



# The Advocate

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Boston, MA 02111

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## THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

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

## We Care, We Remember, and We Prepare

### PUERTO RICO, HOUSTON, FLORIDA, AND THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT), our national organization, represents tens of thousands of members in all of these locations which have been battered by fierce hurricanes. Some of these places will take years to recover. Our colleagues are suffering.

The AFT has a disaster relief fund. You can contribute online by going to [www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org). You can also send a check by mail to:

American Federation of Teachers  
Disaster Relief Fund  
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20001.

All contributions are tax deductible.

A central tenet of unionism is that we help our colleagues in need.

### KATHY KELLEY, AFT MA PRESIDENT, 1993-2006 – IN MEMORIAM

Kathy Kelley was an outstanding teacher, union leader, and a very warm and caring person.

An elementary teacher, Kathy understood that quality public education enabled our students to learn, to become mature adults, to find a vocation, and to become active participants in our democ-

racy.

She was president of the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) in the early 1980's when severe financial pressures led to a massive number of layoffs in 1981. Nonetheless, her stalwart leadership established the foundation for a tremendous resurgence of public education and the BTU just a few years later.

While president of the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts (AFT MA), her contribution were even more dramatic. Her prodigious efforts to expand enormously funding for public education were quite important to the successful efforts in the 1990's, (Currently AFT MA is involved in a campaign to expand that funding level.)

Kathy was a warrior in defending the rights of teachers, paraprofessionals, public librarians, and everyone else the AFT MA represents. Her advocacy for maintaining and expanding the public retirement system was crucial. Her commitment to collective bargaining was unwavering.

I applaud her leadership. I shall miss her.

### VANESSA GRACE MacCORMACK

Vanessa Grace MacCormack, a Lynn teacher and a member of the Lynn Teachers Union and AFT MA, was murdered. A violent death is always a tragedy, but Vanessa's death is even more tragic because she left behind a very young daughter. We thank those who have already made a contribution to the fund that has been set up for her. I encourage you to do the same.

You can send a contribution to:

Child of Vanessa Grace MacCormack  
c/o Eastern Bank  
6 Traders Way  
Salem, MA 01970

Her daughter needs our support.

### JANUS CASE IN THE U.S. SUPREME COURT

The United States Supreme Court has decided to hear the Janus Case. The plaintiffs in this case maintain that requiring non-members to pay a fair share fee (agency fee) violates the U.S. Constitution.

Forty years ago the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that since non-members receive the benefits of the union's advocacy, a share fee was reasonable. In other words, unions could discourage people from becoming "free loaders." Now this decision is being challenged.

Should the decision go against the unions, we shall have to redouble our efforts to fight for education, to fight for collective bargaining, to fight for the middle class, to fight for those in poverty, and to fight for all the democratic values which unions have espoused since their beginning.

We anticipate the Supreme Court will hear the case in early 2018 and will issue a decision by June 2018

Much is to come. Stay tuned. ■

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

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### AFT MA mourns Lynn teacher Vanessa Grace MacCormack



and encourages members to donate to a fund the family has set up for her young daughter.

Checks can be made out to MacCormack Fund c/o Eastern Bank 6 Traders Way Salem, MA 01970

Thank you.

## IN MEMORIAM

Kathy Kelley (1945-2017)

Kathy served the Boston Teacher Union (BTU) as president from 1979 to 1983 and MA Federation of Teacher (MFT now AFT MA) as president from 1993 to 2006.

Before entering union leadership, Kathy taught in Boston. She became a member of the BTU Executive Board in 1973 and a full-time Elementary Field Representative in 1975.

She was an inspiration to all.



## Help AFT Heal After Hurricanes

Support AFT members in Florida, Puerto Rico, Texas, and the Virgin Islands.

Donate to AFT's disaster relief fund at [www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org) or send a check to:

AFT Disaster Relief Fund  
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# Bringing Members Together

## AFT MA encourages early engagement

**W**hile AFT and other unions continue to tout the importance of member engagement, achieving that vital goal can be complicated. Fortunately, many of our fellow members and local leaders have been focusing on member engagement for some time and have developed plans and programs that prove productive year after year.

“We at AFT Massachusetts were able to settle many contracts this past summer,” Notes AFT MA Director of Operation Brian LaPierre, “and the common theme to successful negotiations was members being more engaged and active around the bargaining table.”

In addition to the state and national union working on engagement, many locals have also made extra efforts to engage.

“Member involvement is key,” stresses Chelmsford Federation of teachers President Jennifer Salmon. “We have worked all year on people feeling confident and comfortable having a voice bc in order to support the students. We have to fully support the people who work with them.”

Salmon and her team even made sure to keep members engaged during recent negotiations.

“We did provide pizza and desserts for people when they attended to ratify the tentative agreement,” she explains.

The Holliston Federation of Teachers (HFT) focuses on two special

annual events; one at the beginning of the school year and another during the holiday season.

“In September, we had a booth at Celebrate Holliston,” explains HFT Vice President Mary Beth Numbers, mentioning the annual community-wide celebration in her district. Playing off the start-of-school theme, HFT gave away pencils that said “We Love our Teachers” and Smartie candies that touted “Terrific Teachers + Super Students = A Bunch of Smarties.”

During the holiday season, HFT hosts a party that involves the Holliston Business Association, which gathers donations for an auction from various area merchants.

“It is a great way to get persons from all schools together,” Numbers says.

Another local encouraging engagement during negotiations is Lynn.

“They...kept members informed and apprised,” LaPierre observes, “and really emphasized how students and educators would all benefit by having an agreement in place by the start of the new school year”

On October 19, the Lynn Teachers Union (LTU) will host a New Teachers Social at the Gannon Golf Club.

“This [is] an opportunity for new teachers to meet teachers from across the district at varied grade and experience levels,” explains LTU President Sheila O’Neill. “Our message is that the union is there for you as a support in all areas: lesson planning, evaluation, licensure, and more.”

O’Neill also mentions a new slate of quarterly meetings at which teachers and other members can discuss issues in a confidential and secure setting.

The paraprofessionals in Springfield

try to get ahead of the curve by engaging new members in August during their New Educator Orientation Professional Development Program.

“On the first morning, we invite guests from the district to discuss the role of the paraprofessional in spe-



**AN INDELIBLE MESSAGE**  
Holliston’s Mary Beth Numbers

cial education classrooms, the para-to-teacher pipeline, benefits information from the district and policies of the Springfield Public Schools,” explains Springfield Federation of Paraprofessionals Presi-

dent Cathy Mastronardi. “In the afternoon...[we discuss] Weingarten rights, collective bargaining...[and provide] them with contact information for the local and their building representative and talk about the many benefits of being a union member and our various affiliations.”

In addition to providing all members with vital information, Mastronardi and her talented team do what they can on the second day of the professional development to respond to members needs by offering another session on para-teacher cooperation and a workshop that offers tips for handling stress.

“Both of these courses are taught by instructors from our local,” Mastronardi explains, noting how the local control offers a flexible and effective approach that educates and engages members before they even enter their classrooms.

Though the knowledge and information offered at these sessions helps nourish and sustain members throughout the year, given that all educators all need to eat, a number of locals also offer to take them to lunch in order to give members opportunities to speak frankly in an off-site

location.

“It’s very informal,” says Kimberly Wilson of the UMass Faculty Federation at UMass Dartmouth, noting that the lunches are only offered to individuals and small groups so each member gets personal attention and time to talk.

The AFT local at UMass Dartmouth has also built a strong committee of area reps that work together on new member engagement and internal organizing. The key, Wilson suggests, is that the members who take them out are the “first faces” of the union.

“Research has shown that the first contact is of great importance to the relationship of the new member for the rest of their time in the union,” Wilson acknowledges, noting how she was also welcomed with a lunch that she still remembers fondly today.

In addition to personal engagement, the Federation has been creating materials for all members to read, wear, and distribute in order to get their most important messages out to the rest of the UMass community. They even have their own YouTube channel (search for “UMD Labor Ed Center”)! “Both...the materials and the new member orientation work together in a really important way to build the union,” Wilson observes.

Especially as the potential fallout from the Supreme Court decision on *Janus v. AFSCME* (which would eliminate agency fee for all unions across the nation) looms, Wilson and her colleagues note how vital engagement is and continue to devise new ways to enact and encourage it.

“It’s really interesting to look at open shops with full membership (or close to it),” Wilson suggests, citing how the letter carriers in New Bedford have maintained full union membership despite having agency fee in play (as all Federal unions do). And while the ESU at UMass has very few agency fee payers, Wilson and her colleagues are “gearing up” for the potential impact of *Janus*. “We have found that this initial engagement has led to a much stronger union,” Mastronardi notes, “and increased the overall engagement of our members.” ■

### The Advocate

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Thomas J. Gosnell, President  
Brant Duncan,  
Secretary-Treasurer

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Bruce Nelson  
Sheila O’Neil  
Bruce Sparfven  
Jonathan Staveley  
Richard Stutman  
Jessica Tang  
Gale Thomas

Matt Robinson, Editor  
38 Chauncy St., Suite 402  
Boston, Mass. 02111  
Tel. 617-423-3342 / 800-279-2523  
Fax: 617-423-0174  
www.aftma.net / advocate@aftma.net  
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experiences to share?**

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“Educator Opinion”  
column**

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# Mr. (and Ms.) AFT Go to Washington

## AFT TEACH 2017 a Capitol affair

While many educators were taking well-deserved time off with family and friends, a significant number of representatives from AFT MA were traveling to Washington, DC, to spend time with old friends and also try to make new friends in the Capitol.

On the weekend of July 20-22, scores of AFT MA representatives attended the 2017 edition of AFT's biennial TEACH Conference ([www.aft.org/education/aft-teach](http://www.aft.org/education/aft-teach)). During the three days in DC, AFT members met with colleagues, education leaders, and legislators and participated in rigorous training sessions intended to better prepare them for the school year ahead and the political battles that also loom large on the education landscape.

