

Educators for a Democratic Union

Guide to the Massachusetts Teachers Association Annual Meeting – May 8th & 9th, 2015

EDU's BEGINNER's GUIDE TO THE 2015 MTA ANNUAL MEETING

Annual meeting is a wonderful event, the most democratic part of the MTA, and the one involving the most members. Typically, about one thousand MTA members come together to debate the best direction for the MTA and any delegate may speak to the issues raised on the floor.

Annual Meeting: Schedule

The (formal) meeting begins around noon on Friday. Annual meeting contains a mix of from-the-podium" speeches, staff presentations, and delegate debate on MTA policy for the coming year. On Friday delegates debate and vote to approve the proposed budget.

On both Friday and Saturday mornings, caucuses meet before the official start time and those caucus meetings may be one of the best chances to meet with people who share your interests and perspectives. (EDU will meet Friday from 10 a.m. to noon in Hynes Room 305. We also meet on Saturday from 7:30 to 9:00 am, same room).

Annual Meeting: Elections

Elections are from 8:00 AM to

11:00 AM on Saturday. The MTA President and Vice-President serve two-year terms and can run for re-election. Annual meeting delegates voted for president and vice-president last year (2014) so there will be no presidential elections this year. Each year, some Annual Meeting delegates have the opportunity to vote for the Board of Director representative (director terms are staggered).

For most of us, speaking at Annual Meeting is the first time we will have addressed a thousand people. But we strongly encourage you to take the plunge: these are your friends and colleagues, fellow educators and fellow union members.

Traditionally, elections for MTA Board and the Executive Committee were largely uncontested but elections are becoming increasingly competitive. At this year's Annual Meeting, there will be several contested elections for the Board of Directors.

Annual Meeting: NBIs

For many of us the most important part of the meeting is debating the issues put forward by members, typically in the form of a New Business Item (NBI). The NBIs that have implications for the budget have to be voted on Friday afternoon before adopting the budget. A NBI with budgetary implications might include giving money to a public education advocacy group or donating money to a relief fund. Once all NBI's with budgetary implications have been voted on, the budget is debated, often at length. Delegates will make motions to add expenditures for one or another cause, or to set money aside for an upcoming campaign. On Saturday, we debate items without budgetary implications (say, to direct the MTA to oppose legislation that would cut the health-care benefits that members will receive when they retire).

Any delegate can submit New Business Items, and that can be done up to the end of the day Friday (if the item does not contain budgetary implications). The later you submit your NBI, the later it will appear in the

EDUCATORS FOR A DEMOCRATIC UNION: Who We Are

agenda. Due to time constraints, there is no guarantee that all NBIs will be debated.

Annual Meeting: Debate

Annual Meeting is conducted using *Robert’s Rules of Order*. Although there are a number of good reasons why the MTA uses *Robert’s Rules*, the process can be extremely confusing for those unfamiliar with the process. Given that the MTA parliamentarian will correct anyone that speaks out of order, the procedures can feel down right intimidating. Luckily, the *Robert’s Rules* website offers an excellent “cheat sheet” [goo.gl/ub4y8] to help you find your way.

If you want to speak on an issue, you simply go to any microphone and take the appropriate color-coded sign, which rests in a box next to the microphone. You may have to queue at a microphone but since delegates are not assigned specific microphones, you can always choose a microphone without a line.

In regards to the color-coded signs, green means you want to

support a motion, red that you oppose it, and a yellow sign is to ask a question or raise a point of order. When debate is in progress the chair alternates between those with red and green signs, so that both sides can be heard. When your turn comes, the chair will call on “Microphone X.” Your microphone will turn on and your face will be projected on the screen. You have 3 minutes to make your point (you will receive a warning before time runs out). If someone has a yellow sign, they jump to the front of the line. In theory you are only to ask a question or raise a point-of-order when holding a yellow card but in practice people often try to make a speech for or against an issue, in the form of a thinly disguised question.

For most of us, speaking at Annual Meeting is the first time we will have addressed a thousand people. But we strongly encourage you to take the plunge: these are your friends and colleagues, fellow educators and fellow union members. This is the largest gathering of educators in the state. It represents

a real chance to influence your fellow MTA members.

