

## For Libraries, Glimmers of Hope

After years of cuts, things are finally looking up for some public libraries. Still, with many cities and towns deep in the red, librarians remain wary of the future.



**BUILDING CAPACITY** The Milton Public Library recently moved into a much larger facility but lacks the necessary staff to monitor the expanded space. From left: staff members Sally Lawler, Dan Haacker and Terry Hall.

At the Bridgewater Public Library, things are looking up. After a tax override vote failed in this South Shore community in the fall of 2007, the library very nearly closed its doors. Hours were slashed to a mere 14 a week, while all but eight staff members were let go. Today, the future looks decidedly brighter, says Ann Gerald, the circulation services librarian and the chapter chair of the Bridgewater Public Library Staff Association. Over the summer, an override finally passed here, allowing the library to hire back two part-timers and to more than double its hours of operation. “We’re not out of the woods yet but things are definitely moving in the right direction,” says Gerald.

While the situation at the Bridgewater Library was particularly dire—the facility lost its certification, meaning that local residents can no longer borrow or request books from other libraries—Ms. Gerald’s

note of cautious optimism might apply to any number of libraries in the Commonwealth. After years of seeing staff and hours lost to budget cuts, many librarians say that they’re hopeful that they’ve already borne the brunt of the cuts. “We’re not hearing about as many closings and layoffs,” says Mary Francis Best, a reference librarian at the Milford Public Library and the head of the Massachusetts Library Staff Association. And while the economy in Massachusetts remains in the doldrums—local officials are warning that they expect fiscal year 2012 to be the worst so far—the economic downturn may actually have helped libraries to prove their importance. “People need libraries

right now, whether it’s for Internet or DVDs or books. Demand is way up and I think libraries are holding their own,” says Best.

### Community centers

Across the state, demand for library services has skyrocketed in recent years. Drop by the Stoughton Public Library and you’re likely to encounter a crowd these days. There is often a wait to use one of the library’s eight computer terminals and many more patrons bring their own computers to the facility to make use of the library’s free wireless access, says Josh Olshin, a reference librarian and the chapter chair of the Stoughton Public Library Staff Association.

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## For Longy Faculty, a Tumultuous Year

On a frigid February night last year, members of the faculty at the Longy School of Music celebrated their successful vote to form the first ever union at the Cambridge music school. After a campaign that lasted more than a year—and was fought by Longy administrators at a cost of more than \$80,000—music teachers at the school had successfully joined together in order to have more of a voice in how Longy was run. Buoyed by their victory, members of the new Longy Faculty Union quickly got to work, preparing to negotiate a first contract that would making hiring and firing practices more transparent and give teachers at the school due process rights.

The spirit of celebration didn’t last long, however. Just weeks after the faculty members elected to become part of AFT Massachusetts, Longy administrators announced a significant restructuring of the school, firing 39

faculty members, eight of whom were union members. A total of 92 faculty members were ultimately affected by what Longy administrators termed ‘the realignment.’ “I received a letter telling me that I wasn’t going to be teaching at Longy anymore,” recalls Sophie Vilker, who taught violin and chamber music at the school for 32 years and formerly headed the string department there. “Longy was a second home to me. I was absolutely devastated,” says Vilker.

The repercussions of the realignment went far beyond the faculty members who were terminated. Teachers at the school lost classes as well as long-time students after administrators introduced a new—and seemingly arbitrary—set of rules governing who could teach in what programs at Longy. Faculty who had formerly taught in both the school’s community and conservatory, or professional division, could now teach in only one of these.

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**GRACE NOTE** Violinist Sophie Vilker with student Veronica Dicker. Vilker, who taught at the Longy School of Music for 32 years, was terminated by Longy administrators last year, soon after faculty at the school formed a union. Now a federal judge has ordered that Vilker and seven of her colleagues be reinstated.

AFT Massachusetts has a new website. Visit us at [www.aftma.net](http://www.aftma.net) for all of the latest information on:

- Hot issues, including teacher evaluations, Race to the Top and changing standards that affect educators across the state
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## THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Thomas J. Gosnell  
President, AFT Massachusetts

# Challenges Continue

This year will present many challenges to the positions we have long held on significant issues. Two of them are health insurance for our public employee members and the evaluation of teachers in public schools. Even though I've written about them in previous columns, their constant presence in the media demands that the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts give them more attention.

### Health insurance

In the private sector health insurance coverage for workers has been in decline. This unfortunate situation has caused a number of backward looking folks to assert that health insurance coverage for public employees must also decline. Of course, a more enlightened view would assert that all Americans deserve robust health insurance and that we must find a way to make that happen.

Those who oppose this view claim that the cost of health insurance has escalated so massively that employers cannot afford extensive health insurance coverage and must shift costs to the employees.

A more progressive approach to cost savings would require drug companies, hospitals, and insurance companies to be mindful of the needs of consumers when determining their profits.

During this state legislative session public employee health insurance coverage will be a prime topic. We shall need to use an array of resources to retain a fair and comprehensive system of health insurance coverage. More than anything else this means that the membership must involve itself. At the appropriate time all of us need to communicate with our state representative and senators. We must fight hard, and equally importantly, we must fight smart.

