



# The Advocate

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June/July 2016

## Getting Involved

### 2016 AFT MA Convention urges participation

With issues ranging from charter schools to high-stakes testing to the so-called “millionaire’s tax” swirling through their minds, over 200 members of AFT MA battled hours of traffic to gather in Quincy for their 2016 Convention.

As delegates enjoyed a delicious dinner, retiring Director of Organizations Annemarie DuBois and a number of exceptional educators were feted for service to AFT MA and to the students and communities of MA.

“I did not expect the reaction of the delegates,” Du Bois said of the long standing ovation she received. “I will always treasure the memories from that night and the wonderful people, AFT MA staff and members of our locals, who honored me and my family.”

The next morning, Carol Pacheco presented her popular New Delegates Workshop to a full house of members who were becoming more involved in union life.

“We have a lot of hard work on our plate and the union plays a big role,” Pacheco observed. Looking over the crowd of engaged fellow members, Pacheco suggested, “You are the union. You are the ones on the front lines” and made sure to mention that the AFT MA staff was always there to support all members.

After explaining union structure and how AFT MA members are also involved with AFT and AFL-CIO, Pacheco spoke about the Convention.

“It’s all about information,” she said. “It’s all about helping people understand.”

In addition to recommending that all members recognize and encourage the exceptional work their colleagues are all doing (perhaps by sharing their stories in The Advocate), Pacheco also urged everyone to contact legislators and to speak of their issues in every appropriate venue.

“If legislators get three calls on an issue, they listen because most people do not call,” she noted. “So if we all call or write or even go up to the State House, that has an impact!”

Citing AFT MA Political Organizer Brian LaPierre, who recently won a seat on the Lynn City Council (see February/March 2016 issue), Pacheco went so far as to encourage members to run for public office.

“Help your legislators understand the positivity of the union,” she said. “Get involved at any level you can. It makes a difference!”

As delegates gathered in main hall, adjunct professors from UMass Lowell distributed materials promoting a unified pay rate for the entire UMass system. After AFT MA President Tom Gosnell called the morning session to order, Father Norm Faranelli offered an invocation in which he specifically cited the vital work educators do and asked that teachers and learners both be blessed, “so they don’t get bogged down in endless testing.”

“Teaching is not just the responsibility of the teachers,” Father Faranelli observed. “It is the responsibility of the wider society.” Even so, he realized that it was people such as those who had come to the Convention who are often left with the brunt of responsibility for educating and

often raising our children.

“We ask that you bless those who are gathered here today,” Father Faranelli concluded, “so they may be inspired by each other...and share their wisdom.”

Before the official business commenced, the delegates were treated to a musical performance by students from the Mildred Avenue School in Mattapan. From academic achievement to violence on the streets, the chorus sang of the issues that impact them on a daily basis.

“This is why we need music in schools,”



**ENCOURAGING WORDS**  
**BPS educator and 2016 Teacher of the Year Audrey Jackson speaks at the 2016 AFT MA Convention**

said Director Sheryl Pedone.

After the standing rules had been accepted and the Sergeants-at-Arms introduced, MTA President Barbara Madeloni rose to address her brothers and sisters in education.

“She is committed to growing an activist union that builds alliances to give educators a strong voice,” Gosnell said in his introductory remarks.

Madeloni began her talk with words of praise for AFT MA.

“We work together so well,” she said. “I want to credit AFT with the work you have done to help teach MTA how to do this more effectively.”

She then changed tone by mentioning the “incredibly perilous times” in which we are all living.

“The attacks on our unions are profound,” Madeloni observed, “and we cannot win the fight alone. We have to have coalitions with labor and with the students and parents and community organizations.”

Madeloni then suggested that the main issue is not the charter cap or high-stakes testing, but whether American public education can continue in the land in which it was born

“I think we can win this battle,” she encouraged. “We are ready to take on this fight and to work with AFT to grow a social movement that will deepen our voice, return decorum to the workplace and create the schools our students deserve.”

After observing how many delegates were wearing red in solidarity with workers at Verizon, MA AFL-CIO President Steve Tolman launched into a fiery speech about standing up for rights across the labor movement.

“Their fight is our fight,” he suggested. “It’s all about job security.”

Recalling how charter schools were originally intended to be “laboratories of innovation” that would share best practices, Tolman noted how they are now being posed as an enemy to the very schools they were supposed to support.

“It’s now a runaway train that is trying to diminish the role of teachers,” Tolman said. “Unless we get together, we cannot [fight] it.”

Seeing the dedicated collaboration between AFT MA and MTA as “a dream come true,” Tolman called on both unions to engage every single member in this fight.

“The leaders can’t do it alone,” he said. “We need to talk to every teacher and every person we know. We need to motivate everyone.”

After particularly thanking AFT MA Legislative Field Representatives Michael Canavan and Coley Walsh, Tolman warned that, if the unions do not stand firm on any one issue, they will lose on all issues. “Unless we work tirelessly like... your leaders,” he said, singling out Gosnell as well, “they’re gonna’ beat us.”

As such, Tolman concluded, we must do everything we can to get the word out about our issues so, no matter how much our enemies spend, we can have the ears and hearts of the people, if not their wallets.

“They have the money,” he observed, suggesting members join the Labor Constituent Activist Network (Labor CAN) and other support organizations, “but we have the power if we are organized. This is the biggest fight I have ever seen in my entire life, so we cannot rest!”

In her stirring speech, BTU member and Teacher of the Year Audrey Jackson (see April/May 2016 issue) recalled learning the importance of teacher voice from her parents and her colleagues.

“Your stories are the biggest lever to make an impact,” Jackson suggested. “The stories we tell have a huge power to influence what we believe is possible and to change what others believe is possible.”

Echoing her colleagues, Jackson pointed out how only action can make a real difference and encouraged all members to get involved at every level and in every way they can.

“As a daughter of a school librarian who has been teaching for nine years now,” Jackson concluded, “thank you for all you do and thank you for being part of the union.”

After the credentials report had been presented, the delegates dug into their first resolution of the day, agreeing to stand as one against raising the cap on charter schools.

“This is one of the most massive issues facing us right now,” Gosnell offered. “It is important that all of you take a formal position.”

“This is an issue that threatens the existence of public education in this country,” agreed DuBois. Continued on page 9

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### UNIFIED IN SUPPORT

Members of the AFT MA staff stand in support of all public educators and those who support them





THE PRESIDENT’S COLUMN

Thomas J. Gosnell  
President, AFT Massachusetts

Save Our Public Schools

It is settled. Since the legislature has taken no action on an increase in the number of charter schools, the initiative petition to increase the number of charter schools will be on the ballot. Election day is Tuesday, November 8, 2016

The American Federation of Teachers of Massachusetts (AFT MA) belongs to a broad based coalition determined to save our public schools and to defeat the initiative petition. The name of the coalition is the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance (MEJA). Membership includes the MA AFL-CIO, the Greater Boston Labor Council (GBLC), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), parent groups, student groups, local unions including the United Teachers of Lowell (UTL), the Lynn Teachers Union, and the Boston Teachers Union (BTU), and the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA). This coalition constantly expands and is already engaging in many activities.

Under the law charter schools are public schools, but they operate as private schools. For example, teachers

are not required to be licensed. Charter schools are not subject to many of the regulations promulgated by the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. How can these be justified? However, the major concern about the current existence of charter schools is financial. Ninety-six of every one hundred students in the public schools are in the regular

public schools. Only four of every one hundred students are in the charter schools. In addition, the regular public schools accept all students. Charter schools do not. Yet the charter schools take hundreds of millions of dollars from the regular public schools which are already significantly underfunded. Again, remember that ninety-six of every one hundred students in the public schools are in the regular public schools. The campaign will be intense and fierce. Those supporting the expansion of the charter schools said in the Boston Globe that they are prepared to spend up to eighteen million dollars. In previous initiative

petition campaigns no group has even come close to spending that amount of money. Think of it \$18,000,000. What can each one of us do? Here are some suggestions:

1. If you are not registered to vote, do so. Elections have consequences. No doubt about it.
  2. Participate in activities that AFT MA and your local will have in the fall.
  3. Speak to friends and neighbors about the issue. Emphasize what important contributions the regular public schools make to society and the economy. Emphasize that Massachusetts students are number one in the nationwide National Assessment of Educational Progress test and number one in the western world on the international math and science test. Emphasize that maintenance of this level of achievement requires the investment of resources rather than the loss of resources.
  4. When lawn signs are available, put one up. They will probably be available in August.
  5. Be alert to the literature put out by the unions.
- Widespread participation is important. Widespread action is important. Get involved.

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

BOLD

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.

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On Friday, July 22, Salem High School graduate (and April, 2015 *Summa Cum Laude* subject) Sean Stellato will host a gala at which he will officially announce plans for the film version of his acclaimed book “No Backing Down,” the story of the Salem High School football team’s unlikely championship run.

For information and reservations, write to [nobackingdownwitches@gmail.com](mailto:nobackingdownwitches@gmail.com).

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Resident cartoonist Scott Hubeny is raising funds for a calendar based on his popular “180 Dayz” comic.

For information and to contribute, go to [www.180dayz.com](http://www.180dayz.com).

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

For information, visit [www.longy.edu](http://www.longy.edu).

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Marlborough’s Corey Daly and John Garcia came home to Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School from the SkillsUSA national competition in Louisville, KY with a bronze medal in Additive Manufacturing. In the competition, the Assabet team best 22 of 25 teams with their creative use of 3-D printing technology. Congratulations to Corey and John!

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

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Thomas J. Gosnell, President  
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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](http://www.aftma.net) / [advocate@aftma.net](mailto:advocate@aftma.net)  
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The 2016  
AFT MA  
Leadership Conference  
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Doubletree by Hilton Hotel  
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Be Ready to Lead



WALKING IN TOGETHER  
Students, parents, and teachers and staff entered their school buildings together as part of a Walk-In on May 4.



# Together at the Table

## Merrimack Valley CLC Legislative Breakfast unites unions

At the 2016 Merrimack Valley Central Labor Council (MVCLC) Legislative Breakfast, representatives from AFT, IBEW, the MA Nurses Association, SEIU and United Way gathered at the Four Winds Restaurant at Greater Lawrence Technical School to frankly and honestly discuss the challenges facing all of us and to plan ways to deal with them.

After MVCLC Chair and United Teachers of Lowell President Paul Georges welcomed the crowd, he expressed appreciation to Lawrence Mayor Dan Rivera, who welcomed representatives from labor and from the local legislature.

When it was his turn to speak, MA AFL-CIO President Steve Tolman put aside his prepared remarks and delivered a fiery speech on the real state of the labor movement today and how we have to deal with those who would crush it.

