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A publication of the
Massachusetts Teachers
Association

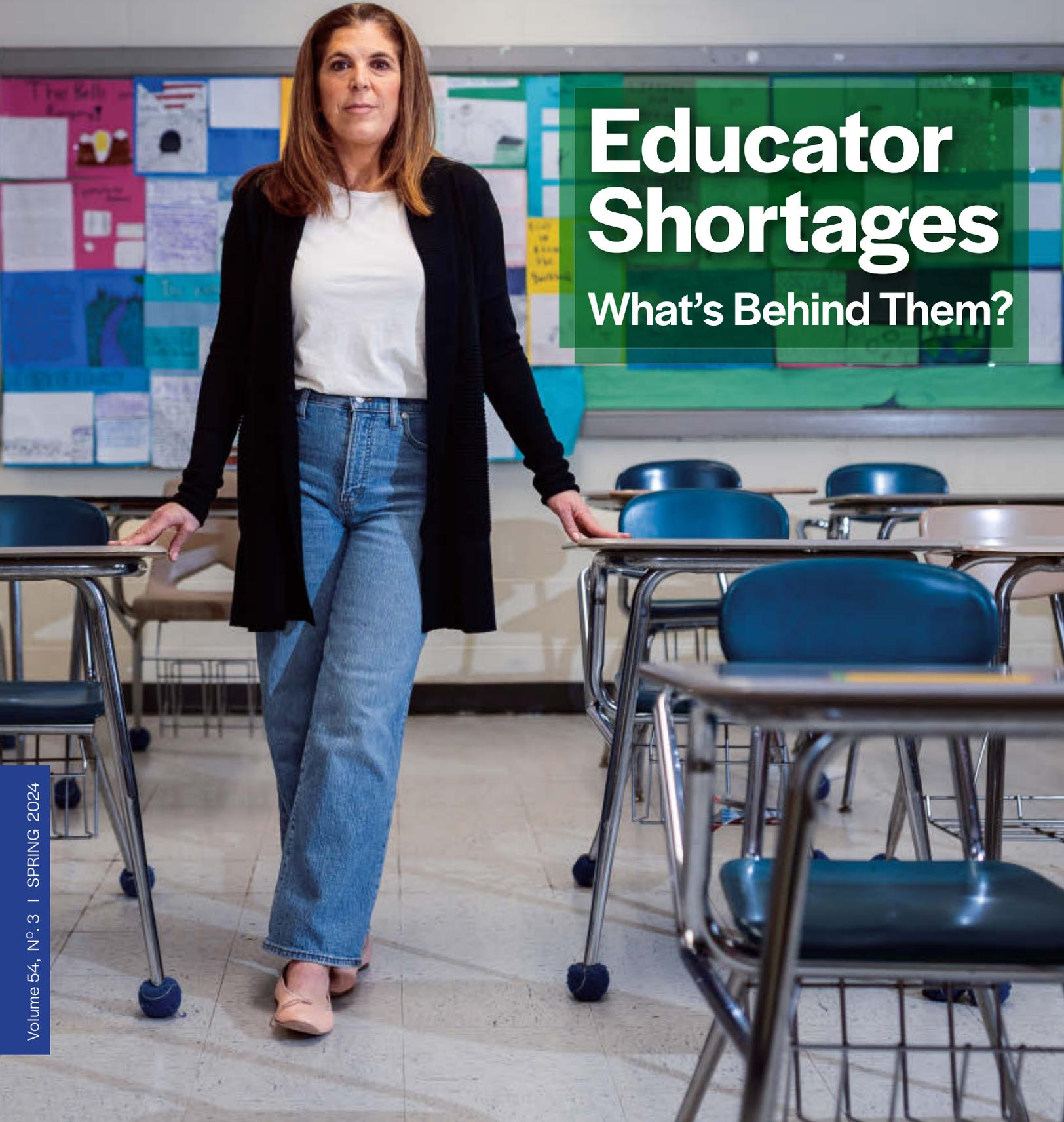
TODAY



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Educator Shortages

What's Behind Them?





Gayle Carvalho,
president of the
Quincy Education
Association.

MTA TODAY

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MTA TODAY (ISSN 08982481) is published by the Massachusetts Teachers Association. Subscription: \$2.65 of MTA members' dues is designated for MTA Today.

Periodicals postage rates paid at Boston, MA, and at additional offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: MTA Today, 2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119.

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The Educator Shortage Crisis is Upon us



“**The saddest words Deb McCarthy and I hear from members are: ‘I can’t encourage my students to go into education as a profession.’”**

MAX PAGE

I opened up SchoolSpring, an education job website, the other day. I typed in “teacher” and found that there were 4,904 openings in Massachusetts. I typed in “para” and found 993 openings. There were 419 “aide” positions. And 124 “instructional assistant” positions.

Then I recalled the NEA survey data from this past year: 55 percent of NEA members who were surveyed said they were thinking of leaving the education profession.

There is no technical definition of “crisis,” but let’s be clear: the educator shortage crisis is upon us. Several articles in this issue of *MTA Today* describe how multiple factors have led us to this place. There’s the 20 percent “pay penalty” for educators in Massachusetts – that’s the amount our members lose when they choose this profession as opposed to another with similar levels of educational requirements. But equally important is the MCAS exam and its narrowing of the curriculum, the lack of professional autonomy our members increasingly experience, and the behavioral issues that are not being addressed by administrations.

The saddest words Deb McCarthy and I hear from members are: “I can’t encourage my students to go into education as a profession.”

As many of you know, when I’m not serving as your president, I teach about the histories of cities and architecture at UMass Amherst. While watching the filming of TV ads for the Fair Share Amendment campaign, Deb and I spent a few hours in a public school in Lynn. I took note of the hidden beauty beneath the grime and mold of that building, as we dodged buckets catching water from leaky ceilings. This school was built as part of the New Deal of the 1930s, one of the greatest eras of public investment in schools, colleges, roads, bridges, housing and parks. I imagined what it must have felt like for this community to see this once glorious school building rise out of a neighborhood of three-deckers.

Imagine if all of our school buildings were built to be the finest structures in every city and town.

Or if we paid educators as if we, as a society, truly meant the praise regularly bestowed on our members – “You are the most important people in our town.”

Or if we provided young people a truly debt-free public college education, so that they did not enter their first classroom as a professional educator burdened with decades of debt.

Or if we treated educators as the true experts and said, “We (principals, superintendent, school committees, DESE) will give you the resources you need, and trust that with sufficient time to plan, prepare and collaborate you will create joyous, creative classrooms where students will learn, and love to learn, and where they will see what it means to be a caring, able and committed adult.”

We do not have that public education system yet. But one thing I know for sure: We are making strides toward achieving it, and that no organization other than the MTA, with our 400 locals and 117,000 members, can help us achieve it.

And when we do, I’ll revisit SchoolSpring, and find that all the open jobs will have been filled with the next generation of educators. ▀

Max Page, MTA President

FINDING ENOUGH

EDUCATORS

Across Massachusetts, education openings are harder to fill.

By **Mary MacDonald** Photographs by **Eric Haynes**

Public preK-12 education has long had a reputation as a profession offering decent, if not spectacular salaries, good benefits, a pension and fairly stable employment. And it provides a chance to guide young people through an impressionable period of their lives.

Many Massachusetts educators say they find much of that is still true, that they love their specialties and working with children. But comparatively, educators say they feel they're losing ground financially, and in work-life balance measures, when they look at their private-sector spouses or friends.

Fewer people, overall, are going through the private and public schools of education that prepare Massachusetts college students for teaching.

More people are quitting before retirement, not just newer educators, but at mid-career. Something has changed.

The result is job openings for educators are remaining open longer, even in suburban districts that have reputations for better salaries, benefits and working

conditions. In many of the largest districts in Massachusetts, job postings remain up year-round. Jobs are plentiful, and not just for positions in traditional shortage areas, such as science, special education and English language learners.

Barry Davis, president of the Haverhill Education Association, is a music teacher. In his specialty, applicants used to far outnumber openings. Now he's noticed that openings are getting filled, but they're staying open longer.

Davis said he thinks social media has unveiled many of the challenges of the teaching profession. People can see the posts and see what it's like in schools. Students in classrooms, where future teachers are created, also observe what's happening around them and the behavioral issues and other challenges confronting educators.

"It's getting harder and harder to put a brave face on every year," Davis said. "Kids see that and notice that. And we don't make enough money. Young kids have a better perspective on that than I did even a decade ago."

The wages and working conditions in Haverhill improved following an educator strike in 2022, and that helped, he said. But now surrounding districts are lifting their salaries, so the competition for the workforce continues.

Gayle Carvalho, right, president of the Quincy Education Association, noted that Quincy has had a turnover of 300 people over the past three years. "Pre-COVID, we might have had 30."

Keith Michon, president of the Fall River Educators Association, sees that circulation out of Fall River and into surrounding districts that pay better, including Taunton, Attleboro and New Bedford.

But he thinks educators are also leaving because the job has become less fun, less creative. "The overemphasis on standardized testing has stolen some of the magic from the profession," Michon said. "It really takes the enjoyment away from the profession that a lot of people found."

Becky Abate, an educator for almost 20 years, is president of the Hopkinton Teachers Association. At least two people in her middle school left last year before retirement. She thinks the post-pandemic shift in work culture to work-from-home for professionals in private jobs is creating new competition for educators, who are qualified for those jobs.

Private-sector jobs now offer not only more generous pay in many comparisons, but also better benefits that educators must fight for in their contracts.

"We just don't have competitive benefits," Abate said. "What we saw happen in Andover and Newton, a big thing that they were trying to negotiate was paid leave. And those districts had to go on strike to get that. And that's something that people in the private sector are getting day one."



“ We don't make enough money. Young kids have a better perspective on that than I did even a decade ago.”

