

# MTA Today



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# MTA Today

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



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## MTA'S MISSION STATEMENT

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

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## ON THE COVER

After a nearly two-year campaign, Massachusetts voters approved the Fair Share Amendment in November, setting the stage for substantial improvements in public education and transportation. The MTA immediately began to craft its priority list for Fair Share spending, and several articles in this edition of *MTA Today* take a closer look at those initiatives. The successful Question 1 campaign drew together a broad coalition of groups and individuals and public officials. Shown at top are some of the many supporters of Question 1, as well as Question 4, which also was approved by voters, and which provided access to licenses for undocumented immigrants for the first time. Bottom left is MTA President Max Page, speaking at a campaign rally in Dorchester shortly before Election Day. Bottom right is U.S. Representative Ayanna Pressley, who also strongly supported the amendment. Coverage of this generational victory begins on Page 3. Also in this edition are stories about the Higher Ed For All campaign, which seeks additional state investment in public higher education, on Page 5, and the MTA's legislative priorities, on Page 6. Coverage of a fight in Worcester over a proposed charter school is on Page 7. And a story about contract fights, and wins, in local unions bargaining for better pay and working conditions is on Page 8. Also in this edition, information about pre-convention meetings for Annual Meeting delegates is on Page 11.



Cover photos by Jonathan Ng

## Quote-Unquote

**“The people of the Commonwealth have told us they want more investment in public education and transportation with the passage of the Fair Share Amendment.”**

— State Senate President Karen Spilka, speaking about free community college for state residents, in an interview Jan. 8 with WCVB 5 On the Record.

# Mass. says ‘Yes on 1’ for fairer taxes

By Mary MacDonald

Massachusetts broke new ground in November, when voters authorized a constitutional amendment that will make the tax system fairer, by enacting a 4 percent tax on incomes over \$1 million.

Five previous attempts to pass similar measures failed. But on Nov. 8, 2022, Massachusetts voters approved Question 1, and now the next steps begin. For billions of dollars to reach public schools and transportation – as intended – educators and activists who combined forces to campaign for the passage of the Fair Share Amendment will need to make sure the Legislature follows through.

MTA leaders have described that effort as the next step in the Fair Share campaign. And it will become a focus in the coming months, as legislators hone in on the state budget and education bills.

MTA President Max Page said the generational victory of Question 1 will be followed up with a winning campaign to ensure it is spent on the most critical educational priorities. “Some of that money needs to come back to our schools, colleges and universities in a way that we think is best,” Page said.

Schools need more educators, counselors and nurses, and supports for students who have come through three years of a life-changing pandemic. In public higher education, the priorities include debt-free public education, and a commitment from the state to resume covering the true cost of building construction and maintenance, which are now pushed on to campuses and students.

Beyond finances, the preK-12 educational system has to be changed to be more just and holistic, including getting rid of the punitive use of the MCAS exams. “We want the money spent on our public schools and colleges, and implementing the *Student Opportunity Act*, but we want to embrace a whole-child approach to education,” Page said. “We need to get rid of what is hampering educators, which is the current set-up of this high-stakes testing system.”

Governor Maura Healey, who supported the Fair Share Amendment, has said publicly several times that she understands its funds will be in addition to, not in place of, existing appropriations for education. Similar statements have been made since November by other state leaders, including Senate President Karen Spilka.

Healey, whose first budget is expected to be delivered to the Legislature by March 1, won the recommendation of the MTA in her gubernatorial race.

MTA leaders already have scheduled or held meetings with her cabinet members, including Patrick Tutwiler, the new Secretary of Education, to share the union’s priorities. Unlike his predecessor, Tutwiler has had a long career in public education, including work as a classroom teacher and school and district administrator.



Photo by Jonathan Ng

The successful voter approval of Question 1, the Fair Share Amendment, followed a nearly two-year campaign by a coalition that included labor, social services and faith groups.

The MTA’s priorities for the Fair Share proceeds are encased in a package of bills newly introduced on Beacon Hill. Each has received the endorsement of the MTA Government Relations Committee, and a grassroots campaign to encourage their passage will unfold soon.



The idea is to put the weight of the 115,000-member union behind each priority, in much the same way that union members have rallied for each other at the local level to fight for better contracts.

In other words, the familiar chant, “when we fight, we win” is going to be applied to statewide educational priorities.

The legislative agenda includes adoption of the *Cherish Act* for higher education, which would include debt-free public higher education, starting with community college and later including four-year universities. More than 700,000 people in Massachusetts have some college credits, but no degree, Page noted. “It’s one thing to get access to college, but we have to help students get the best experience in college and get to graduation without crippling debt.”

The newly reintroduced *Cherish Act* also would expand eligibility for state health care and retirement benefits to adjunct and part-time faculty. And it would add more funds for student support services, ensure adequate minimum funding for public higher education and require the state

to resume coverage of capital construction and maintenance expenses, which are now passed on to local campuses and students.

The *Thrive Act* is the anti-high-stakes testing bill and would remove Massachusetts as an outlier among states in tying a standardized test to graduation. Only eight states now do so. The proposal would replace the MCAS graduation requirement with one that allows students’ districts to certify their completion of coursework and mastery of skills. And it would eliminate the use of state “receiverships” and return democratic control to communities and school committees.

The MTA also is making a priority of a fair inflation adjustment, or COLA, for public education retirees. Current law allows a COLA to be applied only to the first \$13,000 of a pension. The bill would address this unfairness by immediately increasing that base to \$18,000 and over time aligning it with the maximum amount used in Social Security benefits, which is \$43,524 in 2023.

To get these priorities made into law, it’s important for MTA members to become versed in the legislative agenda.

“If we can commit ourselves to self-education as a union, when it comes to our legislative agenda, and how we can use policy to really transform what public education looks like in Massachusetts, then we will have a lot of collective power,” said Betsy Preval, a member of the Cambridge Education Association and chair of the MTA Government Relations Committee.

For more information about the MTA’s legislative priorities for 2023-24, please visit [massteacher.org/legislation](https://massteacher.org/legislation).

# Reflecting on a remarkable period of time in our union history

October and November of 2022 will be remembered for a long time in our union and Commonwealth as that moment when we finally won a fairer tax system; when educators stood up in contract fights and declared: “Enough is enough.”

My last editorial was written in October, just weeks before Election Day. On Nov. 8, we won the



Max Page  
MTA President

Fair Share Amendment, with 52 percent in favor; 48 percent opposed. That sounds close but the percentage is misleading. The difference is about 100,000 votes – the size of the city of Brockton. In 1994, the last time a progressive tax measure was on the ballot, the question lost by a much steeper margin of 65 percent opposed; 28 percent in favor. Before

November there had been five previous efforts to create a more progressive tax system; ours was the victorious one.

Now we will have a fairer tax system than we’ve ever had before, and that is something to celebrate. But we need to keep fighting, too. The wealthiest among us now pay a percentage of taxes that is closer to what our state’s lowest-income workers pay, yet an imbalance remains. In other words, Fair Share was a great start toward tax equity, but not enough.

We also will have \$2 billion every single year to spend on improving public education and transportation for all. In November, the MTA Board approved our legislative agenda, and we have rolled out these proposals for a fair share of Fair Share revenues. The specific bills before the Legislature, as well as legislation fact sheets, can be viewed at [massteacher.org/legislation](http://massteacher.org/legislation).

## Debt-free public higher education

With these priorities, the MTA is demanding high-quality, debt-free public higher education, including fair pay and benefits for adjunct faculty and part-time staff, green buildings, and true debt-free access for every resident of our state.

We are demanding full funding of the Student Opportunity Act and more support for preK-12 education, including living wages for Education Support Professionals, more counselors and mental health professionals, paid family and medical leave, and a true commitment to recruiting and retaining BIPOC educators.

As I wrote in the fall, perhaps the most important win in the Fair Share victory, was that we took a sledgehammer to neoliberalism, the ideology that has dominated political discourse in recent decades, and which has at its core an almost religious belief in tax cuts, privatization of public goods – including public education – and cuts to government. Fair Share has opened a range of possibilities in imagining a different Commonwealth, where we start with this question: What do all Massachusetts residents need to live healthy, fulfilling, prosperous lives that allow them to plan for the future and care for themselves and their families?

MTA educators should feel enormous pride in this historic, shared victory. It was you who spent weekends and nights knocking on doors and calling registered voters, a level of effort that was critical to the success of the campaign. It was you who contributed your dues so that a coalition of labor, faith and social services organizations could go toe-to-toe with the billionaire class and win better funding for everyone. You won this for yourselves, for your children, for your grandchildren, and for future generations. We hope and expect that Fair Share will remain in our state Constitution for generations to come.

## Community and parent support

Even as we were on our way to winning the constitutional amendment in November, MTA members were making historic changes in their own local unions. After months and months of frustrating negotiations in which the school committees engaged in performative “surface bargaining” – showing up to twiddle their thumbs and avoid responding meaningfully to our members’ proposals – Malden and Haverhill educators voted overwhelmingly to go on strike. With widespread parent and community support, the MEA won a tremendous contract, including a dramatic increase in pay for ESP members – close to a true living wage – fair pay for the rest of the educators, and common good demands, such as the school committee joining with the local to demand more affordable housing for Malden families. In Haverhill, the school committee and its highly paid, anti-union lawyer insisted on dragging out the strike in order to punish the Haverhill Education Association. But the members were not deterred! They won a strong agreement that addressed pay, but also key student and educator concerns around behavioral health in the schools.

