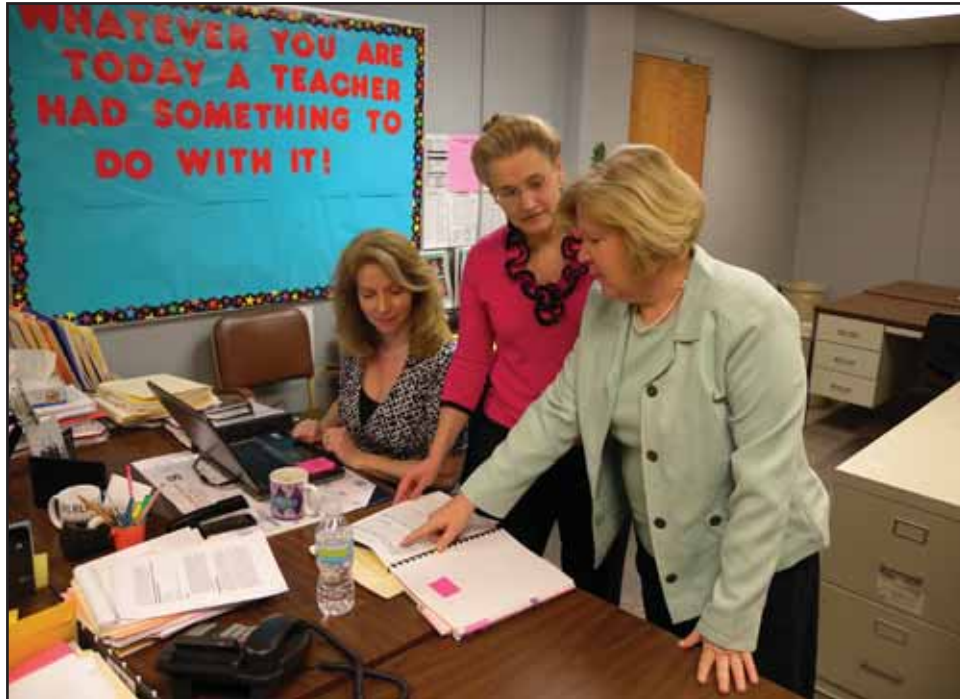


Teachers, Mentors—Evaluators

As the debate heats up about the best way to evaluate educators, an approach known as peer assistance and review may point the way forward.

TOLEDO—On a cold spring morning in this industrial city in northwestern Ohio a now familiar ritual is taking place. A nine member panel consisting of five representatives of the Toledo Federation of Teachers (TFT) and four representatives of the Toledo Public Schools has convened to decide the fate of dozens of teachers. For a year or longer, three teachers, known as intern consultants, have been mentoring brand new educators as well as providing assistance to veteran teachers who need it. This morning they will present their recommendations to the panel, presided over by Fran Lawrence, president of the TFT, and Don Maddox, her counterpart from the administration. The input of the intern consultants, based on countless hours of observation and support, will largely determine the fate of the teachers who are being reviewed. For brand new teachers, a thumbs up likely means



TEAM EFFORT As intern consultants for the Toledo Public Schools, Cindy Lang, Lois Donahue and Peg McAfee provide mentoring to new teachers and assistance to struggling veterans. Their recommendation helps determine whether the teachers will continue to work in the Toledo schools.

a recommendation for a longer-term contract.

Peg McAfee is in her third year as an intern consultant for the Peer Assistance and Review program, known as PAR. McAfee, a Toledo native who began teaching in the schools here in 1988, was herself a participant in the PAR program, which pairs every incoming educator with a mentor. "I'd just started teaching and a woman comes into my classroom and says 'I'm here to help you this year. It was such

a relief," says McAfee, who notes that like many brand new educators she struggled with classroom management. Today though, Ms. McAfee is on the other end of the process. After months of working with the teachers to whom she has been assigned, she must now deliver a verdict to the panelists. It's not a responsibility that McAfee takes lightly. "One of the hardest things I've ever had to do is look at a 23 year old and say: 'I can't recommend a contract for you.'"

Continued on page 8

Tour Highlights Excellence, Innovation

The American Federation of Teacher's Making a Difference Every Day Tour touched down in Boston last month, highlighting teacher-led education reform at two area schools. AFT president Randi Weingarten visited the Clarence R. Edwards Middle School in Charlestown and the Boston Teachers Union School, which was created by district teachers who now run the school.

Since the Making a Difference Tour kicked off in February, the AFT has visited schools in dozens of communities across the country, highlighting public education success stories. In recent weeks, Weingarten has traveled to Peoria, IL, Newark, NJ and Marlboro, NY to focus on collaborative efforts to improve local schools and shine a light on the educators behind that work. The Boston visit marked the first Massachusetts stop for the tour.

Five years ago the Edwards was a struggling middle school that risked closure unless teachers at the school were able to show significant progress

in boosting student achievement. In 2007, teachers at the Edwards agreed to extend the length of the school day. Students now stay in school until 4:30 p.m.; the extra learning time is devoted to tutoring and electives, including music, drama and art. Under an agreement negotiated with the Boston Teachers Union (BTU), teachers who participate in the extended learning program receive additional compensation.

Weingarten, who was joined at the Edwards by union leaders, local politicians including Senators Sonia Chang-Diaz and Sal DiDomenico, Boston Superintendent Carol Johnson and Chris Gabrieli, co-founder of Massachusetts 2020, praised teachers at the school for shaping a culture of success there. While test scores have soared since the school day was lengthened, the school has also seen significant administrative turnover; the Edwards has had four principals in the past five years. Yet the school has continued to improve, thanks to the commitment of its teachers.



TAKING MEASURE Ondrea Johnson, a math teacher at the Edwards Middle School, is joined by AFT president Randi Weingarten. The Edwards was featured when AFT's 'Making a Difference Every Day' Tour visited Boston.

Continued on page 3

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In This Issue

- 2 President's Column
Bold Print
- 4 Diary of a New Student: A teacher longs to go back to school—but finds more there than she bargained for
- 5 Paraprofessional Conference: At the 25th annual event, participants celebrated—and girded for challenges ahead
- 6 On Campus: The Berklee strike—25 years later
- 7 Retiree Corner
The Golden Apple

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THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Thomas J. Gosnell
President, AFT Massachusetts

Issues Abound in Springtime

Health Insurance

In the last issue of this newspaper a clerical error compromised one of my sentences. It read as follows: While public sector benefits are now exorbitant, private sector benefits for the middle class and the poor have declined significantly. It should have read as follows: While public sector benefits are not exorbitant, private sector benefits for the middle class and the poor have declined significantly.

Indeed, they are not exorbitant, but the proposal in the State House of Representatives' budget takes health insurance out of collective bargaining. The coalition of public employee unions is committed to helping the cities and towns to save money, but we are not willing to sacrifice collective bargaining and quality health insurance. We can achieve all three of these goals. Look at the agreement the public employee unions and the City of Boston collectively bargained. The public sector unions maintained quality health insurance while the City of Boston achieved savings. Collective bargaining is the process that enabled the agreement to happen. The same can happen throughout the state.

Performance Evaluation of Teachers

AFT MA believes that a qualified teacher belongs in every classroom. Who doesn't? However, some believe that the only purpose of evaluations is to dispense with poor teachers. This is a mistaken notion.

A top flight evaluations system provides all teachers the necessary support to grow professionally throughout their careers so that they can contribute more and more to their students' education.

The following letter I wrote in the *Boston Globe* printed details our position on a professional evaluation system:

"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."

For all teachers a new evaluation system is coming. AFT MA will work with anybody to advance the principals in which we believe and to help develop an evaluation system committed to the enhancement of the public schools, the education of our students, and the development of the teaching profession.

Funding of Public Schools

The financial landscape is still bleak. The far right Republican takeover of the U.S. House of Representatives has guaranteed a massive decline in federal resources for public education. The precarious economy of Massachusetts will probably cause a diminution in local aid and funding for higher education which has already suffered mightily.

While AFT MA is a member of the coalition fighting to gain additional revenues without putting massive additional burdens on the middle class, the current political climate is not encouraging. Nonetheless, we shall persevere.

If the referendum to reduce the sales tax had prevailed in 2010, we would be in a horrendous situation. However, it is not enough to defeat referenda that would decimate public services; we need additional revenue because public services become significantly weaker when revenues are flat.