Annual Meeting: Voting

Debate can be closed at any time when a delegate calls for a vote (or in Robert’s Rules of Order, they “move the previous question”). The motion to close discussion must be approved by the assembly. The chair will then call for a vote on the NBI. Normally, delegates will respond “aye” to vote in favor of a motion or “nay” to vote against it. For particularly close votes, the chair may ask delegates to stand up or raise their hands. For extremely close votes, delegates may also call for “division” which requires a roll-call vote (where each individual vote is counted).

The voting and debates are important. It’s impressive that a thousand members are there and that so many speak during the debates. But annual meeting is also a chance to meet MTA members from other locals, to make new friends, and to share ideas and experiences.

EDUCATORS FOR A DEMOCRATIC UNION : 2015 CAUCUS MEETINGS

Hynes Convention Center Room 305

Friday: 10am – Noon

Saturday: 7:30am – 9am

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UNDERSTANDING OUR UNION: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE MTA

INTRODUCTION

The entire EDU Guide to Annual Meeting is intended to help democratize the MTA and open things up, letting newcomers and ordinary delegates find out at least part of what long time veterans and senior administration already know.

The Massachusetts Teachers Association has a complicated structure, and most members have only a vague understanding of how it works. We believe this serves the interests of the MTA's policy making elite: *if the only way you can understand what's happening is to have been part of the inner circle for 20 years, then this old guard can trip up and frustrate efforts at change.* We offer here a very brief and incomplete guide to the MTA; it doesn't begin to cover everything, but we hope it gives you a sense of how things work.

MEMBERSHIP

The MTA has 113,000 members divided into (by our count) 438 locals, and it has about 150 paid staff. The vast majority of MTA members work in K-12, but the MTA is also the largest union in our public colleges and universities. Locals vary tremendously in size: Worcester has over 2,500 members, but some locals have a dozen or fewer members. In theory, each local has an elected local president, officers, and an executive board. Most locals also have building level representatives. (who might or might not be on the local's board). Most local officers are working educators; some get a few hours a week of

“release time” so they teach less and can focus on their union duties while a few large locals have “full time release” presidents.

LEADERSHIP: PRESIDENT

Within the MTA, there is an elected statewide leadership: the president, vice-president, the MTA board of directors. For most MTA members, the president is the most visible figure in the organization. The president's job is to make policy recommendations, execute policy initiatives legislated by the Annual Meeting of Delegates and the Board of Directors, and act as the public voice of the MTA. Under the current administration, members have gotten a closer look at what the president does on a day to day basis as Barbara Madeloni sends weekly emails to the membership letting them know the positions she has taken publicly and the work she is currently doing.

LEADERSHIP: THE BOARD

The board is comprised of “district directors” (often just called “board members”), each of whom represents about 2,000 MTA members. In some cases that means a board member is representing one large local (e.g. Springfield), but in other cases a board member is representing ten or more locals. The board meets six times a year, typically beginning with dinner on Friday, running until 10 pm or later, and then resuming on Saturday and continuing until sometime in the afternoon. Board members don't get paid, but the MTA

covers the expenses of board meetings (hotel, food, travel). Board members are elected to three-year terms, with one-third of the board elected each year. The board prides itself on being the voice of the membership statewide, but in the past, elections were rarely contested; three years ago there was not a single solitary contested seat anywhere in the state. The board also includes NEA directors and statewide directors for Ethnic Minority members and for ESPs.

Many members – heck, many annual meeting delegates, even many local presidents – have only the vaguest notion of the board's actions or process. When that's true, it's a sign of a breakdown in democratic procedures. Board members should be regularly communicating about what is happening at the board; even more so, they should be consulting with members and local leaders and getting their ideas and views about the issues coming before MTA (or which should be coming forward, but aren't).

LEADERSHIP: EXCOMM

There's one more layer above board members (that is, above district directors): the Executive Committee (often abbreviated to ExComm). Each ExComm member represents one region (A through G are K-12 based on geography; H is all of higher ed; and then there is also a region for retired members), and each region has a half dozen district directors grouped under that

ExComm member. The Ex-Comm meets in the months when the board does not meet, so ExComm members have a meeting every month (since they also sit on the board).