"The only thing that can change things is the labor movement," he stressed. "We need to stick together.... We gotta stand up for our brothers and sisters because their fight is the same fight we all face."

Speaking in particular of the students who were serving the breakfast, Tolman suggested, "We gotta get active in our unions and in our communities so that these students have a future."

Referring to the proposed tax increase for those making over \$1 million a year that will soon be up for public vote, Tolman explained, "We don't mind paying taxes, especially when it pays for roads and bridges and education."

When Tolman was finished, the audience was treated to a special video message from Senator Elizabeth Warren, who thanked President Georges and his colleagues for their dedicated service and support and encouraged the assembled to "keep fighting."

After another video depicting recent labor events (including the well-attended Labor CAN event in March), Senator Eileen Donoghue rose to speak.

"There is no more worthy advocate than Paul Georges," said the former

city councilor and mayor of Lowell of her hometown colleague and bargaining partner, who returned the favor by praising Donoghue's "sensitivity to our issues," and especially her support with anti-charter school legislation.

"Once upon a time," Donoghue recalled, "the Middle Class took for granted that their future would be secure. Today, all the foundations of society are threatened. Thankfully, you folks are out there fighting.... That is why your advocacy is so important."

Looking at the proposed ballot question regarding charter schools, Donoghue pointed out some inconsistencies that have apparently confused and misled many.

"The plan will take \$1.3 billion from public education to include 4% of students," she said, noting her own use of the term "include" rather than "benefit." Keeping this in mind, Donoghue described a bill she had helped put forth that would allow educators who wanted to innovate to use the Horace Mann school model and that would also insist that public education be fully funded.

"The cost for this plan is \$1.3 billion," she observed, citing a familiar figure.

As the Senate Chair on the Higher Education Committee, Donoghue has also filed a bill to bring a tax credit-bearing education investment system to MA (which is one of the few states to not already offer such). "I have promoted fully finding collective bargaining for higher education," she said, "and increasing pay and benefits for adjunct professors."

Speaking of adjunct professors, Ellen Martins, President of the UMass Lowell Union of Adjunct Faculty, spoke personally of her own trials and those of her thousands of colleagues

across the UMass system and the Commonwealth.

"We are the youngest faculty union in the UMass system," she explained,

noting how adjunct professors outnumber tenure-track colleagues at nearly every institution of higher education and how UMass Lowell adjuncts are paid the least of any UMass system school. "We understand negotiating is compromise... [but] we need to right this wrong."

As a former adjunct professor, Representative Linda

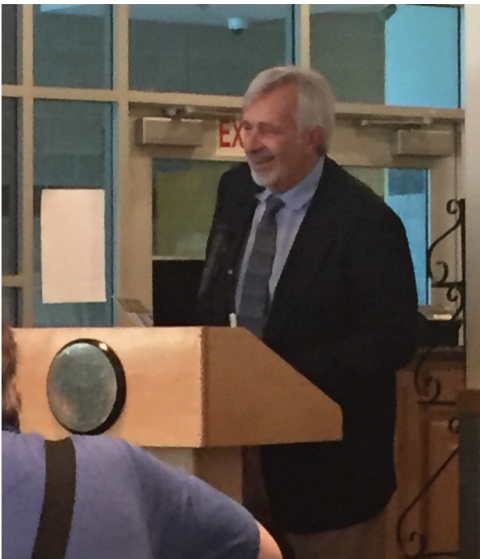
Dean Campbell was "very thankful that I have colleagues like those who are here today. They know what they stand for and they don't vary on it."

Recalling the years her own father spent working for the telephone company before almost losing his benefits after he took early retirement, Campbell noted how the current Verizon strike is very much the same story playing out decades later. She also recalled a neighbor who teaches first grade complaining about being asked to do work during her students' snack time.

"Why can't we let the teachers run our schools?" Campbell asked pointedly. "They know best!"

Reminding the audience that any additional funds garnered from the proposed tax increase on millionaires would go towards infrastructure and education, Campbell reminded her colleagues in labor that, "what you are asking for is something that will make our country great again," and encouraged them all to "keep pushing."

Returning to the charter school debate, Georges pointed out that charter schools do not serve a proportionate number of students with language issues or other needs.



**LEADING THE CHARGE**  
United Teachers of Lowell President and MVCLC Chair Paul Georges

support students, Georges introduced Senator Barbara L'Italien (who he singled out as a "profile in courage" for her dedication to her principles and to her colleagues in labor),

"Barbara has been consistent in standing on principle with us," Georges said.

Introducing herself as the Chair of the Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee, L'Italien spoke of her open-door policy and encouraged all members of labor to come and meet with her whenever they have an issue to discuss.

"Right now, there is a big focus on union bashing," L'Italien observed. "People do not realize that...these groups are the first to pitch in. Unions aren't the enemy. They are providing opportunity for people and allowing people to have a leg up and to get good work for good benefits."

Despite the fact that many of labor's enemies are also her own, L'Italien pledged to stick by her principles and to stay in the fight.

"While I am here," she said, "I am gonna' make the best use of the powers I have been given to protect and support the needs and wants of the people of the Commonwealth."

In lauding the powers of public officials, Georges noted that AFT MA colleague Brian LaPierre had recently had the "audacity" to win a seat on the Lynn City Council (see February/March issue). He also took a moment to thank Lawrence Teachers Union President Frank McLaughlin for bringing Lawrence Superintendent Jeff Riley to the meeting, noting how well they have been working together to support students in Lawrence.

After a presentation by representatives from the striking Verizon workers, the breakfast ended with Georges recognizing long-time CLC supporter and Billerica teacher Paul Gaudette.

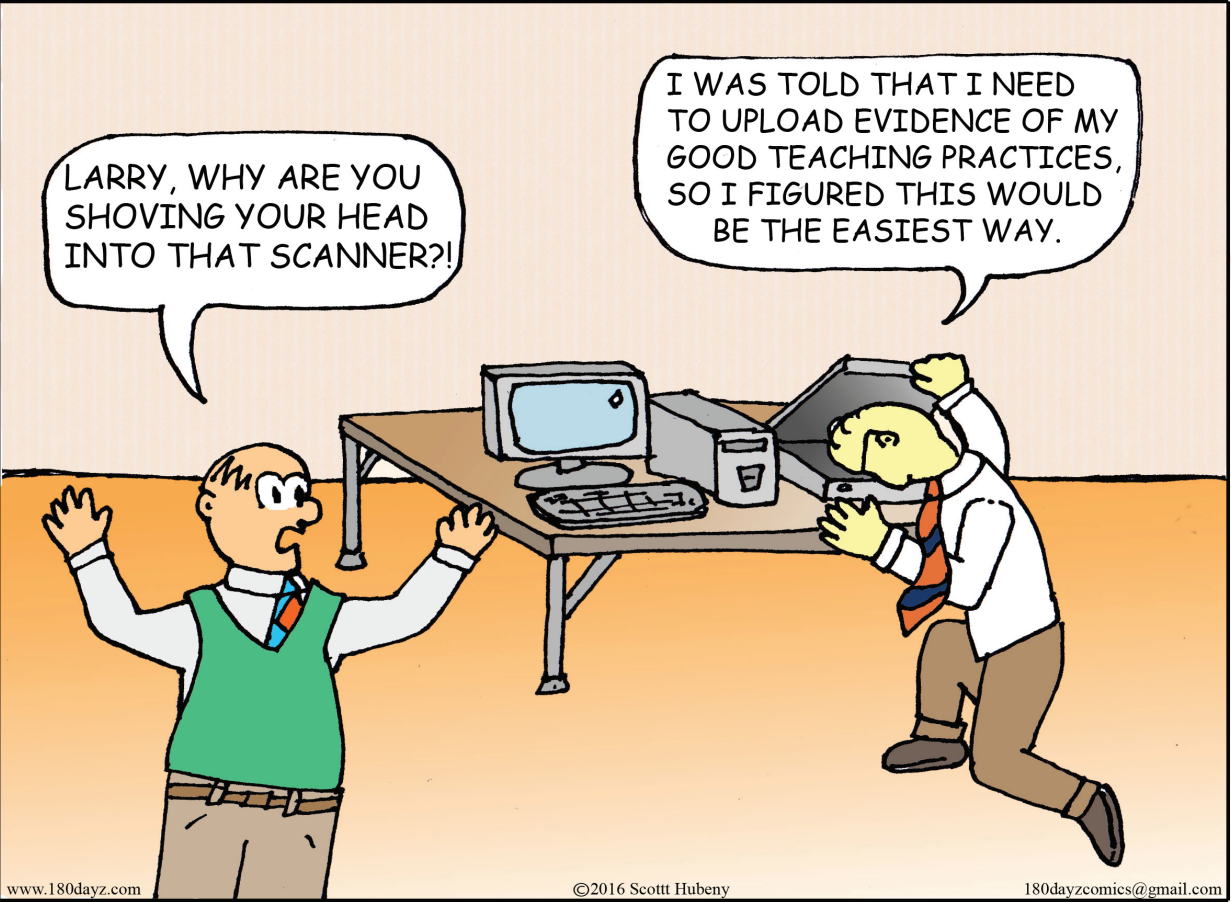
"I came to the labor movement later in life," Gaudette said, "but it has been the best community!"

In his closing remarks, Georges reminded his fellow laborers that, unlike in years past, today's democrats may not necessarily be of one mind with us and warned them against supporting what he called "corporate democrats." "They could lose a whole generation unless they straighten out their act," he said, suggesting that the party has "drifted" since the passing of Senator Edward Kennedy. "We have to support the people that support us. We cannot just choose the lesser of two evils. We have to work together as a labor organization. We have to think about the consequences. We always do better when we think." ■

180Dayz

www.180dayz.com

By: Scott Hubeny



"There are so many things that were promised by DESE that have not been delivered," he observed. "Charter school proponents talk about choice. But if your choice limits other people's choices...it's not fair!" After inviting his colleagues to come to Lowell to see the "enthusiastic" educators working together to

**Do you have stories and ideas to share?**  
**Send them to**  
**advocate@aftma.net**



# MA Senate Eliminates “DDM Mandate”

In a big victory for educators, parents, and students, the Mass. Senate approved a budget amendment on May 26 to eliminate a state mandate that ties educators’ evaluations to student test scores.

The House has not taken a similar step, so the issue will have to be resolved in a joint House-Senate conference committee. If the Senate’s position prevails, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will have to eliminate the regulatory requirement that districts use MCAS test scores and so-called District-Determined Measures (DDMs) to produce “student impact ratings” as part of the educator evaluation system.

In pushing for an end to the DDM mandate, advocates and educators relied heavily on a position paper that was developed jointly by AFT MA and the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA).

