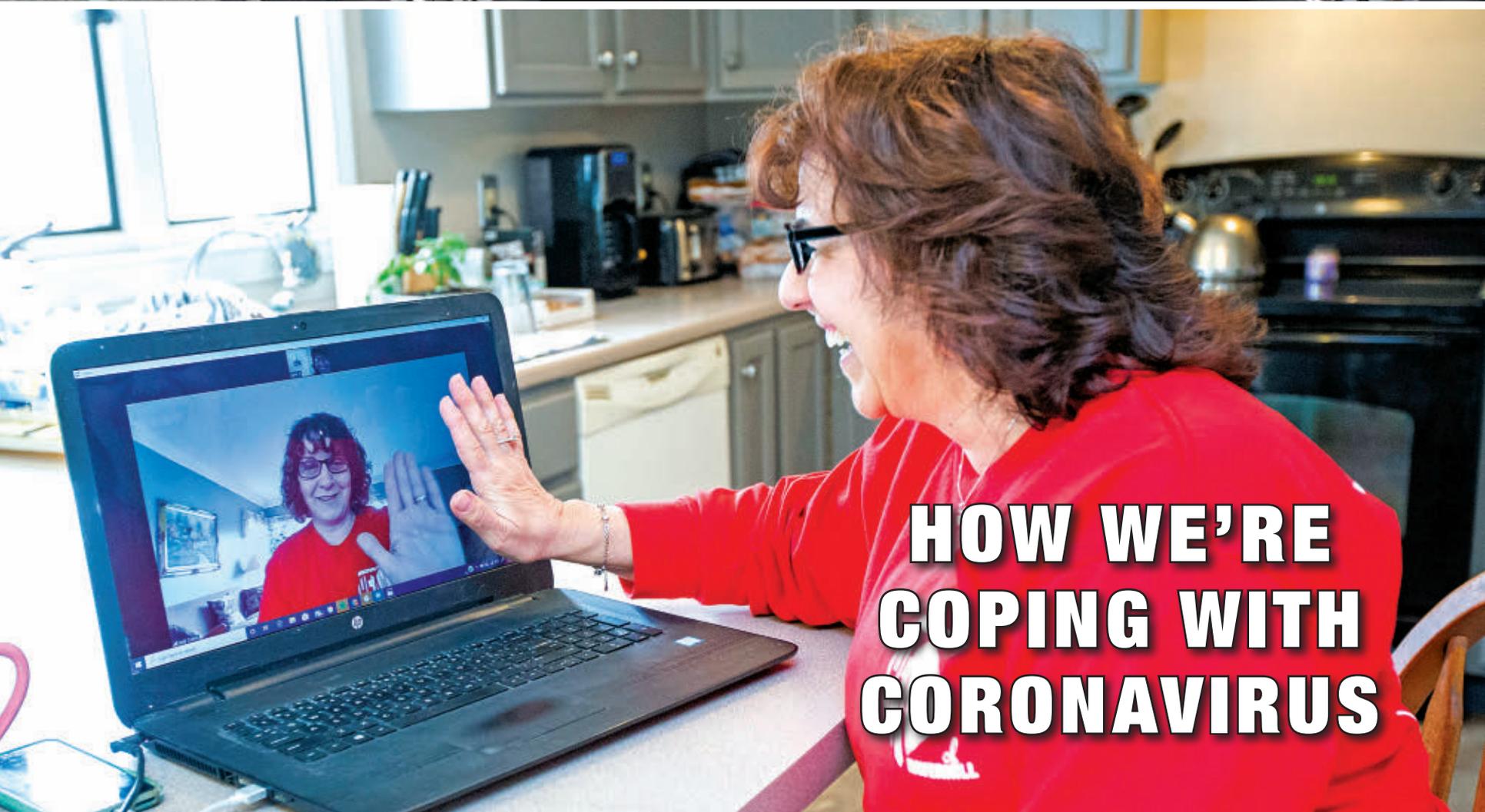


MTA Today

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MTA Today

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This edition also includes the Spring issue of *The MTA Advantage*



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MTA'S MISSION STATEMENT

The Massachusetts Teachers Association is a member-driven organization, governed by democratic principles, that accepts and supports the interdependence of professionalism and unionism. The MTA promotes the use of its members' collective power to advance their professional and economic interests. The MTA is committed to human and civil rights and advocates for quality public education in an environment in which lifelong learning and innovation flourish.

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ON THE COVER

Educators around the state have found endlessly creative ways to help promote learning and positive spirit amid the coronavirus crisis, including meeting remotely with students and organizing community parades. Uxbridge kindergarten teacher Jeannine Yordanopoulos, driving a car with black and yellow balloons in honor of her classroom's "yellow jackets" theme, and a colleague, prekindergarten teacher Olivia Cormier, were among those who formed local caravans. In Haverhill, paraeducator Lynn Sullivan, seated, and teacher Judy Collins high-fived each other before connecting with their kindergarten class. Meanwhile, MTA higher ed members are fighting for worksite safety and equitable funding as they deal with the pandemic, and active and retired members have plenty of stories to share about their coping strategies. Coverage appears throughout this edition of *MTA Today*, beginning on Page 3. You'll also find a story about the MTA's earliest days, beginning on Page 11, as the association celebrates 175 years of advocacy. A section about the 2020 Annual Meeting of Delegates begins on Page 19.

Cover photos by Bob Duffy And Eric Haynes
Cover design by Joshua Degregorio



Quote-Unquote

"I firmly believe that we must suspend the high-stakes nature of the test for the next six years at minimum. The seismic impact of the current disruption in learning will be felt for at least that period of time."

— Senator Jo Comerford, in a Facebook post after the Senate voted to cancel the administration of MCAS this year

Coping with the COVID-19 crisis

Educators go all in to help students, colleagues and their communities

By Laura Barrett

“Nothing about this is normal.” So said Easthampton High School math teacher Nellie Taylor, talking about public education in the coronavirus era.

Since schools and colleges were officially closed in mid-March, MTA members have been using words such as “anxiety,” “stress” and “confusion” a lot, but they also refer to “community,” “caring” and “students and their families.”

At first there was a feeling of suspended animation. In a message to staff and parents, Lexington School Superintendent Julie Hackett quoted Mark Twain in calling for “a rightly timed pause.”

It wasn’t clear when schools and colleges would reopen. Was this like an extended snow day, or something more serious?

Then the number of cases exploded. Colleges and universities effectively closed for on-site teaching as of the spring break in March. Governor Charlie Baker ordered all public schools to remain closed until at least May 4. This was definitely something more serious.

Moving instruction online proceeded quickly on higher education campuses, while planning for remote learning at the preK-12 level kicked into high gear after the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released guidance on March 26. The MTA successfully advocated for it to prioritize students’ social and emotional health and to demonstrate respect for the expertise of educators.

“This is a worldwide health crisis,” said Taylor, president of the Easthampton Education Association and a member of the MTA Board. “This is not business as usual, so don’t act as if it is. On top of the shock and grief that we all experience, it’s stressful to not be able to go to the side of others who are grieving. Above all, districts need to be humane.”

Enacting the recommendations has been difficult and uneven. To bring some common sense to the process, MTA local leaders and field representatives have been moving mountains to negotiate — and renegotiate — agreements setting parameters for remote learning and protections for educators, including Education Support Professionals. Some of the discussions have centered on whether to work over April vacation week or extend the school year further into June and on establishing guidelines to protect student and member privacy in an online world.

Remote learning in preK-12 schools has been a giant experiment conducted with no preparation or notice. Issues to consider have included:

- How can districts ensure equitable education for students who have very different learning needs and unequal access to technology and support at home?
- How can districts address the needs of educators, many of whom have no experience



Educators are finding numerous ways to stay connected with their students and communities. Clockwise from top left, Medford art teacher Suzanne Fee has created a color wheel from everyday objects and shares projects with her students on Instagram. Revere English teacher Chelsea Brandwein-Fryar performs “Quaran-Tunes” on her porch to raise money for the local YMCA, and Uxbridge educators were among the many statewide who formed car caravans and paraded through cities and towns to cheer up local families.

Photos by Eric Haynes and Bob Duffy

with remote teaching and who may have their own challenges, including taking care of their own children or elderly relatives?

■ How can districts strike the right balance between providing students with a connection to a caring adult and ideas about creative activities they can pursue without overwhelming them with too many demands?

Another looming concern is what resources school districts, colleges and universities will have in the future to make up for lost time and be better prepared for remote learning in the future, since no one knows when the coronavirus will be under control.

Public higher education is facing immediate challenges, including rising costs, a tighter state budget and hardship among tuition-and-fee-paying

students. Campuses have been hemorrhaging money. They have had to refund students the cost of room and board while paying for additional cleanings, technology and equipment.

Even if the coronavirus crisis abates, enrollment could be down in the fall. Students and their parents who have lost jobs or had their savings hammered by the falling stock market may no longer be able to afford to attend. There are also long-range questions about whether colleges will try to save money by moving more instruction online, potentially damaging the personal relationships that are at the core of the educational experience.

Because the revenue loss from the crisis could have such a big impact on the state budget, the NEA, the MTA and many other organizations are pushing

Please turn to **How MTA members**/Page 6

We must harness our power to win equity

Life under the coronavirus has brought out the very best in our members and our neighbors while laying bare the structural racism and inequities in our society and our education systems that have been caused by decades of deliberate disinvestment in the public good.

In tele-town halls, Facebook Live events, Zoom meetings and one-on-one conversations, I have heard you talk with real emotion about how much you care about your students and how committed you are to



Merrie Najimy
MTA President

helping them — and each other — get through this crisis. It is joyful to see MTA members connecting with each other in new ways and organizing to create better circumstances local by local.

Yet inequities are growing even wider as the pandemic hits black, indigenous and Latinx communities and families with low incomes the hardest.

Two years ago, a Federal Reserve study found that 40 percent of Americans would not be able to cover a \$400 emergency expense with cash, savings or a credit card charge that they could quickly pay off. Some of you are among that 40 percent. If you work with students and families with low incomes, you know this well. You witness the anxiety and pain that they carry to our schools and colleges.

In this issue of *MTA Today*, Cathy Horkan, president of the Northeast Teachers' Association and a guidance counselor at Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational High School, says of the coronavirus crisis: "This has taken a real social and emotional toll on students. There's a lot of anxiety and depression. For a lot of our kids, life at home isn't great. School is a safe place to escape to."

As reported in *The New York Times* on April 6, "Mounting data suggests that domestic abuse is acting like an opportunistic infection, flourishing in the conditions created by the pandemic."

In a report by *NPR* on April 7, Dr. Uché Blackstock stated that pre-existing racialized health disparities that black people often experience, such as obesity, asthma, hypertension and diabetes, "are all risk factors for developing serious complications of COVID-19."

Dr. Joseph Betancourt, vice president and chief equity and inclusion officer at Massachusetts General Hospital, identifies the social and economic determinants that put people of color disproportionately at risk of contracting COVID-19. They include living in areas with high population density and in housing with multiple family members; being essential workers for hospitals,

It is our job to resist. We should not try to replicate school at home or turn colleges into online learning enterprises. Instead, we need to organize around our vision of what public education should look like upon our return. Let's take this moment to realign our school curriculum to once again be developmentally appropriate, as it was before we were shackled by MCAS. Let's reassert the importance of affordable, accessible, in-person public higher education, led by fairly compensated full-time faculty and staff.

grocery stores and gas stations — or employed as food delivery drivers — and lacking adequate personal protective equipment; and having to take public transportation to work. These conditions don't allow for physical distancing and therefore create a higher risk of the transmission of infectious disease.

MTA members are also "first responders" in this crisis. Some of our cafeteria employees, custodians and professional and classified staff are among those required to come to work, risking possible exposure to the virus. We are all working long hours to provide our students and their families with support while we are challenged to tend to our own family needs. And there are stark contrasts based on socioeconomic status in how remote and online learning plans are being handled.

In some privileged communities, some parents expect that the districts will move full steam ahead with the curriculum. In disadvantaged communities, a bigger challenge is figuring out how to connect with students who are distracted by chaos at home or who don't have access to reliable internet connections, physical materials and an adult in the household who can guide them. Absenteeism always has been disproportionately high in low-income communities. It's now even easier to be absent from a remote learning platform. Educators in many communities across the state are reporting low rates of participation.

In about a week's time — and with little consultation of faculty and staff — higher education was forced to transition fully to online learning. Rightly, dorm, food and parking fees have been partially refunded to students. But this loss of tens of millions of dollars has exacerbated the ongoing funding crisis in higher ed.

The continuing pandemic could mean significant

drops in enrollment, including cuts to faculty and staff. The education "reformers" are already eager to advance their goals of more online education and possibly even shuttering campuses.

As we come out of the coronavirus crisis, we will once again be told we are in hard times so we must "tighten our belts" and "do more with less." We must reject austerity cuts, layoffs, outsourcing, a wholesale transition to online teaching, and all other privatization measures.

It is our job to resist. We should not try to replicate school at home or turn colleges into online learning enterprises. Instead, we need to organize around our vision of what public education should look like upon our return. Let's take this moment to realign our school curriculum to once again be developmentally appropriate, as it was before we were shackled by MCAS. Let's reassert the importance of affordable, accessible, in-person public higher education, led by fairly compensated full-time faculty and staff.

But we can't just limit our concerns to the academic needs of our students. The real "education reform" we need to pursue is greater equity in our society. That is the basis of the Common Good agenda we released when this crisis first broke.

To protect our education system and sustain our economy, we must not only bail out our public schools, colleges and universities but actually reinvest in them at this very moment. This will require the federal government to provide massive aid to states and municipalities — on a scale that is necessary to heal the sick, support those in need of food and housing, preserve jobs and invest for the future.

The MTA — because of our size, our importance, our victories for public education and workers' rights and our connections to our communities — is prepared to move through this disaster to recovery with collective action. The work ahead requires that we harness our power as a union to reach out, bring our communities together and advance a plan of action to make a more equitable future for our students, our members and our communities a reality.

To read the Common Good agenda, go to massteacher.org/commongood. For other information related to the COVID-19 crisis, visit massteacher.org/coronavirus.

Letters policy

M*TA Today* welcomes letters to the editor from MTA members. Letters should be no longer than 200 words. Each letter submitted for publication must address a topic covered in *MTA Today*, must be signed and must include the writer's telephone number for confirmation purposes. Opinions must be clearly identified as belonging to the letter-writer. We reserve the right to edit for length, clarity and style. To submit a letter, mail it to *MTA Today*, 2 Heritage Drive, 8th floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119, or email it to mtatodayletters@massteacher.org. For additional information, please refer to the guidelines posted on www.massteacher.org.

Sudbury educator is ESP of the Year

By Jean Conley

Public education colleagues and fellow unionists were on hand in early March to congratulate Sonia Fortin, an academic tutor at the Ephraim Curtis Middle School in Sudbury, as Fortin was named the 2020 MTA Education Support Professional of the Year.

The announcement — a surprise to Fortin — was made during an after-school meeting of the Sudbury Education Association on March 10.

The MTA ESP of the Year is usually honored not just at the worksite, but at the ESP Conference in early April. But this year the event had to be canceled due to the spread of the coronavirus. Discussions about a smaller gathering for ESPs, possibly in the fall, were being held as *MTA Today* went to press.

Fortin is the sole academic tutor in Curtis's Bridges Program, which provides short-term intensive assistance to students returning to classes after an experience that has had a significant emotional impact on them or has presented a medical challenge, causing lost school time. The program also provides support to the affected students' families.

