



The Advocate



November 2013

AFT Reignites Call for Rights Conference and Day of Action move movement forward

On the heels of the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous march on Washington, members of AFT (many of whom participated in the original march and the anniversary one that took place a few months ago), are finding new ways to keep Dr. King's "dream" alive and to work towards increased human rights, especially as pertain to public education.

As part of the "Reclaim the Promise" campaign, AFT members

from across the country have been gathering to discuss strategies and procedures that will help protect and defend the democratizing force that is public education. On the weekend of October 4-6, more than 500 students, parents, community activists and AFT representatives gathered in

Los Angeles to shape and endorse their shared vision for great public schools and to discuss the means by which they could bring that vision back to their communities and help make it a reality.

For the past 30 years, AFT has organized a series of biennial conferences to discuss and promote the ideas and ideals related to individual and communal rights. At the 2013 AFT Civil, Human and Women's Rights Conference, attendees participated in workshops and other community-building events and listened to presentations by AFT President Randi Weingarten and representatives from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.

"This is a significant coming-together of parents, teachers and young people determined to protect public education from falling into corporate hands," suggested Institute consultant Leigh Dingerson.

"The conference was developed collaboratively by labor and community partners across the country," Institute Associate Director Oona Chatterjee explained, expressing her hope that "this collaborative effort will help build relationships between community and labor in localities throughout the country, and provide an opportunity for cities to connect with each other and understand that our schools face many of the same obstacles."

In addition to sharing and promoting such ideas, another focus of the conference was to endorse a set of principles around which the attendees

and all AFT members could focus their actions. Developed through a nationwide series of town meetings, the "Principles That Unite Us" have already been confirmed and agreed to by over 100 partner organizations, including Boston Teachers Union, Boston Youth Organizing Project, and Massachusetts Jobs With Justice.

Such unity of purpose and strength of force will be vital in promoting the promise of public education and pushing the pro-public schools agenda forward.

"Our communities have felt the pain of the disinvestment in public education for many years and we have fought as individual organizations and coalitions to preserve it," says Kyle Serrette, Director of Education for the Leadership Center for the Common Good. "We

are excited to take on this fight in a more comprehensive and coordinated way. Our hope is that by taking on this fight together that we will have more power."

Among the Principles are the ideas that public schools are indeed public institutions and that private efforts to change the system has only resulted in segregation and inequality. The Principles also posit that strong public schools create and enhance strong communities and that the school buildings can be and often are the basis and center for such communities. While there may be value in assessments, the Principles suggest that they should be used as tools to guide teachers, not to judge them, and that the current style of high-stakes testing does more to rob students of learning time than it does to instruct and support them. They also propose that teachers (who continue to be held up as our "greatest assets" and who should be treated appropriately) should all be committed and trained and not just on their way to other careers. The Principles also put forth the idea that a system of publicly funded, equitable and democratically-controlled schools is the only way to ensure every child the opportunity to pursue a rich and productive life and admitted that the goal of such schools has yet to be reached by our nation. They also emphasize the importance of all schools being fully funded and of those closest to the classroom (i.e., students and teachers) sharing in decision-

making regarding them. The Principles conclude with a reminder that access to good public schools is a critical civil and human right.

Among those in attendance at the conference were representatives from the Oliver Partnership School in Lawrence, which is being held up as a model of what a great community-based public school can be.

"The conference was great," said Nancy Parchuke-Salach who has recently been asked to serve as a co-leader of the Oliver. As the cooperative concept behind her school is a new and progressive idea that is being watched closely by other schools and districts (and also by AFT), Parchuke-Salach was eager to discuss with colleagues from other districts how they combine "town" and "gown" and foster partnerships with other schools and other organizations.

"I was extremely interested in learning how other communities [and] school districts have created the community connection partnerships and made them work for their students," Parchuke-Salach explained, noting that among the hundreds of Conference participants were representatives from other districts where similar cooperative plans are being put in place. "It was nice to see that we here at the Oliver are on the right road to making these partnerships happen."

Parchuke-Salach also noted how the partnerships her school has been able to forge have allowed students to enjoy such vital services as dental care and a sense of community through work with the local historical association. She also thanked AFT for their support with funding ongoing professional development for herself and her colleagues.

"We look forward to working closely with AFT to continue our quest to

Continued on page 5



SAVE THE DATE
**National Day of Action
to Reclaim the Promise
of Public Education**
Our Schools, Our Solutions
DECEMBER 9, 2013

Over the last year, educators, parents, students and community allies have come together to forge a new alliance to reclaim the promise of public education—our nation's gateway to democracy and racial and economic justice. **We must keep that momentum going.**

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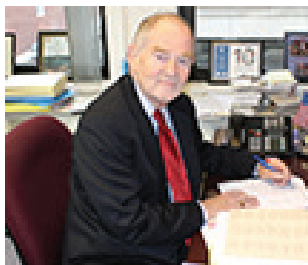
BOSTON STRONG

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WINNING WAYS UMass Dartmouth Union Educational Services Unit Chairperson Bruce Sparfven (center) with 2013 Jay Porter Scholarship recipients Rachel Glaubits (left), whose father is a member of AFT MA and teaches in the Amesbury school district, and Gerald Arneaud, whose mother is a member of Local 369 AFL-CIO NSTAR. Each received a scholarship in honor of AFT MA field representative Jay Porter, who was assigned to the UMass Federation Local.



THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Thomas J. Gosnell
President, AFT Massachusetts

MA Still Tops, but Poverty Still a Problem

The recent results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Test demonstrate once again how well our students did. They are the best in the nation. Congratulations to all the teachers and educational personnel who contributed to this exceptional achievement!

The American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts (AFT MA) has always advocated that we want what is good for students and fair to teachers and all education personnel and collaboratively done. Since public school teachers in Massachusetts are overwhelmingly unionized, we can justly claim that our collective bargaining agreements are not an impediment to our students' success.

Many maintain that the classroom teacher is the most important in-school factor contributing to student success. Consequently, one can only conclude that management must collaborate with teachers and their unions to determine what can be done to maintain and improve student achievement.

Of course, teachers are important, but they do not teach in isolation from other factors in the school environment. Are the schools safe, secure, and orderly? Is the number

of books and computers sufficient? Are the school buildings maintained properly? Does the support personnel have the equipment and space they need to service the students? Are there a sufficient number of them assigned to the schools? These are just a few of the questions that need to be asked.