BARRY DAVIS President of the Haverhill Education Association



Becky Abate, president of the Hopkinton Teachers Association, said more educators in her local are leaving before retirement.

“ I also worry about my own ability to maintain a work-life balance.”

ASHLEY MCCREEDY
President of UMass Lowell's chapter of the Student Education Association of Massachusetts



Over the past decade, enrollments in Massachusetts programs that prepare licensed educators have dropped by more than half, from 21,866 in the 2011-2012 academic year to 8,922 last school year, according to state data collected by the MTA's Center for Education Policy and Practice. These enrollments include public and private universities with educator prep programs.

The state average for teachers completing these programs and remaining employed in a Massachusetts public school for at least two years was 61.5 percent in June 2023, according to state data.

One of the prospective educators currently enrolled is Ashley McCreedy, a senior at UMass Lowell and president of its chapter of the Student Education Association of Massachusetts.

A passion to teach prompted her to switch majors from business to education in her first year. She's wanted to be a teacher for as long as she can remember. She's aware

of the staffing issues that are affecting many schools.

“I also worry about my own ability to maintain a work-life balance,” McCreedy said.

Gayle Carvalho, president of the Quincy Education Association, is a former journalist who switched careers to become an educator 16 years ago. In her roughly 900-member local, about 300 people have left their jobs over the past three years. “Pre-COVID, we might have had 30. It's a huge number,” she said.

What's happening in Quincy and statewide is a combination of factors. Many more mid-career people are leaving. In the aftermath of the pandemic, the educational environment has changed. Districts are expecting more and putting more pressure on educators to learn new curriculum and take on more work.

Financial factors also are paramount. Educators are finding that the pension that used to provide them with a stable retirement is not keeping up with the cost of living in Massachusetts, one of the most expensive areas in the country.

Along with bargaining for improved benefits and pay, Carvalho said entering educators need to be prepared more thoughtfully, so they aren't surprised by what they encounter in schools and feel better supported.

Improved educator training, better community building within schools, and supportive mentorship and outreach for Education Support Professionals are some of the ideas suggested by Christine Mulrone, president of the Framingham Teachers Association.

The ESP unit has had openings all year, Mulrone said. Low pay, high workloads and limited training are all combining to make these jobs challenging.

The workload demands and the pay for all educators are failing to align, she said. Her daughter, a mid-level manager at a retail furniture store, makes more money after six years than Mulrone, who has worked in public education for more than 25 years. “That's insulting,” she said. ▮

Sarah Nathan contributed to this report.

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Bay Path University was recently awarded a five-year federal grant from the U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The purpose of this grant is to prepare individuals to become dually licensed in the field of special education. For more information, please visit the Bay Path OSEP Grant Program webpage.

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Public Educators and Allies Tell Legislators to Stop Tying MCAS to Graduation



“

MAX PAGE

MTA President

Parents, students, educators, and many more in our communities want an education system that prioritizes student learning, and which requires students' districts to certify that they have satisfactorily completed coursework showing mastery of our strong, statewide standards for graduation. Educators take pride in the fact that our standards are considered the gold standard across the country.”

SPEAK OUT

By **Jonathan Ng** Photographs by **Eric Haynes**

Outside the State House on March 3, a sunny Sunday morning, the air was electrified with chants: “Hey hey, ho ho. The high school graduation requirement has got to go!” The voices of fifth graders from the Boston Workers Circle, joined by parents, educators and supporters, carried across Beacon Street. The following day, MTA educators, parents and allies testified at the State House on the union-backed ballot initiative that would replace the MCAS graduation requirement. As *MTA Today* went to press, lawmakers were reviewing testimonies and still had a chance to act – passing the question as drafted or proposing a substitute version. If no action is taken, the ballot question will be decided by statewide voters in November.

What follows is a sampling of diverse voices among educators, parents and allies who spoke out on the MCAS bill. ▸

For more information on the effort to replace the MCAS-based high school graduation test, please visit massteacher.org/testing.





DEB MCCARTHY
MTA Vice President

Our students believe they are more than a score, their parents want to experience all that their child is capable of beyond a test score, and educators want to educate the whole child and be in relationship with our students, not business-aligned interests. I have been waiting for an event like this that places the why and the who of this campaign front and center.”



ADRIANA MASON
Hanover Parent

As a mom, watching my child struggle through the MCAS, knowing full well the high-stakes test doesn't capture his true potential, is heartbreaking. This ballot question is incredibly personal for us and our community. The stakes couldn't be higher.”

Mason helped to collect more than 1,000 signatures for the ballot question.



KIRSTEN FRAZIER
Educational Association of Worcester

We pride ourselves on promoting equity in this Commonwealth, but this MCAS requirement is inherently inequitable. With this test, you are punishing brilliant students who struggle with communication, all in the name of a “test score.” We should award diplomas based on real skills and knowledge, not the ability to take a test.”

Frazier is a multilingual educator.



REV. WILLIE BODRICK
Senior Pastor of Twelfth Baptist Church

This single, high-stakes test has become a gatekeeper, one that too often locks out our most vulnerable students – those from Black, brown, low-income communities – and those grappling with language barriers or disabilities. And it is why I have supported the MTA-backed ballot question, as it would immediately change this inequity.”

Bodrick is a member of the Boston Public Schools Opportunity & Achievement Gaps Task Force.



DANI CHARBONNEAU
Martha's Vineyard Educators Association

I wonder how many people debating MCAS here today know what it tests – because it's a very narrow set of skills in English, math and some sciences. It doesn't test for emotional intelligence, leadership, teamwork or problem-solving skills – all things employers say they are looking for in the workforce.”

Charbonneau is the 2023 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year.

BECKY PRINGLE NEA President

“ Denying students their high school diplomas simply because they fail to pass a single high-stakes, standardized test is wrong. And the unjust MCAS test actively harms students of color, low-income students, English learners and disabled students. That harm can follow students out of the classroom and into their adult lives.”



Private and Public Unions Have DIFFERENT RIGHTS

There is a long history of debate in America about which workers have the right to strike.

By **Mary MacDonald**

Many people believe a strike is a powerful tool for a union that is trying to reach contract terms with management that is stalling or refusing to reach an agreement.

But for nearly a century, a sharp division has existed between the rights of most public and private unionized employees regarding the legal authority to strike. Private-sector union members can legally strike; public-sector union members often cannot.

Why are they treated differently? To some extent, it's because public-sector workers, in working for the local, state or federal governments, are paid by taxpayers on behalf of the public. Under this thinking, a strike against the government is a strike against the interests of the people, said Erik Loomis, a professor of labor history at the University of Rhode Island.

“Are public employees actually workers? Very early public employee strikes – Boston police in 1919 – really raised that question to a new level,” Loomis said. “There is a general hostility about thinking about government workers as workers, period. They're viewed as government servants.”

Deb Gesualdo, president of the Malden Education Association, said disparate treatment of public and private employee unions as it relates to striking may owe more to the fact that educator unions – by far the largest public unions – are predominantly female. “We are the

largest public-sector unions, and we are a feminized workforce. I think it's just another means by which to oppress a mostly female workforce.”

Early labor laws tended to extend rights to specific groups of workers, and not provide broad protection, Loomis said. This also is why railroad and airline workers have their own labor law, existing outside the National Labor Relations Act of 1935.

The Act, approved under President Franklin Roosevelt, first granted the right to form a union and collectively bargain to some private employees. It excluded public unions from those rights, as well as the right to strike. Roosevelt was vehement about this, calling it “unthinkable and intolerable” for government employees to strike, according to a passage in “Beaten Down, Worked Up: The Past, Present, and Future of American Labor,” a book on the history and future of the labor movement by Steven Greenhouse.

“Should a particular kind of worker have the right to strike? There is actually a long debate about this in America,” Loomis said.

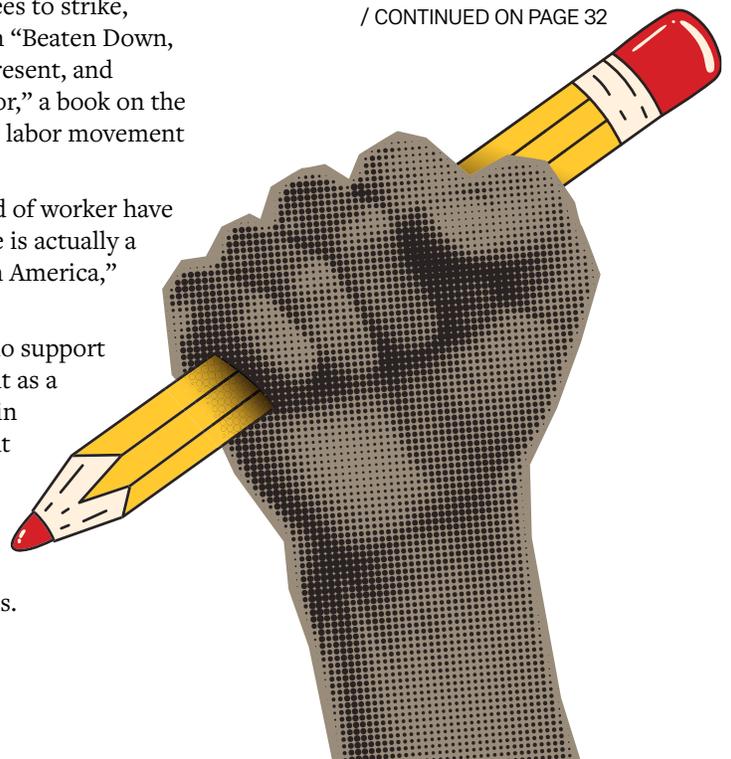
Unionists and others who support the right often describe it as a human right. The MTA, in legislation seeking a right to strike for educators in Massachusetts, supports this change if bargaining has extended for more than six months.