Our course of action is clear. We must continue to advocate for our students and all those who use public services. We must continue to inform the public that union members through collective bargaining want to provide the best public services possible. ■

If you have any comments, please email me at tgosnell@aftma.net.

Landmark Health Accord Reached in Boston

Public sector labor unions in Boston have agreed to a landmark accord with the city's mayor that preserves the role of collective bargaining on health insurance. The agreement came on the same day that House Speaker Robert DeLeo proposed a budget that would strip public sector employees in Massachusetts—including teachers and librarians—of their collective bargaining rights. Speaker DeLeo's version of health insurance would give cities and towns the authority to change health insurance plan design and increase co-pays and deductibles without negotiating such changes at the bargaining table.

The accord reached in Boston demonstrates the extent to which real savings in the cost of health insurance can be achieved when cities and towns work with municipal unions. The Boston agreement, which was negotiated by a first-of-its-kind coalition, will save the city an estimated \$70 million as union members agree to pay a greater percentage of their health insurance premiums as well as higher co-pays. More importantly, notes Boston Teachers Union president

Richard Stutman, the plan balances the financial needs of the city with the unions' desire to protect collective bargaining rights.

Labor leaders argue that the accord is proof positive that significant savings for municipalities are possible without the harsh—and anti-worker—measures now under consideration on Beacon Hill. "The mayor of the largest, most hard-to-manage city in the Commonwealth struck a deal on health insurance through collective bargaining," AFL-CIO spokesman Tim Sullivan told the *Boston Globe*. "He just had to negotiate. All he did was use the budget realities that cities and towns face as leverage in the negotiations, and he was able to get an agreement and get a deal in the largest, most labor-dense city in the Commonwealth." ■

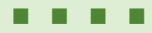
Action Alert

Go to www.aftma.net today to send a customized letter to your legislators urging them to keep public employee health insurance in collective bargaining.

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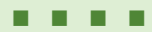
In the Running

Teachers at the **Breed Middle School** in Lynn have organized the first ever Breed 5K Run/Walk to raise funds for the school. Breed staff, their families, friends and parents of students at the middle school will be taking over the trails in Lynn Woods on the morning of May 14th. The event, which organizers hope to hold annually, was put together by librarian **Irene Kszepka**, special education teacher **Cheryl Correnti**, science teacher **Cynthia 'Q' Quaratiello** and English Language Arts teacher **Christine Donovan**. The teachers say they've been thrilled by the response to the event. If you'd like to join them and help to raise money for the Breed Middle School, go to www.active.com.



Everyday Hero

A hearty round of applause goes out to **Jerry Hopcroft**, a professor of engineering at the **Wentworth Institute of Technology** in Boston. Hopcroft, as *Advocate* readers know, was a semifinalist in the **AFT's Everyday Hero** contest in the higher education division. And while Hopcroft may not have taken home the gold—top honors went to Travis Parker, a professor of physical education and athletics at Cosumnes River College, Sacramento, CA, Hopcroft is the big winner in the *Advocate's* eyes. Thanks to his nomination by colleague and Wentworth Faculty Federation president **Marilyn Stern**, we all got a chance to learn about Hopcroft's inspiring work bringing sanitation, development planning—even books—to the village of Chirimoto, Peru. Now that's heroic. To learn more about Hopcroft and his work, visit www.aftma.net.



Donor Dan

AFT MA executive board member and Milton librarian **Dan Haacker** was left holding the lucky ticket at the annual **Jobs with Justice** dinner at Suffolk Downs last month. Haacker, who won half of the raffle's \$600 take, opted to donate his share to the nonprofit which advocates for workers rights. This year's honorees included a cause close to Haacker's heart: the campaign to keep open several threatened branches of the Boston Public Library. "It was definitely the right thing to do," said Haacker, who also serves as vice president of the **Massachusetts Library Staff Association**.



Corrections

Last month's edition of the *Advocate* contained several errors that require correcting. In the President's Column, a sentence intended to state that "Public employee benefits are not exorbitant," mistakenly ran as "Public employees are now exorbitant." What a difference a letter makes! The Behind the Scenes column misidentified photographer Amika Ernst. She goes by her full name: **Amika Kemmler-Ernst**. Also, she received a doctorate, not a master's degree, from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Finally, the students who appeared in the middle picture on that page attend the Agassiz School in Jamaica Plain, not the Marshall School. —JCB

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Tour Highlights Excellence, Innovation

Continued from cover

“This is the shared responsibility version of accountability,” said Weingarten.

A shared goal

Math teacher and building representative Ondrea Johnson says that the key to the Edwards’ success lies in its teachers’ shared goal: helping students at the school become successful in life. “We do what we do so that they can succeed.” Social studies teacher Ted Chambers notes that, with the support of new principal Leo Flanagan, staff members at the Edwards now see themselves as pioneers in a reform movement. “The staff here has really embraced the challenge of becoming a model of how to do education reform,” said Chambers.

Teachers’ choice

As for the success of the extended learning program, teachers at the Edwards were quick to point out that they have a choice as to whether or not they wish to participate—flexibility that staff members helped to negotiate. “It was obvious that we needed a longer school day here,” says math teacher Kevin Qazilbash, who left a career in asset management to become a public school teacher. “But we structured it so that teachers get to decide each semester how much of a commitment they’re able to make.”

Challenges ahead

Still, even the celebration of success at the Edwards couldn’t eclipse the debate that continues to rage regarding the future of public education in Boston. Next year the school will welcome some 100 new attendees,

including many special education students and English language learners who’ve been displaced by the city’s closure of public schools and acceptance of more selective charter schools. And if the influx has the effect of driving down test scores at the school, the Edwards could find itself on the state’s watch list once again. “It’s definitely going to be a challenge,” says Chambers.

Educator in charge

Next, Weingarten visited the Boston Teachers Union School in Jamaica Plain, opened by district teachers in 2009 and operated through an innovative partnership with Simmons College, which has helped teachers develop a leadership model and also provides assistance with professional development. The K-8 school has no principal but is run by its teachers, who are involved in virtually every decision, from the curriculum that’s taught to the way in which teachers are evaluated. Says Berta Berriz, who is lead teacher for the school’s lower grades: “We’ve created a school where teachers don’t have to fight for power. Our knowledge and voices count.”

What is it like to work at a teacher-run school? “It’s incredibly rewarding,” says Laura Davila-Lynch, a visual arts teacher who taught for 17 years in the Boston Public Schools before joining the staff of the Boston Teachers Union School. “The decisions that are made here—we own them.” And while Davila-Lynch concedes that the school’s model requires a considerable amount of work, she believes that the payoff—in terms of results and in the teachers’ experience—is well worth the investment. “Sometimes it seems like



ONE ON ONE Jasmine Acevedo, a first grade teacher at the Boston Teachers Union School, says that the school’s rejection of the traditional principal-led model has been liberating for its teachers. “As a classroom teacher I’m the one with the best understanding of what my students need,” says Acevedo.

much more work than when you have a traditional principal,” says Davila-Lynch. “But then you look at virtually every aspect of how this school is run—process, procedures, the ways of the school—and we decided it.”

First grade teacher Jasmine Acevedo, who changed careers to become a teacher and spent six years in traditional public schools as well as a pilot school before coming here, says that she can’t imagine returning to the traditional principal-led model of school management. “This is what a school looks like when you put power in the hands of the people who are closest to the students,” says Acevedo. “As a classroom teacher I’m the one with the best understanding of what my students need.”

This is what reform looks like

In a question-and-answer session with teachers, union leaders and elected officials, Weingarten said the Boston Teachers Union School

embodies the spirit of collaboration and trust that effective school reform requires. “You’re showing in a very concrete way what the road to success looks like,” she added. At one point the Q and A was interrupted by some special guests: a group of seventh grade girls taking a detour en route to their health class. Without much prompting, the girls shared with the crowd their opinions about the school. One student singled out her math teacher for special praise. “I used to hate math—I didn’t even want to go to class—but you changed my mind about it,” she said. “Now I want to keep getting better at it. I want to keep going.”

