



# The Advocate



May 2015

## “Teachers Are Rising Up”

### AFT MA Convention provides new support and new ideas

As the charter school cap, the adoption of Common Core and PARCC and many other issues continue to loom large, members of AFT MA were able to come together to assess their situation and to plan for the future in a spirit of camaraderie and common interest.

The 47th annual AFT MA Convention opened with an invocation by Rev. Tricia DeBeer, the main part of which was a poem about mindfulness, a key component of any successful worker’s life, and also about the educators, nurses, and other supporters AFT MA protects who are, as Rev. DeBeer put it, “sources of healing... [and] the foundations of the community.”

After a delicious dinner that was accompanied by music provided by faculty from AFT MA members Danny Harrington and Rich Grudzinski from Berklee College of Music (and after he announced the score of the Sox-Yankees game), President Tom Gosnell, along with Secretary-Treasurer Mark Allred, presented Distinguished Service Awards to outstanding members who deserved special recognition.

First up was Tim Angerhofer of Amesbury, who was credited by his local President Cindy Yetman with raising both MCAS scores and member involvement. He was also cited as the force behind the resolution on PARCC that was to be a key element of the next day’s proceedings. In his remarks, Angerhofer mentioned fellow Executive Board member James “Timo” Phillips (who had resigned in March) and humbly thanked the rest of his colleagues in his “activist” union.

Lowell’s Susan Uvanni (who also recently won an award from Share-MyLesson.com) was introduced as a “dedicated collaborator” and political activist who encourages others to serve. After she spoke of “commitment to students and the teaching profession,” Allred introduced fellow treasurer Ruth Adamides from New Bedford who has served as a para for 26 years and who, it was revealed, makes handmade door prizes for local meetings to encourage participation. Next was 37-year para Barbara Boucher from Springfield.

“That’s resilience,” mused Allred, noting that Boucher not only has served her students, but also helped her community deal with the crippling tornado and also helped colleagues achieve “high quality” status. After Boucher thanked all six of her Local presidents, recalling the growth of the union from 75 to over 650 members, she received a standing ovation from her Springfield colleagues and from the entire assembly.

“AFT MA is a very diverse union,” Gosnell observed, noting that it includes not only teachers and paras, but also nurses, custodians, librarians,

and other professionals as well. As proof, he presented Dennis Ferreira, Jr., a custodian member of the United Teachers of Lowell who helped organize his colleagues and who is also a member of the Merrimack Valley Labor Council.

“Teachers should only have to worry about teaching,” Ferreira suggested in his often humorous speech.

The next morning, as many delegates enjoyed a buffet breakfast, a number of first-time participants gathered with Billerica educator Cathy Dwyer to learn about the ins and outs

and other professionals as well. As proof, he presented Dennis Ferreira, Jr., a custodian member of the United Teachers of Lowell who helped organize his colleagues and who is also a member of the Merrimack Valley Labor Council.

“We need to name the structural systems that have people in poverty,” she said, citing unemployment and racism. “We are up against some incredibly powerful forces who have no inclination to listen to us [and] think they know best.” Despite these challenges, however, Madeloni, encouraged by such progressive events as the forthcoming Week of Action (June 8-11) and the building support for the “Fight for \$15” minimum wage raise, concluded by emphasizing that “people power is where the power is” and suggesting that, “if we grow coalitions...we’re gonna’ be able to fight and win this!”

In thanking his colleague, Gosnell presented the native New Yorker with a Red Sox cap.

“If a Yankee fan can be president of MTA,” Madeloni quipped, “anything can happen!”

After introducing the executive board and staff (all of whom he thanked for doing “stellar work for the kids,” Gosnell handed the microphone to AFT MA’s newest staff members – Jeremy Shenck and Monique Jackson – each of whom took a moment to introduce themselves and to offer their support to the rest of the membership.

“I am deeply committed to the labor movement,” Shenck said, touting himself as a “proud BPS parent” and recalling many years of work with other unions. “I believe a strong labor movement is the basis for strong economy...and integral to our democracy.”

Gosnell then took another moment to offer “special recognition” to Jackson, Jennifer Daniel and Mary Ann Dority for helping make the Convention such a success.

When MA AFL-CIO President Steve Tolman took to the podium, the energy of the event raised, as it usually does when what Gosnell termed a “committed and passionate speaker” presents the case for his fellow union members.

“He loves what we love,” Gosnell observed, citing Tolman’s



**NEW DELEGATES**  
Lawrence teachers Jaclyn O’Brien, Daniel Adler and Samantha Allard at the 2015 AFT MA Convention

of the Convention and how they could participate in it more meaningfully. Participants from Lawrence, Medway, Peabody, Salem and various public libraries discussed the role of AFT in the larger union picture and how AFT MA plays its particular role as well. Questions were asked about contracts, national AFT events and our own *Advocate*. The participants gave the session high marks in their reviews later in the day.

Calling the Convention to order with a Red Sox gavel, Gosnell invited Father Thomas Brown of Winchester to offer an invocation in which the former educator prayed for “commitment to making the world a better place and respect for every human being.”

As a means of showing respect for our colleagues in other unions, MTA President Barbara Madeloni was invited to speak next. As a fellow educator and leader of a union that supports teachers, Madeloni made a strong point when she suggested that the main thrust of our combined efforts should not be “just about public education,” but rather “about the nature of our communities.”

“It’s about how we help our children imagine how to live in and create the world that they want,” Madeloni said, calling test scores “dehumanizing.” “It is our job as educators and activists to speak back.... That is why we enter this world as educators.... To be an educator is to have a profound impact on the future.”

Reflecting on recent developments, including the placing of Holyoke’s school system into receivership, Mad-

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## SPECIAL INSIDE

2015 AFT MA  
CONVENTION PROGRAM



**UNION STRONG**  
MA AFL-CIO President Steve Tolman (center) rallies with members of the UMass Faculty Federation (Local 1895) on April 30 to protest negotiated but unfunded contracts at UMass Dartmouth

Continued on page 4



## Help Samira

Samira Sarkis has sickle cell disease and needs to find a bone marrow donor.

Her parents are Angie Sarkis, an educator at Lawrence High School, and Tony Sarkis, an educator at the Greater Lawrence Vocational School.

For information on how to help, contact Leigh Sullivan at Dana-Fabrer Cancer Institute at 866-875-3324 or [Leigh\\_sullivan@dfci.harvard.edu](mailto:Leigh_sullivan@dfci.harvard.edu), or go to [www.bethematch.org](http://www.bethematch.org).

Please use promo code **Samira2015**.



## The Advocate

The official publication of  
AFT Massachusetts, AFL-CIO

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

### VICE PRESIDENTS

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

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

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## THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Thomas J. Gosnell  
President, AFT Massachusetts

## AFT MA Opposes PARCC Test

The delegates to the AFT MA Convention voted to oppose the implementation of the PARCC test. The resolution, included on this page, gives all the reasons for the delegates' action.

High stakes testing and the extraordinary amount of testing impede education. Our students are losing valuable learning time.

The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will hold hearings. Come and testify.

Wednesday, June 10, 2015, Bridgewater State University, Rondileau Campus Center Ballroom, 5:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Monday, June 22, 2015, North Shore Community College-Lynn Campus, Gymnasium, 5:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Tuesday, July 7, 2015, Springfield Technical Community College, Top of Our City Conference Center, 5:00 - 8:00 p.m.

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



### RESOLUTION ADOPTED

#### BY THE DELEGATES TO THE AFT MA CONVENTION - MAY 2, 2015

**WHEREAS:** The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exam system is scheduled for review and a future implementation decision in the fall of 2015 regarding its use as a statewide assessment; and

**WHEREAS:** The very data that is part of this review process is unclear or not fully known to at least the public whose children would be subject to PARCC exams if implemented; and

**WHEREAS:** Actual complete PARCC exams or discussions of those exams are not accessible to the public and teachers; and

**WHEREAS:** The PARCC exams, thus, can neither be assessed by the public and all educators for their fidelity to the state curriculum frameworks in the first place nor for their appropriateness as valid assessments to measure student performance; and

**WHEREAS:** Student performance on PARCC exams may influence students' academic transcripts that impact their futures; and

**WHEREAS:** Student performance on state assessments is or will be a component in teacher evaluations; and

**WHEREAS:** The implementation of PARCC exams requires massive infrastructure expenditures in technology with no financial plan to support these costs in an era in which school budgets are strained with accelerated, decreasing state aid; and

**WHEREAS:** Mitchell Chester, Massachusetts' Chair of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), is also the National Chair of the PARCC Governing Board, which is a significant conflict of interest that calls into question the integrity of PARCC use in Massachusetts; and

**WHEREAS:** The implementation of PARCC exams takes away from teaching time; and

**WHEREAS:** Massachusetts' students are already sufficiently assessed by state mechanisms and, collectively, excel on related exams internationally,

**WHEREAS:** The delegates to the 47th Annual Convention of the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts assembled here in Burlington strongly oppose the implementation of PARCC, be it therefore:

**RESOLVED:** That the AFT Massachusetts president send the result of this vote to the president of every local and every central labor council, and be it further:

**RESOLVED:** That a committee of the AFT Massachusetts be formed to bring locals together to organize against high stakes testing; and be it further:

**RESOLVED:** That the president of every local affiliated with the AFT Massachusetts will encourage the department heads to refrain from recommending ordering text books or teacher supplies or material from Pearson Corporation; and be it further:

**RESOLVED:** That the president of every local affiliated with the AFT Massachusetts communicate the results of this vote to the superintendents and school committees in their districts and urge them to adopt the same position.



# The World is Your Classroom

## EF offers students and teachers travel support

Travel has long been touted as an ideal way to engage new cultures and ideas and to expand one's own perspective and mind. Sometimes, however, the benefits of travel are obscured by an inability to understand all that is being experienced.

