, *Death at an Early Age*. It made a huge impression on me!”

Learning from her mother while teaching her younger brother to read and working with such educational

giants as Kozol, Nathan’s passion for learning was evident. “My first grade teacher even said I’d be a teacher,” Nathan recalls.

“It was not until she attended the University of California, Berkeley, however, that her own teaching career began to take shape. “I got very involved in teaching adult [ESL],” she recalls. “That was [when] I was truly bitten by the teaching bug!”

When she enrolled at the University of Wisconsin, Nathan thought that she was headed into education policy. She soon realized, however, that her passions remained in the classroom. After garnering certification as a bilingual teacher, Nathan began work as a middle school aide.

“My mentor teacher was extraordinary and let me be as inventive as I...needed to be,” Nathan recalls, citing another source of inspiration. “We built an entire medieval village in that classroom and put on a medieval fair!”

This creativity and flair for the dramatic would serve Nathan well as she continued to develop her own academic visions and plans. “Theatre was part of my teaching from the get go,” she says. Her artistic streak also helped her support her fellow teachers as a union representative in the Boston Public Schools.

“I stayed very involved in the Union throughout my teaching days,” Nathan explains, recalling a trip she helped organize that brought union

activists from Central America to visit BPS schools. “BTU helped sponsor that,” she recalls, “as did AFT.”

As she has taught everywhere from Berkeley to Boston to Puerto Rico, Nathan has met many inspired educators and helped inspire many others as well. “I’ve had so many wonderful teachers and mentors,” she says, singling out such favorites as Edison School colleague Carmen Torres (with whom she later co-headed BAA), Vito Perrone (to whom her book is dedicated) and Steve Seidel (who now heads Project Zero

at Harvard). “Vito taught me to keep asking better and better questions,” Nathan explains, also mentioning Wisconsin Professor Michael Apple. “He helped frame for me that a teacher’s day doesn’t end in the classroom but also involves families and the union,” Nathan explains.

Nathan’s latest venture builds upon the

success she and her staff and students have enjoyed at BAA. Known as the Center for Arts in Education, this new institute fosters what Nathan terms “transformative education” by empowering students, schools and communities through artistic and academic innovation. Though it is but a few years old, the Center is already an internationally-recognized provider of professional development and other innovative programs.

“[The] Center is our dissemination and outreach arm,” Nathan explains. “It’s our way of sharing and giving

back what we have learned to a broader educational community.”

Another new way Nathan has been reaching out has been through TED talks, the brief but powerful seminars that are available online at www.ted.com. On March 4, Nathan will present a talk called “Why Arts Matter in Schools.” On April 24, she will speak from Northeastern University’s Fenway Center on arts education and creativity. “My...talk will focus on the importance of creativity and risk taking for urban youth,” she explains. “Testing has become so much the norm now in our society that we have lost sight of the important role that arts play in youth development. We are reverting to didactic teaching and suspensions and resegregation of our schools. The arts show us a way out.”

While many imagine schools where students practice musical scales instead of MCAS exams and fill canvasses instead of standardized test bubbles, Nathan and her talented team at BAA actually make it happen! As she continues to take inspiration from others, many now take from her and go out into the world to share knowledge in an artistic way.

“I’m proud to say that I have many alums out there who have benefited from BAA’s education and are now working in their communities in unprecedented ways,”

While many paths may be unprecedented, Nathan has great precedent and proof for her abiding motto that arts matter and need to be preserved and expanded in education.

“We need to find ways to engage kids more fully in their lives, in their communities and their schools,” Nathan exhorts. “The arts can do that and more!”

Know a student or teacher who gives back and deserves to be honored? Send their name to advocate@aftma.net.



AN ART-FUL ADMINISTRATOR
Dr. Linda Nathan

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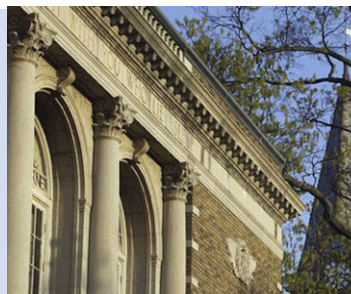
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On Campus

Dan Georgianna, Political Director
UMass Faculty Federation, Local 1895



Don't Blame Me! I'm from Massachusetts!