Gesualdo, whose 740-member union had a one-day strike in October 2022, said she views it as a human right. “I don't think there should be any difference in the type of rights that people have, based on whether they're public-sector or private-sector workers. To limit people's ability to take an action, or even speak about actions based on what type of job they work, is just fundamentally wrong.”

Matt Bach, president of the Andover Education Association, which had a five-day strike in 2023, said that action came after months of stalled bargaining. The action ended with a significant gain in pay and benefits for members, particularly for the union's Instructional Assistants. Bach, a history teacher, said federal prohibitions on striking often trickled down to the states. By the early 1960s, the Massachusetts political establishment reached an agreement that extended collective bargaining rights to public unions here – but not the right to strike.

Bach supports the MTA's legislative effort for the right to strike but has mixed feelings about the bureaucratic process that might create. He saw the power that developed among Andover members when they took that action. Allowing a legal right to strike for educator unions likely will lead to fewer strikes, he said.

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Public Colleges and Universities Hampered by Low Wages

Many crucial positions at colleges remain unfilled.

By **Scott McLennan**

It does not surprise Joe Nardoni that Middlesex Community College, where he teaches, has generated a long trail of failed searches for full-time faculty and staff over the past three years.

Nardoni points out that the calculated cost of living for a single-parent, single-child household in Middlesex County is \$124,000. Faculty salaries at Middlesex Community College are \$74,000 on

average, about \$50,000 below what is needed to live in that area.

“No one can afford to come here to work,” Nardoni said. “We can’t attract good candidates from other states once they see the salary and the cost of living.” Nardoni reflected on the recruitment challenge as he waited to testify at a hearing on the Fiscal Year 2025 state budget, before the Legislature’s Joint Committee on Ways and Means.

Nardoni told the lawmakers that salaries for faculty and staff at community colleges should immediately be raised by \$15,000 using funds from the Fair Share Amendment. This would be a step toward addressing staffing problems at community colleges as they anticipate rising enrollments, given efforts to expand free community college beyond the current MassReconnect program. State Senate President Karen Spilka and other supportive legislators have said they want to expand MassReconnect, which now allows residents age 25 and older to attend community college at no cost.

The issue of low wages is not unique to community colleges.

A salary study conducted by ASA Research, on behalf of the Massachusetts Teachers Association, shows how wages are significantly lower for faculty in the Commonwealth’s public higher education system in comparison to peers working at public colleges and universities in nearby and similar states. Wages for Massachusetts faculty and staff are also far lower than those paid to faculty and staff working at comparable private colleges and universities in the state. In some cases, the wage gap exceeds \$30,000 a year.

Non-instructional staff at public colleges and universities likewise earned well below what is considered to be a living wage, as calculated by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The study showed that, in some cases, public higher education staff earn as much as \$43,000 below what is considered necessary to support a single parent with a child.

The study factored in the cost of living here and elsewhere when determining the salary comparisons. It showed that not only are salaries lower in Massachusetts, but also that salaries of public higher education employees have grown at a

Joe Nardoni, vice president of the Massachusetts Community College Council, is concerned about unfilled positions and noncompetitive salaries.



slower rate compared to those of faculty and staff working at public colleges and universities in other states.

In a recent message to MTA members, President Max Page and Vice President Deb McCarthy stated: “As wages fall below what is needed to meet this state’s high cost of living, this not only harms those of us working in public higher education, but also harms the very institutions themselves as it becomes increasingly difficult to fill vacancies and attract the best-qualified job applicants. Consequently, student supports and academic programs are put at risk.”

Paying faculty and staff fair wages that meet cost-of-living standards in Massachusetts is one of the four main components of the proposed *Cherish Act*, which is supported by the MTA and its partners in the Higher Ed For All

coalition. The bill also calls for an equity and wage study to examine workloads and use of part-time employees. *Cherish* also seeks equitable wages and access to benefits for adjunct faculty.

HEFA’s other priorities under the *Cherish Act* are the creation of debt-free public higher education; expansion of existing programs that support students; and the elimination of campus-based debt for construction and building maintenance by returning those responsibilities to the state, especially as colleges and universities transition to more environmentally friendly buildings.

As the proposed bill sits in committee, HEFA advocates are addressing the pillars of *Cherish* through the budget process. In addition to Nardoni, who is vice president of the Massachusetts Community

College Council, representatives from the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts, the Coalition for Social Justice Education Fund, Progressive Mass, Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance and the Public Higher Education Network of Massachusetts testified at the Ways and Means hearing. Speakers pointed out the hazards of privatizing services at public colleges and universities and the need to lower and eliminate the debt burden for students enrolled in public higher education.

Nardoni said he considered himself lucky, having worked in public higher ed during the last significant wage hike nearly 25 years ago.

“When you can’t live on a full salary, it’s a pretty good bet you’re never going to be able to retire either,” Nardoni said. ▀

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Building Cultural Awareness in Classrooms

By **Scott McLennan**

Kelly Lamb’s daughter was just 5 years old when she became the target of racially motivated bullying in school. When the concerned parent asked her daughter what the school should do about the situation, the child replied that she wanted a Black teacher, to show her classmates that it’s OK to have brown skin like hers.

Lamb, who lives in Easton, said the district had no educators of color, so she found other ways to address the very real need raised by her daughter: How do we represent and demonstrate diverse cultural perspectives in public schools when the state’s teaching force is overwhelmingly white?

In 2019, Lamb and others developed Raising Multicultural Kids, a program that trains BIPOC college students and other facilitators of color to visit elementary schools and present a curriculum on culture, race and identity. Lamb and co-founder Denise Lane have experience in education and program development, and over time built a team of experts to create and deploy the curriculum and trainings.

Easton Public Schools was the first district to adopt Raising Multicultural Kids, and Lane said the support from school administrators and educators was key to the success and growth of the program.

Students read books chosen for their ability that promote cultural awareness, spark conversation and cultivate culturally responsive classrooms. While the trained diversity leaders visit their classes weekly and lead discussions on the readings, classroom educators also attend the sessions, in hopes of fostering

“ I see their minds turn on during our sessions. And I have learned a lot too.”

KYANNA OLIVEIRA
A Bridgewater State University student, on being a diversity leader for Raising Multicultural Kids

additional opportunities to address students’ cultural curiosity.

“Teachers have enjoyed it and it becomes a form of (professional development),” Lamb said.

With grant support from the MTA and state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Raising Multicultural Kids has been able to “professionalize,” hiring RMK co-founder Lane as an executive director who oversees recruiting, training and placement of diversity leaders.

RMK programs are currently in the Easton and Hull elementary schools and will soon be available in Quincy’s afterschool groups.

The MTA recently provided another grant to RMK, and Lane said the additional funding will help the organization deepen its commitment to seeing more educators of color working full time in Massachusetts public schools.

“We want to create a pipeline of educators of color. We want a diverse school staff in general, meaning social workers, adjustment counselors and others who support students,” Lane said.

Lamb said that a “lack of representation leads to a lack of representation,” so when young people of color do not see other young people of color working in public schools, that can dissuade them from following that career path.

“But we have had success. A student (at Bridgewater State University) studying to be a social worker was encouraged to become an adjustment counselor in schools after being a diversity leader in our program,” she said.

Kyanna Oliveira, another student at Bridgewater State, said she chose to become an educator because she never saw teachers who looked like her when

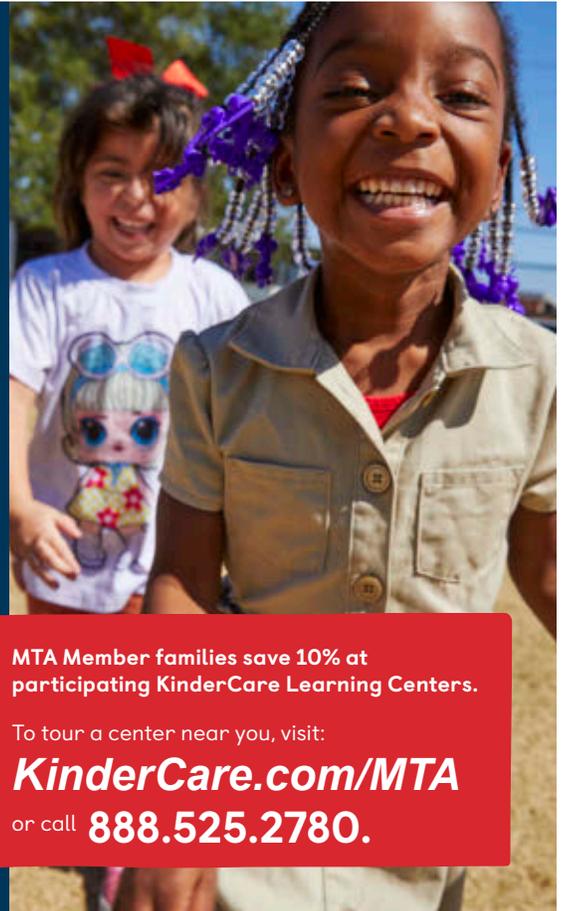


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MTA Benefits spoke with Thomas Colbert, founder and president of Vista Financial Group, about disability benefits available to MTA members. Open enrollment for the insurance program ends on May 17.

Q. How long have you been working with MTA Benefits on this program?

A. We started working with MTA Benefits in 2000 on the current disability insurance program and designed it in a way that is specific to the needs of MTA members. The plan has paid more than \$39 million in benefits to members since 2001.

Q. Why is this plan so important for members?

A. Disability insurance is particularly important for MTA members. In Massachusetts, educators are not eligible for Social Security disability benefits, so they have no long-term financial foundation underneath them in the event they suffer a prolonged illness or injury that keeps them from working. It is something everyone needs to account for in their own financial plan. What would happen if you did not have income coming in for a long period of time? Disability insurance is designed to protect you against that.