That's where educational travel companies like Cambridge-based EF Educational Tours ([www.ef.com](http://www.ef.com)) come in, as they focus on delivering life-changing international experiences that support critical 21st learning.

In the early 1960s, a dyslexic student from Sweden named Bertil Hult travelled to England for the first time. "Book learning was not working for him," explains EF's Adam Bickelman, who notes that, despite his dyslexia Hult was able to learn English while travelling in England.

Convinced that learning outside of the classroom could be just as valuable and productive as learning inside, Hult opened a company called *Europeiska Ferieskolan* (which translates as "European holiday school") that combined travel abroad with learning foreign languages from native speakers in their own cultures. His first excursion took 407 students from Sweden to England, where they all found great success learning a new language and culture. Today, EF has grown into one of the world's largest private education companies, offering myriad means to see the world, experience other cultures, learn languages or earn academic degrees.

In the early 1980s, Hult relocated his family to California, where he quickly realized how difficult it would be to offer English language training programs in an English-speaking country. So he launched EF Educational Tours to give teachers a new way to bring the world into their classrooms and their students into the world. During the next 30 years, EF would refine Hult's original vision with a focus on innovation, adapting the original format for educational travel to incorporate trips that focus on 21st century and service learning and language immersion.

Though the Internet and social

media have helped make the world seem smaller, there is still nothing like actually going to a new land and experiencing it in real life. This is the opportunity that EF provides.

Among the local leaders who have followed Hult's lead and taken students abroad are Boston Latin Academy teacher Michael Maguire.

"The reason I like EF is that they provide great itineraries at the best prices," Maguire explains, noting that EF provides each travel group with an individualized website and materials, as well as pre-trip and on-site support and guidance.

As EF trips are so popular, Maguire advises planning ahead.

"I usually plan my trips two or three years in advance so that the monthly payments are lower because they are more spread out," he says.

During an excursion to Ireland, Maguire says that his group was paired with smaller groups from NY and PA. On his 2014 trip to Paris and Rome (locations that had been requested by his students), he helped chaperone a record-setting 79 students from all over Boston. In addition to further expanding the realm of interests and experiences represented, such mixings also resulted in Maguire gaining a new colleague.

"One of the students from that trip now works at BLA," says Maguire, who had first traveled abroad while a student at BLA in 1988.

Speaking of colleagues, BLA English teacher Wendy Hale has also worked with EF in recent years.

"I took students last summer to Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji," she

recalls. "It was focused on Science so the students were able to observe and be hands on with indigenous animals, plant life, and geological science. They also saw iconic landmarks and historical sites throughout the tour."

In addition to developing language skills and cultural awareness, Maguire says that his trips deliver real-world problem-solving skills. "The students learned their way around the city, how to use rapid transit, where to get good food, and where to shop," he recalls, adding that skills are tied to 21st century learning, which aims to help



NATIVETONGUE

EF programs encourage learning by doing

students develop comfort with ambiguity, cross-cultural competency, and experience with failure, among other areas of focus. EF points to recent reports by Gallup and other organizations that link 21st century skills development to future college and career success, explaining that immersive learning through international travel is a great way to accomplish this goal.

Though EF has grown from a one-man operation to one with 15 divisions (organized in three areas – cultural experience, language and academics), with 40,500 employees in over 500 schools and offices in more than 50 countries, the organization maintains its original focus on using experiential learning to help people create new opportunities for themselves through education.

"Our core offering has expanded with a focus on innovation," says EF Regional Manager Eric Stepanian, "but it is still very much about teachers deciding to get students out of class to give them opportunities to supplement what they're learning in the classroom through an internation-

al trip. We are constantly working with teachers to develop itineraries and experiences that respond to what the teacher is hoping to develop in their students."

In addition to supporting teachers and students before and during their trips, EF also has developed online curricula that uses students' own strengths and passions to create projects that get them more fully engaged in their experience.

"We have developed an online platform called weShare that helps connect the before-tour and after-tour experience with the tour itself," Stepanian explains. "It allows students to have an authentic experience with a particular project in mind before, during, and after the tour."

"It helps students explore something they are organically excited about and to focus their travel experience on that topic," Bickelman says, noting that many travelers now post their experiences in EF's online galleries. "They can provide feedback and share ideas." These projects can also garner students' college credit and many use their experiences for their college essays.

Two years ago, EF joined forces with Boston-based Quest Adventures to help underprivileged students in the Boston Public Schools have an opportunity to travel.

"We are honored to have the opportunity to support the hard work of Quest Adventures to create international travel opportunities for students who may not otherwise have an opportunity to go abroad," Bickelman says, noting that student participation in pre-trip fundraising is "part of the learning" and that "getting to the reward of departure has a lot of lessons involved, including connecting with the community and budgeting."

No matter where students go or what they do there, EF helps them make the most of their time, their budget and the life lessons they learn along the way.

"Going on a trip often sits outside of a transcript," says Stepanian, "but the overall experience really develops a variety of critical skills that help students succeed regardless of the path they choose as they go on to college and start their careers." ■

## Benefit Bulletin: Summer Fun for Everyone!

In this series, we hope to inform our members about the many benefits of belonging to and participating in AFT. Should you have any questions or comments, send them to [advocate@aftma.net](mailto:advocate@aftma.net).

As the months get warmer you'll want to go out and have some fun. Whether you're taking in a ballgame, sightseeing in your hometown, taking in the sights on vacation, or just going to the movies, your AFT+ entertainment and travel discounts will let you save while you relax during the summer.

### Entertainment Discounts

Root, root, root for the Red Sox! Save \$5 to \$50 on tickets to Red Sox baseball games. For example, Grandstand tickets to the June 25 game against the Baltimore Orioles are \$56.99 (a savings of \$12.51 off the regular \$69.50 price), while Pavilion Club seats are \$149.99 (a \$44.51 savings off the regular \$194.50).

Take in a show. Whether it's *Blue Man Group* at the Charles Playhouse, *The Book Of Mormon* at Citi Emerson Colonial Theater, *Newsies* at the Bos-

ton Opera House or *Marvel Universe Live* at DCU Center in Worcester, you'll find discounted theater tickets for local theater shows. Plus, if you're planning a trip to New York City, there's savings on Broadway shows.

Avoid the lines and save on movie tickets. With AFT+ Entertainment Discounts, you can save up to 40% off movie tickets when you buy them in advance. Choose from many movie theater chains, including AMC, Loews, Regal, Showcase, and Rave.

Whoosh down a giant water slide or go for a ride. From Six Flags New England in Agawam to Disney World in Orlando to SeaWorld in San Diego, AFT+ theme park discounts help you save up to \$20 per ticket at any one of 50 participating theme parks across the country.

### Travel Discounts

Check out [UnionPlusTravel.com](http://UnionPlusTravel.com) to book flights and hotels and save on worldwide tours and rentals cars.

Save on car rentals. Renting a car for a weekend getaway is less expensive with the Union Plus car rental discounts. Support your fellow union members at Alamo, Avis, Budget,

Enterprise, Hertz or National and save up to 25%. You can also save with Enterprise car rentals.

Take a trip. Save \$150 on worldwide vacation tours through Go Ahead Tours and book flights and hotels

(don't forget to check the link for union hotels).

Go to [UnionPlus.org/Entertainment](http://UnionPlus.org/Entertainment) or call 1-800-565-3712 and use ID# 744387769 to start saving on summer entertainment today. ■



SUPPORTING OUR SUPPORT STAFF

AFT MA President Tom Gosnell (seated left) with Lynn paraprofessionals Terry LaVasseur (seated right) and (standing left to right) Leslie Blake, Erin Doherty, Cathi Deveney and Barbara Houle. at the 2015 AFT MA/BTU Paraprofessional Conference



# Convention

Continued from page 1

spotless record of support during his years in the State Legislature.

When he promised to stay “cool, calm and collected,” Tolman got a laugh from those who had experienced his fiery speeches before. And even though he was able to keep his promise as he introduced the “opponents [who] want to change the rules [and] make us the problem,” he encouraged others in the room to take the opportunity of the Convention to “get fired up, get educated, and, most importantly, learn how we can get better together.”

“If we do that,” Tolman suggested, his pace and volume building, “there is no way we cannot be successful!”

Citing the receivership issues in Lawrence and Holyoke, Tolman observed that, “people want to pretend it is all for the good,” but maintained that the real matter is labor busting.

“You are the voice because you are all educated,” he suggested. “That’s why they are attacking you.”

As the Sergeants-at-Arms distributed sign-up sheets, Tolman suggested creating a “universal labor contact

In introducing her colleague, Yetman shared a story she had found that morning that related academic testing to medical testing and suggested that it was “silly” to expect people to study for such tests over the outcomes of which they had such little control.

“Our official position is that we are opposed to all high-stakes testing,” Angerhofer noted, citing anti-testing champion Diane Ravitch and noting that AFT MA enjoys the pride of teaching students who are consistently marked as tops in the country and the world.

Noting that teachers are not allowed to see the test, let alone help prepare it, Angerhofer asked “What are we being held accountable for?” He also questioned the role that MA Commissioner of Education Mitchell Chester has played, being that he is also Chair of the Board of Governors for PARCC.

“It’s an obvious conflict of interest,” Angerhofer suggested.

Posing Pearson as another enemy, Angerhofer concluded that, “It is up to us to show the way,” and quoted TV District Attorney Jack McCoy when he suggested that, “It starts with a ‘no.’”

When asked by Phillips if he were expecting his colleagues to stand up against PARCC at the risk of their

MA General Counsel Haidee Morris still suggested that the resolution “risks dismissal” of the teachers if they choose to stand up.

“Sending a message that this is ok... does not seem to me to be a very responsible thing to do,” Morris said.