"It was a fabulous joining of teachers from across the country," recalls Medway teacher and AFT MA Executive Board member Christine Moyer (see June/July, 2016 issue), who lists among the "highlights" opportunities to meet with and lobby legislators on Capitol Hill, brainstorm with colleagues about education and health care, and rally on the East Lawn of the White House to support students and families. She also recalls educational workshops, movies, panels, and plenaries that, she says, were "all designed to inspire, motivate, educate, and support teachers and their students."

Among the events were a movie festival and a series of "boot camps" that were intended to catch participants up and get them prepared to lobby and rally in the future. Featured speakers and plenary participants included AFT Executive VP Mary Catherine Rickner and Secretary-Treasurer Loretta Johnson, AFT CT VP Erin Benham, and acclaimed actor Jaden Piner ("Moonlight"), who discussed how his public school education encouraged and allowed him to be in an Academy Award-winning film.

"Throughout the event," Moyer

observed, "educators made allies from around the country, shared stories, and gave advice to each other." Participants also focused on keeping their messages positive and hopeful to "striving to be the best they can be and to stand together for their students."

As engagement is such a vital theme both in MA and nationwide, the conference also included a teachers' lounge where participants could meet and talk informally and also a scavenger hunt that was intended to get participants working together in productive and fun ways from the moment they arrived. There were also a number of presentations and discussions related to the topic of engagement, including some on ways to strengthen ties not only among teachers but also between teachers and students. AFT's ShareMyLesson team was also on site to help teachers share ideas and lesson plans in an engaging and productive way. The most important element of engagement at TEACH 2017 may have



**AN ARMY OF "DAVIDS"**  
BTU members at AFT TEACH 2017

been member engagement with their national representatives.

"We were able to speak with his staffers...about what people shared with us on education and health care," Moyer recalled of her delegation's visit with Rep. Joseph Kennedy, III. Among the "clear" messages that Moyer and her Medway colleagues delivered were that "people wanted non-partisan cooperation to work openly and honestly," not only on issues related to education (such as enrichment programs, support services, and the "disproportionately high" costs of education and the "crippling" loans that often result), but also health care. And while she realizes that Kennedy is "a champion for these causes, we wanted to reiterate that this is what the people want and to keep up the good fight."

Lawrence Teachers Union President Frank McLaughlin also cited his lobbying visit to long-time friend and ally Rep. Nikki Tsongas as a high point of the weekend.

"Our entire delegation met with her staff...discussing our positions on the status of the Lawrence receivership, the state of our city, educational funding, health care insurance, and our collective bargaining rights," McLaughlin recalls. And even though Tsongas recently announced that she would not seek another term in office, the Lawrence delegation thanked her for her continued support and invited her to visit Lawrence to see all the great work they have done despite

pressures and challenges that repeatedly make nationwide news.

After they met with Tsongas, McLaughlin and his team were taken on a special tour of the Capitol.

"We walked in the tunnels beneath the Capitol and were [able to] obtain rare passes to sit in the Senate gallery and on the floor of the House of Representatives," McLaughlin recalls. "I was awestruck!"

Another AFT MA district that was well represented was Boston.

"BTU members had a wonderful time participating in professional learning opportunities, meeting colleagues from across the nation, and getting to know other BTU members better as well," said BTU President Jessica Tang. "Members left feeling reinvigorated and ready to tackle the challenges that we face and also had many ideas to bring back to Boston."

Another Boston participant was McKinley South End Academy teacher Josh Hupe, who tweeted (#TEACH17)

about the sense of hope he received from attending the conference and how encouraged he is to become more involved going forward.

"As a teacher, I certainly feel motivated to put some of the things I learned into action," Hupe said. "As a union member, I am absolutely motivated to become more active in our union and be a part of something bigger!"

Recalling Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos' claim that public schools are a "dead end," AFT President Randi Weingarten maintained that they are, in fact, "places of endless opportunity," citing the 90 percent of American parents who send their children to public schools as proof.

"Great things are happening in our public schools," Weingarten observed, citing such examples as poetry slams, Socratic seminars, science fairs, and other community-strengthening events. She also promoted the #PublicSchoolProud social media campaign. "Our public schools are filled with dedicated professionals who are doing their level best...and with

the right support, they can do even better!"

Speaking about the hot topic of "school choice," Weingarten went on to suggest that DeVos made a mistake during a recent speech in which the Secretary suggested that she wanted to give parents "more and better options to find an environment that will set their child up for success." However, Weingarten countered, "her preferred choices—vouchers, tuition tax credits, and private, for-profit charter schools—don't work." In fact, Weingarten maintained, "after decades of experiments with voucher programs, the research is clear: They fail most of the children they purportedly are intended to benefit." For evidence, Weingarten used the Department of Education's own analysis of the voucher program in Washington, D.C. and similar studies in LA and OH that all found such programs have "a negative effect on student achievement." Not only do vouchers leave much of the alleged choice to the schools, Weingarten suggested, they also "increase racial and economic segregation" and, perhaps more importantly, "lack the accountability" of public schools.

"These choices do not increase student achievement," Weingarten pointed out. "They do not reduce inequity or segregation. They drain funds from and destabilize our public schools. And they move us further away from the choice every child in America deserves—a well-supported, effective public school near their home."

As support for such options is now coming from some communities and also from the Department of Education itself, Weingarten explained that our only option is "to fight harder and harder just to keep from losing ground." Even so, she related the current struggle between teachers and alleged education reformers to the famed battle between the small but smart future king David and the gigantic but small-minded brute Goliath when she maintained that she had not lost faith because she knows that her army of Davids can prevail. How? By using the "five smooth stones" that represent the five key values that AFT (and other unions) hold dear: fair-wage jobs, affordable healthcare, safe and supportive public schools, a strong vibrant democracy, and safeguarded civil rights for all.

"When we connect on...these values," Weingarten concluded, "we help make people's lives better...[and] we win!" ■



**POINTING TO THE FUTURE**  
AFT President Randi Weingarten speaks before the 2017 AFT TEACH Conference



**PREPARED TO REPRESENT**  
Lawrence teachers Anita Fowler, Trish Wooley, Cheryl Travers, and Leigh Pinette stand outside the office of Rep. Nikki Tsongas during their weekend in Washington DC

## Keeping an Eye on Education Sen. Warren establishes DeVos Watch

As issues continue to spin in the Oval Office, attention may be distracted from issues in other realms of leadership, including the Department of Education. As these issues are of no less importance (and potentially of more, as a failure to educate our nation's children damages their ability to deal with an ever-more-complex world), Sen. Elizabeth Warren has taken it upon herself to establish a new program that will help make sure Washington knows it is being watched.

"The resistance to Betsy DeVos...has spread in this country like wildfire," Warren observes in a video on her website, in which she also details the "experience" she has standing up to the Department of Education, even at the risk of frustrating her colleagues. Building upon that experience, Warren has recently introduced a watchdog system she calls DeVos Watch ([www.warren.senate.gov/devoswatch](http://www.warren.senate.gov/devoswatch)) to inform and involve supporters.

"Secretary DeVos has acted on an almost weekly basis to undermine efforts to protect students from being cheated," Warren observes. "I created DeVos Watch to hold her - and the Department of Education - accountable. I hope this additional oversight will help push the Department...to help our students and put their interests ahead of the industries that make money off of them."

Despite the fact that she has only been in office for a matter of months, DeVos has already taken steps to undermine protections for students and taxpayers, especially those concerning student loans.

"During her confirmation hearing," Warren points out in a May 31 editorial, "DeVos made it clear that

she knew very little about running the federal student aid program. In her first weeks, she assembled a team that highlighted her plans to actively undermine efforts to protect students from being cheated."

Warren also takes issue with DeVos' hiring people with connections to

for-profit education entities and organizations that make money by, as Warren put it, "abusing the student aid program and preying on students."

"The difference between us and people like DeVos," Warren suggests, "is that they...are tied to money and profits and we are tied to kids

and to...values. We believe that every single child needs and deserves a great education and that the funding for that kind of education...needs to be invested in our public schools [and] not subverted to other kinds of failed strategies...like charter schools or vouchers. They need to go where 90% of where kids go to schools."

Warren also notes that one of these new hires resigned the day after she sent a letter to the Department asking for information about these and other situations.

"To ensure that the Education Department acts in the public interest," Warren insists, "Congress and the public must demand accountability."

Warren hopes that her new program will help those affected keep both tabs and pressure on those responsible. While she has many ideas of her own, Warren is also enlisting constituents and others to offer "whistleblower tips" that will help keep any changes in check and in the public eye.

"Oversight works," Warren suggests, "but we've only just started." ■



**"WATCH" OUT**  
Sen. Elizabeth Warren

## Gosnell and Madeloni Honored Laborers recognized at NSLC dinner

In September over 200 of the North Shore's most ardent labor supporters gathered at Angelica's in Middleton to honor their own at the 19th Annual Legislative Dinner hosted by the North Shore Labor Council (<http://nslaborcouncil.org>).

Among the award recipients was AFT MA President Tom Gosnell, who received the Council's Labor Leader Heroes Award alongside MTA President Barbara Madeloni in recognition of their combined efforts

against charter school expansion in last year's Question 2 ballot initiative.

"Our victory was a great testament to the public schools," Gosnell said, noting that MA enjoys both the highest level of teacher unionization and the best student performance in the nation. "So much for the argument that collective bargaining is an impediment to learning."

Among other award recipients were Jonathan Feinberg, who helped organize workers at Guitar Center in Danvers, and a cadre of supporters of the "sanctuary city" concept. AFT MA was represented not only by Gosnell, but also by Salem Teachers Union President Beth Kontos (who was recognized as part of NSLC's Women's Committee, which will host BTU Pres-

ident Jessica Tang at their December 2 breakfast), and MLSA leader Pat Kelly (who was thanked at the event she helped organize for her years of service as a Council board member). AFT MA members from Billerica, Boston, Lowell, Lynn, Peabody, and

Salem were on hand to show support for their colleagues and other champions of labor.