Q. What makes this disability insurance plan special?

A. There are a few factors of the MTA program that are truly unique. Benefits are paid in addition to accumulated sick days or sick bank payments. We do advise members that even though they could collect on both, it probably makes sense to not use up all of their sick days because they'll want to save some in case illness or injury occurs again.

The other distinctive feature about the plan is that we have an open enrollment period every year, and coverage is guaranteed during that period. That's important because if somebody didn't elect to enroll at their first opportunity and was subsequently diagnosed with a medical problem, they could still get coverage.

Q. Could you give an example of when the MTA disability plan helped a member?

A. Recently, I received a call from a member who had been having some problems and was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Under normal circumstances that person would not be able to buy disability insurance, but I explained to them that they could get coverage in the next open enrollment period. Then, if their condition becomes a problem in the future, they'd be covered by the plan.

Q. Can disability insurance help somebody who's planning a family?

A. Absolutely. That's one of the most common reasons members enroll in the short-term disability plan. They'll receive a few weeks' worth of income while they're out on maternity leave.

Q. MTA members can accumulate sick days and participate in sick banks, which will pay income when they can't work. Why should someone elect to participate in the disability plan as well?

A. That's true, but sick days and sick banks were never designed to be a long-term solution. They're really just a bridge that will help someone for a short period of time, and not all members have a lot of accumulated sick days. Everyone should have long-term disability insurance, because there's nothing that's going to pay you after the first few months

of being out of work. If you need your income to pay your bills, then you really do need to have long-term disability insurance to protect that income.

Q. Isn't disability insurance expensive? Is the MTA plan more affordable?

A. Disability insurance is expensive in the individual marketplace because of the higher likelihood that one could become disabled and need to collect on the plan. Rates in the MTA program are negotiated based on the total size of the membership of the MTA. This group program offers heavily discounted rates. It's very affordable, and the ability to layer in short- and/or long-term disability coverage allows the applicant to control the cost based on their individual circumstances.

Q. What are the eligibility requirements?

A. There are two requirements. The individual who is covered needs to be an MTA member, and either their school district needs to have opted to participate in the MTA program or they must be a new member of the MTA since July 1, 2023. Not every school district in the state offers this plan, and we are continually trying to introduce it to new districts. If a district doesn't currently participate, the local president should contact MTA Benefits and we can work with them to make the plan available. We've also introduced an option to have premiums taken from members' checking accounts instead of from their payroll deductions, which has made it easier to introduce the plan in several districts.

Q. How do you enroll?

A. It's really simple. Every year during the enrollment period, members can meet with a benefits counselor in school during on-site enrollment. We also have a call center; members can schedule an appointment with a benefits counselor over the phone and sign up. **T**

For more information, members can visit myenrollmentschedule.com/mta, or call 866.998.2915 to schedule an appointment with a counselor.

THE MTA Advantage

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

Keep Your Children Engaged with Learning This Summer

Summer break provides a chance for kids to cut loose and enjoy the freedom of a less structured schedule. However, as parents and educators know well, months away from academic pursuits can make for a rocky start to a new school year come fall.

“Summer slide” is when students lose some of the achievement gains they made during the school year. Parents can help kids avoid this learning recession and stay engaged with these tips and ideas from the experts at KinderCare.

Read and learn as a family. Research from Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education in 1999 and 2011 shows that spending time reading and writing as a family and encouraging kids to read on their own has a bigger impact on preventing summer slide than any other activity. Find books, poems, or even museum display cards that correlate to places you see or visit during the summer.

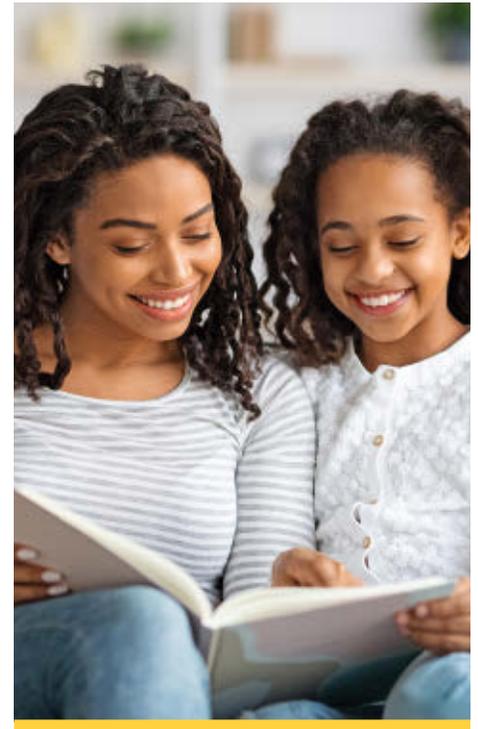
Go to your local library. The Collaborative Summer Library Program found that children who visited the library were less likely to suffer summer learning loss. Your local library may have a summer reading program that can help

provide ideas or motivation, or simply let kids loose in the stacks to find books that interest them.

Don’t forget math. Over the summer, math skills often fall by the wayside, according to Harvard’s Graduate School of Education. Experts recommend getting creative to prevent math learning loss. For instance, ask children to help add prices for purchases in the grocery store or assist in measuring and counting while cooking together in the kitchen.

Get up, get out and get moving. One of the healthiest resources of summertime is free and available to all: nature. According to research by North Carolina State University’s Natural Learning Initiative, kids who spend more time playing outside are better at creative problem-solving and have improved focus and cognitive skills.

Resist the urge to let screens do the work. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents balance the need for media literacy with reasonable limits on screen time. For children over the age of 2, one hour of screen time is enough. For children under 18 months, screen time should be discouraged. Between 18 and 24 months, high-quality educational



media is appropriate when supervised by parents.

Did you know you can use your member tuition benefit to save 10 percent on child care this summer? It’s true! This summer, keep the learning going with a fun, flexible program right in your neighborhood. Whether you need full- or part-time care for your baby, toddler, preschooler, or big kid, KinderCare has you covered.

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By Shawn Dwyer
Vice President, Mid-Island Mortgage Corp.

Should I buy a house now, or wait?



Buy now, or wait? Should I wait for rates to come down? These are common questions we ask ourselves. Deciding whether to buy a house now or wait is a significant decision that hinges on various personal and market factors. Here are some key considerations to help members make an informed decision.

Interest Rates

Mortgage rates play a critical role in the home buying decision. Lower rates can make buying now more appealing, as they reduce the amount you'll pay over the life of the loan. However, if rates are rising or predicted to rise, waiting might not necessarily be beneficial, as future rates could be even higher.



Housing Prices

Historically, real estate prices tend to increase over time, despite short-term fluctuations. Waiting to buy can mean facing higher property prices in the future. Even a modest annual increase in home prices can significantly affect the affordability of homes in a desired area, potentially pricing

homebuyers out of the market or forcing them to consider smaller homes or less desirable locations.

Building Equity and Investment Potential

Buying a home is not just about finding a place to live; it's also an investment. Even in a high-interest-rate environment, real estate remains a tangible asset that typically appreciates over time. By purchasing a home, people are investing in an asset that can build equity as they pay down the mortgage and as the property value increases. This equity can later be leveraged for home equity loans, refinancing, or as a down payment on a future property.

Opportunity to Refinance

Interest rates are cyclical and can change based on economic conditions. If people buy a home when rates are high, there's a potential opportunity to refinance the mortgage if rates drop in the future. Refinancing can significantly reduce the monthly payments and the total interest paid over the life of the loan. Essentially, homeowners are not locked into the high rate forever, and the initial purchase can be seen as securing a stake in the property market with the option to optimize loan terms later.

Emotional Considerations

Homeownership is not purely a financial decision; it's also an emotional one. The stability, pride, and personalization of owning a home can significantly contribute to quality of life. If these factors strongly appeal to you, and you're financially prepared, buying sooner might bring you more joy and satisfaction than waiting for potentially better market conditions.

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Editor: **Carolyn Cassiani**
The *MTA Advantage* is published three times a year as a supplement to *MTA Today* by MTA Benefits, Inc.

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

Tip Sheet

Spring Gift Guide: Save with MTA Benefits

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

Spring is here and with it comes quite a few things to celebrate, such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, graduations, and likely a few birthdays too! MTA Benefits is here to help members give the perfect gift to loved ones, all at a discount. As the flowers bloom and the sun shines brighter, it's time to embrace the joy of the season and spread some happiness with thoughtful gifts. Let's explore some fantastic items and activities that MTA members can use to make this spring a memorable one.



MOTHER'S DAY GIFTS

Moms are an incredible gift to all of us, and Mother's Day is the perfect time to show your appreciation. **From You Flowers** offers a delightful range of bouquets at 25 percent off. A gorgeous arrangement will brighten any Mother's Day with the vibrant colors of spring. If jewelry is a

hoped-for gift, **Long's Jewelers** provides beautiful pieces at 20 percent off that can be treasured for years to come. For the mom who deserves a moment of relaxation, a massage session at **Advanced Massage Therapy** in Brookline — also at a 20 percent discount — may be just what is needed to wind down and rejuvenate.

Dads are our everyday heroes, and Father's Day is the perfect occasion to honor them. Whether it is a husband, brother, son or another important figure, MTA Benefits offers exciting discounts for them! Take the sports enthusiast to see the **Boston Red Sox** at Fenway



FATHER'S DAY GIFTS

Park or the **WooSox** in Worcester. For the adventurous type, MTA Benefits partners with several recreational businesses that promise unforgettable experiences, like **Catamount Mountain Resort** (10 percent off), **The Adventure Park at Heritage Museums & Gardens** (20 percent off), and **Unlimited Biking** (20 percent off). All of these gifts will create lasting memories.