However, even if the answer to all of these questions is yes, we still have broader issues. Those in the schools are not the sole factors in the education of the students.

The achievement gap. We always hear about the achievement gap. Whatever the achievement gap is, we hear little about the social and economic context in which it occurs.

President John F. Kennedy said, "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich." Although spoken over 50 years ago in a different context, it is relevant now.

Students who have inadequate health and dental care, who have substandard nutrition, who live in inadequate housing, or who have seen violence in their neighborhoods deserve better, much better.

Poverty profoundly affects children. When students do not have their basic needs met, their academic achievement will suffer. School

systems which have very few children living in poverty rarely, probably never, have overall scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Test that are deficient.

Everyone wants teachers to be competent, of course. However, everyone needs to realize that poverty is a major obstacle to student achievement and we must act to remove that obstacle. We need to include in the conversation about quality education strategies to bring children out of poverty. Currently such talk is minimal and frequently non-existent in many educational forums.

When we ignore poverty, we ignore our children. When we talk about quality education for all children, we must be willing to act on all matters that affect quality education. This includes the devastating impact of poverty.

Children living in poverty deserve much more of our attention.

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

BOLD PRINT

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

Congratulations to ALL of our members. □ □ □ □

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

□ □ □ □

On November 26, the AFT officially announced the second phase of its campaign against excessive testing, "Learning Is More Than a Test Score," which will include a policy agenda that takes into account what we learn from teachers, parents and others. For more information, go to www.aft.org.

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

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ATTENTION ALL AFT MA MEMBERS AND MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILIES

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

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

Applications are due by December 16, 2013

ATTENTION NEW TEACHERS

Have you been teaching for fewer than five years?

Do you want to share why you entered education?

Do you have life lessons to impart?

Do you want to GET PAID for your efforts?

Write to advocate@aftma.net

Get ready for AFT's National Day of Action December 9, 2013

Go to www.reclaimpublicednow.org

The World is Your Classroom

Boston teachers promote travel as an educational experience

Though all of our members provide students with wonderful opportunities for learning and engagement, there is nothing quite like the experience of going outside of your classroom (and perhaps outside of your comfort zone) to truly engage learning. Such is the philosophy held by many educators who make great sacrifices in order to encourage their students to experience life from new perspectives in very new places.

“Some of my students are accomplished travelers,” explains Boston Latin School teacher Michael Maguire. “Others have never left Boston. These trips unite them with a common experience.”

In 2012, Boston-area students were taken on nearly 20 voyages to places ranging from Canada to Cape Verde and the Dominican Republic to the Czech Republic.

“Our teachers are the backbone of all international opportunities for our students,” suggests Bethany Wood, a former Boston teacher who now serves as BPS’s Director of Global Education (www.bostonpublicschools.org/internationalprograms). “In addition to their teaching duties and trip planning, teachers work tirelessly to spearhead fundraising activities after school and on weekends to improve access for all students to travel programs.”

Though many BPS educators are worldly-wise, one of the most travelled teachers is Boston Latin Academy’s Lillie Marshall. In addition to her primary travel website (www.AroundTheWorldL.com), which contains over 700 entries from five continents, Marshall also oversees another site (www.teachingtraveling.com) that is dedicated to supporting teachers who wish to travel and encouraging them to share their stories as well.

When asked how she caught the travel bug, Marshall explains that, when she realized she wanted to teach, she also realized the importance of learning other languages and learning about other cultures so that she could engage and educate her diverse students more effectively. Returning from an intensive Spanish program in central Mexico, Marshall saw how much she had gained in such a short time and “became obsessed with seeing the world.” Using every vacation for a new adventure, Marshall found that teaching and volunteering allowed her to go more places for less money and also to get more out of each experience.

“The most rewarding thing about traveling,” she says, “is the feeling of expansion and not being ‘left out’ of the world.”

“Travel programs also build cultural awareness within the school and help build global citizens,” suggests Marta Fernandes, a math teacher at Community Academy of Science and Health. Fernandes also observes that while the benefits of travel may not be quantifiable, they are evident.

“It is a change you can notice in students,” she says, noting how many participants take on leadership roles when they return to school. “One student I had was a problem child for most teachers...[but] once she began being part of this program it gave her motivation...and [she] is now an honor roll student!”

While the benefits to the students are undeniable, many of the teachers also gain from the experiences.

“Travel is in my blood,” Maguire

suggests. “I now want to give my students experiences that will last a lifetime.”

Among Maguire’s most notable educational excursions were a 2012 visit to Barcelona, a 2009 Ireland visit and a 2005 trip to Italy, where he is scheduled to return with over 60 students in April of 2014.

“I teach Latin and Ancient Greek,” Maguire reasons, “so traveling to Italy is the best way I can show my students what they are learning.”

The importance of expanding minds and horizons and of fostering a global perspective is so evident to so many teachers and school administrators that many have made it a tenet of their school mission. Such is the case at Charlestown High School, which has been facilitating student trips to Europe (known as EuroTrips) since 2006.

“We want our students to understand other cultures and how societies develop, function and govern themselves,” explains co-chaperone Amy Piacitelli, who also cites respecting diversity, appreciate historical patterns, and seeing the effects of American culture on other societies among the goals for the program. “International trips help us accomplish this mission as well as provide a lifetime of positive memories.”

According to Shisha King, who went on the EuroTrip in 2009, the trip was “my first step into the possibility of travel.” It also encouraged King to become the first in her family to procure a passport.

EuroTrip 2007 participant Lindsey Ruyevcan says the trip changed her life forever. In a letter she sent in support of the 2012 trip, Ruyevcan says, “I really hope all of you soak up as much knowledge as you can – not only about the countries you will visit but about yourself as well.”

Piacitelli suggests that EuroTrip originated “as a way to supplement the studies of students enrolled in World History and AP European History classes and to allow students to experience the thrill of standing at the sites they had only read about in books.” She also notes that many participants have gone on to participate in study abroad and other educational travel programs.

“As they plan for college, many make plans to find ways to continue this vital work,” adds Excel High School teacher Julie Fouhy, who has worked with Fernandes and other teachers to take students from three Boston schools to Africa for the past three years.

Another school that has made international travel a priority is Bridgewater State University, which has organized a partnership program with BPS that allows teachers and administrators to visit Cape Verde.