While comparative testing results won’t be available till this summer, teachers at the school say they already see measurable student learning gains in the classroom. “Our standards are incredibly high,” says Berriz. “They have to be. They’re teachers’ standards.” ■

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Diary

of a New Student

By Shirley Jones-Luke, English teacher,
Madison Park High School,
Boston, MA

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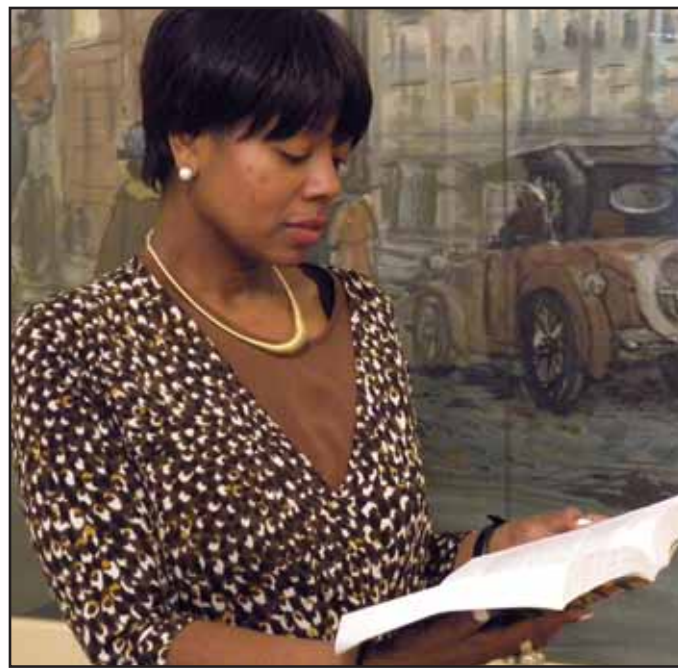
Two summers ago I finally decided to return to school. After a two year hiatus, I yearned for the stimulating surroundings of academia. I wanted to be a student again and focus on my writing, and there was only one place I wanted to be: Emerson College.

As a former Emerson student, I knew that the school's MFA program was what I needed and wanted in my life. In addition, the main campus was conveniently located near my teaching job at Madison Park Technical & Vocational High School. Another plus was the variety of evening classes offered. I could still work full-time and go to school. With my decision made, the next part was the challenge: applying to school.

The first step in the process was taking the Graduate Record Examination or GRE. Most graduate schools, including Emerson, require the test which involves complex vocabulary, high-level reading comprehension passages and critical writing. Then there was the math portion. Needless to say, I was not looking forward to the test.

While I acquired study aids for the test, I focused on the next step in the process: the recommendations. I needed one from an employer, one from a professor, and one from a colleague. Fortunately, I had those bases covered.

The next step in the process was the application itself. After completing the general information, I needed to provide the college with my transcripts and essays. The essays were key and would be read by the admissions department to determine my writing ability and desire to succeed in the



BACK TO SCHOOL

English teacher Shirley Jones Luke dreamed of returning to school to pursue a degree in writing but has found the demands of being a new student and a teacher difficult to balance. "Everyone expects a lot from me and it can be a challenge. But as I tell my students: don't quit."

program. I was also asked how I would help the school if I were admitted. What I wrote needed to be clear, concise and competent. The smallest mistake could ruin my chances.

Last spring I got the news that I'd gotten in. I danced in the rain as I opened the wet and tattered envelope that contained the news. I'd been accepted to Emerson's creative writing program. I couldn't believe it! Months of testing, writing, calling and faxing—and don't forget praying—had finally paid off. Let it rain! Let it rain. I was already on cloud nine basking in the sunshine.

More than a year later I'm now in the last weeks of my fiction writing workshop and my euphoria of last spring has been tempered by the sheer demands of my life. It's been a struggle: reading short stories, writing short

stories and critiquing the writing of classmates. I'm in my element, but I've been floundering. The demands of work and school are taking a toll on me. Although I'm enrolled in only one class per semester, I feel as if I'm in three. And while I've long craved the challenges of academia, my life isn't at the same level. I worry that I won't be able to make it. What a difference a year and a half makes.

My experiences to date have taught me a lot. I have to balance work, motherhood and school, and I have to stay on top of all of my responsibilities. I also have to provide myself with some 'me' time—shopping helps. Everyone expects a lot from me and sometimes it can be a challenge. But as I tell my students: don't quit. They have to follow their dreams and quitting is not an option. It isn't one for me either. ■

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2011 Convention Report

The State of the Union

By Tom Gosnell
President, AFT Massachusetts

In my last two convention reports I wrote that much happened during those years. Another year has passed. Much has happened. The war against public employee unions has become more intense and sustained. In Wisconsin and Ohio the legislatures and governors have massacred collective bargaining. In Wisconsin even the unions' right to exist is under severe challenge.

Our sister union in Wisconsin is trying to recall eight Republican senators who supported the repeal of collective bargaining rights. Our sister union in Ohio is collecting signatures to put the bill repealing collective bargaining on the ballot in November, 2011. I have told the AFT presidents in those states that AFT Massachusetts will give them all the help that we can. Union solidarity must exist.

In Florida the state government has abolished tenure for all new teachers and will make it much more difficult for unions to represent their members. In Pennsylvania vouchers for private school students are on the agenda. In New Hampshire the legislature is trying to abolish the law that permits unions

to require all those benefiting from a collective bargaining agreement to pay dues.

The national threats are severe and multitudinous. We must fight vigorously and smartly.

As I write this article in mid April, a major challenge to collective bargaining is happening here. The budget produced by the House Ways and Means Committee removes the issue of health insurance coverage from collective bargaining. The cities and towns will have close to unfettered discretion to determine health insurance plans without any input by the representatives of the employees. The public sector unions recognize that the cost of health insurance is escalating. That is why we are willing to help the cities and towns to save money. This does not have to be done by destroying collective bargaining or by eliminating top quality health insurance plans.

We do not want a repeat of last year's education bill reducing collective bargaining protections.

However, even in the midst of these miseries good news does bubble up.

Our public school students still lead the United States of America. They are

number one on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test in both English and mathematics. I congratulate all our members who work in the schools.

There are those who maintain that collective bargaining interferes with student achievement. Yet all teachers in the regular school system in Massachusetts work under collective bargaining agreements.

Some states with very low achievement do not have one teacher working under a collective bargaining agreement. Not one. Imagine that.

Last November we defeated a misguided attempt to reduce the sales tax. The initial polls showed the referendum carrying with ease. I thank all of you who did so much to prevent a major decline in

funding for public education.

Let me repeat what I wrote last year.

AFT Massachusetts, in alliance with like minded organizations, will fight for increased revenues, the avoidance of layoffs, the amendment of the education bill, the preservation of health care coverage and pensions, the continuation of quality public education for our students on all levels from pre-kindergarten to higher education, and maintenance of public libraries for all residents.

As we move forward, all AFT members need to be activists, willing to articulate the values and ideals we believe are necessary for a civilized society.

We want what is good for students, fair to all educational workers and librarians, and collaboratively done. ■

Report on Organization

By Annemarie T. DuBois
Director Of Organization

Last year's column began with Dicken's famous words "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Little did we know that Dicken's words would echo even more loudly this year. Unparalleled attacks on public employees have spread across America as political and economic forces squeeze the life out of unions and public institutions. In a terrible irony politicians and financiers have shifted the blame for the recessionary economy, government debt, increasing cuts, reduced services, and threats of tax hikes from the financial institutions that caused the recession to the nation's public employees.

The midterm election led to a change in leadership in the US House of Representatives. Buoyed by the Tea Party, Republicans swept to victory with campaigns demanding cuts in public employee wages, benefits and pensions, and the weakening, if not repeal, of public employee collective bargaining rights. From Wisconsin, where public employee collective bargaining began in 1959, through Ohio, public employees have seen their rights declared illegal in astonishingly negative attacks that portrayed them as enemies of their own communities.

In New York and Rhode Island municipalities facing layoffs have resorted to terminating employees rather than laying them off in the traditional fashion, allowing them to ignore seniority and recall only the most recent hires, presumably the lowest paid, as they attempt to balance their budgets. We have no way to yet measure the impact of the loss of collective experience and wisdom in our public schools and institutions, nor the personal impact upon the individuals and their families as a result of this once unthinkable strategy.

In the Massachusetts House, Republicans picked up 17 members, bringing their total to 31 representatives, although in the Senate, they lost one seat, lowering their number to four. The strongest attack on collective bargaining for Massachusetts public employees has

come in the form of demands that health insurance be removed from the collective bargaining process and made a solely managerial right with respect to plan design and structure. That fight continues with proponents claiming that municipalities need this authority, despite the fact that the city of Boston and all of its public sector unions negotiated in good faith and reached agreement through the collective bargaining process on a plan that will save the city approximately \$70 million over the next four years. Clearly when management and labor commit to work together they can meet the needs of both taxpayers and public employees.