### Performance evaluations of teachers

Statewide changes in the performance evaluation of teachers will occur. However, AFT MA does not support the use of MCAS scores as an evaluative tool. This has caused some newspapers to print nasty comments about our position. In response to these comments I wrote the following letter to the *Boston Globe* which printed it in late December:

"The American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts (AFT MA) supports what is good for students, fair to teachers and collaboratively done. Consequently, we support a professional and comprehensive

system of teacher evaluation. We believe that an evaluation system that is fair, transparent, and collaboratively developed is an integral component of a sound educational system.

A collaborative approach, recognizing that excellent teachers and excellent administrators know the essence of excellent teaching, is essential. What they can do together to implement an effective system of evaluation is beyond measure.

Since the academic success and civic growth of our students are vital, we need fair and multiple measures to determine whether students are growing academically and learning to be involved citizens. However, the scores from the MCAS test, given to far less than half of our students each year, were never meant to evaluate teachers, and no data support the effectiveness of using MCAS scores as an evaluative tool.

In addition, student achievement is a shared responsibility. The entire community, which at a minimum includes teachers, other educational personnel, administrators, parents, the students themselves, and elected and appointed officials, is responsible for student success. It does take a village to raise and educate a child."

In this edition of the *Advocate* Dan Murphy, Director of Educational Policy and Programs, has produced an informative question and answer piece which puts the issue of teacher evaluation in perspective. We shall keep you informed.

### Website

Go to [www.aftma.net](http://www.aftma.net) to see our renovated website. We have much current information there.

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

## AFT Members Plan Response to Challenges

There was no shortage of resolve and determination when AFT affiliates from 37 state federations gathered in Washington, D.C., Jan. 7-9 for the new year's first order of business: crafting a comprehensive plan to defend vital public services, and the professionals who deliver them, from no-holds-barred attacks in today's perilous, divisive economic and political landscape.

The conference drew teams of AFT leaders from 38 states, including Massachusetts, and their goal was to come up with effective union responses to some of the toughest challenges members face—including efforts to gut collective bargaining, attacks on pensions, and privatization of public schools and services. The responses to these and other challenges, AFT president Randi Weingarten told the group, must be as aggressive and as comprehensive as the threats in play. "We are not going to give up, and we are not going to hunker down," Weingarten told union leaders.

AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka also addressed the gathering, and emphasized the need for comprehensive action. "This can't be a parochial fight—no union alone is big enough" to take on well-heeled, well-coordinated groups determined to

silence the power and voice of a strong middle class. "It's time to take back the political momentum," he said.

Speakers at the conference included Ed Muir from the AFT's research and information services department, who said he expects this to be the worst year yet for the state fiscal crisis. The deepening fiscal crisis is going to fuel continued attacks on public employees and their unions, including expanded efforts to roll back bargaining rights, Muir added.

Moody's Analytics chief economist Mark Zandi, who has advised both Democrats and Republicans on economic policy, told conference participants that there are reasons to be optimistic about the state of the US economy. Zandi gave several reasons for his optimism, including the decline in U.S. household debt. Zandi's optimistic outlook, however, was tempered by discussion of the reasons for continued concern, including the state and local government budget crisis. Zandi's opinion: "The cutbacks in state and local governments, and some of the tax increases that are occurring in states and localities across the country, will be the most significant drag on the economy in 2011 and probably 2012."

# BOLD PRINT

### Cover story

Edwards Middle School teachers **Ted Chambers, Kevin Qazilbash** and **Tracy Young** are being featured on the cover of this month's *American Teacher* magazine. The AFT publication is highlighting the Edward's crew's work on developing state-of-the art online lesson planning for teachers. The Boston educators received one of seven AFT Innovation Fund grants this year to develop their concept. The two year old Innovation Fund was created in order to facilitate collaboration and teacher-led reform in the public schools. To read the *American Teacher* story and find out how you can apply for an Innovation grant, visit [www.aftma.net](http://www.aftma.net).

### By the book

Lynn teacher **Kathy Parker** has published her first children's book. Entitled *Fred Freckle*, the book chronicles a young boy's search for a single freckle. Parker, who teaches at the Lynn Woods Elementary School, will read from the book and sign copies at the Lynn Public Library on February 19th at 10:30 AM.

### Worthy cause

**Danielle Bedard**, a seventh grade social studies teacher at the **Robert Adams Middle School** in Holliston, is justifiably proud of her students these days. They raised a total of \$6,308 for Project Just Because, a Hopkinton based organization that assists individuals and families that are having financial difficulties by supplying them with items they need. Teachers at the school have encouraged their students to raise funds or collect goods to be donated to the charity. The middle schoolers took their assignment seriously, collecting more than 500 blankets to help keep needy families warm this winter.

### Employee of the month...

**Nora Clooney**, a librarian at **Nashoba Valley Technical High School** in Westford, was recently named employee of the month there after being nominated by several current and former students. In their glowing testimony, the students wrote of Clooney: "She is always available to help the students of Nashoba Tech. She never raises her voice or gets angry. She's a special lady and deserves to be recognized. She has to deal with so many cranky students and she always keeps her cool."