“We were approached by the

administrative staff of BPS to develop a program that would help staff and teachers respond more effectively to the large number of Cape Verdean-Americans who attend BPS,” explains Michael Kryzanek, Ph.D, Executive Director of BSU’s Minnock Center for International Engagement. Through their week-long “Heritage Tours,”

administrators and teachers are introduced and exposed to many elements of Cape Verdean culture that they can then share with their students.

“BPS teachers told me that the experience of going to Cape Verde will definitely help them better understand their students and communicate with them,” Dr. Kryzanek recalls.

While BSU has helped many teachers learn about Cape Verde, some

teachers already have a basis of understanding as they come from the island nation as well. Jeremiah E. Burke High School teacher Maria Depina has taken many students to her native land, where they work in schools and participate in service projects that continue after they return to the US.

“Travel and interaction with other cultures was an eye-opening experience that changed the students,” Depina observes, suggesting that students who travel “often become aware for the first time of the beauty, challenges and opportunities in life and begin to reach out for them.”

During the Cape Verde trips from The Burke, students are also given opportunities to meet with education legislators, school administrators and also with students who, they discovered, were very much like them.

“Every student was engaged in what they were learning,” observes student participant Katie Drake-Cook.

“I loved the experience to see the way other people learn in a different environment,” recalls fellow traveller Whannelly Guerrero, noting how the trip encouraged her to work harder when she returned to her own school.

“The experience opened my eyes and motivated me to do my best,” agrees student Manuel Pires. “I felt I could do anything if I put my mind to it and that nothing is impossible!”

“Students return to Boston with a new appreciation for our educational system and a resolve to make the most of what we have,” Fouhy observes.

While her students clearly benefit from the experience, trips to Cape Verde have had a special significance for Depina herself.

“On a personal level, this trip was an amazing and emotional experience because I left [Cape Verde] at age of 12 and had not returned in 33 years,” Depina explains.

Travel has been so moving to Marshall that it actually moved her back into the classroom at a time when she was considering leaving the field. “I was extremely close to quitting the teaching profession,” she says, recall-

ing years spent at a “very challenging” school, “until...travel breathed new life into my passion to educate.”

While the benefits of travel may be career saving for teachers, Marshall insists that they are life changing for students and worth any expense.

“Travel enhances education beyond belief,” she says, “and also enhances college applications and resumes.”

However, teachers are not blind to the fact that these trips can involve enormous effort and expense for the teachers, the students and the community. As such, planning ahead can be vital.

“I plan about two years ahead to keep the monthly payments manageable,” Maguire explains.

While many teachers plan and prepare for trips themselves, there are also many organizations they can ask for support and guidance. Among these are Buildon (www.buildon.org), which runs after-school learning programs and also helps build schools in developing countries, and Quest Adventures (www.questadventures.org), a Boston-based organization that was co-founded by retired BPS teacher Claudia Bell that provides step-by-step support for teachers who wish to plan international trips. A number of teachers who lead classes based upon the locally-founded Facing History and Ourselves program (www.facing.org) have also organized trips to Eastern Europe and other locations highlighted in their curriculum. Other opportunities can come through partnership programs, such as the Boston-Strasbourg Sister City High School Exchange (www.boston-strasbourg.com), which offers opportunities for French language students, and the Maple Leaf Exchange, an opportunity for high school students that is funded by the New England Canada Business Council (www.necbc.org).

Despite all these potential supporters, however, some teachers choose to go it more or less alone.

“We do not use a tour company,” Piacitelli explains. “We tell the students what airfare we can afford and they then choose a destination. The chaperones pick safe hostel accommodations and tell the students what the daily budget is, and the students do the rest.”

In this way, the students not only learn about the world but also how to explore it efficiently. “Our goal is not just to expose students to some of the great sites of the world,” Piacitelli says, “but also to teach them how to travel. We want students to learn how to plan and budget a trip so they see that life-long travel is a possibility, even when they are not from a family of means.”

While expenses and other challenges may play roles in where and when people travel, many teachers still encourage and support student excursions and also encourage students to continue to explore the world after they graduate. Even if they do not take students with them, many teachers also recommend that their colleagues see more of the world so that they can bring more of it back to their own classrooms.

“Student travel...fosters a deeper global understanding,” Piacitelli suggests.

“Don’t hesitate,” Marshall urges. “Find a way to travel this year!” ■



VIVE LE DIFFERENCE! Students from Charlestown High School learning in Paris

Diary of a New Teacher

Dan Kelly
Paraprofessional
Mary Lyons Pilot High School

In September 2012, I took a giant leap of faith. I had spent the past several years as a sales agent in the travel industry. The position was fast paced and provided good income, as well as plenty of excursions. It should have been a dream job. However, something was missing.

Prior to sales, I had spent a decade working for the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services. During my time there, I served in a variety of capacities. The one constant throughout was the opportunity to interact with kids. As the saying goes, though, the grass seemed greener, and I was lured away to private industry. Ennui soon set in, and I found myself longing for the days when something nobler than a profit margin was considered the brass ring.

At a friend's urging, I accepted a position as a paraprofessional at the Mary Lyon Pilot High School in Brighton. Walking through the door

on the first day, I felt a profound mix of exhilaration and apprehension. In all honesty, I felt like a complete fraud. It had been years since I had stepped into a classroom, and my own teaching experience was nil. All I knew was that I would be working with a diverse student population and that it would be a learning experience for everyone involved. Beyond that rudimentary idea was the looming anxiety of the unknown.

Quite a bit has transpired over the past 14 months. It has been all I expected, and nothing I expected. My role here has been so much more than a "teacher's assistant." I have the privilege of planning and executing lesson plans with my lead teacher, Mr. Ahrens. I often find myself serving in turns as a mentor, clinician, disciplinarian, and coach to the kids we teach. The work has been daunting, exasperating, exciting and



HEED THE CALL Paraprofessional Dan Kelly was drawn back to working with children after some time spent in private industry

difficult, but never dull. I have a new found appreciation for the professionals who mentor me and for their untiring dedication to the students we serve. As I go into my second year, I am a little wiser, a bit more seasoned, and open to the challenges that lie ahead.

The Mary Lyon is unique among all Boston Public high schools. We are a fully-inclusive environment.

Simply put, we do not have special or dedicated SPED classes.

Each classroom has its own fully-licensed special education teacher and a paraprofessional. To my understanding, we are one of the few high schools in the nation that follow this model. There is no instruction manual for what we do. Our Headmaster, Dr. Herve Anoh, likens it to building an airplane while it is flying.