One victory for organized labor and public employees was the defeat in November of Question 3, which would have reduced the Massachusetts sales tax from 6.25% to 3%. Had this passed, the dramatic cuts to local aid would have resulted in chaos as municipalities would have been forced to close public schools and libraries and decimate the ranks of teachers, police, firefighters and public workers in all departments. Clearly voters understood that the magnitude of those cuts, on top of those already caused by the recession, would have destroyed the quality of life in Massachusetts.

Public schools in Massachusetts as in many other states continue to deal with several initiatives allegedly designed to improve student achievement. Some of these have drastically cut funding in our poorest districts and undermined the dignity of those who work there. The expansion of charter schools continues to drain money from the neediest public schools while they face little public accountability and continue to cream the best students.

DESE has labeled 35 schools in several cities as Level 4 schools based on MCAS scores.

In Lynn, the administration and the union have worked collaboratively to deal with the issues involved. In Lawrence, however, teachers were forced to reapply for their own jobs as the administration took a more draconian approach to the problems.

Legal Report

By Haidee Morris, General Counsel, and Joseph Lettiere, Associate Counsel, AFT Massachusetts

Evergreen clauses

Massachusetts has not been immune from the assault on the rights of workers to collectively bargain. In October the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled in *Boston Housing Authority v. Natl. Conf. of Firemen and Oilers, Local 3*, that evergreen clauses, an established vehicle in many public sector contracts to bridge the gap until another agreement was negotiated, are no longer valid. The court has interpreted Chapter 150E to limit contracts to three years. Although the terms and conditions in the contracts must continue until negotiations have reached impasse and the procedures for determining impasse through the Division of Labor Relations have been concluded, there have been adverse effects. In some districts the employer has refused to arbitrate grievances arising after the term of the agreement has expired. The Mass Teachers Retirement Board recently advised that it could not count teacher stipends as wages for retirement purposes if the contract in which they appeared had terminated.

The AFT, in a coalition with other public sector unions, has filed legislation to remedy this situation and reestablish evergreen clauses. However, until and unless such a bill passes, an intermediate memorandum of agreement, that is, a separate short term contract is needed. This has proved difficult to negotiate in the current climate.

As of this writing the next challenge to collective bargaining has already emerged in the form of legislation to remove the voice of the teachers and municipal workers to negotiate their health insurance coverage. We hope all are engaged in this fight to prevent serious erosion of our right to bargain, as the cascading effects of limiting union rights will not end here.

Longy Faculty Union

After a successful organizing campaign in which they won recognition through an election, the Longy Faculty Union was faced with an employer that refused to bargain, terminated many employees, and moved Union activists out of their assignments. After months of frustrating and fruitless sessions trying to bargain, the Union filed charges at the National Labor Relations Board. The Board investigated, found merit to the complaints, and took the extraordinary action of filing for an injunction against Longy School of Music in federal court. The federal judge issued an injunction in January, requiring Longy to reinstate the terminated employees and bargain in good faith with the union pending a hearing before the Board. Subsequently, after intense bargaining, including time at the Board as the hearing was scheduled, the parties were able to reach a settlement that included a strong three year contract and settlement of all outstanding charges. This office offers its congratulations to the indomitable spirit of the Longy Faculty Union leaders who led this marathon effort. Congratulations. ■

2011 AFT Massachusetts Executive Board Members



Patricia Armstrong, Boston Teachers Union, Local 66. Patricia is political coordinator for the Boston Teachers Union.



Deb Blinder, Holliston Federation of Teachers, Local 3275 Deb teaches Spanish at Adams Middle School in Holliston.



Kathryn Chamberlain, Chelmsford Federation of Teachers, Local 3569 Kathryn teaches 6th grade math and science.



Brenda Chaney, Boston Teachers Union, Local 66 Brenda is the community outreach coordinator for the Boston Teachers Union.



Kathy Delaney, Lawrence Teachers Union, Local 1019 Kathy is vice president of the Lawrence Teachers Union.



Catherine Deveney, Lynn Teachers Union, Local 1037 Cathy is 2nd vice president of the Lynn Teachers Union and a para at Marshall Middle School.



Patricia Driscoll, Lawrence Teachers Union, Local 1019 Pat recently retired after 35 years of teaching in Lawrence. She remains very active in her local.



Marianne Dumont, United Teachers of Lowell, Local 495 Mickey is the Education Issues Chairperson on the Executive Board of the United Teachers of Lowell.



J. Michael Earle, United Teachers of Lowell, Local 495. Michael is vice president of the United Teachers of Lowell and taught honors biology at Lowell High School.



Margaret Farrell, United Teachers of Lowell, Local 495 Retired after 47 years of teaching, Midge is now chairperson of the retired teachers group in Lowell.



Mary Ferriter, Chelsea Teachers Union, Local 1340 Mary is the lead teacher of the Chelsea Middle School Alternative Program, located in the Browne Middle School.



Jenna Fitzgerald, Boston Teachers Union, Local 66 Jenna is the paraprofessional field representative for the Boston Teachers Union and is also a member of the BTU's executive board.



Richard Flaherty, Medway Federation of Teachers, Local 3645 Dick is former president of the Medway Federation of Teachers and a retired social studies teacher.



Paul Georges, United Teachers of Lowell, Local 495 Paul is president of the United Teachers of Lowell and a VP of the Mass. AFL-CIO.



Alice Gunning, Lynn Teachers Union, Local 1037 Alice was president of the Lynn Teachers Union until last year and a longtime elementary teacher.



Daniel Haacker, Massachusetts Library Staff Association, Local 4928 Dan is vice-president of the Massachusetts Library Staff Association.



Joyce Harrington, Salem Teachers Union, Local 1258 Joyce is president of the Salem Teachers Union and teaches 5th grade at Witchcraft Heights Elementary.



Susan Leahy, Billerica Federation of Teachers, Local 1677 Sue is a 1st grade teacher at the Vining School in Billerica.



Rebecca McInnis, Southeastern Regional Teachers Federation, Local 1849 Rebecca teaches accounting and finance at Southeastern Regional Vocational Tech.



Frank McLaughlin, Lawrence Teachers Union, Local 1019 Frank is president of the Lawrence Teachers Union and a history teacher at Lawrence High.



Bruce Nelson, Peabody Federation of Teachers, Local 1289 Bruce is president of the Peabody Federation of Teachers. He is a retired English teacher.



Catherine Patten, Amesbury Federation of Teachers, Local 1033 Catherine is a 2nd grade teacher at Amesbury Elementary School.



James A. Philip, Boston Teachers Union, Local 66 Timo is a member of the executive board of the Boston Teachers Union. He teaches social studies at Brighton High School.



Bruce Sparfven, UMass Faculty Federation, Local 1895 Bruce is Vice President of the UMass Faculty Federation at UMass Dartmouth. He is also chairperson of the Educational Services Unit.



Richard Stutman, Boston Teachers Union, Local 66 Richard is president of the Boston Teachers Union. He is a math teacher and formerly taught at the O'Bryant High School and the Theodore Roosevelt Middle School.



Gale Thomas, Lynn Teachers Union, Local 1037 Gale is a long-time activist in the Lynn Teachers Union. She is a Curriculum Instruction Teacher at the Hood School in Lynn.



AFT Massachusetts Staff Members



Steve Asadoorian, Field Representative Steve formerly worked for the Special Organizing project and served as president of the Northbridge Federation of Teachers.



Jennifer Berkshire, Editor Jennifer is a freelance journalist and has taught at the Labor Center at UMass Boston and the Labor Relations Research Center UMass Amherst.



Michael F. Canavan, Field Representative for Legislation Mike formerly worked for the National Association of Government Employees and the Service Employees International Union.



Jennifer L. Daniel, Office Manager Jennifer graduated from Bristol Community College and has been with AFT Massachusetts since 1994. She took over as office manager last year.



Edward Doherty, Special Assistant to the President Ed served as president of the Boston Teachers Union before joining the staff of AFT Massachusetts.



Mary Ann Dority, Secretary Mary Ann has been on the staff of AFT Massachusetts since 1994. She previously held sales and marketing positions.