In his remarks, Council President Jeff Crosby listed some of labor's many challenges and celebrated recent victories

(including the Lynn teachers' new contract) before looking forward to upcoming political battles, including the fights over immigrant rights, wage theft, and right to work.

"The good news is that on the ground is where we live," Crosby observed. "We build job by job."

After a performance by B Vocal (see page 9), organizer-turned-rabbinical student Rebecca Hornstein offered an invocation that was both appropriate and encouraging to those seeking ways to support their fellow workers.

"What you need to do...is not far from you," Hornstein suggested, quoting the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy. "It is in your heart and in your mouth so that you may do it." ■



**SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT**  
AFT MA President Tom Gosnell



**NORTH SHORE STAR**  
Salem Teachers Union President Beth Kontos at the NSLC dinner

## SUPPORT SEN. ELIZABETH WARREN

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## ATTENTION NEW(ER) TEACHERS

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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?

Do you want to be paid to write?

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# Breakfast of Champions

## GBLC Labor Day event a rousing success

As representatives of the Fight for \$15 movement (<http://fightfor15.org>) gathered outside, hundreds of Labor representatives, legislators, and other supporters of workers packed into the main ballroom at the Boston Park Plaza for the 2017 Greater Boston Labor Council ([www.gbclc.com](http://www.gbclc.com)) breakfast. After esteemed guests were introduced, Labor Council Executive Secretary Treasurer Richard Rogers took the podium to recall past breakfasts and survey the current landscape. And while the current administration, "may not be a friend to Labor," Rogers had only good things to say about the people in the room.

"I am very, very proud of the work that we do," Rogers said, citing the "building boom in Boston" and encouraging everyone to "keep up the good work!"

In addition to thanking Senator Ed Markey for his particularly strong support, Rogers also made a point of congratulating Jessica Tang on being elected president of BTU.

"Boston is a union city," he maintained, urging unity and collaboration among all unions, "and it will always be a union city."

After looking at recent victories, including those enjoyed by educators who put down the pro-charter Question 2, Rogers looked at current challenges.

"Certainly, our biggest challenge is *Janus v AFSCME*," he observed, mentioning the pending Supreme Court case that would eliminate agency fee and allow workers to enjoy the benefits of negotiation and other union privileges without paying dues, "but there is nothing we can't do if we stick together as a union!"

SEIU MA Executive Vice President Tyrek Lee continued Rogers' positive view when he said that, "we have much to celebrate" and observed that our movement is "alive and well." He also cited the nurses at Tufts (who are still battling for a contract) and added praise for the cafeteria workers at Harvard, as well as for all the labor supporters who gathered on Boston Common for what he rightfully called a "massive rally" in May to support teachers (see June/July, 2017 issue).

"Our movement is making progress in ways that don't generate news," Lee suggested, "but we help people's lives."

Realizing that challenges remain, however, Lee also offered advice that was echoed by many on the podium.

"We must come together, strengthen our coalitions... [and] look at new ways of organizations," he suggested. "We must stand tall and not let anybody hold us back. Welcome to the 21st century union!"

In his remarks, Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh offered special thanks to the representatives of Local 26 who make events at the Plaza come off so well and to everyone who helped push against messages of hate during a more recent rally on Boston Common.

"The labor movement gave my immigrant family a shot at the American Dream," Mayor Walsh recalled, citing various times in his life when his union card helped advance and

even save his life. "That is why I carry a union book in my pocket and I will never forget where I came from."

While many were fearful of a union member in City Hall, Mayor Walsh cited the pioneering growth his pioneering city has enjoyed.

"Boston's economy has never been stronger," Mayor Walsh observed. Answering how this has come to pass, Walsh offered, "We put working families first."

Even if individuals have diverse backgrounds and beliefs, Mayor Walsh maintained that all of us can come together for our movement.

"Politics do not have to separate working people," Mayor Walsh suggested, promoting "solidarity" as the watchword of labor life. "If they come for one of us, they are gonna' have to deal with all of us.... When we stand together, we win!"



**STANDING FRONT AND CENTER**  
Sen. Ed Markey addresses the GBLC Labor Day Breakfast

During his passionate speech, MA AFL-CIO President Steve Tolman questioned many choices made by the current administration, not the least of which was the selection of Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos.

"This is a time in our history for organized labor to come together." Tolman urged, "because everything our forefathers fought for is under attack."

Recalling early labor demands by AFL-CIO founder Samuel Gompers, Tolman emphasized how they are the same today.

"We want quality education for our children," he suggested, "health care... [and] the rights and privileges that working people need."

Honoring her pledge to attend the GBLC event every year since she first ran for office in 2012, Senator Elizabeth Warren thanked the labor leaders for convincing her to run and for standing by her "every step of the way" and expressed special love for a city that is led by a union mayor.

"When I first ran in 2012," she mused, "Tom Brady was the best quarterback and Donald Trump was embarrassing himself on Twitter.... Not much has changed!"

Warren then spoke of the values she shares with other American workers and those who wish to join their ranks today.

"America should keep its promises," she maintained, speaking not only of immigrants, but also of veterans and small business owners like two of her own brothers. In mentioning a third brother - a proud labor member - she suggested that, "Unions built America's middle class and unions will rebuild America's middle class."

Citing quotes from President Trump promising protection to workers, Warren also previewed the report released on Labor Day on her website ([www.warren.senate.gov](http://www.warren.senate.gov)) listing each and every "broken" promise.

"We come together on Labor Day to fight back," she suggested, encouraging the crowd by noting all that can be done when individuals come together and speak out, and citing such examples as public outcry against would-be Labor Secretary Andy Puzder and the nationwide success of the Women's March.

"It is thanks to unions that wages went up, that families got stronger, and that America prospered as a country," Warren concluded. And while she admitted that the labor movement is "under attack," Warren pledged her undying support and predicted that, by raising our voices, we will get stronger and "we will fight back."

After more special and sincere expressions of appreciation from Rogers, Senator Ed Markey recalled his own immigrant roots and acknowledged the "huge debt of gratitude" we all owe to workers throughout the Commonwealth and the nation.

"I first ran for office to give a voice to the blue-collar workers in the neighborhood where I live," Markey said, "and I continue to do that."

Recalling the meaning of the day, Markey observed that Labor Day is a time to both "celebrate our victories and recommit to the work ahead" that will make the United States "a more fair and productive nation" for everyone.

"You fought the battle here in MA," Markey thundered, "and now we must fight that battle across the country... and I pledge to fight with you!"

Among the key elements of this fight, Markey maintained, were the passing of a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill to rebuild not just Texas and Louisiana, but every state in America.

"We know they will not back down," Markey said of those who would oppose our efforts and destroy our unions and our way of life, "but we need to send them a special message from MA that neither are we."

In introducing Attorney General Maura Healey, Rogers emphasized how she has taken the time to learn our issues and taking seriously her role as "the people's attorney."

"This is an uncertain time," Healey observed, "but no matter what is happening in Washington, here in this state, we support organized labor."

Healey also took a moment to express her views on the meaning of Labor Day.

"Everybody deserves a shot at the American dream," she said, "and that is what today is about."

Looking both backwards and ahead, Healey made a particular point of promising to do all she could to help workers deal with Supreme Court cases that may threaten union membership.

"We led the fight against *Friedrichs*," Healey reminded, mentioning the previous Supreme Court case that involved right to work policies, "and you better believe MA will be in the lead" for the *Janus* case.

Healey also touted her own team's efforts to combat wage theft by increasing restitution to workers and by also increasing the number of legal cases against employers who tried to deny them rights and wages.

"It should never pay to cheat your workers," Healey maintained, urging passage of legislation to stop such practices. "Together, let's fight for the right of every worker...and ensure that our unions remain where they are, where they have always been and where they always will be, which is a force for good and fairness in our communities."

Knowing that many in attendance wanted to join the Fight for \$15 rally on the Common or enjoy their last day of summer vacation, Representative Joseph Kennedy, III kept his closing remarks brief and to the point.

"I am here to deliver one simple message," he said. "It is time to defend our home field. Every single one of you here today knows that the degradation of the American worker is not just about the Rust Belt or Appalachia. It can happen right here in MA too."

And while he admitted that, "By many standards, we are the envy of the nation," Kennedy pointed out that MA cannot claim to be the "epicenter of the resistance" if we do not deal with inequality in our own backyard.

"If MA won't defend workers and workers' rights," he queried, "who will?"

Posing the fight for workers as the greatest fight in this country right now, Kennedy maintained, "that fight is right here in our Commonwealth" and pledged to fight alongside workers every step of the way.

"We have a lot of work to do," he admitted, "but when I see you on my right and left on the picket line, I know we can do it!" ■



**STANDING SHOULDER TO SHOULDER**  
Lawrence Teachers Union President Frank McLaughlin with Sen. Elizabeth Warren at the breakfast

# Leaders (Re-)unite

## BTU hosts second Organizing Institute

With only days or even hours before the new school year began, union members braved parking and construction issues to travel to UMass Boston's College of Public and Community Service for a second edition of the Boston Teachers Union's (BTU) Summer Organizing Institute.

"We decided to have two this year," explained BTU President Jessica Tang, "because many members couldn't make the dates of the first one and we wanted to create another opportunity for our members to participate in this important professional learning and skill-building opportunity."

While the first Institute was tailored mostly toward educators, the second was expanded in scope to engage and involve all working people.

"In the spirit of community collaboration and solidarity, we also wanted to open up the Institute to all labor friends and allies as the topics and workshops are applicable to more than just our members," Tang said. "We know that working together, we are all stronger."

Among the special guests were MA Nurses Association (MNA) President Donna Kelly-Williams, who presented the keynote address on the Institute's opening day.

"Both nurses and teachers educate people," Kelly-Williams observed, strengthening the ties between her group and that of her hosts. "As professionals, we need people to truly understand what we really do."