So many individuals, members and leaders showed up to support both of these unions in their contract fight. It was overwhelmingly moving to witness the solidarity and comradely love that

*“MTA educators should feel enormous pride in this historic, shared victory. It was you who spent weekends and nights knocking on doors and calling registered voters, a level of effort that was critical to the success of the campaign.”*

was visible everywhere, during the Malden and Haverhill victories and then again in Melrose, over the weekend ending in Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

## Embracing local unions in solidarity

I have never been more proud to be an educator, a union member, and leader of the MTA, than while standing with our members in Brookline, in Tewksbury, in Belmont, Andover and Sharon to demand better for their students and communities. Their fierce commitment to confront bullies in all forms – school committees, the Department of Labor Relations, the courts, lawyers who get up in the morning and say “We have to punish you teachers” (that’s a real quote from a management lawyer) – to embrace their union siblings in solidarity, to call on students and families to stand with them, was inspiring and moving. A lot of tears were shed, because members knew they were and are part of something special. Deb and I witnessed a level of camaraderie, of support, of pure joy in union solidarity.

## Letters policy

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

# Higher Ed For All campaign rolls out

By Scott McLennan

Advocating for state reinvestment in public higher education on a scale similar to that made in 2019 for preK-12 public education, the Higher Ed For All coalition announced its goals in December at a State House event.

Students, educators, business leaders and legislators called for debt-free public higher education, increased student support, fair and equitable pay for all faculty and staff, and a return to a model in which the state covers the cost of campus building and maintenance needs.

According to MTA President Max Page, the Fair Share Amendment approved by voters in November and its introduction of progressive taxes on the very wealthy to pay for public education and transportation projects makes it possible to undo the many harms that austerity budgeting has created in public higher education over the past 40 years. Crushing student debt, the exploitation of adjunct faculty, the elimination of student support services, and a shift of capital costs from the state to individual campuses – and ultimately to students – have undermined the public good of public higher education, Page said.

## We did it before and we can do it again

Page, a second-generation professor at UMass Amherst, recalled how up until the 1980s, students from working families could attend the university debt-free and receive a world-class education.

“We did it before and we can do it again,” he told legislators and public higher education supporters attending the event.

Claudine Barnes, president of the Massachusetts Community College Council, described how low pay has eroded the ability of public colleges and universities to hire faculty and staff.

“We have failed job candidate searches at all 15 (of the community college) campuses,” said Barnes, an instructor at Cape Cod Community College. Barnes explained how she had to work a second job as a bartender for the first 11 years of her career, just to make ends meet.

The difficulty that colleges have in hiring makes it that much harder for them to develop a diversified workforce, and it creates untenable workloads.

“We are losing valuable faculty and staff mid-career to other colleges and careers,” Barnes said.

That staffing shortage is not just a problem at community colleges.

Clare Sheedy, a student at UMass Amherst, described the impact of too few advisors on her campus.

“Mentors are key to our success,” she said.

Sheedy told her story about arriving at UMass as a shy 18-year-old. During her freshman year, Sheedy was sexually assaulted, and she said the



Photo by Jonathan Ng

MTA President Max Page, center, told attendees at a press conference announcing the Higher Ed For All campaign that the recent approval of the Fair Share Amendment creates an opportunity for the state to reinvest in public higher education. At left is Anneta Argyres, president of the Professional Staff Union at UMass Boston. At right is Phyllis Keenan, an adjunct faculty member at Greenfield Community College.

experience left her emotionally shut down.

Working closely with an advisor helped Sheedy to regain her confidence and also brought clarity to her academic pursuits.

Sheedy became a student leader and is now a candidate for a master’s degree in public health. She also has produced a TED Talk that addresses sexual violence, and she attributed her success to the support she received from an advisor.

Not only is there a shortage of advisors on the campus, Sheedy explained, but also a lack of diversity within the advising ranks. That especially hurts students from marginalized communities.

“The experiences, mentorship and opportunities that I have had at UMass made me realize the true disservice being done by all universities that neglect to provide students with full-time academic advisors,” she said.

## Increased pay, benefits for adjuncts

The Higher Ed For All initiative is also aiming to increase pay and provide equitable access to health and retirement benefits for adjunct faculty. In the community college system, adjunct faculty teach more than half of the courses, yet those instructors have no idea if they will be working from semester to semester.

“We need job security,” said Phyllis Keenan, an adjunct math instructor at Greenfield Community College. Keenan told how she had a first-generation student in her class one semester. That student’s success inspired her parents to enroll in Greenfield Community College to further their own education and opportunities.

“We change lives. We change communities,” Keenan said.

Another priority for the campaign is to restore a funding model for public higher education that returns responsibility to the state for paying for constructing and maintaining campus buildings. With most of those costs now in the hands of individual campuses, public colleges and universities are taking on higher amounts of debt and passing those associated costs along to students in the form of hugely inflated fees.

“The Commonwealth owns the land and the buildings, so it has a responsibility to take care of them,” said Salem State University Professor Joanna Gonsalves, who is part of a statewide campus debt relief project.

In advocating for debt-free access to public colleges and universities, the Higher Ed For All campaign is challenging the conventional wisdom that fewer students today are pursuing post-secondary education or training.

“That may apply to some private colleges, but that is the wrong way to think about public higher education,” said Anneta Argyres, president of the Professional Staff Union chapter at UMass Boston. “Instead, we should be thinking about the tens of thousands who graduate and can’t afford to go to college, or the 700,000 adults in Massachusetts who started college but never finished.”

*Additional information about the Higher Ed For All campaign can be found at [massteacher.org/highered](https://massteacher.org/highered).*

# MTA announces legislative agenda

By Scott McLennan

The MTA has outlined its priorities for the legislative session that began in January, including securing state funds that meet all the needs of students who attend public schools and colleges.

Additional priorities for the session include: ending the harmful influence of standardized MCAS testing, restoring the right to strike for public employees, and making sure retired educators are not forced into economic hardship.

MTA members engaged in a participatory process to craft the union's legislative agenda, according to Betsy Preval, a Cambridge educator and chair of MTA's Government Relations Committee, who spoke at a State House event on Dec. 8.

Earlier in December, the MTA-led Higher Ed For All campaign addressed specific needs for public colleges and universities at a State House briefing, including debt-free access to public higher education.

Just as the Higher Ed For All initiative sprang from funding possibilities made available to the state through passage of the Fair Share Amendment, that successful ballot question is key to addressing some very specific needs in preK-12 public education. The ballot question, approved by voters on Nov. 8, created a 4 percent tax on annual taxable income over \$1 million a year. The constitutional amendment will generate nearly \$2 billion annually and requires the funds to be spent on public education and transportation.

## Setting educational priorities

At the Dec. 8 State House briefing, several MTA members spoke about educational priorities.

School counselors from Springfield described the untenable caseloads they face, while emphasizing the important role they play in student success.

Counselor Heather Gershman, who provides services to 479 students, emphasized the need to bring statewide counselor-to-student ratios down to the profession's recommended ratio of 1-to-250.

"When there is only one of us, someone else is missing out," said Tracy Little-Sasanecki, president of the Springfield Education Association and a veteran school counselor.

Worcester educator Saul Ramos emphasized the need to raise wages for Education Support Professionals. In districts throughout the state, education support staff – many of whom work with the most vulnerable students and those with the greatest needs – earn far below what economists consider a living wage.

It is common for ESPs to hold a second job – and sometimes even a third job – to make ends meet, Ramos said. ESPs also need equitable access to health insurance and paid leave.

"We don't have a teacher shortage; we have an educator shortage," Ramos said. "We are losing



Photo by Jonathan Ng

Saul Ramos, a Worcester educator, was among several people who spoke about educational priorities at a Dec. 8 press conference at the State House.

educators who have expertise and who help make our schools function."

Retired educator Phyllis Neufeld addressed the issue of pension payments that are not keeping up with inflation. The MTA supports legislation to adjust the pension formula that now only applies a cost-of-living adjustment to the first \$13,000 in annual pension income.

"That is not offsetting inflation," Neufeld said. The MTA proposes an immediate increase in the COLA base to \$18,000, and to increase it over time to match the maximum base allowed for recipients of Social Security, which is \$43,524 in 2023.

## Ending MCAS as a punitive tool

In addition to addressing funding needs, the MTA's legislative agenda aims to eliminate the use of MCAS scores as a graduation requirement for students and as a trigger to impose turnaround plans on schools or place districts under state receivership.

UMass Lowell professor Jack Schneider, who has researched the use and impact of standardized tests and developed alternative assessment tools, explained that the MCAS is a poor measuring tool for creating an accountability system that leads to good schools for all communities.

"Right now, we don't measure what people care about," said Schneider, listing qualities that families say are important for schools, such as making students feel safe and supported and instilling the value of learning in students.