### Home run...

**Manny Delcarmen**, a former Boston Red Sox relief pitcher and a graduate of the former West Roxbury High School, has donated \$15,000 to the Boston Public Schools for library and athletics upgrades. Delcarmen raised the money through his "Bowlin' Strikes for Schools presented by New Balance" charity bowling tournaments. He made the donation during a Double Dutch Tournament at Mildred Avenue School in Mattapan last month. This is the fourth year he has donated all of the funds raised to the Boston Public Schools.

Got good news? Send it to [advocate@aftma.net](mailto:advocate@aftma.net) or call 617-423-3342 x235.

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# For Longy Faculty, a Tumultuous Year

Continued from cover

**“I’ve been amazed by how dedicated everyone has been, not just for themselves but for the benefit of the entire school. We truly love Longy and want to move forward in a positive direction.”**

—Erik Entwistle, music history teacher, Longy School of Music, member, Longy Faculty Union

taught at Longy for 23 years, also lost the ability to teach in the school’s conservatory program. Anker, who was one of the leaders of the union organizing campaign, says that the changes represent more than a new set of rules, imposed by the administration of Longy’s president Karen Zorn. Instead, they undermined what has long been so unique about this school. “I might teach beginning voice to a graduate student in chamber music one day and then singing classes for community members the next. It made for a very interesting combination and that mix has been good for our students, good for us and good for morale.”

## A union takes shape

For Anker and other faculty members, the drastic changes at the school merely confirmed that they were not participants in decision making at Longy. The union organizing effort drew the support of a wide cross section of faculty at the school, many of whom had taught at Longy for decades and felt troubled by the new administration’s lack of transparency. Says violinist Sophie Vilker: “We knew that something was coming and that we needed protection. Unfortunately not all of the faculty understood that.”

As they mourned the loss of their colleagues who had been terminated and dealt with the sudden changes in their work lives, members of the Longy Faculty Union also had a tremendous task before them. The new union still lacked any official structure or a constitution. Meanwhile, communicating with members, many of whom were only at the school a few



**HOPING FOR HARMONY** Pianist Shizue Sano has taught at the Longy School of Music for more than two decades. She says that while the last year has been extremely stressful, she is hopeful for the future.

## Uncertain times

Pianist Shizue Sano, who has been teaching piano at Longy for more than 20 years, lost half of her classes as a result of the realignment. She formerly taught both graduate students who dreamed of becoming professionals as well as ‘amateurs’ in Longy’s community programs, often local music lovers. Sano, who was told she could no longer teach in the conservatory program, said the changes have resulted in considerable financial uncertainty. “My workload is half of what it was,” says Sano. But the realignment also separated her from conservatory students who’d come to Longy to study under her. “One of my piano majors was a freshman and I felt terrible about not being able to work with her any longer.”

## The soul of a school

Voice teacher Liz Anker, who has

hours a week, remained a challenge.

“When you look at what they’ve been able to accomplish it’s really pretty amazing,” says Diane Frey, the AFT Massachusetts field representative who has worked with the Longy Faculty Union since last spring. “They elected officers, they put together an impressive constitution and they came up with some really innovative ways to get information out to the membership.” Case in point: a system of virtual office hours. Because many of the union’s members are professional musicians who perform in addition to teaching, traditional ‘drop by’ office hours were not an option. Instead, the new officers, including Liz Anker, union president Clay Hoener, and secretary Deborah Yardley Beers, established evening times when union members could call them to discuss key issues confronting Longy faculty.

The union quickly set up a website and created an electronic newsletter in order to keep members informed about the fast changing situation at the school. The Longy Faculty Union News, which is now distributed weekly, also devoted part of each edition to honoring faculty members at the school who’d been affected by the realignment. Called ‘Voices of the Realigned,’ the popular section allowed Longy faculty to speak candidly about just how profoundly they’d been affected by the changes at the school.

## A moving target

In the weeks and months ahead, the Longy Faculty Union’s ability to get its message out would prove essential, especially as the story of what was happening at the music school began to play out in the pages of the Boston press. As faculty members described teaching careers ended prematurely, Longy president Karen Zorn offered varied and conflicting accounts of what was behind the school’s restructuring, from budget woes to a proposed merger with New York’s Bard College.

Meanwhile, negotiations at the bargaining table were going nowhere. By August, the faculty union had submitted more than 40 detailed contract proposals but had received virtually nothing in response from Longy administrators. And on the most pressing of the new union’s demands, that the administration rescind its drastic restructuring of the school and

bargain over changes to the affected faculty members’ employment, there had been no movement at all. On August 9th, the union filed unfair labor practices against Longy on the grounds that changes at the school violated labor law because they were not negotiated with the union.