While Tang called the MNA a "model union" that engages over 23,000 members from the Berkshires to Cape Cod, including many school nurses and the thousands of health care workers who have been involved in heated negotiations with Tufts Medical Center, Kelly-Williams cited the work on Question 2 by BTU and AFT MA as an example of what education can do not only for children but for adults as well.

"People did not know what charter schools were and how they operated... [so] we had to educate them." Kelly-Williams observed. "MNA wants to educate people about what nurses do."

Just as many teachers bemoan overcrowded classrooms, nurses have to fight every day to maintain "safe limits" on the number of patients assigned to each healthcare professional. In fact, Kelly-Williams explained, this was among the main reasons for the recent strike at Tufts.

"Nurses, like teachers, don't want to strike," Kelly-Williams maintained. "That's not their goal...but at some point, you have to fish or cut bait."

She also emphasized the importance of member engagement.

"A lot of our members see the MNA as something to serve them rather than being a part of it," Kelly-Williams admitted. "We had to show them that they are the driving force."

And while Kelly-Williams and her colleagues are trained as nurses and not as organizers, they all had to learn new skills in order to survive.

"We hand delivered information sheets and ran a button campaign to raise awareness and show solidari-

ty," Kelly-Williams recalled, citing a series of recent organizational efforts. "It identified who was on board, who was reluctant...and who needed more information."

As many teachers wear the same colors on certain days, the MNA also asked members to wear black scrubs on Wednesdays so even patients could see who was most concerned with protecting their care.

"If people were not in black, we knew that we had to talk to them," Kelly-Williams explained, noting that she also had to talk to those who felt that striking was "unprofessional."



**GETTING ORGANIZED TOGETHER**  
Members of AFT MA and MNA come together at the BTU's second Summer Organizing Institute

AFT MA Field Representative Jeremy Shenk later likened this campaign to the Springfield Paraprofessionals who were asked to comply with dress code and responded with "the Great Blue Jeans Rebellion" that resulted in the administration backing down.

Taking advantage of old and new technologies, the nurses established a private Facebook page on which they were free to air grievances and also asked patients to put up signs in hospital windows to show their support.

"Over 800 nurses contributed," Kelly-Williams said of the online forum, "and their signed stories were shared with administration."

In the end, 12,000 members marched and only 13 crossed the picket line. So while a contract remains elusive, Kelly-Williams is encouraged by the way her organization has stood together, what they have learned, and what it portends for the future.

"The MNA is planning a ballot initiative for 2018 for safe patient limits," Kelly-Williams noted.

During their presentation, Chris Brooks and Sam Winslow from Labor Notes ([www.labornotes.org](http://www.labornotes.org)) asked participants to organize themselves according to the decade during which they became involved in education and then went around the room tracking and discussing major changes.

During the discussions, veteran teachers recalled condemned buildings, forced integration, and racial divisions

"The city was a war zone for education," said one teacher recalling unqualified administrators (including a "racist" head of the Boston School Committee) and low expectations and morale. On the other hand, teachers from the 1990s cited a "Golden Age" during which they enjoyed controlled class size, zoned bus routes, encouraged creativity, and more equitable

student supports. Millennial hires spoke of increased testing and school "ranking" and results that have included more work (including extra learning time) for the same or less pay.

"The idea of public schools in crisis was ramped up," observed AFT MA Field Representative Jeremy Shenk.

The newest AFT MA members noted the importance of the Question 2 campaign and promotion of charter schools as a "solution" to the so-called education "crisis." They also spoke of buzzwords like "inclusion" and "restorative justice" and the emphasis on literacy and math, even at the cost

of other subjects. One new teacher noted how teachers' unions are "the last bastion of union organizing" and observed the increase of business interest in public education.

"Every major venture capital organization has a unit that deals with education," Brooks agreed.

Pivoting to a discussion of the future, the team from *Labor Notes* (who will host their national conference in Chicago April 6-8, 2018) asked participants about current practices and problems. Responses included lack of staffing and excess demands (including professional development and testing) that preclude connecting with and supporting students. One teacher expressed confusion about who to ask for support.

"Bargaining is often more collective," Winslow observed, "but can also be more complicated," especially when there is "no motivation" for the administration to push it forward.

"Management has a plan," Winslow observed. "They are doing stuff to keep us from getting united and fighting back."

Therefore, Brooks suggested, "we need to have a plan" as well. He then suggested that the role of an organizer is to develop and help implement this plan

"A lot of people do not speak up because they do not want to get in trouble," one educator observed

"How can we shift the power?" Brooks asked. "It takes collective action."

"We need to find out the truth," a school nurse suggested, recalling being told there was no money in her district when the tax base was clearly rising.

While many consider unions as a pyramid with members as the "base," Winslow suggested seeing them as

targets with each concentric circle representing a greater or lesser degree of involvement.

"We need to aim for the bullseye," she said, suggesting that the "core" was where people who are always working for their colleagues dwell, "[and] we need to shrink the 'disengaged' ring."

While this may seem a daunting task, Winslow suggested that it can be done one "ring" at a time.

"Ask someone who is disengaged to wear a sticker," she offered as an actionable example, "and ask people who wear stickers to hand them out to others."

As the Supreme Court is currently discussing it, a key element of the Institute was *Janus v. AFSCME*, which would eliminate all non-union members' obligation to pay agency fees and allow workers to benefit from the efforts of unions without paying fees or dues. In an effort to explain how this works, an AFT MA member likened agency fee to taxes.

"We all get to benefit from the paved road, but only some pay for it," she noted, observing how those "roads" will not be maintained because there is less money. She also noted how teachers in right to work states already make less and how student achievement is often lower in those states as well.

"Right to work is the right to work for less," Winslow observed.

Speaking about the importance of dues, Winslow offered another apt metaphor. "Dues are the gas in the tank for the car," she suggested, "They are the gas that allows us to fight for what we need."

When asked what percentage of members would stay involved if *Janus* passed today and MA became a "right-to-work" state, two paraprofessionals suggested less than 50%

"We have a lot of work to do," Winslow observed, "It's bad, but it's not game over...[and] the stronger we get the better equipped we are to deal with this."

And while she realized that we cannot control the Supreme Court, Winslow maintained that we can control how we deal with it and so control the conversation.

"We can't write anyone off," a member maintained.

"People need to feel heard," Winslow agreed. "We need to widen our focus beyond what affects our members to the big picture. Unions existed before all of this and they will continue to exist." ■

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## New Role. Same Roll.

### Jeremy Shenk takes on political leadership

As a public school student who is now the parent of Boston Public School students, Jeremy Shenk has always been a staunch and active supporter of public education. As a former organizer with the United Steelworkers, SEIU, and Community Labor United (a “sister” organization to the Greater Boston Labor Council), Shenk has also been a devoted activist and union supporter for many years. So it was no surprise when he was approved to take on the role of Political Organizer for AFT MA at the February meeting of the Executive Board.

As his parents were active in the Civil Rights Movement, activism was an integral part of Shenk’s life from very early on.

“They told me stories of doing voter registration work when they were in college,” he recalls, noting that his mother is still an active supporter. “I knew by my teenage years that social justice work was going to be a big part of my life for the rest of my life.”

While in college, Shenk was involved in student solidarity work with

various unions and studied the history of the labor movement.

“[That] really drew me to dedicating my adult life to trying to grow, invigorate, and strengthen the labor movement,” he explains.

Shenk’s dedication to the labor cause runs so deep that he named his eldest son after August Spies.

“[He] was one of the eight-hour day organizers in Chicago in the 1880s who was executed on false charges,” Shenk explains. “Those early labor leaders are

always a source of pride and inspiration for the sacrifices they made for all of us to live better lives than they did.”

When asked what first got him interested in working for AFT MA, Shenk recalls a presentation given by AFT MA Executive Board member and Boston Teachers Union President

Jessica Tang.

“She did an amazing presentation about teachers and parents working together across the city,” Shenk says, noting that many others in attendance have also been actively involved ever since.

After attending the initial meeting

of what was to become the Boston Education Justice Alliance (BEJA), Shenk says he was “hooked,” so when a Field Representative opportunity opened at AFT MA, Shenk saw it as “an opportunity to

do union work in public education as a full time occupation, as opposed to just on my own time as a Boston Public School parent.”

Recalling his own educational upbringing, Shenk is still grateful to the “many great teachers” with whom

he studied in Southwest PA and VA. He is particularly keen to mention Ms. Vazeriagos, his Social Studies teacher at the Thomas Harrison Middle School.

“[She] was incredibly creative and inspiring and really made me love school, history, my role in it, and school in general,” Shenk explains, noting that his own grandfather had been a music teacher in eastern PA who always welcomed his grandson into his classroom.

These days, Shenk is equally honored to spend time with his colleagues across the Commonwealth, from whom he continues to learn.

“I am so lucky to be able to spend so much time in so many interesting schools all around MA,” he says, “and see the amazing work our members do.”

In his new role, Shenk looks forward to continuing to serve his colleagues and to protect and defend public school educators and students.

“Organizing is my vocation and my passion,” he maintains, “and I am glad for the opportunity to spend even more of my time at AFT Mass working on organizing around winning the political and policy victories our members need and deserve.” ■



**LABOR IN THE BLOOD**  
Jeremy Shenk (right) rallies with his son

## An Artistic Agreement Berklee and Conservatory unite

When Berklee College of Music merged with its neighbor, the Boston Conservatory (now the Boston Conservatory at Berklee program), many wondered what would happen to the award-winning facilities and faculty. Could two arts-based schools that each

have international reputations truly come together? Well, if the faculty are any indication, the answer is a resounding “Yes!”