And as far as accountability goes, the achievement gaps are "wider than ever" between white and nonwhite students and between districts that can afford to spend more on their schools and those that cannot, Schneider said.

"When there is such a narrow range used to determine quality, there is an incentive for schools to game the system," he said, referring to schools that narrow the curriculum and take time away from authentic learning to focus on test preparation.

The MTA's legislative agenda also includes winning the right to strike for public education workers, which is prohibited under state law. Over the past three years, educators in locals including Dedham, Brookline, Malden and Haverhill went on strike. In each case, they were potentially subject to fines and other penalties.

But as Malden Education Association President Deb Gesualdo explained, without the ability to strike, educators are at a disadvantage and subject to stalling tactics used by management at the bargaining table. She described how the MEA submitted several contract proposals that the Malden School Committee simply ignored.

"The School Committee's inaction was hurting everyone – the students, the educators and the community," Gesualdo said. "It wasn't until we went on strike that the School Committee took bargaining seriously."

The MEA and Malden School District reached an agreement within the first day of that strike. Dedham and Brookline educators also reached agreements after one day of striking in their respective districts. Haverhill settled its long-stalled contract after a four-day strike that had strong support from community members.

"No local union enters bargaining wanting to strike," said MTA President Max Page.

"Educators prefer to settle fair contracts in a timely manner so they can focus on their important jobs of working with students. But without this fundamental right that almost all other unionized workers have, educators too often face prolonged and unproductive bargaining sessions through no fault of their own, which is why passing the right to strike legislation is so essential to balancing the power between public employees and their employers."

For more information about MTA's legislative agenda, visit [massteacher.org/legislation](https://www.massteacher.org/legislation).

# Proposal for Worcester charter school draws fire

By Scott McLennan

A charter school proposed for Worcester is drawing fierce opposition from a broad array of educators, families, community activists and elected officials, who say the charter would undermine Worcester Public Schools, while offering no unique academic programs.

The proposed Worcester Cultural Academy will duplicate programs already available in the Worcester Public Schools, will not be able to meet the needs of all students, and will trigger damaging cuts in programs and staff by draining about \$7 million annually from the public system that educates all students, according to Melissa Verdier, president of the Educational Association of Worcester.

“We are worried about the damage this charter school would do if allowed to open,” Verdier said at a public hearing on the proposal held Dec. 9 by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

According to the application, Old Sturbridge Village Museum would operate the charter school, which plans to enroll 360 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The museum already operates a charter school in Sturbridge. Opening a second school in Worcester will net the museum \$425,000 in management fees, according to a Worcester school finance official, who noted at the hearing that those fees are public money taken from the Worcester Public Schools to support a privately operated business.

At the public hearing, most of those who spoke in favor of the charter school were members of the OSV Board of Directors or a spokesperson

for the state’s charter school industry. None of the cultural institutions purported to be partnering on curriculum with the charter, including the Worcester



Melissa Verdier, president of the Educational Association of Worcester, speaks against the proposed charter school during the state's public hearing on the application.



Opponents of the proposed Worcester Cultural Academy charter school held signs and lined up outside the hearing room.

Photos by Scott McLennan

Art Museum, Hanover Theatre and the EcoTarium, attended the hearing to support the plan.

By comparison, opposition to the charter proposal came from many fronts, and included several city leaders. Worcester Mayor Joe Petty and state Rep. David LeBoeuf joined members of the Worcester School Committee in speaking out against the charter proposal. The Worcester City Council and School Committee have passed resolutions opposing the plan.

Worcester Schools Superintendent Rachel Monárrez and several members of her administration, along with educators, testified about the programs available to students that not only equal but surpass what the charter school plans to offer.

Members of the arts community also expressed opposition to the charter.

EAW Vice President Saul Ramos quipped during his hearing testimony: “It takes a city, not a village, to raise and educate our students.”

If the charter school opens as planned, it will nearly wipe out the financial gains provided to Worcester Public Schools under the state’s *Student Opportunity Act*. Worcester school administrators have said that as many as 100 jobs could be cut from the public school system if the charter opens.

The state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education is expected to vote on the charter application at its Feb. 28 meeting.

*For more information about how charter schools divert resources from public schools, visit [massteacher.org/charterschools](http://massteacher.org/charterschools).*

## MTA PreK-12 ESP Bill of Rights is a framework for contract gains

By Mary MacDonald

The days of getting crumbs in new contracts have ended. Education Support Professionals are organizing and bargaining for strong contracts using the framing of the MTA PreK-12 ESP Bill of Rights.

And work is progressing on a comparable version of the Bill of Rights for those who work as ESPs in higher education.

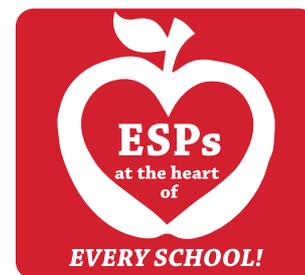
When bargaining for contracts, rather than seeking a percentage increase in pay, which may result in a modest real gain, many locals instead are seeking specific dollar amounts and a minimum floor for salaries – all aimed at reducing the significant gap between what ESPs typically earn and the median living wage for their communities.

That gap is a continuing challenge, because inflation has dramatically increased the cost of living throughout Massachusetts. The salary required for a single person to reach a living wage in several counties increased by more than 25 percent in 2022, according to an annual update by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Norfolk and Suffolk counties both have a living wage salary for a single person that exceeds \$50,000.

To help ESPs bridge that significant gap, the MTA is advancing a living wage campaign as part of its Bill of Rights. Much more effort is aimed at organizing.

Five educators in recent months have been newly hired as regional ESP Member Organizers. The part-time work will require them to collaborate



with local leaders and representatives to advance the directives of the living wage campaign and the ESP Bill of Rights.

These and other initiatives will be discussed at the upcoming 2023 MTA ESP Conference. It will be held March 31 and April 1 at a new location, Hotel 1620 in Plymouth. Details on an agenda and speakers were not available as *MTA Today* went to press, but updates will be posted on the [massteacher.org](http://massteacher.org) website.

Jessica Stimpson, an adjunct professor at Westfield State University, and a member of the

Please turn to **MTA PreK-12**/Page 12

# MTA locals are fighting for change

By Scott McLennan and Jonathan Ng

Faced with stalled negotiations at the bargaining table, several MTA locals have engaged in recent months in escalating actions, including three that went on strike.

From South Hadley to Melrose, educators have been organizing more standouts and “walk-ins,” demonstrations at school committee meetings, and work-to-rule actions. In most cases, where levels of activism are on the rise, educators are working under the terms of expired contracts.

As *MTA Today* went to press, the Woburn Teachers Association had just reached a tentative agreement following a five-day strike. Educators had sought improved pay and working conditions for educators, including Education Support Professionals.

The Melrose Education Association launched into action following winter break. The local, which went for 200 days without a contract for classroom teachers, first voted no confidence in the city’s mayor and school committee. It then followed with a strike vote, which overwhelmingly passed on Jan. 13. Local members were ready to hit the picket lines once classes resumed following the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, if a contract agreement was not reached. An intensive, daylong bargaining session – conducted mostly free of a state mediator, as the union wanted – resulted in a three-year contract that met the financial and professional needs of educators.

MTA leaders reflected on the action taken by the local.

“It is inspiring to watch these dedicated educators hold firmly to their principles,” MTA President Max Page and Vice President Deb McCarthy said. “The Massachusetts Teachers Association supports legislation to lift the prohibition on educators and other public employees from going on strike after six months of bargaining. We firmly believe that if the existing ban were not in place, and the Melrose School Committee knew it could not simply delay negotiations with the MEA, then a contract would have been completed long ago.”

Unions throughout the state are standing firm on proposals that address adequate pay and working conditions. In both Melrose and Medford, members rejected tentative agreements that fell short. Medford ultimately was able to bargain improvements that members approved in December, gaining preparation time for educators and wage increases that are in line with neighboring school districts.

The Middleton Educators Association – representing fewer than 100 members – flexed major muscle in a contract fight that involved deep community organizing and several public events. The MEA highlighted how its members were being treated unfairly because they were paid far less than colleagues teaching at the middle and high

school in the regional Masconomet district. By mid-December, the MEA got the contract it wanted without making any concessions. Highlights included an 11.25 percent raise over three years, increased tuition reimbursement and stipends, a sick leave buyback provision and an increased contribution to educators’ 403(b) and 457(b) retirement plans.

In western Massachusetts, the South Hadley Education Association saw heightened activism among its members lead to a tentative contract agreement that addressed longstanding pay inequities.



Photo by Jonathan Ng

**Members of the Melrose Education Association held a victory celebration on Sunday, Jan. 15, a day after MEA negotiators reached a tentative agreement for a fair contract.**

Members of the Waltham Educators Association fought for and won a three-year contract that included a more inclusive, forward-thinking, eight-week parental leave benefit, as well as livable wages.

Waltham educators centered their fight on parental leave language that allowed them to care for their own families as they do for their students. Previously, new fathers were not entitled to any additional time off after the birth or adoption of a child.