Fortin has worked at Curtis for 10 years. As the driving force behind the school's Gay Straight Alliance, Fortin saw the need for a safe place for students identifying as LGBTQ+. This led Fortin to develop and organize the school's Safe Space Initiative, through which all students can talk to friends and feel safe from judgment. The initiative provides a room in the building — a place "where students from all grades can go and just be," House Administrator Bill Grubb wrote in a letter supporting Fortin's nomination for the MTA ESP honor.

Members of the SEA broke into sustained applause as MTA President Merrie Najimy announced during the Curtis gathering that Fortin had been chosen.

Najimy said she met Fortin for the first time several months ago at the MTA Summer Conference in Amherst. As they talked about Fortin's journey as a unionist, Najimy knew she had met an emerging leader.

"Sonia has shown incredible leadership," Najimy said. Finding strength in the union, Najimy said, Fortin used it to "create a safe place for one of the most vulnerable populations at this school — LGBTQ+ students."

Fortin has taken on significant roles at the local level, including serving as treasurer of the SEA. Najimy noted that Fortin is a member of an MTA working group exploring how MTA can continue to grow, stay strong and protect public education.

At the national level, Najimy added, Fortin is working with other NEA educators to develop a mentorship program for ESPs, "who are too often an invisible group in our schools."

MTA Vice President Max Page said he has gotten to know Fortin through union work and as



In the photo above, Sonia Fortin reacted with surprise to being named MTA's 2020 MTA Education Support Professional of the Year during a Sudbury Education Association meeting. In the photo at left, MTA President Merrie Najimy told SEA members that when she met Fortin at the association's 2019 Summer Conference, she knew that she was talking to an emerging leader.

Photos by Jean Conley

'Sonia takes the time to connect personally with the support professionals in our middle school, and that has motivated staff to not only join the union but take a more active role in union initiatives and activities.'

— SEA President Melissa Morabito

Fortin's professor in the Labor Studies Program at UMass Amherst, where Fortin is pursuing a master's degree.

Page said that he and Fortin "have talked about greater justice for ESPs." Now, due to the leadership of people such as Fortin, "we are on the cusp of a campaign" to secure full rights and a living wage for ESPs, he said.

Joni Cederholm, the 2019 MTA ESP of the Year and a fellow participant in the association's ESP Leadership Program, was also on hand to offer

congratulations and a big hug. "I'm very proud of you," Cederholm said.

After the ceremony, Fortin said the award "hasn't sunk in yet."

"I work all the time to make sure that ESPs have a voice," Fortin said. "It all feels overwhelming — but it's overwhelming because all of the work I've been doing is being recognized. I am extremely thankful."

In support of the nomination, SEA President Melissa Morabito said that Fortin "has been a tireless advocate for Education Support Professionals in our district for years." She said that in 2018, the year of the U.S. Supreme Court's anti-union decision in the *Janus v. AFSCME* case, ESP membership in the Sudbury association actually increased.

"Sonia takes the time to connect personally with the support professionals in our middle school, and that has motivated staff to not only join the union but take a more active role in union initiatives and activities," Morabito said. "While this may seem like a daunting task in our largest school to some, Sonia goes above and beyond to reach out to our ESPs on a regular basis."

Educators' stories: 'Hard times for everybody'

Every member has insights to offer about education in the COVID-19 era. Here are just a few of the stories that educators shared with *MTA Today* as remote learning was beginning to roll out.

■ ■ ■
Donita Johnson, second-grade teacher, Rebecca Johnson School in Springfield: Being self-isolated myself is a lot to deal with. I miss my students. This past Friday, the alert went off on my phone, reminding me it was two students' birthdays. It made me emotional because I can't sing "Happy Birthday" to them. I happened to be texting back and forth with one of the parents on a communication app that we use at our school. She was one of the few who signed up for the app before schools were closed. On that day, I had a little breakdown. I told her I wanted to wish her son a happy birthday. She shared that she appreciated me remembering him on his birthday and that he misses me, too. I have about three students who complete work on academic programs on a daily basis out of 23. I'm not sure why more of them aren't going on, but I know they are dealing with a lot. They could be going

through a difficult time. With them being my babies, I worry about them and will start reaching out to them by phone.

■ ■ ■
John Christian, president of Mansfield Building and Grounds Association: It was generally business as usual before we closed. After we closed, everything changed. We worked in pairs to go into each classroom, spending one-and-a-half to two hours in each room, spraying everything down. It was spray and wipe, spray and wipe again — all the chairs, desks, windowsills. It was almost like a summer cleaning, except that we didn't move everything out of the room since the students may be coming back. After that we also stripped all the hallways. Our custodians have been beyond excellent. They've done exactly what's been asked without question. If Teresa [Teresa Murphy, the district superintendent] needs something to be done, we do it — even before this happened. When some of the kitchen staff were out sick with the flu earlier this year, she asked for volunteers to help

Please turn to 'Everyone's being flexible ...'/Page 27

How MTA members are coping with the coronavirus crisis

Continued from Page 3

Congress to include more funding for public schools and colleges in the *CARES Act*, the massive federal stimulus bill that is being rolled out this spring.

MTA elected leaders have been answering questions on tele-town halls and in other forums. MTA staff have been working from hastily set up home offices to provide members with guidance and support, move the 2020 Annual Meeting of Delegates and other convenings to virtual platforms, and keep the wheels of the organization turning.

"This pandemic has exposed the gaping holes in our social safety net," said MTA President Merrie Najimy. "The union has been a source of protecting rights and benefits, connections, information and concrete action to support members and their students during these stressful times.

"It has become clearer than ever why unions matter," Najimy continued. "With just a few exceptions, MTA members are still being paid their salaries and wages. Their health insurance has been maintained. Their jobs are secure. Health and safety measures have been negotiated. Districts that initially set unreasonable expectations have been forced by the unions to pull back. We stand in solidarity with all the non-unionized employees across the country who do not have such protections.

"Our communities also benefit when unions have power," Najimy said. "Educator unions are uniquely situated to stand up for the common good. That means we are fighting for health insurance for our adjuncts and others who are uninsured, food and housing for students and families who are food- and housing-insecure, the suspension of evictions, student debt relief, and growing the movement to bring justice to our increasingly unequal society."

MTA members have been supporting one another, their students and their communities in a variety of ways.

From early on in Haverhill, for example, ESP Lynn Sullivan and teacher Judy Collins, who work together at Pentucket Lake Elementary School,

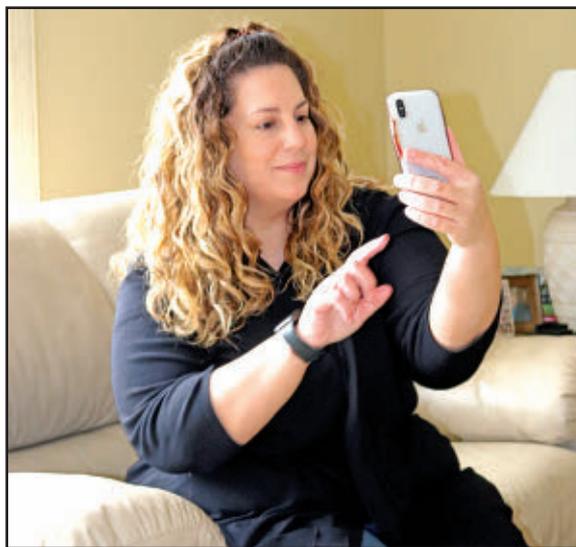


Photo by Bob Duffy

Malden Education Association President Deb Gesualdo conducts a Facebook Live session.

have been meeting with their kindergarten class by computer every morning at 11. The daily meeting allows them to stay connected to their students, they said, and to make sure the students stay connected with each other.

Collins said engagement is crucial for both educators and students. "I'm getting to see a little bit of their home lives. They're showing us their pets, their toys, their siblings. The kids love it."

Sullivan, a building representative at Pentucket Lake and a member of the Haverhill Education Association contract negotiating team, said that despite having her work world thrown upside down by the pandemic, she is gratified to be able to offer the students a way to connect.

Here are just a few other ways MTA members have been demonstrating acts of kindness.

■ Locals in Somerville, Medford, Brookline, Haverhill and elsewhere have set up or participated in "mutual aid" efforts through which residents can list what they need and volunteers can provide the help.

■ Members in Clinton, Uxbridge and many other communities have been taking part in car parades to let their students know they are missed.

■ Food service employees and custodians across the state are "essential workers" who have continued to prepare and package takeaway meals for students and keep the buildings clean.

■ Northeast Metro Tech E-Board members have produced and delivered fruit baskets to members to let them know their efforts are appreciated.

■ Staff in districts across the state delivered Chromebooks, mobile hotspots and other supplies to students so they could stay connected remotely.

■ Guidance staff have been reaching out to students who have fallen off the radar and helping families connect with needed services.

■ School nurses in Worcester gave supplies to a nearby hospital, while the local in Norton donated money to a community mutual aid group.

■ Deb Gesualdo, the president of the Malden Education Association, has been holding regular Facebook Live conversations to keep members informed and connected.

■ Members are using video to connect with students and communities. Revere teacher Chelsea Brandwein-Fryar has performed "Quaran-Tunes" on her porch on Fridays to raise money for the local YMCA, while Lexington teaching assistant Amy Morin read a book online to her kindergarten students.

■ Medford art teacher Suzanne Fee has found ways to stay connected to her McGlynn Middle School students. Working on Instagram, she is showing her students the wonders of the color wheel and displaying her artwork — and theirs.

Thousands of similar activities are taking place throughout the state. The MTA wants to hear stories of how members are coping during this unprecedented global pandemic and making a difference in the lives of students, fellow educators and their communities. To share your experiences, visit [massteacher.org/coronastories](https://www.massteacher.org/coronastories).

Pandemic spotlights higher ed needs

By Scott McLennan

Two weeks before the coronavirus pandemic reached the point at which campuses were effectively shut down, hundreds of students, faculty members and staff from the Commonwealth's colleges and universities were at the State House to advocate for the *Cherish Act* and a substantial increase in state investment in public higher education this year.

The need to confront the COVID-19 crisis — and the economic meltdown it has triggered — in some respects has had the consequence of reducing the impetus for the *Cherish Act* campaign in the Legislature. But in key ways, the pandemic has highlighted the dire problems resulting from the chronic underfunding of public higher education.

The issues that community colleges, state universities and the UMass system are currently confronting serve as poignant illustrations of longstanding troubles:

- The burden of student debt is growing heavier as job losses mount.
- Adjunct faculty without access to affordable health care have been made even more vulnerable.
- Faculty members have been left scrambling to find ways to deliver courses remotely.
- Staff members have clashed with administrators over access to personal protective equipment and the requirement that they report to work on campus, among other safety issues.

The economic impact on public colleges and universities has raised fears of layoffs as well as concerns that the crisis could be exploited to reduce faculty and staff, increase privatization, and move more courses permanently to online platforms.

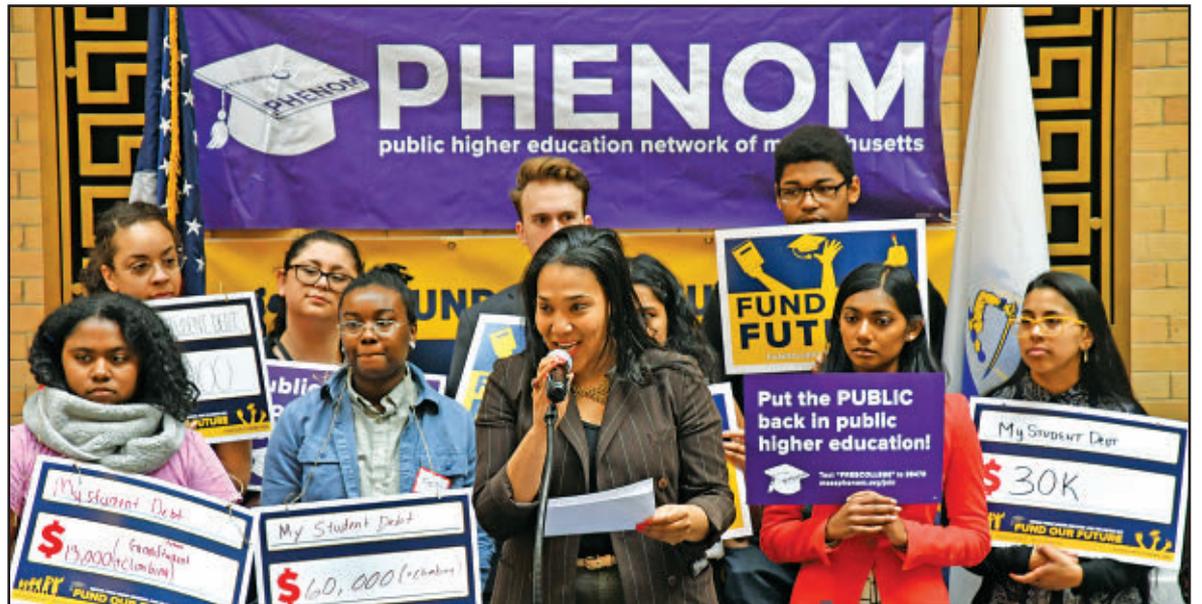
A coalition of MTA higher education members from community colleges, state universities and the UMass system had begun working on new, more equitable funding solutions well before the coronavirus crisis hit, and that work will significantly ramp up as campuses work to rebound from the pandemic.

“We cannot allow this crisis to be used as an excuse to deepen the austerity measures put in place at our public colleges and universities,” said MTA President Merrie Najimy.

The coalition will be central to the MTA's work in advocating for greater federal resources for public higher education, starting with funding being made available through the *CARES Act*, the recently enacted federal stimulus package that stands to pump approximately \$130 million into public colleges and universities in Massachusetts.

Najimy said the money needs to support students, staff and faculty directly.

UMass Amherst economics professor Michael Ash said that federal assistance will be necessary to supplement the state's reinvestment in public education, but full funding of public colleges and universities by the state remains paramount.



Above, Sasha Link, an adjunct professor at both Massasoit Community College and Bridgewater State University, where she is also a professional staff employee, spoke during Public Higher Education Advocacy Day. She is flanked by students representing the hundreds who met with legislators to discuss the debt they are accumulating. At left, educators joined students in sharing stories about campus funding needs.

Photos by Chris Christo

UMass Amherst economics professor Michael Ash said that federal assistance will be necessary to supplement the state's reinvestment in public education, but full funding of public colleges and universities by the state remains paramount.

“Investing in something that pays off more in the future is just a good idea,” Ash said.

Ash is updating a 2012 research paper that he co-authored, “Economic Impact of Investments in Public Higher Education in Massachusetts: Short-Run Employment Stimulus, Long-Run Public Returns.”

There is a short-term economic benefit to keeping college and university staff and faculty employed during a period of economic downturn, Ash explained — both to sustain educational quality on public campuses and to offset further financial harm caused by job losses.

Maintaining high-quality, affordable public colleges and universities will enhance workforce development and job creation, he said, which ultimately benefits the state with greater tax revenues and lower social safety net costs.

“States that did not invest in public higher ed during the last economic downturn had a much harder time coming back,” Ash noted.

The crisis doesn't change the campaign to win approval of the *Cherish Act*, which has three main legislative goals:

- Passage of a fiscal 2021 state budget that includes \$120 million — the first installment set forth in the *Cherish Act* for additional public higher education funding.

- Passage of the full act, which would add \$600 million to public higher education funding over the next five years, restoring the state to funding levels reached in fiscal 2001.

- Passage of the *Debt Free Future Act*.

Many MTA leaders from preK-12 locals attended this year's Advocacy Day on March 2, asserting that

Please turn to **Higher ed**/Page 17

MCAS tests canceled for this year after barrage of calls to officials

By Laura Barrett

As a result of several hundred calls and several thousand emails from educators, students and parents to legislators and Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley, a bill was passed on April 9 waiving MCAS test-administration requirements this spring. Governor Charlie Baker signed the bill into law the next day.