Annemarie T. DuBois, Director of Organization Past president of the Peabody Federation of Teachers, Annemarie was a former English teacher at Peabody Veterans Memorial High.



Cathy Dwyer, Political Director Past president of the Billerica Federation of Teachers, Cathy taught in the Billerica school system and is a labor member of the Democratic State Committee.



Shawn Flood, Field Representative Shawn is a former field representative with the AFT Northern New England Council. He also worked as an organizer for the New Mexico Federation of Teachers.



Diane Frey, Field Representative Diane began her long career in the labor movement as an organizer for 1199 and worked most recently for AFT in Vermont, organizing early education workers.



Dianne M. Heeley, Field Representative Dianne is a former field representative for Service Employees International Union Local 285 and former senior field representative for Local 925, SEIU.



Phil Katz, Field Representative Phil is the former president of the Brookline Educators Union. He also taught math and computer science in the Brookline public schools.



Brian LaPierre, Field Representative Brian is a member of the Lynn Teachers Union. He formerly taught social studies and history at both the Thurgood Marshall Middle School and Lynn English High School.



Joseph R. Lettiere, Associate Counsel Joe formerly served as associate counsel for Council 93 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.



Haidee Morris, General Counsel Haidee was formerly the labor counsel to the Boston Public Schools and the Massachusetts Community Colleges.



Dan Murphy, Director of Education Policy A former researcher, writer and analyst, Dan came to AFT MA from AFT's national headquarters in Washington DC.



J. Coley Walsh, Field Representative for Legislation Coley was formerly a guidance counselor at the Lawrence Regional School where he served as president of Local 1707.

Report on Organization

Continued from Convention Report, page 1A

The single brightest light concerning Level 4 schools beams in Lowell where President Paul Georges led the union and Superintendent Chris Scott led the administration in collaboration based on the premise that all parties have a responsibility to strengthen the schools to improve student achievement. This approach demonized neither the union nor the teachers; it created a climate of trust and support. Consequently, students registered huge gains on MCAS with 51% of the fourth graders at the Morey scoring in the "very high" category, compared to 20% statewide.

In one of the terrible ironies of Massachusetts politics, the Lowell School Committee apparently oblivious to their

students success and the reasons for it, failed to renew Superintendent Scott's contract and it will expire June 30. We wish her the best in her future endeavors.

Other positive developments have occurred despite the current climate. A team of Boston teachers received an AFT Innovation Grant to design "21st Century Lessons" using highly effective teachers and technology to create, model and disseminate world class lesson plans to their colleagues.

An angry debate about teacher evaluation has raged across the nation and the state this year. After receiving the report from a 40 member panel that met for months on the subject, Commissioner Mitchell will present his recommendations to the Board of Education on April 27 which will vote in June after a public

comment period on final regulations. At this time, the question of tying MCAS to teacher performance evaluation remains unresolved. Level 4 schools must adopt the new system in September, 2011, Race To The Top districts in 2012, and all other districts in 2013. Negotiation between the union and the district must occur prior to implementation.

Despite the economy, some locals have settled contracts. They include Pittsfield, North Attleboro, Chelmsford, Nashoba Valley, Fairview Federation of Nurses, Wentworth Faculty, Cambridge College Mid-Level Administrators, North Shore Consortium and South Shore Collaborative among others.

The most significant contract victory came to the Longy Faculty Union after 14 months of bitter battle with Longy

School of Music which saw long time faculty terminated and a blatant refusal to negotiate in good faith on the part of the school. Numerous charges filed with the NLRB and a court case leading to an unusual injunction against the school finally led to a three year contract ratified by the union in March.

In another positive sign that our union remains vibrant, new young leaders emerged to serve as presidents in Lynn, Pittsfield, Holliston, South Shore Regional and Lawrence Administrative Support Staff.

AFT MA Field Staff Dianne Heeley, Shawn Flood, Phil Katz, Brian LaPierre, Diane Frey, Special Assistant to the President Ed Doherty and I worked with our locals.

Coley Walsh and Mike Canavan served as lobbyists at the State House and Cathy Dwyer, as political director, worked with our locals on political action.

Dan Murphy, director of education policy and programs, worked with our members and on their behalf with DESE.

As always, Jennifer Berkshire told our stories in *The Advocate*.

Sara Beth Walker, our long time office manager, retired and we wish her well. Jennifer Daniel, our new office manager and Mary Ann Dority, our secretary, continue to assist our members at the AFT MA office.

As we face the year ahead, we stand ready to fight the battles we must and to collaborate as we can to improve the lives of our members and the institutions in which they work. ■

Secretary Treasurer's REPORT

The State of the Union's Finances



Mark Allred
Secretary Treasurer
of AFT Massachusetts

The past year has been a challenging one for AFT Massachusetts and for workers in general. The assaults on our institutes of public and private education as well as our libraries have been brutal. We are living in a time when being a member of a union has been under attack from many on the right. It took a good portion of our resources and those of the AFT to fight Question 3 last November. However, the assaults continue. Once again, I can report to you that our finances are sound but that does not mean that the fight is over.

In order to continue to fight those assaults on collective bargaining, on maintaining quality health care and protecting those most vulnerable, we shall need all the resources we can muster to win the fight.

It seems inconceivable that some of our friends (as well as some not-so-friendly people) put the blame for failing schools squarely on the shoulders of the teachers when we live in the state with the highest test scores in the country and the highest percentage of unionized teachers. That says to me that it is not the fault of the teachers but it is the fault of society.

We continue to constantly seek ways to reduce costs and I continue to work to that end. There have been a number of cost cutting measures taken at our office, which will save the organization money in the long run.

I am so honored to have served as your Secretary-Treasurer over these last five years and I look forward to continued service to the organization, which has served me well in my 38 years as a member.

I hope you enjoy the convention and meeting old friends as well as meeting new ones! ■

We're Learning Here



"I was working with Michael Duggan, who is learning to use visual symbols to construct his daily schedule. This activity provides a predictable structure to the day and enhances communication skills. Our students also spend time in community service jobs off-site every week in order to learn how to be productive citizens."

—Madeline Richmond
Teacher, Model Autism Program, Brook Farm Academy, Boston

"We were taking notes and asking Ms. Aloe for help understanding something in our history text. We're learning about Mexican immigration to the United States in the 1800s. This has helped us understand our own family backgrounds and appreciate how difficult life is for immigrants even now."

—Chantae Cabrera & Edilly Arias, Brook Farm Academy, Boston



We're Learning Here is a series by retired Boston teacher Amika Kemmler-Ernst. A former new teacher developer for the Boston Public Schools, Kemmler-Ernst takes pictures of students in schools across the city then asks them to describe, in their own words, what they're learning. To contact Amika about visiting your school, write to amika45@comcast.net.

Statement of Financial Position: April 30, 2010

ASSETS

Cash	798,624
Receivables	414,349
Prepaid Expenses	69,446
Furniture & Equipment	44,523
Security Deposit	12,465

TOTAL ASSETS 1,339,407

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Accounts payable	7,320
Accrued Expenses	26,986
Employee Benefits Payable	-

TOTAL LIABILITIES 112,751
TOTAL NET ASSETS 1,226,656

TOTAL LIABILITIES & ASSETS

1,339,407

REVENUES

Per Capita Dues	3,525,152
At large Dues	300
AFT Rebate	39,153
AFT Defense Fund Grant	-
AFT Assistance	30,240
Interest Income	8,993
Insurance Administrative Fees	3,238

TOTAL REVENUES 3,607,120

EXPENSES

Advertising	5,765
Assistance to Members and Locals	63,644
Automobiles	204,209
Charitable Contributions	28,535
Citizens for Public Schools	0
Conferences & Conventions	53,526
Contributions to Cand. & Refer.	28,236
Depreciation	23,614
Employee Benefits	454,547
Expenses Reimbursements	94,260
Insurance	25,152
Library	26,841
Maintenance	8,287
Newspaper	63,046
Office Supplies	59,852
Payroll Taxes	144,346
Pension Plan	294,166
Per Capita - AFT	2,446
Postage	12,997
Professional Fees	60,144
Public Relations	39,000
Rent	185,419
Salaries	1,745,170
Scholarships	10,500
Telephone & Utilities	24,178

TOTAL EXPENSES 3,719,482
DECREASE IN NET ASSETS (112,362)

ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR

1,412,941

ASSETS AT END OF YEAR

1,226,656

Congratulations!