GRADUATION GIFTS

Graduation is an occasion that should always be celebrated and anyone who's about to reach this milestone deserves recognition. **The Brattle Book Shop** (20 percent off) in Boston offers a diverse selection of books to inspire and empower recent graduates as they embark on their next chapter. For a more personalized gift, consider a memorable photo capturing a cherished moment in a beautifully crafted frame from **Big Picture Framing** (10 percent off). These gifts symbolize not just academic achievement, but also the support and love of family and friends. With MTA Benefits, give a gift that celebrates their accomplishments and future endeavors.



BIRTHDAY GIFTS

Know anyone with a birthday in the spring? From live shows to sporting events to sightseeing, the perfect birthday gift is waiting. A theater lover would love nothing more than seeing a **Broadway in Boston** show (discounts vary) or a performance at the **Boch Theater** (10 to 30 percent off). Are they more into thrills or seeing the city from a different point of view? Immerse them in the panoramic beauty of Boston's skyline at **View Boston**, the city's only 360-degree observatory on the 52nd floor of the Prudential Center (25 percent off).

This spring, make the most of MTA Benefits and its exclusive discounts to celebrate all the special occasions that come with the season. From Mother's Day to graduations and everything in between, there's something for everyone. MTA members can spread joy to loved ones with meaningful gifts and experiences all at a special member discount.

Visit the **MTA Benefits Discount Directory** at www.mtabenefits.com/discountdirectory discover even more.



WHAT WE'RE LEARNING THIS SUMMER

Infants and Toddlers, Ages 0–2

Little learners will discover sea animals, explore textures, and build sensory skills through hands-on water play! Our warm and caring teachers are right by their side to make sure every splash is a safe and joyful one.

Preschool and PreK Kiddos, Ages 3–4

Summer is full of fun and growth for our preschool and preK kids! They're learning how to work as a team, make new buddies, and share their exciting discoveries while digging into the season — what do plants need to grow?

Champ Club

Quality summer-break camps for 5- to 12-year-olds can be hard to find. Look no further than Champ Club, available at select KinderCare and Champions locations. This is where your child will nurture friendships, explore opportunities in STEM, make new friends, and (everyone's favorite) embark on field trips! Join for a day, a week, or the whole break.

Want more information about your 10 percent Tuition Benefit with KinderCare or Champions? Visit [KinderCare.com/MTA](https://www.kindercare.com/MTA).

Protect Your Information with a Complimentary Identity Theft Plan

Identity theft is now more prevalent than ever, primarily due to the advancement of technology and the rise of cybercriminals. Your personal information is at risk of getting stolen and the process to recover your identity is a lengthy — and often stressful — one. As an MTA member, you can now sign up for a free identity theft plan provided by Securus ID through MTA Benefits.

With the complimentary Securus ID Identity Theft recovery plan, members get immediate access to all three of their credit bureau files and limited power of attorney for complete restoration on their behalf. Members also get multilingual and hearing-impaired services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. With the help of certified, identity theft risk-management specialists, enrolled participants don't have to worry about the several hours that credit restoration may take — the company handles it all for them.

Don't let identity theft damage what you've built. Be sure to take advantage of this complimentary plan so you can help safeguard your personal information as well as that of those closest to you. But don't wait too long — this offer expires on Jan. 14, 2025. Register at mtabenefits.securusid.com/registration.

Should I buy a house now, or wait?

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Rental Expenses

While waiting to buy, prospective owners are likely paying rent, which is an expense without a return on investment. Rent payments contribute to someone else's equity, not yours. In markets where rent is particularly high, the cost of waiting and continuing to rent can be comparable to or even exceed the cost of a mortgage payment, making it financially disadvantageous to delay buying.

Ultimately, the right time to buy a house is when buyers are financially prepared, emotionally ready, and have done their due diligence to understand the market. Consulting with financial and real estate professionals can provide valuable insights tailored to their situation, helping them make the best decision for their future.

Mid-Island Mortgage can help members navigate their unique home buying, refinancing or renovation needs and offers special MTA member discounts.

Visit www.mortgagecorp.com/mta to learn more.



Delegates to Gather for Annual Meeting

By **Mary MacDonald**

The 2024 MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates will be held in person on April 26 and 27 at the MassMutual Center in Springfield. Virtual participation will be available for those who request it in advance.

This is the second year that the Annual Meeting delegates will gather in Springfield. The meeting is the association's 179th since its founding in 1845.

The meeting is where essential business for the MTA takes place, including union elections and approval of the association's operating budget. The new budget year, for fiscal 2024-2025, begins July 1.

The meeting will feature reports by MTA President Max Page, Vice President Deb McCarthy and Executive Director-Treasurer Mike Fadel.

The first session will begin at noon on Friday, April 26. The agenda for the day will conclude with speeches by candidates for president and vice president. On Saturday, April 27, the meeting resumes at 9 a.m.

The election of candidates is expected to begin at 11 a.m., after action on the proposed budget, and will include both virtual and in-person voting. If action on the budget goes beyond 11 a.m., the elections will take place immediately following it.

Delegates will vote to select the MTA officers for MTA President and Vice President. Positions on the Board of Directors and Retired Members Committee have been filled by waiver, according to the MTA Bylaws. An article on members elected by waiver appears on Page 22 of this edition.

There is one candidate for MTA President: the current President Max



Page, of Amherst. Two candidates are running for MTA Vice President: Deb McCarthy, of Hull, and Yahaira Rodriguez, of Worcester.

The Annual Meeting also will include the consideration of amendments to MTA Bylaws and Resolutions and voting on new business items with and without budgetary implications.

The recognition portion of the meeting will be held on Saturday morning.

The 2024 MTA Friend of Education Award will be presented to Citizens for

Public Schools. The nonprofit promotes and protects public schools and opposes political and social initiatives that seek to endanger public education. Its recent efforts include engaging with the MTA on a ballot initiative and legislative effort to replace the MCAS-based high school graduation test.

The 2024 MTA Friend of Labor Award will be presented to Shawn Fain, president of the United Auto Workers. Fain led the UAW in 2023 through a watershed moment in American labor, as the union held concurrent strikes of the Detroit Three automakers at locations throughout the United States. The six-week strike ended with significant gains in salary and benefits, not only for UAW members, but also for workers at non-unionized automakers that quickly raised their wages.

The President's Award will honor Jane McAlevey, a labor organizer who is a senior fellow at the University of California at Berkeley's Labor Center, and a strike correspondent for The Nation. McAlevey is the author of several books on unions and organizing, including her most recent, "A Collective Bargain: Unions, Organizing and the Fight for Democracy," which focuses on attacks on workplace and civil democracy and the tactics of right-wing organizations.

The delegates will also recognize De'Shawn Washington, the 2024 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, and a member of the Lexington Education Association. A graduate of UMass Boston with a bachelor's degree in accounting and master's degrees in special education and elementary education, Washington is the first Black male educator recognized as Massachusetts Teacher of the Year.

/ CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

Candidates vie for offices at MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates

The contests for MTA President and Vice President will be decided at the upcoming Annual Meeting of Delegates.

Candidates for the MTA Board of Directors and Retired Members Committee were all declared elected by waiver under a provision in the MTA Bylaws. No Executive Committee seats were up for election this year.

A statement by the only candidate for MTA President who submitted nomination papers by the deadline — Max Page — appears on Page 24-25. Statements by candidates for Vice President — Deb McCarthy and Yahaira Rodriguez — are on Page 26 and Page 27, respectively. The offices for President and Vice President have two-year terms and begin on July 15. Candidate statements are printed in ballot order.

Candidates declared elected

All candidates for MTA Board of Directors seats who submitted nomination papers by the deadline 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 begin on July 1 and continue for three years.

Board seats for districts 9B, 28D, 30E, 25F and 47H also have terms ending this year, but no candidates submitted nomination papers by the deadline. Therefore, the interim election process for filling vacancies will take place shortly after the Annual Meeting of Delegates. Members in the affected districts will be notified of the nomination and election process and timeline.

The candidates for Board of Directors declared elected by waiver are as follows:

Board of Directors

At-Large Director for Ethnic Minority Membership: Rosa Lopez-Whitehill, Pembroke Teachers Association

District 7B: Rick Maynard, Fitchburg Education Association

District 10B: Kirsten Frazier, Educational Association of Worcester

District 35C: Christopher Szkutak, Whitman-Hanson Education Association

District 42C: Cherian Armstrong, Monomoy Regional Education Association

District 14D: Sarah McKeon, Framingham Teachers Association

District 32D: Truong Dinh, Braintree Education Association

District 23F: Jennifer Zabelsky, Haverhill Education Association

District 24F: Laura Newton, Beverly Teachers Association

District 19G: Robert (Bobby) Travers, Cambridge Education Association

District 44H: Paul Johansen, Mass. Community College Council

District 46H: Jeanne Brunner, Mass. Society of Professors, UMass Amherst

Candidates for the Board declared elected and who provided photos are pictured with this article.

CANDIDATES DECLARED ELECTED



Rick Maynard



Kirsten Frazier



Christopher Szkutak



Cherian Armstrong



Sarah McKeon



Jennifer Zabelsky



Robert (Bobby) Travers



Paul Johansen



Jeanne Brunner

Candidates Declared Elected to the Retired Members Committee

Four members were elected by waiver and will serve a two-year term.

Four candidates for the Retired Members Committee also were declared elected by waiver because the number of candidates did not exceed the number of openings.

They are as follows: Kathy Greeley, Cambridge; Ora Gladstone, Boston; Rick Last, Florence; and Rafael Moure-Eraso, Medford.

Each will serve a two-year term beginning July 1 and ending June 30, 2026. **T**

Delegates to Gather for Annual Meeting

/ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

The MTA Education Support Professional of the Year will also be recognized by Annual Meeting delegates. Karen Torres, a member of the Andover Education Association, is the recipient of this year's honor.