LEADERSHIP: SCHEDULE

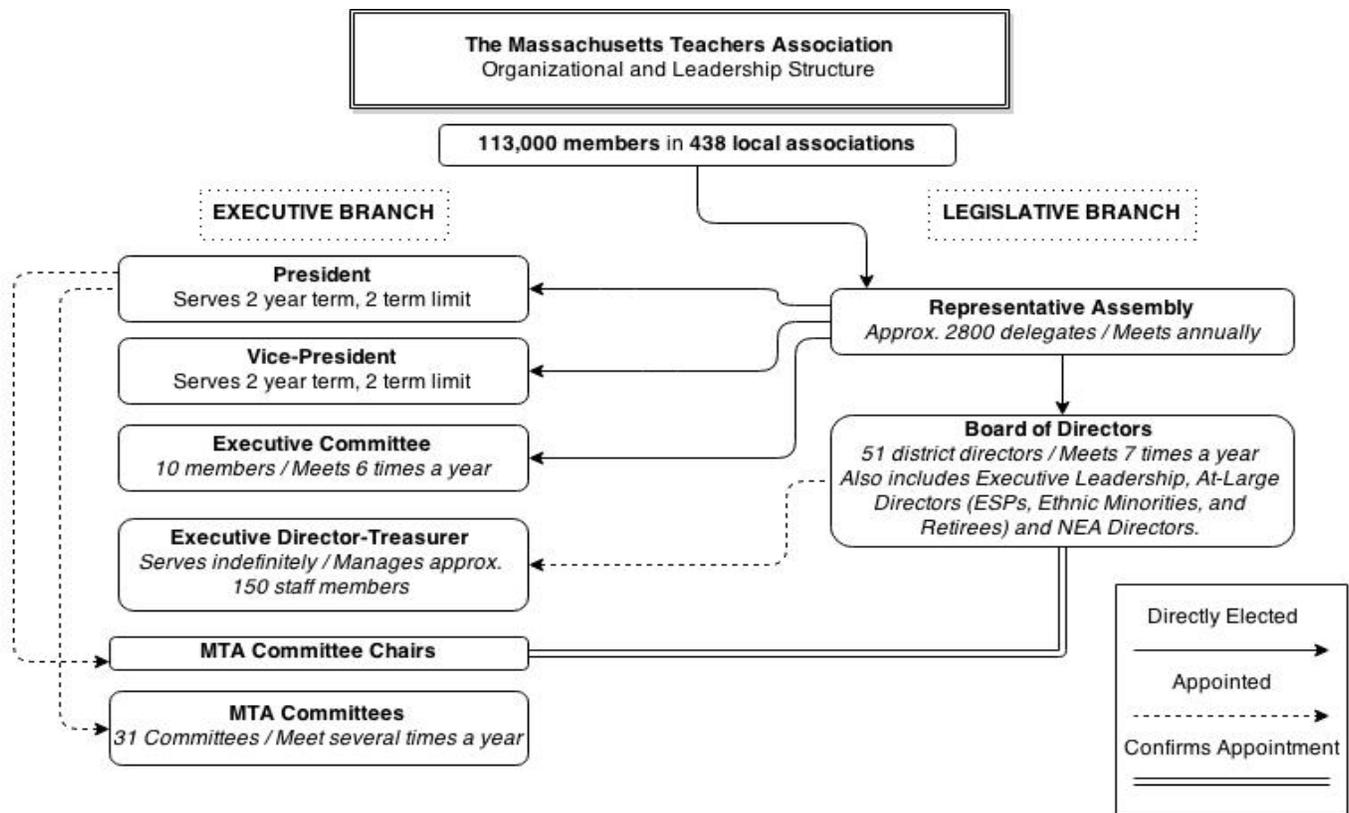
The board and Ex Comm meet throughout the year; once a year there is an Annual Meeting, with delegates elected by each local. Although it varies from year to year, each year our state-wide locals are eligible to elect a

people who elect people to the board and the Executive Committee, as well as electing the president and vice-president.

COMMITTEES & STAFF

Two more pieces will conclude this simplified overview of the MTA. First, the MTA has about 25 committees, typically with 9 members appointed by the MTA president. These committees deal with a wide range of issues: what legislation MTA should support, how we train new members (and leaders), LGBTQ,

Second, a subject worthy of its own extended discussion, the MTA employs about 150 staff. The most visible to members are the field staff - also called field reps, consultants, UNISERV consultants, etc. - who work with locals, help with bargaining and grievances, and so on. Each of these field reps, like each board member, works with something like 2000 MTA members (although field rep districts and board districts are not identical). In addition there are lots of people working in



total of about 2,800 delegates. In practice, the actual number of delegates attending is less than half that, and almost no local has a contested election.