The new contract also included the highest COLA the local had won in 20 years, as well as a 3.25 percent raise each year, providing members with more than a 4 percent pay increase overall in year one.

Across the state, thousands of members in dozens of locals are organizing for living wages that will attract and retain high-quality educators to their school districts, and advocating for improved working standards that will benefit students through improved learning conditions.

In Malden and Haverhill, local associations addressed broad issues such as racial justice and housing insecurity, refusing to abandon such goals as they entered into respective strikes in mid-October.

The Haverhill Education Association secured a three-year contract with pay increases that will narrow a wage gap between educators in the city district and those who work in surrounding communities. Prior to this contract, Haverhill paid its educators about \$10,000 less than the average salary for educators in the state, and the city failed to attract and retain the staff needed to meet the needs of its 8,000 students.

The HEA also won language addressing school safety and racial justice. Through a financial settlement with Haverhill officials, relating to the cost of school closures, the HEA will establish a scholarship fund for Haverhill High School students pursuing education careers.

After ratifying the agreement, HEA President Tim Briggs described the hard-fought victory as transformative, not only for the union, but also for the city.

“The encouragement we heard from parents and other community members kept us strong and affirmed that we were doing the right thing,” Briggs said, in a statement following the strike. “Their respect for us – and their willingness to entrust their children’s future with us — make us proud to teach in this city.”

As a result of its contract fight, the Malden Education Association established a new pay scale, enabling paraeducators to get on a path to earning a living wage. The MEA also got the district to commit to a plan that will address housing insecurity among its student population. The three-year pact addresses adequate staffing, caseloads and class sizes.

The contract is a testament to solidarity, said MEA President Deb Gesualdo.

“Our members have been engaged throughout the entire process to win a contract that recommits our school community to ensuring that housing insecurity is not a barrier to students’ academic success, educators are paid competitively and fairly, and our students’ education is not dependent on their ZIP Code,” Gesualdo said.

The Malden local reached a contract agreement during the first day of its strike. The Haverhill strike lasted four days, with HEA members participating in large numbers on picket lines at every school. On the final day of the Haverhill strike, U.S. Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh called negotiators several times to encourage talks to continue until an agreement could be reached.

*For updated information on contract actions being taken by local unions, please visit [massteacher.org/news](http://massteacher.org/news).*

# EMAC Conference encourages discussion of racial justice

By Mary MacDonald

A commitment to racial justice requires people to talk openly about the way the world is, and to work actively to change it. That was one of the points made by David Stovall, Ph.D., a professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, who was the keynote speaker at the MTA's 2022 Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee Conference.

Held in December, the two-day conference was organized by the MTA EMAC Committee. It featured an opening night address by Stovall, who touched on subjects including forms of white supremacy, gentrification, and how politics and race are reflected in standardized tests and academic "standards" and "rigor."

Stovall, a professor in the departments of Black Studies and Criminology, Law & Justice, is a scholar who investigates areas including critical race theory, the relationship between housing and education, and the intersection of race, place and school.

In his address, "Race, Capitalism, and the Struggle for Justice in Teachers Unions: Working with Intent, Building Without Fear," Stovall said a commitment to racial justice requires people to make changes and be honest about the work. "We live in a land founded by slavery, genocide and wrongful land appropriation," he said. "That's a historical fact. It is not conjecture."

Labor unions that prioritize racial and social justice must prioritize the marginalized, he said, even if it means making some people uncomfortable. "The work that's being done cannot be exclusionary of race because it makes some people uncomfortable," Stovall said.

For the first time in three years, the EMAC conference was held in-person, and it attracted more than 125 educators from across the state.

Individual sessions at the event included workshops on building union power, how to navigate difficult conversations with peers, building intergenerational, intersectional climate coalitions, and the harmful impact of standardized testing.

## Commitment to racial justice

In comments to the members, MTA President Max Page said the union is committed to antiracism efforts and to promoting the voices and needs of its diverse membership. "We must continue to work for representation of people of color in our elected offices and in our staff, to continue to learn together about the destructive impacts of racism and capitalism on all of us, but particularly our members of color, and work for public policies that advance greater equity."

The MTA has fought for such policies – such as the preK-12 *Student Opportunity Act*,



Photo by Jonathan Ng

David Stovall, Ph.D., a professor in the departments of Black Studies and Criminology, Law & Justice at the University of Illinois at Chicago, was the keynote speaker at the conference.

the higher education *Cherish Act, Tomorrow's Educators* (to diversify the education workforce), and the Fair Share Amendment as building blocks of a more racially and economically just Commonwealth.

On the final day of the conference, EMAC Committee members participated in a moderated discussion of current issues, including how they balance their work and union lives, representation of diverse educators in schools and the comradery of belonging to groups with shared interests and backgrounds.

The panel was moderated by Christine Sampson-Clark, a member of the NEA Executive Committee, and a longtime special education teacher in Trenton, New Jersey. She began her career 30 years ago as an Education Support Professional.

Jennifer Burgess, an ESP who works in Lexington, serves as a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion facilitator for the school district. In the panel discussion, she said she doesn't expect that ESPs should be paid the same amount as classroom teachers, who work longer hours outside the workday, but she does expect comparable benefits and respect. "I am asking that if they get 14 sick days; we should get 14 sick days," Burgess said.

She continued: "... what keeps me here, as a building rep, and all of those things, is we're seeing that this conversation around diversity,

equity and inclusion involves ESPs, and people other than teachers," Burgess said.

## An opportunity to listen

Kip Fonsh, who is an MTA Retired member and also a member of the MTA Board, attended the EMAC conference as a white ally. He was there to listen and learn, said Fonsh. "I live in a community that's incredibly diverse, but the diverse groups do not always engage with one another," he said. "This was an opportunity to listen."

The conference was held at the Verve Hotel in Natick and attracted Education Support Professionals, Retired members and educators from all grade levels and higher education.

Yemisi Oluwole, a member of the Cambridge Education Association, attended the EMAC Conference for the first time. Oluwole is an officer in the Cambridge local, serving as secretary, and has worked as an Education Support Professional for nine years. Oluwole wanted to attend to feel the engagement of other educators and to learn more about shared challenges.

In the course of daily work, educators do not have time to get together otherwise. "We don't have an opportunity to do this," Oluwole said.

For more information about the EMAC Committee and its work, please visit [massteacher.org/emac](https://massteacher.org/emac).



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## Nominations sought to fill vacancy, At-Large Ethnic Minority Executive Committee member

The seat on the MTA Executive Committee for At-Large Ethnic Minority Executive Committee Member has become vacant, and the process is underway to fill that vacancy. Members are hereby notified of the current vacancy and the nomination and election process described below.

Any active member of MTA is eligible to be a candidate for At-Large Ethnic Minority EC Member. Members may self-nominate to run for this seat by sending an email to [MTAGovernance@massteacher.org](mailto:MTAGovernance@massteacher.org). Nominations may also be made by letter sent via U.S. mail to Division of Governance, MTA, 2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119. Nominations must be received no later than March 15, 2023, regardless of postmark.

The vacancy shall be filled by election conducted among the delegates to the 2022 Annual Meeting. The election period will commence on April 4. Voting ballots and candidate material

will be provided to the appropriate delegates. The election period will close on May 3. Ballots received by that date will be tabulated under the direction of the Credentials and Ballot Committee. A majority of the valid ballots cast is required for election. If there is only one candidate for the position, the election shall be waived and the candidate declared elected.

The member elected shall take office immediately and serve for the remainder of the current unexpired term, through June 30, 2023.

Each candidate is invited to submit promotional material for distribution to the voters

with the ballot. A statement of up to 100 words and a photograph (color, head shot) should be provided no later than the nomination deadline of March 15 to [MTAGovernance@massteacher.org](mailto:MTAGovernance@massteacher.org).

The duties of the Executive Committee are defined in Article VI Section 1B of the MTA Bylaws, which are available on request. Executive Committee members are ex officio members of the Board of Directors. In addition, Article IX, Section 2B provides that members of the MTA Board of Directors shall be official delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates and entitled to vote at meetings of delegates.

### INQUIRIES WELCOME:

Inquiries regarding the nomination and election process may be directed to John Connelly, MTA Division of Governance, at MTA Headquarters, 2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor, Quincy, MA 02171-2119, 617.878.8305, or [JConnelly@massteacher.org](mailto:JConnelly@massteacher.org).

## 2023 NEA Director election waived, candidates declared elected

Two MTA members presented the requisite nomination papers with member signatures by the deadline and have been declared elected to the NEA Board of Directors. Deb Gesualdo, of the Malden Education Association, and Yan Yui, of the Canton Teachers Association, have been elected as two of MTA's NEA Directors, for three-year terms on NEA's Board, Sept. 1, 2023, through Aug. 31, 2026.

Per NEA Bylaws and MTA's election policy for these seats, if the number of candidates does not exceed the number of seats to be filled, the election is waived, and the candidates declared elected.

MTA currently has six seats on the NEA Board of Directors. MTA's active members are eligible to run for and serve in these elected positions. Two of the six seats are up for election every year for three-year terms.

MTA's NEA Directors also serve as members of the MTA Board of Directors, as MTA Annual Meeting Delegates, and as delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly during their terms.