We may not always do the right thing in state politics, like keeping our state legislative leaders out of prison, but we almost always vote the right (not Right) way. In the Presidential election of 1972, millions of college students, tens of thousands from Massachusetts, supported George McGovern's crusade to end the war in Viet Nam. It didn't work; he lost every state to Richard Nixon, except Massachusetts.

Massachusetts was a national laughing stock, until a year later, 40 years ago this year, when the Nixon administration sunk into the mire of covering up their break-in to McGovern's campaign headquarters at the Watergate office complex that led to President Nixon's resignation a year later.

Bumper stickers, the main currency of elections in the U.S., appeared everywhere. "Don't Blame Me, I'm From Massachusetts."

On some issues, Massachusetts' politics has run counter to the political trend that has swung so far to the right that Noam Chomsky calls Richard Nixon, the last liberal president.

For example, the Commonwealth offers the highest maximum unemployment compensation in the nation and has one of the highest minimum wage rates.

Countering the argument that these benefits cause unemployment, Massachusetts has one of the lowest unemployment rates among states with large populations, good news for the state economy during the recent economic crisis.

Massachusetts also leads the nation in health insurance coverage. The Massachusetts Health Insurance Law that offers health insurance for almost all of its citizens, the first in the nation, has worked quite well in terms of health care. The state is now addressing rising health costs in a 2012 amendment to include price controls on the health care system.

Massachusetts does not rank as high on state spending for public higher education, however. One of the richest states per capita, Massachusetts ranks near the bottom in state spending on public higher education per capita.

State spending per public college

student is falling faster in Massachusetts than in any other state. Over the past 10 years, spending per student has almost been cut in half. Massachusetts now pays less than 4% of its state budget on public higher education. Only two states pay less.

To counter this trend, Governor Patrick recently announced a plan to increase state spending on public education by about \$1 billion per year. About 1/3 of this spending increase will go to higher education with the rest spent on early childhood education and K-12.

Governor Patrick's goal is to increase state spending to 50% of state college and university costs of their educational programs, up from the state's share of 40% of UMass's educational costs. Twenty-five years ago the state paid almost all of public college and university education costs.

To pay for the increase in state spending on education, Governor Patrick proposes raising the state income tax rate to 6.25% and making taxes fairer by doubling personal exemptions and eliminating some itemized deduc-

tions. He also proposes to reduce the state sales tax to 4.5% to improve retail sales with all proceeds from sales tax going to transportation costs, building schools and other public infrastructure.

Governor Patrick has shown courage by raising taxes to fund public investment in education and infrastructure at a time when most state governors avoid even the whiff of tax increases, and many governors have turned all of their energy to cutting public programs.

Virtually all polls show that most people want public services. Polls, often the same polls, show that most people want to pay less taxes. This contradiction is driven by accusations of massive government waste and the naked appeal to personal gain rather than the public good.

It seems to me that spending tax revenues wisely makes the most sense. Governor Patrick has taken a brave step to offer more state funds to public education. It is up to us in education to make sure that the money is spent wisely. ■

A PHENOM-enal Time to Get Together: Public Higher Education Advocacy Day is March 5

On March 5, educators, alumni and students from Massachusetts' many acclaimed public schools of higher education will gather at the State House to support accessible higher education in the Commonwealth. This Public Higher Education Advocacy Day event, which is being sponsored by the Public Higher Education Network Of Massachusetts (www.phenomonline.org), is the latest in a series of efforts to unify the public education community.

After a 10:30 registration session in Gardner Auditorium, a program will be presented by PHENOM administrators and supporters, after which delegates and their guests will visit their district legislators. Among the key elements that participants will be asked to discuss are increases to the operating and need-based financial aid.

Founded on February 1, 2007, PHENOM has since helped unify and support its members and constituents through regular lobbying and other political and educational action. Their annual Higher Education Summit is now a high-priority event for many educators and legislators.

According to PHENOM Organizing Director Alex Kulenovic, Higher Education is the "sleeping giant" of Massachusetts politics. "If every individual who was in some way connected to the public education system mobilized," he notes, "it could swing every vote in every district in the state."