The delegates will consider a proposed MTA operating budget of \$56,544,895 for the coming year.

A vote is scheduled for Saturday morning, according to the preliminary agenda, just prior to the election of officers.

The Advisory Budget Committee, the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors have proposed annual dues of \$536 for full-time active members. This is an increase of \$33.

Dues for the category of secretaries, clerks and custodians would be \$321.75

under the budget proposal, an increase of \$19.75. Dues for ESPs, including food service personnel and paraeducators, would be \$161, an increase of \$10. Retiree annual dues remain at \$30 under MTA Bylaws.

In addition to the operating budget, the proposed Public Relations/Organizing Campaign budget of \$1,844,860 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. Paraeducators, food service personnel and other ESPs would be assessed \$6. **T**

For additional information on the Annual Meeting, please visit [massteacher.org/annualmeeting](https://www.massteacher.org/annualmeeting).

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Explore all your MTA discounts today at mtabenefits.com.



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Save up to 75% on regular prices from our Best Value List of preferred products. Plus, receive free* next-business-day delivery on qualifying orders of \$30 or more.

Travel Savings Center

Access member-only travel savings from car rentals, hotels and ticketing discounts to condos, villas, cruises, guided tours and group travel packages.

*Terms apply.

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Candidate for MTA President: Max Page



Serving as your president for the past year and a half has only reinforced my fundamental commitments — to public education as the foundation of democracy, to unions as the essential organizations for achieving educational, economic, racial and gender justice, and to continuing to transform the MTA into a social justice union based in rank-and-file power. I am thrilled and honored to run for re-election as president, and alongside Deb McCarthy as vice president, so we can continue to work to make our vision of public education a reality.

I live in the house I grew up in and went to the same outstanding Amherst public schools my children were lucky enough to attend, serving as the first student school committee member, and learning from the courageous members of the Amherst-Pelham Education Association as they fought for better schools. I am the son of two public school educators.

My father, a refugee from Nazi Germany, was able (because of the GI Bill) to become a professor of English at UMass Amherst. My mother, born in Camden, New Jersey, was a drama teacher and then a longtime principal of elementary schools in Rowe and South Hadley, before finishing her work as an education professor at Mount Holyoke College. I have had a career as a scholar and teacher of American history, with a focus on the history of cities and the politics of historic preservation.

As soon as I arrived at UMass in 2001, I was invited by a fellow union member to become involved in my local, the 1,500-member Massachusetts Society of Professors, working with others to transform the MSP in the way we are all transforming the MTA. I was president and led bargaining campaigns, which resulted in two path-breaking contracts (around paid family and medical leave and adjunct rights). Following my

leadership of the MSP, I focused on work within the MTA, as a member of the Executive Committee and Board, as head of the Revenue Committee, as vice chair of the Government Relations Committee, and starting in 2018, as vice president. More important than these positions, I am proud to have helped found Educators for a Democratic Union, building on the efforts of the group of “angry presidents” and the Peace and Justice caucus.

I am excited about the work we have done in the past year and a half since I was elected president. We have supported local organizing as the key to our strength as a union, including helping striking locals — Brookline, Malden, Haverhill, Woburn, Melrose, Andover and Newton — win outstanding contracts that are securing ESP living wages, paid parental leave, prep and collaboration time, and fairer pay for all. With the Board’s approval, we created a new Organizing Department with a team of organizers to support local contract campaigns. So many of you have seen their effectiveness in helping mount strong contract campaigns. If I had to point to just one advance in local contract campaigns, I would point to the opening up of bargaining including the use of silent representatives. This approach, which has helped build the power of every local, has become the new standard approach to contract negotiations.

At the state level, in the fall of 2022, we won passage of the Fair Share Amendment, a once-in-a-century victory to raise taxes on the wealthiest people in the Commonwealth and invest the revenues in our public schools, colleges and transportation systems. We are seeing the results in universal school meals for all students, free community college and improved roads, bridges and public transportation — and that’s just the first year! Now that Fair Share is in the state Constitution, we look forward to having upwards of \$2 billion to spend every year on education and transportation.

“ I am excited about the work we have done since I was elected president. We have supported local organizing as the key to our strength as a union.”

MAX PAGE
Candidate for MTA President



This past fall, our members gathered 135,000 signatures to eliminate the use of the MCAS as a graduation requirement. Led by Vice President Deb McCarthy, we are on track, either through the Legislature or at the ballot box, to remove the keystone of a punitive, high-stakes, testing regime. We also remain committed to securing a generational reinvestment in public higher education — including fair pay and working conditions for staff and faculty — through passage of the Cherish Act. We will also continue the fight for dignity for our current and future retired members by improving the cost-of-living adjustments for pensions and working with the NEA to finally fix the harmful, federal GPO/WEP pension laws.

Across our union, attendance at learning opportunities — such as Winter Union Skills, Summer Conference, the

EMAC, ESP and Early Career Educator conferences, and Retired members gatherings — keeps growing as more and more members are getting involved, committed to building an MTA that is committed as a union to economic, racial and gender justice.

Dissatisfaction with the ways things are and how far they are from the way they should be is our love language as union activists. That’s because even as we celebrate our victories — and we must — we always demand more for our schools and students. We have big plans for the coming years, including accelerating our gains for ESPs, addressing the mental health crisis among our students and educators, and moving away from a deadening, scripted curriculum, test-and-punish system to one that allows you, the educators of the finest education system in the nation, to

fulfill your hopes for public education, using your skills, experience and creativity. In the coming years we want to focus on building community schools and raising the wages and housing security of the families of our students. We know that unless we improve the economic security of Massachusetts families, our students cannot reach their highest potential.

The pandemic laid bare — and made worse — so many of the inequalities in the Commonwealth. That experience challenged me, and it should challenge all of us, to raise our expectations about what is necessary, what we in the MTA can achieve. Now we need to raise more hell to win greater justice for our students, members and the Commonwealth. **T**

Candidate for MTA Vice President: Deb McCarthy



“ Under my and Max's leadership, we have actualized the direct benefits from an organizing model of expanded bargaining.”

DEB MCCARTHY
Candidate for MTA Vice President

Two years ago, I was elected as the vice president of the Massachusetts Teachers Association on a promise to dismantle the high-stakes testing regime. I pledged, in unison with Max Page, to advance the passage of the Fair Share Amendment and the right for a debt-free higher education for all. Together, we ran on a platform dedicated to educational, economic, racial and gender justice. We made a commitment to organizing and expanded bargaining because we know that when we fight, we win. We promised to seek the working conditions that are our students' learning conditions, to resist the privatization of our public good, and to preserve educator autonomy and our freedom to teach. We vowed to achieve the dignity to retire, the right to earn a living wage, and our inherent right to withhold our labor. Together, we delivered on the promises that we made.

On Nov. 8, 2022, voters passed the Fair Share Amendment, a constitutional amendment that allocates almost \$2 billion annually to public education and

public transportation. On Dec. 6, 2023, 135,000 signatures — more than any other ballot campaign of the legislative cycle — were delivered to the Secretary of State's Office for certification. Besides these legislative victories, under my and Max's leadership, we have actualized the direct benefits from an organizing model of expanded bargaining. In Malden, Melrose, Haverhill, Woburn, Andover and Newton, educators withheld their labor and won the contracts that they deserved. In places like North Andover, Braintree, Wellesley, Middleton, Weymouth, Quincy and Avon, to name a few, because the members were strike-ready, they won the contracts that they deserved. Max and I joined these educators on the line and in their fights, as they achieved historic contractual wins that advance the professionalism and rights of an education workforce.

I am proud of the work that I have done to promote and enhance the work of Raising Multicultural Kids. It has been an honor to stand in solidarity with educators in places like Great

Barrington and Pembroke, unwavering in the commitment toward diversity and inclusivity. Our students need to see themselves represented in their educators and in their curriculum. Our schools need to be spaces that are nurturing, safe, accepting and diverse.

In two years' time, I have met education workers who are unable to retire, who are unable to escape poverty wages, and who are unable to access PFML benefits. As I learn each of their stories, I have become intimately connected to their struggles, and my passion for the fight has deepened. The relationships that I have formed with rank-and-file members are as important to me as the relationships that I had with my students. They are fueling my desire to continue in a state leadership role. When you vote for 'Max and Deb' on April 27, you will be voting for a movement of member-driven, rank-and-file union educators who have created the power and the strategies to win the working and learning conditions that we all deserve. ▀

Candidate for MTA Vice President: Yahaira Rodriguez

When I think about education growing up in Puerto Rico, I think back to my own experiences.

I was a happy child. All my educators looked like me and spoke my language. I felt that I was part of a community. I knew that I wanted all children to have a similar experience. This is why I became an educator.

When I first arrived in the mainland of the United States, my own children felt alienated by a school system in which educators did not look like them, speak their language or understand their history and culture. They did not feel part of the larger school community. So, I volunteered in their school.

I quickly learned from other parents that my children's experiences were common to the majority of the students in the school. If I wanted my kids to have a happy experience, like mine, I needed to do more. I became an ESP so that I could change the narrative for students of color and immigrants. I wanted to educate people that the value of representation is a sense of belonging, security and support. When people feel visible, accepted and included, it builds our power and creates change.

I want my students to look out and see themselves. My students in Worcester have the same barriers as my own kids. They are expected to fit into a school system that doesn't represent them; they deserve more. They deserve to look out and see themselves represented in their educators.

My students face other structures of racism. Rigid curriculum and MCAS limit the imagination

of our students and who they can be. Many have language, cultural and economic barriers that shut them out.

As an ESP, I share their experiences. And ESPs' issues are students' issues.