In addition, one candidate has been declared elected under the election waiver provision to the position of Alternate NEA Director. Nicole Prevost has been elected to that role for a three-year term, Sept. 1, 2023, through Aug. 31, 2026.

## Virtual preconvention meetings to be held in April, Annual Meeting information

Each year, Annual Meeting delegates receive information and materials at preconvention sessions that are critical to their decision-making on organizational matters. This year's preconvention meetings will be held virtually, in early April, in advance of the 2023 MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates.

The Annual Meeting will be held on Friday, April 28 and Saturday, April 29 at the MassMutual Center in Springfield. Delegates will receive preconvention information and registration materials as soon as they become available.

More details on the virtual preconvention sessions as they are finalized will be posted on the [massteacher.org/precons](http://massteacher.org/precons) website.

### MTA Chorus to open Annual Meeting



MTA members who are interested in joining the MTA Chorus this year may contact Choral Director Bob Lague at [neaorgan@aol.com](mailto:neaorgan@aol.com).

Three rehearsals will be held at Lague's house.

Rehearsals start at 7 p.m. and usually last about an hour. Rehearsals will be held on March 27, April 10 and April 24.

The chorus will perform at the 2023 Annual Meeting of Delegates, which will begin April 28 in Springfield. It is not necessary to be a delegate to participate in the MTA Chorus.

# MTA PreK-12 ESP Bill of Rights is a framework for contract gains

Continued from Page 7

Massachusetts State College Association, is one of the new ESP member organizers. She's also involved in the work to create a Bill of Rights for adjuncts and other part-time workers in higher education and recognizes the common bonds between preK-12 ESPs and adjuncts, particularly on workplace rights. Stimpson works three jobs, including as a full-time paralegal and as an adjunct at two institutions.

"I definitely have that comradery and I really understand where the ESPs are coming from," Stimpson said. "They do so much important work and they're not receiving what they should be for that. They're struggling to have the pay scale where it should be and they don't have the benefits that they need, and the Bill of Rights hopefully will be able to change that for them."

Julie Bishop, a speech language pathology assistant and a member of the Wachusett Regional Education Association, started working as an ESP member organizer in December. She knows how important a livable wage is for ESPs. After 11 years, she still isn't making the minimum, livable wage for Worcester County.

"The people in my union – the people that actually hit that minimum standard of living that MIT has said is the minimum for your district –

they have an average of 20 years of experience," she said.

To strengthen contract bargaining, local presidents and teams are expanding member involvement by using a combination of open and expanded bargaining, which allows all members to participate in negotiations. The asks are being framed around the pillars of the ESP Bill of Rights, which includes a living wage, affordable health insurance, job security and paid family and medical leave.

In recent months, several locals have scored big wins for ESPs in new contracts.

In Taunton, newly organized therapy assistants got a \$9,500 raise in the first year, which represented a 20 to 30 percent increase for members. It is their first contract.

Westford ESPs will have starting wages increased by 38 percent, and the maximum wage will rise 11 percent over the three-year contract.

In Worcester, bus drivers will see a wage increase of five to 17 percent over three years and a reduction in steps, as well as bonuses of between \$500 and \$1,000. The bus drivers have reached a minimum wage of \$40 an hour.

Part of the new approach boils down to not taking 'no' for an answer when an administration

or school committee waves its hand and says there isn't enough money.

Donna Trumpler is president of the Saugus School Clerical Association. Her tiny local – it has just 17 members – fought for almost two years for a new contract. A tentative agreement reached in December includes a salary increase of 7 percent over three years, as well as a first-year COLA boost of \$1,250, followed by two years of \$1,100 each. The combined impact means some members will see nearly a 23 percent increase in pay, Trumpler said.

The new deal came after a change in mindset. "The last several years, like 10-plus years, we've been settling for a contract based on whatever the superintendent suggested, and that was it," said Trumpler, who became president last year. Her first priority was getting a COLA.

"Why can't we go for the gusto? Why not go for whatever we need to ask for?"

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*Please visit [massteacher.org/esp](https://massteacher.org/esp) for more information about the MTA PreK-12 Bill of Rights and Living Wage campaigns.*

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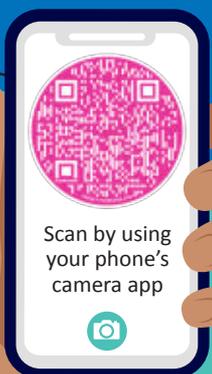


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# I Spent Too Much During the Holidays – Now What?

Now that the holidays are over, many consumers are seeing the folly of overspending. In fact, many people have spent their way into financial jeopardy, putting themselves and their families at risk. It's not pleasant to think about, but it's a fact of life for millions of Americans. This is also why January, February and March are the busiest months at nonprofit credit counseling agencies across the country.

For-profit debt settlement companies often increase their advertising during the post-holiday period, extending bogus "lifelines" to desperate consumers. In truth, "the secret the banks don't want you to know" is that there is absolutely no right for consumers to settle a debt in the United States. But creditors almost always have a right to sue, and that's what they might do during the months it probably will take for a debtor to save enough money to propose a settlement. Even if the creditor agrees to settle, the amount "saved" will be negligible. The settlement company will take between 25 percent and 40 percent of the savings as its fee – a hefty payday for doing nothing while exposing you to a lawsuit and ruining your credit. No, debt settlement companies are not your friends when you're in trouble.

Instead, financial education is the answer. Before Cambridge Credit Counseling became an MTA Benefits partner – providing members with free student loan counseling and informational webinars – it spent more than 25 years helping consumers deal with financial difficulties.



Cambridge's debt management plans are developed with creditors, who typically agree to reduce their interest rates and waive their fees in return for the counseling and education Cambridge provides. Rather than paying down their credit card balances at rates that average 25 percent, Cambridge clients repay the balances at an average of just 7 percent, an arrangement that can save consumers money without the threat of a lawsuit or intrusive calls from creditors.

Cambridge Credit Counseling knows that MTA members are already facing considerable professional challenges. It's here to help members

make informed and effective financial choices in their professional lives. That's where Cambridge can make a crucial difference. If your budget is uncomfortably tight, due either to increasing expenses or student loan payments, MTA Benefits encourages you to call a Cambridge counselor at 888.948.4639 to review your options. The counseling sessions are free for MTA members. To learn more about available credit and debt counseling services, watch one of two free webinars presented by Cambridge Credit Counseling, on Feb. 15 or March 6. To register, visit [www.mtabenefits.com/webinars](http://www.mtabenefits.com/webinars).

## MTA Benefits Annual Meeting in November 2022

The MTA Benefits Annual Meeting was held on Nov. 16, 2022. Shown here are members of the MTA Benefits Board of Directors.

In the front row, from left, are MTA Executive Director-Treasurer Lisa Gallatin, Director Robert V. Travers Jr., Director Julia Norman and MTA President Max Page. In the back row, from left, are Director Candace Shivers, MTA Benefits President Elizabeth Bejoian, MTA Vice President Deb McCarthy and Director Christine Mulroney. Not pictured are Directors Nicole Prevost and Yahaira Rodriguez.



Photo by Bob Duffy

# Opposition mounts to use of MCAS

By Jonathan Ng

When MTA member Jack Schneider spoke on the impact of the MCAS exams at a State House press conference in December 2022, he teared up at the emotional toll the standardized test has had on his children.

The high-stakes nature of the test, he said, “incentivizes schools to game the system, to do things like teach to the test and narrow the curriculum.”

Schneider, who is also a professor of education at UMass Lowell and who studies the impact of MCAS and school rankings, recalled the painful experience the high-stakes test had on his daughter.

“We’re incentivizing schools to teach to the test, narrow the curriculum, the sort of things that pain me personally, as the father of a seventh grader in the public schools who used to love learning,” said Schneider before pausing, and tearing up. “The thing that’s worse is that it exacerbates segregation.

After you leave, go on (to real estate platforms) and see how they use ratings of schools to steer people toward particular neighborhoods.”

The fight over high-stakes testing in Massachusetts was coming to a head in January as the MTA unveiled its five-prong legislative plan, among them, to end the destructive and punitive use of the MCAS. The high-stakes test has been a hot-button issue for students and educators since the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993, which created the MCAS accountability system.

Educators have long called for an end to high-stakes testing, saying a student’s future should not be determined by their ranking on a standardized test, but instead by their performance in high school classes.

In the new year, MTA and its allies are continuing the fight by raising public awareness about the negative impact of high-stakes testing on students. Most recently, educators and supporters are advocating for legislative approval of An Act Empowering Students and Schools to Thrive, a new

bill that would end the state’s MCAS-based high school competency determination.

The Thrive Act would replace the MCAS graduation requirement with one that allows students’ districts to certify that they have satisfactorily completed coursework showing mastery of the skills, competencies and knowledge required by the state standards.

It also would eliminate state receiverships and reinstate democratic control to communities and school committees.

MTA Vice President Deb McCarthy, previously a fifth-grade teacher for 25 years in Hull, spoke at the MTA legislative briefing about the harm the high-stakes test had on her students.