## Vindication

A federal judge agreed with the faculty members. In a highly unusual move, Judge Patti Saris issued an injunction, ordering Longy to rehire the eight faculty members who were terminated last year. The emergency decision signals that the Longy Faculty Union is likely to prevail when its case is heard by an administrative law judge later this month. In her decision, Judge Saris argued that Longy’s actions had harmed not just the eight fired faculty members but the collective bargaining process. Wrote Saris: “The issue here is not just the harm to individual employees but the way that Longy’s changes impacted collective bargaining, an especially important consideration because the union and Longy had yet to negotiate a first collective bargaining agreement.”

For members of the Longy Faculty Union, the judge’s decision confirmed that a year of hard work and emotional struggle has been worth it. “It’s been a difficult fight because it’s been drawn out,” says music history teacher Erik Entwistle. “I’ve been amazed by how dedicated everyone has been, not just for themselves but for the benefit of the entire school. We truly love Longy and want to move forward in a positive direction.”

Days after the decision came down, the Longy Faculty Union held a meeting where they welcomed back the newly reinstated faculty members. Says Sophie Vilker: “We were greeted with a standing ovation—it felt so good to be among friends.” And while the last year has been difficult for Vilker and her colleagues, she says that the experience has left her more convinced than ever of the value of a union. “We could never have accomplished this without a union.” ■

To learn more about the Longy Faculty Union visit their website at [www.longyfacultyunion.org](http://www.longyfacultyunion.org)



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# Diary of a New Teacher

By Karen Mello  
Paraprofessional, Carney Academy,  
New Bedford, MA

I have had many people ask me why I wanted to become a teacher and the answer is very simple: I wanted to give back something that was given to me. You see, when my son was 10 months old he came down with the chicken pox. The virus caused brain damage, leaving the right and left sides of his brain without any connection to each other. His speech was gone and so was his sense of taste, touch, and smell. He also ended up with the characteristics of many disorders such as obsessive compulsive disorder, attention deficit disorder and autism. We enrolled him at Schwartz Rehabilitation Center and also the New Bedford School system. The prognosis for his development depended on the learning skills he would be able to develop.

The remarkable teachers that worked with my son helped that prognosis to become more positive with each passing year. The teachers were kind and understanding of his needs, but at the same time were demanding and pushed him to do his absolute best. They always kept me informed about the strides he was making, but also let me know if there

was extra help that he needed so that I could continue to work with him at home. The teachers even gave worksheets and notes to my mother-in-law, who set up a spare room in her home as a classroom, so that she could work with him all summer long.

I can't begin to describe the determination and desire these people had to make sure that my son would someday graduate from high school. I was fortunate to get a job working with children in an urban school and quickly realized that this was my chance to make a difference in a child's life, like the teachers and other adults who worked with my son.

Several years ago I was fortunate enough to begin working with a teacher named Mr. Lincoln at Carney Academy in New Bedford. He treated me as his co-worker and taught me many things about education. I was taking college courses in order to complete my associate's degree, but had no plans to continue beyond that. It was Mr. Lincoln who told me that I had a special way with the children and convinced me to become a teacher. I knew my job as a paraprofessional was important but Mr. Lincoln pointed out to me that I could reach even many more children by becoming a teacher. With his encouragement, and the support of the Journey into Education and Teaching program at UMass Dartmouth, I have continued education and am working toward my bachelors and masters degrees. When I complete the program, I will be dual certified in education and special education.

The JET Program places paraprofessionals in a co-hort to



**TEACHER IN TRAINING** Paraprofessional Karen Mello is a participant in the Journey into Education and Teaching program at UMass Dartmouth, an accelerated degree program for paraprofessionals who want to teach in the high need elementary schools of Fall River and New Bedford.

work together through the trials and tribulations of going to college while juggling work and family. It has been an awesome support group for me, and I don't think I would have continued my education if it wasn't for the strength we give each other. They are a family of brothers and sisters that has inspired me to keep going forward and succeed in my journey through college. Through this program I've been able to see one of my goals become reachable.

As for my son, he is now 19 years old and recently graduated from New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School. And because he passed the dreaded MCAS exam, not only did he complete high school, he received a

diploma as well. He is currently in his second year at Bristol Community College and wants to become a marine biologist. I hope that someday my son's dream does come true. He has already accomplished more than what was expected of him. My own dream is that someday I will touch the life of one of my students the way many of the hard working and caring teachers have touched my son's life. ■

*Karen Mello has been a paraprofessional for thirteen years. For more information about the Journey into Education and Teaching program visit [www.umassd.edu/cusp/jet](http://www.umassd.edu/cusp/jet)*



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# Q & A

## Dan Murphy

Director of Educational Policy and Programs, AFT Massachusetts

**Advocate:** Bring us up to speed on the debate over tying teacher evaluations to student test scores.

**Murphy:** The impetus for all this is the federal Race to the Top program, which recently awarded a \$250 million grant to Massachusetts. One of the conditions of the grant is that the state must revise its regulations to incorporate student learning outcomes into the teacher evaluation process. To address this requirement, the state has put together a task force made up of more than 40 organizations and individuals to make recommendations to the state Board of Education on what these new regulations should look like. AFT Massachusetts has a seat on the task force and has been a vocal participant. The task force will submit a report to the Board in the coming month. The Board will then consider the recommendations and establish new statewide regulations by spring 2011.