AFT Massachusetts congratulates the winners of the 2011 Albert Shanker, Sandra Feldman and Jay Porter Scholarships. Each winner, a high school senior and dependent of an AFT Massachusetts member, will receive \$1500 towards the cost of his or her college or post-secondary education. Congratulations to this year's winners and best of luck with your future endeavors.

Shanker Scholarships:

Moira McCrave
Marysa Angeli
Emily LaRochelle
Eric Muench
Deidre McLaughlin
Sarah Stutman

Feldman Scholarships:

Samantha Torpey
Elizabeth Parks

Porter Scholarship:

John Powers

Professional Staff Union:

James Fiore

Para Conference 2011: Celebrating 25 Years

At their 'silver anniversary' conference, paras from around the state celebrate the gains of the past 25 years even as they prepare for challenges ahead.

When the first official Paraprofessional Conference was held twenty five years ago, paras were still celebrating their recent inclusion in the Boston Teachers Union. And their long struggle for rights and respect was just beginning, recalls Jenna Fitzgerald, the driving force behind the annual gathering. "We've come a long way. Health insurance, sick days, personal days—we fought for all of those benefits and won," says Fitzgerald, who has served as the BTU's paraprofessional field representative since 1979.

1979 was also the year that the paras held their first conference and what began as a Boston gathering would soon evolve into a statewide meeting. This year—what organizers referred to as the 'silver anniversary'—drew paraprofessionals from across the state, including New Bedford, North

Reading, Lawrence and Chelmsford.

Reflecting on change

Elaine Safioleas, president of the New Bedford Federation of Paraprofessionals, has attended the event for every one of its 25 years. "I wouldn't miss it," says Safioleas, who works as a job coach in the Transitional Resource Program at New Bedford High School, training students with a variety of disabilities and delays. How has the job of the paraprofessional changed in that time? "The need for paras just keeps going up," says Safioleas, noting that schools in New Bedford have seen an influx of students with significant learning delays. But while demand may be up, the actual number of paras in the New Bedford schools is down considerably thanks to the community's perennial budget crises. "Unfortunately the money just isn't there and paras are the first to go," says Safioleas.

Jeanne Hanson, president of the North Reading Federation of Paraprofessionals, and another long-time conference attendee, reflects that paras today have a great deal more responsibility than they did in the past. "The needs of the children in the public schools have really changed and there's much more emphasis on inclusion," says Hanson.

Celebration—and challenges

And while the hundreds of paras in the crowd had come to enjoy professional fellowship and recharge



SALUTING SILVER
Jenna Fitzgerald, with AFT MA president Tom Gosnell, has been an outspoken advocate for the rights of paraprofessionals since 1979. "We've come a long way. Health insurance, sick days, personal days—we fought for all those benefits and won," says Fitzgerald, the BTU's paraprofessional field rep.

their batteries, signs of the challenges facing the educators were everywhere. For Regina Folger, a member of the BTU's Paraprofessional Council, that challenge is personal. The Gavin Middle School in South Boston where Folger teaches life skills to developmentally disabled students—she is in her 35th year of a career that has taken her to schools across the city—is closing at the end of the school year and will be replaced by the UP Academy, a charter school. "I'm hoping to continue working as a para somewhere else," says Folger. "I love what I do and I'm not ready to give it up."

Troubling trends

While paras like Folger are confronting the hard reality of school closures, elsewhere in Massachusetts, paraprofessionals face the threat of outsourcing. AFT MA president Tom Gosnell, who spoke to the crowd, drew audible gasps when he described a proposal in Amesbury to contract out the jobs of paraprofessionals. "If this goes through, the paras won't be part of the union or the school system. This just shows us that we have to be alert and involved," said Gosnell.

Amesbury officials, seeking to close a \$400,000 budget gap, have proposed shifting 60 special education paraprofessional jobs to a private firm, Futures Education, based in Beverly, MA. "They're trying to balance the budget on the backs of employees who can least afford it," says AFT MA field representative Dianne Heeley, noting that the Amesbury paras have already been asked to give up three vacation days. The proposal, which would affect many so-called 'one-on-one' paras,

who work with students who require intensive assistance and support, has spurred outrage among parents. The issue will be revisited at a school committee meeting on May 3rd.

Preparing to lead

Also on the agenda: health insurance, specifically the debate on Beacon Hill over cost shifting and stripping public sector employees, including paraprofessionals, of their collective bargaining rights. (See related story on page two). John Brouder of Boston Benefits Partners urged the paras in the crowd to prepare to lead their colleagues in the challenging months ahead. "You have an important task before you," said Brouder, who advises public sector unions on health insurance issues. "You are the leaders in your schools and people are going to come to you for information. The more you know, the better you can talk to your friends, colleagues and neighbors."

Silver Saturday

But despite the seriousness of the topics, there was also plenty of time devoted to the event's other purpose: bringing paraprofessionals together for fun and fellowship. Karima Allie, who is in her fifth year as a para at the Higginson/Lewis Elementary School, attends the event every year with her mother, Glenda Bynoe-Allie, and close family friend Angelina Newsome-Bey, both long-time paraprofessionals. "It's uplifting and motivating and you come away feeling inspired," says Allie. "It's a really great feeling to be around so many people who understand what you do and support you." ■



PARA PRIDE
Karima Allie (left), a paraprofessional at the Higginson/Lewis School, was inspired to become a para by her mother, Glenda Bynoe-Allie (center). Also pictured: close family friend and paraprofessional Angelina Newsome-Bey. The three say that attending the conference each year reinvigorates them.

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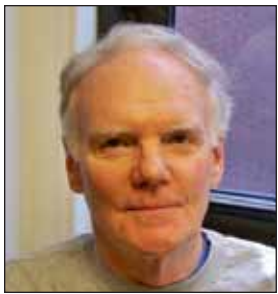
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On Campus

Mike Scott, President
Berklee Faculty Union
Berklee College of Music, Boston, MA



The Berklee Strike, Twenty Five Years Later

The chance to dramatically alter the course of an institution seldom arises. Seizing that opportunity and actually implementing change is even more unusual. In 1986, against tough odds, the faculty at Berklee College of Music accomplished this very feat. On April 22 twenty-five years ago, the then fledgling Berklee Faculty Union ended a two-week strike and signed their first Faculty Contract Agreement with the previously intransigent Berklee administration.

The road had its share of potholes, as the road to collective bargaining will.

At midnight in early March of '86 the faculty negotiating team, a bunch of musicians really, huddled together in the cold and dark. We had just exited the plush offices of Foley/Hoag, the Berklee administration's legal eagles hired to crush the upstart faculty union. A bitter north wind whistled over grimy snow mounds.

Through chattering teeth, a team

me. "Pull the trigger!"

I nodded. "Call the strike captains," I said. "Tell them it's on."

One telephone call and a very few minutes later, a solemn union team passed by the federal mediator on their way out of the building. "Hope you know what you're doing," he said.

"Me, too," I answered, knowing that I had absolutely no idea what I was doing. I was a sax player from Cambridge burdened by the knowledge that 138 people could lose their jobs if this backfired.

A few sleepless hours later, we headed for the strike site. A reluctant dawn sulked behind a bank of dark clouds when we arrived in front of a coffee shop on Mass. Ave. The cheerful, multi-colored Dunkin' Donuts sign seemed to mock my decision-making ability. What if no one showed up? What if only a few people showed up? They and the entire negotiating team would be dead meat. Our working conditions would never ever



UNCERTAIN FORECAST Mike Scott, second from left, led the 138 member Berklee Faculty Union out on its first and only strike in 1986. Also pictured here (from left): Bill Hill, Roger Davis and George Hargan.

load, one of the most onerous full-time faculty teaching loads in higher education, has decreased by more than 50%. One-year contracts with no recourse upon non-renewal have become three to five year contracts with arbitration rights under a just cause standard upon non-renewal. 86% of our part-timers are eligible for health, dental, management co-contrib 403(b), disability and life insurance. Over one hundred part-time faculty have been converted to full-time status since 1996, something unheard of even in public university systems with, literally, faculty numbering in the tens of thousands.

How did all this impact the institution? In the same time period, the faculty increased from 138 to 570. The student body grew from 1700 to over 4000. Most tellingly the college's endowment rose from ten million dollars to over 170 million. What was good for the goose turned out to be even better for the gander.

