

## Future Unclear for Lawrence Schools

A palpable sense of anxiety hangs over the Lawrence Public Schools these days. Last month, state education officials designated three more schools in the city as “Level 4,” bringing the total number of chronically underperforming schools there to five. Officials also announced that they are considering a state takeover of the entire district, a move backed by William Lantigua, the embattled mayor of Lawrence.

If the Lawrence Public Schools are indeed placed into receivership—meetings of union leaders, School Committee members, teachers and parents to discuss the issue were scheduled for late November—it will mark the first time that the state has ever taken over a district. But for educators and students in the city’s schools, the news comes as just the latest in a series of headlines and setbacks. Former schools chief Wilfredo Laboy is awaiting trial for charges of fraud and embezzlement, while a search to replace the interim superintendent, Mary Lou Bergeron, was recently suspended. Mayor Lantigua, who heads the school committee, is the target of a federal corruption probe.

### A lack of leadership

Frank McLaughlin, president of the Lawrence Teachers Union and a history teacher at Lawrence High School, says that the schools don’t need receivership but leadership.



**IN THE BALANCE** State officials recently designated three more Lawrence schools as underperforming, including two small schools that are part of Lawrence High. Now the mayor of that city is calling for a state takeover.

“We have an unbelievable lack of leadership at the top in Lawrence. There is no one at the helm,” says McLaughlin, who notes that educators in the city have been without a contract for two years. “Morale is as low as it’s ever been and teachers feel totally demoralized.”

On a recent tour through several Lawrence Public Schools, the theme of a leadership vacuum was echoed again and again by teachers, most of whom asked to remain anonymous, fearful of the consequences of speaking on the record. “We need support in our classrooms and we need leadership,” said one high school teacher. Said

another: “It’s terrifying not knowing what’s going to happen next or even how the decisions about our future are going to be made.”

### Demographic challenge

To spend even a little time in a Lawrence public school is to be made aware of the immensity of the challenges facing educators here. Ninety percent of students are Hispanic, most with origins in the Dominican Republic, and few speak English as a first language. It is not uncommon for students to arrive from the Dominican Republic in the middle of the school year.

*Continued on page 8*

## Unintended Consequences

A contradiction between state law and one agency’s regulations is causing some part-time workers, including librarians and educators who work more than 20 hours a week but less than full-time to lose health insurance benefits. The problem is an unintended consequence of recent laws passed on Beacon Hill that make it easier for cities and towns to move public employees into the Group Insurance Commission or GIC.

While state law requires that municipalities provide health insurance to employees who work 20 hours a week or more, the GIC requires that employees must also participate in a state or local retirement system in order to be eligible for insurance. And that’s where the problem lies, says AFT Massachusetts municipal health insurance specialist Andy Powell. “In cities and towns where these employees aren’t part of the retirement system they’re losing their health insurance. Joining the GIC shouldn’t cause harm to municipal employees but that’s exactly what’s happening,”

**As more communities join the Group Insurance Commission, a growing number of part-time employees are losing their health insurance.**

says Powell.

As more cities and towns seek to shift their employees into the Group Insurance Commission in an effort to save money, this problem is likely to grow. In Wakefield, where town employees including teachers, librarians and firefighters are being shifted into the GIC effective January 1st, 13 part-time employees will lose their health benefits unless a remedy is found. Nearly 100 full-time long-term substitute teachers and building based educators have already lost health coverage in Lawrence, which moved its employees into the GIC last year.

*Continued on page 2*



**STAND OUT** Kirk Womack and Russell Paulding from the Urban Science Academy in West Roxbury participate in a recent protest intended to call attention to the fact that teachers in the Boston Public Schools have been without a contract for more than a year. More than 4,000 Boston educators joined the early morning action.

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## THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Thomas J. Gosnell  
President, AFT Massachusetts

### Challenges Here, There, Everywhere

This school year and the next school year will continue to pose challenges that will require us to continue to fight hard and smart, to think creatively, to work collaboratively when we can, and to get for the students the resources they need to obtain a superior education.

#### New evaluation system

The development of a new evaluation system for teachers continues to be a center stage issue. Allegedly every school system must be moving toward an evaluation system that will comply with the requirements set by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education - For example the only allowable evaluation marks are exemplary, proficient, needs improvement, and unsatisfactory. The latter two marks are considered unacceptable and will require teachers to enter a program to demonstrate immediate improvement.

#### Bargaining still applies

Even though new statewide requirements exist, collective bargaining still applies in many areas. Therefore, local communities and unions can negotiate about many aspects of evaluations. Local unions can put forward proposals that will seek to establish a system that will enable all teachers to become even better teachers



**ELECTION QUESTION** Candidate for US Senate Elizabeth Warren meets with members of the Massachusetts Nurses Association.

while at the same time will ensure that due process protections against arbitrary and punitive actions are in full operations.

Teachers know better than anyone else what an outstanding teacher is. While we do not applaud all aspects of the new system and indeed are quite vocal in our opposition to aspects of it, opportunities do exist for us to put our imprint on what happens this year.

#### Pension changes

A new pension law for those hired on January 1, 2012 and thereafter has

taken effect.