By mobilizing a large and engaged grassroots network taken from the over 500,000 individuals who are employed by the state's higher education

system, PHENOM hopes to garner the resources and support to create a public higher education system deserving of our Commonwealth.

"Especially if you consider alumni who are still in the state," Kulenovic

are paid competitively. "It's about getting people together behind common needs," Kulenovic suggests.

Among the people backing PHENOM are UMass Dartmouth Lecturer Colleen Avedikian, who has been



MARCHING TOGETHER Members of PHENOM rally at the State House in support of the Commonwealth's public higher education system

says, noting that nearly 80 percent of all Massachusetts public higher education graduates stay in Massachusetts, "it's a pretty large population!"

As the first united representative body of the system, PHENOM allows all of these public higher education employees, students, and alumni to speak with one voice. Among PHENOM's key principles are the funding of public higher education, maintaining affordable fee structures for that education, keeping hiring a priority and making sure that all employees

involved since 2008. "The idea of being part of a grassroots organization fighting for better funding of MA public higher education was exciting," Avedikian says, noting that, unlike many other educational organizations, PHENOM encourages students to participate at all levels, including the Executive Board. "PHENOM creates the opportunity for students to have a real voice," she suggests, "and they can shape the agenda."

In addition to supporting members of the public education community,

PHENOM also helps other education-related organizations to support their own work as well.

"We have great solidarity with unions," Kulenovic says, noting that one-third of the "ask" at Advocacy Day involves funding for faculty and staff.

While public higher education was long on the "low end" of legislative priorities, Kulenovic says that PHENOM is making progress. Recalling recent meetings with key legislators, including House Speaker Robert DeLeo and Governor Deval Patrick, Kulenovic says PHENOM's causes are becoming the Commonwealth's causes. "The Speaker said that higher education is number two to transportation," Kulenovic recalls. "That's huge!"

By organizing the campuses, allying with like-minded campus-based, community-based, statewide, and national organizations, and increasing the breadth and depth of their organizing to increase grassroots capacity, Kulenovic hopes to help make PHENOM not only a unifying force for public higher education in Massachusetts, but a model for other education systems in other states as well.

"Growing our grassroots power will have a meaningful impact," he suggests. "The purpose of this strategy... should be to promote the cause and the issues."

This is also why Advocacy Day is so important, especially this year.

"For...years, we have had no [unified] pitch," Kulenovic admits, "but with students and teachers and administrators working together, we can come up with ideas that will help us all!" ■



Retiree Corner

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

You Are Not Alone

There is a great difference between being alone and being lonely. Many people go through a good portion of their lives alone, but are never lonely; others, though surrounded by people are very lonely.

Someone once wrote that being lonely is like having lots of toys, but you just don't want or enjoy any of them; while being alone means you have no toys at all and don't feel the need or the loss of the toys. Being alone is very easy to describe because it is the absence of anything or anyone. Being lonely is difficult to describe because it is felt internally. Someone once told me that loneliness is emptiness at the upper part of one's stomach and no matter how much you eat, it is still there. I don't think there is anyone who does not experience periods of loneliness and pain during their lifetime. Sometimes it may be good to be alone, but it is rarely good to be lonely.

If we find ourselves feeling lonely

too much of the time, we should look at what fills our life. As educators we are or were totally involved in a profession that concentrated on the needs of others. During our active years we often failed to look at our own needs or to develop our own interests. Loneliness can be very real in retirement for those who neglected to put variety in their lives or who did not develop many interests outside of their work, and isolated themselves by only associating with co-workers who shared like interests.

There is no time like the present to expand one's interests. We have all heard the saying. "All work and no play make Jack a dull boy." We must put variety in our life; feel comfortable with doing more than one thing at a time and expand our horizons. There are so many things one can do that will offer the opportunity to use creative skills. If you agree, but don't know where to start, begin at the beginning! Learn, ask questions, reach out and explore.

Think of something new you would like to do, a new hobby you would like to develop, a new area you would like to discover. Start with something simple like learning the lyrics of a song you hum often but don't know the words and move on from there. We were involved in or retired from a profession that demanded communication, which is still relevant in retirement. Television and reading can fill certain needs in one's life, but both of these are passive acts. Now we need to turn on the active mode.

