



October 2014

Spotlight on Lawrence Weingarten and Patrick visit exemplary district

Despite the fact that administrative and even governmental pressures remain, Lawrence Public Schools (LPS) have been able to continue to improve in such a way that many of their procedures and practices are being considered as models for other schools, not only in other districts, but in other states!

In an effort to recognize and encourage these positive changes, both AFT President Randi Weingarten and MA Governor Deval Patrick made visits to the historic city in recent weeks.

On September 4, Weingarten returned to Lawrence as part of her continuing “Back to School” tour.

“When I thought about what to do in the first few days of school throughout the United States of America this year,” Weingarten explained, “I wanted to come to Lawrence because Lawrence last year did something very special.... People took a big risk to say let’s work together, change our relationships with each other to actually really focus on what will work for children, and that’s why I wanted to come back.”

While in the area, Weingarten also visited nearby Lowell, which has also been showing great progress in recent years.

“There is a real sense that the...schools are transforming lives for young people,” Weingarten said.

Among the schools Weingarten toured during her visit to MA were Wetherbee Elementary School and Oliver Partnership School (which she had helped to officially open last year), all of which have been held up as models for how productive partnership between teachers, unions and administrators can revitalize not only classrooms, but entire communities as well.

“For public education to fulfill its obligation as an opportunity agent for children,” Weingarten suggested, “there must be less blaming of and more collaborating with educators, parents and the broader community to create the tools, time and trust needed for student success. That’s why what’s happening in Lawrence is so groundbreaking!”

By partnering with parents, teachers, union and city administrators and others, Lawrence schools have been able to bring new opportunities and ideas into practice. “They are working together to learn and execute best practices that are giving students the rich, holistic instruction with wrap-around supports they need to succeed,” Weingarten observed, noting how evident it was that the teachers are taking more of a leadership role and that it is paying off.

“When we put together solutions that work,” Weingarten explained at a roundtable discussion in Lowell that also included AFT Massachusetts President Tom Gosnell, Lawrence Teachers’ Union President Frank McLaughlin, United Teachers of Lowell President Paul Georges and Lowell

Superintendent Jean Franco, “then real change happens!”

“Lawrence teachers, parents and administrators have earned their recognition as leading examples of what can be accomplished when we all focus on what’s best for our amazing students,” McLaughlin said.

While many Lawrence schools demonstrate the benefits of the new partnerships and protocols, perhaps none do so better than the Oliver. As it was formed with the intention of seeing what good can come of letting teachers play a role in directing their own school, the Oliver has become a model for other schools across the country.



WALKING THE WALK

AFT President Randi Weingarten (center) walks through a Lawrence school as part of her “Back to School” tour of improving districts in New England

“With real leadership and real help from the AFT and LPS, we’ve proven that teachers at Oliver Partnership School can do a nice job,” said second-grade teacher William Mahoney.

“I love the energy here,” said teacher and instructional coach Mary Kennedy, representing the positive feeling and excitement that surge throughout the building. “The Oliver Partnership School is a community that’s all about student success - and we are going to see that happens!”

On October 14, Governor Patrick visited the Francis M. Leahy Elementary School in Lawrence. He was accompanied by Secretary of Education Matt Malone. As the Leahy has shown sustained progress in educational development and achievement gap narrowing, it was a great example of all the good that is being done in Lawrence and what more good might be done elsewhere.

“I applaud the dedication of educators and students in Lawrence on the great progress they have made in their effort to turnaround their school district,” said Governor Patrick. “The Leahy Elementary School is a wonderful example of what is possible when we put student needs first and focus on making meaningful changes that will sustain themselves for years to come.”

As Lawrence’s schools have been given a great amount of autonomy, teachers and administrators have been able to try new approaches to teaching and learning. The results have been impressive, as demonstrated by schools such as the Leahy, where teachers

have been given more planning and development time and where students are given not only more personal attention in new daily small-group study sessions, but also more enrichment options that are available for more hours each week. As many of these are organized in partnership with outside community members, the programs not only enrich the students’ lives in school but also give them a glimpse into community life and perhaps a sense of what they might do after they graduate.

“The progress we see in Lawrence is a true testament to the teachers and school leaders who stepped forward and committed themselves to making

needed changes for the students they serve,” said Secretary Malone. “School turnaround is some of the most difficult work happening in America today, but once again Massachusetts is proving what is possible. The Leahy School is a fine example of how dedication, focus and strategy can result in big improvements.”

While the students and teachers may be enjoying the added time and resources, the Commonwealth is also able to enjoy the

positive spotlight that is being shone on this once troubled area. In addition to stronger academic performance and graduation rates, the Lawrence schools are also enjoying better performance on the MCAS. Recent results show 41 percent of LPS students in the district scored proficient or advanced on the math portion of the state test, compared to just 28 percent in 2011. At the Leahy, the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the English portion of the test rose 6 points in just one year and the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on the math test improved ten points from 2013 to 2014.

“The MCAS results prove that returning authority to schools where the community is welcome, and where principals and teachers are empowered to make decisions creates a culture of trust that ultimately benefits students, parents and the communities where they live,” Weingarten said.

As a result of the remarkable improvements (which show little sign of abating), the Leahy’s status has been raised from Level 2 to Level 1, which indicates that the school is meeting achievement gap targets and other benchmarks.

“I am pleased to see the progress at Leahy and in other Lawrence schools,” said Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester. “Students have benefited both from their own hard work and from better coordination among the adults in the district, who are collaborating more and holding each other to high standards.”

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Many state legislators are also noting the progress being made by LPS.