The paper argues that DESE’s “DDM mandate” is unworkable; harmful to teaching and learning; and no longer needed in order for districts to receive federal dollars following the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) by the U.S. Congress in December 2015.

The joint paper calls for the elimination of DESE’s requirement that districts issue impact ratings to educators based on student test scores. Under the AFT MA and MTA proposal, evidence of student learning may still play a role in districts’ locally negotiated educator development and evaluation systems. The paper notes: “This would enable administrators and educators who value the common assessments they have created to continue their work, while relieving them of the unproductive obligation to create new assessments and complex scoring and educator-evaluation met-

rics that they do not believe improve teaching and learning in their schools and classrooms.”

Districts have been pushing back against the onerous mandate for several years, with efforts accelerating in recent months following the significant changes to federal education law brought about by ESSA. The Massachusetts Association of School Committees passed a policy statement in May urging the state to scrap the student impact ratings, the Boston Globe recently reported. The same Globe article cites a recent survey showing that most superintendents also oppose the student impact ratings.

In instances where school districts are moving forward to implement the mandate, local unions are speaking out and stepping up their advocacy on behalf of educators and students. After the Boston Public Schools announced their intent to impose a DDM

plan on teachers, the Boston Teachers Union sent a special e-bulletin to its members decrying the move.

Noting that the unilateral move “defies a growing and nearly-unanimous body of educational research and common sense,” the BTU urged members to stand with educators across the state in calling for an end to the harmful mandate. “Common assessments and MCAS/PARCC tests were never designed to evaluate teachers, and using them this way will undermine teaching and learning,” the e-bulletin says, referring members to the AFT MA-MTA white paper for additional information.

AFT MA urges members to add their voices to the discussion by expressing their appreciation for the senate’s vote and by contacting their state representatives. Tell them that it’s time for the House to follow the Senate’s lead, and to end the senseless DDM mandate once and for all. ■

## The More Things Change... Charter schools remain hot topic

### Educator Opinion

By Michalene Hague

I originally submitted this letter to my local newspaper in the spring of 2010. Sadly, the issues have not changed much over the years! The same arguments keep recycling. Is it fear that keeps state government from saying “no” to those who want special treatment, especially when charters do not seem to be producing better academic results than traditional public schools? Or is it greed - the lure of public monies? Whatever happened to providing for the needs of some without dismantling support for the needs of all? Solutions can be found if people are brave enough to see and challenge the “land grab” for what it is. It’s disheartening for public school educators to witness how factionalism and elitism continue to erode the democratizing purposes of public education.

Has anyone questioned the constitutionality of most charter schools, or even of the concept itself? Charter schools establish parallel schools dedicated to a limited, selected population, funded by public revenues and exempt from the same oversight by publicly elected officials to which public schools are held accountable.

Is this set-up not a new incarnation of tracking or “separate but equal” formats that were outlawed decades ago? Offering publicly funded education to a favored few in a limited access, privately run environment free of the legal constraints imposed on the public sector creates a disparate

two-tier system of haves and have-nots. That structure is a definite contradiction of the idea of public schools as the crucibles of democracy, as the great providers of equal opportunity to learn for all students regardless of wealth, relatives, race, gender, religion, ethnic background, talent and intellectual ability. Thus, charter

schools seem elitist – private public schools dedicated to the self-interest of a few and draining public resources away from the many. Can democracy survive this entitled approach?

Public schools, funded, monitored and evaluated by taxpayers and their elected representatives, already provide many ways to educate children

to be knowledgeable and productive citizens; vocational, examination/application, alternative, community and traditional local and regional schools – all offer opportunities to address the needs of students and the many ways that they learn. Do we need another option just because tempting money is proffered? With reductions in funding during the last decades, most public schools and their staffs should receive praise for making student learning work successfully without the materials, books and technology necessary for state of the art education. Instead they receive brickbats from the media and from those who think it improves schools and reduces costs to siphon away more monies to special interest options.

Rather than sabotage and decentralize public education, we should use the public funds to improve programs, curricula and buildings in the existing public schools!

People want to save money? Then close the loopholes in the October 1 attendance rules that allow application schools to send a student back to a public school and to keep the funds dedicated to his/her education. Rescind the DESE requirement that teachers earn a master’s degree within a designated time frame, a state unfunded mandate that forces cities and towns to pay higher salaries. Then, let the state take over those underperforming schools as it already has the right to do and restructure them. Do not let the state over-regulate the public schools with mandates impossible to meet; do not make it harder to become a teacher and maintain certification, place the financial burdens on the local districts and personnel, then approve new schools exempt from the same rules!

People want to improve education? Then rethink parenting, class size, the failing middle school self-esteem model, system-wide curriculum and content knowledge, teacher preparation in higher education, teacher evaluation and the dominance of theory over application/experience. Get serious! But that’s another, different letter.

Right now, where is the public outrage? Where is the public outcry as the proponents of self-interested versions of education reform set out to undermine the public schools? How dare these self-described “innovators” pit student against student? How dare they restrict access to educational resources by creating charter schools that promote educating small groups of selected students at the expense of educating the majority of students? Two hundred or more high school students to a charter school!? Who is advocating for the 800 to 1600 students left in the public high school? Don’t they deserve that “special” education, too?

The serpent in the garden has successfully pitched the philosophy of entitled self-love, i.e. only “my child” counts. Democracy does not advocate speaking with that forked tongue; it asserts that providing for the public education and welfare of all children benefits the nation and “my child,” too.

Such a practice as approving discriminatory charter schools funded by public revenues without public oversight must be stopped. Predatory private interests lured by federal and state monies must be shown the gate OUT of the education garden!

Yours truly,  
Michalene Hague  
English Department Head  
Peabody, MA ■

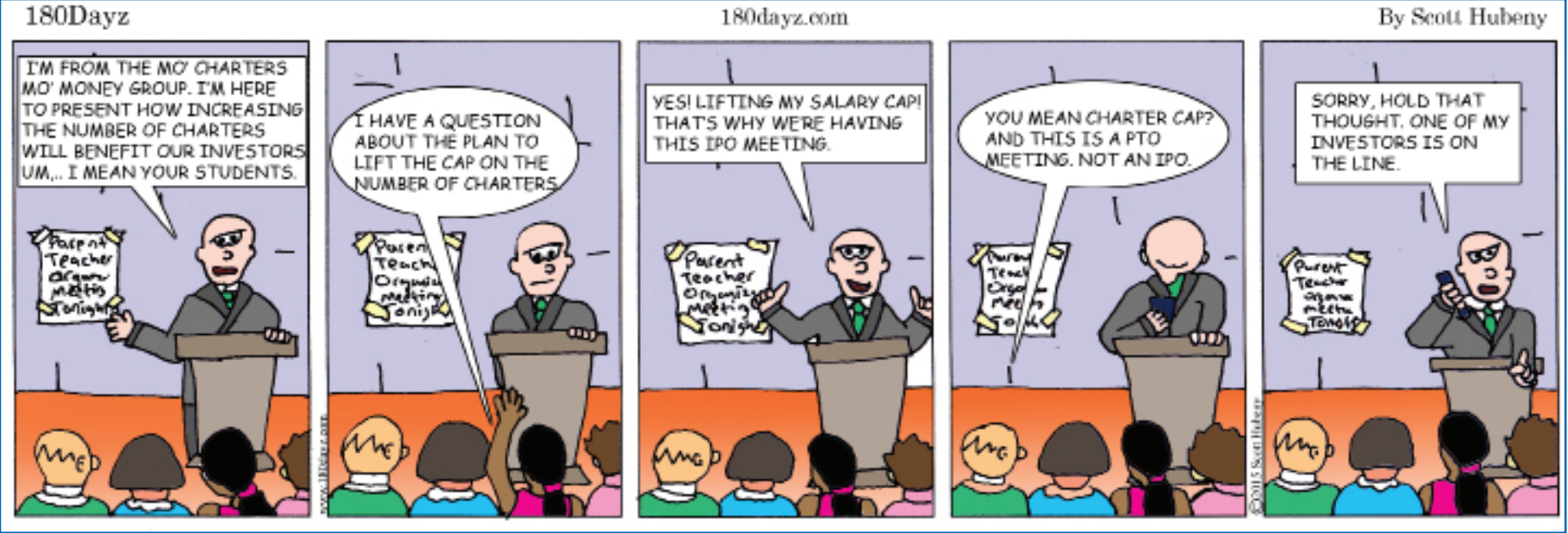
To the Editor:

With all the coverage of and pressure for charter schools these days, one wonders whatever happened to common sense and democracy in action. The private interest serpent in the garden of public education continues to sweet talk citizens into believing in a golden apple of education reform; allowing charter schools as presently designed is really a worm destroying, not reforming, a public system dedicated to the public good!



Katy Millman

STILL SPEAKING OUT  
Michalene Hague





# Getting Students’ Attention

## Teaching students with ADHD

Educator Opinion  
By Maurine McDermott

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – 4th edition (DSM-IV) defines Attnetion Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) as "a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that is more frequently displayed and more severe than is typically observed in individuals at a comparable level of development". Typically, students with ADHD will be those who are at risk for failure in school, particularly if this health impairment has not been diagnosed or if they are not taking prescribed medication. According to a study by the National Institute of Mental Health, two thirds of children with ADHD have at least one other coexisting problem1., which exacerbates the challenges that students and teachers will face.

Teaching students with ADHD requires specialized training, frequent adjustment to practice and continued professional development.. In my experience as a special education teacher, I have taught many students with ADHD who are on Individualized Education Plans (“IEPs”) for health impairment. With the current move toward placing students in Inclusion classrooms, General Educators, new, and inexperienced Special Educators face a daunting task to maintain a classroom environment that is conducive to learning for all students, accommodate a variety of needs accordance with student’s IEP utilizing curriculum modification and differentiated instruction, while ensuring that each student reaches his or her full potential in addition to working with parents and satisfying district demands for teacher performance. This can be daunting and sometimes discouraging for both teachers and students but is also rewarding. Teachers do make a difference in the success and lives of their students.

All students can learn. However, all students learn differently. My first task in September (after reading IEP’s and learning students’ names), is to determine each students’ learning style. There are several learning style inventories that can be found online and administered to students during the first week of school (refer to [www.educationplanner.org](http://www.educationplanner.org)). The three main learning styles are vsual, auditory, and kinesthetic (sometimes referred to as “haptic”). Visual learners learn by seeing. Auditory learners learn by hearing. Kinesthetic learners learn by doing. Some students have combinations of two or even all three. Therefore, the use of multi-sensory instruction that addresses at least visual and auditory styles is essential to ensure maximal success when teaching students with disabilities.