Isolation in one's life can be avoided by associating with people of all ages. If we just associate with those our own age, we not only limit our interests, but will be left alone someday. Every age has something to teach us. Learning is a life long adventure--- it should not be left at the classroom door.

Prize the time you are alone, but work at things that can eliminate the feeling of loneliness in your life. ■

New Health Insurance Policies Change Picture for Many Retirees

What you receive for health insurance upon reaching retirement are about to change, particularly for many employees mid-way through their careers and for all new hires. The changes are courtesy of a special commission report released December 20th that contains strong recommendations to reduce benefits by requiring longer service requirements and limiting the amount the employer contributes toward the cost of insurance. The special commission included member of the House and Senate as well as union officials and representatives for retirees and municipalities. The commission voted 11 to 1 in favor a proposal that will now be turned into legislation that will likely be adopted in 2013. The following is a summary of the commission's recommendations

Years of Service w/Age Requirement

Future public employee retirees shall be required to complete twenty (20) years of service and have reached the age of 60 (group 1), 55 (group 2), and 50 (group 4)

Pro-Rating Contributions

Future public employee retirees shall receive a health plan employer contribution based on a pro-rated scale based on completed years of service upon retirement as follows:

Years of Service w/ Premium Contribution

20 years - 50% of Premium
23-26 years - 1/3 of the difference between 50% and Maximum Available Benefit (MAB)
27 - 29 years - 2/3 of the difference between 50% and MAB
30-plus years - 100% of MAB

Example Community A provides 70% of the premium contribution to retiree

Years of Service - Premium Contribution
20 years - 50% of Premium
22 - 25 years - 56.7% of Premium
26 - 29 years - 63.3% of Premium
30-plus years - 70% of Premium (100% of MAB)

Exempted Employees and Retirees (Grandfather)

The following current employees and currently retired shall be exempt from the aforementioned age, years of service requirement, and pro-rating of contributions as of effective date of any so-called Reform Law:

- Any retired public employee who is retired.
 - Any employee within 5 years of retirement age, by pension group (IE... group 1 would be 50 and above), and who has completed 20 years of service.
 - Any current Teacher participating in Retirement Plus and, who retires at full pension benefit (80%), and is age 57 and above, shall be entitled to 100% of MAB regardless of retirement age.
 - Any employee who within 5 years of the current Medicare Eligible age and, within twelve months of vesting. Partially Exempted Employees
 - Any current employee who is age 50 and has completed 15 years of service shall be eligible to receive a 50% premium contribution.
 - Any current employee who is age 55 and has completed 10 years of service shall be eligible to receive a 50% premium contribution.
- In the event these employees work

beyond twenty years of service, pro-rating would prevail upon retirement.

Employee and Retiree Protections:

The following economic protections are necessary as any Reform is implemented:

- Municipal retiree contributions are "frozen" at levels as of 1/1/2013 for a period of 3 years from the effective date of the OPEB Reform Law, provided that changes adopted locally before 1/1/2013, shall be honored. Following the moratorium, the ability to reduce contributions shall be returned to local option given, however, that any municipality that exercises this right shall hold harmless (grandfather) existing retirees at their current level of contribution at the time of implementation.
 - All surviving spouses (both existing, and if enrolled in the municipal health plan & prospective) in municipalities be entitled to a minimum 50% employer premium contribution.
 - All "Accidental" disabilities (both current/future) are exempt from the reform.
 - Ordinary disabilities are exempt from any Reform Law until such time that the 2014 affordable care act (ACA) Exchange is available. At that time, ordinary Disability Retirees shall receive a 50% premium contribution from 10-20 years of service. Beyond 20 years of service, proration applies.
- The Commission report will make note that the recommendations are consistent with the Commonwealth's recent practice of applying changes to new retirees only.
- The 2014 ACA Exchange shall not exclude any public employee retiree from participating and the Commis-

SENIOR SEMINARS

How to Protect Your Nest Egg and Plan for the Right Outcome

This two-hour free seminar, presented by Elder Law Attorney Mary Howie, deals with issues related to wills, trusts (irrevocable and revocable), gifting, Medicare, probate, joint tenancy, direct transfers upon death, and much more.

Attorney Howie will offer two separate seminars at Presidential Park (314 Main Street, Unit 105, Wilmington, MA). The first is Saturday March 23, 2013 from 10-12. The second is Saturday April 27, 2013 from 10-12.