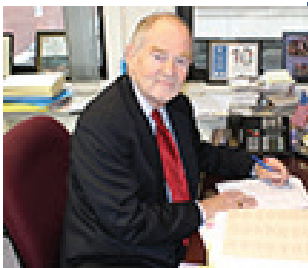
“I am very happy that our children’s education is on the right path towards success,” said Representative Marcos Devers.

“I would like to applaud the school leadership, faculty, and administration on all the hard work that it took to achieve this great success,” added Representative Frank A. Moran. “It is truly worth celebrating the fact that Lawrence students are currently getting a better education today than at any point in recent history.”

In addition to helping the students of Lawrence, this positive attention is also helping the city, which is both proud and grateful.

“We are thrilled to have Governor Patrick and Secretary Malone showcase Lawrence and the achievements of our students, teachers and staff,” said Mayor Daniel Rivera. “Having six Level 1 schools like the Leahy is a milestone for our district and a source of encouragement to keep up the hard work.”

“Lawrence teachers are working harder than ever,” McLaughlin said, “and with the support of the AFT state and national leadership, our efforts are showing results.” ■



THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Thomas J. Gosnell
President, AFT Massachusetts

Election Day Is Important

Elections have consequences. In this edition of the newspaper is a list of all the candidates and issues which the Executive Board of the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts (AFT MA) is recommending. If the candidate does not hold the office for which she/he is running, the recommendation is based on answers given in an interview. If the candidate is an incumbent the recommendation is based on the voting record.

In the governor/lt. governor race the Board is recommending the ticket of Martha Coakley and Steve Kerrigan.

The AAFT MA disliked intensely Martha Coakley's statement that "today's news that all new charter schools were rejected is disappointing." AFT MA told the campaign that it was a dreadful statement.

Subsequently, Martha Coakley said that she "favors a lift in the charter school cap as long as we hold charter schools accountable for the success of their students, ensure adequate protections for teachers, and prioritize greater investments in our public education system across the board." Her opponent supports increasing the number of charter

schools without any qualifications.

The Coakley/Kerrigan ticket strongly supports a massive expansion in early childhood education. We all know how important early childhood education is for students' success in their K-12 and higher education years.

Martha Coakley and Steve Kerrigan understand how important health insurance coverage is. They do not support cutting back benefits for public employees when they retire.

I shall be sending to the membership a mailing which will explain in more detail why the Executive Board of AFT Massachusetts is recommending the Coakley/Kerrigan ticket for governor/lt. governor.

AFT MA also supports Question 4 on the ballot. Question 4, if passed, will permit thousands of workers currently ineligible, to have annually 40 hours of paid sick leave. It is rather astonishing that in 2014 so many workers cannot stay home when sick without losing pay. They cannot stay home without losing pay when their children are sick.

Question 4 is a step in the movement toward a more humane and just society.

We know that how you vote is your choice, but we encourage you to vote for pro education and pro

workers candidates and issues on Tuesday, November 4.

Elections have consequences.

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



**wants
YOU
to
VOTE
November
4**

The Advocate

The official publication of
AFT Massachusetts, AFL-CIO

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BOLD PRINT

In accordance with state law, Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School will be destroying all records related to Special Education students who were no longer receiving services as of the end of the 2005-2006 school year unless the parent/guardian or eligible (adult) student notifies the school district otherwise.

The administration realizes that, while after seven years, the records are no longer useful to the district, but they may still be useful to the parent/guardian or former student in applying for Social Security benefits, rehabilitation services, college entrance, etc. Copies of all records may be requested in writing or in person at the following address:

Assabet Valley Regional
Technical High School
215 Fitchburg Street
Marlborough, MA 01752

□□□□

The Boston School Committee recently eliminated buses for seventh and eighth graders as part of a \$975 million spending plan. The Committee proposes that these students take public transportation, despite the expenses and potential dangers such a plan engenders. For more information, visit Coalition for Equal Quality Education at <http://equalqualityeducation.org>.

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



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

Please include your home mailing address for identification.

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 support your colleagues and community?

Write to advocate@aftma.net

Beyond the Textbook: Expanding Native American Studies

By Dena Capano

Summer vacation at the beach? Not for several dedicated K-12 teachers who met in Cullowhee, North Carolina over the summer to collaborate on how to expand Native American studies in their classrooms. Beyond the Trail of Tears: A View from the Cherokee Homeland, directed by Elaine Franklin, PhD, was a summer institute for K-12 school teachers sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and hosted by the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (NCCAT).

Over the course of the three-week institute, teachers spent time working with Cherokee leaders, archaeologists, and teachers to dig deeper into Cherokee culture and history. During the early nineteenth century, the US government shifted its policy regarding American Indians from one of assimilation to that of relocation. The forced removal of thousands of American Indians from their homes in the eastern part of the U.S. to land west of the Mississippi River is referred to as the Trail of Tears. Indian Removal was a decades long struggle between Native Americans and the U.S. government. Archaeologist, Dr. Brett Riggs, led teachers to various historic sites along the Trail of Tears and ran a two-day archaeological dig on the Cherokee reservation where teachers participated as volunteers.

Teachers at the Institute agreed the subject of the Trail of Tears composed a mere two paragraphs in their textbooks. Danielle Dietz, Exceptional Children Teacher in Bunn, North

Carolina commented, "In order to enrich their content knowledge we need to supplement what we are given in our current textbooks. Also, it is often an "untold story" that students are interested in and are naturally curious about." South Carolina teacher, Wallace Foxworth added, "In today's textbooks, the Native American story

is told with two or three paragraphs that cover thousands of years of human development in

America. Something is terribly wrong with this picture."