Basically the new law requires public employees to work longer for a smaller pension. The public sector unions were able to prevent more severe measures from being enacted, but particularly for lower paid employees pensions will be lower than current employees will receive.

Some good items are in the bill. Currently the cost of living allowance

applies to the first \$12,000 of a pension. Now it will apply to the first \$13,000. AFT MA will send out a flyer explaining the bill.

#### Senate election

Next year's Senate election is important. AFT MA will carefully review all the candidates' positions to determine whether we can find a candidate who will fight for working women and men. ■

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

### Health Law Has Unintended Consequences

*Continued from cover*

City officials there have filed a so-called home rule petition to remedy the situation.

For part-time municipal employees who suddenly find themselves without health insurance there are few good options in a state where the cost of insurance ranks among the highest in the country. Notes Powell: "We live in a state that mandates that Massachusetts residents have health insurance and suddenly, through no fault of their own, we have part-time employees who are seeing their coverage dropped."

#### Question of authority

Last summer lawmakers passed a bill that makes it far easier for cities and towns to move their employees into the GIC. But the GIC's regulation that an employee must belong to a retirement system has created a huge gap in health insurance coverage for part-time municipal workers whom the law says are entitled to health insurance. Because local retirement boards are not required to include part-time employees, these employees are now faced with loss of health insurance coverage if their community decides to join the GIC.

"It isn't realistic for every city and town that runs into this problem to go directly to the legislature," says AFT MA general counsel Haidee Morris.

#### Part-timers on the rise

For municipal employees, the change in the insurance law coincides with a rise in the number of part-time workers employed by cities and towns. Librarian Dan Haacker, who serves as the vice president of the Massachusetts Library Staff Association, which represents employees at public libraries across the state, says that libraries in particular are seeing once full-time employees replaced by part-time staff as cash-strapped cities deal with a rising tide of red ink. "When a full-time person retires a part-timer is hired in their place," says Haacker, who is the assistant director of the Milton Public Library.

#### Be prepared

With many more municipalities likely to be joining the GIC in the coming year, it is inevitable that more part-time employees will find themselves facing the loss of health insurance coverage. That makes it essential for local unions to identify early on exactly who among their members is likely to be affected and try to negotiate a remedy as part of any agreement with the city or town, says Powell. "Municipalities aren't joining the GIC so that they can see their employees lose coverage but that's the unfortunate consequence of the new health law." ■

## BOLD PRINT

#### Best laid plans

**Richard Christiano**, professor of facilities planning and management at the Wentworth Institute of Technology and a member of the **Wentworth Faculty Federation**, was recently honored with an award from the International Facilities Management Association (IFMA), Boston chapter. Christiano, who served on IFMA's Sustainability Committee before being appointed as vice president of education for the Boston chapter, won an award for Education and Professional Development. File under good planning!



#### Leading in Lynn

**Phil McQueen**, an English teacher in Lynn and a member of **Lynn Local 1037**, recently completed training in the AFT's Education, Research and Dissemination or **ER&D** program at The Maritime Institute in Baltimore. McQueen has been teaching English, ESL and AP Language and Composition in the Lynn Public Schools at the middle and high school levels for the past 14 years. He previously taught in Japan. McQueen says that he's thrilled by the opportunity to provide quality professional development to the members of his local. Congratulations Phil.



#### Porter Prize

The **UMass Faculty Federation**, Local 1895 has presented the **Jay Porter scholarship** to two undergraduates sophomore students at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. The awards are named in honor of Jay Porter, a long-time AFT MA field representative who worked with faculty and staff at UMass Dartmouth. This year's winners are **Cody Potvin**, a sophomore student with a 3.7 grade point average and **Jordan Benson** also a sophomore student with a 3.8 GPA each received a \$500.00 scholarship in memory of Jay Porter, long time AFT/MA field representative to local 1895. Both students have a parent who are AFSCME members with an additional parent who is a member of Teamsters local 140. Jay would be proud!



#### School on the move

Congratulations to the faculty and staff at the **Clarence R. Edwards Middle School** in Charlestown. The school is the recipient of the 6th annual \$100,000 **Thomas W. Payzant School on the Move Prize**. The prize was awarded by EdVestors, a Boston-based school change organization focused on sustaining improvement in urban schools. The first middle school to qualify for the prize, the Edwards has seen consistent improvement in recent years and is considered a model for collaborative education reform. Last spring AFT president **Randi Weingarten** visited the school to call attention to the role of its faculty and staff for leading the successful school improvement initiative. Congratulations to everyone at the Edwards for their hard work!

*The Advocate loves good news. If you've won an award, attended a conference, given a performance, etc, let us know. Send your good news to [advocate@aftma.net](mailto:advocate@aftma.net) or call 617.423.3342 x 235.*

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# Educators, Students Give “Rhee-form” a Failing Grade

Former chancellor of the Washington DC public schools Michelle Rhee continues to provoke controversy and strong opinions. Her admirers and detractors were both on hand when she visited Boston to speak on education reform.