To register, call 617-482-1568 or eemail mardito@retireesunited.org. Please give your name, phone number, the seminar you wish to attend and a telephone number. You will not receive a follow-up call unless you have questions or need directions.

Preparing for Retirement

Lawrence - Thursday March 7, 2013, 3:45-5:45 at Relief's In (1 Market Street)

Methuen - Thursday April 4, 2013, 3:30-5:30, at the Methuen Educational Association Union Office (184 Pleasant Valley St. Suite 1-204)

Register for these two seminars by calling 781-647-7787 or e-mail seminar.registration@gmail.com. Please give your name, phone number, the seminar you wish to attend and a telephone number.

Lynn - Wednesday April 24, 2013, 3-5 p.m. Lynn Teacher's Union Building (679 Western Ave.nue)

Register by calling the union office at 781-599-5591.

sion recommends that in the future, retirees are provided with the information necessary to determine if coverage under the ACA exchange may be of comparable quality at a lower price.

Although it is expected that the Governor will file legislation that closely resembles the commission's recommendations, we must be aware the legislative process could amend many of the bills features. As the legislations becomes closer to law, watch the advocate for updates. Also, available at AFTMA's website is a link to the full commission report and a summary outline of the commission recommendations.

Questions and comments should be directed to Andrew Powell (apowell@aftma.net). Powell is our expert on this issue and served as the labor representative on the commission. ■

Retirees Needed as Mentors

Are you an educator over 55 who is interested in mentoring new teachers?

The Educator Mentor Corps (EMC) at Wheelock College mobilizes experienced educators to support, inspire and retain urban teachers in Greater Boston.

An AmeriCorps program, EMC offers its members a stipend of \$1500 and an education award of \$1468 in exchange for a commitment of 10 hours per week.

For more information, write to Dana Fitchett at dfitchett@wheelock.edu.

RETELL is Underway

Statewide teaching initiative for ELL teachers will involve preparation and effort

The Mass. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has begun a massive statewide initiative aimed at strengthening teachers’ and administrators’ knowledge and skills in the instruction of English language learners (ELLs). The initiative, known as Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners (RETELL), comes with new state licensure requirements and has significant implications for tens of thousands of prospective and incumbent educators across the Commonwealth.

There is considerable history behind the RETELL program. In 2002, Massachusetts voters passed a ballot initiative that eliminated most bilingual education programs and generally required English-only instruction, referred to as sheltered English immersion (SEI), in both language acquisition (e.g., ESL) and academic content (e.g., math, social studies) classes. For roughly the last eight years, DESE and school districts have provided so-called “Category Trainings” in SEI for

academic content teachers who work with ELLs, but this training has been voluntary, not mandatory.

In July 2011, the U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) notified DESE that the Category Trainings were insufficient, and that Massachusetts was violating the civil rights of ELLs by not requiring adequate training for content teachers who provide SEI instruction. The DoJ further said that Massachusetts must mandate improved SEI training programs in order to comply with the federal Equal Educational Opportunities Act.

Responding in part to this pressure, the Mass. Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in June 2012

approved a series of sweeping regulatory changes relating to the provision of SEI programs in public schools, including charter schools. These changes and other reforms—such as new standards and assessments for ELLs—collectively make up the RETELL initiative and are now taking effect in districts and schools.

Perhaps the most significant change says that all “core academic teachers” who are responsible for ELLs—and the administrators and supervisors of such teachers—must add an “SEI Endorsement” to their license by 2016. For most educators, this endorsement will be attained through completion of a

45-hour, graduate-level course in SEI instruction. Teachers who possess an ESL or ELL license will automatically qualify for the endorsement and are exempt from the course.

In addition, the Board’s changes require all licensed academic educators—including “non-core” teachers and administrators—to complete 15 PDPs in SEI and 15 PDPs in special education instruction in order to renew a professional license after July 1, 2016.

The timeline governing full implementation of the initiative is complex, with varied implications for educators depending on their particular circumstances. Below, we have compiled some of the most common questions pertaining to the new rules for teachers (vs. administrators), with our answers reflecting the best available information from DESE at press time.