Each teacher desired to expand this abbreviated story in their classrooms and met with Cherokee leadership and professors to accomplish this task. Visiting the Kituwah mound with former Chief Joyce Dugan, Western Carolina faculty Tom and Roseanne Belt, and Lynn Harlan proved to be one of the most profound experiences of the trip. The feelings evoked from experiencing this ancient settlement together could not come from a textbook. Chief Joyce Dugan led the effort to recover the land for the

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI). She charismatically spoke to the teachers and reminded them that although the Trail of Tears is remembered nationally as a Cherokee event, many other Native American tribes experienced their own "Trail of Tears." California teacher Pablo Garcia noted, "I always tried to include the Native

American perspective as we travel through the events in history, but the institute has allowed me to see and hear up close the story of the Cherokee which has commonalities with other nations. As a result of the three week experience I feel more confident and prepared in telling the story of the Native Americans in our country."

The intensive three week institute allowed teachers to collaborate on projects to expand their lessons on the Cherokee or other Native Americans in the U.S. History teachers were not the only participants in the program. Jennie Wilson, Pottery teacher from Omaha, Nebraska was excited to bring Cherokee art back to her classroom. She commented, "I teach art, and I

think it is a great opportunity for students to learn about Native cultures. Students hear about the Trail of Tears, but I think it is critical that they learn who the Cherokee were pre-contact and how their culture continues to thrive today. In art class, we can cover Cherokee food ways and how ceramic technology improved Cherokee diets and helped to grow their culture and traditions."

Teachers brought back valuable lessons from the Institute. Foxworth noted, "I have gotten more out of it than what I expected. It has gone beyond my wildest dreams of what I would learn at this institute." South Carolina teacher, Maureen Stevens added, "The most memorable thing that I want to stress to my students is what Tom Belt said, "We are not a Trail of Tears people. We survived and we are still here." It is that story of survival and persistence and success that I want my students to understand and internalize from our study of this time period." ■

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



ON THE TRAIL
Dena Capano and her colleagues explore the Trail of Tears as part of an NEH Institute in North Carolina

Benefit Bulletin: Serving Those Who Serve Us All

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.

The American dream of homeownership is far too often out of reach, especially for those who make significant sacrifices to protect our country. AFT +, in partnership with Union Plus, wants to make the dream of homeownership a reality for hard working AFT members who have served in our armed forces. AFT + will start offering the AFT Union Plus Mortgage Veterans Grant November 1, 2014, to provide qualified AFT member veterans with a \$1,000 grant that never needs to be repaid to help offset the costs of a down payment.

Only 33 percent of veterans report looking for a home within the first year of their return from active duty, citing the high cost of home prices and the inability to come up with a down payment as reasons that deter them. AFT + wants to make sure that veterans that have joined a union after their service time receive help in making their dream of homeownership a reality.

"There are over two million union veterans in this country; they give so much and their families deserve to live in a great home," Leslie Tolf, president of Union Plus, said. "The AFT Union Plus Mortgage Veterans Grant of \$1,000 will help them continue to be part of the middle class and live in a secure house."

To be eligible for a grant, AFT members must meet the following qualifications:

- Finance their mortgage of their primary residence through the Union Plus Mortgage program on or after November 1
- Be an active or retired union member of a participating union
- Be a veteran of the United States Armed Services

Applications must be submitted within 90 days of closing on a mortgage. Limited funds are available and will be awarded in the order eligible applications are received.

The AFT Union Plus Mortgage program, with financing provided by Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, has provided \$43.6 billion in mortgages to help more than 200,000 union members and their families buy or refinance a home.

It is packed with unique benefits tailored to meet the needs of active or retired AFT members, as well as their parents and children. Union members who are first-time buyers even have the opportunity to receive a \$500 First-Time Home Award from Union Plus.

Some of the other benefits of the AFT Union Plus Mortgage program include:

- Hardship Assistance – Union Plus Mortgage Assistance helps members and their families who are unemployed, recently disabled, on strike, or locked out make their mortgage payments with interest-free loans and grants. Mortgage Assistance has provided almost \$10 million to help members keep their loans current and stay in their homes.
- Award Card – Union members and their families may receive a \$500 Wells Fargo My Mortgage GiftSM award card after closing on a purchase or refinance loan.
- Incentive for First-Time Home Buyers – Union members who are first-time buyers can apply for a \$500 First-Time Home Award from Union

Plus. Active or retired union members who used the Union Plus Mortgage program to purchase their first home are eligible to apply. They simply need to fill out an application and provide a short, written description of their Union Plus Mortgage program experience and why home ownership matters.

To learn more about the AFT Union Plus Mortgage program and the new Mortgage Veterans Grant, please visit UnionPlus.org/AFTMortgage

Your union and Union Plus are looking out for you. To find out more about all the benefits and discounts for which you're eligible, please visit UnionPlus.org/AFT. ■

Your Valued Military Service Can Earn You \$1,000 When You Purchase a New Home



As a Veteran, you've served our country, now we want to serve you by offering a \$1,000 grant when you purchase a home through the Union Plus Mortgage program.

Make your dream of home ownership a reality! The \$1,000 Union Plus Mortgage Veterans Grant makes home ownership more affordable for veterans by helping with expenses for your newly purchased home.

Grant Requirements:

- Open to veterans of all branches of the U.S. military
- Must be an active union member or retiree
- Must apply within 90 days of closing on a Union Plus mortgage

Don't Miss Out! Limited funds are available for this grant. Additional terms and restrictions may apply.