By Matthew Robinson  
Advocate correspondent

To her admirers, Michelle Rhee, the former chancellor of the Washington DC schools is a miracle worker who led that district from among the worst in the country to one that saw surging test scores, enrollment and graduation rates. To her detractors, the woman who was featured in the film “Waiting for Superman” is anything but a heroine. They regard Rhee as a union buster who has demonized teachers and stripped educators of key workplace protections. As for those much vaunted test scores? Rhee’s critics point to mounting evidence of cheating on standardized tests in the DC public schools.

Both camps were on hand when Rhee spoke at Symphony Hall last month as part of the Boston Speakers Series. And even Rhee admitted to being “highly controversial” when she

took the stage.

Rhee was greeted by a crowd of educators and students who were protesting outside. Among them were members of the Boston Teachers Union, the Teacher Activist Group, Alliance for Educational Justice and the Boston Area Youth Organizing Project, which represents students in the Boston Public Schools.

“The outpouring of demonstrators shows there are a number of true education reformers who think [Rhee’s] policies are bankrupt,” suggested Richard Stutman, president of the BTU. Jennifer Doe, an organizer from Massachusetts Jobs with Justice which sponsored the protest, argued that the policies that Rhee implemented in Washington created havoc for students, teachers and the community in general. Said Doe: “We believe that teachers and parents should work together to create a system with adequate staffing that is supportive of all students.”

## Difference of opinion

Others said that they were moved to join the protest because of Rhee’s positions on specific issues affecting teachers. Ross Kochman, a sixth grade ELA teacher at the Harbor School in Dorchester and a co-founder of the Boston chapter of the Teacher Activist Group, criticized Rhee’s campaign to eliminate tenure. “I disagree with her assumption that great teachers are lost through seniority based layoffs,” said Kochman, noting that he himself had been laid off due to seniority



Photo courtesy of Carolyn Mainardi

**PROTEST PARADE** Protests greeted Michelle Rhee, the controversial former chancellor of the Washington DC schools, when she visited Boston last month. Protestors charge that Rhee has demonized public school teachers and created a culture of cheating and test score inflation.

issues. Tenured teachers are the first to stand up in the face of bad policy decisions for our students. If we lose tenured teachers because we abandon seniority-based layoffs than our students lose some of their strongest allies.”

On this night of protest and provocation, however, even that view was controversial. “Nobody has a job for life,” announced a ten-year teacher who’d come out to hear Rhee

speak as he pushed his way toward the entrance of Symphony Hall.

Though Rhee may have been the focal point of the protest, Framingham special education teacher Amirah Goldberg suggested that the protest was really about ‘reframing the discussion’ about education reform. “Rhee and others want us to believe that the problem with our schools is ‘failing teachers’ and the teachers’ union. But the real issue in our schools is that we’re being asked to do more with less.” Goldberg says that her caseload has been getting bigger every year, even as the programs and support staff to help struggling students are eliminated.

## Wanted: civilized dialogue

To hear Rhee say it, though, she and her detractors may not be so far apart. As the protestors paraded outside, Rhee told the audience that she too wanted to cooperate and collaborate in the name of children. “Teachers know our system needs to be changed,” Rhee suggested. “The only way that can happen is to come together and have civilized dialogue.” Continued Rhee: We need to “honor, respect, and recognize teachers for the incredibly difficult work they do every day.”

But the educators gathered outside charge that civilized dialogue is impossible as long as self-styled reformers like Rhee paint public school teachers as the enemy. “Real school change can’t happen when you insult and dismiss educators and families,” said Jen Rose-Wood, an English teacher at Brookline High School who helped to organize the protest. “We are valuable people with valuable experience and we should be a powerful voice in the process of change.” ■

*Matthew Robinson teaches English and journalism at Burke High School in Dorchester. Send comments to [advocate@aftma.net](mailto:advocate@aftma.net)*

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## 2012 AFT MA Scholarship Program

Once again AFT Massachusetts will be awarding scholarships to eight eligible high school seniors who are dependents of AFT MA members. Every year AFT MA awards eight \$1500 scholarships on the basis of a labor history exam administered by the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, in cooperation with the Massachusetts Department of Education. One additional scholarship is being awarded by the AFT MA Professional Staff Union in memory of long-time AFT MA field representative Jay Porter.

To be considered for the scholarships, named in honor of Albert Shanker and Sandra Feldman, both former presidents of the American Federation of Teachers, and Jay Porter, the student must be a dependent of an AFT MA member and a high school senior. The student must also attend a college or other post-secondary school in the fall of 2012.

### Applications

Applications for the 2012 scholarships are available on the AFT MA website: [www.aftma.net](http://www.aftma.net). The deadline for submitting applications is December 19.

To take the labor history exam, students should apply directly to their guidance office, social studies

teacher, or principal by Monday, December 13th. A packet including one labor history study guide and one application is sent to each high school in the state in November. A study guide is also available on our website.

This year’s labor history exam will be given on Wednesday, February 1. Once a student has submitted an application to AFT Massachusetts and notified a guidance counselor, he or she is considered registered for the exam.

### Additional scholarships

Additional scholarships are also available through the Massachusetts AFL-CIO. Be sure to visit [www.mass.aflcio.org/scholarship-program](http://www.mass.aflcio.org/scholarship-program) to learn about other opportunities.