Multi-sensory instruction can be performed in a variety of ways. The use use of video, podcasts, interactive software, and Powerpoint presentations are just a few examples. An auditory strategy I have experiment with in the past is the use of music. While there may be students who have sensory impairments that can cause them to be overstimulated or distracted by music, they can be provided with headphones (if the school permits it).

I once had student named “Michael” who was easily distracted and had difficulty completing written tasks. He was capable of doing the

work, but he had ADHD and was not taking his medication. Michael was unable to stay seated and would blurt out randomly, saying things that had nothing to do with the task at hand, which was disruptive to the classroom. I decided to try giving Michael large padded headphones (not earbuds) and to allow him to listen to music while he worked. Listening to music enabled Michael to calm down and be a productive and effective learner. Asking Michael to stop talking, sit down and issuing consequences would not have been effective interventions for Michael. Instead, rewarding Michael upon completion of tasks using the headphones as a technologically-assistive device often worked.

Never assume that a child with ADHD is taking their medication as prescribed. If the school nurse is required to administer the medication, check with the nurse and not the student to ensure that the student is reporting to the nurse for medication. I have had students tell me they went to the nurse and took their medication, but when I checked with the nurse, I discovered the student had not reported. A friendly reminder to a parent never hurts and can work wonders!

Separating the health impairment from the student is an important factor for teachers’ success in reaching a student with ADHD. One must realize that this is a medical condition (health impairment) and I have found that students who are non-medicated tend to have less self control. TEACH them self-monitoring skills. Have students reflect on their own performance by using a written assessment in the form of a simple weekly checklist with points. The checklist I use is completed daily with a column for each day. At the end of each class, every student assesses their own performance for that day for a total of 10 points, if the student has successfully completed each item on the list. For example, if a student arrived on time and sat in his/her assigned seat, he/she would earn three points. At the end each week, the points are tallied and the high scorers names’ are placed on the board and they receive as small reward (not food).

Another tool I found success using is the Weekly Progress Report. The report should be individualized to target specific behaviors for the individual student. For example, “Tiffany” was a 14 year-old freshman student in my History class who frequently drummed on the desk with her hands and tapped her pencils loudly, while banging her feet on the floor. I conferenced with Tiffany, explained that the progress report was geared to improve her attention and alleviate her anxiety. I calmly informed her that once she overcame the desk drumming, WE would work on a few other behavioral modifications, all the while assuring her

that I knew she could overcome these habits. Tiffany would receive a reward in the form of a ticket whenever she caught herself engaging in the targeted undesirable behavior and when she had reached her goal, the “good news” Progress Report would be sent home to her parent. She could “purchase” a reward of her choice, depending on the number of tickets she had earned.

Below are some additional strategies and interventions that have proven to be effective in most cases:

1. Teachers should always have a seating plan and seat students with ADHD away from doors, windows, clocks, pencil sharpeners, etc. This may seem obvious but I know some teachers who do not use a seating plan. This is a HUGE mistake. Pair students with ADHD next to another student who typically remains on task. Keep them near the teacher for close monitoring and frequent check-ins. Pay attention to the seating arrangements and readjust when necessary. Get to know how and with whom your students learn best.



ACHIEVING ATTENTION  
Mo McDermott

2. Most teen-age students with ADHD struggle with seated tasks. Reassure them that you understand they may find it challenging to stay seated the entire period but that they will have the opportunity for a stretch break in 10 minutes after they have completed part of the assignment. Chunking or

breaking down the work into smaller segments makes tasks more manageable for students with ADHD. Always build a plan that includes movement around the classroom. For example, allow students who are eager to help the teacher, hand out textbooks, water plants or other activities as a reward that includes movement.

3. Avoid confrontations and power struggles. Your students are fun-loving adolescents who are often misunderstood. However, some students will lie to cover up their shortcomings and feelings of failure that can affect their self-esteem. Some will overreact. There will be emotional outbursts, noncompliance and rebelliousness. They will challenge you in an attempt to keep the focus off their own weaknesses, fears and anxieties. Sometimes they will show remorse and become overly apologetic for their behavior. Telling them, “Don’t say you are sorry, just don’t do it again” doesn’t work! Providing immediate feedback and issuing consequences when necessary in a direct manner is a better course of action for teach-

ers. For example, teacher reiterates classroom rule: “Getting out of your seat without permission is a violation of our classroom rules which are posted at the front of the room. I have already given you one warning. Now you will lose the privilege of sharpening the pencils today. Hopefully you will raise your hand and ask permission the next time you need to leave your seat. I know you can remember to do that.”

4. Use pens and pencils that do not “click” or can be disassembled. Mechanical pencils can be a distraction. I have seen students taking them apart, putting them back together again and continually clicking them. I always have a supply of fresh standard pencils available and use Bic pens without caps that are likely to fall on the floor or end up somewhere else!

5. Use common sense and humor. This means limiting hallway passes and make sure students are using the rest room in between classes, not during class because students continually exiting and entering will result in disruption. The use of humor in the classroom alleviates any tension or anxiety students may be having. Never use a student or his or her behavior as the object of a joke, as it can be hurtful. Allow students to use humor in a classroom appropriate manner. I have had students who were naturally very funny and made me laugh!

6. Not every strategy will work for every student and this article is by no means an exhaustive “How To” guide. Utilize and train the paraprofessionals to assist you with your most challenging students. Most paraprofessionals I have worked with are eager to please the teacher and just need direction in how to help students. Paraprofessionals can (and should) be an asset to your classroom community.

Students with ADHD face many challenges and are more at-risk for failure than other students. They may pose greater challenges for teachers in managing behavior and in assisting those students to make progress toward their social, emotional and educational goals. However, through the use of multi-sensory and differentiated instruction, ongoing adjustments to practice, and continued professional development focused on implementation of accommodations and curriculum modification, teachers can make a difference in the lives and futures of their students. By having hope, remaining calm, establishing routines and clear guidelines, following up with nurses, parents and other service providers, teachers can build positive relationships with students that will result in positive teaching experiences. ■

Maurine “Mo” McDermott is a Special Educator and ESL Teacher in Boston.





# Wentworth Makes Everything

## New creative class brings campus together

The Boston area is known around the world as a hub of innovation. From biotech to energy to medicine, the ideas that shape tomorrow often come from this area today.

Among the most central players in this innovation center are the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the Wentworth Institute of Technology.

In recent years, MIT has been offering a course to its graduate students called “How to Make Almost Anything” (HTMAA). This summer, Wentworth will offer a version of the course to 50 lucky undergraduates, including a number of rising freshmen and even some rising high-school seniors, who will participate through Wentworth’s RAMP program (<http://wit.edu/clp/college-access/ramp.html>).

“The goal was to develop a unifying course that introduces students to the fundamentals of designing and fabricating smart systems,” explains course developer Nate Derbinsky, “including the product lifecycle, as well as relevant tools and design principles.”

When asked where he got the idea, Derbinsky says that he heard of MIT’s course while working in an industrial research lab. “Since coming to Wentworth,” he explains, “I’ve honestly wanted to take this course, and so the best way is to build a Wentworth version, so that our faculty, staff, and students can benefit.”

According Steve Chomyszak (who Derbinsky tapped to help design the class), the course provides hands-on instruction in 14 technologies relevant to the “maker” culture. “It is taking the

efforts of 10 different faculty members and technicians to put together the content,” Chomyszak notes.

“Creating this course required lots of collaboration amongst the faculty and staff because we all have our own area of expertise” he says, “but now, they are collectively brought together to bring a great deal of content to the students within a single course.”

As the faculty comes from so many disciplines and departments, the course will also allow and encourage collaboration across the curriculum for both students and faculty.

“The students will also be more empowered to interact and collaborate with students from other majors because they now have a commonality,” Chomyszak suggests.

While the summer session will last for seven weeks, Chomyszak is keen to mention that a full-semester version is already in the works.

“The first half [will be] used to develop maker skills,” he explains, “and the second half [will be] used by the students to design and build a project of their choice based around the skills

taught in the first half.”

Among the particular elements that are currently involve din the course are electronics, sensors, controls and software, as well as three-dimensional printing and laser cutting.



**PUTTING IT TOGETHER**  
Wentworth students collaborate on their latest triumph

“Wentworth has the equipment, tools, and facilities for manufacturing a variety of products and systems,” Derbinsky observes, “but there is no course like HTMAA to unify aspects of making smart systems.”

In addition to learning how to handle the cutting-edge technological tools, students of the new course will also learn a great deal about the creative process and how to create their way out of a problem.

“We are also providing content on the design process which focuses on thoroughly understanding [a] problem and creatively exploring the possible, as well as the impossible/improbable, solutions,” Chomyszak says, “then on quickly iterating and refining the solutions which best address the problem

at hand.”

When asked what he hopes will come from what he calls a “crash course on making stuff,” Chomyszak replies that, if students are able to take this course early in their Wentworth careers, they will have more time not only to develop ideas and make more stuff. They will also have more time campus to “leverage their skills.”

“A course like HTMAA is ground-breaking in how it prepares students to learn and make,” Derbinsky adds, “but also requires that an institute of higher learning stress-test many of its logistic building blocks, including scheduling, resource-sharing, co-teaching, and large-scale interdisciplinary collaboration. In short: producing top-notch experiential learning experiences requires institutional agility, bold and collaborative faculty/staff/student leadership, and a willingness to learn from failure.”

As such, the new course is very much an example of itself, in that its creators may also have to find ways to overcome obstacles and find new solutions as the process unfolds.

“This course... will provide students with an essential foundation for EPIC projects across campus,” Derbinsky says, citing Wentworth’s famed Externally Collaborative, Project-based, Interdisciplinary Culture (see December, 2014 issue), “including coursework, innovation, entrepreneurship, research, and service learning. The experience with smart-manufacturing tools, techniques, and design fundamentals will also make co-op and graduating students more employable, and thus strengthen Wentworth’s reputation of preparing high-quality students for career success.” ■

# Sing a Summer Song

## Longy summer programs offer music for all

After many months of negotiations, the faculty at Longy School of Music of Bard College is ready to celebrate the school’s centennial with the triumphant return of their popular summer program series. This summer’s menu will include the Dalcroze Summer Institute, the International Baroque Institute at Longy, and the *El Sistema* Summer Academy.

The Dalcroze method, (also known as Eurhythmics) is a pedagogical approach in which the body is dealt with as the main instrument. Students listen to a piece’s rhythm and express what they hear through movement.

“Dalcroze is such an amazing musical experience,” observes program director Lisa Parker, who will offer her course from June 28-July 15. “You move, you sing, you really listen, you create as a group and learn to improvise using your voice and also piano - it’s like nothing else!”