Call 1-866-378-1486 or visit UnionPlus.org/AFTMortgage to learn more about the Union Plus Mortgage Veterans Grant.

AFT MA

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AFT MA RECOMMENDED POSITIONS ON STAEWIDE BALLOT QUESTIONS

Question:	Topic:	Summary:	Recommended Position:
1	Gas taxes	Repeals 2013 law that automatically increases gas taxes according to inflation	NO
3	Gambling	Repeals a 2011 law allowing resort casinos	NO
4	Labor	Entitles certain employees to earn and utilize paid sick days	YES

Be Sure to VOTE

RECOMMENDS

AFT MA RECOMMENDED CANDIDATES FOR THE STATE LEGISLATURE

State Senate:

CHANDLER, HARRIETTE L. (5th Worcester District)
DiDOMENICO, SAL N. (Middlesex and Suffolk District)
DONNELLY, KENNETH J. (4th Middlesex District)
DONOGHUE, EILEEN M. (1st Middlesex District)
ELDRIDGE, JAMES B. (Middlesex and Worcester District)
FLANAGAN, JENNIFER L. (Worcester and Middlesex District)
HAYRE, DYLAN (Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex District)
JEHLEN, PATRICIA D. (2nd Middlesex District)
KEENAN, JOHN F. (Norfolk and Plymouth District)
KENNEDY, THOMAS P. (2nd Plymouth and Bristol District)
LESSER ERIC (1st Hampden and Hampshire District)
LEWIS, JASON M. (5th Middlesex District)
L'ITALIEN, BARBARA A. (2nd Essex and Middlesex District)
MOORE, MICHAEL (2nd Worcester District)
MOORE, RICHARD T. (Worcester and Norfolk District)
O'CONNOR IVES, KATHLEEN A. (First Essex District)
PACHECO, MARC R. (1st Plymouth and Bristol District)
RUSH, MICHAEL F. (Norfolk and Suffolk District)
SPILKA, KAREN E. (2nd Middlesex and Norfolk)
WOLF, DANIEL A. (Cape and Islands District)

State Representative:

BARBER, CHRISTINE P. (34th Middlesex District)
BELANGER, DOUGLAS A. (17th Worcester District)
CALTER, THOMAS J. (12th Plymouth District)
CANTWELL, JAMES M (4th Plymouth District)
CHAN, TACKEY (2nd Norfolk District)
CULLINANE, DANIEL (12th Suffolk District)
DAY, MICHAEL (31st Middlesex District)
DECKER, MARJORIE (25th Middlesex District)
DOWGIEWICZ, MARK (18th Worcester District)
DUFFY, KEAVIN P. (3rd Bristol District)
DUNNE-GRIFFIN, BEVERLEY (12th Essex District)
FOX, GLORIA L. (7th Suffolk District)
GARBALLEY, SEAN (23rd Middlesex District)
GARRY, COLLEEN M. (36th Middlesex District)
GREEN, MARTIN (9th Worcester District)
HEROUX, PAUL R. (2nd Bristol District)
HUNT, DANIEL J. (13th Suffolk District)
MALIA, ELIZABETH A. (11th Suffolk District)
MOM, RADY (18th Middlesex District)
NYMAN, RHONDA (5th Plymouth District)
PROVOST, DENISE (27th Middlesex District)
RAUHALA, GENE (5th Middlesex District)
RYAN, DANIEL J. (2nd Suffolk District)
SMIZIK, FRANK (15th Norfolk District)
STANLEY, THOMAS (9th Middlesex District)
TERRY, MATTHEW (5th Barnstable District)
TIMILTY, WALTER F. (7th Norfolk District)
ULTRINO, STEVEN (33rd Middlesex District)
WHELAN, TIMOTHY (1st Barnstable District)

TUESDAY, November 4!

Adding to the Library: First Book returns to Lynn

As reported in the July, 2014 issue, the national literacy support organization known as FirstBook (www.firstbook.org) has begun to work with teachers, students, administrators and community members in Lawrence to help get more books into the city's schools and into the hands of its citizens. The organization collects and distributes books across the country with the goal of increasing both interest in and the ability to read, enjoy and learn from books. As the program has already proven to be such a success, other cities and towns are expressing interest in benefitting as well.

"Together, we can raise the quality of education in the country by making sure kids in need have access to the same resources as kids of means, further closing the achievement gap and providing a more equitable opportunity for all kids," said First Book CEO Kyle Zimmer.

AFT President Randi Weingarten agrees.

"Reading and discovering a love of books at a young age is one of the most important building blocks to lifelong literacy," she said. "The AFT's partnership with First Book is one way we are reclaiming the promise of a great education for all children and creating a pipeline of books and other resources to students and families in need."

As the program has already proven to be such a success, other AFT MA districts are expressing interest in benefitting as well.

"That's why we joined with First Book," Weingarten noted. "We call this reclaiming the promise of public education. It's a collective obligation."

This month, Lynn was added to First Book's growing list of beneficiaries. While the partnership is already making a huge impact, it is not the first time that the city and the system had met.

"First Book was in Lynn years ago," explains Lynn Teachers Union (LTU) President Brant Duncan, "but they used a different model. They were fundraising and buying books [and] it was more involved with the community organizations than the schools."

"I have received several selections from [FirstBook]," says LTU Member Erica Tolley, who serves as a librarian at Lynn Classical High School. "Their books are of excellent quality, reasonably priced, and interesting to all age ranges or reading abilities."