“When we fight, we win!” said MTA President Merrie Najimy. “Canceling MCAS this year is a big victory. We especially want to thank Senator Jason Lewis (D-Winchester) and Senate President Karen Spilka (D-Ashland), along with her leadership team, for taking seriously what our members had to say and shepherding this bill through to passage.

“The lives of our students, their families and our members have been turned upside down by the coronavirus,” Najimy continued. “MCAS is already a hot-button issue for students and educators. To have the specter of MCAS hanging over their heads while struggling to adapt to such a dramatic shift in all of our lives just cranked up the heat. So we put out a call to action and successfully shut MCAS down for this year.”

The new law also gives Riley the option of waiving the mandate that seniors in the Class of 2020 meet the MCAS-based competency determination in order to graduate.



“The commissioner should exercise that right and leave graduation decisions to local school districts,” said Najimy. “Students’ futures should not be determined by a high-stakes test but instead by their performance in their classes in high school.”

All 50 states have been given federal waivers allowing them to cancel test-administration requirements this spring, and at least 40 states have already done so. In addition, nearly all of the 11 states that still have test-based graduation requirements have waived those mandates for this year.

In Massachusetts, there was resistance to canceling the test-administration requirement outright in some quarters, including on the editorial page of *The Boston Globe*, which has a long history of defending high-stakes testing. The *Globe* criticized the MTA for calling for cancellation and said the decision should be left to Riley.

Almost all of the reader comments in response to the *Globe* editorial expressed outrage at the newspaper’s position, including one that read:

Actual students take these tests.

Actual children see the results of these tests.

Actual children have their self-esteem annihilated by scores.

Actual children are already stressed and worried about current events.

Actual children do not need to be further stressed by taking the MCAS.

The end.

“We have been fighting the MCAS testing regimen for a long time because it has narrowly defined the curriculum and has been weaponized against schools and districts, particularly in communities of color,” Najimy said. “We must now seize on this moment that MCAS is paused, organize to end MCAS permanently, and realign our curriculum so that it is once again developmentally appropriate, as it was before we were shackled by MCAS.”

Ravitch cites ‘powerful’ resistance in victory over Question 2

By Laura Barrett

“My message is: Resistance is not futile — resistance is powerful.” So said Diane Ravitch, education historian, author and activist, during a recent Citizens for Public Schools event.

Ravitch was in the area to promote her newest book, *Slaying Goliath*, and to recognize two Massachusetts activists it features: former MTA President Barbara Madeloni, honored for leading the successful 2016 fight against lifting the cap on charter schools, and UMass Boston Associate Professor of Political Science Maurice Cunningham, whom Ravitch praised for shining a light on the dark money that poured into the “Yes” campaign. The MTA was a co-sponsor of the event.

In her talk on Feb. 26 at First Parish in Cambridge, Ravitch recounted the fight against Question 2, as the ballot initiative seeking the cap lift was called, reminding the audience that the “Yes” side was ahead by a wide margin in early polling. She said that so-called education reformers, whom she calls education “disrupters,” set their sights on Massachusetts in the belief that if they could win in

the “bluest of blue states,” they could win anywhere.

The “Yes on 2” campaign won support from Governor Charlie Baker, several business associations, Democrats for Education Reform and *The Boston Globe*. It brought in money from very wealthy donors, many of them from out of state. The campaign ultimately raised close to \$29 million, outspending the “No” campaign by \$14 million.

Backers of the question also filed a lawsuit claiming that the state’s cap on charter schools was unconstitutional. Their public face was a group of parents who were featured in rallies and ads but who did not finance or control the campaign’s spending.

Despite their resources, Ravitch told the Cambridge audience, backers were up against a formidable foe in Madeloni, who said, in essence, “We will not let this happen.” Madeloni and other members of the “No on 2” coalition — including many MTA and AFT Massachusetts members, along with allies across the state — refused to cut a deal in the Legislature to allow a partial lift of the cap to avoid a costly ballot campaign.

The gamble paid off. In the end, Question 2 was defeated by a vote of 62 percent to 38 percent. Of the state’s 351 cities and towns, the



Photo by Larry Aaronson

Education historian Diane Ravitch discussed the defeat of Question 2, the 2016 initiative to lift the Massachusetts charter school cap, during an event in Cambridge on Feb. 26.

“Yes” campaign won in fewer than 20 affluent communities — communities not threatened by the expansion of charter schools.

Please turn to **Ravitch**/Page 10

Climate activism continues amid pandemic

By Scott McLennan

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the cancellation of large gatherings that had been planned around the 50th anniversary of Earth Day to address climate change and promote environmental activism. But the work itself continues — and the MTA's Climate Action Network is in the thick of it.

There are now more than 160 MTA members participating in the network, including a core group of about two dozen educators that has been organizing fellow MTA members to take action on climate change.

Because of the network's advocacy, the MTA supported last year's youth climate strikes and signed on as a sponsor of Earth Day 2020 Boston.

Michael Kozuch, a high school history teacher in Newton, played a leading role in developing plans for Earth Day events in Boston. Kozuch, who also offers a course on sustainability, reduced his teaching load to focus on organizing rallies and teach-ins to span a week of action that was to have started on April 18.

But by the end of March, when it became clear that large public events would not be possible as a result of the coronavirus crisis, Kozuch had pulled together an online meeting of student activists and members of environmental groups who had been involved in the planning for Earth Day.

Although the meeting began with a tone of disappointment, it ultimately blossomed into an enthusiastic brainstorming session about ways to use social media platforms to promote the Earth Day message of activism to protect the environment.

"I was surprised and then encouraged by the level of support people voiced to keep going despite the incredible disruption in everyone's lives," Kozuch said.

He was not surprised that students took the lead in designing the new digital format. As *MTA Today* went to press, the organizers were planning a Facebook Live event on April 18 and an ongoing campaign to post nature photos with the hashtags #earthday2020boston, #earthrise and #strikeywithus on social media sites.

Kozuch, who was born the day after the first Earth Day, which was held in 1970, has been teaching a course on sustainability for a dozen years. Upon noticing his students' eyes opening wider and wider with each class, he concluded that more social action was needed.

"Part of my teaching the course is empowering students and letting them know that their voices matter," Kozuch said.

He likened the organizing surrounding climate action today to the activism that grew around other movements, such as opposition to the Vietnam War, the environmental awareness campaigns of the 1970s, and fights for the civil rights of people discriminated against based on race, gender and sexual orientation.



MTA Today File Photo by Scott McLennan

The MTA supported the Global Climate Strike held on Sept. 20, 2019, which drew numerous educators to Boston's City Hall Plaza. As the nation marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, more than 160 members are participating in the MTA Climate Action Network.



"Young people have always had to push the adults to listen," Kozuch said. "Once again, we are seeing young people make a difference."

Simone Klein is a senior in Kozuch's sustainability course. She said that at first, she was disappointed when the plans for in-person Earth Day events had to be canceled.

"Planning a big event, though, I've been learning how to be flexible," Klein said. "We are making an active choice to keep going. If climate justice is important, we just need to decide what we can do."

Part of her motivation to keep working on a virtual Earth Day program involves the fact that so many of her peers — not just her fellow students in the sustainability course — see climate action as a crucial issue. More people are recognizing climate change as a universal problem, Klein said.

She said that in addition to posting photos on social media that promote environmental awareness, she was most looking forward to creating Earth Day chalk murals, especially at her high school — while employing all of the necessary social distancing, of course.

"It will be great to bring back life to the school," she said.

Likewise, the Climate Action Network is keeping alive its ambitious plan to deepen environmental awareness and activism within the MTA.

The network has four areas of focus:

- Supporting student actions such as climate strikes.
- Developing "green" contract language to bring to the bargaining table.
- Creating a broad array of curricular materials not only to educate students at all levels, but also to educate fellow educators on climate change.
- Forming coalitions across environmental and labor groups.

Climate Action Network member Craig Slatin, a retired UMass Lowell professor, said that one priority is building consensus among coalition partners for a unified position on cohesive legislative action that moves the country toward a Green New Deal.

There already has been some success, Slatin noted, in crafting contract language that encourages sustainability, including moving toward more energy-efficient workplaces.

As public funds are diverted to address the damage wrought by climate change, that will have an impact on how public education is funded in the future, Slatin said. That is another reason educators should be actively working to mitigate the problems arising from global warming and pollution, he added.

"The coronavirus crisis is showing us in the short term the impact of a global crisis," Slatin said. "The climate crisis — slowly over time — will have an even deeper impact, which is why we need to convince people to act now."

Kozuch said he believes the pandemic will inspire people to behave differently.

"In every tragedy, there are opportunities to rethink how we move forward," he said. "The current crisis is getting us to rethink how we organize as a society and should be getting us to think how to make our society more sustainable."

Ravitch attributes win over Question 2 to four key factors

Continued from Page 8

Ravitch attributed the “No on 2” win to four main factors. The campaign had a clear message about how charter schools drain money from public schools while failing to serve the same population of students. It had a better ground game, including educators across the state who spread the message to friends, family members and neighbors. It offered a potent critique of who was behind the “Yes” campaign — billionaires and out-of-state donors who had no connection to public schools in Massachusetts. Lastly, the “No” campaign was endorsed by more than 200 school committees, respected local officials, the Massachusetts Democratic State Committee and longtime public school advocates.

Madeloni, for her part, credited the large coalition of education, labor, parent, community and civil rights groups represented in the Save Our Public Schools campaign with being a truly grassroots effort.

“Power is not in the State House,” she said. “We have the power. We have to stop giving it to them.” Madeloni added that support from African Americans was critical, reminding the audience that then-Boston City Councilor Tito Jackson became one of the most forceful spokespeople for the “No” campaign.

Madeloni said that beating the education “reformers” was more than just about winning on

Cunningham described the endless power of monied interests as “perilous for democracy.”

a single ballot question. “Thank you for writing a book that reminds us we are part of something bigger,” she said to Ravitch. “This is all about union busting and stifling the voice and power of workers.”

Cunningham, who did extensive research on the dark money behind the “Yes” campaign, said that there are three reasons corporate interests support non-unionized charter schools over unionized public schools: “Taxes. Taxes. Taxes.” Unions such as the MTA advocate for progressive taxation to pay for quality public services and to fund fair wages, hours and working conditions for public employees.

In *Slaying Goliath*, Ravitch details how Cunningham ferreted out who funneled money to the “Yes” campaign through the New York-based organization Families for Excellent Schools — Advocacy. The strategy was for this group to receive the money, concealing the names of donors, and then to contribute the bundled funds to the political action committee running the campaign.

It didn’t work. Cunningham scrutinized campaign finance documents and highlighted

big names behind the “Yes” campaign, including billionaire hedge fund manager Seth Klarman, who in 2014 had backed Republican Karl Rove’s American Crossroads super PAC; Jim and Alice Walton, heirs to the Walmart fortune; Jonathan Sackler, heir to the Purdue Pharmaceutical fortune; billionaire former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg; and venture capitalist Paul Sagan, Baker’s appointed chair of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Cunningham encouraged the state’s Office of Campaign and Political Finance to investigate the money trail. The OCPF did — and fined FESA \$426,000 for concealing the names of the donors. The fine cleaned out the group’s bank account and led to its closure.

“I’m no hero,” Cunningham said. “Barbara and Diane are heroes.”

Cunningham said he spends time following the money trail on important issues because “people have the right to know” who is funding political campaigns. He described the endless power of monied interests as “perilous for democracy.”

He said he hasn’t made many friends doing such work, but he doesn’t intend to stop. His message to those seeking to unfairly manipulate the system is this: “When you stop screwing with democracy, I’ll stop messing with you.”

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MTA celebrates 175 years of activism for students and public education

This is the first in a series of articles marking the 175th anniversary of the Massachusetts Teachers Association.

By Laura Barrett

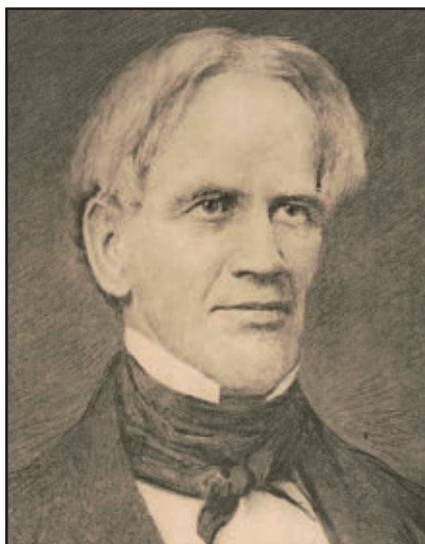
The year was 1845. James Polk was sworn in as the 11th president of the United States. Texas became the country's 28th state. A potato blight led to the Great Famine in Ireland, setting off a wave of Irish immigration to the U.S. And on November 24, 85 educators — all men — met in Worcester at Brinley Hall to establish the Massachusetts Teachers' Association, as it was then called. That meeting was at the behest of the Essex County Teachers Association, which had been founded in 1830 and was the first county association in the country.

Times have certainly changed since the organization's founding, but the MTA is still going strong after 175 years. Throughout its history, members of the association have supported their students through major upheavals, including the Civil War, World War I and World War II, the Great Depression and the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918, which claimed the lives of about five out of every 1,000 U.S. residents. They are continuing to do so in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020.

In 1845, "practical" male teachers were allowed to join the MTA for a fee of \$1 a year while female teachers were allowed only to become honorary members.

The mid-19th century was a period of great change for public education in Massachusetts. There were a number of publicly funded schools in Massachusetts from Colonial times, including in Dedham, where the first taxpayer-funded school in the country was authorized in 1644. (Boston Latin, the oldest continuously operating public school in the nation, was run out of private residences until it moved into a schoolhouse in 1645.)

It wasn't until the mid-19th century that Massachusetts had a statewide system of free, universal public education. The champion of that system was Horace Mann, a lawyer and Massachusetts state senator who in



Horace Mann, above left, the first secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, championed a system of free and universal public education. At right, a large Springfield high school class is pictured in 1890.

1837 became the first secretary of the newly established Board of Education. Mann propounded six main principles of education for what were then called "Common Schools" that still resonate today:

- (1) Citizens cannot maintain both ignorance and freedom;
- (2) This education should be paid for, controlled, and maintained by the public;
- (3) This education should be provided in schools that embrace children from varying backgrounds;
- (4) This education must be nonsectarian;
- (5) This education must be taught using tenets of a free society; and
- (6) This education must be provided by well-trained, professional teachers.

The Common School movement spread across the country. Then, as now, Massachusetts was in the vanguard of public education, having passed the nation's first compulsory education law in 1852.

In an address to the MTA's Annual Meeting of Delegates, held at Faneuil Hall in Boston and recounted in the periodical *The Massachusetts Teacher* in 1854, a key speaker, identified only as "Mr. Wells" but likely a leader of the association, said, "If there is a portion of the world in which the blessings of a free and universal education are more fully enjoyed than in any other, I trust we may



say, without boasting, that place is Massachusetts."

As more schools were developed, more female teachers were hired, beginning in the 1850s. According to a history of public education produced by PBS, despite low salaries and poor working conditions, "Still, women flocked to teaching. Not only were they grateful for the salary, however meager; they also welcomed the independence and sense of purpose teaching gave them. ... Teaching gave women a window onto a wider world of ideas, politics and public usefulness."

In his address, Mr. Wells described some of the working conditions that prevailed at the time: "The labors of many teachers, if faithful in the discharge of their duties, are so constant and arduous during the day, that they have no strength left, at the close of school hours, either for personal improvement, or for a review of lessons to be heard on the following day." The problem? "There are many respectable schools in Massachusetts in which the number of pupils is as great as 60 or 70, and even 80 or 90, for each teacher."