As many teachers who employ the system are working during the school year, Parker has been offering a summer program to allow and encourage them to enrich and deepen their study during their vacation.

“I started it 39 years ago and we’re still going strong,” she says.

While the idea of combining music and movement was considered revolutionary when Swiss composer and educator Emile Jaques-Dalcroze created his protocols, Parker points out that, “nowadays, all music methods include

movement of some sort.”

In addition to enhancing both musical and movement-based expression, Parker posits that Dalcroze can be used for conflict resolution, mental stimulation, and other benefits as well. That is why, she says, it is so important to teach and to learn and to bring



**THE MUSIC OF COMMUNITY**  
Longy faculty, students, and neighbors join hands as part of one the famed music school’s popular programs

to all educational and community organizations.

Despite the wealth of musical and movement schools in the Greater Boston area, Parker maintains that finding Dalcroze training is difficult and that this is why she was prompted to start one at Longy.

“Come and try it,” Parker encourages. “You will find enrichment, revitalization, specific teaching ideas, an opening of your whole self to your own creativity.”

Another older tradition that continues to inspire and enrich is that of Baroque music, which will again be the focus of the International Baroque

Institute’s Musica Bohemica program at Longy from July 22-31.

According to Co-director Phoebe Carrai, the Institute began nearly 25 years ago when she and colleague Paul Leenhouts were looking for a summer workshop in which to focus on different themes each year with faculty from all over the world.

“It has been a wonderful place to work,” says Carrai, crediting former Longy President Victor Rosenbaum with helping get the Institute of the ground. “The audiences...look forward every summer to hearing concerts with our amazing students and fantastic faculty.”

Carrai also notes that many appreciative audience members help house the students and guests during the summer program.

“We are still looking for free housing for students of the institute,” she advises. “They are great people and our past hosts have always been so pleased. Anyone interested can email [pccarrai@longy.edu](mailto:pccarrai@longy.edu).”

In addition to food for the ears, the Institute also offers delicious delights from area retailers like Trader Joe’s, Wholefoods, Formaggio Kitchen, and Hi-Rise Bakery, all of whom also help the Longy faculty raise money for student scholarships at the Institute events.

As the title might imply, this year’s

focus is on Bohemian music.

“It promises to be a great year,” Carrai claims, noting that, during this year’s series, Longy faculty members will be joined in classes and performances by Handel & Haydn Society Concertmistress Aisslinn Nosky, as well as Yale vocal music professor James Taylor. There will also be representatives from Harvard, Yale, Oberlin College and the Julliard School of Music. In addition to a series of master classes, the program will include performances by vocal and chamber music artists, including a number of lunchtime concerts and, on July 30, a grand finale concert featuring students and faculty of the International Baroque Institute.

Longy will wrap up its summer programming with a return of the *El Sistema* Summer Academy during the first two weeks in August. Designed for students from *El Sistema*-inspired programs across Massachusetts and beyond, this program fosters friendships, enhances musical artistry, and promotes leadership skills. Highlights of the two-week immersion program include two levels of orchestra, drum circles, and outdoor games, a collaboration with the Landmarks Orchestra at the DCR Hatch Memorial Shell on Wednesday, August 10, performances in Harvard Square on Thursday, August 11, and Longy’s Pickman Hall on Friday, August 12.

“With the talent and excitement growing throughout our El Sistema-inspired community” says Program Director Chris Schroeder, “Longy’s *El Sistema* Summer Academy promises to be an incredible music experience with opportunities to create lasting friendships and memories!” ■



# Putting the “Professional” in Paraprofessional

## Educators unite for 30th annual statewide conference

Education is challenging. With new demands from parents, administrators and, most importantly, students coming daily, teachers need more support than ever to effectively engage and educate their students and their communities. Fortunately, many schools employ dedicated and talented teams of paraprofessionals who do everything teachers do and sometimes more.

Despite their devotion and skills, however, many paraprofessionals are underappreciated, especially by those who may not understand their roles. That is why, for the past 30 years, the Paraprofessional Council has been showing special appreciation for its members and colleagues and educating them so they can educate others more effectively.

On April 9, paraprofessionals from across the Commonwealth gathered at the Boston Teachers Union Hall in Dorchester to share ideas and successes as part of the 30th Annual Paraprofessional Statewide Conference.

“All of you mean so much to me because of the process we are going through,” said event organizer and Boston Paraprofessional/Substitute Teacher Field Representative Josefina Lascano. “It doesn’t matter if you have 30 years or two months of experience, because you all love what you do!”

After recognizing her BTU colleagues and paying special tribute to her “right hand” Patty O’Donnell and her predecessor (and the event’s founder) Jenna Fitzgerald, Lascano introduced BTU President Richard Stutman, who opened with a school-related joke before turning back to a more serious tone.

“This will be a difficult year,” he admitted, “but historically, it’s always a difficult year.” As demands continue to increase and budgets decrease, Stutman called on all educators to become more involved and to contribute even more. He specifically recommended members contact their legislators whenever they can and participate in the Sticker Friday program, in which educators wear sloganed stickers to

school each Friday to help get their voices heard and demands met. “Every little thing helps and all the issues are related,” Stutman observed. “If we do well in one area, we do well in another area.”

In his welcoming remarks, AFT MA President Tom Gosnell thanked the paraprofessionals for “the wonderful job that you are doing” and pointed out that, with their help, MA was both the most organized state and also the top performer when it came to education, a relationship he saw as no coincidence. “We are

the most unionized state in the nation when it comes to education and we are number one,” he pointed out. “So much for the view that unions are an impediment to the achievement of students.”

Among the issues Gosnell mentioned were charter schools and the state budget. Even for those paraprofessionals who are not in districts where charters are as much of an issue, Gosnell echoed Stutman in suggesting that all issues are related and that every educator needs to do all they can to help every other educator.

“We’ve gotta’ do better,” Gosnell urged, “and we need you to be part of this campaign to help us preserve public education.”

Recalling his 28 years as a teacher at Madison Park, BTU VP Patrick Connolly praised the paraprofessionals for all they do to make all schools work.

“I could not have done the work as successfully without them,” he said, noting how all teachers and paraprofessionals at Madison Park had recently been asked to reapply for their own jobs as part of the so-called “turnaround” process.

As the paraprofessionals prepared to break up into workshop groups, Boston Superintendent Tommy Chang came in to offer more words of appreciation and encouragement.

“Thank you for what you do every day,” Chang said. “You are the first face that kids see and you set the tone for the day. Thank you for being committed to your own learning.”

When it was time for that learning to begin, the paraprofessionals divided into three groups. One group began with an introduction to Google Docs presented by BTU Director of Professional Learning Paul Tritter. The second discussed Common Core with paraprofessionals Cassandra Samuel and Donna Lashus. The third participated in an open discussion of the day’s theme- teamwork.

In his video-enhanced presentation, Tritter suggested that anyone who uses a school computer work as if everything they type or search on it were public. That being said, he also encouraged paraprofessionals to use technology as a means of communication and idea sharing.

“If you are a member of a union,” Tritter observed, “you need to be an organizer and these tools are a great way to get out information.”

At the Common Core session, participants marked a diagram of a tree with post-it “leaves” that explained how much they knew about the curriculum protocol and to what extent they were implementing it in their classrooms.

“How can we implement something we haven’t trained for?” one paraprofessional asked, pointing out the dearth of professional training in many districts.

worse, an email. Students will be required to sign a variety of documents. Electronic signatures have replaced actual penmanship in some cases, but you still need to sign on the computer at least once.

Penmanship and creative writing need to return to schools. I have been writing for many years and have had various articles and essays published. It has always been an exciting outlet for my ideas and views. Give me a blank page and I am ready to go! I was very excited to open up my *Lowell Sun* on a recent Sunday to see essays written by five Lowell High School students. These students, under the direction of their ESL Social Studies teacher Jessica Lander, were challenged to write about important issues in their community. It was compelling to read their essays about

“It seems it would be a great thing for a student to be able to go from state to state and be at the same level,” another observed, “but I think that it is not happening.”

“The issue is whether it is being correctly implemented,” Lashus suggested.

In the discussion forum, paraprofessionals from the Horace Mann School for the Deaf signed to hearing-impaired colleagues about such issues as access to technology, professional development, and parent and community partner engagement. One participant noted how students in her school have computers and other devices but paraprofessionals do not.

“It’s not fair,” she said. “If we do not have access to a computer, we miss important information.”

Another participant suggested that paraprofessionals become more involved, perhaps going so far as becoming building representatives or to take on other union roles.

Come to the union meeting and get your voice heard,” she said. “And, most importantly, never give up!”

Discussion facilitator Arleta Faulkner (who led the program with Jennifer Hayes and Nancy Schliesse) spoke of Curley Share, the collaborative program at the Curley School in Jamaica Plain. She also distributed copies of a schedule she and her classroom colleagues had designed to make sure that each educator had distinct roles and that every child was supported.

“As long as the children are safe and feeling supported, we are doing our jobs,” another participant suggested. “And if we are doing our jobs, we both succeed.”

Before dispersing to enjoy a delicious lunch and listen and dance to music provided by Gilberto Rivera, music teacher at Thomas Edison K-8 in Brighton, participants were asked what they thought about the state of their cohort.

“We are paraprofessionals,” one replied. “Let us be professionals!” ■

## The Write Way

### Paraprofessional Perspective By Marcy Winer

On her first day of Kindergarten over 18 years ago, my daughter made a picture on the computer which the teacher printed out for her. I am 100% certain that I when I started Kindergarten many moons ago, I came home with a picture that I colored. Technology has changed for school children over the years. Now, the little ones are encouraged to do spelling and phonics games on tablets and it seems writing has taken a back seat to expressionism. Creative drawing and writing have become antiquated due to the influx of technology. Video games, hand-held devices, and social media have propelled our children into a technology frenzy. Today, all children want the most exciting video game, the best phone, and the newest tablet. If Johnny has a tablet, Suzy wants one too. Even if Johnny’s parents do not know how to use a tablet, you can bet Johnny has already figured it out.

I asked my 12-year-old nephew what would he rather do - play a video game or write a story. He said (perhaps predictably) “probably play a

video game.” What has happened to writing? I fondly remember learning the rules of penmanship with those long red pencils. Children in elementary school need to write more than they do. They need to learn how to practice printing their letters, capitalizing when appropriate, and using grammar and punctuation properly to form paragraphs and write essays. The essay portion of many college applications is mandatory. So while today’s applicants may not hand write it as I did, they still need to write thoughtfully.