“This is part of a broken system that has been going on for far too long,” said McCarthy. “I needed to leave the classroom because this system is harming students and it is time to remove the harmful, high-stakes, punitive, rank-and-shame accountability system that has not done anything to address the achievement gap.”

## REGIONAL RETIREMENT CONSULTATIONS AVAILABLE

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

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

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

**QUINCY** – Harold Crowley, Peter Mili and Raymond Thompson: Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., MTA, 2 Heritage Drive, 9th Floor, Quincy; 617.878.8240 or 800.392.6175, ext. 8240, or email [hcrowley@massteacher.org](mailto:hcrowley@massteacher.org).

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

**LYNNFIELD** – Barbara Callaghan: third and fourth Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., MTA Northeast Office, 50 Salem St., Building B, Lynnfield; call 978.660.4171 or email [bcallaghan@massteacher.org](mailto:bcallaghan@massteacher.org).

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

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

**HIGHER EDUCATION AT-LARGE** – Edward McCourt, call 781.325.2553 or email [emccourt@massteacher.org](mailto:emccourt@massteacher.org).

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

## CLASSIFIEDS

### Vacation Rentals

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**ESCAPE TO CAPE COD:** Pond-front cottage with pool and tennis court in Eastham. Immaculate, three-bedroom, two-bathroom cottage overlooking a sandy beach with panoramic sunset views. Enjoy air conditioning, cabana shower, granite kitchen, dishwasher, Casablanca fans, Wi-Fi, deck, association washer/dryer. Near Cape Cod National Seashore, Cape Cod rail trail and Provincetown. Visit <http://rps10001.wix.com/pine-cottage>. Email [LEASULL@aol.com](mailto:LEASULL@aol.com) or call 508.733.5482.

### For Sale

**POMPANO BEACH, FLORIDA:** April school vacation week. Deeded timeshare! Free transfer. Fully equipped condo, one bedroom, one-and-a-half bathrooms, sleeps four people. Next to the pool and steps to the beach! Visit [lacostabeachclub.net](http://lacostabeachclub.net). Call Lisa at 508.572.1477 or email [lisafer@comcast.net](mailto:lisafer@comcast.net). Great escape for teachers and their families!

# Obituaries

**Carol L. Adam, 80**, of Hubbardston. Taught in the Marlborough school system for 30 years, retiring in 2000. July 31.

**Kathryn M. Auclair, 91**, of Monson. Was an elementary school teacher in Springfield and Monson, retiring in 1993. Sept. 1.

**Charles A. Bennett, 97**, of Framingham, formerly of Wayland. Worked for 33 years as a teacher and principal of Wellesley's John D. Hardy Elementary School. Aug. 11.

**Marie T. Brady, 91**, of Medford and Naples, Florida, formerly of Pocasset. Worked as a media specialist at Medford High School and Arlington High School and then as director of library/media services for the Arlington Public Schools. Aug. 14.

**Hortense E. Burton, 96**, of Haverhill. Taught in the Haverhill school system for 39 years. Sept. 17.

**Mario L. Casali, 95**, of Braintree. Taught physical education and coached football, basketball, and baseball at Quincy's Central Junior High School for 30 years. Was also a guidance counselor for the Quincy school system for 15 years. July 16.

**Sally W. Clifton, 88**, of Lake Worth, Florida, formerly of Cape Cod. Led the special education programs at Barnstable High School. Sept. 25.

**Frank D. Coutinho, 59**, of Middleboro. Taught mathematics for Middleboro Public Schools and was a past president of the Middleboro Education Association. April 2.

**Carol A. Dailey, 77**, of Burlington. Taught first grade in the Weston public school system for 35 years. Sept. 15.

**Shirley V. Deknes, 91**, of Bridgewater. Taught elementary school for 40 years. July 18.

**Henry S. Dembowski, 83**, of Swampscott. Over a 34-year career in public schools, he was a teacher in Lynn, teacher and principal in Marblehead, assistant superintendent in Wilmington, superintendent on Martha's Vineyard and superintendent in the Pentucket Regional System. Sept. 25.

**Lon S. Dexter, 75**, of Centerville. Was a teacher at Mashpee Middle-High School for many years until his retirement. Aug. 29.

**Eleanor A. DiPaolo, 77**, of North Andover and Salisbury. Taught middle school mathematics for Tewksbury Public Schools. Sept. 10.

**Patricia A. Donahue**, of Hudson, formerly of Maynard. Was a speech pathologist and teacher with the Hudson Public Schools and past president of the Hudson Education Association. July 19.

**Nancy A. Ford, 75**, of Fall River and Stafford, Virginia. Taught middle school in Somerset. July 14.

**Jane L. Gadaire, 91**, of Shelburne Falls. Taught French and Latin at Marshfield High School, and later became a certified teacher of specific language disability for the Brockton Public Schools. Aug. 31.

**Philip A. Garufi, 92**, of Dedham. Taught history at Quincy's Atlantic Middle School for over 40 years. Aug. 20.

**Linda M. Goulet**, of Somerville. Was a special education teacher at Dedham High School for 30 years. Also ran the Peer Leadership program, Words not Weapons project and the Gay/Straight Alliance. Aug. 2.

**Thomas K. Hawes Sr., 87**, of Peabody. Was a teacher in Revere, and then spent 30 years in the Peabody School Department in several positions, including as a guidance and adjustment counselor. July 21.

**David S. Horton, 78**, of North Truro and Naples, Florida. Taught elementary school special education for 30 years in the Fitchburg Public Schools. Aug. 26.

**Joyce T. Hovey, 87**, of Stockbridge. Taught in the Berkshire Hills Regional School District from 1970 until 1994 at the Village, Plain, and Housatonic Schools, before teaching in private school. July 20.

**Bjorg Jeppson, 83**, of Easton. Taught science in Brockton for 30 years. Also served as head of the science department at North Junior High School. Aug. 24.

**Beverly Johnson, 86**, of Mashpee. Taught English and literature at Sutton Elementary School and Sutton High School. Served as past president of Sutton Teachers Association and as an MTA Board member. Aug. 5.

**Spyridon T. Kaplanes, 88**, of Natick. Taught middle school social studies in the Worcester public schools for over 45 years. Sept. 3.

**Sheila Kelly-Chace, 69**, of Tiverton, Rhode Island. Was a guidance counselor at New Bedford High School for over 20 years. Aug. 2.

**Caroline Taber Kiessling**, of East Walpole. Taught third grade in the Walpole School District for nearly 40 years, at the former Bird Elementary School and the Fisher Elementary School. Aug. 12.

**Gerard R. Lane, 85**, of Walpole and Falmouth, formerly of Dorchester. Was an industrial arts teacher for Norwood Public Schools. Aug. 11.

**Roger C. Leblanc, 80**, of Enfield, Connecticut. Taught English at Longmeadow High School for 38 years. Was also a baseball and soccer coach, and Key Club and yearbook adviser. Sept. 4.

**Robert P. Maher, 87**, of Marion, formerly of Norton. Was a Latin, Spanish and French teacher, and tennis coach, at Norton High School for 30 years. July 12.

**Constance Keavy Martin, 84**, of Mattapoisett. Began teaching English at Old Rochester Regional High School in Mattapoisett, then spent 26 years teaching elementary school at the Sgt. William Carney Academy Elementary School in New Bedford. Sept. 30.

**James R. McSweeney Sr., 75**, of Woburn. Taught science for 32 years for Woburn Public Schools at the Joyce and Kennedy Middle schools, and later at Woburn Memorial High School. Sept. 18.

**Paul T. Monti, 76**, of Raynham, formerly of Braintree. Taught earth sciences at Stoughton High School. Aug. 26.

**Patricia E. Nee**, of Roswell, Georgia, formerly of Quincy. Was a special education teacher in Quincy for over 30 years. Sept. 26.

**Mary J. Nowasacki, 77**, of Auburn. Taught seventh grade at Auburn Middle School for 34 years. Sept. 3.

**Lisa Nussbaum, 57**, of Pinehurst North Carolina, formerly of Bridgewater. Was a second-grade teacher in the East Bridgewater school system until she retired in 2020. Sept. 18.

**Joseph M. Quinn, 77**, of Little Compton, Rhode Island. Taught English and Latin at B.M.C. Durfee High School in Fall River for more than 30 years. Oct. 2.

**Marjorie J. Scotti, 75**, of Taunton, formerly of Norton. Taught in the Norton Public Schools for 30 years at both the L.G. Nourse and Henri A. Yelle Elementary Schools. Sept. 12.

**Beverly A. Shea, 89**, of Wilmington. Worked in the Wilmington Public Schools for over 30 years – first as an English teacher and then as the school librarian at Wilmington High School. Aug. 10.

**Frederick C. Smith, 85**, of Gardner. Taught math and science for Gardner Public Schools for more than 30 years. Oct. 6.

**Marilyn Stoll, 95**, of Saint Augustine, Florida. Was a high school special education teacher in Marblehead for many years. Sept. 16.

**Dorothy F. Thayer, 77**, of Middleborough. Was a history teacher for Middleborough Public Schools for over 20 years. Aug. 13.