Last year ten children of AFT Massachusetts members were awarded \$1500 scholarships. The 2011 winners include Moira McCrave, Marysa Angelli, Emily LaRochelle, Eric Muench, Deirda McLaughlin, Sarah Stutman, Samantha Torpey, Elizabeth Parks, John Powers and James Fiore. Congratulations to last year’s winners and good luck to all of this year’s applicants. ■

For more information call  
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# Diary

## of a New Teacher

By Joyce Melker  
Special needs paraprofessional,  
Watson Elementary  
Fall River, MA

### Meet the 2011-2012 New Teacher Diarists

#### Bill Madden-Fuoco

A humanities teacher at the Urban Science Academy in West Roxbury, Bill was also a semi-finalist in the state's 2012 Teacher of the Year contest.

#### Robert Tobio

Robert teaches math and special education at the Mary Lyon Pilot School in Brighton and previously taught at Monument High in South Boston, which closed last spring.

#### Melissa McDonald

A fifth grade teacher at the Parthum Elementary School in Lawrence, Melissa is returning to teaching after a year of maternity leave.

#### Joyce Melker

A paraprofessional at the Watson Elementary School in Fall River, Joyce is a student in the JET teacher training program at UMass Dartmouth.

#### Matthew Robinson

Matthew is beginning his second year teaching English and journalism at the Burke High School in Dorchester.

#### Riana Good

While Riana is technically no longer a new teacher, this Spanish teacher at the Boston Teachers Union School in Jamaica Plain says that she still feels like a 'newby.'

Remember when you were young and everyone asked you what you wanted to be when you grew up? I do. I played games like house and would always insist on being the mom, but my playmates would tell me that wasn't enough; I had to have a real job too. I always chose to be a teacher because it was the one job that let me be with the younger children that I so enjoyed.

Flash forward to today and I am a wife, a mother and an educator. I am a paraprofessional in the Fall River school system—and I love it. This year I began working at Watson Elementary and my new appointment has placed me in a position where I feel that I can be of the most use. It's a well-known fact that if students aren't able to grasp the basics taught in elementary school, they will continue to fall farther and farther behind in the upper grades. As a special needs/inclusion para I work with children who face tremendous challenges in school. Sometimes we have a diagnosis and documentation of a learning disability; other times learning problems are the result of stress and anxiety over situations outside of school. Regardless of the cause of a child's learning difficulties my goal is simple: I want to be the teacher who encourages children to look past their current problems and see the potential in themselves that I see.

While working at the Henry Lord School in Fall River my principal encouraged me to apply to the Journey into Education and Teaching program at UMass Dartmouth and become a teacher. It crossed my mind at the time that maybe I was getting too old to go back to school, but with the encouragement of my husband I took a shot. The JET program uses a cohort model and it has been wonderful. I have not only gained more knowledge,



**TEACHER IN TRAINING** Fall River paraprofessional Joyce Melker is studying to become a teacher through the JET program at UMass Dartmouth.

but also nineteen sisters and one brother who share my enthusiasm for teaching. We support and encourage one another when the trials of being students, teachers and parents begin to pile up. We've even a slogan: "Don't be a baby duck! Lead. Teach." For us the image of a brood of yellow fluffy ducklings following along behind the mother also represents that of a teacher and her eager students.

Some people are really good at sitting back and taking it easy. Not me. I am happiest when my plate is full and I am in a constant state of motion. In 2001, I learned the most difficult lesson of my life: *Life is short and there are no second chances.* That year my mother died after a short illness, and our son, now thirteen, was diagnosed as severely and profoundly autistic and showed very few signs of ever improving. The combination of these two events has changed the course of my life and turned me into a crusader for children, especially those with disabilities. I

have become a woman on a mission: to continue my work as a special education instructor and help the children who need me the most.

This May I will graduate with a bachelor's degree. But it doesn't end there. I'm also working on my master's in teaching as well as a certification in special education for children with mild to moderate disabilities.

As I look forward to graduation I'm conscious of the fact that for me this is only the beginning. As a life-long resident of Fall River and a product of a public school education, I know that there are quality educators in our city who truly care about the work they do. It's a challenge and an opportunity for me to give back to the city I am proud to call home. For me, there is no better feeling than breaking through the barriers and seeing the light bulb of acknowledgement go on in the eyes of a child with a learning disability. I can't think of a better challenge than that to take on every day. ■

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## Extras for Creative Learning

[www.exclrecycles.org](http://www.exclrecycles.org)

***A Lynn nonprofit takes donated supplies and materials from area businesses—and gives them to teachers and artists for use in the classroom.***

**A**re you looking for free supplies and materials for your classroom? Extras for Creative Learning can help. The nonprofit organization, which recently relocated from Boston to Lynn, takes materials that area businesses no longer want and provides them to teachers at little to no cost. On a recent weekday, Jodi Schmidt and Lindsay Keyes, who oversee the operation, were celebrating the arrival of hundreds of pounds of sidewalk chalk, a pile of calendar clocks and thousands upon thousands of popsicle sticks. Explains Schmidt: “We have all of these interesting tactile things for teachers and artists to use, and because we get them in bulk you’re able to get all of what you need.”