What about cursive? Most children today have no idea what cursive writing is and how the letters are formed. Recently, on an episode of WCVB TV’S Chronicle, Liz Roessler was profiled for the popular calligraphy classes that she teaches in Boston. The report suggested that many people wanted to get back to writing things with personalization. I always felt that, when you received a gift, a personal hand-written “thank you” letter was appropriate; not a computer-generated note. or,



WRITE ON!  
Marcy Winer

cyberbullying, the use of drugs in society, diversity and other issues. They had a chance to express themselves and their essays proved that, given an opportunity, students will write. They are now published writers and should be very proud of themselves! I am sure their teachers, families and friends are very proud of them for their writing. Hopefully, seeing their essays in print will inspire them to try their hands (not their keyboards) at more creative writing.

Technology is always going to be accessible and exciting. More and more advancements will it easier to connect with others, yet more difficult to connect pen to paper. I have an attachment to my technology as most adults do. It is what we are used to and what is easy to do and natural. It doesn’t harm us to change it up a bit, however, and to fall back on older ways. So the next time you want to communicate, get creative, write something fabulous and then sign your name! ■

Marcy Winer has been a paraprofessional in Lowell for over 10 years. She also is the founder of the literacy program Project DEAR (Facebook. com/ProjectDear).



# Benefit Bulletin:

## House Hunting Help

Spring is one of the most popular times for people to look for and buy new homes. And while many get a thrill from the hunt, others become overwhelmed- personally, emotionally and financially. Fortunately, AFT is here to help!

After years of house-hunting, AFT member Lily Ho had finally found “The One.”

“We had been looking for a house for five years,” Ho said. “When we walked into this house...I just knew!”

As a social education teacher and a first-time homebuyer, Ho had a budget to keep in mind and many other aspects to deal with. “You don’t even realize all the stuff you need up front just to get into the house,” she says.

Thankfully, when Ho told her AFT chapter leader all about the house, she learned about Union Plus.

“She said, ‘Well, you know one thing you probably want to do is look into Union Plus.’”

After that conversation, Ho visited the Union Plus website and learned

how she could apply to receive up to \$1,000 in benefits.

The AFT + Mortgage program, with financing available through Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, can help you purchase a home while also featuring special benefits for union members. Qualifying members can also apply for a \$500 First-Time Home Award from Union Plus in addition to the \$500 Wells Fargo My Mortgage GiftSM

received after closing.

“It was great!” said Ho. “I mean, at first, we were like, ‘How much could this actually help us?’ But in the end — wow — it really did help. We needed drywall and spackle and it helped us heat our house for the first month!”

AFT members who enroll in the AFT + Mortgage Program may also be eligible for special hardship assistance from Union Plus such as job loss, strike, disaster relief, and disability grants. ■

For more information, please go to AFT.org/Benefits.



**HAPPY HOMEOWNER**  
AFT member Lily Ho and family

# Your Home Is Waiting



The Union Plus Mortgage program is one of some 25 benefits available to help union members. The program is for union members, their parents and children. Benefits of the program include mortgage hardship assistance to help protect members' homes in the face of financial hardship. With Union Plus, a mortgage is more than a monthly payment. It's long-term protection for everything your home means to you.

**UnionPlus.org/AFTMortgage**

AFT-MT-08-01-10

## Summer Speech Support

**Educator Opinion**  
**By Miriam Rodriguez and Anna M. L. Williams**

Communicating thoughts, ideas, and opinions clearly and effectively is essential to becoming a successful learner and independent problem solver. Therefore, families should continue to develop speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills over the summer by enjoying activities that will strengthen communication skills.

Here are some summer speech support suggestions.

**Talk About Things:** Make it a routine to name and describe things. For example, “I see a tall, leafy, shady tree. What do you see?”

**Hide and Seek:** Hide items and then ask others to find them from a list or from verbal descriptions. Example: “It’s round and small and used in a game.”

**Mix and Measure:** Using words related to dirt and water, you can verbally instruct, model, and elicit language. For example, “Fill the cup half way.... Oh, look, I spilled the whole cup. What do I need to do next?”

**Read:** Go to the library to borrow books related to summer. Remember to read each book at least twice, focus on key or new words, and ask what, where, when, who, why, and how questions and find supporting evidence from the text.

**Write:** Write or copy new or oft-used words and their definitions, write or copy answers to questions related to reading, and keep a journal.

**Play:** Arrange playdates that will encourage children to socialize with each other and enjoy a non-electronic activity together, such as a game,

building project, or pretend play.

**Draw:** Draw shapes, words, or pictures with chalk. Use the drawings to play a game of following directions, describing, telling stories, or answering questions. You can use a photo of the drawings to include in a summer journal.

**Blow Bubbles:** Bubbles are fun for all ages and great for developing lip muscles, proper breath control,



**TAKE A VOCAL VACATION**  
Speech and Language Pathologists Miriam Rodriguez and Anna M. L. Williams

turn-taking and social interaction. Dishwashing liquid is a low cost way to make homemade bubbles. Focus on words like up/down, big/little, high/low, and pop/blow.

**Go to the beach:** Building in the sand, collecting beach items, and water play are just a few of many activities that develop language and social skills. Focus on words like same/different, many/few, smooth/rough, wet/dry, and full/empty.

**Cook:** Start with a simple recipe. Talk about the ingredients and utensils. Use process words such as first, second, and last and flavor words, such as salty, sweet, and sour. When you are done, take a photo of the final product to use in the summer journal. and ask the child to explain the pro-

cess. The Internet is a great resource for finding creative, kid-friendly recipes.

**Picnic:** Go shopping for a picnic. Make word or picture lists for the various items. Use activities such as matching, comparing, counting, describing, and selecting/searching. Discuss the plan, asking questions such as “If we’re serving potato salad, what will we need?”

**Play a board game:** Playing games encourages turn taking skills, social skills, vocabulary, concepts, following directions, and understanding/tolerating winning and losing. Any board game can be turned into a speech or language game by incorporating the child’s target sounds or language skills. For example, “When it’s your turn, say/repeat this sound, word, or sentence.” or “When it’s your turn, make a sentence using a word from this list.”

**Make a Sound/Letter Book:** Create a book using drawings or pictures that depict a target sounds that the child needs to improve or practice. Use pictures from coloring books, magazines, shopping ads, etc. Paste them onto cardboard or piece of coloring paper to create a notebook to use for practicing daily or weekly.

**Scrapbook:** Use images to document summer activities. Discuss the sequence and favorites, and share with others. Add comments or descriptions either by copying, dictating, or writing. Use questions and vocabulary to build sentence length and language skills.

**Take a Trip:** Visit local attractions like museums, zoos, amusement parks, and aquariums. Research and discuss the attraction before the trip to plan the agenda and to preview related vocabulary. Use background knowledge to build on new experiences. Be sure to document the experience!

**Root! Root! Root!:** Researching teams or sports, comparing and contrasting, making predictions of winners/losers, choosing a favorite player or team, keeping score, and discussing performance are just some of the activities you can plan before, during, and after a sporting event.

**Explore:** Camping, fishing, and vacationing are wonderful ways to engage in social interaction, enhance life experiences, and expand upon vocabulary and language. They also allow routine skills to be carried over to other settings. Research and talk about diversity and the routines of other cultures. Being surrounded by groups from different cultures can expose also children to other ways of approaching activities or even speaking different languages. For example, for fishing the Asian community uses fish traps, while Americans use fishing poles.

For free grade-level summer reading packets, go to [www.readworks.org](http://www.readworks.org). ■

Miriam Rodriguez-Fusco is a 17-year, ASHA certified, bilingual SLP veteran of the Lynn Public Schools.

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

### Check it out!



*A Union of Professionals*



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



Convention

Continued from page 1

“We have to put a stop to this!”

The next resolution raised the idea of eliminating district-determined measures of student learning and achievement (a.k.a., DDMs).

Noting how the student impact rating (SIR) used in his district is often determined by the evaluator and therefore is neither an objective nor fair measurement, Peabody Federation of Teachers President Bruce Nelson, suggested that DDMs were “absolutely ludicrous.”

After that second resolution passed easily, DuBois and the Sergeants-at-Arms distributed a third resolution that had to do with reconfiguring or removing requirements regarding sheltered English immersion endorsements. Noting how some districts have students speaking as many as 28 native languages, some of which are not written, DuBois suggested that DESE’s demand that all teachers with even as few as one ESL student be required to achieve a new standard by taking a time-consuming course was unfair, especially as DESE has been having difficulty finding enough trainers to teach them.

With the resolutions having all received unanimous support, it was time to nominate new members of the staff and Executive Board.

In calling for President Gosnell to remain in his post, long-time Executive Board member and former United Teachers of Lowell Vice President J. Michael Earle cited Gosnell as “a man I have the highest admiration for and who I consider to be among the top union leaders in America today.”

When it came time to nominate a Secretary-Treasurer to replace Mark Allred, who was retiring after 10 years at the post, Lawrence Teachers Union President Frank McLaughlin nominated Brant Duncan, President of Lynn Teachers Union.

“He is a terrific unionist, teacher and dad and he will be a terrific treasurer,” McLaughlin said. “Brant bleeds union blue! He will make sure that your funds are properly spent and that every dime of your dues will go to improving this union.”

When it came time to fill vacant spots on the Board, a number of familiar names were suggested, all of whom met with praise and, eventually, acceptance. Among the new members are BTU newsletter co-editor Michael Maguire and organizer Jessica Tang, Springfield paraprofessional leader Catherine Mastronardi, Lynn educator Marie Cawlina-Kasle, Lawrence educator Kimberly Barry, and Medway Building Representative Christine Moyer (see profile on page 10). As was true of all delegates, the nominees came from various districts but were all ready to come together to support their union.

When the nominations were complete, members of the Billerica Federation of Teachers were called up to be feted for 50 years of AFT membership. After the applause finally died down, AFT Deputy Director of Government Relations Beth Atunez offered a report on the new Every Student Succeeds Act (which had been created with the help of Jackson and other AFT members). Defining terms and explaining protocols, Atunez helped clarify the Federal mandate for the educators who would now be living with it.

“There is no more high-stakes testing or AYP... [or] Federal interventions,” Atunez said, noting that all tests can now be audited to improve their quality and effectiveness. “There is also a pilot program in which project-based assessments will be used in lieu of tests...[and a]

wider array of indicators for school quality is now being considered and greater flexibility in terms of which are considered to what extent.”

Speaking directly about charter schools, Atunez noted that, though are still able to collect Federal funds, they “need to be more accountable and transparent in terms of how they are serving all students.”

As was true of many other speakers, Atunez concluded by urging fellow members to help explain the situation to others and to continue to advocate for themselves and their colleagues.

“We see a lot of messiness coming up,” she admitted, “but also a lot of opportunities. Get involved to advocate and speak out!”