The Annual Meeting is the highest decision-making body of the MTA, setting policy for the Board and ExComm. Annual Meeting delegates are also the

ethnic minority, or ESP concerns, educational policy, vocational education, and lots more. [for more information, see <http://goo.gl/EzURVK>] If you are interested in serving on a committee, let MTA president Barbara Madeloni know; obviously, there aren't always openings, but there might well be spots available.

headquarters: legal, government relations, education policy and practice, communications, and so on. And of course there are managers heading up each of these units, and an Executive Director-Treasurer (Ann Clarke) who heads it all and supervises the staff.

WHAT IS SOCIAL JUSTICE UNIONISM? by Maureen O'Connor

A social justice union is one that is truly democratic, member-driven and responsive to the broader community. It organizes workers around more than just immediate workplace issues such as pay, benefits and working conditions. While social justice unionists still fight hard for bread and butter issues at the core of traditional unionism (collective bargaining, etc.), they also engage in wider political struggles for human rights, social justice and democracy. This means advocating for the interests of people outside our

union who have been historically underserved and underrepresented. Ultimately, the union seeks to be part of a broader movement to transform society.

A social justice union gives its rank- and-file members a critical voice in decision-making and recognizes the importance of external allies. For example, a social justice educator's union works to build coalitions with parents, students, and community members to address the repercussions of income inequality, immigration, inade-

quate health care, high-stakes testing and other issues which affect students and their families.

As a social justice caucus, EDU is cognizant of the fact that the struggles we face as American teachers are part of a global assault on teachers unions, which began in Latin America, Asia and Africa over 40 years ago. EDU has, in part, modeled itself on CORE, the Caucus of Rank and File Educators of the Chicago Teachers Union—a social justice union.

EDU's SOCIAL JUSTICE UNIONISM SUMMER READING LIST

Reign of Error by Diane Ravitch (Knopf, 2013)

In her most recent book, Ravitch unravels the erroneous and often fabricated positions espoused by the school privatization movement. From charter schools to merit-pay, high-stakes testing to data-driven teacher evaluation, Ravitch contends both common sense and raw data undermine nearly every position privatization advocates use to criticize public education.

The Future of Our Schools by Lois Weiner (Haymarket Books, 2012)

It's no secret that the attack on public sector unions has eroded support even amongst our own ranks. Weiner offers a bold strategy for how to engage our fellow teachers and connect them with the struggle to strengthen collective bargaining rights and increase union power. Weiner believes teacher unions will only protect member benefits if they fight for a broader platform of economic justice. Outlining a number of innovative strategies, Weiner argues a more progressive platform will reignite teacher unions.

How to Jump-Start Your Union: Lessons from the Chicago Teachers (Labor Notes, 2014)

This collection of essays offers a "how-to" guide for social justice unionists. Drawn from the experiences of activist educators and militant unionists in the Chicago Teachers Unions, this book offers practical lessons in how to run for office, work within your community, build a network of building representatives, train emerging leaders, run a contract campaign, and organize for a strike.

Class Action: An Activist Teacher's Handbook (Jacobin, 2014)

With organized money putting its full weight behind privatization, organized labor needs to develop as many strategies as possible to defend our schools. The authors of this pamphlet offer a diversity of perspectives on how teachers can identify and critique the attack on public education, while building a stronger movement of teacher activists ready to fight for better working and learning conditions. Available as a free .PDF download at Jacobin Magazine's Website (<http://bit.ly/1jGlv4t>)

Strike for America: Chicago Teachers Against Austerity by Micah Uetricht (Verso, 2014)

Uetricht offers the Chicago strike as a vivid case study of how teachers can organize their workplace to effectively fight the attack on public education. Yet, the strike did not simply aim to raise compensation and improve benefits for Chicago Teachers. The CTU demanded better learning conditions for their students and an end to the austerity-driven privatization efforts that have closed school after school in Chicago. As Uetricht explains, the CTU's leadership organized deep inside their membership and built robust connections with parents, gaining diverse support for the strike.