The thirty-year old organization, which had its headquarters in the basement of the Boston Latin School until this fall, is one of several in New England that provide surplus materials for use by educators and artists. The concept is simple: businesses, from small offices to major manufacturers, donate supplies that they no longer have use for. “It could be paper that’s headed to the shredder, binders, even the contents of a desk,” explains Keyes, who serves as ExCL’s executive director. “It doesn’t make sense for them to throw away staplers and tape—those are things that teachers need.” Businesses that donate their leftovers get a tax write off, while educators get access to a limitless—and ever changing—array of items for use in the classroom.

Individuals pay \$50 for a 12 month membership (Lynn teachers are



**EXTRAS** Lindsay Keyes, executive director of Extras for Creative Learning, surveys a calendar clock. ExCL which recently relocated from Boston to Lynn, accepts donations of materials from area businesses for teachers and artists to use in their classrooms at no or low cost.

currently able to join for \$25 thanks to a generous donation for the local United Way). The membership entitles teachers to six shopping trips, during which they can take away as much as they like. During a typical visit a teacher leaves with an average of \$224 worth of materials, says Schmidt. And while some objects obviously lend themselves to classroom use others require a more creative approach. And that’s part of the fun, says Schmidt. When a local company donated thousands of cell phone cases it didn’t take Schmidt and Keyes long to come up with a function for them. “They make a perfect carrying case for flash cards,” says Schmidt. There is also an area of for-sale items, including furniture. The most expensive item at present is a top-of-the-line wooden white board that ExCL is selling for \$50. “Even the items that we charge for are very low cost,” says Keyes.

While most of their patrons are teachers, ExCL also welcomes artists for whom the cost of supplies can be prohibitive. Schmidt became a passionate ExCL member as a result of her experiences teaching art in several Massachusetts public schools. As a young teacher in Worcester she taught 30 art classes per week on a budget that amounted to less than a dollar per child. “This is a way of making art projects affordable,” says Schmidt. “Teachers get free supplies, kids get materials, and businesses get rid of stuff they don’t need. It really works for everybody.” ■

*Extras for Creative Learning is located at 20 Wheeler Street in Lynn. Contact them at 781.599.9939 or visit [www.exclrecycles.org](http://www.exclrecycles.org) for more information about hours of operation and membership.*



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# On Campus

Dan Georgianna, Political Director  
UMass Faculty Federation, Local 1895



## For Higher Education, Times are A-Changing

**“Massive college debt threatens not only college students’ futures but the financial health of the economy. I see little difference between college debt and mortgage debt in a long term recession. Both give hostages to the future.”**

More than at any time since the mid 1960s, “the times they are a-changing.” Unlike the 1960s, few of these changes appear promising. Global warming, a financial crisis that doesn’t seem to end, and the worldwide recession that it caused evoke images of sea water lapping at our door steps, worthless currency, and unemployment.

Higher education also doesn’t seem as promising for faculty, staff and students as it did a generation ago.

As its title suggest, *Higher Education: How Colleges are Wasting Our Money and Failing Our Kids - And What We Can Do About It* is not a comfortable read for people who work in higher education. The authors (Andrew Hacker and Claudia Dreifus, one full-time and the other part-time professors at Queens University) portray most faculty as self-serving and overpaid, especially



tenured and tenure-track faculty. They add that administrators make work for themselves at excessive salaries, their numbers increasing exponentially as the number of full-time faculty are decreasing, and most college staff, especially those in sports and non-academic student services, don’t contribute anything to higher education.

### Broken promises

The authors’ central concern is the rising cost of higher education, growing at double or more the rate of the cost of living. Four years of college costs anywhere between \$50,000 and \$250,000 and few graduate in four years. College cost is rising because students and their parents are willing to pay, mostly by mortgaging their futures. Student debt approaches \$1 trillion in the U.S., about double the national debt of Greece that threatens the economies of Europe and the rest of the world.

The authors’ solutions to “wasting

### RISING COSTS

The cost of higher education is growing at double or more the rate of the cost of living. The rising cost of college—and the uncertain job prospects for college graduates—is proving to be a combustible combination.

our money and failing our kids”: cut costs and reduce reliance on student loans, eliminate courses that focus on training rather than on education, abolish tenure because it doesn’t protect academic freedom, eliminate sabbaticals and research that detracts from teaching, and spin off university research centers. Given the choice between funding research faculty or adjunct faculty, they want adjunct faculty paid more, with office space and other facilities.

### The fall of the faculty

*The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why It Matters* by Benjamin Ginsberg, also a college professor at a major university (Johns Hopkins), agrees with much of the problems in college education portrayed by Higher Education, especially the declining quality of education, but places the blame squarely on the increases in numbers and control by administrators. The author sees

the major problem as confusing ends with means. For faculty, human and physical structures in colleges and universities are a means to the twin goals of teaching and research; for college administrators, teaching and research are the means to the end, the financial viability of the institution.