**Patricia L. Twombly, 85**, of Rockport. Taught fifth grade in the Rockport public school system until 2005. Aug. 18.

**Francis L. Walsh Jr., 86**, of Worcester. Taught mathematics at the former Holden Junior High School for seven years, then at Melican Middle School in Northborough until retiring in 1998. Aug. 2.



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DT240223

# Secretary of education is a veteran public educator

By Mary MacDonald

**P**atrick Tutwiler, the new state secretary of education, is a professional educator with decades of experience in the public schools of Massachusetts.

Appointed to the position by Governor Maura Healey, Tutwiler has more than 20 years of experience in public education, including as a high school history teacher, and as a principal and superintendent.

He was superintendent of the Lynn Public Schools for four years, and previously had served as deputy superintendent.

Immediately prior to his appointment as education secretary, Tutwiler was a senior program officer for the Boston-based Barr Foundation for four months.

Healey, whose appointment of Tutwiler was among her first actions as governor-elect, described him as having the experience, empathy and vision to make sure every Massachusetts resident receives a high-quality education at every stage of their life.

As secretary, Tutwiler will oversee public education in prekindergarten through higher education.

“From his time working as a high school history teacher to leading a large, diverse, urban



Photo Contributed

**Patrick Tutwiler, state secretary of education, was among the first cabinet appointees announced by Governor Maura Healey.**

school district, he has earned his reputation as a consensus builder who puts diversity, equity and inclusion at the center of everything he does, and delivers results,” Healey said, in a news release.

Following the Dec. 16 announcement, MTA President Max Page and Vice President Deb McCarthy said they were pleased with the appointment and cited his deep and varied background in public education.

“We fully expect Dr. Patrick Tutwiler to bring a new vision to the office, one fully rooted in the public education community,” the MTA leaders said in a statement. “Following the

historic passage of the Fair Share Amendment, our members and our broad coalition have the funding to win the transformative investments in public higher education laid out by the Higher Ed For All campaign and to build on the *Student Opportunity Act’s* reinvestment in preK-12 public education. We also have an opportunity to shift away from the Baker administration’s punitive use of high-stakes standardized testing and to instead focus on educating the whole child.”

Tutwiler has a bachelor’s degree in history from The College of the Holy Cross, a master’s degree in education from Harvard University Graduate School of Education and a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction from the Lynch School of Education at Boston College.

According to his LinkedIn profile, his public education experience includes serving as headmaster of Brighton High School, as principal of Wayland High School, and as dean of students at Westford Academy, which is part of the Westford Public Schools. He also worked for nearly five years as a teacher and assistant headmaster for the Boston Public Schools.

In Lynn, as superintendent, he led a collaborative effort to increase graduation rates, recruit and retain a racially diverse faculty and staff, and establish an early college program, according to the governor’s office.



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## SEA advocates for students, educators of color

By Scott McLennan

A top-down, administrator-driven approach to addressing issues of racial equity within the public schools of Springfield just wasn't working in the eyes of the Springfield Education Association.

And the union wasn't about to let years of difficult organizing work around racial justice fall apart because school and city administrators lacked a similar bold vision and appetite for authentic change.

"We knew we wanted something that was educator-led and ultimately involved the whole community," said Theresa Bryant, an SEA member who took on the role of Racial Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Social Justice Organizer.

Bryant is developing Diversity, Inclusion and Racial Equity (DIRE) teams in individual Springfield schools, building on an initiative rooted in the 2017 formation of ALANA – a group within SEA specifically for educators who identify as African, Latino, Asian and Native American, and their allies. ALANA led the call for greater racial and ethnic diversity within Springfield's teaching force as well as greater supports for students of color.

But over time, ALANA members grew frustrated with the types of trainings and programs that the district was crafting to address the need for racial justice in Springfield's schools. SEA President Tracy Little-Sasanecki called them "top down" and described them as lacking.

So ALANA structured its own trainings, geared toward identifying implicit biases, addressing race-based micro-aggressions and finding ways to build better working relationships among educators, as well as between students and educators. All of these efforts placed race in the foreground.

The SEA applied for an MTA Public Relations/Organizing grant to enable it to hire a full-time racial justice organizer who could bridge the work of educators, the administration and the community.

Bryant, a veteran school counselor, got the job and has been working since the summer to set up DIRE teams in schools.

SEA's racial justice work is also getting support from the Pioneer Valley Project in Springfield, which is partnering with the union to engage the community.

Bryant said that it is crucial to have a comprehensive approach to dismantling systemic racism, otherwise there will always be elements undermining the work.

Two main goals now, she said, are to increase the number of educators of color in Springfield's public schools and to make sure that students have the supports they need and that they feel supported.

"When students see the DIRE teams working in their schools, they'll know that there are people who are there that support them," Bryant said. "We want student-led social justice teams to form too."

Bryant and Little-Sasanecki criticized district initiatives that allege to support students but



Photo by Scott McLennan

Theresa Bryant, left, the Springfield Education Association's racial justice organizer, and SEA President Tracy Little-Sasanecki, right, have been leaders in an effort to recruit more educators of color to Springfield schools.

actually do minimal collaborative work with students to change learning conditions.

"We want students to advocate for themselves, but they need help doing that. Students without support won't advocate for themselves," Little-Sasanecki said.

Bryant said the SEA will work on not only increasing the number of educators of color working in the city but also increasing the number of members of color in union leadership roles.

"I know this is all going to be a work in progress," Bryant said. "But this is a big moment in time for us."

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# THE MTA Advantage

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

## Get Answers to Important Mortgage Questions

**E**mbarking on the journey to purchase a home can be daunting, especially when it comes to securing a mortgage. MTA Benefits spoke with representatives at New Fed Mortgage, who have more than three decades of experience helping consumers with their mortgage needs, to learn more about the process.

### What are the top considerations in choosing a mortgage lender?

The most important factor in choosing a mortgage lender is to find one that takes the time to answer your questions patiently and honestly. The mortgage process is daunting to most people. An effective lender will ask questions and listen patiently to the client. Once the lender understands the goals and desires of the client, advising properly becomes a natural process. It is also very important that the lender offers competitive programs, rates and fees.

### How important is my credit score?

Credit scores are the most important factor in determining a monthly payment, fees and rates. We cannot stress enough the importance of meeting with a loan representative early in the decision process of buying a home. The loan representative can help you prepare for the process. This advice can include suggestions on how to improve your score before you apply for a mortgage.



### What are the different types of loans?

A myriad of loan programs is available to consumers, including fixed-rate and adjustable-rate mortgages, conventional loans offered through agencies like FHA, FNMA and FHLMC, as well as State Bond, rural housing, jumbo loans and non-qualifying loans.

### How far in advance should I reach out to a mortgage lender before I'm planning to buy?

There is not a clearly defined answer to this. However, the sooner, the better. Understanding strategies and reasoning on how to prepare for

the mortgage process can save a consumer thousands of dollars.

### Are there strategies to use in buying a home now?

There are two opportunistic ways to approach the current market when choosing a mortgage option. Each of these options comes with some degree of risk.

Because rates go up and may eventually come down, a home buyer can elect to pay no closing fees to obtain a mortgage. This option is called a no point, no closing cost option. The goal is to initially accept a slightly higher rate and then to eventually refinance to a lower rate if the economy slows and rates drop.

The second option is to apply for an adjustable-rate mortgage. This product allows the borrower to take advantage of a discounted interest rate for a set period of time, usually from three to seven years. The goal when choosing this option is to refinance at a later date when the economy slows to a fixed-rate option.

New Fed representatives are always available to help you set a strategy that works best for your goals. Visit [www.newfed.com/mta](http://www.newfed.com/mta) or call 877.861.MTAB to learn more.

## Coping with Seasonal Depression as Winter Deepens

By Courtney Barber, MHC

Many people may feel the beginnings of the "winter blues" as the days grow shorter and earlier bedtimes and darker mornings become the norm. This may be even more impactful this year, as this new year comes on the heels of the most active summer and fall in three years, following pandemic-related social restrictions.

(continued on page 4)



**Courtney Barber** is a mental health counselor, health writer, wellness educator and founder of Belladonna Wellness.

Barber also is the Director of Behavioral Health at MyRosalie.com, a nationally recognized administrator of behavioral health programs for labor unions and professional associations.

# Save Money on Spring Break Travel

Vacation travel has taken a hit lately, but in 2023, it is projected to make a near-full recovery. The number of travelers is predicted to reach pre-pandemic levels.

While the economy has had challenges, a 2022 travel survey conducted by ValuePenguin revealed that 73 percent of Americans have plans to take a big vacation this year. But that doesn't mean they're likely to throw caution to the wind. Travelers are expected to be more intentional about how they plan vacations, with the greatest priority on getting the most value.



## How will seasoned travelers get the most value for their travel budget?

1. Be smart about the timing of the vacation.
2. Plan much further in advance than usual.
3. Use a private discount-program travel site, such as the MTA Benefits program through Access.

## Planning for the "shoulder season"

While peak summer months are when most people habitually go on vacation, savvy travelers are booking trips during the shoulder season, or the time between peak season and off-season.