Though many feared that the BoCo faculty would be lost in this transition, the Berklee

Faculty Union was determined to unite with its new faculty and strive for equity for all faculty. With this in mind, the Berklee Faculty Union embarked on an organizing drive among Boston Conservatory at Berklee Faculty. After lengthy negotiations with Berklee College, the Union reached an agreement for voluntary recognition, with the result that on June 13, 2017, an independent arbitrator confirmed that the Boston Conservatory at Berklee faculty overwhelmingly chose the Berklee Faculty Union (BFU) to represent them. With the voluntary recognition, they joined the Berklee faculty bargaining unit, increasing the bargaining unit by one third. However, the Union needed to negotiate over contract provisions for its legacy Berklee faculty and what contract

provisions would apply to the newly represented Boston Conservatory at Berklee faculty. As Boston Conservatory faculty have historically been paid much lower wages than Berklee faculty, this constituted a significant challenge to BFU’s goal of pay equity for all faculty. After extensive and

hard fought negotiations over the summer by the Berklee Faculty Union negotiation team with the participation of the new Boston Conservatory at Berklee representatives, BFU President Jackson Schultz announced

that the parties had reached a tentative agreement with the College on August 30, 2017. The agreement awaits ratification.

In the words of the Berklee Faculty Union, as stated on the BFU website, “We thank all our supporters – students, parents, alumni and community members - who signed petitions, contacted the College, wrote letters and reached out in solidarity with the faculty. Without your support we could not have achieved this milestone! We also thank the Berklee faculty for “standing in unity with our new colleagues from the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, and for the commitment and passion of our new BoCo at Berklee members who have stayed strong, committed and unified.” ■



**“SHAKE ON IT!”**  
Boston Conservatory Dance Faculty Denise Pons-Leon and BFU Treasurer Jeff Perry look forward to collaborating

## A Hard-Fought Victory Lynn comes together for contract

After nearly a year of negotiations, the Lynn Teachers Union has garnered a new contract.

While President Sheila O’Neill is thankful to AFT MA Field Representative Jeremy Shenk and former LTU President Brant Duncan for their support, she is keen to credit her colleagues for the victory as well.

“Each member of the Negotiations Team brought five or more members to a school committee meeting all wearing LTU t-shirts,” O’Neill recalls. “We had approximately 60 members at this event.”

On May 1, over 100 members marched to City Hall to join a city-wide protest on May Day (please see June/July, 2017 issue).

“We [also] rallied prior to negotiations with about 80 members marching and chanting at the Administration building,” O’Neill notes.

Such strong member support is what helped keep the Negotiations Team energized and focused through 11 months of work.

“Our original ask regarding wage percentage was inflated with bargaining in mind,” O’Neill explains. After asking for three consecutive years of a 4% raise, the Team agreed to a two-year contract with a 2.5% retroactive raise and 2% for this year.

“We also received a \$5 increase in the hourly rate,” O’Neill notes.

While the salary was a key element, O’Neill says that the main “sticking point” was actually the issue of personal days.

“They wanted to limit number of members allowed to take a day to a percentage per building,” O’Neill explains. “This was unacceptable and inequitable, so we rewrote the language to have 15 days notice required in December, May, and June.”

Another issue was the lack of an option to receive payments for 52-week pay cycle.

“We now have an option for a 10-week lump sum payment in week 43,” O’Neil says. ■



**LEADING IN LYNN**  
Lynn teachers march together in support of a new contract



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# Multiple Children, Multiple Intelligences!

**Paraprofessional Perspective**  
By Marcy Winer

If Tommy and Janie are in a room filled with toy trucks, dolls, and other items to play with, many are likely to assume that Tommy will pick up a truck and Janie will opt for a doll. Surprisingly, this assumption may be wrong! Genetically speaking, all children are born with natural brain strengths and weakness that have nothing to do with gender. These abilities influence and affect how they play and develop their personalities.

Children's personalities and preferences are made up of many neurological and natural components that can be influenced by their surroundings and their interests can be supported and developed at home and at school with appropriate exposure and opportunities. In the end, nurturing Tommy may become a nurse and tactile Janie may find a career in construction.

In "Musical Dynasties: It (Genetically) Runs in the Family," mental health counselor Dr. Stephanie Sarkis explains that there is, in fact, a genetic component to children's proclivities.

Her team of researchers analyzed 224 families and found an inheritability rate of 50%. I cannot play an instrument or sing a tune that anyone would want to hear and the same goes for my younger daughter, but my husband is a professional musician and my older daughter can play the alto saxophone. We hit the 50% mark!

As young children develop, their personalities emerge. I learned all about psychologist Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences in a class at Rivier University taught by the fabulous Diane Connell, Ed. D. In Diane's class, we learned about Gardner's definition of eight intelligences (linguistic, logical, bodily-kinesthetic, visual-spatial, musical, naturalistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal) and how they develop. Each individual demonstrates a unique combination of these intelligences. As educators, we know children all learn differently and

we need to differentiate and accommodate accordingly. How great would it be to be able to figure out each child's multiple intelligence(s) and gear academic learning towards their strengths? While this is nearly impossible to do in a large classroom, we can emphasize what we learn about each child's personality and use it to enhance their learning during the school day.

We had a child last year who disliked writing but loved puzzles. Whenever we could, we encouraged him to take a break and use some of the puzzles in the classroom. Intuitively, he knew his strengths and he liked to focus on them.

He was associating with his inherent "visual-spatial" intelligence.

We have all had students who like to draw but hate to write, or who love to build, create stories, and play dress up. All of these play and academic concentrations can be applied to the



**MANY WAYS TO TEACH**  
Marcy Winer

theory of multiple intelligences. Think back to your own childhood. Did you play an instrument (musical intelligence), draw (visual-spatial intelligence) or fix and build things (bodily-kinesthetic intelligence)? If we see a child as a budding artist or a future mathematician and encourage them along the way to enhance the areas that they naturally enjoy, they can feel successful and build their self-esteem. Every classroom comes with eager and excited children ready to learn. Let's focus on the skills they can naturally succeed at and help them become their best self! ■

I wish to offer special thanks to Diane Connell, Ed.D. for her support with this article. To learn more about multiple intelligence, read Dr. Gardner or consult Diane's book "Brain Based Strategies to Reach Every Learner."

Marcy Winer is a paraprofessional in Lowell and the founder of the literacy program Project DEAR ([www.facebook.com/Project-DEAR-738334756244926](http://www.facebook.com/Project-DEAR-738334756244926)).

## Out on a STEM

### BU supports science students

As the studies of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) continue to grow in importance and Next Generation in Science Standards (NGSS) Core Ideas integrate engineering and other sciences, many teachers are seeking new means of training so they can understand the latest developments and pass them on to their students (and colleagues) effectively.

Fortunately, engineers and scientists at Boston University are offering such a support system through their Research Experiences for Teachers (RET) program ([www.bu.edu/photronics-ret](http://www.bu.edu/photronics-ret)), which is led by Mechanical Engineering Faculty members Xin Zhang and Helen Fawcett.

RET involves the design, fabrication, and use of very small-scale systems. Each summer, teachers from public schools in the Central/MetroWest, Boston/MetroNorth, Cape Cod/Southeast, and Northeast STEM networks are immersed in an interdisciplinary research program related to nanotechnology. Over the course of six weeks, teachers are partnered with undergraduate researchers to engage in solving real-world problems. In the process, they not only learn how to handle complex scientific scenarios, but also how to work together.

"The knowledge gained will help participants develop sustainable curricula and activities in STEM education," Fawcett explains. "Participants... develop critical skills, awareness and confidence necessary to advance in academics and research in the future..."

[and] will return to their classrooms with an improved and relevant skill set to foster their student's interest...and to succeed with the ambitious...goals of the NGSS."

In addition to hands-on training sessions and cleanroom activities RET Site introduces participants to research skills through seminars on nanotechnology and fosters discussions on classroom integration and pedagogy with BU faculty mentors.

"The summer sessions culminate a year-long effort that involves teacher recruitment, development of faculty proposals, project selection, pairing projects with teachers, quantitative and qualitative evaluation and feedback," Fawcett explains when asked how participants are selected for the program. Fawcett also notes that the goals of the RET Site include engaging teachers who serve in high needs schools where resources may be limited, that have high percentages of minority and low-income families, and where the administration is supportive of teachers implementing new STEM curricula.

"[We] target schools and individual teachers with STEM interest but limited resources to implement these activities," she says. When teachers introduce hands on engineering research concepts to students, the natural outcome is to "understand the difference between a scientist and an engineer and to understand what engineering and engineering research are all about." Last winter, Fawcett visited a participating school and

asked each class if they knew what an engineer was. One out of 60 students raised their hand. Through the RET program, teachers will help break down the misconceptions of what it means to be an engineer.

One of the recent teacher participants was Scott Hubeny, who teaches math, physics, and special education at East Boston High School.

"I found out about the RET program at BU Photonics Center through a fellow colleague at my school who had participated in the program the summer before," Hubeny recalls, noting that he is the fifth teacher from his school to participate in RET. "After hearing all the positives, I decided to apply myself."

Despite the fact that the program is rigorous and is at least equal in required effort to a full-time job, Hubeny was eager to expand his understandings of the latest engineering research technologies so he could share his new knowledge with his students and help them get excited about science as well.

"A professional development opportunity where you get to work with professors and graduate and undergrad students on cutting edge research is something that a science teacher like

myself just could not pass up," Hubeny says, noting that RET also offers a stipend to participants as well.

When it was all over, Hubeny had not only helped further important research, he had also furthered his own education and teaching abilities.

"For this experience, I gained perspective on what research at such a high level is actually like," Hubeny says, noting that this is "something I can discuss with my own students back at school."

"I found the experience incredibly rewarding personally and professionally," agrees Collins Middle School teacher Karl Muench, noting that his university-level research merited presentation at a scientific conference. "I determined that the standard science class - not just that labeled 'STEM' - needs more engineering challenges. And the science employed can be current without leaving our students behind."

Hubeny also observed many "parallels" between what the researchers do in their labs and what teachers and students do at their level.