**Advocate:** Is this a new idea?

**Murphy:** There has always been a desire to try to tie teacher evaluations to student learning because the approach has a certain intuitive appeal. But the devil is in the details. What people run into is the realization that attributing student learning gains to any one person or factor is very, very difficult. Especially when you consider that schools are fundamentally collaborative enterprises where all of the adults in the building are contributing to the educational achievement of the students.

**Advocate:** So how do you come up with a fair and accurate mechanism?

**Murphy:** Frankly, there are no easy answers here, and this is the number-one question that the Task Force is grappling with. Some ideas, however, are better than others. For example, if student learning outcomes are part

# Using Test Scores to Evaluate Teachers

of the mix, teachers generally prefer measures over which they have some control, such as teacher-designed assessments or samples of student work. Unfortunately, much of the conversation has revolved around how MCAS growth scores will be used in the evaluation.

**Advocate:** Explain to our readers what an MCAS growth score is.

**Murphy:** The MCAS growth score is a new measure developed by the state that attempts to show how much a student improves on the MCAS from one year to the next relative to his or her academic peers from around the state who have a similar test score history. So, for example, if a student does better on the MCAS than 40 percent of his academic peers, his growth score would be 40. Scores range from 0 to 100 for each student. In some ways, this is better than just looking at raw test scores, but to incorporate these growth scores into the teacher evaluation process raises the exact same attribution problems I described earlier. The growth metric simply tells you how much a student has grown; it doesn't tell you anything about what accounted for that growth.

**Advocate:** Is there any research or evidence supporting the use of MCAS or other standardized tests in evaluations?

**Murphy:** No, there is absolutely none. That's what has been so frustrating about the push to tie teacher evaluations to student test scores. In fact, numerous studies by leading researchers and testing experts have sounded the alarm on the pitfalls—both methodological and educational—of this approach. And, if you talk to teachers, they understand these problems immediately—at the gut level. But the problem has been that the conversation in policy circles has largely ignored this extensive research base and the voices of teachers.

**Advocate:** What do you mean by 'educational pitfalls?' Elaborate please.

**Murphy:** Well, we've talked a little bit about why tying teacher evaluations to student test scores is unfair to teachers because it is so difficult to determine who should get the credit—or the blame—when it comes to student learning outcomes. But the approach could also harm students because many negative consequences are likely to ensue. For example, you would see even more teaching to the test and narrowing of the curriculum to topics that are covered by MCAS. This means students won't be exposed to the well-rounded curriculum they need. A second consequence is that the approach would create disincentives to work with the neediest students; educators could be penalized for teaching students who don't typically test well on MCAS, such as special



### POLICY WATCH

"We want evaluations done in such a way so that they are primarily about providing constructive, improvement-oriented feedback. And the process should give teachers the chance to say what they need from administrators to better serve their students."

needs students and English language learners.

**Advocate:** Won't this also create an environment where teachers essentially compete against one another?

**Murphy:** That's exactly the danger we face with this approach. Teachers will be pitted against each other in a competition for the best students and the best test scores. Unfortunately, this will undermine collaboration, which all the research suggests is one of the most important factors in school success. Another danger is that this approach could be very demoralizing, as good teachers get ensnared in a system that is fundamentally inaccurate and unfair. This may especially be the case in urban settings. A very real concern is that good people will leave these schools or the profession altogether.

**Advocate:** So what kind of approach do we support?

**Murphy:** AFT MA's guiding principle is that we want what is good for students, fair to teachers, and done collaboratively. We have been very vocal on the Task Force pointing out the pitfalls of an MCAS-reliant approach. That said, can evaluations be done better in Massachusetts? Absolutely. And one problem is simply that teacher evaluation isn't being done at all. We have good tools, but we're not using them! But we also want evaluations done in such a way so that they are primarily

about providing constructive, improvement-oriented feedback. And the process should give teachers the chance to say what they need from administrators to better serve their students. It shouldn't be about "gotcha." It should be a two-way conversation centered on the question: How can we all work together to do a better job for our students?

**Advocate:** Are there any promising approaches out there?

**Murphy:** One approach we really like is called peer assistance and review, or PAR. Through PAR programs, excellent teachers take the lead in defining what good teaching looks like and then help their colleagues reach that standard. With teachers in charge, the process is almost always about improvement, never about "gotcha." There are many AFT districts across the nation that have in-depth experience and expertise with PAR programs. We hope to learn from those programs and transfer some of the best practices to Massachusetts. ■

*Editor's note: for the latest information on the teacher evaluation debate, including additional resources, visit the educator resources section of our website: [www.aftma.net](http://www.aftma.net)*

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# On Campus

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UMass Faculty Federation, Local 1895



## Push for Funded Research, More Students at Odds

State university administrations are trying to fill the financial gap caused by cuts in state appropriations by enrolling more students paying higher tuition and fees and chasing more research funding. This dual strategy makes sense in the idealized world of the twin goals of sharing and increasing knowledge, but in the practical world the strategies of increasing students and increasing funded research conflict with each other.