Chelmsford delegate Ben Cole suggested boycotting Pearson and Executive Board member Mickey Dumont from Lowell suggested that the issue is not replacing MCAS with PARCC (especially as MCAS becomes more “aligned” with Common Core) but rather high-stakes testing in general. Even so, Gosnell suggested, “The thrust of this resolution is PARCC,” and Angerhofer echoed this, clarifying that the intent of the resolution was “to address PARCC and PARCC only.”

Boston delegate Marjorie Crosby noted that BTU has a teacher-parent committee related to testing and suggested that she and other locals “build support for this,” going so far as to propose the creation of a new committee to help organize the entire union.

In the end, the amended resolution passed unanimously.

“All this high stakes testing is odious,” Gosnell concluded.

After nominations for recently-vacated positions on the Executive Board were taken and confirmed (Jonathan Stavely replacing Catherine Chamberlain and Johnny McInnis replacing Phillips), the assembly took a break to discuss their opinions and ideas in a less formal setting. After a presentation of AFT benefits (many of which are discussed in the monthly “Benefit Bulletin” in these pages), Allred and Dubois invited the assembled and their colleagues to an AFT MA leadership training event September 26 and reminded the delegates about the rights and responsibilities they and their colleagues have as far as finances, reminding them all that, as Allred put it, “the union is a business” and that failure to pay per capita will result in failure to be invited to future conventions.

In his President’s Report, Gosnell reiterated the “diversity” of the union, noting how all members were “part of our educational mission.” He also mentioned the kickoff to the AFT’s 100th anniversary (see page 2) and then went over a list of recent issues and achievements. From Doherty’s appointment to the Board of Edu-

cation and AFT MA’s expanding participation in FirstBook to the national attention that continues to be lauded on the Oliver Partnership School in Lawrence, to a collaboration between the teachers and superintendent in Lowell to stave off “underperforming” status, Gosnell noted that we had much to celebrate and also much to worry about.

“The challenges

are great,” he admitted, “but we will deal with them!”

One of the most significant victories, Gosnell noted, was the recent defeat of the bill that would have allowed the cap on charter schools to be raised.

“Do not underestimate the role that all of us sitting here had,” he observed, noting that it was “the very first time that the charter school folks did not prevail at the State House.”

In addition to the continuing battle over charter schools, Gosnell also mentioned the potential for a Supreme Court battle over agency fee, the Foundation Budget Review Commission and the effort it is taking to convince those in power to release more funds to struggling schools and students. As for PARCC, Gosnell observed that delegates had “made your voice clear today, so that is the message that AFT MA will carry forth on PARCC.”

Overall, Gosnell concluded, “we are making progress.” However, he said, “we are not there yet.”

Speaking of funds, a constitutional amendment was then discussed that proposed raising union dues to help AFT MA fight more effectively for members, students, and the community at large. When it passed unanimously, Allred thanked the delegates sincerely, saying, “You have made this organization stronger through your participation.”

Before breaking again for lunch, the delegates stayed in their seats for a provocative and comprehensive presentation by AFT MA Representative Andy Powell regarding proposed raises in health care costs (see past two issues). In it, Powell discussed who is most likely to be affected, and how they can most effectively deal with the changes.

“He is one of the foremost experts on health insurance,” Gosnell said.

During the lunch, children of AFT MA members were presented with scholarships. As their credentials and future plans were discussed, it seemed that the future of the union was bright.

“Day by day,” Dumont observed, “teachers are rising up.” ■



## WELL-DESERVED APPLAUSE

Delegates from Chelmsford give a standing ovation to Chelmsford High School student Benjamin Siegel, who was awarded one of AFT MA’s annual scholarships



## STANDING BEHIND HIS COLLEAGUES

AFT MA President Tom Gosnell stands behind the 2015 Distinguished Service Award Winners (from left) Susan Uvanni, Dennis Ferreira, Jr., Barbara Boucher, Tim Angerhofer, and Ruth Adamides

list” that would tie all labor members together so they could all support each other more efficiently. “When they try to screw us,” he said, “we’ll get the word out.”

With this concrete action having been taken, it was time to discuss another. After the final credentials report of the 176 delegates was presented by Director of Organization Annemarie Dubois, Angerhofer rose to present a resolution regarding AFT MA’s position on PARCC and whether members should refuse to present it to their students.



## A HEALTHY PRESENTATION

AFT MA Representative Andy Powell discusses changes in health care rates

jobs, Angerhofer admitted the issue was “provocative” and said that he was “hoping for a healthy discussion where we can freely exchange ideas, take a good look at ourselves and define who we are.”

After a series of amendments were proposed and discussed, the resolution proposed all AFT MA locals (including those that were not k-12-affiliated) be notified of our opposition and that their representatives communicate it with superintendents and school committees in their districts and “urge them to adopt the same position.”

While Gosnell suggested that the amendments hold in order to “avoid risking putting teachers at risk of allegations of insubordination,” Boston delegate Seth Peterson pushed for action, citing the dozen teachers in Seattle who stood up against PARCC and did not lose their jobs.

“If we are not willing to take that action,” he observed, “it reflects poorly on the resolve of our union.”

United Teachers of Lowell (UTL) President Paul Georges then suggested that labor councils be included in the action.

“This has to be a unified effort,” the new WCAP radio host said, adding that testing “takes teachers away from primary function of educating kids and building relationships with kids.”

Other delegates discussed the possibility of working as parents first and opting out of the tests, but AFT



## KEEPING THE BEAT

Berklee College of Music faculty Danny Harrington and Rich Grudzinski perform during dinner





# 2015 Convention Report

## The State of the Union

The mission of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is a union that champions fairness, democracy, and high-quality public education, healthcare, and public services for students, their families and their communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

The American Federation of Massachusetts (AFT MA), as one of the AFT's state federations, wholeheartedly supports this mission.

We want what is good for children, fair to our members and collaboratively done.

AFT MA celebrated a major victory last July when the Massachusetts State Senate by a 26-13 vote refused to raise the cap on charter schools. In alliance with many organizations and through active involvement of our members, AFT MA conducted a lengthy and well organized campaign.

However, this issue still breathes. Apparently a law suit, claiming that the charter cap violates the state constitution, will be forthcoming. In addition, the advocates for charter schools will be active in the legislature. We shall be vigilant and prepared.

Last year the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to increase reliance on growth in MCAS scores to determine whether a school district is underperforming. Consequently, a district's composite score is 25% growth and 75% MCAS score. This moves in the right direction, but growth in MCAS scores still need to be a significantly larger portion of the composite score.

The Massachusetts AFL-CIO can nominate three persons to fill its seat on the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. One of the nominees was Ed Doherty, Assistant to the AFT MA President. Governor Patrick appointed him. Ed is the first educator to fill this seat in at least twenty years.

During the last session the legislature did not consider the proposal to reduce health care coverage for many active employees when they retire. Although the issue is underground right now, I anticipate that it will burst forth. Under the leadership of the AFL-CIO the unions have met to discuss strategies to thwart this proposal.

In addition, AFT MA will continue to advocate for the following issues:

1. An end to high stakes testing and a reduction in the number of mandated tests.
2. The development of evaluation systems that are supportive rather than punitive.
3. An expansion of wraparound services in our schools so that the effects of poverty can be diminished.
4. Massively increased funding for public libraries.
5. Maintenance of the current Medicare system and the preservation of health insurance for employees and retirees..
6. Massively increased funding for public higher education.
7. Adoption of a tax system that funds public education and all public services so that they will be of the highest quality.
8. Restoration of full collective bargaining rights for level 4 and 5 schools.

This list highlights some significant issues but is not meant to be exhaustive.

AFT MA, in alliance with like minded organizations, will fight for the above issues and the continuation of quality public education for our students from pre-kindergarten to higher education and the maintenance of public libraries for all residents. All members need to be activists, willing to articulate the values and ideals we believe are necessary for an American society committed to the wellbeing of all Americans. ■



**Thomas J. Gosnell**  
President of AFT Massachusetts

## Report on Organization

By Annemarie T. DuBois  
Director Of Organization

This year, members of AFT MA slogged through the snowiest winter on record and over every obstacle Mother Nature and those who would profit from undermining public education and public services could pile up. Despite the roadblocks our members drove school busses, cleared paths and stairs, opened schools and public libraries, prepared meals, and made phone calls to parents so that educators could meet their students through what seemed like one endless blizzard. They nursed patients and worked overtime so that their patients received necessary health care. Our members did the work they needed to do because they have committed their lives to those who depend upon them to do it.

Long before the first snow, the State Senate defeated a bill to eliminate the cap on Charter schools. Extensive lobbying, coalition building, and publicizing the negative effects of eliminating the cap in districts which constantly struggle for sufficient money to educate all students contributed to the Senate's 26-13 vote. In March, however, three partners in different firms (Foley Hoag, Wilmer-Hale, and Goodwin Procter) announced plans to file a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the cap. This unprecedented attack on public schools pits the money and personnel of three high powered law firms with ties to The Boston Foundation and other groups against the resources of the Commonwealth funded by taxpayers. Obviously, the war has just begun.

In December, 2014, State Auditor Suzanne Bump published an audit on charter schools in Massachusetts that confirmed many problems charter opponents have long cited. Highlighted deficiencies include inflating the total number of students seeking placement since some student's names appear simultaneously on multiple lists. Few charter schools disseminate information about best practices which the enabling legislation cited as a charter school's responsibility. DESE fails to assure the reliability of data submitted to it by charter schools and it inadequately secures the student and educator data it collects. Fewer licensed educators work in charter schools and teachers earn salaries that average 25% less than teachers in sending districts.

In addition to supporting charter schools operating without rigorous oversight and using unlicensed personnel as "teachers," DESE announced a new initiative tying re-licensure for current teachers to competency as demonstrated by teacher evaluations. The program announced in October purported transparency in planning, but public outcry forced the commissioner to withdraw it by mid-November.