Each day, I gain a bit more insight. Is a student's behavior a manifestation

of their emotional disability? Is a student's lack of participation just a mask for their frustration at struggling with material? What does differentiation look like? How does one deliver differentiated content to students based on their individual strengths and challenges? To do so in a way that it is not off putting or apparent is often an exercise in genius with a healthy dose of sleight of hand.

I am now in my senior year at UMass Boston finishing my B.A. in English. It is my intention to take the Pathways curriculum and become a teacher myself. As I am now 40, it seems to be a case of teaching an older dog new tricks. However, each new thing I teach my students, is brought back to me tenfold. ■

Do YOU have a story to tell or a lesson to share?

We are looking for "new" teachers (i.e., educators with 1-5 years of experience) who want to share their stories and lessons they have learned.

Please send your name and ideas to advocate@aftma.net.

Thank you!

A Sistema for Success

Josiah Quincy School Orchestra supports students and community

As study after study continues to promote the importance of the arts and their connection to academic success, many schools continue to cut such programs in favor of more time spent preparing for assessments which have no evidence of supporting improvement or narrowing achievement gaps.

Fortunately, there are many schools that hold tightly to their beliefs in the power of the arts to improve not only lives but minds and grades as well. Among these is the Josiah Quincy School in Boston.

Located in the heart of Boston's Chinatown district, the Quincy serves a student population nearly 80% of which live in low-income housing.

With a mission of ensuring the long-term musical and social success of all students at the Quincy, the Orchestra also serves to positively impact student musicians, their families, and the community through quality education and performance. When asked why she became involved, Community Arts Coordinator Marlee McDonald explains that her more personal goal was to provide orchestral music to what she sees as a community in need.

As music is a universal language, the orchestra and its mission not only appeal to all but help bridge and overcome barriers between students and families from different cultures. Nearly 60% of students at the school come from households in which English is spoken as a second language, so having this unifying element to their education helps all students feel part of the community.

"We do many performances in the community and are very involved in the school," McDonald says, noting that the Orchestra's next performance will be the Winter Concert on December 18 at 6:30 PM.

Such a sense of student support and community involvement and be-

longing greatly mollifies the anxieties many students feel living in a community that faces economic, linguistic and cultural obstacles and helps Quincy students perform even better in the music room and in the classroom. While the Quincy is already one of the strongest –performing schools in Boston, McDonald suggests that the Orchestra has helped encourage more families to move to the area and also encourages many students to stay in school.



FROM THE TOP Avi Mehta conducts members of the Josiah Quincy School Orchestra. The Orchestra's Winter Concert is December 18.

"The Orchestra has led to 100% increased school attendance," McDonald explains, noting that it has also engendered a 95% retention rate. "Over 30 students are currently on the beginner orchestra wait list."

When McDonald came to the Quincy as a teaching artist, the Orchestra was just a dream. After only a few weeks of promotion, however, McDonald was able to entice about 30 students to join the Orchestra. With support from Principal Simon Ho and other administrators, the company quickly grew and now includes nearly 120 students who are supported by a team of eight teaching artists.

"The Orchestra is successful because students start to play an instrument at an early age," Principal Ho

suggests, noting how the Orchestra also helps students "learn how to socialize among themselves." Each week, Orchestra members participate in over seven hours of instruction. They arrive every day at 8 AM and practice and learn together until 9:30. In this way, they all begin the school day with a sense of accomplishment and physical movement, both of which have been shown to increase performance in other pursuits. The daily practice also allows and encourages the students to

approval and community experience. By keeping its enrollment fee low, the Orchestra is able to serve its students and its community at a rate that is far less than the average cost for instrument rentals and private lessons and that is also far more affordable even for low-income participants. For those families for whom even this expense represents a hardship, the school provides scholarships so that no student need be turned away based on need.

As the Quincy is a feeder school for the nearby Josiah Quincy Upper School, students arrive with years of musical experience and success and all the other benefits these bring.

As evidence of these benefits, the Quincy traditionally ranks among the strongest and most productive public schools in the District. It also enjoys a near-perfect attendance rate. Such credentials also predict a higher percentage of students continuing their educations after high school.

In its continuing efforts to enhance its offerings, the Quincy will introduce a music mentorship program that will further strengthen the bonds between and among Orchestra members.

"We have always done informal mentoring," McDonald notes. "This year, we are doing more structured observations of a younger ensemble member [by] an older one, and having students work together to teach each other in private lessons and also side by side."

As the Orchestra also performs outside of school, it serves as a means of strengthening ties between the school and the surrounding community and of promoting the promise public schools can produce.

"We work very hard with little resources," McDonald says, "because we know that our work is very important for the successful future of our students." ■

Making Lawrence Better

Mayor-elect reflects on relationship with Union

After years of questionable ethics and little forward progress, Lawrence is looking forward to the prospect and promise of new Mayor Dan Rivera, who many met on his forward-looking website, www.makelawrencebetter.org

Dan Rivera is a native Lawrentian who attended public schools in Lawrence before enlisting in the Army, where he attended the Military Police Academy. After attending UMass Amherst on the G.I. Bill and receiving his MBA from Suffolk University, Rivera served as a marketing administrator for many Merrimack Valley corporations. He also worked under Congressman Marty Meehan as Economic Development Director and as a manager for Lawrence Housing Authority and Catholic Charities Lawrence.

Rivera's desire to give back to the community that has given him so much is evident and will surely continue to be so in his new capacity. Even though he may not be able to have as much of a direct impact on the State-controlled school system as other mayors, Rivera looks forward to working with those in charge of the schools and, more importantly, to working with the teachers and other educational professionals who allowed

and encouraged him to seek the opportunities he has.

"We definitely want to be partners with the State and support what they are doing," Rivera says, suggesting that, "They seem to be coming up with good results."

When asked where he sees the



HOMETOWN HELPER
Lawrence Mayor-elect Dan Rivera

current state of schools in Lawrence, Rivera credits his colleagues with "setting up some good goals" and "a good benchmark for us to succeed," but

notes that he definitely thinks that it is high time the union had a contract.

"The future is national-level policy making with an impact on teaching and learning that everyone is going to copy," he suggests. "I feel it is an opportunity to bring more resources to the community and to be an advocate for teachers, students and parents."

Even though he may not be able to determine everything that happens within Lawrence public schools, Rivera realizes that he can have an impact on those who work and contribute there.

"We have so many teachers and paraprofessionals that live and work in this community," he observes, "so public policy affects them."

This is also why Rivera is so grateful to have had support of so many education professionals and members of the Lawrence Teachers Union.