Given that large number, it is not surprising that another article in *The Massachusetts Teacher* that year focuses on "The Evils and Remedies of Whispering, or Communicating in School." In this "prize essay," Mr. Daniel Mansfield of Cambridge complains of students "whispering"

about such matters as "the next sleigh ride, the new bonnet of one, and the shabby dress of another." If all 60 students in a class whispered twice an hour during a three-hour half-day session, then there would be "360 whispers in one session" — an intolerable distraction.

In addition to focusing on how to improve the lot of teachers, the early MTA publications focused on fundamental issues of pedagogy.

One example is a *Massachusetts Teacher* article from February 1854 titled "Teaching to Think." It begins, "However immature his mental capacities or unripe the more primary processes of development, the pupil must be taught to think. ... The widest compass of the instructor's field of toil is to furnish food for the mind, present inducements to energy, supply the higher impulses to an elevated course of acquisition, and to precede the pupil with the aids of demonstration and explanation. Impart mind, or give thought — he can do neither."

These were among the areas covered in new institutions known as "Normal Schools," which were experimental teacher training schools established during Mann's tenure at the Board of Education. If public schools were going to be required in communities throughout the state, more teachers would have to be trained. The first state-supported

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Counselor of the Year focuses on helping students

By Sarah Nathan

How do you stay connected to your students in the time of COVID-19? That's the question educators have been struggling with since public schools closed abruptly in March.

Karen McCrillis, the grade nine counselor at Gardner High School and the 2020 Massachusetts School Counselors Association's School Counselor of the Year, is no exception. The recent move to remote learning has not been without its challenges.

Before the coronavirus outbreak, McCrillis had opportunities to connect with students throughout the day by visiting classrooms and meeting with students in school. But since schools have closed, McCrillis has had to find creative ways to help her students and learn how to operate online meetings.

Reaching out to students who are deemed to be at risk is especially hard.

"These are the kids with less access to technology" and sometimes less enthusiasm for school, said McCrillis, who also coordinates the district's guidance program.

Counseling is about building relationships, she added, and while reaching out is not impossible, it takes time to rethink things and adjust to an entirely new set of circumstances. "I read the kids' faces and watch their body language — and that's really missing when communicating over email," she said.

After schools were closed, the first priority was checking on the well-being of the students. Using a system organized by the principal, educators reached out to every student at the school. As a result, educators were able to help out families in need by taking steps such as bringing groceries to a parent with a compromised immune system.

In nominating her for the School Counselor of the Year award, colleagues credited McCrillis with promoting the importance of school counselors, advocating for planning time for the counseling staff, and emphasizing social and emotional learning. McCrillis collaborates with the Massachusetts School Mental Health Consortium and organizes professional development for school counselors



Photo by Sarah Nathan

Karen McCrillis, who has been named the 2020 Counselor of the Year by the Massachusetts School Counselors Association, was honored by her colleagues during the organization's annual advocacy and leadership day at the State House on Feb. 4. She works at Gardner High School.

"This is what I've always wanted to do," McCrillis said. "This high school is home to me."

and providers. She also has a caseload of 138 ninth graders.

"The best ways to describe her are compassionate, inspirational, coordinated, attentive, helpful and mostly, selfless," Savanna Livingston-Cowen, a 2018 Gardner High School graduate, wrote in her recommendation letter for McCrillis. "She has been a tremendous inspiration to me and my career choice."

McCrillis, who has worked at Gardner High School for 15 years, is also a graduate of the school. She was officially named the 2020 Massachusetts School Counselor of the Year by the MASCA at a surprise all-school assembly on Jan. 28. She is scheduled to represent the state at a gala in Washington, D.C., when the gathering can be held, and she is in the running to serve as the national School Counselor of the Year.

"This is what I've always wanted to do," McCrillis said. "This high school is home to me."

Electronic professional development resources for counselors can be found on the Massachusetts School Counselors Association's website at <https://masca.wildapricot.org/Electronic-PD>.

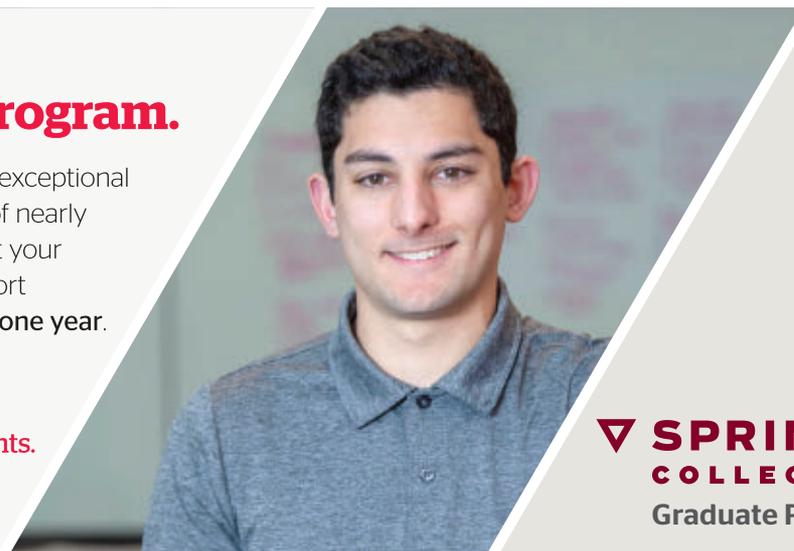
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The MASA also offers programs to ensure that members receive urgent care in a high-quality



medical facility, and it works with the funeral industry to help families if a death occurs. The MASA's transport solutions include working with the pre-need planning industry to provide transportation of mortal remains and peace of mind for family and friends.

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Savings on outdoor fun

Luckily for us, the winter was a mild one — and as the warmer air becomes more prevalent, outdoor activities are sure to follow. MTAB's *Benefits & Discount Directory* and our nationwide discount partner, *Access*, are great resources for savings on outdoor fun. Here are a few suggestions:

Benefits & Discount Directory

- Adventures at Yankee Fleet Deep Sea Fishing in Gloucester — \$20 off.
- Cape Cod Central Railroad in Hyannis — 10 percent off all excursion trains.
- Lake George Steamboat Company in Lake George, New York — \$1.50 to \$5 off lake cruises.
- Theme parks, including Candia Springs Adventure Park, Hersheypark and others.

Access

- Boston Pedicab — 10 percent off customized tours.
- Golf Country in Easton and Middleton — free round of mini golf with the purchase of same.
- Harmony Trails Horseback in Dalton — 10 percent off trail rides.
- International Tennis Hall of Fame & Museum in Newport — \$2 off admission.

Visit www.mtabenefits.com for a full list of discounts.

MTA Retired members discuss life amid the crisis

MTA Retired Members Committee Chair Jacqueline Gorrie reached out to MTA retirees and asked them to share their thoughts and stories about life amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Here is a sampling of their responses — edited for length and style — that also includes their former local affiliations.

Cynthia Francis, New Bedford: Mom and I have finished more than 75 masks and they are all going to people who will need them. We work together. She cuts and assembles while I sew. At 98, she does all this by feel mostly because she is legally blind. She tells me stories about how she tore up bedsheets and pillowcases to roll bandages for the WWII war effort. When there are needs, people step up. Thank you to all those who are taking care of us. Back to work. More masks to make.

Joan Indio, Fairhaven: I am the one who collects family pictures. I decided to make albums for each of my three children. It took me weeks to gather all that I had. I inherited my parents' memorabilia as well. It will take weeks to organize three baskets for each album. We have a habit of putting off for tomorrow what we should do today. Well, tomorrow is here!

Joe O'Sullivan, Brockton: I spent 30 hours completing a four-channel, electric-powered Cessna 182 radio-controlled model airplane! The backstory is that my friend's dad started it 20 years



Joe O'Sullivan built a radio-controlled airplane.

ago, became ill and passed away a few years ago. His son, David Lynch, gave it to me when Gregory Gervais, my former BEA vice president, and I were helping to clean out the garage four years ago. It sat on my workbench from then until now! Turned out to be a bigger project than I estimated, converting the already installed fuel-powered system to electric power as well as installing a new radio system. Looking forward to a maiden flight. Great therapy!!

Katey Swanson, Canton: I've been sewing medical masks for Norwood Hospital and the Walpole-Natick Visiting Nurses Association. I started my teaching career as a home economics teacher.

As a result of Proposition 2½, "home ec" was considered a nonessential course for middle school and high school students and was reduced in many Massachusetts school districts. With the introduction of education reform and MCAS testing, family and consumer sciences (the new name for home ec) was just about eliminated. I transitioned into teaching health during the last 15 years of teaching and retired in 2016. While many educators and educational leaders dismissed my subject area as "fluff," I can't help but feel frustrated, angry and helpless with the effects of this pandemic and the demise of home economics.

Judith Wilhelmy, Ayer: I live on the first floor of a one-building, three-story, 75-unit condominium. A lovely brick pathway meanders around the building, and on sunny days many residents enjoy a stroll in the fresh air. I love art in its many forms. I have placed artwork in three of my windows and on a stool by my sliding door. I placed an invitation in the lobby inviting others to join me in placing art in any form in their windows. It is my hope that together we can create an "art walk" that will bring joy and pique conversation for our neighbors.

Elaine Koury, Cambridge: I've been busy every day. I figure that one of the best things I can do for my community right now is stay home and stay healthy. So I have been cleaning out my cellar

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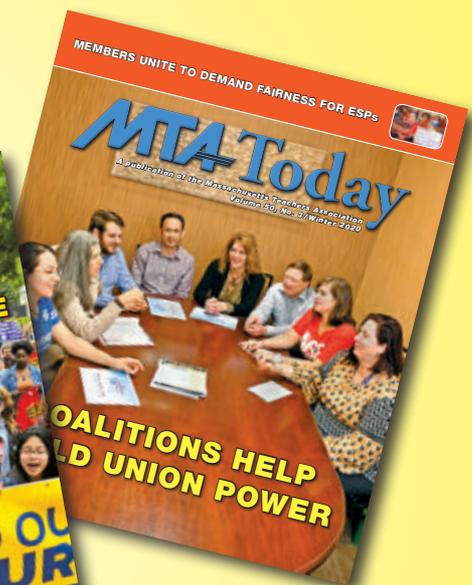
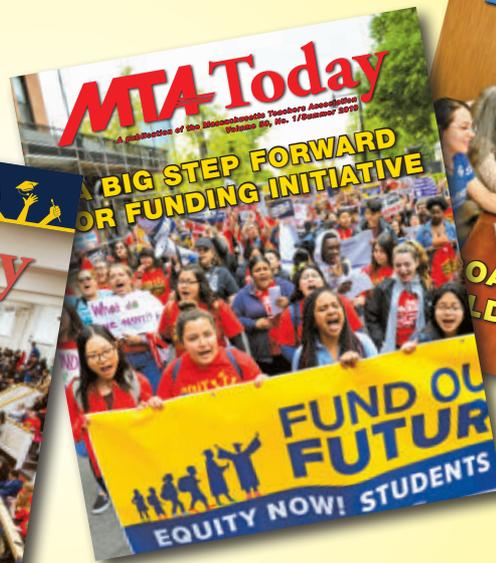
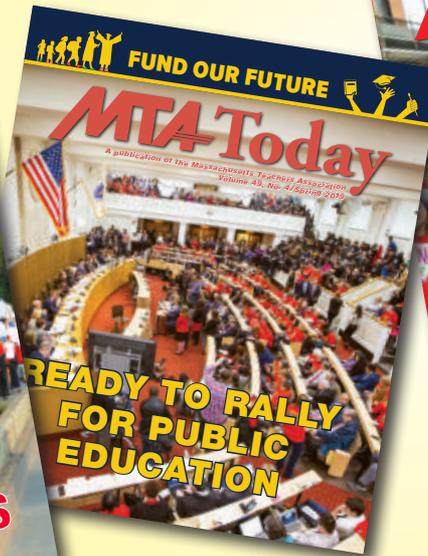
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Higher ed funding 'is a statewide issue'

Continued from Page 7

since enactment of the *Student Opportunity Act* last year, it is time for state leaders to fully fund public higher education and not leave students stranded when they graduate from high school.

"This is not just a higher ed issue," said MTA Vice President Max Page. "This is a statewide issue."

During the Advocacy Day at the State House, students spoke about the difficulty of working multiple jobs while trying to carry a full course load. They said the problem is compounded as the portion of college budgets devoted to student services shrinks and vital supports disappear.

Cameron Costa, a student at Bristol Community College, told the audience that he had done everything he possibly could to be a standout high school student in New Bedford — and that his mother did everything she could to support his pursuit of a college degree. But he also shared the disheartening news that the portion of tuition and fees that colleges expected him to cover far exceeded what was realistic, given his family's income.



Photo by Chris Christo

Bristol Community College student Cameron Costa called on the Legislature to take action.

"I did my part as a student. My mom did her part as a parent," Costa said. "It's time for the Legislature to do its part."

The task has become ever more urgent amid the current crisis.

For updates and more information, please visit massteacher.org and follow the MTA on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Amid distractions, a professor works to keep her students engaged

MTA members have been sharing their stories about working during the COVID-19 pandemic. Swan Gates is an adjunct professor at Cape Cod Community College who happened to be taking a course on how to teach online when her school closed the campus in March and moved all of the courses online. She provided the following account to *MTA Today*:

"On March 12 the college told us we'd be moving to an online/remote learning format. During spring break, I put everything the students would need online. I have 30 students in my Introduction to Philosophy class, 28 in my logic class and 13 in my existentialism course. Unfortunately, I never heard from three students after break. I've been using Zoom as a way to continue our schedule, as we would if face to face, to keep students engaged. Using Zoom's free account means you have a time limit, so having to end and begin again is a distraction.

"The only class I've had a problem with online is logic, specifically proposition logic. It's like a math class, and I'm a chalkboard person. The white-screen option on Zoom is horrible. It's difficult for students to see the equations and illustrations I use to show them what is being covered in the text. I've been offering one-on-one office hours outside of the lectures. The MOST challenging aspect of working remotely is having a 3-year-old in a small home with no office or privacy, and very little time for class preparation or grading (which can only get done after bedtime)!"

The MTA wants to hear stories of how members are coping during the coronavirus crisis and making a difference in the lives of students, fellow educators and their communities. To share your experiences, visit massteacher.org/coronastories.

REGIONAL RETIREMENT CONSULTATIONS AVAILABLE

The MTA provides individual retirement consultations throughout the state to assist members. *Proof of membership must be submitted when requesting retirement services. This schedule is in effect from September to June except at MTA's Quincy headquarters, which is staffed during the summer and school vacations.*

PLEASE NOTE:

All consultations are now by appointment only during the hours listed.

AUBURN — Edward Nelson: first Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Central Office, 48 Sword St., Auburn; 508.791.2121, or at home, 774.239.7823.

QUINCY — Harold Crowley: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., MTA, 2 Heritage Drive, 9th Floor, Quincy; 617.878.8240 or 800.392.6175, ext. 8240.

CAPE COD — Lawrence Abbruzzi: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Barnstable Teachers Association (BTA), 100 West Main St., Suite #7, Hyannis; 508.775.8625, or at home, 508.824.9194.

FITCHBURG — Karen Melanson: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Fitchburg Teachers Association office, 245 River St., Fitchburg. Call 978.660.4359.

HOLYOKE — Ron Lech: third Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Western Office, 55

Bobala Road, Suite 3, Holyoke; 413.537.2335, or at home, 413.893.9173.

LYNNFIELD — Peter Mili: third Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Northeast Office, 50 Salem St., Building B, Lynnfield; call 617.460.6589. Barbara Callaghan: fourth Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Northeast Office, 50 Salem St., Building B, Lynnfield; call 978.660.4171.