"The process of science is quite the same," he suggests. "It involves a lot of trial and error and seeing what happens." ■



**SCIENCE!**  
BPS teacher Scott Hubeny goes big with the small at BU's Photonics Center



**SINGING HER PRAISES**  
Springfield Federation of Paraprofessionals President Cathy Mastronardi (left) is presented with the Pioneer Valley Central Labor Council's "Unsung Hero" Award by Executive VP Ivette Hernandez



## Thought for Food: Salem focuses on fresh ideas

As there are more demands on students today than ever before, providing nutritious, healthy meals needs to be a priority. While school meals programs have traditionally not been regarded as a key element in students' academic success, that perspective is changing and cafeterias across the country transforming into delicious extensions of the classroom.

Ten years ago, the Salem Public Schools meals program was at a crossroads that many districts face. Due to a funding deficit, the district was considering alternative solutions for their meals programming, including corporate privatization. The nadir of the Salem program came when the district piloted privatized solutions in a few schools. When they replaced full kitchens with convection oven conveyor belts, students were fed reheated frozen meals that they did not like and parents became upset that they were paying for meals their children would not eat.

Fortunately for Salem, a small group of mothers was sufficiently hungry for a better plan that they took matters into their own hands.

"We posited that parents, students and staff would love to buy...fresh, wholesome, scratch-cooked meals," recalls School Nutrition Director Deb Jeffers. Partnering with principals, significant stakeholder groups, and Salem State University statistics expert Alan Schwedel, a group of concerned parents determined that students and staff wanted minimally-processed food cooked from scratch in the district's kitchens by a fairly-paid staff using fresh, preferably locally-sourced ingredients.

Today, around 80% of meals are scratch-cooked in the district's nine school kitchens. Fresh ingredients from local farms and fishermen as well as the USDA Commodities program are used. Alternative delivery models for breakfast have literally moved the cafeteria right into the classroom and integrated eating nutritious meals with learning about nutrition. Salem is also beginning to consider ways in which lunch can become learning time as well.

"School gardens are a fantastic learning environment as well," Jeffers observes. "When you pair your school garden with your cafeteria, the learning opportunities abound!"

In addition to changing the meals

program in alignment with the original goals set in 2007, many Salem teachers are also changing their curricula to involve and integrate the food program.

"We have been actively teaching students how to grow food for over eight years at the high school," explains science faculty member Graeme



**THE FRUITS (AND VEGETABLES) OF THEIR LABORS**  
Teachers at the Bates School participate in the new Salem Public Schools nutrition program

Marcoux. "Students are consistently looking for more ways to grow food at home and it is a real treat when they ask if they can start seeds in the classroom to later bring home."

This year, the district has also been able to offer no-charge breakfast and lunch for all students through the USDA's Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which also allows students to enjoy breakfast, lunch, and dinner throughout the Summer, thereby preventing the dreaded "learning loss" that often occurs when schools are not in session.

In addition to growing food, many Salem students have also used the new nutrition program to grow business ideas.

"At times they are interested for their own needs," Marcoux observes, "but at other times it is obvious that they are figuring out how to market the produce to customers."

In fact, Marcoux notes, "developing an economic mindset" around food production has become a real centerpiece for the classes who participate in the program.

"It is important for students," Marcoux maintains, "and everyone for that matter, to understand the real costs associated with growing food in a clean and sustainable manner that allows for the freshest, most nutrient dense produce possible."

Among the most popular produce products have been items that students grow in vertical hydroponic units that were donated by Boston-based provider Freight Farms.

"The hydroponic lettuce and herbs

we were growing last summer were a consistent hit at the local farmers market," notes Marcoux, who also helped win access to an exclusive training program at the Farm to School Institute in Shelburne Farms, VT that will allow Salem students and staff to incor-

porate even more advanced practices going forward.

"We had the great fortune to attend the...Institute to plan sustainable integration of classroom curriculum with nutrition programming in the cafeteria," explained SPED teacher and garden founder Kelly Cronin.

While additional benefits continue

to sprout, the main goal of better nutrition and better preparedness to learn and achieve remains at the forefront of the program.

"Our students are learning a vital lesson in how to take care of their bodies and minds for life," observes Toomey, who now serves as the district's manager for breakfast and summer nutrition programming. "This is something that not all children learn

at home regardless of their economic circumstances."

As the district prepares to roll out year-round nutrition services this year and to partner with a local family-run fish provider to bring fresher fish to their expanding Fish to School program, they also hope that other institutions and even other districts may follow their lead.

"We look forward to expanding or operation in the near future to be able to produce even more delicious produce for the school and community," Marcoux says, "and are always looking for ways to make more cross-curricular and community connections." ■

## Sing Out!

While it is important for all union members to raise their voices in support of our common causes, some may want to do it with a bit more pizzazz.

Fortunately, there is the a cappella group known as Boston Voices of Community and Labor ([www.facebook.com/BVocalChorus/](http://www.facebook.com/BVocalChorus/)).



**IN HARMONY**  
Katie Cohen and Lisa Gallatin

Together with North Shore Labor Council Organizer Katie Cohen (who trained as an opera singer before becoming more involved in labor life), MA AFL-CIO Chief of Staff Lisa Gallatin has led sing-alongs from Boston Common to the State House and they want you to join in!

"Everyone can sing," Gallatin says. "And when we lift our voices together in song, there's an amazing feeling of unity and power. Singing is one of the things that will help keep us going, even during these challenging times."

Noting that B VOCAL is planning a community song swap in November that will feature protest songs from different cultures, Gallatin explains that, even if participants have never sung before, they are invited to get involved through music. The only requirements are that they believe in justice for all and that they want to sing.

"We need every voice," Gallatin urges. ■

## Four is a Magic Number Wentworth becomes "University"

The MA Department of Higher Education recently bestowed the title of "university" on Wentworth Institute of Technology ([www.wit.edu](http://www.wit.edu)). While the school's name will not change, the Institute recognizes that its new status will help expand its name recognition and enhance the value of a Wentworth degree.

"The university designation strengthens our mission to educate and prepare our students for career success and engaged citizenship through our undergraduate programs and, now, graduate programs," said President Zorica Pantić.

According to the Code of the Massachusetts Regulations, in order to be officially named a "university," an institution must have programs in four "distinct professional fields of study" and demonstrate that it can

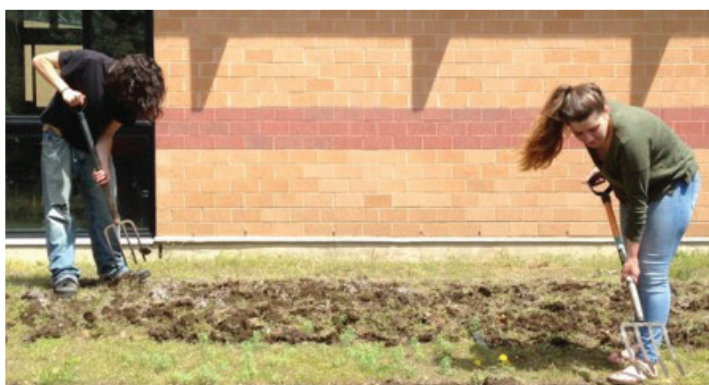
support graduate programs. Over the past eight years alone, the Institute that was originally founded in 1904 as a small technical school has developed graduate programs in design, management,

engineering, and the sciences.

"The faculty and staff have done a tremendous job in developing our graduate programs," Pantić said, noting that the Institute has

also come to be recognized as a university by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education and *U.S. News & World Report*.

As the name will not change, the Wentworth administration assures that the Institute's mission and other important elements—most notably the co-op program and career preparation focus—of a Wentworth education will stay as they are as well. ■

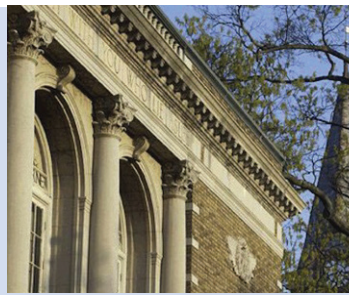


**DIGGING DEEP**  
Salem High School students labor in the garden



# On Campus

**Grant V. O'Rielly**  
Executive Committee of the Faculty Federation,  
Local 1895



## Preparing Students for Jobs that Do Not Exist

**W**riting the column representing Higher Education in MassAFT has been an interesting endeavor. I want to thank all of you who wrote with supportive (and critical) comments over the past few years. Going forward, I have handed the column over to Grant O'Rielly, who has been an active member of the Executive Board for a long time. He is preceptive and always outspoken and I think he will contribute an informative and thoughtful column.

- Susan T. Krumholz

**W**ith my first column title, I am not referring to the disappearance of good, middle-class jobs in America. What I am referring to is the statement we all hear so often from our President, Dean, and other administrators that says that society is changing so rapidly that a college degree needs to prepare students for jobs that have not yet been invented yet. This is often followed by some suggestion that what

we are doing currently is old-fashioned and unsuitable, and that we need to assess student learning and deliver course content in a new way and change how students earn credits. We are also often told that if we do not change all of these things, then we are also old-fashioned, unwilling to adapt, and are not serving our students.

Colleges and universities have been preparing students for jobs that have not yet been invented for generations. Sixty years ago, there were no computer programmers. Thirty years ago, a web site designer would have been a spider. Even ten years ago, no one knew what an app developer did, let alone a social media consultant. Even so, college graduates went on to not only do all of these jobs but succeed in them. Actually, it is university graduates who have created most of jobs that have not been invented yet. They see a need or an opportunity, apply the skills and knowledge that they had learned in all those old-fashioned college courses and, most importantly, build on those skills and that knowledge to create something new.

I am not saying that a college course

should never change. After all, we all know a professor who is using lecture notes from a decade ago that may not include the latest developments in the field. But we also do not want to jump on the newest educational bandwagon simply because it is new.

As we have to prepare our students for those jobs that have not been invented yet, all of us should (and, I believe, do) reflect on our courses every year, asking ourselves what needs to go, what should be added, and what could be done differently. We also need to look at the latest fashions in instruction – be it the flipped classroom, just-in-time teaching, using clickers and the like – and ask ourselves what might work in our classrooms with our students.