Conditions at Berklee have improved dramatically over the past twenty-five years. However with the new college administration more intent on buying up the Back Bay than investing in its faculty, it could all go in a heartbeat.

In fact, collective bargaining itself could go in a heartbeat. Hardly a day passes when unions do not come under attack and/or have their hard-earned bargaining rights threatened. The watchword is vigilance. It's time to stand against the wind, time to get involved. We must all fight to preserve one of the last hopes for the continued existence of a middle class in America—our unions. ■

Mike Scott is the president of the Berklee Faculty Union. Share your comments with him at mScott@berklee.edu.



STANDING OUT Members of the nascent Berklee Faculty Union went on strike to protest low pay, an excessive course load and the administration's refusal to negotiate. Since then, the union has made major gains.

member complained: "All this time and the only thing we've got is the right to post union notices on two bulletin boards."

"Not good," mumbled another, pulling her stocking cap over her ears.

As though on cue, a member of management's team rode by in a chauffer driven limo heading home to his mansion on the North Shore. When he noticed us standing on the sidewalk, he smiled and waved.

Of nine months of frustrating negotiations it seemed like the low point, but little did we know what lay ahead.

In the wee small hours of April 7, 1986, the faculty team was back at Foley/Hoag, caucusing in a conference room. It was 2:22 AM and we had just learned that, while Berklee had plenty of money they had no intention of responding to our financial demands.

One team member put it bluntly. "You've got to pull the trigger," he told

change.

Berklee faculty began pouring into the Dunk as the sun sneaked a peek over the eastern horizon. By 7:30a.m. the bargaining unit, 96% strong, had hit the bricks. The strike was most definitely on.

The fourteen days during the strike were chilly and damp—typical Boston springtime. But we sang, we played, we marched and, more than anything else, we walked in circles outside college entryways, chiding the very few colleagues who crossed our picket lines and chanting, "What do we want?" "Contract!" "When do we want it?" "Now!"

And when the smoked cleared and the clamoring subsided, we'd won.

In the ensuing twenty-five years, our full-time faculty average salary, once the lowest in Massachusetts, has risen by nearly 400%. Part-time faculty hourly rates have increased by a whopping 700%. Our teaching



SOLIDARITY SONG Music was a key component of the 14 day long strike at the Berklee College of Music. Singing and playing, recalls Mike Scott, kept spirits high despite the tense times. Pictured here (from left): Greg Badolato and Allan Chase.



Retiree Corner

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

SENIOR SEMINARS

Preparing for Retirement

Comprehensive seminar for those within 5 years of retiring from the public sector in MA. *Three dates and locations:*

Where: Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District, 65 Pleasant St. Upton, MA

When: Monday, May 2, 2:30-4:30

Where: Tenney Grammar School Auditorium, 75 Pleasant St. Methuen, MA

When: Monday, May 9, 2:00-3:30 or 3:30-5:30

Where: Lawrence The Relief's Inn (formerly the Knights of Columbus), One Market St. Lawrence, MA

When: Tuesday, May 17, 3:30-5:30

How to Protect Your Nest Egg and Plan for the Right Outcome for Your Family

This popular seminar, given by elder law attorney Mary Howie, looks at many issues involving probate, trusts, Medicare Trusts, Benefits for veterans and their spouses and much more.

When: June 11, 10 to noon

Where: Presidential Park, unit 105, 314 Main Street, Wilmington, MA (Main street is Route 38).

To Move or Not to Move

A comprehensive 2 hour seminar on the pros and cons of various housing choices and the legal ramifications for these choices.

When: June 18, from ten to noon

Where: Presidential Park, unit 105, (see above).

All the above seminars are free. To register call Marie Ardito at 781-272-8073 or e-mail mardito@retireesunited.org.

Telling the Story of a Terrible Disease

There have been many articles written on the subject of dementia and Alzheimer's disease, but none quite so heartbreakingly real as *Still Alice* by Lisa Genova. Although it is a work of fiction, its story of a very learned woman, Alice Howland, has the ring of authenticity. She is a Harvard professor of cognitive psychology who at 50 years of age is diagnosed with early Alzheimer's disease. Genova, a Cape Cod resident, brings her own rich background in neuroscience to this book.

Most of the literature on this topic is written to instruct and give support to caregivers. This presentation describes what is happening from the perspective of the patient with Alzheimer's disease.

Genova presents a very realistic portrayal of the thought processes of one with this illness. The work has the stamp of approval of the Alzheimer's Association which feels that it is a very authentic presentation of a person with Alzheimer's. This aspect of the illness has not been attempted before to their knowledge. Many patients who are able to express themselves agree that Genova has portrayed what happens in a realistic manner.

People have many misconceptions about the disease and its manifestations built up over the years. It does not just affect old people, as early onset Alzheimer's can be diagnosed in someone as young as thirty. For most it is something that occurs after age sixty and the percentage increases after eighty-five. The Alzheimer's Association estimates that there are roughly 5.3 million Americans with the illness and that roughly 200,000 of these have early onset Alzheimer's.

Another misconception is that Alzheimer's only affects people who are alone too much. It does not matter how busy one is or how full ones day anyone can be a victim of this illness. The idea that by keeping the mind busy learning new things will keep this dreaded illness away is myth. It can help but is no guarantee.

As with many illnesses early detection is important. There is no cure but there are medications that can delay the progression of the disease. The underlying cause determines how treatable it is. Also, the earlier Alzheimer's is detected the more the affected individuals can take part in decisions affecting his or her future.

According to Genova's research only five percent of Alzheimer's is caused from inherited genes. If it is in one's family the risk is greater but there is a better than average chance it will not affect others in the family.

The author cautions the reader not to talk about the patient while they are present as though they cannot hear. People do this often with older folks and it happens even more frequently with those with Alzheimer's. Genova's character Alice makes one see how this feels to the person with the disease.

Often family members say, "He or she doesn't know who I am." We have all sympathized and felt sad for someone in this position. In the pages of this book the reader sees the truth about this disease when Alice is looking in the mirror and does not know who is looking back at her.

This is a must-read book. It is well written and can be used very successfully with a book club, as material is provided at the end for such a purpose. ■

Still Alice is available at local book stores or on Amazon.com.

The Golden Apple



By Ted Chambers

This is Howard Rowe, an old friend of mine. We are enjoying lunch at the Dogwood Café in Portland, Maine. The photo was taken last summer and Howard is holding my baby daughter Naomi, who was about four months old in the picture.

Howard and I both hail from the City of Lynn, though that is not where or why we met. I met him when I was just sixteen years old and a junior at Deering High School in Portland, Maine. Of course I called him Mr. Rowe back then. He was my Academic Decathlon coach, my class advisor and my senior year English teacher.

As any one of Howard's former students can tell you, he is a force of nature. And for forty years he was one of the most amazing and engaging teachers at a public high school that was full of incredible, amazing and dedicated teachers.

It is hard describe the influence that Howard and a number of my other teachers at Deering have had on my life. They helped guide me through one of the most turbulent and painful periods of my life, and the dedication, skill, friendship and love that they showed me during those

Paying Tribute to a 'Force of Nature'

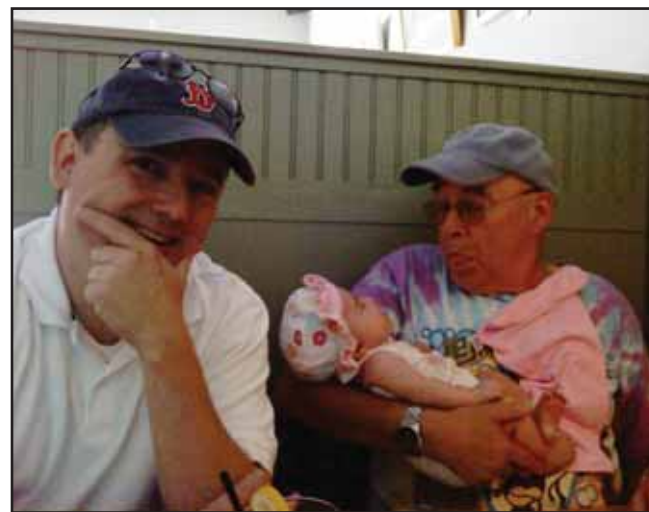
years eventually informed my decision to become a teacher as well.