He wants faculty to take back control of education and research by convincing boards of trustees, the media, students, parents, and alumni that administrative power is misplaced and focus should return to teaching and research driven by faculty control. By contrast, Higher Education argues that research subtracts from teaching and much shared governance is wasteful, driven

by faculty “anxiety that they’ve lost control of the institution.”

Both books agree that there are too many administrators who create unproductive work for productive faculty and staff. Higher Education quotes statistics showing that college administrators per 1,000 students has doubled since 1976.

It is easy to see both books as laments for the loss of the good old days when liberal arts professors ruled. Still, the excessive reliance on loans, the peculiarity of tenure, and the surfeit of administrators ring true with me.

### Mortgaging the future

Colleges are too expensive, and massive college debt threatens not only college students’ futures but the financial health of the economy. I see little difference between college debt and mortgage debt in a long term recession. Both give hostages to the future.

Tenure does not protect academic freedom for the 2/3rds of the faculty who are not covered by the tenure system. The end of tenure would be a terrible blow to academic freedom, but privileges for the few cannot long survive restrictions for the many.

There are too many administrators, and they have too much power. The model of faculty and administrators on leave from teaching determining curriculum and pedagogy has mostly disappeared. More troubling, teaching is only one of many divisions at most universities, often on an equal footing with administration and finance, student services, fund raising, and athletics.

Other, more positive, changes are occurring on college campuses, however. The faculty who were hired in the 1970s had to fight for academic freedom and control of the curriculum in the golden age of tenure-track appointments. Younger faculty, both tenure-track and adjunct, who replaced them came through a tougher process. They will either keep their heads down in the self-seeking environment of the modern university or join together to create a new, better paradigm of teaching and learning. My money’s on the latter. ■

Dan Georgianna is the Chancellor Professor of Economics at UMass Dartmouth. Share comments with him at [dgeorgianna@umassd.edu](mailto:dgeorgianna@umassd.edu)



## Educator Mentor Corps

Are you an experienced educator who is looking to get involved in mentoring? The Educator Mentor Corps is a program of Wheelock College that mobilizes skilled, experienced educators to help support, inspire and retain the next generation of urban teachers in Greater Boston. Most EMC mentors are retired or working part-time and have 20 or more years of teaching experience.

An AmeriCorps program, EMC offers its members a stipend of \$1500 and an education award of \$1468 in exchange for a commitment of 10 hours per week.



For more information, email [azak@wheelock.edu](mailto:azak@wheelock.edu).  
To apply, go to [www.wheelock.edu/aspire/emcapp.asp](http://www.wheelock.edu/aspire/emcapp.asp).



# Retiree Corner

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

## SENIOR SEMINAR

### Preparing for Retirement

Are you planning to retire in the near future? Learn the ins and outs of preparing for retirement, including Medicare, working in retirement, pensions and other issues. Don't be caught by surprise!

**When:** Thursday, January 12 (snow date: January 18)

Where: Billerica, MA, location and time to be announced.

Contact Marie Ardito for details at 1-617-482-1568 or e-mail [mardito@retireesunited.org](mailto:mardito@retireesunited.org).

# Celebrating a Legislative Victory

Ask and you shall receive" may work in prayer but when it comes to legislative issues one should not only ask to have a bill filed but also work to get it passed. In between the "asking" and the "receiving" are years of research and education on the issue to justify the bill's passage.

Massachusetts Retirees United is very proud of the efforts of all its members in getting two bills filed and included in the recent Pension Reform Bill. Hopefully, by the time you read this column Governor Patrick will have signed it.

The first bill will benefit retirees who wish to continue working in the public sector after they retire. Presently, one can work up to 960 hours or make the difference between what your pension is and what your salary would have been had you remained working in the position from which you retired, whichever happens first. In other words yearly raises for active teachers increase what they can earn. This is calculated on a calendar year not a contract year. The bill that MRU was instrumental in getting filed and re-filed yearly increased that amount by \$15,000. So going forward, assuming that the Governor signs it, you will be able to earn the difference

between what your pension is and your salary would have been had you remained working plus \$15,000 additional. This bill took close to four years to bring to completion.

The second bill, The Maternity Bill, took over ten years to reach the Governor's desk. It was first filed by now Registrar Rachel Kaprielian while she was still a representative, and would have allowed those who were still working to purchase up to four years of their unpaid maternity leave as long as the leave began no later than January 1975. Her argument was that women retired on much lower pensions than their male counterparts because they were forced by contract to leave teaching because of pregnancy. In some instances teachers had to leave as soon as they became pregnant. One teacher told me that her administrator warned her "not to dare to wear maternity clothes to school"!

This bill, for which MRU is solely responsible, will extend the same benefits to those who were retired at the time the original bill passed. You are probably eligible if you can answer yes to all of the following questions:

1. Were you teaching in a public school in Massachusetts prior

to January 1975 and were you forced to take unpaid leave for maternity reasons prior to that date?

2. Did you have a child within 9 months after leaving?
3. Did you return at some future date to teaching in a public school in Massachusetts?
4. Did you retire with less than 80%?
5. Did you retire prior to September 2000?