At the recent AFT convention in Los Angeles (see previous issue), Duncan met some First Book staff members, one of whose mother had been a



RARING TO READ
Secretary of Education Matt Malone encourages students at the Drewicz Elementary School in Lynn to read the books they receive from First Book and any other books they can get.

teacher in Lynn. After some discussion about the state of school libraries and other programs in his district, Duncan arranged to have First Book return to Lynn to contribute books to the school system.

"There are [now] two programs," he explains. "There is the National Book Bank, which gives free books that they choose, and there is also the Marketplace where you can buy books that you choose at a great discount."

From early childhood primers to higher education materials, First Book offers millions of top-quality books at significant discounts. As the topics and subjects range from award-winning books and timeless classics to contemporary works and even bi-lingual books, it is a great way for schools and families to start or enhance their libraries and for readers to expand their horizons.

Though the partnership is still relatively young, dozens of LTU members

have already singed on and become involved in this new effort to bring new books to and develop literacy for their students and those of their colleagues and friends.

"For too many children in Lynn, books they can take home and keep are a luxury that's out of reach," Duncan observed. "We can change that. As educators, we're delighted to be partnering with our city, our school

district, and First Book on a goal that's so close to our hearts."

"Reading is the key to success for students," agreed Massachusetts Secretary of Education Matt Malone, "and we all must do our

part to encourage and support literacy."

On October 10, Secretary Malone did his part to mark the first distribution of First Book materials by coming to Lynn to speak to the community and to read to the students. Among the books that were selected from the First Book Marketplace were Island of the Blue Dolphins, How to Eat Fried Worms, and Frindle, all of which were requested for fifth grade students at the Drewicz Elementary School.

"I am excited to join the students at the Drewicz Elementary School to kick-off First Book in Lynn," Malone said. "The students at the Drewicz Elementary School will benefit greatly from First Book and I'm proud to be a part of the event!"

While he is responsible for all education-related policy in the Commonwealth, Malone seems especially interested in literacy.

"Every child should be reading every

night," he advised. "When I'm out on the road visiting schools, I tell classrooms full of students to find something you like, that you're interested in and read every book you can get your hands on. The First Book program helps put those books in kids' hands to make reading more accessible."

Also in attendance at the launch event were State Senator Thomas McGee, State Representative-elect and Councilor at large Brendan Crighton, Lynn Mayor Judith Flanagan Kennedy and Superintendent Catherine Latham, all of whom were encouraged to read the First Book books and all of whom, in turn, encouraged the students to do the same.

As First Book continues to expand its roster of partners, it has also expanded its catalog to include such student-friendly items as pens, pencils, highlighters and other things that, as Duncan puts it, "people would be interested in for their schools."

While the teachers, students and families of Lynn are doing all they can to help support the partnership and the program, Duncan points out that people who do not have students in their homes or who live in other districts can also help.

"If we get 2,000 people to sign up for their list-serve, we get 40,000 books," he says, asking people to go to www.firstbook.org/aft to sign up. "It's great member engagement!"

Working with reading specialists, librarians, and other community members, Duncan and his colleagues are trying to spread the word so they can share the First Book bounty with more schools, students and families.

"We are getting the word out," he says, noting that LTU members are working with community organizations to "get this done."

The first major distribution of books is scheduled to take place on December 13.

"That's 12/13/14," Duncan notes. "It's easy to remember and it's a great opportunity for us!" ■

Meet Your Rep: Jeremy Shenk

Many union workers serve in one field or even in one position for their entire careers, showing up every day, night, or whenever else they may be called upon, to put their skills to work to serve their employers and the community.

While Jeremy Shenk has always given his all to the task at hand, he has found it more beneficial and more satisfying to serve collaborative organizations. As the deputy director of Community Labor United (CLU), Shenk organized and oversaw everything from agendas to staff, working with representatives from throughout the labor world to prepare and promote campaigns and to coordinate unions and union workers in a wide array of ways. While working with CLU, which he describes as "a coalition of unions [and] community groups based in working class communities and communities of color, and environmental organizations," Shenk helped convene a new group called the Green Justice Coalition. He also worked as a community organizer for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), helping them to better focus

and serve their members and their communities around vital issues. Prior to that, Shenk worked in Pittsburgh as the communications director for the Thomas Merton Center for Peace & Justice, helping to bring the Center's messages to the masses. While in Pittsburgh, Shenk also worked with the United Steelworkers Healthcare Workers Council as an organizer. In each of these capacities, Shenk has done all he can and whatever it takes to help his fellow members and administrators make sure that all are being served as effectively and humanely as possible.

Although he may not be "traditionally trained" as a contract negotiator, Shenk has been involved in many employer negotiations as part of community labor campaigns. "I have worked in a multitude of settings with staff and members from many different background," he explains. "I bring

a wealth of experience in representing workers, leading new organizing and contract campaigns, and building community support for union drives, and developed deep personal and organizational relationships with

sometimes unlikely allies across the state."

As he has worked in so many capacities, Shenk has also forged countless relationships in a wide array of unions, including education-related unions. "I have dear friends who are public school teachers," he says, "and I relish the chance to bring together my organizing skills with my passion for public education in a more formal way."

While he has worked on myriad projects and campaigns, among those of which Shenk is proudest are the CLU's Public Transit Public Good campaign, which supported the MBTA's efforts to create a pass for students. Especially as Boston schools are



ONE-MAN COALITION
AFT MA Rep Jeremy Shenk

cutting funding for student transportation, such ideas are more important than ever.

"The only way to truly give all children the education they deserve is to fully fund and support our public schools," Shenk suggests, noting that, in addition to working with unions and other workers, he also volunteers at his son's school and at schools across Boston. "I have been volunteering...to fight for a fairer budget for our public schools and against lifting the charter cap," he explains.