For most of 2014, the election of the public officials who set the agendas of our public institutions and directly influence our workplaces and our financial futures took center stage. Members of AFT MA across the state worked on and contributed to political campaigns and ballot questions. While the vast majority of AFT MA endorsed candidates won their elections some did not, among them Congressman John Tierney a long-time AFT MA supporter and friend. Seth Moulton, the new congressman from the sixth district, has already become a familiar figure at the political meetings organized by the Lynn Teachers Union, and we look forward to working with him on our issues as we fight the Republican agenda in Congress.

The election also brought significant change to the State House where the Republican governor who favors increasing the number of charter schools has appointed charter school advocate James Peyser as his Secretary of Education. Prior to leaving office however, Governor Patrick appointed AFT MA's Ed Doherty to fill the AFL-CIO labor seat on the state Board of Education. Dr. Doherty has already joined the battle by voting against granting a Commonwealth Charter to the Bentley School in Salem and although not on the winning side of that vote, he has just begun to fight.

Health insurance for public employees again looms as a pressing issue since the state Group Insurance Commission (GIC), which provides health, dental, vision and life insurance to state employees, retirees, and some municipal employees, faces a deficit. The GIC has proposed increased copayments for services and increased employee contribution rates. If instituted, these new rates will impact municipalities currently providing health insurance outside the GIC, since the new rates will set the benchmark against which the Commonwealth will measure municipal insurance rates and products.

At an AFT-endorsed program organized by President Brant Duncan and the members of the Lynn Teachers Union (LTU), First Book provided one of the highlights of the school year. Members of the LTU opened the Harrington School on Saturday, 12/13/14, and provided more than 43,000 free books to students in Lynn. Months of planning and hours of book sorting culminated in a celebration of literacy and learning, complete with a visit from Santa and students and parents each leaving with five books to read.

Members of the Salem Teachers Union have forged new alliances with parents and community members. This spring they initiated a new partnership with the School Committee to work together to improve student success at the Bowditch Elementary School. A joint labor management team has begun to analyze barriers to achievement and has a goal of creating a plan for both immediate and long term interventions for success.

Several locals negotiated and ratified contracts this past year. The librarians at the West Springfield Library ratified a three-year contract with salary increases of 1%, 2% and 2% with increased longevity and a new top step.

Teachers at Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School ratified a three-year contract with raises of 3% in FY16, 2.75% in FY17, and 2.75% in FY18. The contract also increased longevity, expanded the use of sick leave to include family member illness, increased the number of teacher workrooms, and provided just cause for discipline.

Teachers at Greater Lawrence Regional ratified a three-year contract with salary increases of 2% and 2% in the first two years and 3% in the third year. They also improved language in their teacher evaluation contract provision to provide teachers with better protection.

Teachers in Lynn ratified a three-year contract with salary increases of 2% each year, the first retroactive to the 2013-2014 school year. The contract included an increase in the stipend for members who attain National Board Certification to 5% of the Masters Thirty column, step 11 rate. The con

Continued on page 3A

## 2015 Legal Report

By Haidee Morris, General Counsel,  
Joseph Lettiere, Associate Counsel,  
Harold Jones, Associate Counsel,  
AFT Massachusetts

On a general note, the number of teacher dismissals pursuant to the statutory change in evaluation process has continued to increase.

In a long fought case of interest, we were at last successful in obtaining a positive result for a Union activist at Longy School of Music. The arbitrator found that administration at Longy had a predisposition to be rid of the Union activist, that it set about a plan for his ultimate departure, that it ignored relevant evidence and conducted its investigation without an open mind, failing to consider evidence that all of this renowned teacher's students wished to continue to study with him. The arbitrator found that the faculty member's conduct was well within appropriate limits and ordered retroactive reinstatement, back pay and front pay.



At the National Labor Relations Board the Longy Faculty Union also prevailed in a case where the School continued to send out employment letters which stated that all employees were employees at will. In fact, the contract requires just cause for discipline and dismissal. This incorrect information could lead employees to conclude that they were employees at will and had no protection. The Judge found that the School violated the National Labor Relations Act by such action, as it suggested that the employees' collective bargaining representative was irrelevant.

The judge further found that the School's refusal to provide the Union information on new hires on an ongoing basis prevented the Union from effectively policing its contract. The Board ordered the School to provide this information going forward and also to post a notice that it would not violate the Act. ■

Please check out our NEW website at  
[www.aftma.org](http://www.aftma.org)



# 2015 AFT Massachusetts Executive Board Members



**Tim Angerhofer, Building Representative, AFT Amesbury, Local 1033** Tim is Vice President of the AFT MA Executive Board.



**Patricia Armstrong, Boston Teachers Union, Local 66** Patricia is Vice President of the AFT MA Executive Board.



**Deb Blinder, Holliston Federation of Teachers, Local 3275** Deb is the former President of the Holliston Federation of Teachers.



**Brenda Chaney, Boston Teachers Union, Local 66** Brenda is the Community Outreach Liaison for the Boston Teachers Union.



**Kathy Delaney, Lawrence Teachers Union, Local 1019** Kathy is Treasurer of the Lawrence Teachers Union.



**Catherine Deveney, Lynn Teachers Union, Local 1037** Cathy is Second Vice President of the Lynn Teachers Union.



**Patricia Driscoll, Lawrence Teachers Union, Local 1019** Pat is retired from a long teaching career in the Lawrence Public Schools.



**Marianne Dumont, United Teachers of Lowell, Local 495** Mickey is the Executive Vice President of the United Teachers of Lowell.



**Brant Duncan, Lynn Teachers Union, Local 1037** Brant is President of Local 1037 and previously served as a teacher and paraprofessional in the Lynn Public Schools.



**J. Michael Earle, United Teachers of Lowell, Local 495.** Michael is Staff Representative and former Vice President of the United Teachers of Lowell.



**Margaret Farrell, United Teachers of Lowell, Local 495** Retired after 47 years of teaching, Midge is now Chairperson of the Retired Teachers Group in Lowell.



**Jenna Fitzgerald, Boston Teachers Union, Local 66** Jenna has retired as a paraprofessional field representative for the Boston Teachers Union.



**Richard Flaherty, Medway Federation of Teachers, Local 3645** Dick serves as Assistant to the President of the Medway Federation of Teachers.



**Paul Georges, United Teachers of Lowell, Local 495** Paul is President of the United Teachers of Lowell and a vice president of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO.



**Daniel Haacker, Massachusetts Library Staff Association, Local 4928** Dan is Assistant Director of Milton Public Library and VP of the Mass. Library Staff Association.



**Joyce Harrington, Salem Teachers Union, Local 1258** Joyce is President of the Salem Teachers Union and a reading specialist at Witchcraft Heights Elementary.



**Susan Leahy, Billerica Federation of Teachers, Local 1677** Sue is a retired teacher at the Vining School in Billerica. She serves on the AFT MA COPE Committee.



**Johnny McInnis, Boston Teachers Union, Local 66** Johnny is a long-time music teacher who is a champion of developmental learning involving movement as well.



**Frank McLaughlin, Lawrence Teachers Union, Local 1019** Frank is President of the Lawrence Teachers Union.



**Bruce Nelson, Peabody Federation of Teachers, Local 1289** Bruce is President of the Peabody Federation of Teachers. He is a retired English teacher.



**Joseph Poli, Southeastern Regional Reg. Teachers Fed., Local 1849** Joseph is Vice President of Local 1849 and also serves as Chair of the Grievance Committee.



**Robert Salois, Chelsea Teachers' Union, Local 1340** Robert is the President of the Chelsea Teachers' Union and a math teacher in Chelsea.



**Bruce Sparfven, UMass Faculty Federation, Local 1895** Bruce is Vice President of the UMass Faculty Federation at UMass Dartmouth and chair of the Educational Services Unit.



**Jonathan Staveley, Chelmsford Federation of Teachers, Local 3569** Jonathan is a Social Studies teacher in Chelmsford and served as an executive VP for the Chelmsford Federation of Teachers



**Richard Stutman, Boston Teachers Union, Local 66** Richard is President of the BTU. He formerly taught at O'Bryant High School and Theodore Roosevelt Middle School.



**Gale Thomas, Lynn Teachers Union, Local 1037** Gale is a long-time activist in the Lynn Teachers Union. She is a retired teacher at the E.J. Harrington School.



# 2015 AFT Massachusetts Staff



**Walter Armstrong, Field Representative**  
Walter was previously the president of the Bellingham Municipal Employees, part of AFSCME Council 93.



**Eric Blanchet, Field Representative** Eric graduated from the UMass Labor Center and worked for SEIU before joining the AFT MA team.



**Michael F. Canavan, Field Representative for Legislation** Mike has been with AFT MA. for more than 25 years and has served locals across the state.



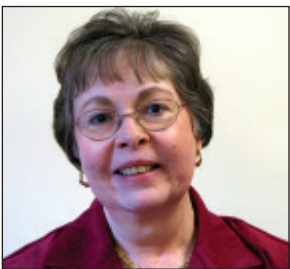
**Jennifer L. Daniel, Office Manager**  
Jennifer graduated from Bristol Community College and has been with AFT Massachusetts since 1994.



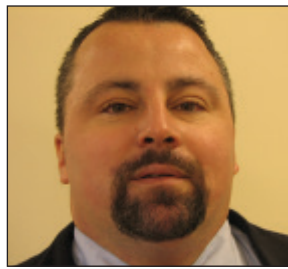
**Edward Doherty, Special Assistant to the President** Ed served as president of the Boston Teachers Union before joining the staff of AFT Massachusetts.



**Mary Ann Dority, Secretary** Mary Ann has been on the staff of AFT Massachusetts since 1994. She previously held sales and marketing positions.