THE SITUATION IN HOLYOKE by Erin DuFresne

On April 28, 2015, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) voted to designate Holyoke Public Schools (HPS) as a “chronically under-performing” district, which classifies it as Level 5 and places it into receivership.

In December of 2014, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) notified the district that the review scheduled to take place in April had been moved up to January. This would allow the state enough time for all options to be considered, including receivership. A group of former educators and administrators visited the schools over a period of five days in Holyoke. They published a comprehensive review of the district, including strengths and weaknesses, in February. In March, when BESE held its monthly meeting, Commissioner

Mitchell Chester recommended that BESE vote to place HPS in state control and declare the district a Level 5 district. Throughout this process, Reclaim Our Schools, an initiative of the Holyoke Teachers Association (HTA) and the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA), organized forums, gathered petition signatures, wrote letters, made phone calls, and passed out stickers, lawn signs, posters, and buttons. Among the highlights of the Reclaim Our Schools campaign were a discussion with local elected and community leaders on April 2nd and two Community Forums held concurrently on April 9th. Approximately 1,000 people attended the public hearing held on April 27th. This last minute show of force was not enough to sway the majority of the BESE members. The vote on April 28th

was 8 in favor and 3 opposed to state takeover. Only two members of the board visited the HPS during this entire process. Both of those members voted against receivership.

Commissioner Chester is expected to choose a receiver in the coming months. The HTA now has 30 days to “negotiate” a new contract with the state that will be between HTA and whomever Chester appoints as receiver. In addition, a turnaround plan must now be drafted and agreed upon by the various parties involved. It is uncertain how many teachers will choose to remain in Holyoke. Teachers will not know what the length of the school day will be next year or what the pay scale will be next year until the contract is negotiated with the state.

STOP THE DUES INCREASE! by Dan Clawson

Every year our dues go up. This year the board proposes another dues increase. Usually the board votes almost unanimously to approve the dues increase. This year it was a fairly close vote, 38-24.

There is no need for a dues increase. Every year the MTA budgets on the assumption that there will be a certain number of members, and in every one of the last ten years the actual number of members has been greater than the projected number, so the MTA collected more revenue than it had projected. The extra revenue collected

was then added to the MTA’s surplus. In the last six years, the surplus has always been more than \$1 million for the year.

Todd Ostrowski has shown that if we more accurately project the number of members we will have the budget is in balance with no dues increase. The Full Time Equivalent (FTE) membership as of January 2015 is 86,581, up 1,286 over June 30, 2014. By voting to change the FY 2016 proposed FTE from 85,000 to 86,000 (which is in line with our current membership) there would be no dues increase needed for next year.

We ask you to please vote to amend the proposed budget to increase the FTE from 85,000 to 86,000 and to oppose any increase in dues. We believe raising the FTE count is both more accurate and is the most efficient way to have no dues increase and maintain our dues at \$459 per FTE. We elected Barbara, and we build EDU, to set a new direction for the MTA. We helped elect Barbara, and we build EDU, to set a new direction for the MTA. One of the clearest signals we can send to members is to have the first year of this new direction be the first year without a dues increase.

ADJUNCT FACULTY: PRESENT FACTS AND A NEW DIRECTION by Carol Gray

FACT: A majority of Massachusetts' community college courses are taught by adjunct / DCE faculty.¹

Berkshire – 65.04%	Middlesex – 67.1%
Bristol – 76.91%	Mt. Wachusett – 70.02%
Bunker Hill – 65.54%	North Shore – 56.94%
Cape Cod – 59.88%	Northern Essex – 64.51%
Greenfield – 55.82%	Quinsigamond – 74.18%
Holyoke – 64.31%	Roxbury – 53.14%
MassBay – 67.99%	Springfield – 57.93%
Massasoit – 71.29%	

FACT: Adjuncts are paid at a much lower rate than full-time faculty for teaching the same classes.

Adjuncts currently get paid about \$3000 to \$3500 per class. Adjuncts do not know what classes they will be assigned to teach, and they do not know how many classes will be assigned each semester. In contrast, average full-time faculty annual pay has been reported at one community college to be about \$68,000.²

FACT: Not only are adjunct wages much lower for teaching the same courses as full-timers; but adjuncts also get no benefits such health insurance or retirement.

Benefits make the difference in compensation even more dramatic. One study of 2010-2011 data showed the value of benefits to full-time faculty was \$15,123.³

FACT: Adjuncts are very under represented in our union.