Having found the AFT MA position on UnionJobs.com, Shenk was excited to bring the skills he has developed in his various labor union and community organizing roles to the fight for public schools.

"This is a key time in the battle for public schools," Shenk observes, "and I relish the opportunity to bring together my organizing skills with my passion for public education in a more formal way to help with this important struggle. Parents, students, and teachers are starting to come together here in Boston and across the country and I want to be a part of that full time." ■



Retiree Corner

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



Your Retirement Years

Recently, Massachusetts Retirees United invited award-winning journalist Susan Wornick to be a guest speaker at their Annual Meeting. For one full hour, Wornick entertained us, informed us, and inspired us. She said what an honor it was for her to be there among so many retired teachers, as it was the teachers at Natick High School that were largely responsible for who she had become. She pointed to the audience and said, “There is some kid out there that owes so much to you and what you did for them. There are kids out there that will never forget you”.

During her lively presentation, Wornick offered insight into the broadcasting business and her career in it. She also discussed how, in so many cases, the people in the story were more important to her than the story itself. There was so much to take away from the talk Wornick gave, not the least of which were many laughs!

Wornick spoke of Britney Gengel, the college student killed in the Haiti earthquake who was there to feed the poor. She told of Gengel’s parents, who turned what has to be the hardest thing in a parent’s life - burying a child - into a true memorial to their daughter through the building of BeLikeBrit orphanage in Grand Guave, Haiti.

Though Wornick herself had

recently retired from her long-held anchor role at WCVB TV, it was not because she was squeezed out because of age. Rather, it was because at the time of signing her last contract two years ago she made it known that she had decided to retire when the con-



JOYFUL JOURNALIST
Susan Wornick

tract expired. Wornick went out on her own terms, already knowing in her mind and in her heart what she planned to do with the years that were to be hers in retirement. As Wornick put it in a piece she wrote, she “wanted to continue her lifelong passion of helping others and serving as trusted

advocate to those who need a voice to help tell their story.”

What a lesson for those still working who find that their retirement date may be creeping up on them and they still have not thought of how those years would be spent! What a lesson for those in retirement who still do not know what to do with their time! There are those retired who need more hours in the day to accomplish all they want to do. And there are those for whom the days are long and empty because they did not take the time to plan their time for this part of their life. Wornick clearly falls into the former camp.

We have all spent years preparing for and thinking of how you would spend our many years in the work force. Too many do not spend much time at all thinking of the many years they could have in retirement.

There is a commercial out there that asks, “How many years do you plan to live in retirement?” The purpose of the commercial is to make sure you have the money to take you through those years. More important than the money, however, is whether or not you have the dreams, the goals, the interests, the passions, to make your retirement years truly your “golden years” and actually some of the best years of your life. ■

SENIOR SEMINARS

Preparing for Retirement
Saturday October 25, 10-noon
314 Main Street, Unit 105, Wilmington

Marie Ardito’s presentation is directed to people retiring in the next 10 years from public sector jobs. It provides an understanding of the retirement system and options, as well as a legal checklist, tips for protecting assets, advice about understanding Medicare, and much more.

How to Protect Your Nest Egg
Saturday November 1, , 10-noon
Saturday December 13, 10-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.

Living As an Informed Retiree
Saturday November 15, 10-noon
314 Main Street, Unit 105, Wilmington

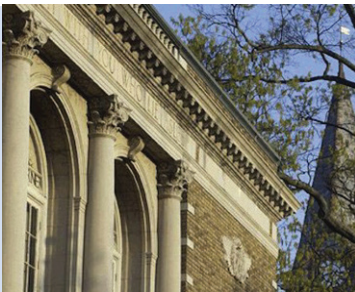
This free seminar presented by Marie Ardito is directed toward those who retired on a public service pension and deals with many issues confronting retirees. Among the issues are: health insurance, Medicare, Medicare B penalty and surcharge, Social Security, working in retirement, legal checklist, tax structure of pension, and many others. All too often misinformation or lack of information on the issues presented is costly to the retiree.

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.



On Campus

Dan Georgianna, Political Director
UMass Faculty Federation, Local 1895



The Problem with Plagiarism

Plagiarism, defined in the *New Oxford American Dictionary* as “the practice of taking someone else’s work or ideas and passing them off as one’s own,” has become frequent practice in professional writing and common practice in student writing.

The Boston Globe reported (7/28) that two superintendents of Massachusetts’ school districts plagiarized graduation speeches (one of them was fired for the offence) and that U. S. Senator Walsh from Montana plagiarized much of his final paper at the U.S. Army War College.

The same article reported a survey showing that “32 percent of high school students said they had copied an online document for an assignment.” In my experience, this estimate is low.

World-famous historians Doris Kearns Godwin and Stephen Ambrose admitted plagiarizing from other authors. The Beatles, the Beach Boys, Led Zeppelin and many other groups plagiarized tunes and lyrics, usually taken from Black musicians.

A few weeks ago, my local newspaper ran an article that was taken almost word-for-word from a book I had written with Roberta Aaronson on a strike in New Bedford, without reference to us or to our book.

I emailed the editor noting that we had credited his newspaper and its predecessors with dozens of footnotes in the book. He didn’t respond, but he did credit me and listed our book in the on-line version of the newspaper.

Plagiarism is a problem. It steals recognition from the original writer and restricts the reader from access to more information from the original sources.

More importantly for teaching writing, students use plagiarism to evade learning. Students also copy from several sources to create a mish-mash of other writers’ ideas and words rather than clear writing based on the their own organized thought.