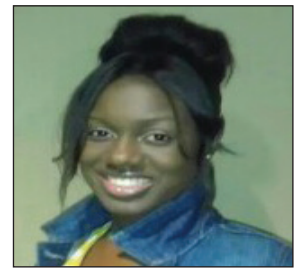
**Annemarie T. DuBois, Director of Organization**  
Past president of the Peabody Federation of Teachers, Annemarie was a former English teacher at Peabody Veterans Memorial High School.



**Shawn Flood, Field Representative** Shawn is a former field representative with the AFT Northern New England Council. He also worked as an organizer for the New Mexico Federation of Teachers.



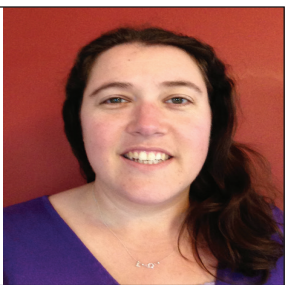
**Dianne M. Heeley, Field Representative** Dianne is a former field representative for Local 285 of the Service Employees International Union and a former senior field representative for Local 925, SEIU.



**Monique Jackson, Receptionist**  
Monique attended Oakwood University in Huntsville, AL, and has been with AFT MA since December, 2014.



**Harold Jones, Associate Council** Harold also works with organizations such as Massachusetts Interfaith Worker Justice.



**Caryn Laflamme, Field Representative** Before coming to AFT, Caryn was with AFSCME Council 93 for over nine years both as a field representative and an organizer.



**Brian LaPier, Field Representative** Brian is a member of the Lynn Teachers Union. He formerly taught at the Thurgood Marshall Middle School and Lynn English High School.



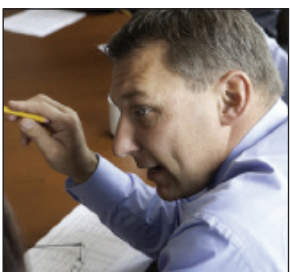
**Joseph R. Lettiere, Associate Counsel**  
Joe formerly served as associate counsel for Council 93 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.



**Haidee Morris, General Counsel** Haidee was formerly General Counsel to the State Secretary of Labor and Commissioner at the Labor Relations Department.



**Daniel Murphy, Director of Education Policy**  
A former researcher, writer, and analyst, Dan comes to AFT MA from AFT's national headquarters.



**Andrew Powell, Field Representative** Andy formerly worked as a health insurance consultant with Boston Benefits Partners, advising public sector unions.



**Michael Regan, Field Representative**  
A former history teacher, football coach and local co-president, Mike joined AFT MA in September of 2011.



**Matt Robinson, Editor**  
Matt is an English, journalism, and boxing teacher who has edited and contributed to publications around the world.



**Jeremy Shenk, Field Representative**  
Prior to joining AFT MA, Jeremy served the United Steel Workers (PA), SEIU 615, and Community Labor United in Boston.

## Report on Organization

*Continued from page 1A*

tract eliminated separate religious holiday leave language and added a fourth personal day.

Paraprofessionals in Lynn also ratified a three-year contract with 2% salary increases yearly, retroactive to the 2013-2014 school year, and guaranteed longer hours for elementary instructional paraprofessionals and lunch aides. Bargaining unit members also received a fourth personal day.

Paraprofessionals in the Masconomet Regional School district ratified a three-year agreement that increased wages significantly by instituting a step scale which raises salaries 25% over three years.

Librarians in Wakefield ratified a three-year contract which provides rais-

es of 8.75% over three years and a new top step 1.5% above the previous top step.

U Mass Faculty members ratified a new three-year contract with guaranteed annual salary increases of 2.8%, with the possibility of an additional merit-based increase in each year. Members of the U Mass Education Support Unit also ratified a three-year agreement with guaranteed annual increases of 3% with additional increases possible, based on merit. Trustees had sought an increase in the merit portion of salary and a decrease in the guaranteed compensation. Both contracts become effective if the state funds them.

Ed Doherty, Dianne Heeley, Shawn Flood, Andrew Powell, Walter Armstrong, Mike Regan, Caryn Laflamme, Eric Blanchet and new Field Representative Jeremy Shenk and I worked with our locals in contract negotiation and

enforcement and member training. Brian Lapierre organized our members for the November elections. Dan Murphy focused on the education policy issues we confront every day. John Coley Walsh and Mike Canavan lobbied at the State House on behalf of our members and those for whom they work.

Matt Robinson chronicled our stories in *The Advocate*. Office manager Jennifer Daniel, secretary Mary Ann Dority, and receptionist/secretary Monique Jackson continued to assist our members at the AFTMA office.

As this beautiful spring day signals the end of an agonizing winter, the commitment of our members signals their dedication to their students, patients and clients that no amount of corporate profit can destroy or duplicate. Perhaps Albert Camus said it best: "In the midst of winter, I found in me an invincible summer." ■



**J. Coley Walsh, Field Representative for Legislation** Coley is a former guidance counselor at the Lawrence Regional School where he served as President of Local 1707.



# Secretary Treasurer's REPORT

## The State of the Union's Finances



**Mark Allred**  
Secretary  
Treasurer,  
AFT Massa-  
chusetts

Once again, I am pleased to report that the finances of the organization are sound and currently in good shape. 2014 was a year that once again saw a modest surplus. However, the challenges that are ahead require the convention this year to consider an increase in per capita, the first since 2011. Over the last year, the executive board has increased staff in order to meet the growing needs of our locals. The biggest challenge I had to deal with since last November was our lease, which expires in July.

I will present the need for an increase during the convention but wanted you to know that we have done all we could to hold down costs including cutting Internet and

telephone costs by 50% over the last year. This is an ongoing challenge but we have come to the point where an increase is necessary.

As I say every year, our staff works very hard each and every day to deliver the services to our locals, which is required to protect their contracts and further the benefits of union membership. They have gone over and beyond their own assignments to cover other locals when someone is out for an extended time. I hope you will take time at this convention to thank those who work with your local and show your appreciation, I am sure many of you already have done so. Our membership is the backbone of our organization and we have a first rate staff to provide exemplary service.

As before, I must say thank you for the opportunity to be your Secretary-Treasurer. It is an honor and a pleasure to serve this organization.

Enjoy the convention

## Congratulations!

### 2015 AFT MA Scholarship Winners

AFT MA congratulates the winners of the 2015 Albert Shanker, Sandra Feldman and Jay Porter Scholarships. Each winner, a high school senior and dependent of an AFT Massachusetts member, will receive \$1500 towards the cost of his or her college or post-secondary education. Congratulations to this year's winners and best of luck with your future endeavors!

**Albert Shanker,**  
**Sandra Feldman,**  
**and Jay Porter Scholarships**  
Michael Doody – Mt. St. Charles

Finoa Fitzgerald –  
Boston Latin School

Alexander Healey –  
Billerica Memorial High School

Sean Lundergan –  
Danvers High School

Brianna Raposo –  
B.M.C. Durfee High School

Kayla Rich –  
Billerica Memorial High School

Rebecca Rubenstein –  
Bedford High School

Benjamin Siegal –  
Chelmsford High School

### Distinguished Service Award Recipients

Congratulations to the winners of the 2015 Distinguished Service Awards! The awards are presented annually to AFT MA members who have demonstrated an outstanding level of service and dedication to their union locals.

### Educators in the K-12 System, Vocational Education and School Collaboratives

Tim Angerhofer -  
AFT Amesbury

Susan Uvanni -  
United Teachers of Lowell

### School-Related Personnel

Ruth Adamides -  
New Bedford Federation  
of Paraprofessionals

Barbara Boucher - Springfield  
Federation of Paraprofessionals

Dennis Ferreira, Jr. -  
United Teachers of Lowell

Betsy Robinson - Springfield  
Federation of Paraprofessionals

### AFT MA Professional Staff Union Jay Porter Scholarship

Michael Tice -  
Chelmsford High School

## Statement of Financial Position: April 30, 2014

### ASSETS

Cash	1,332,342
Receivables	431,416
Prepaid Expenses	56,521
Furniture & Equipment	37,505
Security Deposit	12,465

TOTAL ASSETS 2,003,611

### LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

#### CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accounts payable	24,118
Accrued Expenses	72,103
Assistance to Locals Payable	0

TOTAL LIABILITIES 96,211

TOTAL NET ASSETS 1,879,660

TOTAL LIABILITIES & ASSETS 2,003,611

### REVENUES

Per Capita Dues	3,947,608
At large Dues	20
AFT Rebate	42,404
AFT Assistance	32,040
AFT Defense Fund Grant	16,212
Interest Income	1,353
Insurance Admin Fees	2,815

TOTAL REVENUES 4,082,702

### EXPENSES

Advertising	2,440
Assistance to Members and Locals	64,070
Automobiles	76,659
Charitable Contributions	52,830
Conferences & Conventions	55,821
Contributions to Cand. & Refer.	31,337
Depreciation	11,631
Employee Benefits	532,306
Expenses Reimbursements	137,722
Insurance	27,238
Library	25,005
Maintenance	487
Newspaper	115,400
Office Supplies	96,499
Payroll Taxes	163,112
Pension Plan	333,212
Per Capita – AFT	3,122
Postage	9,671
Professional Fees	35,650
Public Relations	39,000
Rent	217,565
Salaries	1,950,663
Scholarships	12,000
Telephone & Utilities	11,371

TOTAL EXPENSES 4,011,103

INCREASE IN NET ASSETS 71,599

ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR 1,719,053

ASSETS AT END OF YEAR 1,879,660

## The AFT Massachusetts Professional Staff Union Jay E. Porter Memorial Scholarship

The AFT Massachusetts Professional Staff Union has established a new scholarship to honor the memory of our dear friend and colleague Jay Porter. We're pleased to announce that to date more than \$10,000 has been donated to support the scholarship. If you or your local would like to make a donation in Jay's memory, send it to:

**AFT MA Professional Staff Union**  
**Scholarship Committee**  
c/o AFT Massachusetts  
38 Chauncy Street,  
Boston, MA 02111



# Summa Cum Laude: Jon Damian

With its world-renowned faculty and impressive performance space, Berklee College of Music attracts the world's best and brightest and is a true hub of creativity. What does it mean, then, to be the head of the college's Creative Workshop Ensemble (CreW)? Just ask Jon Damian!