Vacationers who travel during the shoulder season will usually find more deals because they're not competing with as many people for the best hotels and resorts, the most popular theme parks and the highest-rated restaurants. They will also discover that the weather during shoulder season is great for outdoor activities, and they will avoid the scorching heat that accompanies peak season in warm locations. Another great benefit of shoulder season is smaller crowds. Dealing with fewer people is always a bonus when you're on vacation, right?

## Spring Break-ation

This year get the benefits of traveling during shoulder season by choosing to travel during Spring Break ... or what the team at Access likes to call "Spring Break-ation."

Start by logging on to [mtabenefits.com/access](https://mtabenefits.com/access). First-time visitors will need to activate an account using an MTA ID and personal email.

Once vacationers are logged in, they can start shopping for a destination.

Many people want to book their getaway at one of the popular theme parks in Orlando, Florida, or in Anaheim, California. MTA members will find exclusive offers at all of the major theme parks, such as Walt Disney World, Universal Orlando Resort and Disneyland.

In addition, Las Vegas is always among the most popular destinations for MTA members. That's because they will usually find plenty of great deals at amazing hotels and casinos. Even if you decide to travel at the last minute, check the MTA Benefits site because it always has great deals.

Beyond resorts, theme parks and casinos, savings are available for travelers who book lesser-known destinations on Florida's Emerald Coast, including the Gulf Coast communities of Destin and Fort Walton Beach.

There are also family-friendly destinations like Nashville, the "Big 5" national parks in Utah, or even unique experiences like a culinary tour of New Orleans. Shop around, and don't be afraid to try something new and exciting.

(continued on page 4)



**Editor:** Carolyn Cassiani  
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No dues dollars are ever used to market MTA Benefits programs.

# Tip Sheet

All discounts listed in the Tip Sheet can be found at [mtabenefits.com](http://mtabenefits.com).

## Maintain your frame: A winter guide to car care and physical fitness

### Prioritize Your Vehicle

MTA members who still haven't gotten their cars serviced this winter shouldn't put it on hold any longer. Browse through the MTA Benefits Discount Directory, where you'll find some of the best maintenance shops in Massachusetts offering a reduced rate to members.



It's good practice to begin with a multi-point inspection, to get a solid idea of what's needed and how much it'll cost. **AAMCO Transmissions** is a well-known provider of quality car care, and they'll make this process as smooth as possible. They'll provide you with a free, 36-step multi-point inspection and if it turns out that the vehicle needs work done, the business will provide 10 percent off the cost with an MTA membership card. Head over to their Wilmington and Roslindale locations to take advantage of this exclusive deal.

In addition to full-service maintenance options, several specialty auto centers offer MTA member discounts.

If your auto insurance policy doesn't cover glass replacement, visit **Affordable Auto Glass** to ensure that you have a reliable auto glass provider in your corner. Members receive free wiper blades with the purchase of a new windshield at their West Springfield location. Need VIN etching done? That's free too! Other glass-related services are also available at an additional cost.



Don't avoid getting an oil change due to unbearable wait times. Innovative companies, including **Valvoline Instant Oil Change**, created drive-through facilities specifically for busy people who can stay right in their cars while the oil change is completed. Visit one of their many statewide locations and enjoy 15 percent off their convenient services.

**Cape Cod Auto Spa** in Pocasset is the ideal destination for anyone with auto detailing on their radar. This reputable shop uses the highest quality eco-friendly products to deep clean and rejuvenate vehicles from the inside out. Speak with one of their certified technicians about the vehicle's specific needs and get \$50 off a detailing package.

### Work Out This Winter, Shine This Spring

With access to discounted gym memberships, personal training sessions and home equipment, members can certainly reach any fitness goals they've set for themselves.

Try **Fitness Together**, a place that will begin to feel like a second home. People who have joined this gym describe it as welcoming and professional because of its relaxed atmosphere and skilled personal trainers. No matter where someone is in a fitness journey, a trainer will give them the tools they need to succeed with a customized workout plan. MTA members can choose among three locations and enjoy special perks. Their Belmont location offers a free consultation and three free personal training sessions, along with 10 percent off any package of 48 or more personal training sessions. Fitness Together Norwell and Fitness Together Westborough offer free consultations and one free personal training session or one free small-group training session. Additionally, members get 10 percent off any package of 36 or more personal training sessions or any three-month program.



If you're looking for a passionate personal trainer who is going to push you to the next level with their knowledge of exercise science, register for **Mike's Fitness** in Jamaica Plain. After a free one-hour fitness assessment, find comfort in knowing that you saved \$84 on your annual membership just for being a member of the Massachusetts Teachers Association.

Members in the Beverly area should consider joining **Reck Fitness**. This is a popular, member-owned gym, best known for their wide range of high-intensity classes, like boxing, bootcamp and "Power Hour." A unique component about this gym is that it doesn't only cater to adults, but also is dedicated to children and teens. Gather the whole family and get into a consistent and healthy routine. Any membership or class pass is offered at a 20 percent discount for members.

Sometimes this journey is more spiritual than physical, so be sure to check out yoga discounts through MTA Benefits, as well. Whether you're a beginner seeking guidance or an active yogi looking for a new community, options are available for you. Receive a free, first session at **Yoga Anita** in Devens, take 15 percent off lessons at Yoga with John in Concord or save 20 percent on classes at **The Yoga Loft** in Wilmington.

Perhaps you're realizing traditional gym or studio settings aren't for you. As an alternative, members can access fitness equipment discounts and start conditioning their bodies at home. Visit **Precision Fitness Equipment** in Attleboro, Framingham, Hanover or Newton and save 10 percent on a variety of products.

Visit [mtabenefits.com](http://mtabenefits.com) for details and a full list of discounts.

# Save Money on Spring Break Travel

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## Booking the trip

After selecting a destination, it's time to book the trip. The best advice is to start with booking the flights, and then book the hotels and car rentals.

MTA members have the advantage of not having to use popular online travel booking sites like Expedia, Hotels.com, Kayak, etc. Time and again, MTA members report finding the best prices in the MTA Benefits portal, where our partner Access Nationwide provides savings of up to 50 percent off quotes on the public travel booking sites. This is an exclusive member benefit provided especially for MTA members.

Members can also take advantage of more than 350,000 discounts wherever they travel nationwide, including more than 250,000 mobile offers. MTA members will find deep discounts at popular local restaurants, on fast food, or even at retailers, boutiques, day spas and destination-specific activities.



## Start now and save

If saving money is a big priority, then now is the time to start the research. Check out the deals offered by MTA Benefits. You may be surprised by what you find.

## Coping with Seasonal Depression as Winter Deepens

(continued from page 1)

The World Health Organization has reported an estimated 25 percent increase in experiences of anxiety and depression worldwide since the COVID-19 pandemic. About 1-in-5 Americans struggle with mental illness. As many know, mental health is a more urgent issue now than ever. So, how can people best mitigate stress and anxiety and prepare for a long winter, in terms of mental health? Positive coping skills can help. Those of us who work in the mental health field have several tips that we commonly provide for those who may struggle:

- ❖ **Take your feelings as information about what matters most.** Rather than viewing uncomfortable feelings as negative, we can view them with curiosity. "Difficult emotions have value," Dr. Tracy Dennis-Tiwary, psychologist and the director of the Emotion Regulation Lab at Hunter College, recently told the New York Times. "It's information about what we really value and want in our life and we can use it to help define our priorities. Try to dig into what, exactly, you're saddest about losing ... and see if you can make more time for that in the future."
- ❖ **Know that Seasonal Affective Disorder is more than the "winter blues."** While the winter blues are common, mild and typically resolve as the days get lighter, Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a form of clinical depression connected to seasonal patterns. More common in northern latitudes, the disorder can cause low moods and

lead to people having trouble accomplishing daily tasks or even having suicidal thoughts.

- ❖ **Let the light in.** Both the winter blues and Seasonal Affective Disorder can be connected to a decrease in natural light during the winter. Opening your curtains or window shades to let in more sunlight, spending daily time outdoors or planning a midwinter vacation can help. You may also want to ask your primary care doctor about light therapy or Vitamin D.
- ❖ **Move your body!** Exercise can naturally counteract stress and often decreases anxiety or depression symptoms. Your nervous system produces chemicals such as endorphins, dopamine, adrenaline and endocannabinoids during cardiovascular activity, leading to positive or euphoric feelings and even sometimes pain relief. Do what works. Having fun and choosing something accessible is key. If the gym is too expensive or unrealistic, find an alternative. Even dancing to favorite music indoors can be an easy way to get the natural benefits of exercise during the deep winter.
- ❖ **Remember that you're not alone.** If you are feeling anxious, stressed or sad, ask for help. Many other people have experienced similar symptoms and have found relief. Talk to your primary care provider or mental healthcare provider if you feel lost. You don't have to navigate seasonal mood changes alone.

If you are struggling with depressive or suicidal thoughts, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by dialing 988 or text HOME to 741741 to connect to a Crisis Text Line Crisis Counselor. If you or a loved one is in imminent danger, dial 911. Help is available 24/7.

All program and pricing information was current at the time of publication (February 2023) and is subject to change without notice. To find out what may have changed, please call MTA Benefits at 800.336.0990.