The Internet tempts students and other writers with millions of expert ideas, interesting facts, and clever phrasing as a short-cut to thinking and writing.

Much of the writing that students plagiarize are well-worn phrases that have become meaningless with too much use.

Readers skip over these phrases, losing concentration, often a good thing, because many prompt terrible images. Consider the phrase “a shot in the arm,” an obvious reference to narcotics.

Jennifer Graham in *The Boston*

Globe calls this form of plagiarism “the recycling of clichés and banal ideas already in broad circulation” that makes for ineffective writing but is not a major problem for teaching writing.

While Graham recognizes that plagiarism of longer pieces is cheating, she doesn’t see this as a major offence either. She calls firing a superintendent of schools for plagiarizing a speech “outrageous, an instance of corporal punishment for a time-out offense.”

The main problem with plagiarism for Graham is that it produces bad writing.

I agree; policing students for plagiarism is important, but the goal of teaching should be effective writing.

According to Aristotle, writing entails thinking and organizing ideas to present an argument that is intelligible and persuasive to the reader.

The first step in writing is to sit down. The next step is to read and think. The last step is to write.

I use the Internet to find topics for this column. I search *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post* every day, the *New Yorker* every week, and other sources for topics and ideas. I also use the Internet to help understand key ideas. I use Wikipedia every time I write. For this column, I looked up everything

in Wikipedia from the Beach Boys to *Aristotle’s Rhetoric*, which we used as a text in a writing class in college, still the best guide for effective writing.

I use Google to spell. (I thought that Godwin’s name was Dolores.) And I use an on-line thesaurus to find the best word, always keeping in mind Orwell’s advice “What is above all needed is to let the meaning choose the word, and not the other way about.”

I don’t regard any of this as plagiarism, especially as I list sources, although low-keyed to keep the reader’s attention.

Plagiarizing from the Internet is not the major problem in teaching writing. As in any time period, writing in the age of the Internet requires concentration and thoughtful composition.

The Internet simply makes shoddy writing easier. ■



Time to Give Thanks

Educator’s Opinion

By Ken Craft

In the news, I have been reading about more and more retailers hoping to storm the barricades of Thanksgiving Day by opening on this once-sacrosanct, commercial-free date to get a jump on Black Friday sales.

This notion, apparently on sale at Bad Ideas R Us, should be blocked at all costs. Abraham Lincoln -- as presidents go a mountain among men -- set this day aside for the express purpose of counting blessings and being thankful for them. Period. He certainly didn’t have “Let’s skip the pumpkin pie so we can nab some marked-down iPods at Walmart!” in mind.

Let the questionably-sane give up precious sleep for worthless material goods at midnight, if they must, but leave the fourth Thursday of November alone. End of mini-editorial.

One of the beauties of Thanksgiving, especially as compared to the “holiday cheer” that follows, is how relatively easy it is. All you have to tolerate? Relatives.

And, except for the food, it is shopping-free. That little blessing is as big as a Macy’s Parade balloon, no?

Let us start there, then, as we list things we are thankful for in 2014: I am thankful...

- That most shops are shuttered every fourth Thursday of November.
- That people from countries outside the United States get a chuckle out of our National Day of “The-Diet-Starts-Monday.”
- That the nearest copying machine works 82.7% of the time.
- That I work with people who, despite knowing as little about Kant, and Spinoza as I do, remain philosophical when things get crazy.
- That students understand the concept and effect of rhetorical questions thanks to helpful parents who ask, “What were you thinking?” and “Are you delusional?”
- That America isn’t what movies say it is.
- That elections, TV ads, and robo-calls are in the rearview mirror and fading fast.
- That we have school secretaries and custodians worth their weight in dark chocolate.
- That there are now three football games on Thanksgiving Day (see comment on relatives above).
- That Daylight Savings has gone

- bankrupt for a few months.
- That Common Core has finally beamed a floodlight on speaking and listening (as opposed to talking and hearing).
 - That I have family and friends kind enough to be my sounding board when it’s been “one of those days” at work.
 - That children want to learn, even if it’s sometimes a treasure hunt finding the key to their natural curiosity.
 - That Mark Twain said, “Man is the only animal that blushes. Or needs to.”
 - That weekends keep cropping up when we least expect them.
 - That people who understand education are fighting the good fight against people who think it should be treated like a business (see D.C. [comma] Washington and Gates [comma] Bill).
 - That Twitter values succinctness.
 - That some people know how it works (succinctness, not Twitter).
 - That I remain cellphone-free -- or else I, too, would fall into the habit of gazing at the palm-sized God all hours of the day.
 - That I live in a country built on the principle of religious toleration.



THANKFUL TEACHER
Ken Craft

- That some truths are self-evident and others are like Rubik’s cubes waiting to be figured out by students in our classrooms.
- That there are readers who actually got this far into the list.
- That each dawn is a metaphor for promise and hope.
- That some students actually laugh when I say “T.G.I.M.!” on Monday mornings.
- That I try to remember what it was like to be a student every time I plan to teach my students.
- That I had parents wise enough to understand that discipline and guidance are forms of love, too.
- That the dash is there to bail us out of more than one punctuation mess — come on, you know it’s true!
- That I stir some *carpe* into every *diem* I get.

Happy Thanksgiving, fellow teachers! ■

Ken Craft is an eighth grade English teacher in Holliston.

Flexible Minds

New yoga program helps BPS stretch and learn

Yoga is one of the most ancient forms of fitness in history. For hundreds of years, practitioners have used the acrobatic art form to stretch their bodies and their minds.