A native of Brooklyn, Damian was first attracted to music by his mother's whistling. "It was like listening to a beautiful aria, the way she whistled over her lasagna-making," he recalls, noting that he was also inspired by his sister's record collection that featured such favorites as Count Basie, Billy Holiday, and Bobby Hackett. "It was a great listening foundation for me."

As his mother was able to combine two forms of art (music and cooking), Damian often espouses mixed-media mélanges in his own work. As a guitarist, he has performed with Luciano Pavarotti, The Boston Pops and Boston

Symphony Orchestra, Nancy Wilson, and fellow guitar wizards Bill Frisell and John Pizzarelli. As an author, Damian has recently published his third book, *Fresh Music: Explorations with the Creative Workshop Ensemble for Musicians, Artists, and Teachers*

(which is available at [www.JonDamian.com](http://www.JonDamian.com)). The book chronicles 40 years of CreW creations, inviting readers to participate as if they were at one of his world-famous workshops and immersing them in creative experiences that they can make their own.

When asked about CREW,

Damian says, "Participants don't need advanced skills to participate. The goals, he suggests, are to 'heighten listening skills... and compose and improvise original works spontaneously.'"

Its "guilt-free" philosophy has inspired many musicians, bandleaders and others to express themselves more creatively.

When asked how his visual and musical machinations meld, Damian suggests that "they are one with no separations." In fact, in his book, Damian coins the term "poly-artists" to describe those who have what he calls "an awareness of all art media as a seamless medium."

Damian came to Berklee with the help of Veteran's benefits earned for service in the Far East. He even-



**MULTI-MEDIA MASTER**  
Berklee professor Jon Damian

## Rising in Defense

### "Champion of education" Jonathan Kozol speaks out

As the armies of anti-public education forces seem to be growing, it was encouraging to see a packed First Parish Church in Harvard Square on May 6 when Citizens for Public Schools ([www.citizensforpublicschools.org](http://www.citizensforpublicschools.org)) sponsored a talk by Jonathan Kozol - the man AFT MA President Tom Gosnell calls "a champion of education." Kozol was there to speak on behalf of public school teachers, administrators and students who, as he put it, "take an awful beating these days and receive an awful lot of criticism from people who know nothing about teaching."

Though they may be "the universal scapegoats for all the injustices in society," Kozol noted that, "teachers are my heroes and it is a wonderful profession!"

Before Kozol spoke, CPS President Ann O'Halloran took an informal poll of how many people in the room were involved in education (most raised their hands) and then recalled reading Kozol's seminal book, *Death at an Early Age*, admitting that it led her to teach (as it probably has for many others).

After thanking his many friends and colleagues in AFT MA, CPS, the Boston Teachers Union (particularly Richard Stutman, who was in attendance along with many other colleagues), the Black Educators' Alliance and the METCO Program, the former Boston Public Schools teacher echoed O'Halloran by taking his own poll of people who were "real life classroom teachers" or who were otherwise professionally involved or were hoping to become involved in education.

"The people who take care of the poorest people need to be protected and defended," the Newton native maintained, noting that, "Not only are teachers being attacked, but also the very institution of public schools."

In reintroducing himself and going over his credentials, Kozol admitted that, when he started out, "I knew nothing about teaching. I went to Harvard." He also recalled years spent in a "haunted house" of a school, from which he was fired for teaching a poem by African American master Langston Hughes.

"It's really crazy how this country works," Kozol mused. "I was officially fired for what was called 'curriculum

deviation' and then was hired by the Federal Government for curriculum development!"

After leaving Boston, Kozol spent some time in what he saw as "the poorest neighborhood in the South Bronx," but has since returned many times speaking about his dozen books and the issues that still matter to public education. Reflecting on his home district, Kozol observed, "an awful lot has changed in Boston since I began to teach," noting that, "the quality of teachers is infinitely higher than 50 years ago," and suggesting that, "teachers in Boston represent one of the best and most devoted urban districts in the U.S." In addition to diminished class sizes, Kozol discussed the increase in minority leadership and the "illegalization of explicit racism" in the Boston Public Schools. "Still," he pointed out, the introduction of exam schools offers a "post-modern version of the dual system we were fighting 50 years ago."

While such lingering issues are not unique to Boston, Kozol noted the disparity between white children and children of color in these "high-performing schools" and how different the percentages are than in the general population in the districts.

"Every few years, officials promise they will 'fix' this," Kozol recalled, using the recently-received Holyoke district as an all-too-contemporary example, "but it never works."

While such inequalities are evident everywhere - from Boston to Baltimore to small towns in Iowa and elsewhere - Kozol still stresses that they are, "simply unacceptable."

"Separate and unequal schools are still the order of the day," he observed, suggesting that "Brown v. Board" was "correct" in stating that "isolating Black and Latino children in a differ-

ent place where they cannot contaminate the education of white and middle class people does damage to those children that may not be reversible."

"It is an irreversible theft, despite what politicians promise," Kozol reiterated. "You only get to be a two year old once, and once it's gone, it's gone forever."

Comparing urban public preschool programs to private ones that are more typically found in wealthier suburbs, Kozol decried what are often called "The Baby Ivies" for which parents pay up to \$40,000 per year to enroll their tiny toddlers. "How much is that per pound," he mused, smiling.

As far as answers, Kozol was well prepared, as always.

"If I had the power," he said, "I



**PARTNERS FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION**  
Jonathan Kozol consults with AFT MA President Tom Gosnell before speaking in Cambridge

would take all the money that is going to multi-billion dollar testing organizations and put it into rich and exciting pre-k and early childhood education. Unfortunately, in this wealthiest

of nations, we do not provide that to millions of children."

What makes the matter worse is how the very same politicians who "turn their backs" on young learners later insist on testing them.

"And if the scores are low, do they blame themselves?" Kozol queried the knowing audience. "No- they blame the teachers!"

Such "pathogenic testing mania" is becoming a growing problem among what Kozol called "numerically-addicted people." And while many students are opting out as part of a growing movement (more information can be found at [www.fairtest.org/get-involved/opting-out](http://www.fairtest.org/get-involved/opting-out)), many teachers fear losing their jobs if they try to buck the system, even if the option involves giving up weeks of learning time to prepare for and administer the

tests. tually became a full-time professor who also teaches performance privately. While music and art may be his primary proclivities, Damian says that writing was also a natural extension of his creative endeavors. "My books are reflections of my curiosities as a music and art student," he observes.

From the creative resources for the "curious" guitarist in his debut book, *The Guitarist's Guide to Composing and Improvising*, to the more nuts-and-bolts guidance in *The Chord Factory: Build Your Own Guitar Chord Dictionary*, Damian has combined his passions to support his creative colleagues, even using cartoons in recent projects.

While he is still very busy with teaching at Berklee, Damian is already at work on another book (a workbook companion to *The Guitarist's Guide*) and, is shaping a sequel to a popular album he made with Bill Frisell.

"I wish I could say I am going on sabbatical," the tireless creator smiles, "but I can't!" ■

tests.

"Even principals are running scared," Kozol observed. "They know that if they cannot pump the scores each year by whatever arbitrary number the government demands, they will lose their jobs or have their schools shut down or simply be humiliated."

As a result, the glories of public education are being threatened as so many elements that once made it noble are being cut out.

"Curiosity and spontaneity are not tested," Kozol noted. "Authenticity is never listed as a standard.... Depth of feeling is not tested; only mechanical correctness."

And while good teachers may still be able to "use...passion to unlock motivation" and to encourage general intellectual curiosity, they often do so at their own peril.

In many schools, the situation is further complicated by students with special needs or new immigrants for whom English is not a native language. In such schools, Kozol observed, "scores remain stagnant or they actually decline." It is at this point, he said, that something "truly curious" occurs. Commercial forces descend upon the school in an alleged effort to "rescue" the children from the "failings" of the public system.

"It is the entire ethos of a corporate society at its most predatory level," Kozol suggested, noting how many so-called education management organizations (EMOs) hire young people who have never studied education.

"When was it decided that the upper tenth of one percent should be allowed to shape the wants and aspirants of low-income children," Kozol queried. "Who gave them that entitlement?"

While education has clearly become what the Obama administration terms a "race to the top," Kozol wisely pointed out that, "there cannot be a top without a bottom."

For Kozol, however, that bottom is the basis upon which education should be built.

"Children have value in the first place," he emphasized. "We don't need to pump it into them in an anxiety-ridden atmosphere that often spends as much as half a year preparing for exams."

Asking his colleagues to stand with him, Kozol pledged to "keep fighting these battles" until his final day.

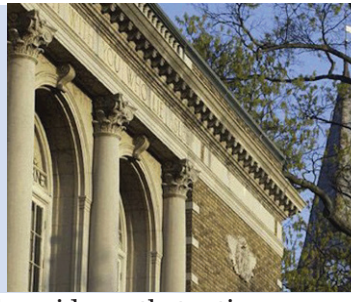
"Life goes so fast," he concluded. "Use it well!" ■





## On Campus

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



## Evaluating Student Ratings

It's that time of the year again when students evaluate their professors. In a mass of good reviews, it is that one cutting comment that keeps us up nights. Real concern emerges when these evaluations become the cornerstone of merit and promotion decisions.