More students can only lead to more net revenue if increasing costs don't match increasing revenue. This means stretching the same or fewer faculty to cover more students. Teaching loads increase either through

funds while the connection between higher quality instruction and more student applicants is far from clear in the short run. It is easier to stretch instruction resources over more students.

This analysis owes more to Thomas Hobbes than to Adam Smith, who favored government spending for education, and masks many exceptions among and within universities. Richard Freeland, President of Northeastern University from 1996 to 2006, improved research facilities and increased the number of tenure-track faculty, causing both graduation rates and SAT scores of incoming freshmen to rise sharply. On any campus, there are plenty of research faculty who bring

**"Arguments to focus on teaching from high levels in the profession mean little to untenured professors at most public and private universities trying to juggle teaching, research, and service. Most have given up service because it's worth little or nothing to academic administrators who hold power over them."**

for teaching."

Kenneth Mann, a biochemist at the University of Vermont, calls transferring university funds from teaching to research a Ponzi scheme that uses student funds to pay off debt from investment in research facilities rather than for instruction.

Arguments to focus on teaching from high levels in the profession mean little to untenured professors at most public and private universities trying to juggle teaching, research, and service. Most have given up service because it's worth little or nothing to academic administrators who hold power over them. Unfortunately, the incentives for good teaching are heading in the same direction. ■

### CAMPUS UPDATE

**Presidential pick**  
Robert Carey, president of Towson College in Maryland, has been tapped to run the University of Massachusetts system. Carey, who also led a college in California, was a unanimous pick by UMass trustees who praised his success in boosting minority graduating rates while at Towson. The incoming president has pledged to fight hard for public higher education funding and to get UMass high on the legislative agenda.



**Decisive verdict**  
A federal judge has ordered that the Longy School of Music rehire employees that were let go last year and to negotiate their terminations with the newly formed faculty union. United States District Court Judge Patti B. Saris ordered Longy to pay terminated faculty members the salary they would be receiving had they been retained for 2010-2011 and to return these employees to the bargaining unit if they were removed from the unit as a result of any changes announced in March 2010. Faculty at the Cambridge music school voted to form a union last February (see cover story). Soon after Longy administrators announced a significant restructuring of the school and terminated or 'realigned' 39 faculty members.



**CAMPUS CROWDS**  
State universities are trying to fill the financial gap caused by cuts in state appropriations by enrolling more students paying higher tuition and fees and chasing more research dollars. This means stretching the same or fewer faculty to cover more students.

larger class size or larger faculty course loads, and fewer courses are offered in order to increase class size in the remaining courses. To attract more students and charge them higher tuition and fees, universities increase amenities and lower standards or both to make up for the loss of quality instruction due to larger and fewer classes.

Funded research takes research faculty out of the classroom by reducing their teaching loads, which attracts grant proposals from faculty seeking to supplement their income and to avoid teaching larger classes of students, many of whom aren't prepared for college work.

Academic administrators judge research, especially funded research, as the major requirement for contract renewal, tenure and promotion because it brings in money, and funded research is easier to measure and defend. University administrators transfer funds as well as rewards from teaching to funded research in the form of new research buildings and other research facilities rarely used by students.

It may seem counter productive for universities to favor funded research over teaching and because tuition and fees supply most university funding, but as with most business decisions, changes at the margin matters most. Funded research brings in additional

their scholarship to the classroom.

Now evidence or at least rhetoric emphasizing teaching comes from Science, one of the leading scientific research journals. In the most recent edition (14 January 2011), thirteen scientists from leading research universities call on their colleagues and universities to change the culture of science education at their universities. They list seven initiatives to achieve this goal that range from requiring excellence in teaching for promotion to educating faculty about research in teaching, an area of research that most faculty do not take seriously.

Their ideas and initiatives aren't new; the AFT has been pushing these ideas for 30 years. American Educator, a quarterly publication of the AFT sent to all members, focuses on research in teaching with several Nobel Prize-winning scientists among its authors. "Ask the Cognitive Scientist" by Daniel Willingham, a regular column, is especially interesting.

Bruce Alberts, Editor-in-Chief of Science, warns universities of overbuilding research facilities on speculation of receiving government funding (10 September 2010). With success rates of 10% from major funding agencies, government funded research resembles a lottery, where research universities will eventually have to pay research facilities "at the expense of needed facilities and faculty

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## Retiree Corner

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

### LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

**Non Public School Teaching Bill**  
AFT MA has re-filed a bill on Non Public School Teaching. The original bill, passed in 1993, allowed anyone who taught in a private or parochial school prior to January of 1973 to purchase up to ten years of this service. The service could be anywhere in the United States and did not apply to individuals eligible for Social Security. The new bill, filed by Representative Cheryl Coakley-Rivera of Springfield, would allow non public school teachers to purchase ten years of service for teaching done after 1973.

If you think that you would benefit from this legislation please email Linda Sutton at lsutton143@verizon.net and be sure to give her your name, email address, and school district. She will add you to a database that has been created to keep voters updated on the progress of the bill. Also please notify friends in MTA school districts about this refiling and get them aboard.