In many public schools, physical education programs continue to be cut and students are given fewer opportunities to exercise. Despite the mounting research that demonstrates the benefits, physical education (and many other productive forms of study, including music and art) are being crushed under the mounting piles of high-stakes standardized tests.

“Yoga in general is great for anyone,” notes Brighton High School teacher John Lilly. “However, it is exceptionally good for...students as they have very few...opportunities to let go and to fully relax their mind and spirit in something so rewarding to them.”

Fortunately, many individuals have taken it upon themselves to stem this tide by offering programs for interested students and faculty. Among them is yoga teacher Deb Cohen.

Having taught yoga since 1996, Cohen has been running a successful studio in Cambridge called Core Yoga (www.coreyoga.com) for many years. When her husband, Dan Goldner, became a teacher at the Jeremiah E. Burke High School in Boston, Cohen inquired about bringing her expertise to the school as well. As she is also a licensed Physical Education teacher and a professional development point provider for the Massachusetts Department of Education, the school was more than willing to listen.

“The yoga classes at the Burke started in 2010,” explains Cohen, whose Core Yoga in Schools manuals for grades K-5 and 6-12 meet Boston, Massachusetts and United States standards for Physical Education.

According to Cohen, the mission statement for Core Yoga in Schools is “to provide relaxation training, atten-

tion training and physical, mental and emotional health for students in the Boston Public Schools.”

So far, it appears to be working! “Yoga calms my mind and helps me control my behavior during the rest of the day,” one student says.

“It cleared my mind and I forgot my worries,” says another student.

“I thought yoga was really fun,” says a third student. “My body was relaxed so I was better prepared for my next class.”

“Students learn how to use their breathing to relax their bodies and minds and direct their attention,” Cohen explains, noting that her classes support students not only with physical fitness, but with stress management, hygiene, and other vital skills.

Last year, Cohen worked with colleagues at Harvard Medical School and BPS’s Health and Wellness Department to pilot a study where she trained the Burke faculty to bring yoga into their classrooms. Working with Burke PE teacher Megan Waterbury, Cohen created a two-week yoga unit. Their collaborations proved so successful that Cohen was invited to bring her program to other BPS schools, including Brighton High School, the William Monroe Trotter Elementary School, the Perkins Elementary School, and the Boston Teachers Union School.

“There is a lot of interest among the teachers,” Cohen observes. “Yoga meets a lot of the requirements of their students for stress reduction and impulse control and it meets a lot of aims of the Health and Wellness Department.”

Brighton High PE teacher Walter C. Mitchell met Cohen in the fall of 2010. “The following semester, she began teaching yoga,” he recalls, noting how Cohen provided colorful yoga mats for his wellness and fitness classes to

facilitate the practice and make it even more productive and fun.

“Deb facilitates an excellent climate for learning in the gym or the classroom,” Mitchell says. “She allows time for everyone to perform, observing each student [and] assisting those in need. She does a masterful job of incorporating advanced students to help beginners as well.”

After class, Mitchell asked his students what they thought.

“The students enjoyed her classes,” he says. “Some said they felt stronger and more focused. Other students shared how more relaxed they were.”

The class caught on so quickly that soon students and teachers from other classes were asking to participate!

“Many staff members heard from the students about Deb’s exceptional yoga sessions,” Mitchell explains. “Staff showed their appreciation by participating during their break time and bringing in other students to join us. All left the classes with smiles.”

According to fellow BHS PE teacher Kristin Green, “The yoga program has been such a tremendous opportunity for my students to have this school year.”

Despite the fact that some students apparently had preconceived notions of what yoga was, all of them have embraced the practice.

“Every single time any of the students did a yoga class,” Green says, “they were surprised at how great they felt afterwards....Yoga has been such a positive outlet for many of the students and has been something for many of them to look forward to each week!”

As interest in the program continues to expand, so does the program itself!

“We did a full-school outdoor yoga class at the Perkins accompanied by my African dance teacher Joh Camara on the drums,” Cohen recalls of the event that included over 250 students and teachers.

“It was an awesome experience,” says Perkins PE teacher Mary Balaconis, for whom Cohen’s class was “the first yoga class I had ever taken

and I enjoyed.” She immediately took many of the ideas and practices to her students.

“I thought the belly breathing with its calming value would be good for my students as a coping mechanism for when angry or under stress during all the testing that they were subjected to,” Balaconis recalls, adding that “the music used was very comforting for me and my students.”

Another of Cohen’s fervent fans is J. M. Curley School dance teacher Kim Taylor Knight, who trained with Cohen so she could bring the program to her students even more effectively.

“Before I took Debbie’s yoga for teachers professional development,” she says, “I didn’t have the confidence to teach it to my students. I began incorporating yoga into my dance classes at the Curley and within a month students began to gain more focus [and] increased flexibility....Yoga has allowed me to create the perfect learning community within each of my classes, giving us time in silence to process, wonder and learn together.”

As much as the class has benefitted her students, Knight says it has also helped her as well.

“The practice has given me more patience, insight and space to develop as teacher,” she suggests, “while giving students an opportunity to ground themselves, which I believe nurtures and supports both diversity of thought [and] a better cultural climate for the entire school building. My only wish is that we, as an entire school, could have a daily yoga break all at the same time so that each and every student was given the chance to experience that my 400 students have begun to claim.”

As Cohen continues to look for more opportunities and more support for her program (which is partially funded by grants and donations), her colleagues continue to sing her praises and to ask what they can do to be more involved.

“I am very fortunate to have worked with Debbie,” Mitchell says. “She is a refreshing teacher who brings life to the classroom!”

“If there is another group for more study next year,” Knight adds, “I would love to be a part of it!” ■