AFT Massachusetts will continue to provide you with updated information, both in the Advocate and at www.aftma.net. We welcome your input and questions. ■

RETELL comes with new state licensure requirements and has significant implications for tens of thousands of prospective and incumbent educators across the Commonwealth.

RETELL FAQ:

What is an SEI Teacher Endorsement?

An SEI Teacher Endorsement is the centerpiece of DESE’s RETELL initiative. It’s a credential documenting that a core academic teacher has met the subject matter and skill requirements necessary to instruct ELLs. Most teachers will earn the Endorsement by completing a 45-hour course in SEI.

Who is a core academic teacher?

Core academic teachers include early childhood and elementary teachers, teachers of students with moderate or severe disabilities, and teachers of the following academic subjects: English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, civics and government, economics, history, and geography.

Who has to earn the SEI Teacher Endorsement?

There are three categories of teachers for whom SEI Endorsement is required:

1. All teachers, including prospective and incumbent teachers, who apply for an initial license as a core academic teacher after July 1, 2014.
2. Core academic teachers who are assigned to SEI “cohorts” by their districts over the next four years.
3. Core academic teachers who are assigned to provide SEI to ELLs after July 1, 2016, in which case the assigned teacher must either possess the SEI Endorsement or earn it within one year of assignment.

What exactly are “cohorts”?

DESE estimates roughly 26,000 core academic teachers statewide are responsible for ELLs and must earn the SEI Endorsement between now and 2016. Over the next four years, these teachers will be divided into training “cohorts” by their districts according to DESE guidelines. For more on this process, see <http://www.doe.mass.edu/retell/sei-guidelines.pdf>.

What does it mean to be “assigned to a cohort”?

Being assigned to a cohort has significant licensure and employment implications. State regulations say: “Educators assigned to a cohort must meet the requirements for an SEI endorsement within the time designated for their cohort. Educators who fail to earn an SEI endorsement by the time designated for their cohort shall not be eligible to advance or renew their educator license...until such educators earn an SEI endorsement.”

When will cohort assignments and SEI courses begin?

The full SEI course will be offered this winter/spring to teachers in the following AFT districts: Boston, Chelsea, Lowell, Lynn, and Salem. Most other AFT districts will begin courses in the fall of 2013 or 2014. See the complete rollout schedule at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/retell/DistrictRollout.pdf>.

Will the SEI course cost money?

DESE has committed to providing funding to districts so that every teacher assigned to a cohort will have one no-cost opportunity to complete the course.

Can teachers earn PDPs for completing the SEI course?

Yes. Teachers will earn 67.5 PDPs for the full-length SEI Endorsement course. All of these PDPs can be applied to license renewal content requirements.

What if a hardship comes up during a teacher’s assigned cohort period?

State regulations provide for a hardship exception which would permit an extension to obtain the Endorsement (e.g., in the case of a serious illness or injury). However, DESE says that the standard for such waivers will be high.

Will teachers who have completed some or all of the Category Trainings receive credit for this work?

Yes, under certain circumstances. DESE has stated that teachers who have already completed two or three of the Category Trainings (from 1, 2, and 4) are not required to complete the full SEI course and will be eligible to complete a shorter “bridge” course. These bridge courses will be available in fall 2013, DESE says.

Besides taking the full or bridge course, are there other ways to earn the SEI Endorsement?

There are three other paths to earning the SEI Endorsement:

1. Possession of an ESL/ELL license.
2. Passing a DESE-approved test in SEI (this test is in development and may be available by March 2014).
3. Possession of an applicable bachelor’s or graduate-level degree approved by DESE—e.g., in Applied Linguistics or Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL).

How does the RETELL initiative affect non-core academic teachers (e.g., art, music, physical education teachers)?

Non-core academic teachers are exempt from having to earn the SEI Endorsement. However, all educators with an academic license will need to complete 15 PDPs in SEI and 15 PDPs in special education instruction in order to renew a professional license after July 1, 2016.

How does the RETELL initiative affect teachers with vocational/technical licenses?

At this time, the RETELL initiative has no licensure or recertification implications for teachers with vocational/technical licenses. However, academic teachers who teach in vocational/technical schools are subject to the same requirements that apply to all academic teachers.

Where can I get more information about RETELL?

Information can be found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/retell/>. ■