Having been a student for all those many years, I recall evaluating my teachers using student evaluations of teaching (SET) with a mixture of emotions. I enjoyed the opportunity to give my opinions (always!), especially in a situation where I was otherwise largely powerless. But I struggled as well with the pressure of saying something potentially meaningful. I had one teacher in law school I gave awful reviews to. He taught Constitutional Law, the class I most looked forward to taking. I only attended a few classes before deciding he was taking all the joy and excitement out of a subject I loved. I taught myself the material and returned to class to take the exam. I probably shouldn't be telling this story, but the point is that when the time came to evaluate this professor, I took great pleasure in voicing my displeasure. In retrospect, my critiques were as uninformed and pointless as the student who once wrote on my course evaluation form

that the book wasn't useful...because he never bought it!

So here is the first problem: What students desire, even what they expect, is not necessarily what makes a good learning experience. Whether the material is well covered does not seem like a question suited to someone whose familiarity with the subject began with that particular class. But that only begins to address the concerns. SETs have been found to contain an ever-evolving set of biases. In an older study, women faculty were found to get lower ratings than their male colleagues and Black faculty received lower mean scores than their counterparts. Students in required classes also tend to give their instructors lower ratings. Freshman are said to be the harshest critics, giving the lowest ratings to their professors.

It is also typical for fewer than 50% of students in a class to complete their SET. Perhaps students see it as meaningless, or they are concerned about retribution. In any case, it is the small sample - very small in a class of 30 or fewer students - that should raise concerns. Small response numbers invalidate any statistical analysis. And it is the fear of every teacher that the only students who will take the time to complete the evaluation are those who

are angry. The evidence that ratings are bifurcated gives support to these fears. The recent trend toward administering SETs online will only exaggerate the situation. After all, if we are only getting 50% response or less from students sitting in a classroom at the end of class, how many students will bother to follow a link in an email? Students are under pressure and this is not likely to be a priority unless they are really happy or really upset. A recent trend is to require teachers to explain the low numbers, as if it is their fault.

At UMass Dartmouth, we prefer to refer to the SET as "Student Rating Forms" to reinforce the belief that students aren't qualified to evaluate faculty. A better option might be a "Student Opinion Survey." As Philip Stark noted in his 2014 study, An Evaluation of Course Evaluations, "We don't measure teaching effectiveness. We measure what students say, and pretend it's the same thing." In 2003 the Faculty Senate at the University of Washington approved a set of recommendations for using ratings in merit and promotion matters. They suggest limiting the use of SETs and never using them as the sole factor in evaluating teaching. Stark offers specific recommendations, including refraining from use of averages as they are rarely statistically significant, avoiding comparing faculty across levels, sizes

and disciplines, and spending more time observing teaching and teaching materials and less time on numbers.

It appears to be likely that SETs will soon be implemented in K-12. It would be wise to learn from the lessons of your higher education sisters and brothers. ■



### COACH OF THE YEAR

**The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association named Assabet Valley Regional Technical High Girls Basketball Coach Frank Ferreer the 2014-15 Coach of the Year**

**Support the next generation of MA teachers**

## MENTOR WITH THE ASPIRE INSTITUTE

**The Wheelock College Aspire Institute is recruiting current and retired teachers to mentor Boston area teachers in their 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years of teaching**

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**Deadline to apply is May 31!**

## After the Bell:

### Myra S. Wolovick

In this column, we celebrate our members and their "further lives" after retiring from teaching. Should you wish to participate or suggest someone, please write to [advocate@aftma.net](mailto:advocate@aftma.net).

#### What got you into teaching?

In the late 60's, or early 70's, the actor Cliff Robertson portrayed a mentally challenged adult in the movie "Charlie", based on the book "Flowers for Algernon." The theme of the movie inspired me to "encourage" young children with disabilities to become, as much as possible, contributing members of their communities. At the age of 41, with the support of my husband and three (3) children, I enrolled into North Shore Community College, Beverly, MA, going on to Lesley University, (College) Cambridge, MA, for my Bachelor of Science in Education. In 1985, while still teaching, I received my Master of Science in ED from Simmons College, Boston, MA.



**IT'S ALL ABOUT STUDENTS**  
**Myra S. Wolovick**

#### How long did you teach? What subjects? What grades?

For almost 22 years, I taught at Peabody Veterans Memorial High School in the Special ED Dept. I loved it, and still miss it. I chaperoned almost

every school event and was Key Club Advisor for several years.

#### What is the greatest lesson you learned as a teacher?

The students are hurting, confused, and tempted by too many negative surroundings. Keeping them focused on studying/learning is not an easy task.

#### What are you doing now and how does it relate to your life in education?

Because I had to retire much earlier than anticipated, due to the High School becoming a "sick building", and me becoming very ill as a result of that, I am still limited to where I can participate. However, I do belong to an anti-bullying group held in the Gifford Youth Activity Center. Very serious business. I am also a member of the Carling Community Group in my Temple, which interacts with the students in the religious school. And, of course, I volunteer for many activities in my community.

#### What is your advice to current teachers?

Being a teacher is all about and for the students. Be consistent, firm, demanding their best; and if you do not have a sense of humor, develop one! ■





## Retiree Corner

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



### ATTENTION TEACHERS:

At the initiative of AFT MA, the Non-Public School Bill has again been filed.

H2426, filed by Representative Timothy Toomey, Jr., will allow one to purchase up to FOUR years of non-public school service.

As I am often asked about this service at seminars, I wanted to make the knowledge of the bill available to you. Contact the Rep at Timothy.Toomey@mahouse.gov and let him know of your interest in the bill and to be made aware when a hearing will be conducted. Make your Reps and Senators aware of your interest in the bill and ask them to support it.

### SENIOR SEMINARS

**How to Protect Your Nest Egg**  
Saturday June 27, 2015, 10 am-noon  
314 Main Street, Unit 105, Wilmington

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 any seminar, email contact@retireesunited.org or call 781-365-0205. Please give the name of the seminar, your name, phone number and the number attending.

## Never Give Up!

When one is working for justice, a good motto is "Never give up." This is especially true when the battle involves legislation, as most politicians count on the fact you will stop fighting long before they have to do the right thing.

Massachusetts Retirees United is supporting many initiatives to correct injustices. The bills and their numbers as well as a brief summary follow:

H3146, filed by Representative Jim Micelli, and S1396, filed by Senator Tom McGee, is our Veteran's Bill. When Governor Weld signed the bill in 1996 to allow those who were veterans and still working to add up to three years of their military service to their creditable service, those retired at the time were left behind. There are nearly 600 retired teachers still living who fall into this category. They fought for us and now it is our turn to stand by them and get them this benefit! Please speak to your local veteran's agent to support these bills.

H2313, filed by representative Tom Golden, makes an adjustment to the pensions of those who retired prior to July 2004 and took an Option B/ Option C or their survivors. The

penalties attached to these options were greatly reduced in 2004. It would be both an expensive and very timely task to recalculate the pensions of these people so we have come up with a compromise by having a flat rate adjustment.

H2029, filed by Representative Jim O'Day, will require hospitals to provide both written and oral notices of patients admitted to the hospitals as to whether they are there in patient or observation status.

Through the efforts of the MRU membership, the amount of money one could make if they returned to a public sector job in retirement was increased by \$15,000. This organization was the only one to ask to have that bill filed and was the only one to work for and obtain its passage. Now we are trying to increase the hours to 1,500 hours that one can work if returning to a public sector job. S1418, filed by Senator Michael Rodrigues, asks for this increase in hours.

There is a new law in Massachusetts saying that, if you have your windshield wipers on, you must also have your headlights on. The fine for this was small but the original law was

going to impose a surcharge to your insurance. I had lengthy conversations with Representative Shaunna O'Connell who filed with Representative Jim Lyons to have the surcharge repealed. I was recently notified that our efforts paid off and the surcharge has been dropped. Never give up!

There are a number of COLA bills that have recently been filed, but the two I feel have the best opportunity of passing is S1406, filed by Senator Pacheco, and H2302, filed by Representative Garballey. S1406 would immediately raise the COLA base to \$14,000. Then it would raise it to \$15,000 in 2016 and the following year to \$16,000. H2302 will raise the COLA base to \$16,000 immediately.

These are the main bills that we are supporting in this session at the state level. We appreciate everyone doing their part by asking their member of the House and Senate at Beacon Hill to support the passage of these bills and correct the lack of fairness that exists in so many instances. Working together we can prevail, but we must never give up! ■

## Policy Perspective: Transition Specialists

By Cory O'Hayer

Students in Massachusetts are entitled to a free and public education until they receive a high school diploma or reach age 22, at which point students with special needs are to be provided with transitional services so as to progress in either a career catered to their abilities or how to achieve an independent lifestyle. Special education students too should be ready to transition from school to adult life by graduation or age 22, and transition services should be addressed at IEP meetings beginning no later than age 14. In 2012 the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education created the Transition Specialist Endorsement as part of an ongoing effort to improve service access for special education students ages 14 to 22 who are preparing to enter an independent lifestyle.

According to the DESE guidelines' description of the endorsement, the establishment of a specialist position is one potential solution for what is a major and growing problem. Only 25% of adults with disabilities between 20 and 24 years old are employed and half earn less than \$15,000. With a statewide decline in access and enrollment in vocational high schools, many skills-based learning methods have been foregone in favor of subjects more quantifiable for standardized testing. An individual with a Transition Specialist Endorsement is to guide these students from their completion of their formal public education into an independent lifestyle after having aged out of the system.

The primary goal of the position is to provide students with special needs the appropriate individualized support they need to live independently and successfully upon exiting special education. Though listed in IDEA, 2004

as being a results-oriented process that is centered around the development of the student for their post-school career, the specification that a specialist guide the transition is not stated in the bill. Furthermore, The Commonwealth's use of a special education trained individual emphasizes that while not a traditional academic subject, an endorsed teacher would have to be highly trained in order to work with a challenging population.

The training for individuals seeking a Transition Specialist Endorsement is comprehensive. An individual seeking the endorsement must have had a minimum of two years of special education teaching experience, guidance, social work or work as a rehabilitation counselor, must have completed a training program as well as 150 hours of field based experience. As this endorsement is offered by a handful of Massachusetts universities, partial tuition reimbursement is available to teachers enrolled in such programs.