"Having them on our side was important," he says. "It built momentum for our win."

Holding teachers up as a "vital resource," Rivera is especially appreciative of LTU President Frank McLaughlin who, it turns out, taught him math while he was a student at Lawrence High School.

"He is a leader of our community,"

Rivera says. "He and his family have always played a role in this community...so having his support and that of the teachers was very important."

"Many Lawrence teachers were the mayor-elect's mentors," McLaughlin notes. "He knows better than anyone our commitment to our students."

Rivera goes so far to say that, were it not for Lawrence's teachers, he would not be who he is today.

"I am a product of public schools who lived in public housing who went to the Army and studied on the G.I. Bill and bought my first home on a G.I. Loan," he recalls, seeing himself in many of Lawrence's current crop of promising public school students. "I will never forget where I came from and will defend those values."

"We know we have a partner who supports teachers, parents and students, so our mentoring may continue," McLaughlin adds.

By maintaining the values and lifting the mood and the hopes of his fellow Lawrentians, Rivera hopes to "lift all boats," including the long-sinking ones in the school system.

"A lot of people like to talk about home runs," Rivera observes, "but every hit is a good thing because it moves things forward, especially because we have been so long without them." ■

Taking action

Continued from page 1

make the Oliver Partnership School a complete success for all," Parchuke-Salach concluded.

The Oliver's Director Of Community Relations Lynne-Ellen Garcia noted that there were people from every state and the U.S. Virgin Islands at the Conference. As a 28-year veteran of education, Garcia knows well the needs of students and of the school system as a whole. Despite all her years in teaching, however, even she had never felt or observed such a sense of urgency at an education event.

"We have to unite on our principals," Garcia said. "Our voices matter!"

While we all need to make sure that the voice of the union is heard every day in every district, our "voices" will be especially concentrated and emphatic on December 9, which is being organized as a national Day of

Action (www.reclaimpublicednow.org) by the AFT and its partners, including the National Education Association and the Boston-based National Opportunity to Learn Campaign.

"December 9 is an exciting chance to speak out in one voice, across many states," Dingerson said, noting that the Day is being promoted as a "first step" In what is planned to be a multi-city set of campaigns and actions that should carry throughout the spring of 2014.

According to AFT administrators, the Day of Action emerged out of the town halls AFT had organized last year in cities across the country. On December 9, Boston is planning its own town hall meeting with many of its community partners. The theme of the event is "The Future of BPS: A Community Forum for Students, Families, and Educators to Create a New Public Education Agenda for Boston."

"The event is an opportunity to welcome the newly elected leaders,"

explains BTU Director of Organizing Jessica Tang, "and to let them know that educators, students, parents, and community members are committed to working with the new administration to create a new agenda for Boston Public Schools that is community-driven and reflective of the experiences, knowledge, and needs of those of us who live in Boston, attend BPS schools, work in the schools, and send our children to BPS schools."

Among the issues to be presented and discussed at the town hall meeting are community involvement in the search for a permanent superintendent for Boston and promoting equity and investment in Boston public schools.

"This will be a pivotal moment in history where large numbers of parents, students, and community members are mobilized and become part of the grassroots movement that echoes across the country and 'Reclaim the Promise' of Public Education, Higher Education, Quality Healthcare, and Public Services," said AFT's Northeast Regional Deputy Director Barbara Pallazzo.

Among the purposes of the December 9 national event is to signal the power of the national movement against the current trends in privatization, unfair assessment and other markers of so-called "reform." The Day is also intended to provide support for ongoing efforts on behalf of public education and to support those who continue to strive to reclaim their promise, which is the overarching theme of AFT efforts at this critical time.

"We are excited to work with AFT MA locals to use the Day of Action to reach out to parents, students and the community to build a movement in Massachusetts to defend and improve public education," says Massachusetts Jobs with Justice Executive Director Russ Davis.

"We cannot have true education reform without the voices of students, parents, teachers and the community," said Ocynthia Williams, parent leader

Happy Holidays
from your friends and
colleagues at **AFT MA**



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and secretary of the New York City Coalition for Educational Justice.

That is why this Day of Action is so important; as it represents a opportunity for concerted efforts by all union members and all who believe in the importance and the promise of public education.

"Real public education reform comes from the bottom up, with teachers, parents and communities working together to help all children thrive," said AFT President Randi Weingarten. "That's community-driven reform. And that's how we can make every school a school where parents want to send their kids and teachers want to teach."

In addition to making public schools as strong and effective as they can be, the Reclaim the Promise movement also involves bringing members of the public education community together to support each other and our students.

"Our communities need to unite and be partners in education," Garcia suggested. "We all matter when it comes to our students." ■

Just what IS under that Charter School Cap? Hmmmmm.

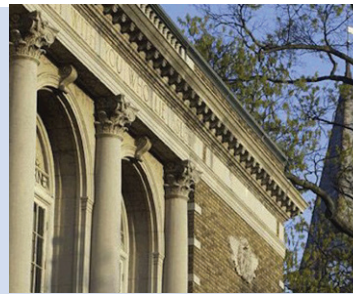


Joseph Quigley



On Campus

Dan Georgianna, Political Director
UMass Faculty Federation, Local 1895



The Internet and Bullying

Last month, Facebook joined Twitter and other texting services in allowing teenagers to post status updates, videos and images that can be seen by anyone, not just their friends. The new policy would also give Facebook blanket permission to use posts by teenagers in advertisements to attract new customers.

In a widely distributed opinion column that was published by the Bloomberg News Service, Rochester Institute of Technology Philosophy Professor Evan Selinger and Stanford University Law Professor Woodrow Hartzog exposed the dangers from public texting. "Facebook is designed to collect and hoard massive amounts of personal data," they claimed, "and its search engine, Graph, allows users to filter through a trove of information." They went on to suggest that, while these issues "seem harmless when stored in our own memories," they could be "toxic" if publicized, as "our most humiliating or damaging moments become just a click away."

In addition to exposing teenagers to lifelong embarrassment from foolish, perhaps dangerous mistakes in Internet posts, Facebook's new policy weakens child pornography laws. Teenagers are protected from prosecution for posting explicit sexual messages

and photos of themselves by freedom of speech, but people who re-post this material are subject to these laws. Re-posting would no longer be necessary for everyone to see sexually explicit messages under Facebook's new policy.