In his final financial report, Allred announced that, “this union is a strong union, but we are facing many challenges” and urged members to “stay strong and to get others involved.”

In his President’s report, Gosnell took a moment to welcome and thank first-time delegates, as well as the administrative staff at AFT MA who had worked so hard to make this year’s Convention another great success.

“It is absolutely wonderful having you here,” he beamed.

After noting how diverse AFT MA is in terms of the many individuals and groups it serves, Gosnell offered special recognition foer the Masconomet paraprofessionals who had become part of AFT MA just thus year.

“Remember this, colleagues,” President Gosnell said, “MA students are the best in the nation and 100 percent of our teachers are unionized and work under a collective bargaining agreement.” On the other hand, he noted, the lowest performing states have “z-e-r-o” collective bargaining agreements.

“So much for the argument that teacher unions interfere with the achievement of students,” he laughed.

President Gosnell’s address was also diverse, ranging in topic from DDMs, ESSA and the Friedrichs case (which, though defeated, was most probably only the first of a series, he warned), to First-Book and the potential merger between Berklee College of Music and the Boston Conservatory. He also explained the process of the proposed Constitutional amendment that would institute an additional 4% income tax for those making over \$1 million a year.

“The money is targeted for public education and transportation, roads and bridges,” he explained. “It is set to bring in \$2 billion.”

Going back to Friedrichs, President Gosnell noted that, had there not been a vacancy on the Supreme Court, the case would most probably have gone against us. He also recalled how the legislative defeat of the proposal for lifting the cap on charter schools was a victory, but one that is also not complete. In fact, he pointed out, it is set to become a referendum issue that will be decided by the voters themselves.

“Many claim that voters in MA want an increase in the cap,” President Gosnell offered, noting how those in support of charter schools are already predicting at least \$18 million spending on advertisements and other pro-charter propaganda.

“This is not true!” He also suggested that, even if a given district is not dealing with charter schools now, they may be coming, so we all must remain vigilant and involved.

“Even if there are no charter schools in your town,” he observed, “students from your town go to charter schools and take money away from your districts.”

President Gosnell concluded by suggesting that the charter school question is not really about charter schools, but of a larger effort to privatize and so destroy public education, thereby rendering the unions “impotent.”

“If we want to offer quality schools, we need quality resources,” President Gosnell said. “We’ve got to be in this together.... MA has a proud tradition of public education. If this proposal passes, we have a major problem.”

Another troublesome proposal was that which was raised regarding a potential dues increase that would help AFT MA raise funds with which to counter our many foes. Despite the fact that AFT, MTS, and other colleagues were also donating to the cause, AFT MA still had a hefty bill to foot to do their part in the battle against charter school champions and the millionaires who stand to be taxed more if the amendment passes. That is why the dues increase had been proposed. Though many members saw the logic in it, many also had difficulty seeing how they could afford to approve it.

“It is difficult to speak about a dues increase,” admitted BTU President Stutman, “but this is really not much when we consider the threats we are facing.”

“It is not worth losing \$96 a year to lose your job,” Nelson echoed, citing other cities that have lost most of their students to charter schools.

On the other hand were many smaller locals or locals that served educators with lower incomes who feared overtaxing their members.

“We know all about charter school in Springfield,” Mastronardi added. “We pay \$31 million to them each year.” Following McLaughlin, Mastronardi suggested that, instead of money, members offer their time and energy. “I know we need money and that I know it is really important to stand up against charter schools,” she said. “We need our members to call their legislators.”

Executive Board member Tim Angerhofer suggested that, even if we did increase dues, it might not be enough.

“When it comes to financing, our opponents have a Lamborghini,” he suggested. We have a Nissan Sentra. It is a good car, but this increase upgrades the Sentra to an Altima. I am not against paying, but it needs to be effective. This is about strategy more than it is about money.”

In addition to having members contact colleagues and community leaders, Angerhofer also suggested calling on the students to support their teachers.

“There is an untapped resource here,” he observed. “We have a lot of students that have graduated from public schools. What are we doing to reach them?”

He even went so far as to suggest suing charter schools for “working outside of their legal scope.”

Looking forward to his role as Secre-

tary-Treasurer, Duncan offered his.

“We may not want to absorb the costs,” he said, “but we also do not want to lose the ballot question.” He also suggested that, if AFT MA does not contribute, it will also diminish the contributions made by our colleagues at MTA and hurt both organizations’ standing in the community.

“We do not have enough money to subsidize this,” he admitted, “but we have to do something.”

After a great deal of vibrant debate that recalled Proposition 2.5 and other past trials and triumphs, it was decided that, based upon a friendly amendment offered by McLaughlin, there would be a smaller increase than had been originally proposed and that it would be reviewed at the next Convention. It was also agreed that a delegation of AFT MA representatives would approach AFT and ask for further support.

With all matters having been dealt with, the delegates retired to the next hall for a luncheon and to fete the students who had been awarded the AFT MA scholarships.

“It’s wonderful to have the leaders of tomorrow here,” President Gosnell said, “and to have them supported by their parents.”

With hope for the future and a clear set of priorities, the delegates disbanded, ready to take the ideas and messages they had shared back to their colleagues and communities and to continue to strive to protect and enhance public education. ■

We put the



in



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Do you have stories and ideas to share?

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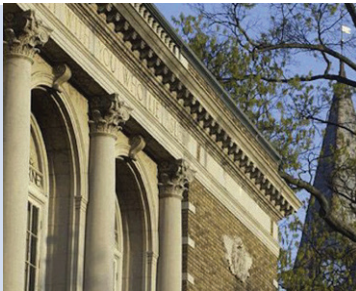






# On Campus

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



## Keeping a good education affordable

The University of Massachusetts has been in the news an awful lot in the last few weeks. Since mid-May, I have read numerous articles about student debt, enrollment, admission policies, and the expansion of the university's research mission.

A few weeks ago, UMass Boston announced that, with a potential budget deficit of \$22.3 million, they would put 400 adjunct professors on notice that their contracts may not be renewed in the fall. The possibility of layoffs is present on the other UMass campuses as well.

According to a report by a group called the Young Invincibles who describe themselves on their website as "a national organization, working to engage young adults on issues, such as higher education, health care, and jobs," Massachusetts gets an F when considering per-student spending, average tuitions, and state financial aid programs. Some of their findings include a 23% decline in higher education funding from pre-recession levels accompanied by tuition increases for both two and four-year institutions. Higher education makes up only 10% of the entire state budget, putting us below the national average, and grants only comprise 7% of the budget for higher education (<http://younginvincibles.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/YI-State-Report-Cards-2016.pdf>). Other reports indicate that Massachusetts continues to rank 30th in funding for public higher education, with the actual per student funding below the national mean.

The Young Invincibles report also talks about attainment equity. They also found that the degree attainment gap is 21 points for African Americans

and 30 points for Hispanics. And this attainment gap has increased since 2007. The Globe recently published an article by Neil Swidey that gave us a powerful look at student debt in the state. But the quote that stood out to me was "where there has long been a history of robust public support for the state education system and where most students attend public colleges, the student debt loads tend to be considerably less. . ."

At the same time all of this news is breaking, the Pioneer Institute released a report on the current state of UMass. I suspect those of you reading this, who have been working tirelessly against the unfettered expansion of charter schools, are familiar with the work of the Pioneer Institute. It is a "free-market think tank" which has been described as "dedicated to privatizing the common wealth." So we shouldn't be surprised that the report would be critical of public education. Criticism includes too much expansion, too much reliance on public money, and too many out of state students.

According to UMass President Marty Meehan only about 17% of the \$3.1 million that funds UMass comes from the state. And out-of-state students, who continue to represent a smaller percentage of students than at the state universities around New England, directly benefit the university, both for the higher tuition they pay, and for the "diversity" they bring. He also accused the Pioneer Institute of trying to protect the private universities. Having gotten my post baccalaureate degree at Northeastern University, I know how valuable it is to have good private universities

of the caliber we find in Massachusetts. But for the future of the state, a strong state university system is vital. (Besides, I thought competition only made us stronger. I guess that only works when you're the one with all the power?!)

So, how does all this connect? It seems pretty obvious to me at this point that in order to provide a great and affordable education to everyone--and not just those with the skill and resources to navigate the system--properly funding a state university system is critical. The Boston campus of UMass is the most diverse campus in the system, with the poorest demographic. Yet it is the first campus to risk losing substantial numbers of faculty. Faculty TEACH. That probably sounds silly, but in the era of bloated university administrations, reducing deficits on the backs of those providing the essential service--after all what universities do is teach -- is ill-advised.

Here at UMass Dartmouth we have seen the culture of teaching change radically over the past two decades. Though the talk of student retention and student success is persistent, the role of teaching as an important part of what tenured/tenure-track faculty do has diminished. I have just started reading the book "Slow Professor: Challenging the Culture of Speed in the Academy" by Maggie Berg and Barbara Seeber. It's an engaging read and the discussion about enjoying teaching ("Pedagogy and Pleasure") is relevant here. Pleasure, they say, has no place in the corporate world, a world increasingly inhabited by the university. Yet pleasure is central to both teaching and learning. When

the pressures of just keeping up overwhelm us, "stress and cynicism" replace pleasure. When teachers stop enjoying teaching, students stop enjoying learning. Seems obvious, but even the obvious bears repeating - loudly and often! More on this book in upcoming columns.

Summer has begun, at least for those of us in higher education, but the work continues. ■

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

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

**Thank you!**



## Meet Your Colleague: Christine Ann Moyer

As a teacher with two decades of experience (including six with special education students), Christine Ann Moyer has a way and knows her way with students. Using her passion for art to engage and enrich her students and their lives, Moyer has not only inspired many budding artists and encouraged all students to think and act creatively and compassionately, she has even helped create a virtual art studio for her students in Medway (<http://memorialartstudio2015-16.weebly.com>).

Whether through photography or quilting or through her words and actions, Moyer is always keen to depict and encourage the beauty in life and to help others see it as well. Perhaps that is why she is so excited to lead and support her colleagues as a new member of the AFT MA Executive Board.

"I am very excited to continue representation of my Medway Local at the state level," she says, explaining that she was prompted to run because, when Medway Federation of Teachers leader Richard Flaherty announced his plans to step down from the Board, Moyer felt that the position on the

Board was "too important to give up for our members."

Another major reason why Moyer was eager to join the Board is her desire to support AFT MA's push for social justice.

"That is the number one reason I must fulfill this obligation," she suggests. "As a human being and



**AN ARTFUL TEACHER  
Christine Ann Moyer**

a teacher I strongly believe that all people should be treated with respect and kindness. I also believe that everyone should be given the benefit of the doubt and interactions with others should always be positive and professional. I hope to bring this back to my district as a leader of professional conduct and bring administration, parents, and our union together as allies for best practice among professionals to facilitate the best education and care of our students."