If you answered yes to all the above you will probably receive an increase in your pension. The following is the process that MTRS plans to use. First they will send out an announcement and questionnaire, most likely in January. If the answers to the questions above show that you qualify for the benefit, they will pull your file to verify the information. They will then add to the creditable service you had at the time you retired the number of years for which you qualify (up to a maximum of four years) and recalculate your pension. The House version of the bill says that the increase cannot occur until July 2012, however the Conference Committee version uses an April 2012 date.

We have no problem with that as it will allow the MTRS time to do this additional work. I have offered to help the MTRS unofficially in the process so please direct any questions to me [mardito@retireesunited.org](mailto:mardito@retireesunited.org) and get the word out to those who retired prior to September 2000. I have a database to keep those who will benefit updated on the process.

When one retires the various retirement groups in the state send letters of invitation to join their organization. They promise a lot but Massachusetts Retirees United delivers. Thanks to all who helped with their emails and phone calls to bring these two bills to fruition. Persistence pays off and unity brings success! ■

## The Golden Apple



By Joseph Quigley

When I was young I wanted to become a priest, not odd for a boy growing up Boston Irish Catholic in the 1950's. I came to know the Salesians of Don Bosco, whose mission was to teach youth. Its founder started by gathering abandoned youth in Italy and teaching them a trade along with academics.

I attended a "Juniorate," a type of boarding school, in historic Ipswich, Massachusetts, housed on what had been the estate of the descendants of John Proctor of Salem Witch Trial fame, and the international aspect of the order meant that we not only had a faculty from the United States, but from countries around the world. The students were also from many states, including a few from Canada. Our school's relationship with similar schools allowed exposure to teachers and students from all over as well. We were visited by international personalities, and, because of the Salesian mission, education in all things was at all times paramount. Education was not limited to academics, but included whatever lessons could be learned from those

with whom we came in contact within and beyond the classroom. The adage about life being an education was more than a platitude. It was reality.

Having come from various backgrounds and experiences our teachers instilled in us a desire to learn as much as we could so when it came to our turn to teach, we would go beyond what the curriculum called for and educate the whole person.

We had teachers who had spent their youth in such settings as the Spanish Civil War, Europe before, during, and after World War II, the Middle East, and parts of Asia, and some had to escape before the Iron Curtain came down. Our curriculum was typical of any high school, but it was supplied by people with life experiences beyond anything we might have experienced in our home towns, and often delivered in unconventional ways.

History was learned through its participants. Because of the multi-acre nature of our school's property we learned from, and to care for the environment. Astronomy was learned during night walks as the meanings and histories of the constellations were explained to us. Science was a firsthand experience as the lakes, rivers, and wetlands in the area served as our laboratory. Our environment became a resource, and we were lucky to have had it.

Because our influences were multi-cultural, we learned to respect



the cultures from which our students would come, and to respect and address students in accordance with how they were raised and influenced.

What was instilled was the necessity of educating the whole student, going beyond the strict confines of the curriculum. Where students might not be able to go out into the greater world, we were to bring it to them. Students would learn what was presented, so it was important to present as much as humanly possible, and to sometimes do it in unconventional ways.

When I first entered teaching as an English teacher and later as a special education teacher, there was

no limit to what could be brought into the classroom. My students may not have been as lucky as I had been, but that did not mean they should be limited. The suits of armor, harpoons, model ships, biological specimens, old books, historic artifacts and other such items that comprised the furniture and decorations in my homes during the summer months made their way into my classrooms during the year so students could see, touch, and experience what they encountered in textbooks.

It was as if the teachers I had in high school were in the room with me, and I was often able to pass on what I had received from first hand sources.

Sadly, though, with the present emphasis on testing and test scores, this approach has been condemned by those who want us to teach to the test and use all the classroom time for test preparation. And the students have lost out. ■

*Joseph Quigley is a retired teacher and political cartoonist. His cartoons appear regularly in the Advocate.*

# Future Unclear in Lawrence

Continued from cover

**“Anyone making decisions that will affect teachers in Lawrence needs to spend time in our classrooms and in the hallways of our schools. You need to walk in our shoes.”**

—Kathy Delaney, guidance counselor, South Lawrence East Middle School

And whether these new students speak English or not, that is the language in which they must be taught—and tested. In 2002 Massachusetts voters approved a ballot initiative requiring that all public school students be educated solely in English.

## Silver bullets?

In the coming weeks and months a plethora of policy recommendations will be made for how best to turn around the Lawrence schools. But Lawrence is no stranger to school improvement trends. Lawrence High School is actually six small schools, a reflection of the small schools movement that has swept through public education in recent

years. That approach holds that large urban schools should be divided into smaller autonomous units, resembling more closely the size and structure of private schools. The new campus of Lawrence High School reflects that belief in its very architecture. Each of the six small schools has its own facility, while students who attend the individual schools wear designated uniforms. Of the schools that were recently classified as chronically underperforming by the state, two, Business, Management and Finance and the International School, were divisions of Lawrence High School. Meanwhile, the Gates Foundation, the single largest funder of the move to break up large urban schools, has begun to move away from that approach.