Facebook management argued that they were only matching other texting services in giving teenagers the same rights and responsibilities as everyone else and offered education to teenagers on the dangers of public texting. They also argued that public posts would give parents the opportunity to teach their children safer, more responsible Internet usage. Unlike other services that allow anonymous posts, Facebook requires that senders' names accompany public posts.

In the *New York Times* (10/16/13), technology reporter Vindu Goel argued that more is involved than teenagers' rights and responsibilities. Big money is at stake. Facebook and other Internet services are paid by advertisers, with prices determined by the number of hits on the website. According to an industry survey by Price Waterhouse, total Internet advertising revenue was above \$40 billion for the last 12 months and grows by 20% per year.

Given the nastier sides of human nature, people are attracted to embarrassing, outrageous, or sexual messag-

es, which increase the number of hits and also increase advertising revenues.

Public texting has been blamed for increasing bullying among teenagers and young adults. Emily Bazelon, author of *Sticks and Stones: Defeating the Culture of Bullying and Rediscovering the Power of Character and Empathy*, accuses Facebook of "habituating kids to giving up their privacy." She argues that public texting intensifies bullying. It leaves no place safe because Internet messages are unbounded by space and time, often for all to see. She argues, however, that bullying is far more complicated than texting. She adopts Swedish psychologist Dan Olweus' definition for bullying: "verbal or physical harassment that occurs repeatedly over time and involves an imbalance of power."

Most texting, while sometimes vicious, is between equals, such as classmates or friends or former friends. "Mutual aggression, with no clear victim or perpetrator, is common," Bazelon suggests. "Kids recognize this when they use the word 'drama' (rather than 'bullying') to describe their conflicts."

Bazelon's message boils down to the idea that "kids need to be taught how to treat each other right, and even how to empathize, and that character building is a community-wide project with

academic as well as social benefits."

College and university administrations and unions are just starting to advise about bullying on college campuses. As usual, most college administration's first priority is protection from lawsuits by shifting responsibility to faculty and staff. This usually takes the form of training workshops that are often led by lawyers.

The AFT offers advice and best practices to K-12 teachers and staff to stop bullying based on a campaign called "See a Bully, Stop a Bully: Make a Difference." The campaign raises awareness and helps educators, students and parents maintain a safe learning environment. However, I saw no mention on the AFT website of adding language on public texting or bullying to collective bargaining agreements. Too often, feel-good regulations in negotiated agreements without sufficient thought make teaching more difficult.

The simplest and best advice on texting is to be very, very careful. My mentor and prior Local 1895 President, Joe Bronstad, who never used the Internet to communicate with members, told me to consider all email and other Internet messages as written on a billboard at the entrance to the campus.

Bazelon offers good advice to stop bullying and destructive texting: Teach and practice tolerance and empathy in and outside the classroom. ■

State of the Stacks

MLSA Welcomes New Treasurer

Despite their importance to the communities they serve and the myriad services they provide, many libraries continue to face financial challenges. It is therefore vital that those who oversee their finances in any capacity are sharp and fully dedicated to their colleagues and the continuation and strengthening of their field.

Last month, the Massachusetts Library Staff Association (MLSA) elected librarian Matt Amory as their new treasurer. Though he currently works in Wayland, Amory had also worked in libraries in Sudbury, Waltham, Newton, and at the libraries for Emerson College and Lasell College. Among his various roles, Amory has served as a reference librarian, technology trainer, circulation assistant and supervisor. As he has such a breadth of experience, Amory understands well the workings and the needs of libraries and how to meet them most effectively.

Before making libraries the root of his "third career," Amory had been an actor and worked with actuaries.

"I worked happily for a while as an actor and member of Actor's Equity," he recalls. "Then when my son was born, I moved into sales and support for a suite of financial information databases with a New York company working with business and finance librarians in the financial services industry."

Though Amory himself admits to not having realized that librarians and finance could come together in this way, he soon found that he enjoyed being around his research-minded colleagues more than his fellow salesmen.



TECH-SAVVY TREASURER
New MLSA officer Matt Amory

Upon relocating to Boston with his family, Amory decided to follow in his financial friends' footsteps.

"I asked myself what I really wanted to do," he recalls. "I liked librarians, so I decided to become one myself!"

As a member of the prestigious New England Library Leadership Symposium at Simmons College Graduate School of Library and In-

formation Science, Amory became a member of the Beta Phi Mu Honor Society. While at Simmons, he served as treasurer of the SLA Student Chapter

"At Simmons, I did my best to utilize and further develop the knowledge and skills that I had picked up in my years of working with databases and code and the web," he explains, "and I discovered a huge need for those skills in the library marketplace."

As he had studied database design while working in the financial field, Amory is adept at a wide array of popular programs and programming languages, all of which help him communicate with colleagues and patrons more effectively. As a librarian, he has designed and conducted workshops dedicated to sharing his knowledge and to encouraging colleagues to embrace such technologies as e-readers and computing in the Cloud. He has also brought such noted technology experts as David Weinberger and Mary Ellen Bates to speak to colleagues and students.

"In addition to finding books and treasuring arcana, I teach classes for staff and members of the public who have wildly divergent ideas about what it means to be tech-savvy and what it means to be technologically literate," he says, "and I'm happy to be doing so!"

Though he now lives in Brookline, Amory says that his various positions in the area have allowed him to get to know and appreciate the towns and cities in which he has served and to get a better sense of what challenges his colleagues face, what goals they have, and how he can help them.

"I have come to greatly appreciate [this area] through the local library community," he says.

As much as he enjoys the opportunities he has as treasurer and as much as he is able to support colleagues and strengthen libraries in his current role, Amory mentions goals that aim even higher.

"I would like to be a library director or work with our state library people in a technology leadership capacity," he says.

When asked what he hopes to see in terms of the future of MLSA, Amory admits that he would appreciate more scholarship opportunities for member families, but emphasizes his desire to help the organization move forward in its efforts to keep libraries and the people who work there vital and strong.

"I hope that we continue to find ways to work with town and library management to best serve the needs of the public," he says. "I also hope to help make the MLSA and the AFT a better union." ■

Are YOU a librarian with a story or observation to share?

Please contribute to State of the Stacks.

Send ideas and suggestions to advocate@aftma.net.



Retiree Corner

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



SENIOR SEMINARS

Preparing for Retirement
Saturday, December 7, 2013, 10-12

Marie Ardito's presentation is directed to people retiring in the next 10 years from public sector jobs in Massachusetts, whether they are retiring under the teacher's state, Social Security, or public pension. It provides participants with an understanding of the retirement system and options from which they can select, as well as a legal checklist, tips for protecting major assets, advice about understanding Medicare, its penalties and surcharge and much more.