#### Massachusetts Retirees United Legislative Survey

Massachusetts Retirees United (MRU) is surveying retired teachers and other public employees in order to help win passage of legislation that will benefit seniors. To take the survey, visit [www.retireesunited.org](http://www.retireesunited.org) Note: you do not have to be an MRU member to participate. You may also download the survey and print it out to give it to retired friends who lack computers. The more data we have about retired workers, the more likely we are to get key legislation passed this session.

Thanks for your help!

## Funeral Planning an Essential Topic

Two topics that most people do not like to speak about are death and dying. We know that both are inevitable and are not the exclusive province of retirees or people of a certain age. This column explores the advisability of prearranging one's own funeral or that of a loved one. The purpose of prearranging is to ensure that one's wishes be respected concerning how one's funeral will be conducted and to act as a hedge against inflated funeral expenses in the future.

One can prearrange but not prepay a funeral. In this case you make your wishes known through a funeral director but do not pay ahead for the services. You may feel very strongly about a church service, viewing time—or lack thereof—cremation or a traditional burial. If you have family living in several states you may have a preference as to where you would like your remains to be placed. If religion and a church service are important to you this should be covered as well. Some people feel so strongly about their funeral preferences that they have a provision in their will that if their stated wishes are not observed then their assets will go to a specified charity rather than to family members. It is important that all family members or anyone else involved should know about these stipulations.

Recently, I was involved in helping with someone's prearrangement and was stunned at the thousands of dollars discrepancy that existed from funeral

home to funeral home. The difference in casket prices and liners, service fees and what these fees included, and cremation if burial is not a choice. The cemetery in many instances may have a say in the type of liner that is required, as most cemeteries require them. One does not have an opportunity to comparative shop when a loved one has died, but by prearranging you relieve someone of that responsibility at the time of death when they may be emotionally vulnerable.

If you decide to prepay, find out what is the best way to do it. If prearranging is being done for someone going into a nursing home, the funeral director must put the money into an irrevocable trust or Medicaid eligibility could be affected. These funds cannot be withdrawn except by the funeral director after producing a death certificate. Also, the family cannot eliminate some of the things provided in order to get money back as once it is put into this form of trust all the monies must be spent on the burial and none can be returned. If you pay upfront the funeral director can put the funds into a revocable trust that you have control over and can withdraw at any time. You can move money from a revocable trust to an irrevocable one but not vice versa.

The following are some questions to consider and ask a funeral director.

Do you have the freedom of transferring the money (contract) to another funeral home? Is there a fee

for this? What are the arrangements if the funeral home with whom you are dealing goes out of business? Does the money you give in prearranging earn interest? How is the money reported and who is responsible for the taxes on it? Can a family member or executor of the will or estate trustee alter the prearranged plans? Some of these issues differ according to the state in which one lives. What becomes of the money you give and how is it protected?

The contract itself should be complete itemizing everything including the length of time for viewing, family cars or lack thereof, flower car or lack thereof, and all the services included by the contract. Multiple copies of this contract should be provided to you so that you can distribute it to those who are on a need to know basis.

Prearranging a funeral is something you should seriously consider speaking to a loved one about if you are an only child or a niece or nephew living nearby. You do not want to wait until siblings arrive to be able to do anything with the remains. Also, what we think we want for that person may not be what they want for themselves. Prearranging is definitely something one should consider if you wish a friend(s) to be responsible for taking care of this for you over a family member.

Death is inevitable and prearranging does not hasten the

death. If you do not have feelings on the topic and you genuinely do not care then you have nothing to do. If you have strong feelings on the subject at the minimum let them be known to those who will be responsible. ■

## The Golden Apple: A Retired Teacher Continues to Inspire

When teachers at the Vining Elementary School, a small neighborhood school in Billerica, learned about the *Advocate's* Golden Apple series, they knew just who to nominate: retired reading specialist Carol Stokes. While Stokes, who started teaching at the Vining in 1965, may have officially left the classroom in 2002, she remains a regular—and immensely helpful—presence at the school.

"We are so lucky to have Carol," says second grade teacher Sue Leahy. "She comes every Thursday to read to the kids and they're absolutely mesmerized by her. I think they look forward to Thursday more than any other day of the week." Her students are especially curious about what's in Stokes' infamous green bag, says Leahy. Every week, Stokes arrives with a new book in tow. "The kids are always looking at the bag wondering what's in there," says Leahy.

Jane Milanes, who started teaching at the Vining in 2002, credits Carol Stokes for helping her to survive her early years as an educator. "She's kind, she's calm and she has great

perspective. She came in and guided me those first few years and reassured me that I was doing a great job."

Milanes says that she has always been impressed with Stokes' ability to work with every kind of child, from struggling readers to more advanced students who are hungry for enrichment. Milanes has since left the Vining and now teaches third grade at Billerica's Ditson School. And while she loves her new school, there is one essential ingredient that the Ditson lacks, says Milanes. "I miss Carol terribly. She is such a kind and caring presence in the classroom and there really is no one else like her."