Among the goals listed in the DESE's mission statement, it is the department's intent to strengthen the Commonwealth's public education system so that every student is prepared to succeed in postsecondary education. That postsecondary education is often understood to mean higher education and advanced degrees. Students for whom additional attention and support is needed have historically been underserved as they exit their formal education and begin independent living. With the introduction of the Transition Specialist Endorsement, and the position's adoption by districts, the Commonwealth has reaffirmed its commitment to enhancing student education as they learn the skills necessary to support their lifestyle. ■

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

Check it out!

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

Join the  
**Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance**  
(a new collaboration among AFT MA, MTA,  
Citizens for Public Schools, Jobs with Justice,  
and other community organizations) for a  
**WEEK OF ACTION**  
June 7-13

**Monday, June 8 - Sticker Day**  
(wear stickers in support of our causes)

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(contact your local legislators)

**Wednesday, June 10 - Social Media Day**  
(post comments in support of public education)

**Thursday, June 11 - Action Day**  
(local and regional actions throughout the Commonwealth)

For more information, contact Russ Davis  
at 617-413-0713 / [russdavis@comcast.net](mailto:russdavis@comcast.net)



# Legislator Profile: John Keenan

As the fourth of seven children, Senator John Keenan knows well what it is like to be in an overcrowded room and how important it is to work with others to get things done. Perhaps this is why he is such a champion of public education.

“My earliest memories of my education,” Keenan says, “are those of kindergarten.... The teachers were always so calm and had such control over the fairly large class.”

When asked if any teachers in particular stood out, Keenan demurs, claiming that there were “so many,” it is too hard to pick just a few.

“I had truly remarkable teachers every year,” he says, “each of whom I remember with special appreciation.”

Even so, he does recall a “special fondness” for a fifth grade teacher who was going through some personal challenges. When the administration decided to single her out by making her homeroom class the only one in the school to stay with one teacher all day, instead of sharing the workload with other teachers, this teacher “did her best...despite this difficult situation.” In fact, Keenan recalls, she went so far as to organize a bicentennial production of the Broadway musical “1776” and to use it as the basis for a

self-designed curriculum on civics and history.

“She took us on field trips to Lexington and Concord, and to the Freedom Trail,” Keenan recalls. “She introduced us to books about the American Revolution, and instilled in me a love of that period, its leaders, and of our Country and its government.”

When asked about his perspectives on the teaching of such subjects today, Keenan says, “I do not think today’s students are learning enough about government, civics and history,” and suggests that the result of this is “a lack of appreciation for our democracy and the obligation to be an active participant in that democracy.”

Keenan’s love of history extended all the way through high school, where another fondly-remembered teacher challenged him to read and write extensively about the subject.

“It was tough,” Keenan admits, “but she pushed us through the work.” He adds that it was this teacher who recommended that he apply to Harvard, from where he later graduated with honors with a concentration in

government.

After Harvard, Keenan graduated from Suffolk University Law School. While in law school, Keenan chaired the Mayor’s Commission on Handicapped Affairs in his native Quincy, and was also appointed to the Zoning Board of Appeals. In 1997, Keenan was appointed Executive Secretary to Mayor Jim Sheets, in which capacity



**A STUDENT OF HISTORY**  
Senator John Keenan

he managed 22 department heads and both prepared and presented Quincy’s budget and financial matters.

Among Keenan’s many legislative triumphs are shepherding legislation that that helped build a track at Braintree High School, and

funding for work on schools in Holbrook and Abington. However, the fruits of his legislative labors were evident much earlier. “In junior high school and high school, I ran for and served on student councils,” Keenan explains, recalling campaigning to allow students who had morning exams to go home afterward and to encourage students with special needs to run

for student government themselves.

In addition to supporting students and teachers throughout his career, Keenan has also championed the causes of retirees. In 2001, Keenan became Executive Director of the Norfolk County Retirement System, a public pension system with approximately 10,000 members, and assets of over \$500 million. While this is a lot of money, Keenan is keen to make sure that it is fairly and appropriately handled and distributed and goes so far as to suggest that education can help with this as well.

“I truly believe, in this world increasingly of haves and have nots, that education must serve as the great equalizer,” he says.

As such, public education must continue to be supported.

“There are many issues, including lack of stable home environments, a greater demand for special education options, the need to keep attracting quality teachers, meeting the challenges of students who primarily speak other languages, testing demands, integrating technology into curriculums, the challenges of social media,” Keenan observes, “and fulfilling the our obligation to provide truly equal educational opportunities to all students.” ■

## Helping Students is the Bottom Line

### Boston-based program offers long-term support

As the job market and college application process continue to prove challenging and complicated, many students become disheartened about their chances for success.

Fortunately, there is Bottom Line ([www.bottomline.org](http://www.bottomline.org)), a national organization based in Boston that helps students complete both applications for and degrees in college and to prepare for their futures.

Bottom Line started in 1997 with 25 seniors at New Mission High School. At a time when only 1 in 7 low-income students who began college graduated, 80% of the students who were involved in Bottom Line’s programs graduated in six years or less. Since then, Bottom Line has grown to serve thousands of students in many major metropolitan areas across the country. “We now serve students in Massachusetts from Greater Boston and Worcester,” explains Mike Wasserman, Executive Director at Bottom Line Massachusetts, noting that Bottom Line also has offices in Chicago and New York. “We will work with approximately 2,600 students across MA this year.”

Bottom Line’s national retention rate is 84% (compared to the national average of only about 33%), and nearly 80% of affiliated students are able to procure career opportunities upon graduation (a full 25% higher than the national average). One of the reasons why Bottom Line has been able to enjoy such a strong record is by maintaining relationships with participants. Unlike many other support programs, Bottom Line engages students in high school and sticks with them all the way through college.

“In the College Access program where we provide one-on-one support during a student’s senior year to help them navigate the many steps that are necessary to get into college,” Wasserman explains. “In the College Success program...we continue to provide in-person, one-on-one support while they are in college to make sure they have the mentoring and support they need to successfully earn a degree.”

In the Access program, professionally-trained counselors help students find appropriate schools and then fill out and file the applications. They also guide students through the financial aid process. Once students are enrolled, Bottom Line’s DEAL model (which stands for Degree, Employability, financial Aid and Life) supports them with a wide array of other aspects of the college experience, including choosing a major and applying for internships and jobs.

“Bottom Line has helped me on every step in my college...process,” says Chelsea High School senior Cuong Nguyen.

“They analyzed my grades and SAT scores and helped me figure out what colleges I have the best chance of getting into.”

Some Bottom Line students become involved

in the program after they graduate as well. Valdivino Gonçalves is a guidance counselor at New Mission who went through the program and now supports it as an advisor.

“As a student, I loved working with Bottom Line,” Gonçalves recalls. “My counselor Claudine was incredibly friendly, knowledgeable about the college application process and made what seemed like an insurmountable task of applying to twelve colleges, submitting supplement pieces and applying to financial aid, much easier and enjoyable.”

As his high school counselor was overwhelmed with responsibilities (as he often admits to be), Gonçalves is

grateful to have had this supplementary support.

“Bottom Line can help bridge the gap between...counselors and students and...ensure that more students have access to college opportunities,” he suggests. “I am forever thankful to the support, encouragement, and love I received and continue to receive from that organization...[and] I would definitely recommend Bottom Line to my students!”

As each Bottom Line counselors works with a specific set of students who are at a specific stage in their college process, each student can get



**RAISING THE BOTTOM LINE**

Mike Wasserman, Executive Director of Bottom Line Massachusetts, Allison Quirk, EVP and Chief HR and Citizenship Officer at State Street Corporation, and student speakers Ronald DeLorme and Alana Hans-Bodden at the Bottom Line GO FAR 2015 event.

what they need at each phase of their academic career. As many counselors come from a wide array of professions, they are not only able to provide personal lessons from

their own college careers but also career advice about other careers as well. “We like to connect students to people in the fields they want to pursue so they can build their network,” Wasserman explains.

For professionals who want to help but who cannot change careers, there are frequent volunteer opportunities through which they can to share their expertise and experience with program participants.

“Some counselors are former teachers who want to work individually with students,” Wasserman says. “Others have done other kinds of mentoring work and come to us that way.”

Wasserman also notes that many past

students stick with the program and with their communities just as Bottom Line stuck with them.

“Our students get involved and stay involved and transform their communities,” he observes.

As many counselors end up at Bottom Line thanks to peer recommendations, so too do many students. In addition to being recommended by teachers and counselors, many Bottom Line participants come from other programs that do not offer the enduring individual attention and support that Bottom Line does.

“We also work directly with...colleges,” Wasserman notes. “They refer us to students who are enrolling.”

No matter how they come to Bottom Line, the main difference between students who do and many of those who do not is that the Bottom Line students enjoy individualized attention and support throughout their pre-college and college careers.

“All meetings are one on one,” Wasserman maintains, noting that students and mentors meet regularly in a way that is “consistent” and “comprehensive.”

“The biggest thing is that every Bottom Line student has someone that has got their back,” he continues. “It is what we call ‘intrusive advising.’ You can’t get away from us!”

Though many students try to avoid being told what to do, Wasserman and his talented team know that it is at those times when the student is pulling away that they need support most.

“We are constantly present and we build strong relationships with the students,” he says. “We also really understand the reasons why students leave college and our curriculum addresses those issues head on.”

Recently, Bottom Line held an annual fundraising event at which over 1,000 participants, mentors, and supporters gathered to celebrate successes and to look towards further expansion and greater support for students.

“Our focus is always on the supports that work,” Wasserman says. “There are huge numbers of students dropping out of college. The solution is to provide them with expertise and knowledge and support. The statistics are abysmal, but the path to improvement is clear.” ■