How to Protect Your Nest Egg and Plan for Your Family

Saturday, January 11, 2014, 10-12.
Snow Date: Saturday, January 18.

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

Both these seminars are offered at 314 Main St. Wilmington, MA Unit 105 from 10 to noon.

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

Honoring ALL Who Serve

November is a time to give thanks for all that we have. It is also a time to thank those who allow us to have it.

This month, we celebrate Thanksgiving, but we also honor another day that makes Thanksgiving possible for all of us - Veterans' Day.

I expected to be especially grateful this Veterans' Day as I really thought we would finally remember the men and women who served our country and were left behind when the Veterans' Benefit was awarded to all still working for the Commonwealth. That was in July of 1996!

The Actives were allowed to add up to four years of their military service toward their creditable service, but those retired before July 24, 1996 were not included in the official count. Massachusetts Retirees United has been fighting for far too long to get this benefit for those deserving men and women. None of us thought the Maternity Benefit would pass ahead of the Veterans' Benefit and none of us want to see Veterans left behind any longer.

Again this year on Veterans' Day, we will honor our military. We will attend events during which men and women who served are asked to stand and be recognized for their service.

We will observe how proud they are when the song of their branch of service is played. They will all stand tall with great pride no matter how bent their aging bodies are or how long ago it was that they served. It is about time that we all stand up for them.

Our Veterans' Bill, S1249, was filed by Senator Tom McGee and will extend to those retired by July 24, 1996 the same right to apply up to four years of their military service years toward their creditable service providing they did not retire at 80%. This bill had a hearing May 10, 2013, and still sits in the Public Service Committee. The Senate Chair of the Committee, Senator Brownsberger, told me the committee would consider all the creditable service bills at the same time. This is fine as long as our Veterans are not passed over again.

There are around 600 retired teachers in this group and each month a few more come off the list. We must do our part before any more die with their dedicated service going unrecognized.

Every Veterans' and Memorial Day, politicians take the stage to talk about their gratitude toward those who served. Let your Representative and Senator know how you feel by calling them and requesting that they show

their gratitude by appealing to the members of the Public Service Committee to get S1249 moving so it has a chance of becoming law by Memorial Day.

We have done our homework. We conducted a survey of these men and women and know the bill will cost under a million dollars a year. This amount will decrease each month as more and more servicemen and women pass on. This is a small price to pay to recognize the blank check each of them signed on being inducted into the military willing to give up to their lives in service of their country.

Please call the State House at 617-722-2000 and ask to be connected to your respective Senator or Representative. Those of you in state or out, email as many as you can and tell them all to urge the Members of Public Service to move S1249 out of Committee. Our Veterans have earned it and deserve it and it is definitely affordable and long overdue! In fact, we cannot afford to not do it! Act now before the budget process begins. If all of you stand tall for those who stood up for us and make at least five phone calls or emails for our Veterans, we hopefully will be successful. Let's serve Veterans as well as they have served us! ■



HONOR GUARD Members of the Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School's new Marine Corps Junior ROTC present the colors during the school's Veterans Day Assembly

Dealing with a Deficit BPS works on overcrowding

As the saying goes, the Boston Public School system has good news and they have bad news.

The good news is that BPS is experiencing its highest enrollment in nearly a decade. The bad news is that this is resulting in a lack of appropriate learning space. What makes matters worse is that the deficit is most notable in the City's early childhood education centers, which is discouraging parents who were otherwise excited to enter Boston's school system.

"The district sought to find classroom space for 1,294 new students this current school year," explains BPS Director of Media Relations Brian Ballou. "We called on 78 schools to absorb this influx of students."

While Ballou explains that a primary focus on the outreach effort was to protect arts and science classrooms, he also notes how important it was to allow the administrators at each contacted school to find appropriate classroom space. "In most cases," Ballou notes, "they were able to do so without supplanting any existing classes."

Ballou admits that there were some buildings in which the administrators eventually decided to have classes share space but that this was the exception; not the rule.

As they look forward, BPS is actively developing a plan that will avoid such issues in the future. "We are currently formulating our long-term facilities plan that factors in the population growth trend," Ballou explains, noting that the latest projections indicate that kindergarten enrollment is expected to increase by

nearly 19 percent over the next four years, with overall enrollment rising seven percent.

According to Boston Teachers Union President Richard Stutman, "there is a room deficit, though it has never been quantified." Stutman claims, in fact, that the School Department says that there is actually a surplus of space, but attributes this to a possible confusion between available space and available seats.

"You could theoretically fit more people in our schools," Stutman suggests, "but at the same time, every school lacks sufficient space for itinerant services, conferences, science labs, specialty subjects, and so on."

As a result, many teachers are forced to keep their materials on movable carts that they then take from room to room. While this allows them to teach to some degree, it does not give the teachers any space to call their own or in which to meet and work with individual students.

"We have classrooms in virtual closets and basements," Stutman observes, recalling that, when he was a teacher, a class was held on the auditorium stage.

"Schools have had to reconfigure things," Ballou explains, noting that many students with special needs were reassigned to schools that already had support programs in place. "By planning ahead and adjusting grade spans over the long term, we can continue to welcome more students while protecting the arts and science classrooms our families and teachers know are critical to student success." ■

Summa Cum Laude: David Stockbridge

Many people work for years before they find their true passion.

For Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School art teacher David Stockbridge, the road was circuitous, but he was on the path all along. Perhaps that is why he is such a good teacher and why he was recently named Secondary Art Educator of the Year by the Massachusetts Education Association.

Though Stockbridge always loved art, he was not able to pursue it in the way he may have intended.

“When I was young,” he recalls, “I had aspirations to study art and possibly teach.”

As is the case for so many students, however, financial obligations conflicted with personal dreams and Stockbridge found himself unable to pay for further training after three semesters of college education.

Finding himself “blessed” with the roles of husband and father to four daughters, Stockbridge angled his painterly proclivities into a successful painting and wall covering business. Though he was pleased to see how his business skills were as strong as his artistic ones, Stockbridge still yearned to use paint to depict rather than to cover.

“There was always a lingering regret for not having completed my studies,” he admits. “Art had been important to me for my entire life and, as it does for many young artists, it gave me a distinct sense of who I was and how I viewed the world.”

Though he saw it as “extinguished,” an ember of Stockbridge’s creative passion and desire to share it with

others still burned.