PITTSFIELD — Ward F. Johnson: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Berkshire Office, 188 East St., Pittsfield; 413.499.0257, or at home, 413.443.1722.

RAYNHAM — Raymond Thompson: third Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Southeast Office, 756 Orchard St., third floor, Raynham. Call Thompson at 617.347.4425.

HIGHER EDUCATION AT-LARGE — Edward McCourt, 781.325.2553.

Note: If your association would like to schedule a retirement workshop at your school, your local president should call Harold Crowley at 800.392.6175, ext. 8240. Please be aware that the MTA consultants do not have records of your service, so members are advised to bring that information along to meetings.

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Total MTA Member Savings: \$3,163***

* \$3,000 in discounts for conventional loan as compared with standard Massachusetts conventional mortgage fees and closing costs, according to *Bankrate.com*.
** Loan Origination Fee is inclusive of the following fees: Origination, Processing, Commitment, Application and Underwriting. Borrower shall not pay any other fees that go directly to lender for processing a mortgage/loan.
*** Does not include Title Exam Fee savings.



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MTA to hold virtual Annual Meeting

By Jean Conley

The 2020 MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates will be held on Saturday, May 2 — and it will be presented as a virtual meeting for the first time.

The Board of Directors met remotely on March 21 and voted to scale back the meeting from two days to one after discussing health and safety concerns amid the coronavirus pandemic. The Board's vote was followed two days later by Governor Charlie Baker's order limiting in-person gatherings to groups of no more than 10 people.

Essential pieces of MTA business will be taken up at the Annual Meeting, including voting on the association's proposed budget for fiscal 2020-2021 and holding leadership elections.

The meeting will also feature reports by MTA President Merrie Najimy, Vice President Max Page and Executive Director-Treasurer Lisa Gallatin; presentation of an Issues Forum on the MTA All In Blueprint Project; and recognition of outstanding educators, student activists and education allies.

The meeting will be called to order at 9 a.m. on Saturday, May 2, and is expected to end around noon. Delegates will vote for candidates for MTA

President, Vice President, and the association's Board of Directors and Executive Committee. In addition, four Retired Members Committee seats will be filled, with delegates representing the Statewide Retired District taking part in that election.

The Blueprint Project Issues Forum grew out of the work of member and staff committees that began meeting last fall to examine whether the MTA is well positioned to address the challenges and the opportunities ahead in a post-Janus world.

The member group, called the All In Member Blueprint Work Group, surveyed local leaders and

Please turn to **Virtual**/Page 26

Candidates vie for seats on Board and Executive Committee

In addition to the election of the MTA President and Vice President, the 2020 Annual Meeting of Delegates will feature contests for seats on the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors.

Executive Committee contests are as follows: Matthew J. Bach of the Andover Education Association and Ruth Allen of the Dracut Teachers Association are vying in Region F; John Sullivan of the Belmont Education Association and Kerri Scott of the Melrose Education Association are vying in Region G; Yahaira Rodriguez of the Educational Association of Worcester and Leslie Marsland of the University Staff Association are vying for the At-Large Education Support Professionals seat; Gloria Salazar of the Somerville Teachers Association and Graciela Mohamedi of the Brookline Educators Union are vying for the At-Large Seat to Represent Ethnic Minority Members; and MTA Retired members Julia Monteiro Johnson and Andrei Joseph are vying

for the Statewide Retired Region seat.

Contests for seats on the Board are as follows: Judith Fairweather of the North Adams Teachers Association and Ginger Armstrong of the Lee Education Association are vying in District 1A; Jacqueline Perkins and Katuska (Katie) Lecaro, both of the Education Association of Plymouth-Carver, are vying in District 34C; Fred Hopkins and Kerry Costello, both of the Andover Education Association, are vying in District 22F; Rosemarie Freeland and Colleen Avedikian, both of the Massachusetts Community College Council, are vying in District 44H; Robert (Bobby) V. Travers Jr. of the Cambridge Education Association and Paula Rigano-Murray of the Northampton Association of School Employees are vying for the At-Large Education Support Professionals seat.

The at-large seats are voted on by all delegates at the 2020 Annual Meeting. Regional seats are voted on by delegates representing that region and district seats by delegates from that district.

All other candidates for the Executive Committee and the Board have been declared elected under the election waiver in the MTA Bylaws. The provision states that if there is only one candidate for an open position, the election will be waived, and the candidate is declared elected. Terms on the Board and Executive Committee begin on July 1 and last for three years.

The candidates declared elected because of the waiver are:

Executive Committee

Region A: Cedric Cunningham, Springfield Education Association

Region C: Dale Forest, Barnstable Teachers Association

Board of Directors

District 2A: Kristy Dyer, Agawam Education Association

District 3A: Nellie Taylor, Easthampton Education Association

District 4A: Chris Herland, Amherst-Pelham Education Association

District 5A: Tracy Little-Sasanecki, Springfield Education Association

District 6A: Diane Brennan-Ogorzalek, Ludlow Education Association

District 26A: Benjamin Eisen, Chicopee Education Association

District 43C: Cheri Cluff, Martha's Vineyard Educators Association

District 15D: Sonia Fortin, Sudbury Education Association

District 27D: Tim Dwyer, Dedham Education Association

District 38E: Joe Spremulli, Norton Teachers Association

District 18G: Kelly Henderson, Newton Teachers Association

District 21G: Jessica Gold Boots, Malden Education Association

Candidates declared elected who supplied photos are pictured below. In contested races, the biographical statements of candidates for the Executive Committee and the Board appear on Pages 21 through 25.

Candidates declared elected



Diane Brennan-Ogorzalek



Cedric Cunningham



Dale Forest



Kristy Dyer



Nellie Taylor



Sonia Fortin



Jessica Gold Boots

Candidate for MTA President: Merrie Najimy

The last two years mark another milestone in our movement of growing the collective power and unity of educators to win the schools, colleges, unions and communities that we all deserve.

When we began our tenure as President and Vice President, Max Page and I prioritized spending time with locals. Since then, we've traveled throughout the state visiting members — coffee and doughnuts in the parking lot, fighting against bullying administrators; walk-ins and rallies for fair contracts; membership meetings strategizing with local campaigns for healthy buildings and student wellness; regional forums raising demands for public education funding via Fund Our Future; retreats with ALANA, the statewide network of members of color; meetings with higher ed chapters planning coordinated bargaining; and ESP emerging leadership retreats dialoguing about ESP needs and actions.



From preK through higher education and within each constituency group — educators of color, Education Support Professionals, LGBTQ+ and new members, and retirees — we hold a common set of aspirations. We all share the quest for dignity and respect in the workplace. We all want our schools and colleges to be fully funded, joyful places where we have the autonomy to cultivate the social, emotional and academic development of our students. We all insist on fair raises, affordable health care, and economic, job and retirement security. These desires and demands center on class, race and our responsibility to protect the planet from the ravages of climate change. The onset of the coronavirus only emphasizes the collective nature of our destiny. When we fight for ourselves, we are building more than a socially, racially and economically just education system. We are building a just society.

These are the hopes and dreams I held during my three decades as an elementary school teacher and my

years leading the Concord Teachers Association. I still hold these values as the proud leader of the largest and most powerful union in Massachusetts.

For the story remains the same. If we stay isolated or fight only for our own salaries and working conditions, then we neglect our allies, and everyone suffers. But when we campaign around the common good and connect to each other, to our students and their families, and to like-minded organizations in coalitions, then we protect each other, and everyone wins.

We are building a wave of rank-and-file member participation and community coalitions, and we are winning!

In New Bedford, the commissioner of education tried imposing a dangerous new charter school model, drawing a neighborhood zone and expropriating public property. The New Bedford Educators Association, fortified with MTA resources, united with the New Bedford Coalition to Save Our Schools and shut it down.

The Northampton, Haverhill, Belmont, Gloucester and Cambridge locals — to name a few — have developed their knowledge and skills at MTA bargaining summits and are introducing ways to democratize bargaining.

The Dennis-Yarmouth and Monomoy locals connected their contract campaigns to Fund Our Future and won good contracts.

The Somerville paraprofessionals launched a living-wage campaign through their latest contract negotiations.

The Dedham Education Association struck over fair compensation and to win benefits and sexual harassment and student cellphone use policies. They won all of these.

Rank-and-file members of color established the statewide ALANA network; other rank-and-file members and leaders founded regional solidarity networks; others started the MTA Climate Action Network; and retirees created a direct-action network called the Wisdom Warriors.

ESPs are developing a statewide mentorship program to connect ESPs with one another as they engender a



sense of belonging and community and build their power.

Higher ed locals ran teach-ins and forums linking preK-12 and higher ed funding as equal priorities.

And then there is our most historic statewide victory since winning Question 2 — the *Student Opportunity Act*. We insisted that the legislation address the needs of our poorest students and students of color in underfunded districts. We demanded \$2 billion and not a penny less. And **that's** what we won!

These victories are drawing educators toward the MTA in times of a great assault on union rights. Contrary to the expectations following the *Janus* decision, our membership numbers are on the rise. Participation is increasing at presidents' meetings, bargaining summits, member forums and union skills conferences. Rank-and-file members are leading our union skills workshops.

This progress is possible because we are shifting union culture to be members gathering to share experiences, learn from each other, determine solutions, and decide on collective actions — actions backed by MTA resources. **In doing so we are building a true democracy.**

When we say the MTA is behind you, it isn't just our brilliant legal team, should you need them. It is the full force of the MTA. If you need me and Max Page to show up — we

are there. MTA field representatives guide you in all things related to your essential function. If you need an MTA organizer to build local and contract action campaigns — you got it. If you need the communications team to help with messaging — we are there. If you need a poster or flyer design — consider it done. If you need the Wisdom Warriors for a creative action — give them a call. All of the MTA is at your side.

It has been exciting to be at the helm of MTA. Onward in the next two years to:

- Fight for the passage of the *Cherish Act* for public higher education, to secure justice for adjunct faculty and staff, and to win investment in full-time faculty and staff.
- Formulate campaigns to win an ESP Bill of Rights, including living wages and good working conditions.
- Intensify the fight to end high-stakes testing and for students' well-being.
- Win debt-free public higher education for every Massachusetts resident.
- Further the movement to democratize bargaining and bargain for the common good.
- Renew our commitment to racial justice and a sustainable planet.

I am honored by your support. For even in these challenging times, we know another world is possible.

Candidate for MTA Vice President: Max Page

Two years ago, I was elected as your Vice President, along with Merrie Najimy as your President, to lead the MTA in reclaiming professional respect for educators, building stronger locals and joining with allies to win victories for our schools and our Commonwealth. We promised to center economic and racial justice in this work.

In the past two years, with 116,000 MTA members, we have advanced the cause of public education and continued to achieve a more just community.

Merrie and I arrived in office immediately after the *Janus* decision and the Supreme Judicial Court's decision to throw the Fair Share Amendment (the millionaires' tax) off the ballot. Undaunted, we got to work and launched the Fund Our Future campaign. We engaged members from across the Commonwealth to sign petitions, speak to legislators and rally at the State House.

And we won. Approximately \$2 billion is being reinvested in our public schools, especially those that have been most deprived for the past quarter century. It was an unprecedented victory for school funding. Let's be clear: The *Student Opportunity Act* passed because of the activism of MTA members.

We have had other legislative victories as well, including passage of a bill to ease the destructive impact of the *Janus* decision. We galvanized the Raise Up Massachusetts coalition to pursue progressive revenues for transportation and are on the way to increasing taxes on global corporations.



But what is most exciting, and makes me most optimistic about the future, is the member activism at the local level. Across the state, MTA members are accessing their power to demand fair contracts — even striking to win these demands. MTA members are standing up to bullying principals, stopping

charter expansion, and banding together to insist that ESPs get a fair wage. We are building these campaigns with parents and the broader community.

Our local and statewide victories are why members are so committed to the MTA — so

committed that membership numbers have grown by more than 1,000. We are larger and stronger than ever.

The power of our *Student Opportunity Act* victory, and the wave of principled collective action in cities and towns across the state, bode well for the coming years.

We will access this collective power to:

- Win strong contracts that show the respect and autonomy members deserve through open bargaining, regional bargaining networks and bargaining for the common good.
- Pass the *Cherish Act* for public higher education to secure justice for adjunct faculty and staff and to win investment in full-time faculty and staff.
- Win living wages and good working conditions for our ESP members.
- Intensify the fight to end high-stakes testing.
- Win debt-free public higher education for every resident in Massachusetts.

As the largest union in New England, we will lead the fight against climate change and for a green new deal.

We have more work to do, and I would be honored to serve another term as your Vice President.

Biographical statements of candidates for Executive Committee

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

REGION F

Matthew J. Bach, Andover

As an EC member, I am proud to have played a leadership role in hiring our All-In organizers, expanding our membership, lobbying for and passing the *Student Opportunity Act*, and organizing with other locals on issues that affect our members and students such as housing insecurity and rent control. In Region F, there is greater cross-local activity, whether it's fighting charter expansion in Haverhill; supporting community events in Danvers and Gloucester; rallying against management bullying in Swampscott, Andover and Revere; or gathering to discuss gold-standard contract language. I ask for your vote to continue this exciting and satisfying union work.



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

REGION F

Ruth Allen, Dracut

I am a passionate believer in public education. In my two terms as a member of the MTA Board, I advocated for all members. I would like to resume this work as the Region F Executive Committee member. I know that we are strongest when we listen to one another and work together. In order for the MTA to continue to thrive, we all need to be willing to do this. Reasonable disagreement is healthy and necessary. We have many struggles ahead of us. I believe I am the best candidate to advocate for Region F and all MTA members.



Get involved!
Volunteer to serve on an MTA committee

MTA committees are vital to the work and mission of our association. Serving on an MTA committee is an ideal way to get involved with your union at the state level. If you are interested in volunteering to serve, we would like to hear from you!

➔ Visit massteacher.org/committees to learn more

Biographical statements of candidates for Executive Committee

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

REGION G

John Sullivan, Belmont

Our goal as educator members is to improve our working and student learning conditions. We organize to achieve a member-driven vision for public schools. Under my leadership as BEA president, we worked to increase:



- Transparency — Fought for and won open bargaining with silent representatives.
 - Equity — Created partnerships to dismantle racism.
 - Power — Established joint labor-management committees to include educator voice in decision-making.
- Regionally, I've collaborated with locals to offer union representative, leadership, and anti-racist workshops. As your representative, I hope to strengthen our solidarity within Region G to achieve our vision of public education. I appreciate your consideration.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

REGION G

Kerri Scott, Melrose

I am running for Region G Executive Committee because the strongest MTA leadership comes from those who experience the everyday struggles educators face. I have taught biology at Melrose High School for 18 years. As a Political Action Leader, I led the effort to pass the first override in Melrose in 25 years, and, on the bargaining team, leveraged that into a contract win. I worked on the SOA, delivering member letters to DeLeo and lobbying at the State House. With your vote, I hope to continue moving the MTA toward rank-and-file activism, creating more opportunities for member-to-member organizing.



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

AT-LARGE ESP

Yahaira Rodriguez, Worcester

Locally I am the ESP chair, EMAC chair, building rep, and part of the Bylaws Committee. I worked to create a book discussion that built a foundation of unity and equality and fostered a safe environment to engage in race conversations. In my state I am the ESP co-chair, a member of the Bylaws and Rules Committee, Resolutions Committee, ALANA Statewide, and Task Force on Race. Nationally I am part of the Resolutions Committee and the ESP director for the Hispanic Caucus. If you are passionate toward creating a unification of voices in order to spark profound change, vote for me.