I moved to Portland at the end of my freshmen year because I had to get away from an alcoholic father and a life that was long on problems but short on coping skills and resources. I left behind nearly everyone and everything I had ever known and loved, and moved to a place where, for a very long time, I felt completely alone and isolated.

Those first two years in Portland were undoubtedly the most difficult years of my life. Aside from being "the new kid in school" I struggled with my father's drinking, my parents bitter divorce, a turbulent relationship with my mother and stepfather, the kidnapping of my girlfriend, and then the ensuing trial and incarceration of her attacker.

When I think back on those times, the challenges I endured and the obstacles I had to overcome to get through high school and move on to college, I thank God for the love and support I had from my teachers, especially Mr. Rowe. If I have had any success or managed to do anything good and productive with my life, the teachers at Deering High School are owed an enormous amount of the credit.

Especially Mr. Rowe. Howard was



Mr. Mentor
Teacher Ted Chambers with his high school mentor, Howard Rowe, who is holding Chambers' daughter Naomi. Chambers credits Rowe, whom he calls a mentor, a friend, even a surrogate father figure, with helping him navigate the most difficult years of his life.

so much more than a teacher. He was a mentor, a friend, and at times a surrogate father figure. Which is not to suggest that he was a push-over. In spite of his easy going nature and affect, Mr. Rowe had the uncanny ability to befriend his students without letting us off the hook. He was kind and demanding. It is a skill I attempt to model nearly every day of my working life.

So, Mr. Rowe, on behalf of my family and the people who rely on me, I want to say: 'thank you'. Thanks to you—and the many other teachers in my life—for helping me become the teacher, the writer, the mentor, the friend, the colleague, the advocate and the father that I am today. Thanks for

inspiring me to join this incredible vocation.

Thanks for pushing me and holding me accountable. Thanks for being a good and decent guy who always found a way to make learning more engaging, and occasionally even fun.

And most of all, thanks to you and your family for the sacrifices you made so that others, like me, could find our place and happiness in the world. ■

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Teacher, Mentor—Evaluator

Continued from cover

But whatever the decision, notes McAfee, it's one that is based on evidence. "I'm the one making the recommendation so I'd better have the facts to back it up."

Serious standards

The Peer Assistance and Review program, or PAR, is the brainchild of Dal Lawrence, who led the Toledo Federation of Teachers for more than three decades. The idea was born of his dissatisfaction with the existing system of teacher evaluation in Toledo's schools—essentially the model that remains in place in most public schools today. "The system made no sense," says Lawrence, a former history teacher. "It bred distrust on all sides without providing any real information about an individual's teaching practices." He began to envision an alternative approach where teachers—like doctors or lawyers—would both establish the standards of their profession and enforce them. And he quickly found a following. Says Lawrence: "Wherever I'd go I asked teachers one simple question: 'how would you like to be part of a profession that's respected for its excellence and high standards?'" Thirty years later, PAR remains the single most popular program that the Toledo Federation of Teachers offers.

Mentor early

How does the program work? Every incoming educator is paired with an intern consultant, a veteran teacher who spends three years providing mentoring and support services. Such mentorship is key, explains Lawrence, and not just because it provides essential assistance to brand new teachers. "The union becomes the body that defines what the standards are for great teaching and helps our newest members reach those standards." Of course, not everyone gets there. Since PAR's introduction in 1981, hundreds of Toledo teachers have been dismissed, three quarters of them new teachers who weren't recommended for a permanent contract with the school district.

Intervene when necessary

But PAR isn't merely a mentoring program. It also provides a mechanism by which struggling veteran teachers can receive assistance—and be recommended for termination if they fail to improve. The intern consultants provide confidential help to teachers who contact them. A more drastic measure known as intervention allows a principal or a building representative, to refer a non-probationary teacher for a performance review. (Interestingly, as Lawrence notes, during the history of the program the overwhelming majority of these referrals have been made by building representatives, not by principals). Once an intern consultant, assigned by the PAR panel, has conducted one or more unannounced visits to the teacher's classroom, he or she recommends one of three courses of action: no assistance needed, mentoring only—a less serious stage with no threat of dismissal—or intervention, an acknowledgement that serious problems exist.

Intern consultant McAfee is presenting one such case this morning.

Starting a Peer Evaluation and Review program

Let teachers develop the standards of practice upon which mentoring and evaluation are based.

Ask teachers to be part of a real profession known for its excellence. Real reform starts with peoples' aspirations.

Govern the program with a joint union-management board.

Require every consulting teacher to report on every intern and internship case to the governing board.

Have an appeals procedure.

Once you have standards, don't make exceptions.

Keep it simple. Peer review need not be complicated to be effective.

The teacher in question had been recommended for intervention back in 2009 by her principal who cited a crisis in classroom management and numerous complaints from parents regarding lost student work and a "baffling" grading system. For nearly an hour McAfee reports on the teacher's process in recent months, her third such report on the teacher. Throughout, members of the reviewing panel pepper her with questions. Has the teacher substantially improved her organizational skills? What were the teacher's interactions with students like during McAfee's most recent visit? In the end, though, neither the panelists nor union president Fran Lawrence have heard enough to convince them that the crisis has been resolved. The verdict comes swiftly: McAfee is urged to counsel the teacher towards retirement.

This resolution is not entirely surprising. Of the interventions conducted by the PAR program since its founding, roughly two thirds fail to bring instructional practices up to an acceptable lesson. In recent years, however, the number of interventions has dropped significantly, thanks largely to the effectiveness of the program in its mentoring phase. And whether they are working with brand new teachers or 30-year veterans, the intern consultants are charged with enforcing the same set of standards.

Uncertain future

The PAR program has already been replicated in dozens of school districts around the country, and Dal Lawrence hopes that the raging debate over teacher evaluation will lead other districts, including some in Massachusetts, to experiment. Ironically, the one place where PAR's future is truly in doubt is now Toledo itself. At press time, funding for the program has been cut as Toledo confronts a gaping budget deficit, a dwindling population and an explosion of charter schools. Members of the Toledo Federation of Teachers continue to fight to save the program. ■

State Task Force Releases Recommendations on Educator Evaluation

Following six months of deliberation, a 40-person Task Force representing the full range of education and community stakeholders released in March its long-awaited report on how to redesign teacher and administrator evaluation in Massachusetts. The Task Force was convened by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as part of the state's Race to the Top plan.

The Task Force's report recommends that all school districts adopt a four-point rating scale—unsatisfactory, needs improvement, proficient, and exemplary—with educators rated against standards and indicators in four domains: curriculum, instruction, and assessment; teaching all students; professional culture; and family and community engagement.

In determining ratings, evaluators could draw upon traditional classroom observations as well as additional sources of evidence such as lesson/unit plans, multiple measures of student learning and growth, and educators' contributions to the school community and professional culture.

Under the proposed framework, student MCAS scores can play a role in informing ratings, although the role is limited, with heavy emphasis placed on the need to use a wide variety of student learning measures. AFT Massachusetts continues to oppose any role for MCAS in evaluation, citing extensive research showing the methodological and educational flaws of this approach.

"The framework isn't perfect but it's potentially workable," says AFT MA's director of educational

policy and programs, Dan Murphy, who participated in the Task Force. "Make no mistake—we remain concerned about the role of student test scores, as well as other components of the framework. But where there is good will and trust between teachers and administrators, and where teachers have a significant voice in system design through collective bargaining, we're hopeful that this framework can be used to create local evaluation systems that are truly about professional growth, not 'gotcha.'"

Murphy adds that the debate over educator evaluation is far from over. The Task Force's recommendations are only advisory in nature, he says. The state's commissioner of education, Mitchell Chester, is expected to submit his own recommendations to the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Board will ultimately determine the content of the new statewide regulations.

"We'll likely see the commissioner's recommendations at the next Board meeting on April 27," says Murphy. "If the Board approves his initial recommendations, there will then be a two-month public comment period before final regulations are issued. During this period, it will be critical for AFT MA members to get involved and to voice their concerns to the Department and the Board." ■

AFT MA members can stay on top of the latest developments by visiting the AFT MA website at <http://aftma.net/educator-resources/teacher-evaluation>. The full Task Force report can also be downloaded at this site.

Help Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive May 14, 2011



Place boxes and cans of nonperishable food next to your mailbox before your letter carrier delivers mail on May 14, 2011. Your letter carrier will do the rest.

Help those who are facing hunger and joblessness.



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