After 20 years as a contractor, Stockbridge returned to school to complete his undergraduate degree.

“My degree was not in education” he explains, “but in fine arts with a major in painting. I found a common denominator in the skills that I had developed in the painting trade and of those skills developed in an academic environment.”

Upon graduation, Stockbridge found a teaching job in the Painting

administration at the time was not all that interested in art for art’s sake.

“Electives were very limited in the student schedule,” Stockbridge explains. So, to succor student demand for creative outlets, Stockbridge created an after-school arts club that, he says, “proved to be very successful.” Though he still found it challenging to garner support, Stockbridge remained dedicated to the goal of opening student’s eyes to other aspects of art.

“I was asked to develop a program

proposal that would address the benefits, needs, costs, and space requirements of adding an art elective,” Stockbridge recalls. “After nine years of advocacy...I was asked to apply for the position of art instructor.... I jumped at the chance!”

Never losing sight of his goal, even when it was obscured somewhat by his own life, Stockbridge has taught his students not only what can be done with paint but what can be done with their lives.

“I have never lost sight of the fact that

my classroom is the result of dogged determination,” he says, noting that he is currently working on a proposal for the expansion of his program that he plans to present to “anyone who will listen.”

“I intend to keep moving forward and advocating for the expansion of art in curriculum,” he says.

Such dedication has garnered Stockbridge not only the appreciation and admiration of his students, but of his colleagues as well.

“It is very fitting that Dave is being recognized for his contributions to art education,” says Principal Mark Hollick, noting Stockbridge’s passion for pushing his students to stretch and achieve. “He has built a fantastic pro-

gram at Assabet Valley, and many of his students have also received awards and recognition for their work.”

Working at a vocational/technical school, Stockbridge is able to interact with creative students who may want or need to put their talents to practical use before exploring their creative sides. As he has made a success of himself, Stockbridge hopes and, in fact, helps many of his students will be able to do the same.

“I am proud of our students who continue to prove that the combination of trade skills and academic excellence is the right combination for their education,” he says.

In her nomination letter, former Superintendent Mary Jo Nawrocki praised Stockbridge’s dedication to his colleagues and to his students. “One of David’s strongest character traits is his willingness and ability to collaborate with his colleagues,” she said. She also mentioned Stockbridge’s spearheading a fund raising campaign to secure his student a \$6,000 scholarship to the Rhode Island School of Design Pre-College Program. “What I view as David’s most valuable contribution to his students and his profession is his extensive knowledge of his subject area and his willingness to be an active learner in order to remain current in his discipline.”

When he found out about the award, Stockbridge was flattered.

“It is an honor to have been recognized for the job that I do in the classroom and in a broader sense the job that I do along with my co-workers at Assabet Valley,” he says.

Posing himself more as a representative of the great art teachers in the Commonwealth and the country, Stockbridge is grateful that he is able to “work in a creative environment and to be in a position to help foster that creativity in students.”

“My immediate hope as a result of the award is that it puts a spotlight on the art program at our school,” Stockbridge says, “and that the district recognizes the need to expand the program.” ■



ART-FUL ADVISOR David Stockbridge supports the arts by supporting artists like Assabet Valley student Gustavo Gonsales

and Design Technologies program at Assabet Valley.

“This was not an option that I had previously considered,” Stockbridge admits. However, he observes, it ended up being the best.

“Teaching in the vocational program,” Stockbridge suggests, “I was able to introduce creative components of the trade. I added faux finishing, mural work, and sign painting to the fundamental skills that are representative of the craft.”

Though he posits that he entered academia through an “unanticipated side door,” Stockbridge quickly became one of the most popular professors in the program and one of the most vocal supporters of arts education. Unfortunately, the admin-

Prioritizing Public Education

Educator’s Opinion
By Dena Capano

This past summer, the need for education reform in the United States became glaringly apparent in Chicago. On a sunny summer morning in July, hundreds of teachers, parents, and students in Chicago gathered downtown to protest the Chicago Board of Education’s monthly meeting. The meeting’s topic was a discussion of a \$1 billion dollar deficit and fell approximately two weeks after over fifty public school closings and over 2100 layoffs of Chicago Public School teachers.

Many Chicagoans are critical of Mayor Rahm Emmanuel’s plan to build a 10,000 basketball arena for DePaul University, costing the city a whopping \$33 million. The plan was unveiled six days before over fifty closings of Chicago’s public schools. Teachers are puzzled at the city’s priorities because while there is money allocated to build a new basketball arena for a private university, many schools had to close and teachers had to get laid off. According to Alice Ocrey, a retired

CPS teacher at the rally, “When you close that many schools, class sizes go up. Reducing teachers increases class size.” Many teachers at the rally chanted, “Hey hey, ho ho, Rahm Emmanuel has got to go!” Some other teachers present at the rally



CHICAGO CHAMPION
Dena Capano

received impersonal emails informing them they no longer had a job—some that had been teachers for over twenty years. An anonymous third grade teacher stated, “Public education is under attack!” Teachers at the rally held signs that said “I am a teacher” with the “am” crossed out and in marked written “used to be.”

The Chicago Teachers Union has been active for over 75 years, and are at the forefront of education in Chicago. The CTU and CPS teachers serve as an example for teachers around the country. Understandably, the teachers want a mayor in office that will support a system where educators and students are valued. Larger class sizes and overcrowding breeds an environment not conducive to learning. Officials should be focusing on how to build schools

and not close them. The need for new schools and education reform is necessary not just in Chicago, but everywhere in the country.

For example, in Lynn, Massachusetts, the Lynn Teachers Union supported an initiative that was recently passed to build a new Marshall middle school. The old school was dilapidated and has been in need of repair for quite some time. According to LTU president Brant Duncan, “Building a new school would not only provide Marshall students with a state-of-the-art facility, it would also save Lynn taxpayers millions of dollars. With 80-percent MSBA reimbursement for eligible costs, a new Marshall would cost the City approximately \$35 million. The cost to do minimal repairs to the existing building, with no educational enhancements, would be approximately \$40 million, with the City responsible for 100 percent.” Initiatives to open schools and hire more teachers are an example of what should be happening around the country. Chicago is an example of public education under attack. The message needs to be sent that public education needs to be the priority. ■

Dena Capano is a Social Studies Teacher at Lynn Classical High School.

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

Want to recognize a teacher, student, staff member or graduate?

Send their information to advocate@aftma.net

Thank you!