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

AT-LARGE ESP

Leslie Marsland, University Staff Association

My passion for ESPs is no secret. I've served in many leadership roles within my local, MTA and NEA. As president of the largest ESP local, I represent 1,000 members at UMass-Amherst. I'm seeking the Executive Committee position because I have the experience, a degree in business management/accounting and the qualifications to hold this position. ESPs play an important role in the education of our students. I will advocate not only for ESP members, but all members. We must stand strong and united to make public education a priority. I ask for your vote as the next ESP At-Large, EC.



DONATE NOW

to The Massachusetts Child, an MTA charity that educators use to help students facing financial hardships. Checks payable to The Massachusetts Child should be sent to:

The Massachusetts Child
MTA Division of Communications
2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor
Quincy, MA 02171-2119



MASSTEACHER.ORG/MASSCHILD

Biographical statements of candidates for Executive Committee

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AT-LARGE ETHNIC MINORITY

Gloria Salazar, Somerville

For 19 years I haven't stopped fighting, advocating, and educating our members about our rights, and empowering them to defend what is most sacred: the right to free, quality public education for all. I am a qualified leader who has served locally (Board of Directors, negotiations team), in the state (MTA At-Large member of the Board of Directors, Equal Opportunity Council, EMAC, and Public Relations/Organizing Campaign Committee), and nationally (Northeast regional director of the Hispanic Caucus, Team of ELL experts, NEA Resolutions Committee, NEA Human and Civil Rights Committee, NBI Committee, ELL Cadre, and NEA social justice trainer).



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AT-LARGE ETHNIC MINORITY

Graciela Mohamedi, Brookline

I will build the MTA's commitment to social justice. As a Latina educator, I fight for our students through:

- Organizing and speaking at the March for Our Lives and Fund Our Future rallies;
- Participating in statewide ALANA leadership;
- Speaking on the 2018 EMAC panel;
- Giving a TEDx talk about allyship, to name a few.

The social and emotional well-being of our students is an integral part of our working conditions. If it is the union's job to fight for the betterment of our working conditions, it's the union's job to fight for the betterment of our students' lives.



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE STATEWIDE RETIRED

Julia Monteiro Johnson, MTA Retired

I am a proud, vocal unionist and have been for my entire professional life. I was a local president and served you on the MTA BOD, Retired Members Committee, and as an NEA Director. I will work to represent all retirees in our member-driven union, just as I have in the past. My involvement record speaks for itself: retiree membership increases, workshop presenter, supporter of active members in contract disputes, and politically active. I will continue my efforts to make MTA the union that responds to members' needs. Retiree issues are all member issues. I ask for your vote.



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE STATEWIDE RETIRED

Andrei Joseph, MTA Retired

While currently serving on the Retired Members Committee, I have testified at the State House to increase the COLA on our pensions and arranged for expanded workshop offerings at our Retired Gathering. Most importantly, I have helped to build the Wisdom Warriors, a group of engaged retirees who travel to active locals to express solidarity. We have shown up to support the Dedham strike, unfairly suspended teachers in Revere and ESPs fighting for just pay in Somerville. I would be honored to continue this work as our representative on the Executive Committee.



Candidates for MTA Retired Members Committee

Four vacancies for two-year terms commencing July 1

The election will be held at the 2020 Annual Meeting of Delegates. The delegates representing the Statewide Retired District will vote in the Retired Members Committee election. Candidates are listed in ballot order. Their biographical statements were printed in the March/April edition of the MTA Reporter.

- | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Mary Cowhey | Ron Colbert | Bonnie Page |
| Beverly Saccocia | Lois Powers | Mike Power |
| Bill Coleman | Kip Fonsh | Ruth Comstock |
| | Patrick Patterson | |

Biographical statements of candidates for Board of Directors

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 1A

Judith Fairweather, North Adams

Judith Fairweather, grade seven ELA teacher at Drury High School, North Adams, has served as a PAL (2017-present) and secretary of the North Adams Teachers Association (2019-present). She believes the current MTA focus on open negotiations is vital and will work to keep us moving in that direction.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 1A

Ginger Armstrong, Lee

The Board of Directors needs to hear strong voices from Berkshire County. As president of my local, my experience includes MTA Board and Executive Committee, NEA, Northeast Organizing Institute, TLL, and currently represent educators on the BCETF. Please vote for me to represent District 1A's unique perspectives to the Board.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 34C

Jacqueline Perkins, Plymouth-Carver

I'm an active member who listens at Board meetings yearly, wishing I could speak: to stress commonalities above differences, to ask relevant questions, to contribute solutions. These are my strengths; I believe in member-driven solutions. As an advocate, educator and lawyer, I am honored to ask for your vote.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 34C

Katuska (Katie) Lecaro, Plymouth-Carver

I am Katie Lecaro, and I currently serve as EAPC secretary and on the MTA Race Task Force. Having been a delegate to MTA Annual Meeting and NEA-RA, I'm ready to serve on the MTA Board. The daughter of immigrants, I will advocate for 34C's needs and be your voice.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 22F

Fred Hopkins, Andover

I am an active part of our member-driven union. I believe that together we can achieve the schools our students deserve. I am working to create an MTA that fights for all educators and will continue to work in coalitions to protect and elevate society's most vulnerable members.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 22F

Kerry A. Costello, Andover

I have served on both the Executive Committee for Region F and the Board for District 22F. I communicated on a regular basis with the locals I represented. I will be a passionate voice for District 22F as a Board member and at Annual Meeting. I ask for your vote.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 44H

Rosemarie Freeland, MCCC

I'm Rosemarie Freeland, a loyal, confident, empathetic educator, union activist and leader. For over a decade I've asserted our unique interests as community college educators at multiple MCCC/MTA tables. I have the demonstrated experience needed to amplify our voice on the MTA Board, passionately and resolutely. I won't disappoint.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTRICT 44H

Colleen Avedikian, MCCC

Dr. Colleen Avedikian is a professor of sociology at Bristol Community College. She has held leadership roles in her MCCC chapter and PHENOM. She currently serves on the MTA PR/Organizing Campaign Committee. As an MTA Board Director, she will continue to fight for the passage of the *Cherish Act*.



Biographical statements of candidates for Board of Directors

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

AT-LARGE ESP

Robert (Bobby) V. Travers, Jr., Cambridge

As a tireless advocate for ESPs, I will work to:

- **Increase** focus and support for ESP issues and concerns
- **Encourage** ESP involvement in locals and MTA
- **Represent** ESPs and all MTA members

Please vote for:

Bobby Travers

ESP At-Large

MTA Board of Directors



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

AT-LARGE ESP

Paula Rigano-Murray, Northampton

I've been a classroom paraeducator for 10 years and am all too familiar with the issues facing paras every day. I know how to organize around them. I serve as ESP chapter co-coordinator. I'm on the PD and Political Organizing committees and negotiated an unprecedented ESP contract for my local.



Special rules adopted for alternative nomination process

The following motion on special rules for the 2020 Annual Meeting regarding nominations for MTA President and Vice President was adopted by the Board of Directors on April 7:

MOVED, that the Board of Directors adopt the following special rules for the 2020 Annual Meeting regarding nominations for MTA President and Vice President:

A member seeking nomination for the office of MTA President or Vice President may request nomination papers from the Executive Director-Treasurer by emailing MTAGovernance@massteacher.org starting at 12 p.m. on Friday, May 1.

Nomination papers are due back to MTA prior to 6 p.m. on Friday, May 1.

Papers provided will be a PDF file of the traditional candidate signature sheet.

Only 2020 Annual Meeting delegates may sign.

A minimum of 200 signatures are required for nomination. No more than 50 signatures may be from any one local affiliate. No more than 100 signatures may be from any one electoral district.

A member seeking candidacy may request a delegate list, which will be provided by MTA.

Upon certification of the required number of signatures, and with compliance to the above stipulations, the Credentials and Ballot Committee will certify candidacy and place the candidate's name on the ballot for the office sought.

The member seeking candidacy may print and distribute in person or send the PDF file via email to official delegates. Delegates who have received the nomination papers electronically should print the file to create a physical sheet on which the said delegate may enter their signature. Delegates should also enter a printed name, member ID number or

last 4 digits of their Social Security number, and name of local, region, and district where indicated on nomination form.

If a delegate cannot print and sign the original nomination document, the delegate can, on a blank paper, include the following:

- Their printed name, member ID number or last 4 digits of their Social Security number, name of local, region, and district.

- The line: "I verify my support for **(Blank)** candidate for **(Blank)** office."

- Their signature.

A photograph of the paper with signature and statement will be considered valid only when it is accompanied with the original blank nomination document. Delegates must submit the necessary documents from their personal email address to MTAGovernance@massteacher.org prior to 6 p.m. on Friday, May 1.



2020 HUMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET
 JUNE 19 – DoubleTree Hilton Westborough

ONLINE REGISTRATION www.massteacher.org/hcr

Award nomination deadline is April 30. Event registration deadline is Friday, June 12.

Telephone reservations will NOT be accepted.

Since 1983, MTA's Human Relations Committee has reviewed nominations and selected the recipients of the annual Human and Civil Rights Awards. The annual HCR Awards Banquet, attended by educators from across the state, honors those who have shown extraordinary dedication to civil rights and human relations. Honoring those who dedicate themselves to equality for all is a proud tradition of the MTA.

Virtual session to focus on elections and MTA budget

Continued from Page 19

held focus groups to develop recommendations for the MTA’s strategic priorities going forward. Those priorities, approved by the MTA Board on March 21, will be the subject of the forum.

At a special meeting on April 7, the Board voted to defer consideration of amendments to Bylaws, Resolutions and Standing Rules to the 2021 Annual Meeting of Delegates.

The Board also adopted special rules for 2020 to address MTA Bylaw Article 7, Section 2.B.(2), regarding the alternative nomination process for MTA President and Vice President at the Annual Meeting. Further information on the process can be found on Page 25 of this edition of *MTA Today*.

Two MTA members — Takeru Nagayoshi, the 2020 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year and a member of the New Bedford Educators Association, and Sonia Fortin, the 2020 MTA Education Support Professional of the Year and a member of the Sudbury Education Association — will be among the educators honored.

Nagayoshi, an Advanced Placement English teacher at New Bedford High School, is the son of Japanese immigrants and a gay person of color who brings his own life experiences to the fight for equity. Outside of the classroom, he has written op-eds on education issues, he coaches developing teachers in high-need districts, and he lends his voice to panels, committees and task forces that focus on education equity for urban districts.

Fortin was surprised with the MTA ESP of the Year award at a recent meeting of the Sudbury Education Association. Fortin is the sole academic tutor in the Ephraim Curtis Middle School Bridges

At a special meeting on April 7, the Board voted to defer consideration of amendments to Bylaws, Resolutions and Standing Rules to the 2021 Annual Meeting of Delegates.

Program, which provides short-term intensive assistance to students, and the driving force behind the school’s Gay Straight Alliance and the Safe Space Initiative, which provides students with a space in which to gather, talk to friends, and feel safe from judgment.

This year’s Friend of Labor Award will be presented to Sara Nelson, international president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, AFL-CIO, since 2014. Nelson first became a union member in 1996, when she was hired as a flight attendant at United Airlines. Today she represents 50,000 of aviation’s first responders at 20 airlines.

Nelson made headlines during a 35-day federal government shutdown in 2018-19 when she took to social media and cable TV to warn of the dangers of not paying airport workers — and she called for a general strike to end the shutdown.

This year’s Friend of Education Award will be presented to four players for the New England Patriots — Devin McCourty, Jason McCourty, Duron Harmon and Matthew Slater. The four are members of the Players Coalition, which played a strong advocacy role in the campaign for passage of the *Student Opportunity Act*. The act, signed into law last November, is set to provide more than \$2 billion per

year in funding for public schools in Massachusetts once it is fully phased in.

The President’s Award will recognize two young activists, Audrey Lin and Amalia Hochman, who represent the determination and commitment of today’s youth-led environmental movement.

Lin, of Watertown, and Hochman, of Somerville, co-organized the Youth Climate Strike, which drew thousands of people to downtown Boston last September for speeches, a rally and a march to the State House. They will accept the award on behalf of Youth Climate Strike US, the Sunrise Movement and other student-led environmental organizations.

The proposed MTA operating budget of \$48,486,926 for fiscal 2020-2021 will be presented and voted on. The Advisory Budget Committee, the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors have proposed annual dues of \$480 for full-time active members, which represents a \$3 increase from the current year. Under the proposed budget, dues for secretaries, clerks and custodians would rise to \$288; dues for aides, food service personnel and other Education Support Professionals would remain at \$144.

In addition, the proposed Public Relations/Organizing Campaign budget will be considered. The recommended general dues assessment for the PR/Organizing budget is \$20. For secretaries, clerks and custodians, the assessment would be \$12; aides, food service personnel and other education support professionals would be assessed \$6.

Further information about the Annual Meeting can be found at massteacher.org/annualmeeting.

‘I decided to make bread and give it to neighbors ...’

Continued from Page 14

and learning to play the piano. Luckily, in January I started lessons, so I had the opportunity to have a few in person before social distancing. Now I have a weekly lesson via Zoom. Practice — which I do one to two hours a day — is fascinating. I am learning so much about music while I give my brain and fingers a real workout. In the meantime, I have been hearing from people I haven’t seen in years. If it weren’t for people getting sick and dying, and our federal government continuing to act ignorantly, this would be a wonderful time.

Patricia J. Crist, Longmeadow: I retired to North Carolina after 44 years as a teacher, the last 21 in Longmeadow. Over the years, to de-stress from never feeling caught up between school, family and volunteer obligations, I would make bread. No bread machine, everything by hand. It takes all day, but there is time to do mundane things during any of the three risings. When the

bread is done and I have four loaves of fragrant, warm bread lined up on the counter, there is a feeling of satisfaction, of creating and finishing something. During our “shelter-in-place” time, I decided to make bread and give it to neighbors, especially after seeing empty bread shelves during infrequent shopping trips. I call ahead and leave the bread on the porch so as not to violate social distancing. Now I have branched out to elderly members of my church, my water aerobics classmates (the Y is closed), etc. The folks who get the bread seem pleased. This morning, one 86-year-old lady from church hugged hers like a baby. I realize this is a small contribution, but it gives me pleasure to bake and share the bread.

Sue Wallace, Framingham: To begin, I had no idea how bad this was or how bad it would get, especially among older people. Since I’m somewhat physically fit at 76 with no major health issues, I was quite able to continue my five-mile

“Teachers deserve to be paid \$50,000,000 per day!!!!” I’ll never be “just a teacher” to him!

walk each day and even walk with a few other people. My grandchildren happen to live far away. One is in California at Berkeley and in the midst of midterms, so as of now he has been unable to find a safe means of transportation to get home to Virginia. His family of two brothers and mom and dad are in Virginia. My other son lives in North Carolina and has two sons. One is 4 and one is 8. My son works for the Durham Bulls baseball team and was able to work at home and take care of the two boys. After a day and a half, he sent me some pictures of them at home and this message: “Teachers deserve to be paid \$50,000,000 per day!!!!” I’ll never be “just a teacher” to him!

'Everyone's being flexible and doing what they can'

Continued from Page 6

serve lunches. Four of our guys and one of our girls said, "Sure, we can do that." These are hard times for everybody. My vice president has three little ones at home, and others also have kids. Teresa was very flexible. She let us change our hours. Now that the buildings are closed, we are working three days a week and staying home the other two. It's been a challenge but we're getting through it.