I have all that it takes to be a great educator. However, language, culture and economics are obstacles I face in passing the MTEs. We need to continue moving forward to change the requirements of MCAS, and also MTEs, so that students graduate and unionized educators like me can become classroom educators.

We must also win livable wages so that ESPs can achieve economic security. One job should be enough. When I look out, I see ESPs who speak the language of our students, and look like them, but who are too often treated with no respect. We must do better!!

When I think about an ideal union, I want to see leaders who look like me, not just as a token representation but in a position of leadership. We need mindful representation so we can understand our power and change not only public education but also our union to truly be an anti-racist union in both the outcomes and the way we win. We center those closest to the problem as decision-makers in the way we fight. Leaders should reflect our multiracial, cross-class ranks and education system.

These are the reasons I'm running for MTA vice president. ▮



“ I want to see leaders who look like me, not just as a token representation but in a position of leadership.”

YAHAIRA RODRIGUEZ
Candidate for MTA Vice President

Proposed Amendments to the MTA Bylaws

The following is Proposed Bylaw Amendment #1. It would revise Article III, Section 4, Membership Year. The present text is in the left column. Proposed revisions are indicated by underlined text in the right column.

Article III – Membership, Section 4, Membership Year

PRESENT TEXT

Article III - Membership, Section 4, Membership Year

A. The membership year shall be from July 1 to June 30.

PROPOSED AMENDED TEXT

Article III - Membership, Section 4, Membership Year

A. The membership year shall be from July 1 to June 30.

B. A person who is not a member of the Association may enroll in the Association for the next membership year between April 1 and June 30 of the current year. The enrollee shall be eligible to receive certain benefits and services of the Association, as authorized by the Board of Directors, between the date of enrollment in the Association and July 1. Such early enrollees will not be included in membership counts for governance representation or have individual governance rights until their membership becomes effective on July 1.

IMPACT STATEMENT

MTA locals will be able to enroll eligible potential members for the *upcoming* membership year each spring beginning in April of 2025 as soon as the MTA Board finalizes MTA early enrollment program guidelines.

SUBMITTED BY

Annetta Argyres, Professional Staff Union

BYLAWS AND RULES COMMITTEE

Recommends Adoption (6-0)

MTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Recommendation Adoption (52-0)

JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION

 **Wednesday, JUNE 19**

 **11 a.m. - 2 p.m.**

 **EDWARDS HOUSE**
1 Badger Road, Framingham



Proposed Amendments to the MTA Bylaws

The following is Proposed Bylaw Amendment #2. It would revise various words within Articles III, IV, and VII. The present text is in the left column. Proposed revisions are indicated by strikethroughs and underlined text in the right column.

Articles III, IV, and VII – Modifications to use Gender-Neutral Language

PRESENT TEXT

Articles III, IV, and VII, as indicated below

Article III, Membership

Section 2

- A. (3) he/she was
- D. (1) his/her

Section 3

- A. (4) (c) mother, father, sister, brother, son, daughter

Article IV, Finance

Section 2

- A. (2) (d) his or her
- A. (3) (a & b) him or her (four instances)

Article VII, Nominations, Elections & Terms

Section 2

- A. (2) he or she seeks
- D. (3) he/she

Section 3

- A. (2) he or she seeks
- E. (3) he/she
- G. (4) (b) he/she

Section 4

- D. (4) he/she

Section 6

- E. (2) (d) he/she is

Section 7

- D. (1) he/she

PROPOSED AMENDED TEXT

Articles III, IV, and VII, as indicated below

Article III, Membership

Section 2

- A. (3) he/she was they were
- D. (1) his/her their

Section 3

- A. (4) (c) ~~mother, father, sister, brother, son, daughter;~~ parent, sibling, child

Article IV, Finance

Section 2

- A. (2) (d) ~~his or her~~ their
- A. (3) (a & b) ~~him or her~~ them (four instances)

Article VII, Nominations, Elections & Terms

Section 2

- A. (2) ~~he or she seeks~~ they seek
- D. (3) he/she they

Section 3

- A. (2) ~~he or she seeks~~ they seek
- E. (3) he/she they
- G. (4) (b) he/she they

Section 4

- D. (4) he/she they

Section 6

- E. (2) (d) he/she is they are

Section 7

- D. (1) he/she they

IMPACT STATEMENT

There is no impact on the intent and application of the existing bylaws. The proposed changes are the result of a new business item at the 2023 Annual Meeting of Delegates, which was subsequently passed by the Board of Directors, that all of MTA's governing documents would be modified as needed to use gender-neutral language.

SUBMITTED BY

MTA Bylaws and Rules Committee

BYLAWS AND RULES COMMITTEE

Recommends Adoption (6-0)

MTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Recommendation Adoption (53-0)

Amendments to Resolutions are Recommended

MTA Resolutions are the association's statements of principle on issues relating to members, public education, the welfare of students and human and civil rights.

Resolutions may be submitted by any member to the Resolutions Committee by the second Friday in January. The committee may also propose resolutions.

All resolutions submitted are considered by the committee and those approved by a majority vote of the committee are recommended to the Annual Meeting delegates after having been presented to the Board of Directors.

To become an official position of the MTA, a resolution must be adopted by the delegates at Annual Meeting. The proposed revisions printed in this edition of *MTA Today* have been recommended by the Resolutions Committee. The Board also voted on Saturday, March 23 to recommend passage by the delegates.

A section of the current resolution that has a line through it is proposed for elimination; a section that is underlined is a proposed addition.

All current resolutions are posted on the MTA website at massteacher.org/resolutions.

Proposed Revised Resolution A-10

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

The Massachusetts Teachers Association opposes the privatization of the institution of public education or any component therein. The MTA recognizes that privatization takes many forms, such as outsourcing Education Support Professional (ESP) services, auxiliary services and online program management; entering into public-private partnerships for early childhood education, public childcare, early college, and capital construction; filling school/college positions for multiple years with contract employees and temporary agency employees; and heavily relying on management consultants for school/college operations.

The MTA specifically opposes private-sector contracts and partnerships if it determines that such contracts have a negative impact on public education or reduce or eliminate the number of staff providing or could be providing that educational service. The MTA opposes any efforts, ~~including public-private partnerships~~, that undermine institutions of public education by diverting funds and/or weakening their democratic autonomy. The MTA stands strongly against the transformation of educational institutions from a public good to profitable commodities and believes anti-privatization legislation is needed. (75, 77, 80, 17, 24)

Proposed Revised Resolution C-6

HEALTHY AND SAFE SCHOOLS

The Massachusetts Teachers Association believes that staff and students deserve to be in a healthy and safe learning environment. The MTA believes that measures should be taken to guarantee that physical conditions of buildings are maintained so as to conform to the highest possible standards for health and safety, in full compliance with all building codes and safety regulations of the state.

The MTA urges that school committees and boards of trustees must improve school mechanical ventilation systems to assure that school spaces' air quality is sufficient to diminish as much as possible the risk of airborne infections from indoor pathogens from any source (viral, bacterial and molds), and bring them in line with best practices and current scientific recommendations. This would require mechanical ventilation systems (Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning, HVAC), which must be mechanically driven from Air Handling Units (AHU) that provide a supply of clean outside air. At least five Air Changes per Hour (5 ACH) must be achieved in each school space. The outside air could be complemented by recycled air filtered through at least MERV 13 rated filters to achieve the minimum 5 ACH. Appropriate exhaust flows out of each school space must be balanced with the supply air into the rooms. Portable HEPA Ventilation units could also be provided to complement and maximize air cleansing.

The MTA recommends that contract bargaining language require formation of Health and Safety Committees composed of school personnel, parents, and school committee members and that they have regularly scheduled meetings designated to improve the health and safety of the school environment.

The MTA further urges that school committees provide for safe usage, proper storage and transfer and disposal of all toxic and/or hazardous substances used in school buildings and on school grounds.

The MTA strongly supports the enforcement of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) on behalf of all employees in the public sector.

The MTA believes that all educational facilities must be safe from all environmental and chemical hazards, including lead from water pipe systems within schools, inadequate ventilation and climate control, particulate pollution, mold and sick-building syndrome.

The MTA urges that dangerous asbestos be removed immediately from the schools and that the Commonwealth provide funds for its removal and other related expenses.

The MTA also strongly supports the state's school immunization requirements. These requirements exist to protect students, staff and members of the wider community from serious diseases that can be prevented by vaccines. (75, 77, 79, 82, 84, 85, 88, 01, 03, 07, 19, 24)

Proposed Revised Resolution C-7

SCHOOL FACILITIES: DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION AND FUNCTION

The Massachusetts Teachers Association believes that school facilities must be conducive to teaching and learning. The physical environment must allow for a variety of needs, including the number of students, physical characteristics of students, changes in teaching methods, presentation of instruction, and an increased use of school facilities. The MTA also believes that all school facilities must be well constructed, safe, energy-efficient, aesthetically pleasing, accessible, functional and adaptable to persons with disabilities.

The MTA supports ecologically conservative facility designs including heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.

The MTA believes that the community, parents/guardians and education employees should play an advisory role in designing these facilities.

The MTA also believes that stable and sufficient funding must be provided for the design, construction, maintenance and operation of the school facility.

The MTA believes that one of the most effective means to prevent the risk of airborne infections to students and educators (viral, bacterial and molds) is a well-designed mechanical ventilation system that is in line with best practices and current scientific recommendations. This would require a system that provides for at least 5 Air Changes per Hour (5 ACH) based on outside clean air. Well-tempered outdoor supply air should be designed-in for every school indoor space. Temperature and relative humidity extremes should be avoided – by design – in new schools while conforming with at least 5 ACH ventilation rates as a design criterion as described in MTA Resolution C-6 Healthy and Safe Schools.