I have been an early adopter of some of these new fashions in instruction, using online homework and clickers to assess student's understanding in the classroom, especially for my introductory courses. Then again, in the senior electives that I offer, I have stayed with chalk and a blackboard (I still have one in my classroom), and encourage students to

write their lecture notes out by hand and to ask me question in class. Some of the best learning comes about when a student asks me to explain myself. Different courses have different students and different needs, but I hope and believe that they all are learning from being in the classroom with me.

Given this, how should we respond when someone tells us that we need to change what it is that we are doing in our classrooms in order to prepare students for jobs that have not been invented yet? My suggestion is that we should tell whoever is making this comment that this is exactly what we are doing in our classrooms. Tell them that we have thought long and hard about this very issue and that it is the skills and content knowledge that we have incorporated into our courses that will best prepare students for the future and will ensure that they are ready to do those jobs that have not been invented yet. Then we should reflect quietly on the reality that often the changes being promoted would decrease faculty independence and homogenize the learning experience across the various disciplines. Perhaps the real goal isn't student preparation after all. ■

## Meet Your Colleague: Cathy Curran

**A**s the daughter of two educators, UMass Faculty Federation President Cathy Curran was "always really excited" about school.

"I was instilled with a love of learning," Curran recalls, noting a particular fondness for reading. "I read... all kinds of books, and really enjoyed being assigned challenging reading."

When asked who her primary educators were, Curran cites her mother and "Nana" as the "first teachers" who taught her the "most important life lessons."

In addition to her family, Curran was positively influenced by other passionate teachers.

"Passion [is] infectious," she says. "I credit those passionate teachers with sparking my interest in a wide variety of subjects."

When asked for specific names of teachers who impacted her in a positive way, Curran mentions an elementary school music teacher named Mrs. Piercesal.

"She taught us to close our eyes and see...and feel music," Curran attests. "She taught us music was a whole body experience."

She also cites a literature teacher known as Sister Florette who also served in the school library, a place where Curran recalls spending many happy hours reading and exploring.

"The third...influential teacher was Mr. Carroll my high school math teacher," she explains. "Mr. Carroll

taught me that I was capable of more than I thought I was. He pushed me to work through my insecurities and simply perform."

As teaching was a "tradition" in her family, Curran maintains that she was "destined to be in education in some way or another." As a teenager, she began to work in area preschools and ultimately came to own and operate some.

"It was incredible to watch children learn and thrive," she recalls, explaining that this new element of her own love of learning encouraged her to pursue an MBA and PhD so she could be a more effective educator and school operator.

"My goals were straightforward," she says. "I wanted to infuse students with passion for my subject...[and]to encourage students to be their best selves and to let them see that...they are capable of more than they know."

Even today, Curran admits, her classes are considered "challenging" because she pushes her students not only to learn the material but to learn about themselves.

"The letters I receive from students years after they graduate are the most gratifying," she recalls. "To read that they are still using the lessons learned in my classes reinforces my passion for teaching."

As Curran's mother was also a union president, it may be no surprise that she followed in those footsteps as well.

"My family has always been interested in social justice and fairness," Curran explains. "I felt that it was my duty to serve as president after serving for a number of years on the Executive Board."

And while she admits that stepping into the shoes of her illustrious predecessors was "intimidating," Curran had a strong feeling that she could have a "positive impact" on the UMass Dartmouth campus.

"My primary goal is to ensure that the elected leaders of the campus constituencies have a seat at the table," she explains, noting how the school's administration has historically been "reluctant" to include elected leaders of the faculty, staff, administrative support staff, maintainers, and police in strategic planning and decision making. "We are all anxious to work with the administration to move our campus forward."

While the most immediate need is to help her colleagues access the administration, Curran suggests that the issue of accessibility is the "primary challenge"

in the world of higher education and that much of this issue is related to economics.

"Cost is an enormous factor for all but the wealthiest families," Curran observes. "We need to think about how to assist families in affording a college education."

As the benefits of higher education extend beyond the individuals who are privileged enough to enjoy it and support entire communities and even countries, Curran does not consider it fair for so many families to be left to bear the brunt of support and paying for it on their own or being crushed by debt for so many years.

"Education is not a private good," she maintains, "but a public good."

Therefore, she suggests, higher education must "adapt" to become more accessible.

"As the economy changes," Curran says, "we must be there to assist people in getting the education they need to be successful." ■



**TEACHING TRADITION**  
Cathy Curran



**STANDING UNITED AT UMASS**  
UMass Dartmouth faculty at campus homecoming weekend



## Retiree Corner

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



## Our Foundress. Our Leader. Our Friend.

**M**assachusetts Retirees United was saddened to learn of the death of our foundress, Kathleen A Kelley. Kathy was a giant of a woman whose foresight and caring brought about our organization.

I first met Kathy in 1990 when a group of us were working on trying to get credit for non-public school service. Kathy teased me for years that the first phone call she made to me resulted in her always working on one of my projects. That first phone call from her, however, changed my life.

Kathy was a teacher in and out of the classroom. She took a group of greenhorns and showed them how to deal with the legislative process. At the time, she was a lobbyist for the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers (the predecessor of AFT MA). She taught us the importance of researching the benefits we wanted, presenting it effectively, and above all not whining during testimony because members of the legislature hear too much of that. Because of her leadership, the first creditable service bill since 1937 was passed in 12 months!

Kathy was also supportive when our grassroots group started working on improving the pension system for

teachers. She arranged for us to see all the right people. When the bill passed, Kathy asked me to prepare and present seminars regarding the benefits for all her locals so that "her people" would understand the decision they were being asked to make.

It was a privilege to see her testify on a bill at the State House. I would marvel at the smiles and looks on the faces of the committee members because they knew that Kathy would not only inform them but that she would also give them something to laugh about.

Kathy cared for the children in the classroom, the teachers, the paras, and the profession and did all she could for all of them. She saved her deepest concern, however, for the retirees. She felt that no one was looking out for them and so she had to. She spoke to me many times of her concerns in this regard. She was troubled about health benefits and protections. She wanted to make sure there were people out there informing and educating retirees on issues that affected their lives. She felt that, to many organizations, seniors and retirees were not a group to be guided but only a business from which a profit could be made.

In 2006, I could no longer stave off her plea for help in forming a retirement group. She made it very plain that this organization was not going to be limited to union folks, to just teachers, nor to just those under the AFT umbrella. Any issue that was a senior issue should be addressed and education would be ongoing. Leadership did not cease when one retired, she maintained, and that the lighter our hair became, the more need there was for someone or some group to be looking out for us. So MRU was born on the shoulders of this giant of a woman.

Thank you, Kathy, for your friendship, your guidance, your vision, and your inspiration. We were privileged to have you a part of our life. You will live on in the minds, memories and hearts of those lives that you so deeply affected. We promise to do our best to promote what you wanted MRU to be and to do this is the best tribute we can give you and the greatest memorial we can offer you. You were truly a leader for our times. ■

Please note that MRU will be making a donation to Homeboy Industries ([www.homeboyindustries.org](http://www.homeboyindustries.org)) in Los Angeles in Kathy's memory.

## Teachable Trauma

**Educator Opinion**  
**By Ronda Goodale**

**A**s the school year begins, the transition for students is handled in myriad ways. Excitement, dread, and a slew of other emotions can all be experienced singularly or in discordant harmony at various points by students. When school is perceived in a generally positive way, it is the result of a multitude of factors including previous experience, patterns of emotional response to transition, preparation, and the range of an individual's emotional repertoire, including but not limited to positive feelings about exploration and novelty.

As the range of possible emotions is so broad, so too is the range of time it will take for students to transition. While most students have adjusted by October or November, their newly-established foundation of comfort and ease can be jolted by the introduction of trauma.

In today's world, such trauma can come from many sources. From geopolitical unrest and uncertainty to the physical destruction we have all witnessed or experienced either personally or through family and friends, there are many issues in the world that can affect different people in vastly different ways. And just as people board up their homes when a storm is predicted, so do many board up their hearts when they feel trouble is brewing. Such protective measures can help in many ways, but can also

prevent healing and help from coming through effectively.

What does this all mean for our students? Students often reflect or mirror the feelings of the adults around them. They pay attention to how the adults they respect talk and act in response to various events. Teachers and parents become powerful models of how disasters can be processed. The major dilemma facing both adults and children is the feeling of powerlessness that disasters can trigger. After all, if a trusted adult can do nothing to stop a problem, what can a child do?

There are a few important ways that teachers and parents can model and help their students in order to not only protect but strengthen them. First of all, children need to be allowed and encouraged to express their feelings, whatever they might be. In order to do this, adults should also be willing to share openly and honestly, so that children can see that it is "okay" to talk about how you feel and not feel the need to board themselves up. When teachers and parents are affected by events but do not discuss them, it can increase anxiety among children and make them feel the events are too upsetting to discuss.

Teachers should also talk about some ways they plan to support other adults as well as children. They can

provide an opportunity for students to brainstorm ways that they might also help. Some of these ideas can include donating toys or clothing, or thinking of ways they might raise

money to assist those who are most in need. When students find ways they can contribute, it fosters in them a sense of self-efficacy and a feeling that they can actually do something that matters. This has the effect of helping them feel better as well as helping the children and adults affected by the disaster. The disaster becomes a learning opportunity for teachers and students to build a sense of community while helping others. In this way, the disaster becomes an opportunity for children to learn that, even if you cannot change an event, you can improve the outcome and be of support.

Fortunately, it does not take a disaster to impart such lessons. Every day offers opportunities to share feelings and to act on behalf of others. Instead of feeling powerless, we can all find ways to feel more positive and potent in the face of life's challenges. ■

Ronda Goodale is a retired Boston teacher who is also a psychologist. She currently teaches at University of Mass, Cambridge College, Northeastern University and William James College.



**GOOD FROM BAD**  
**Ronda Goodale**

### SEMINARS

#### Preparing for Retirement

These free seminars deal with most of the issues one should address when preparing for retirement from a public sector job in MA. They are open to all.