Cathy Horkan, Northeast Teachers' Association president and a guidance counselor at the Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational High School in Wakefield: We have three core components we're trying to sort out — academic, vocational and counseling. It's a little easier to navigate the academic. Most are on Google Classroom and are continuing to use that forum. But how do you handle shop week? Our teachers are getting very creative, working with people in their industries to upload informative videos. But it's not ideal. Guidance counselors are always busy and overworked, but I am busier now than normally. I can assure you, no one in our school thinks this is a summer vacation. Teachers and all the staff are putting a tremendous amount of pressure on themselves. This has taken a real social and emotional toll on students. There's a lot of anxiety and depression. For a lot of our kids, life at home isn't great. School is a safe place to escape to. I am talking with them a lot about how they are doing, managing stressors. It has shifted from, "Let me help you get your work done" to more global issues. I ask them to think of a fun thing they did that day, or how they can help a neighbor. Our first week was really about connection — getting in touch with hard-to-reach kids and their families. Every week I send a newsletter to every parent and guardian. I've been doing a lot of Q&As. I'm spending much more time working with families, not just kids, connecting them to resources. Parents are overwhelmed. There's a tremendous amount who are out of work and are nervous about finances. Normally working with families would just be a small component of the job. Our administration did an inventory of what students need.

Every educator tried to develop a list. Administrators have been driving around to students' houses dropping off Chromebooks for the last three days and setting up kids with hotspots. Our auxiliary staff have been dropping off breakfasts and lunches to their bus stops. Everyone's being flexible and doing what they can.

Amy Morin, specialized instructional assistant, Maria Hastings Elementary School, and a member of the Lexington Education Association Executive Board: I'm approaching this with as much enthusiasm as I can. I've been reaching out to my teachers to ask how I can help, and I've been encouraging the other Unit C members to reach out to their teams. We have folders on Google that have fun things the kids can do to help them. I spent a good part of yesterday with my own ideas for my student for math, writing, reading and social skills, things his family can do to help him. For example, he could write down a recipe with parental help. I shared my ideas with the special education teacher so she can communicate to the parents. I also videotaped myself reading to them and uploaded that to Seesaw, where the whole class could watch it. It's challenging to work and also help my own kids at home. [Morin has a 12-year-old son and 10-year-old hearing-impaired daughter.] They got a week's worth of assignments that are due Friday. They were anxious they would have to complete them all. I told them they didn't have to do everything. I've also been part of a lot of statewide ESP calls. Every week we meet and go over what's going on. A common concern had been whether we were going to keep getting paid full time. So far, most of us have been. Our LEA E-Board was also very supportive. They voted that for Unit C members and those in Unit D making less than \$18,000 a year, the union will take care of their dues for the rest of the year. The district has also been helpful. It not only made devices available to all students, but also to all staff. All three of us in my house have our own devices, which is really good. The inequities are clear. We are moving forward with remote learning, but I know that many poorer districts don't have the same capacity we have.

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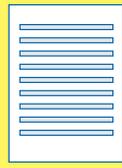
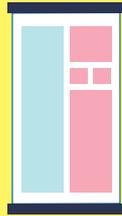
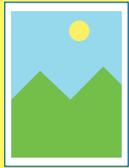


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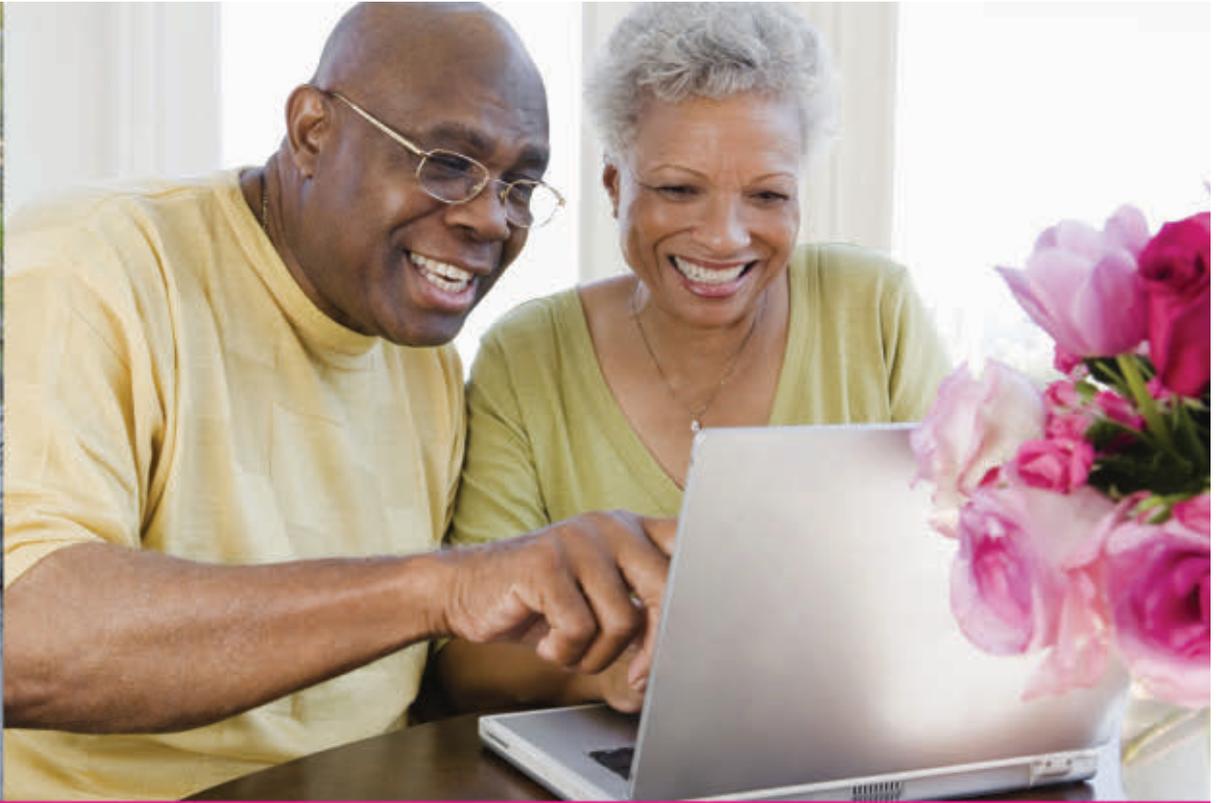
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Standing up for public education for 175 years

Continued from Page 11

Normal School in the country was founded in 1839 on the northeast corner of the historic Lexington Battle Green. It later moved and evolved into Framingham State University.

In the 19th century, the MTA fought for such progressive education ideas as physical fitness programs for students, special education for the handicapped, programs to address school dropouts, and a state tax to help poor school districts. Parallels can be found today, as the MTA is currently fighting for a bill to guarantee 20 minutes of recess for elementary school students, wraparound services to meet the needs of at-risk students and — with passage of the *Student Opportunity Act* — more state funding to help low-income students and students with special needs.

The MTA also began to stand up for female teachers many years ago. In 1860, *The Massachusetts Teacher* includes a quote decrying “school systems in which female teachers are seldom employed and ignorant men are preferred to competent females.”

Four years later, an article speaks up for better pay for female teachers. “In light of justice and of humanity, we submit that it is not creditable to the intelligence and the educational status of the Old Bay State, that the female teachers who are spending the very best portion of their lives, wearing out soul and body in the exhausting labors of the school-room,



should not receive a fair compensation for their labors.” That pay in certain towns is described as \$1.50 for a week’s work, plus \$2.50 for board.

The MTA weighed in on issues of social and political significance in its early days, as it does today. When the Civil War was declared in 1861, the association was enthusiastic in its support of the Union, noting proudly the increasing numbers of members who left their classrooms to join the cause.

After peace was restored, an 1866 issue of *The*

Massachusetts Teacher defended “equal rights to all men, irrespective of race or color.”

Also important to the organization from the start was the status of the teaching profession. A complaint found in *The Massachusetts Teacher* may sound familiar: “Our ears are often assaulted with woeful lamentation over the low estimation in which the profession of teaching is held.”

That said, the MTA itself was apparently held in high esteem. School districts released teachers to attend the MTA’s annual meetings. In 1865, the editor of *The Massachusetts Teacher* breathlessly published an article with the headline “Twenty-five Hundred Massachusetts Teachers in Convention Assembled! The Largest Gathering of Educators Ever Seen in America! The Old Bay State Thoroughly Waked Up!”

The writer concluded, “So inspired was the occasion, that even the silver-haired school masters felt themselves young again; and the humblest teachers held up their heads and modestly exclaimed, ‘Really, we think, after all, that we are somebody.’”

In future issues of MTA Today, we will write about MTA highlights from the early 20th century, including winning the passage of laws creating teacher pensions and a teacher tenure system, as well as highlights from the mid-20th century through the landmark Education Reform Act of 1993.

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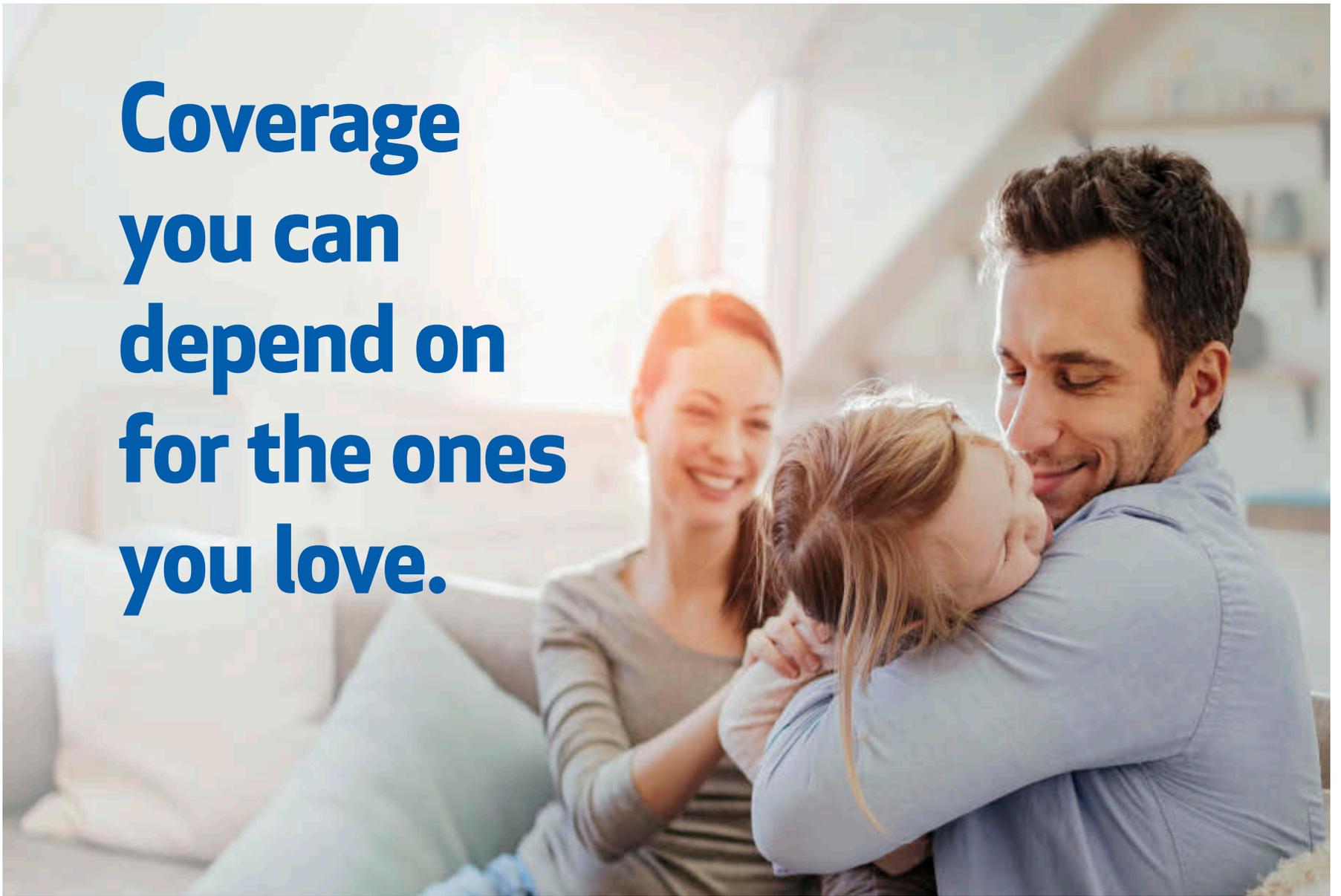
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Obituaries

Margaret M. Anderson, 77, of Springfield. Taught in the Springfield Public Schools, retiring in June 2004. Jan. 11.

Audrey M. Boudreau, 81, of West Stockbridge. Taught in the Arlington Public Schools for many years. Jan. 7.

Joan C. Callahan, 78, of Somerville. Was employed by the Massachusetts Teachers Association for five years as a budget specialist in the Finance and Accounting Division. Jan. 16.

Josephine Fay, 76, of South Weymouth. Was a professor of early childhood education at Quincy College for 18 years. Was an elementary school teacher at several schools on the South Shore and served as a delegate to the NEA

Representative Assembly for many years. Feb. 18.

William R. Hazlett, 66, of Gill. Was a middle school educator for 22 years in the Gill-Montague Regional School District. Jan. 17.

Dorothy McLoughlin, 87, of Holden. Was an elementary educator for 38 years in the Worcester Public Schools before retiring in 1992. Jan. 18.

Janice M. McWeeny, 72, of Falmouth, formerly of Milton. Was employed for many years in the Hull school system. Jan. 7.

Craig Mulligan, 89, of Portsmouth, Rhode Island. Was an educator in the Swansea school system. Jan. 18.

Carrie A. Piwcio, 48, of Belchertown. Taught in the Belchertown Public Schools for 25 years. Feb. 25.

Barbara A. Sargent, 92, of Scituate, formerly of Norwood. Was an educator in East Walpole and in the Scituate Public Schools before retiring in 1990. Jan. 9.

Robert L. Schuman, 89, of Centerville. Taught at the Mullen Hall School in Falmouth. He developed a computer center and became the school's first computer coordinator. Jan. 15.

Janet Smith, 82, of Fall River, formerly of Somerset and Worcester. Was a transitional kindergarten teacher, retiring in 2003. Jan. 17.

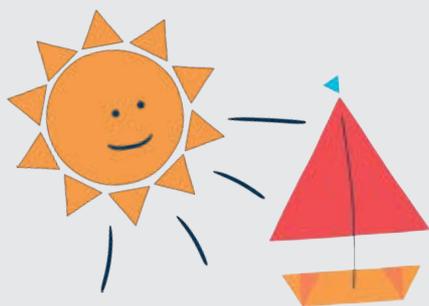
Charles R. Stevens, 72, of Reading. Taught music at the Gibbs Middle School in Arlington for 20 years. He also served as an MTA field representative before retiring. Jan. 15.

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FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA — Wyndham Resort scenic mountain condo. Three-bedroom, sleeps eight. Near Grand Canyon, Sedona and historic Route 66. Private outdoor Jacuzzi. August 7-14. \$1,150. Email probinson1221@gmail.com or call 508.677.7014.

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For information, call 800.392.6175, Ext. 8265



WE'RE HIRING!

To view available job opportunities, please visit massteacher.org/jobs.

The MTA is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We value our diverse workforce and welcome applications from minorities, women and persons with disabilities.

2020 Benefits: Open enrollment through May 22

Speak with a benefits counselor to learn about the benefits offered.

 Schedule your appointment to meet with an MTA benefits counselor by calling 866.998.2915 or going to myenrollmentschedule.com/mta.

 Need more info? Text #readysetenrollmta to 87487.

It's time to **shed some light** on how to take care of yourself financially when dealing with an expected or unexpected medical condition.



Did you know that as an MTA member, you have access to these valuable benefits?



Accident



Critical Illness



Disability

Questions you may have that we can answer:



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Educators push for end to active shooter drills

By Scott McLennan

While students have largely taken the lead in calling for more sensible gun control laws, educators are now pushing for an end to “active shooter” and lockdown drills that simulate violent situations.