These principles should apply equally to preK-12 schools and buildings used by public higher education institutions. (11, 21, 24)

Proposed Revised Resolution F-11

RIGHT TO STRIKE

The Massachusetts Teachers Association reaffirms its position that all PreK - Higher Education public school workers educational-personnel should have the legal right to strike. The MTA condemns the jailing of its members and the imposition of coercive fines and arbitrary restitution for strike-related activities. The MTA also strongly encourages all of its members to support their colleagues who have been forced by the extreme stalling tactics and unwillingness of their employers to bargain in good faith to strike in order to improve educational working and learning conditions. (79, 85, 09, 24)

Proposed Amendment to the MTA Standing Rules

The following is Proposed Standing Rules Amendment #1. It would revise Rule 5, Section 3. The present text is shown first, followed by the proposed revision, indicated by strikethrough and underlined text.

RULE 5: Local Delegations - Modifications to use Gender-Neutral Language

PRESENT TEXT

Rule 5

Rule 5: Local Delegations, Section 3
his/her

PROPOSED AMENDED TEXT

Rule 5

Rule 5: Local Delegations, Section 3
~~his/her~~ their

IMPACT STATEMENT

There is no impact on the intent and application of the existing standing rules. The proposed change is the result of a new business item at the 2023 Annual Meeting of Delegates, which was subsequently passed by the Board of Directors, that all of MTA's governing documents would be modified as needed to use gender-neutral language.

SUBMITTER

MTA Bylaws and Rules Committee

BYLAWS AND RULES COMMITTEE

Recommends Adoption (6-0)

MTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Recommendation Adoption (54-0)

Alternative Nomination Process for President and Vice President

ARTICLE VII, Section 2B(2) of the MTA Bylaws provides for an alternative nomination process for President and Vice President at the Annual Meeting of Delegates:

- Nomination papers may be obtained at the Annual Meeting from the Executive Director-Treasurer.
- Nomination papers must be signed by 200 of the registered delegates with the same limitations as described in Section 2B(1)b of the MTA Bylaws.
- Nomination papers must be filed with the Credentials and Ballot Committee prior to the close of the first business session.
- The committee will certify that the nomination papers comply with the requirements in Sections 2B(1)b, 2B(2)b, and 2B(2)c of the MTA Bylaws. Upon certification, the candidate's name will be placed on the Ballot for the office sought.

The candidate(s) who have not previously filed papers may obtain nomination papers from the Executive Director-Treasurer or his designee at the podium after the opening of the first business session of the Annual Meeting of Delegates.

The candidate(s) must then file the nomination papers with the Chair of the Credentials and Ballot Committee through the podium assistant at the podium prior to the close of the Annual Meeting of Delegates.

The Credential and Ballot Committee will process the nomination papers for certification in accordance with the established procedure and will certify the papers if they are in compliance with the MTA Bylaws.

As the last item of business prior to the close of the first business session, the chair of the Credentials and Ballot Committee will present a supplementary (amended) report of the Committee by reading into the record the names of those who have

requested nomination papers for President and/or Vice President.

The Credentials and Ballot Committee will assure that the names of all certified candidates for President and/or Vice President will appear on the Ballots. Sufficient space will be available on the Ballot to allow for the names of certified additional candidates under the supervision of the Committee.

For 2024, members seeking candidacy by this alternative nomination method will be provided with paper sheets as well as an electronic/online signature form (online link) which may be shared with potential signers. All of the above stipulations apply, including the provision that only signatures by registered 2024 Annual Meeting delegates will count. The electronic form will contain fields to collect the same information from signers as the traditional paper form: Name, Member ID/Last 4 Digits of Social, Local Assn Name, Region/District, and Signature. The form will allow for an electronic signature, signed either by finger on a touchscreen/phone/tablet or by using a mouse on a non-touchscreen computer.

Nomination papers are due back to MTA by 5:15 p.m. on Friday, April 26, 2024.

Signatures on physical papers may be filed at the podium no later than 5:15 pm on Friday, April 26. Signatures collected electronically are automatically transmitted to MTA by 5:15 p.m.

Members seeking candidacy by this alternative nomination method will be given the opportunity to address the delegates during speeches from presidential and vice presidential candidates on Friday only if at least 200 signatures were submitted for C&B review prior to the above deadline. If less than 200 signatures were submitted, the opportunity to give a speech will not be provided. **■**

Private and Public Unions Have Different Rights

/ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10



“They’re very impractical in not allowing at least teachers to strike,” Bach said. “What you would likely see is the threat of that reality bringing management to a quicker solution through collective bargaining.”

In recent years, statewide and local educator unions have become a focus in public-sector strikes, many of them in states where striking is illegal. West Virginia started the “Red for Ed” wave in 2018, striking for improved pay and benefits, quickly followed by educators in Oklahoma and Arizona. These strikes inspired educators throughout the country to follow suit.

The power that the educator unions hold, in part, is that their numbers are so great they cannot be easily replaced, Loomis said. Educators also are professionals with credentials; someone can’t just walk into a school and start working. “Who is going to move to West Virginia, with qualifications, to work in a dilapidated school for \$30,000 a year? No one,” he said. “They hold all the cards.” **■**

Building Cultural Awareness in Classrooms

/ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

she was in school. Becoming a diversity leader for RMK was not something she planned out in advance, but it certainly has contributed to her training.

Oliveira has led reading group discussions for elementary students in Easton, working weekly over the past two years with students ranging from preK to fourth grade.

“The older kids get into the conversations and really want to tell you what they know and share what they have seen. The little kids are just figuring it all out,” Oliveira said.

The conversations have gone far and wide. A segment on clothing triggered a chat about the time a student saw a man wearing a kilt. In another instance, a young girl was able to express her pride in having perseverance through a poster design exercise.

“I see their minds turn on during our sessions,” Oliveira said. “And I have learned a lot too.”

The progression of work through the RMK curriculum begins with identity, Lamb said, allowing students to express themselves as individuals in a way that leads into talking about building community. Finally, students can talk about advocacy so cultural awareness becomes a normal and comfortable part of the school experience.

“There is such a deep need for this kind of work. We listen to teachers throughout the process and pivot as needed,” Lane said. “Working closely with educators, we see how they are learning how to open up to students in ways that strengthen relationships and improve learning overall.” **T**

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Letters to the Editor

MTA Today welcomes Letters to the Editor from 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. **T**

For additional information, please refer to the guidelines posted on massteacher.org/letters.

"I'm Here" to Help

The MTA LGBTQ+ Committee recently ordered "I'm here" badges that educators can wear on their lanyards to show support for LGBTQ+ students and staff and demonstrate that they're a safe person to speak to.

MTA locals are invited to order them through the NEA LGBTQ+ Caucus at www.nea-lgbtqc.org/imhere.html. The cost is \$2 per badge with the NEA Benefits brand or \$2.50 if co-branded with the local union. MTA locals can apply for All In or PR&O grant funds to help pay for these.

MTA branding on designs for 3-inch buttons and stickers are also available and can be printed by MTA Printing and Mailing or outside vendors, depending on the order size. Contact the LGBTQ+ Committee for more information at mtalgbtq@gmail.com. **T**



Regional Retirement Consultations Available

The MTA provides individual retirement consultations to assist members. Proof of membership must be submitted when requesting retirement services. This schedule is in effect from September to June. If possible, appointments may be available during the summer and school vacations.

All consultations are held by appointment only during the hours listed. Members are advised to call selected MTA consultants in advance to schedule an appointment.

For general questions about retirement, please call 617.878.8240. All consultants work part time and will respond as soon as possible to inquiries.

Worcester

Edward Nelson: first Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; and Karen Melanson: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; **MTA Central Office**, 12 East Worcester St., 2nd floor, Worcester. Contact Nelson at 774.239.7823 or enelson@massteacher.org; or contact Melanson at 978.660.4359 or kmelanson@massteacher.org.

Quincy

Raymond Thompson: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., **MTA Headquarters**, 2 Heritage Dr., 9th floor, Quincy; contact Thompson at 617.878.8255 or rthompson@massteacher.org. Peter Mili: virtual consultations, days and times vary; contact Mili at 617.878.8256 or pmili@massteacher.org. (Email is preferred.)

Holyoke

Ron Lech: third Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., **MTA Western Office**, 55 Bobala Road, Suite 3, Holyoke; call 413.537.2335 or email rlech@massteacher.org.

Middleton

Barbara Callaghan: third and fourth Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., **MTA Northeast Office**, 35 Village Road, Suite 602, Middleton; call 978.660.4171 or email bcallaghan@massteacher.org.

Pittsfield

Ward Johnson: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., **MTA Berkshire Office**, 188 East St., Pittsfield; call 413.443.1722 or email wjohnson@massteacher.org.

Raynham

Raymond Thompson: third Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; and Lawrence Abbruzzi: second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; **MTA Southeast Office**, 756 Orchard St., third floor, Raynham. Contact Thompson at 617.347.4425 or rthompson@massteacher.org; or contact Abbruzzi at 508.824.9194 or labbruzzi@massteacher.org.

Higher Education at-Large

Edward McCourt: call 781.325.2553 or email emccourt@massteacher.org.

Looking for obituaries?

Member obituaries have moved to our new *MTA Today* website. You will find a compilation of obituaries, which are searchable by date of death and name. Listings are updated regularly throughout the year. The new site is massteacher.org/obits.

SUMMER TRAVEL DEALS ARE ON!



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LAST WORD

Tina Mansfield

Educational Association of Worcester, student transportation

“My kids are my motivation. It’s my kids that make me want to go to work. My students are my kids. I know more about them than I probably do about my own kids. They rely on us and can talk to us. And not be judged.

I drive preK to high school. I start with high school in the morning, then I do an elementary school, then I do a middle school, then I do a preK. Then I go back. The [Central Massachusetts] Collaborative kids are my favorites. I can connect with them. All they want to do is be heard.”

PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC HAYNES