Having served on the executive board of Medway Public Schools for the past 18 years, Moyer is well versed in the ways of education administration and leadership. When asked what she hopes to bring to AFT MA, Moyer

replies, "I would like to bring equity to different locals regarding expectations for educator evaluations. This is an overwhelming process for educators to add to their practice and it needs to be streamlined for all educators in Massachusetts."

As she and her colleagues often feel overburdened by the demands that are put upon them by their district administrations and others, Moyer hopes to be able to mitigate and ameliorate the pains many educators go through in order to teach.

"I thrive on helping others lighten their loads," she posits. "I have taught all grades and worked in many different subjects, but the commonality among all my experience is my ability to make a difference in the lives of the children, their parents, and my colleagues."

Among Moyer's specific goals is to change the structure of state testing. "I would also like to see the administration of MCAS simplified and better balanced," she explains. "We need to consider how often this barrage of tests are really necessary and also spreading them out throughout the year so they are not so overwhelming and exhausting."

While she has been painted as Polyaana-ish by some, this talented

artist prefers to see her role through a different lens. "The truth," Moyer maintains, "is that great change can occur through persistence and upright behavior." As such, she says, "It's important to get to the truth of a situation before correcting any problems. I will bring these strengths to the Board."

When asked how she came to enter education in the first place, Moyer recalls a long-held desire to combine her love of art with her love of young people.

"I needed to earn a living with my arts degree," she explains, "and I loved children."

Armed with certification in art education, special education, and general education, Moyer has followed multiple paths simultaneously in her 20 years in the classroom but has always remained dedicated to the arts and the art of teaching – a combination that is sadly lacking in many schools today..

"It is with the highest intention that I hope to fill my seat on the board," she pledges. "Together I hope we can continue to make progressive change in the field of education and positive learning conditions for our educators and students. Thank you for welcoming me!" ■





# Retiree Corner

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



## Honor Thy Fathers

This past April, Beverly Beckham wrote an article in *The Boston Globe* regarding her grandson. She spoke about how he had put her on a pedestal, turning to her to spell a word, give a definition, or any of the hundred and one things a grandmother can do to be special in her grandchildren’s eyes. She spoke about enjoying that pedestal with her own children until they got to the age when mother knew nothing and they knew it all.

Mother’s Day has come and gone when mothers got to enjoy the pedestal if only for a day, but Father’s Day looms on the horizon. Dads, I think, are truly unsung heroes. They are less often put on the pedestal. We are all familiar with the saying that behind every great man is a great woman, but I truly believe behind every successful woman is a very supportive man.

We hear about the one in three homes in America devoid of a father, but how often do we think of the great impact that a father or male makes in the other 2/3rds of American homes. So many times I have marveled when being at soccer, baseball, hockey, or other sporting events to watch young men, or not so young men, coaching an evening event after working all day. What an example they are not only to the children they coach, but to the spectators who watch.

We see men roll up their sleeves to give of themselves in so many volunteer efforts at school, church and com-

munity. So often we see them stop to offer assistance to someone stopped at the side of the road. I know how often I have said a “thank you” to the angel who breaks the snow heap at the end of my driveway after a storm.

There are far too many who have not had the love and example of a caring father and look toward male images they meet along life’s road to provide this example. We have all heard of the Big Brother movement which pairs up young men with younger boys that they mentor. There is another movement, Foster Grandparents, which pairs older Americans with young people who need mentoring. Some of these groups are only dedicated to children with special needs, but others a more diverse group. Some even provide stipends to those who give of their time.

Today, more than any other time in history, Americans are looking for role models, people they can look up to. For too long those in Hollywood or sports figures were asked to fill that role. Too often their example has been a letdown rather than an inspiration. How blessed we are if we had/have a man in our life that filled that role for us. How much greater if the males among us are performing that role for someone presently in their life.

Get the pedestal dusted for that special someone in your life this Father’s Day. More importantly, bring it out often during the course of the year! ■

### SENIOR SEMINARS

**How to Protect Your Nest Egg**  
Saturday June 25, 2016, 10 to noon  
314 Main Street, Wilmington, MA

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

To register for this seminar, call 781-365-0205 or email [contact@retireesunited.org](mailto:contact@retireesunited.org). Please give your name, phone number, and the number of people attending.

**Please Contact Your Legislators**  
Presently, there is a moratorium on cities and towns being able to increase the percentage retirees pay for health insurance premiums. This moratorium expires in July of 2016. ALL are asked to contact their local legislators to support Amendment #91 to extend the moratorium to July 1, 2018. Senator Tom McGee filed amendment #91. Ask your local Senator to sign on to co-sponsor this amendment. Failure to get this amendment passed means that cities and towns can increase the amount retirees pay for their health care premium up to 50%. Also, be sure to ask your local Representative to be aware if such a measure is attached to the House Budget. Thank you!

## “Millionaires Tax” Moves Forward

On May 18, members of both houses met in the House chamber to discuss and debate the proposed amendment to the Constitution of the Commonwealth that would add a 4% tax on any taxable income over \$1 million, the proceeds of which will be directed towards public education and infrastructure.

As the Senators paraded in, escorted by a special delegation from the House, the galleries filled with supporters of the amendment, including many representatives of AFT MA, MTA, RAISE UP MA and other organizations.

Once Senate President Stanley Rosenberg opened the special joint session, the members and guests all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance, after which Rosenberg asked the members to take their seats “so that this historic debate can be heard.”

Throughout the discussion, hearing was an issue, as the milling members of the House and Senate repeatedly drowned out the speakers at the podium with their side comments and discussions. Rosenberg used his gavel judiciously in an effort to keep order and to move the proceedings forward.

Among the most ardent speakers were Representative Jay Kaufman (who chairs the legislature’s Committee on Revenue) and Representative Bradley H. Jones, Jr. (who serves as the House Minority Leader). Among Kaufman’s proposals were that MA has “unsustainable tax system” and that “we cannot raise the money we need to provide...for the cities and towns.” Citing the billions of dollars in proposed infrastructure projects that have had to be put on hold and the lack of universal pre-kindergarten and the debts that many public education students accrue during their studies, Kaufman posited that “Nobody would argue that education and transportation were anything but the responsibility of the Commonwealth” and so urged the passage of what is often termed the “fair share tax.”

In an effort to make the amendment more agreeable for his constituents and colleagues, Jones repeatedly stepped to the podium to propose further amendments. However, as the majority had apparently agreed to keep the main amendment “clean,” all of these were voted down. In the end, the amendment itself passed and will now move forward in the multi-year approval process. The amendment will again be considered in the 2017-18 session. If it is approved again, it will be put on the official ballot for popular vote in 2018. AFT MA stands behind this amendment and urges all members to support it as well. ■

## Policy Perspective:

### DDMs are DOA

#### Educator Opinion

By Cory O’Hayer

Boston Public Schools has begun to develop a set of data-driven criteria, or District-Determined Measures (DDMs), that will tie student performance on standardized tests to teacher effectiveness with Student Growth Percentile (SGP) among the factors being considered for teacher evaluation. Though the Massachusetts Senate voted to remove DESE’s 2011 requirement that districts link teacher effectiveness to student progress based on MCAS data, BPS has determined that, contrary to the opinion of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, test-score data should be included in teacher evaluation.

Massachusetts promised to adhere to set education policy standards when DESE accepted Race to the Top funding in 2009. Among these were initiatives that both pressured students into more assessments testing and punished schools, teachers and districts deemed to be underperforming. In March of this year, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) gave more autonomy to states who, in turn, were to provide districts with more local control. Under ESSA, many onerous federal requirements were removed, including the requirement to tie student performance data to teacher effectiveness in evaluations.

Much of the language in ESSA can

be seen as the beginning of a national backlash to the over-testing of a generation of students. The impetus behind PARCC’s expansion has withered, as Pearson’s once lauded test has declined from 24 states to just a handful. The decades-old agenda of turning students into numbers to prove policy goals has been shown to be no more effective in improving classroom quality or education inequality as indicated by the opposition of parents, students and educators. For BPS to consider such ineffective measures to assess teacher quality is emblematic not only of the district’s inability to look out for the best interests of students and teachers, but also of their unwillingness to accept what has become common best practice elsewhere.

Using SGP as a measurement of student progress isn’t necessarily a bad policy decision. Rather, it is the high-stakes nature of test data collection that renders student information unreliable. In a high-stakes environment, a teacher who has invested their focus of study and career into the classroom risks rendering both their expertise and their education useless after a flawed evaluation, while a student rests their free and public education on one test. Data, when used for high pressure decision making, is more likely to be distorted in order to meet the agenda of those affected. In two decades of education reform, the lack of validity among high-stakes testing has proven only that the higher

the stakes, the more inaccurate the available data.

Boston’s plan for DDMs may not happen, as this may be a tactic on the part of the district before this summer’s collective bargaining agreement negotiations are to begin. This may be a bargaining chip, but it’s a dangerous one to use. The threat to include flawed measurements in professional evaluations can only further the image of the district as being out of touch with standard best practices. The aversion to working in high-needs districts is already strong among professional educators, and can only be made more difficult should the district threaten to include widely discredited analysis into teacher evaluations. ■

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



### LOBBYING FOR A “FAIR SHARE”

Supporters of the proposed “millionaires tax” gather outside the House Chamber to show their support for the amendment



# Thank you for coming together!



## VOICES RAISED TOGETHER

Chrous members from \*\*\*\*\* with Director \*\*\*\* help open the Convention proceedings with song



## WORKING LUNCH

Members from Pittsfield enjoy lunch with AFT Field Representative Walter Armstrong (center)



## STILL SPEAKING OUT

Retiring AFT MA Director of Organization Annemarie DuBois offers her thoughts and support



## RICHLY-DESERVED REWARD

Billerica Paraprofessionals were honored by AFT for 50 years of membership



## HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Recipeints of the AFT MA scholarships show off their latest accomplishments



## POWER COUPLE

BTU Political Advsiors Angela Christiani speaks with MA AFL-CIO President Steve Tolman



## A TEAM EFFORT

Members of the Springfield Federation of Paraprofessionals and AFT MA celebrate the Federation's winning AFT's Child Welfare and Communiy Service Helping Hands Award



## GOOD NEWS!

MA Teacher of the Year (and BTU member) Audrey Jackson shares a smile with AFT MA President Tom Gosnell



## CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Retiring Secretary-Treasurer Mark Allred confers with his successor, Lynn Teachers Union President Brant Duncan



## MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT

Members from Longy School of Music at Bard College perform during the Awards Luncheon

# Keep up the GREAT work!