As for Stokes, she says that her decision to remain a part of the Vining has been driven by a sense that teachers needed additional help in their classrooms. "It was time for me to retire but I knew how much it meant to the teachers to have someone who could help out in the classroom who really understood what was going on," says Stokes. And while the Vining's teachers—and students—clearly benefit from the arrangement, Stokes is quick to admit that there's something in it



**LEADING ALOUD**  
Reading specialist Carol Stokes officially retired in 2002 but has remained a presence at Billerica's Vining School, coming in once a week to read to groups of students and help those who need additional assistance. "We are so lucky to have Carol," says second grade teacher Sue Leahy.

for her as well. "I love working with children. I went into teaching for the love of it and I always knew that it was what I wanted to spend my whole life doing."

Teachers at the Vining say they couldn't be happier with Stokes' continued presence in the classroom. "Carol not only did an incredible job while she taught, she continues to enrich students and teachers well into her retirement," wrote Leahy and Milanes in a letter recommending Stocks as a Golden Apple candidate.

"Her advice, her modeling, her ability to lend a listening ear and her interactions with the children are all invaluable. She has a quiet, unassuming manner that the children love and on several occasions has helped us maintain our sanity. She has been and continues to be an incredible mentor and friend. She is the definition of a Golden Apple." ■

*We couldn't agree more!*

# For Massachusetts Public Libraries, Some Glimmers of Hope

Continued from cover

“With the economy as bad as it is a lot of people are canceling their Internet service at home and coming here instead,” says Olshin. In addition to free Internet access, local residents also visit the library to make use of free citizenship classes, computer courses, even tutoring. “The library is the one place we have left that is open to everyone and is free to all. We’re really the community center of the town,” says Olshin.

At the Milton Public Library, both circulation and patron visits are at an all time high. Assistant director Dan Haacker says that that’s a mixed blessing. “The problem is that we’ve got so many new people using the library but the same number of staff helping them,” says Haacker. The Milton librarians are also facing a relatively unusual challenge these days. Last year the library moved into a brand new facility, one considerably larger than the previous home. “Considering that we had a serious mold issue in the old library, it’s a good problem to have,” says Haacker, noting that mold forced the original facility to be closed for weeks at a time. “But the real issue is that we don’t have the staff to adequately monitor the space or to handle the increased demand that we’re seeing.”

## Cut to the bone

The irony of the present situation is that to the extent that libraries are seeing some reprieve from the budgetary axe, it is only because at many facilities—especially smaller institutions—there is simply nothing left to cut. The Chelmsford Public Library has gone through painful staff cuts in recent years and is currently

operating at what children’s librarian Maureen Foley describes as a ‘bare bones level.’ “We are grateful to have jobs, especially jobs that we love, but the staff cuts here have also affected our ability to do our jobs.” While librarians do their best to process the endless stream of books and materials arriving from other libraries, says Foley, there are no backup staff members to summon should someone call in sick. “When the public says things like ‘get rid of the waste,’ you can in fact work at that bare bones level, but it all falls apart when somebody can’t make it in to the library. There is no cushion here, no contingency whatsoever.”

## Small victories

It is a sign of the times, say librarians, that even the smallest victories these days seem like cause for rejoicing. In Lynnfield, staff members at the Lynnfield Public Library are thrilled that they have a new contract, says Patricia Kelly, chapter chair of the library staff association and head of the reference department. The three year agreement even includes raises in years two and three. “I think we’re all feeling pretty happy with the results and that the negotiating process is over, but we’re still pretty apprehensive about the future,” says Kelly. “How can you not be?”

## Budget battles ahead

That sense of apprehension is widely evident throughout the extended library community. In Boston, Mayor Thomas Menino seems intent upon closing branch libraries of the Boston Public Library system. While four branches in Brighton, East



**SIGN OF THE TIMES** A makeshift memorial placed outside of the Bridgewater Public Library in October 2007 after an override vote in the town failed. The tax measure finally passed last year and the library has been able to increase its hours and restore some staff positions.

Boston, South Boston and Dorchester that had been slated for closure were given a reprieve thanks to \$350,000 from the state, that lifeline was only temporary. Mayor Menino recently told the *Boston Globe* that the library system has too many branches.

And many more libraries across the state continue to do battle with the unending grind of local budget cuts. In Stoughton, chapter chair Olshin and his colleagues saw the library’s assistant director laid off a year and a half ago and lost their full-time custodian to retirement last month. “We’ve lost two union positions in a union that had very few people to start with. We’ve all been chipping in and picking up the slack.” Meanwhile, says Olshin, Stoughton continues to look at making additional cuts to the local budgets.

## The right direction

In Bridgewater, librarian Ann Gerald is already steeling herself for the next round of town budget talks. “Each year we have to go through another budget process and you never know how much money you’re going to get.” Still, Gerald has hopes that the library’s line item will remain the same as it was last year, or even increased slightly. After facing budget problems so severe that selectmen threatened to cut police and fire fighters, Bridgewater replaced its town meeting structure with a council and town manager. That’s been a positive development for the library says Gerald. “The new town manager pays attention to all of the departments. There’s a feeling here now that we’re finally going in the right direction.” ■

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