The National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers and the advocacy group Everytown for Gun Safety jointly released a white paper in February explaining that there is no evidence to suggest that active shooter drills enhance school safety. In fact, such drills are more likely to be traumatic experiences for students.

The report, “The Impact of School Safety Drills for Active Shootings,” cites research showing that most school shootings have involved current or former students of the schools that were targeted.

“Moreover,” the report states, “despite a lack of research proving active shooter drill training’s effectiveness and the potential to inform potential shooters of protocols, many for-profit companies charge school districts tens of thousands of dollars to provide such training. These funds could be better spent on proven, effective measures, such as threat assessment programs, mental health professionals, physical security upgrades, and improving school climate.”

While it is reasonable to provide preparedness training to school staff, the report continues, it is not necessary to subject students to shooter simulations and other violent reenactments. The paper also publicized guidelines aligned with those of the National Association of School Psychologists and the National Association of School Resource Officers for schools that ultimately choose to conduct such drills.

The MTA has called for an outright ban on lockdown and active shooter drills that involve students. There is no requirement that such drills be conducted, and the state does not keep track of schools and districts that employ the drills.

MTA President Merrie Najimy said the drills she has experienced have ranged from having children hiding in the dark to practicing throwing objects at an intruder.



MTA Today File Photo by Eric Haynes

Student-led events calling for an end to gun violence were held across the nation on March 24, 2018. In Massachusetts, more than 100,000 people joined the protests, including dozens of educators who gathered to walk behind the MTA banner at a March for Our Lives event in Boston.

“It is time to stop subjecting students and educators to classroom lockdowns and active shooter drills, which are narrow, fear-based responses to problems that run deep in our society and cannot be addressed by such exercises,” Najimy said. “Simulating school shootings traumatizes both children and adults — and there is no evidence to suggest that the practice increases safety for our students or our communities.”

The MTA instead urges districts to put in place personnel and programs dedicated to students’ emotional and mental well-being.

“To create truly safe learning environments, schools must have the necessary resources to hire sufficient numbers of counselors, maintain small class sizes, and take other steps that professional educators know are necessary,” Najimy said. “We need to focus on detecting and addressing social and

emotional concerns rather than fixating on active shooter drills and other extreme crisis responses.”

Norton middle school teacher Joe Spremulli agreed. Spremulli said students and educators need to be prepared for emergencies but that such preparation does not need to be trauma-inducing. He added that while school shootings are galvanizing events, public schools are generally remarkably safe places.

Rather than involving students in active shooter or lockdown drills, schools should work to foster a culture and climate conducive to safe, healthy learning environments, he said.

“These drills are frightening children and providing no proven benefit,” Spremulli said. “We should be focusing our energy on practices that we know make our schools better, safer places to teach and to learn.”

THE MTA Advantage

The MTA Advantage is a publication of MTA Benefits, a subsidiary of the Massachusetts Teachers Association

Student loan borrowing — it's not all bad news!

Educators are lifelong learners, but how does one pay for additional coursework — a master's degree and beyond — on relatively modest pay? And even when you've made it through the minefield of student loan repayment yourself, how do you prepare to put your own children through college? As it turns out, there are some strategies that you can use to your advantage.

For new teachers preparing to earn a master's degree or for those who have recently received a graduate degree, the good news is that any Direct federal student loan should be dischargeable through the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program.

There are a number of questions to consider when creating a repayment strategy to get you to forgiveness — but they're pretty straightforward.

- Are you going to teach for another 10 years?
- Do you have only federal loans, or do you also have some private loans?
- What subject do you teach? Are you a candidate for Teacher Loan Forgiveness?
- What if you're a counselor rather than a classroom teacher? A custodian or a school librarian?
- Is your current loan repayment plan eligible for PSLF?
- Can you also discharge your Perkins loans?
- What are your other household expenses?
- What are your financial goals for the next 10 years?



Loan forgiveness isn't just for new teachers. If you have children who are reaching college age or are already in school, you also might have options. Many educators are not aware that their profession might allow them to discharge their federal **Parent PLUS loans** after 120 qualifying payments.

While that might sound straightforward, it's not. There are some fairly tricky eligibility requirements. But getting out from under significant debt before retirement is a real possibility. For parents still paying off their own federal undergraduate loans while tackling PLUS loans, the news might be even better.

Although the questions may not seem terribly difficult, it may still be unclear how the answers come together to help you form a strategy under various scenarios. That's why MTA Benefits has partnered with Cambridge Credit Counseling — to help MTA members create a path to loan forgiveness that accommodates **borrowers' specific mix of loans**, current budget and everything they would like to accomplish with their hard-earned money. Lifelong learning shouldn't mean lifelong debt.

You can reach Cambridge Credit Counseling at www.cambridge-credit.org/mta or by calling 888.948.4639.

What is open enrollment — and what's in it for you?

Open enrollment refers to a period during which eligible participants may freely enroll in or change their selections for a benefit program. It is usually subject to limitations. MTA Benefits, the source of all benefit programs for MTA members, has a designated period each year in which eligible members may enroll in the MTA disability plan.

Who's eligible to participate?

Members of any local association whose leadership has approved the MTA plan may elect to enroll. But that doesn't mean that every MTA member is eligible. To find out if you qualify, ask your local president or building representative; call MTA Benefits at 800.336.0990; email info@mtabenefits.com; call plan administrator Tom Colbert at 888.646.1972, ext. 101; or email Thomas.Colbert@voyafa.com.

What's offered during open enrollment?

While disability insurance is the most important coverage available, there are actually three benefit plans that can pay you money when accidents and illnesses happen — **disability, critical illness and accident insurance**. All three plans are "income protection plans," which means they take the financial pain and strain out of expenses for accidental injuries and covered illnesses.

How do I choose?

First and foremost, disability insurance provides the most comprehensive benefit available. It offers the most money for the greatest number of situations and for the longest time. Here's a simplified explanation:



Disability. Regardless of whether it's a short-term or a long-term policy, it pays you when you're not working or bringing in a paycheck. That could mean income for three weeks or three years.

Critical illness. You must be diagnosed with a specific illness or condition to be paid under this plan. Heart attack, stroke, renal failure and cancer all qualify as covered illnesses, for example. When your illness is diagnosed, you receive a lump-sum payment that you can use to cover any expenses you choose, whether medical or non-medical.

Accident. If you're injured in an accident, you could receive money based upon the specific medical issue you experienced. Hip fracture? You could receive up to \$5,000 toward accident-related expenses. More than 50 types of injuries, services and treatments are covered.

What do I get for what I pay?

Let's take accident insurance as an example. For only \$6.69 per week, you can insure your entire family (\$2.61 per week if you're just insuring yourself) and receive payments toward

broken bones, burns, concussions, emergency room visits, X-rays or hospital admissions. The cost of care goes beyond what medical insurance covers. Check out all benefit amounts at www.mtabenefits.com/accident-insurance.

The bottom line: It may be that you can't afford NOT to enroll in an income protection plan.

What do I gain by enrolling?

Simply put, if you take a tumble, your finances won't crumble if you're supported by some kind of income protection plan. Without one, you could be forced to pay thousands of dollars out of pocket at a time when you can least afford it. These plans **help fill in many of the financial gaps not covered by health insurance**, covering items such as deductibles, co-pays and medical supplies. With some coverage, you'll be comfortable knowing that an unexpected medical expense won't automatically bankrupt you.

How much time will it take?

Just a few minutes — and it's well worth it! Call 877.401.4083 for more information or to enroll.



Planet Green Recycle

The Winter issue of *The MTA Advantage* carried an article about MTA Benefits' recycling partnership with Planet Green Recycle. Unfortunately, we have been notified that the company is no longer recycling small electronics. Planet Green is still recycling ink cartridges as part of its fundraising program, however. Information is available at mtabenefits.com.



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Website: www.mtabenefits.com

No dues dollars are ever used to market MTA Benefits programs.

Tip Sheet

All discounts listed in the Tip Sheet can be found at mtabenefits.com.

Eleven ways MTAB can help your family save and win



1 One-to-one student loan counseling

Student loan debt is a hot topic right now — and while the subject might seem daunting, getting an accurate assessment of your loans is crucial. Cambridge Credit Counseling offers a self-help portal for \$24.95 that will help you determine how to reduce or eliminate your debt. Once you have the report, a free 30-minute consultation with a student loan counselor will help you get your questions answered.

2 Free magazine subscription

Each year, the MTA Magazine Service offers MTA members a free subscription on a select number of titles. If you haven't gotten yours yet, visit www.mtabenefits.com/seasonal-offers to make your choice. Current options include *Working Mother*, *Harper's* and *Popular Science*.

3 Share savings with your family

Did you know that members of your family can become MTA family members? Family members are defined as mother, father, sister, brother, son, daughter or grandchild of an active, Retired or deceased member, or the spouse or domestic partner of an active, deceased active, Retired or deceased Retired member who is not otherwise eligible for MTA membership. There is no cost for a family membership, and family members are eligible for most MTA Benefits programs and discounts.

4 One free month at BJ's Wholesale Club

Whether you're signing up for the first time or renewing membership at BJ's Wholesale Club, the MTA Benefits discount provides savings on your membership fee — as well as one month of saving for free! Stock up on sunscreen, bug spray, popsicles and all of your grilling essentials.

5 Free hearing screening

According to hearingloss.org, only one in five people who would benefit from a hearing aid actually uses one. Take advantage of our partnership with Hear In America and get a free hearing screening. If the screening finds that you need a hearing aid, the program offers savings of 30 percent to 70 percent. You'll also get three-year repair, loss and damage warranties and three years of batteries for free with a purchase.

6 Get a free insurance quote

It's easy to buy and then forget about auto and home or renter's insurance. But it's wise to compare companies every few years. You can get a free quote through Educators Insurance Agency, which provides coverage exclusively to educators in Massachusetts. Take a few minutes to find out how much you could be saving.

7 Complimentary life insurance

The National Education Association offers a complimentary life insurance program for eligible NEA members. Coverage includes up to \$1,000 in no-cost life insurance as well as coverage for accidental death and dismemberment. Take a moment to register your beneficiary at www.neamb.com.

8 \$50 worth of free propane

Whether you already use propane in your home or are thinking of converting, the suppliers at TankFarm provide quality fuel and service. Upon signup, you'll receive \$50 worth of free propane as well as \$100 off the price of a new propane tank. There are no membership or delivery fees and no contract lock-ins. TankFarm's exclusive pricing will help you save \$300 to \$500 a year.

9 Free next-day delivery on school supplies

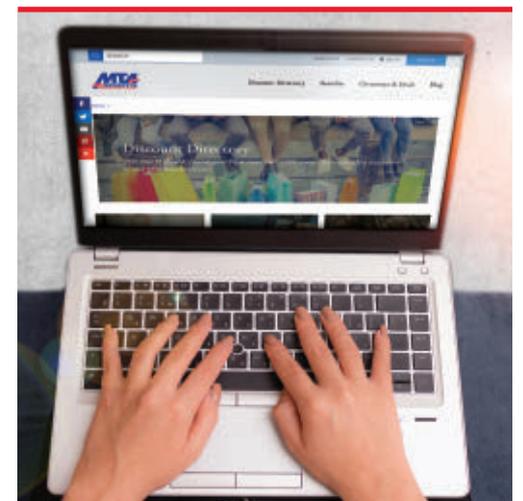
Back-to-school shopping is a few months away, but when you're thinking about supplies for next year, Office Depot/OfficeMax has what you need at great discounts. When you spend \$50, you'll receive free next-day shipping. Stock up on markers, notebooks, Post-it Notes, planners, calendars and much more.

10 Enter MTA Benefits giveaways

There are still two giveaways left — in May and July. From May 11-18, enter to win a \$150 Lowe's gift card. Two winners will be chosen. From July 13-20, the giveaway prize is a \$50 Fandango gift card. There will be five winners.

11 More than 180 free offers

The MTAB *Benefits & Discount Directory* has more than 180 free offers, ranging from shipping of books from MTA member authors to a phone consultation with Vocation Destination, a career/life coaching firm that specializes in helping educators transition to a new job or retire. Look for many other free offers, including museum admissions and recreational activities.



Visit www.mtabenefits.com for information on these offers.

When school's out, KinderCare is in!

When school's out (but you still need to work), you can count on KinderCare to provide your children with a safe and supportive environment focused on fun. Are you excited about summer yet? KinderCare is! And our One Epic Summer program will give your children a school break to remember.

Summer at KinderCare offers the simplest way for the whole family to get the most out of the season. Every weekday while school's out, children up to 12 years old can enjoy fun themes and activities while you work. KinderCare will make sure they have a blast. In any given week, children might be exploring circus science, diving into the world of marine mammals or making up their own versions of a mixed-up fairy tale. Boredom isn't a thing here — and friendships and laughter are guaranteed.

Ask your center director about the themes planned. KinderCare summers are open to all, whether you're already a KinderCare family or just joining. Busy summer schedules are a little easier when you know your children will be happy and safe. Space is limited, so save your child's spot today.

For more than 50 years, KinderCare has provided safe, nurturing care for children. With more than 1,500 learning centers at worksites and in communities, KinderCare is dedicated to quality education that helps children grow and thrive.



MTA Benefits has partnered with KinderCare to provide member families with access to affordable child care with safe, nurturing classrooms. As a member, you save 10 percent on tuition at KinderCare Learning Centers.

To find a center near you, visit www.kindercare.com/mta or call 888.525.2780. New and current families are eligible for the discount. Please present proof of MTA membership to the center director.

ElderBenefit: A free resource to care for your loved ones

The coronavirus pandemic has made us focus on the care of loved ones — and it has many of us thinking about our own senior family members' safety at home. Being proactive about care needs is the key to being prepared for a time such as this.

Knowing what to look for is the first step in determining whether a senior could use a little more help at home or whether it's time to transition your loved one into a senior living situation.

What to look for in evaluating safety:

- **Changes in medical condition.** Has your senior family member received a recent diagnosis of disease, injury or illness that affects his or her ability to function on a daily basis?
- **Driving.** Sometimes vision, hearing or reflexes are impaired with age. Physical changes increase the odds of a senior getting into a car accident.
- **Food/Nutrition.** Well-balanced nutritional meals are essential for good health. Take note if you find expiring food in the refrigerator or see any weight changes.
- **Hygiene.** Overall personal appearance and general cleanliness are good indicators, as is the cleanliness of bedding, towels and clothing.
- **Behavior.** Showing anxiousness, irritability, depression or acute memory loss can be a sign that care may be needed — either immediately or soon.

- **Daily tasks.** When daily tasks become challenging or more time-consuming, essential activities may not be completed. For example, being able to pay the bills, check the mail and maintain a safe home environment are crucial factors for retaining independence.
- **Medication.** Not being able to manage medications — including dosage, frequency and changes to prescriptions — can lead to dangerous situations. Making sure that a senior can manage medications should be a priority.
- **Overall home safety.** Evaluating the risk of falls and maintaining the overall safety of your loved one's home should be routine tasks. Throw rugs and electrical cords near walking paths increase the chances of a fall. Routine safety checks should include making sure that appliances are turned off when not in use, candles and cigarettes are extinguished, and all doors and windows are locked.

If your concerns involve even one of these issues, it may be time to take a more active role in your loved one's life. The ElderBenefit program available through MTA Benefits includes guidance on obtaining community resources for yourself, a parent, a grandparent or any other family member. ElderBenefit by CarePatrol can help your family find in-home caregivers, senior living communities, elder law attorneys, financial planners, home modification companies and more. This is a free benefit for MTA members. For more information, visit www.elderbenefit.com/mtabenefits or call 866.423.9877.

All program and pricing information was current at the time of publication (April 2020) and is subject to change without notice. To find out what may have changed, please call MTA Benefits at 800.336.0990.