## Turnaround tale

Efforts to improve student achievement at the city’s least performing schools have intensified in recent years. After state education officials classified two Lawrence schools as “Level 4” in 2010, educators at the Arlington Elementary School and the South Lawrence East Middle School were forced to reapply for their jobs. Kathy Delaney, a guidance counselor at middle school, explains that out of 51 educators there, just 15 returned



**GREAT EXPECTATIONS**  
Dianne Traynor, an A.P. English teacher at Lawrence High School, says that more turmoil in the city’s schools is the last thing that Lawrence students need. “The students are fearful—you can feel it in the air. The time they spend here in our classrooms is the safest most structured part of their lives and they really depend on us.”

after the reapplication process. “It was a really wrenching experience—very hard on morale,” says Delaney, who is also a vice president of the Lawrence Teachers Union. In addition to the staff shake up, both schools have also implemented extensive changes in an effort to boost the fortunes of struggling students. The school day has been extended, educators are required to attend professional development sessions after school as well as on some weekends, and to provide after-school tutoring for students. At the Arlington, where the student population includes a substantial number of English language learners who aren’t literate in their own languages, teachers have made a major push to reach the families of their students. The school has even offered English classes to parents in hopes of better involving family members in their children’s education.

But while both schools saw student achievement improve last year as measured by the state’s MCAS exam, neither made the kind of progress that restructuring was supposed to produce. The schools are currently in the second year of a three-year turnaround plan, after which still more drastic measures can be implemented. What will happen to the schools should the entire district be placed in receivership remains unclear.

## Uncertain fate

At press time, state officials were preparing for two meetings, including a public hearing, intended to determine the fate of the Lawrence Public Schools. Earlier this year the president of the Lawrence Teachers Union made headlines by issuing a very public invitation to Mitchell Chester, the state’s Commissioner of Education, to visit to Lawrence for a first-hand look at its schools. While Chester hasn’t yet indicated whether he plans to visit the city, educators here have expressed repeated concern that state officials simply don’t understand the challenges that they face. “Anyone making decisions that will affect teachers in Lawrence needs to spend time in our classrooms and in the hallways of our schools,” says Delaney. “You need to walk in our shoes.”

In a recent anonymous survey, educators painted a bleak picture of crowded classrooms and a physical infrastructure in distress: leaking roofs, poor air quality, persistent mold problems, crumbling walls and rodent infestation. Meanwhile, at school after school, teachers reported that morale is sagging even as the paperwork intended

to monitor accountability measures piles up.

## Providing stability

Not long after the news broke that Mayor Lantigua was urging the state to take over the Lawrence Public Schools, a student approached Dianne Traynor, an A.P. English teacher at Lawrence High. “He came up to me and said ‘I’m sorry you’re going to get fired,’” recalls Traynor, who teaches at the Business Management and Finance school, one of two high school units to receive the Level 4 designation.

Traynor, like a number of teachers at the high school, expressed deep concern about what the uncertain fate of the school will mean for its students. “The students are fearful—you can feel it in the air. The time they spend here in our classrooms is the safest most structured part of their lives and they really depend on us,” says Traynor. ■

## Former Paras Embrace a Challenge

When Genevieve Bard decided to apply for a teaching position at South Lawrence East Middle School after it was designated a Level 4 school by the state, she admits that she was taking a big risk. After all, Bard had worked as a paraprofessional at another Lawrence middle school, the Robert Frost, for nearly years before. “I was up near the top professionally,” says Bard, who completed her teaching degree—with high honors—at the age of 50. “I took a leap and I’m glad I did it.”

Bard, who now teaches fifth grade science at South Lawrence East, is one of six former paraprofessionals or building-based educators who’ve gone on to become teachers in the city’s level four schools. Joining Bard are Gretchen Ortiz, Elizabeth Richardo and Heather Long, all new teachers at the Arlington Elementary School, and David Duncan and Patricia Britton, new teachers at South Lawrence East.

The new teachers picked a challenging time to join the faculty at the schools, both of which are in the midst of multi-year turnaround plans. The schools now have an extended day, a new teacher evaluation system and an intensive professional development program. Teachers routinely stay late—or come in on weekends—for additional training as well as to provide students with tutoring.

“It’s definitely been a big adjustment,” says David Duncan, who formerly worked as a special education para in a substantially separate classroom at Lawrence High School. The 28 year old Duncan now teaches health, including social and mental health, to more than 500 South Lawrence East students. “Getting to know all of the students and helping



Photo by Amika Kemmler-Ernst

**LEAP OF FAITH** David Duncan, a former special education para at Lawrence High, is now a full-time teacher at South Lawrence East Middle School. Duncan is one of six former paras or building based educators who are now teaching in a Level 4 school in Lawrence.

them to make healthier choices is the best part of the job,” says Duncan.

Both Duncan and Bard made use of the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant program to pay for their teacher training. The program, which AFT Massachusetts helped to create, offers financial support to paras who want to become full-time teachers, as long as they commit to working in the public schools.

For Bard, who grew up in Lawrence, the opportunity to teach in its most challenging schools was too tempting to pass up—even if the road to get there hasn’t been easy. “I had to juggle family, work, homework. But if you’re doing what you really want to do you’ll get there,” says Bard. “It’s always been my dream to teach.” ■

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