Tuesday, October 24, 2017, 3:30-5:30  
North Attleboro Middle School  
564 Landry Avenue, North Attleboro, MA

Monday, October 30, 2017, 3-5  
Lynn Teachers' Union Hall  
679 Western Avenue, Lynn, MA

Thursday, November 2, 2017, 3:15-5:15  
Chelsea High School  
299 Everett Avenue, Chelsea, MA

Thursday, November 9, 2017, 3:30-5  
Amesbury High School  
5 Highland Street, Amesbury, MA

Tuesday, November 28, 2017, 3:15-5:15  
Natick High School Lecture Hall  
15 West Street, Natick, MA

Thursday, March 29, 2018, 3:30-5:30  
Methuen Education Association Office  
184 Pleasant Valley Street, Methuen, MA

#### Living in Retirement

This free seminar, given by Marie Ardito, deals with issues important to retirees, such as tax breaks for selling your primary residence, avoiding double taxation of TSA, 403b, protection of major assets, understanding Medicare, working in retirement, understanding penalties of the WEP, GPO, legal checklist, and other topics.

Monday October 23, 2017, 10-noon  
Lynn Teachers' Union Hall  
679 Western Avenue, Lynn, MA

Wednesday October 25, 2017, 1-3  
IBEW Local 96  
242 Mill Street, Worcester, MA

#### Protecting Your Nest Egg

This free seminar by Elder Law Attorney Mary Howie deals with such vital issues as wills, trusts, gifting, Medicare, probate, joint tenancy, direct transfers upon death, and much more

Saturday, November 4, 2017, 10-noon  
Presidential Park  
314 Main Street, Wilmington, MA

#### Moving On

This comprehensive seminar looks at ways to decide on and adjust to a planned move. It will discuss how to select a realtor, how to choose a residence, pros and cons of various forms of housing, and important questions about legal and financial consequences related to over 55 housing, in-law apartments, and independent and assisted living.

Saturday, November 18, 2017 10-noon  
Presidential Park  
314 Main Street, Wilmington, MA

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

**Check out the**  
**LATEST AFT MA and AFT**  
**news at**  
**[www.aftma.net](http://www.aftma.net)**

# The Revolution Will Not be Texted

## New writing program comes to Boston

While most students can tell you where they are in 140 characters, only a few can fully express themselves in writing, a skill that is linked to reading comprehension and critical thinking and that is essential for academic and workplace success. In fact, approximately 75% of all American students fail to perform at grade level in writing.

Fortunately, another revolution has recently come to Boston. On September 25, nearly 100 teachers from gathered for the regional debut The Writing Revolution ([www.thewritingrevolution.org](http://www.thewritingrevolution.org)), a teacher training program developed by experienced educator Dr. Judith Hochman.

"Figuring out how to scaffold for students (especially ELLs) to write complex sentences and compositions is always a challenge," admits Charlestown High School teacher Katie Yue-Sum Li. "I'm always on the lookout for any training that will improve my teaching of writing."

As Li has used Revolution strategies before, she was encouraged by the presentation, which offered more evidence that it works and can work across the curriculum.

"It was gratifying to get researched-based validation for using those strategies," Li says. "In addition, it was incredibly helpful to see all of their sentence level strategies organized and in one place where each strategy built on the previous one. These will surely get used with my ELLs in my classroom!"

While other programs promote oral language structures (i.e., writing the

way we speak), open writing (e.g., in writing journals), and teaching grammar in isolation (e.g., using sentence diagrams, etc.), The Writing Revolution focuses on embedding writing in content across the curriculum. "We want to move students from writing the way that they speak to using written language structures," explained senior faculty member Dina Zoleo, reminding the teachers that assigning writing and teaching writing are "different things."

As they are so often asked, The Writing Revolution team focuses on the purposes behind the strategies they teach. They start by responding to the question "Why teach sentences?" and point out that there is strong data supporting that sentences are the foundation upon which strong paragraphs and compositions are built. Teaching sentence strategies improves grammar, fosters close reading, helps assess content understanding and develops students' critical thinking skills.

"For us, the sentence is the building block of all writing," Zoleo observed, noting how The Writing Revolution's scaffolded system engages writing at the sentence level regardless of the student's age. The same strategies can be used in any class and any grade level to support students no matter where they are or what they are trying to write about. "It is the content that drives the rigor," Zoleo explained. "Once students have become proficient at the sentence-level skills, we can engage the outline."

While writing may be handled by many as a transcription service (i.e., writing what is heard, like a stenographer), the Revolution team realizes that spoken communication involves cues and constructs that are often missing in written communication

(e.g., tone, body language). Writing also involves additional rules (e.g., capitalization, spelling) that are

not explicitly involved in oral communication. Therefore, the Revolution system engages these rules and tools to support writers from the bottom up so they can use writing to demonstrate knowledge and as a learning and communication tool.

Citing the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) as the "gold standard" of assessment, faculty member Sherry Lewkowicz offered the NAEP definition of writing as a "complex, multifaceted, and purposeful act of communication" to emphasize the need for explicit instruction in order to enable students to effectively master this complex skill and communicate effectively.

"Our objectives are to raise the linguistic complexity of our students' writing," Zoleo concluded, "and to enhance their organizational skills to make their writing more coherent." She also noted that educators often report results that The Writing Revolution did not anticipate such as students' improved oral communication and self-esteem.

Citing education expert Bruce

Saddler's idea that sentences are "miniature compositions," Zoleo offered sentences from popular texts to demonstrate the richness and resultant power a single sentence can have and the types of complex sentences that students will encounter in the books they are expected to read in school.

"That is why we stress the importance of a sentence," Zoleo explained, noting that students who can create more complex sentences can more effectively process them as well.

The rest of the session consisted largely of taking participating teachers through a series of scaffolded activities, offering readings and exercises that help students (and teachers) learn how to improve their writing. Many samples of teacher- and student-created materials were provided. Strategies ranged from fragments and conjunctions to tips for combining and expanding sentences for maximal communicative and educational effectiveness.

With the basic building blocks of sentences having been explained and ways to engage and teach them demonstrated, the participants offered their own subject-specific examples of using The Writing Revolution's system in their own diverse disciplines and looked forward to the subsequent sessions on October 20 and November 17 when the course will move educators through ways to explicitly teach paragraph and composition writing.

"Students are writing more today than ever before," Zoleo admitted, "but they are not writing better."

"Teachers and students need a roadmap," Executive Director Jacki Kelly observed, "and that's just what The Writing Revolution...provides." ■

## Curtain Up: Billerica renovates theater

Before becoming president of Billerica Federation of Teachers, Michael Ashe was teaching math and advising a drama club at the Marshall Middle School. For the past 10 years, he has remained a staunch supporter of the arts and of his students in many ways, but perhaps most profoundly in his efforts to renovate

the auditorium at the Marshall.

In 2007, Ashe and former BFT Secretary Leah Gagnon decided to offer a theater club in Billerica. Unfortunately, when club members began preparing to stage their first performances, they found the stage to be lacking.

"It had six working stage lights, no dimming system, no working sound system, threadbare curtains and broken seating," Ashe recalls.

Eager to provide their students with an appropriate space in which to showcase their hard work and natural talents, Ashe and his colleagues decided to use the obstacle as an opportunity. They devised a program that would engage students in the repair of the space.

"[Our] goal was to provide a theater experience for kids to allow them to work collaboratively, learn teamwork and build self confidence based on actual achievement," Ashe explains, "and have the experience of being in a 'real' show."

The change to the school culture was immediate and tangible. "The

more we did to improve the space," Ashe notes, "the more use it got, and the more support we got for additional improve-

ments. It became a real whole community effort!"

With grant funds and other support from IBEW Local 103 and Mass Electric, the electrical and lighting systems were completely revamped using the latest in energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly technologies.

"Their donation of services meant that all monies raised could go to equipment," Ashe says appreciatively when speaking of his brothers and sisters in the electricians' union, "more than doubling the value of funds raised!"

In addition to donating their own

expertise, IBEW members also helped train and mentor students at Shawshen Valley Technical High School.

"[It gave] those students an invaluable opportunity to learn electrical work...with real electricians in an authentic setting," Ashe observes.

In addition to replacing and upgrading the lighting and electrical systems, the renovation also involved replacing the draperies, enhancing the audio system with a new digital mixer, painting and recarpeting the entire facility, and replacing 505 seats. While the total cost was over a half million dollars, the district paid only \$120,000, thanks to financial support from the Arts Council, various community-based funds in Billerica, and private donations from members of IBEW and other organizations.

Once all the work had been done, it was time to choose a name for the fabulous facility.

"The Billerica School Committee agreed to dedicate the new facility in memory of Dr. Paul Cox," Ashe explains citing the former music teacher and assistant superintendent who had been instrumental in starting a theater program in the district

At the rededication ceremony, Superintendent Tim Piwowski spoke before a student production of "The Lion King Junior."

"Our fine arts program...[and] theatre program are some of our shining beacons in a school system and what we talk about what we are proudest of in this community, what we do in our theater program is one of the finest examples," Piwowski said. "It is something that all 40,000 people in this town can be proud of!"

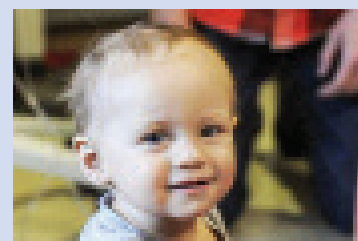
The Marshall Theater Club will begin its 11th year this fall in its "new" facility, while Mr. Ashe and his team set their sights on renovations at the Locke Middle School, their sister middle school, also in Billerica. ■



**CURTAIN (BACK) UP!** BFT President Michael Ashe (center) with BFT Members Jennifer Moriarty and Leah Gagnon in the recently renovated Paul Cox Theater in Billerica

## Care for "Callie"

Calliope "Callie" Carney is the one-year-old daughter of Lawrence teacher Kathryn Carney. She was recently diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia (AML) and needs YOUR help to pay for her medical expenses.



To donate, go to [www.gofundme.com](http://www.gofundme.com) and search for "Care4Callie"