Although there are 5,333 adjunct unit members in our union representing 69% of all in the MCCC,⁴ only 2 of 21 MCCC Board members are adjuncts (9.5% of the Board) and there are no adjuncts on the MCCC's seven person Executive Committee

A NEW DIRECTION: *The Program for Change* (currently in place in Vancouver, Canada)

One way to achieve equality for adjuncts would be to adopt a strategy similar to the *Program for Change*¹ that Vancouver Community College in Canada has successfully implemented. Here are the main points of the Vancouver Model:

- 1) Aimed at solving the inequities of adjunct pay and benefits not by creating more full-time tenure-track positions, but rather by putting adjuncts (“part-time instructors”) on a single salary schedule with full-timers so that they would simply receive a pro-rated portion of a full-timer’s salary and benefits.
- 2) Within two years of being hired (*i.e.*, after completing a probationary term), adjuncts would become ‘regularized’, that is, they would have job security from that point on.
- 3) Seniority accrual would begin on day one of employment. Part-time instructors would accrue seniority alongside full time instructors. Where one falls on the seniority list is based primarily on length of employment not whether one is full or part-time.

Summary facts based on presentation by Professor Jack Longmate. For more information about the Program for Change, please see this link: <http://vccfa.ca/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Access-the-Program-for-Change-May-2013.pdf>

¹ Statistics taken from article by MCCC President Joe LeBlanc in April 2013 edition of MCCC News.

² MassBay 2015 NEASC Accreditation Self-Study, February 2015.

³ NEA Advocate salary issue, April/May 2015, www.nea.org/home/35310.htm

⁴ The statistics are from the MCCC Budget, July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016, distributed at the MCCC Delegate Assembly, April 25, 2015.

CHANGE THE ELECTION RULES? AN ASSESSMENT OF THE BY-LAW AND STANDING RULE PROPOSALS

BACKGROUND

This year there will be more than a dozen proposals to change the MTA's election rules. Former MTA president Paul Toner proposed some of these rule changes. Others are proposed by a task force created by the Board of Directors from a motion by Tim Sullivan. He made the motion at the last board meeting shortly after he lost the election for MTA President. These key committees were chaired by a circle of veteran MTA members close to the previous administration. While there are a few good proposals, many of these should be voted down as potentially dangerous efforts to shift power away from the broader membership.

ELECTION RULES

EDU takes the position that elections and election rules should be determined by the broadest decision making body in the MTA: the Annual Meeting of Delegates. Today, the MTA's election rules can be found in one of three places: by-laws, standing rules, or board policies. The **by-laws** provide a guarantee of popular decision-making: they can only be changed by a vote of two-thirds of the delegates to Annual Meeting. **Standing rules** are also broadly democratic: they also require a vote by Annual Meeting delegates, but only require a majority vote to change. **Board policies** are the least democratic because they can be

changed at any time by a vote of the board.

It is almost custom that the Board of Directors does not take roll call votes, so members have almost no way of knowing how their representatives voted (short of attending each board meeting). Moving any election rule into board policies gives a small number of people wide latitude to shape and potentially impact

EDU takes the position that elections and election rules should be determined by the broadest decision making body in the MTA: the Annual Meeting of Delegates.

future elections. Additionally, moving election rules into board policies could make them essentially secret as none of 186 pages of the Board's Policies are posted on the MTA website.

The board endorsed almost all of the proposed rule changes that delegates will vote on at Annual Meeting.

THE BASIC SITUATION

The proposals move most election rules out of the Standing Rules. Some of the rules would go into the bylaws, which we should support, because then changing those democratic procedures will require a two-thirds vote of annual meeting delegates. We don't support the

first 4, which are all new and we believe they are anti-democratic. However, the proposal is that other election rules (including just about everything about campaigning, finance, etc.) become board policy. If that happens, Annual Meeting delegates will no longer have control over these key electoral rules. The board could vote in August to completely change the election rules, and it would not even need to take a roll call vote.

CONCLUSIONS

Although there will be some complications on the specifics, and it's not quite this neat and clean, in general EDU members will want to SUPPORT moving election protections into the bylaws, and OPPOSE making election protections board policy.

Proponents of these changes will say they are merely technical, and that the parliamentarian suggested that the Standing Rules should only address what happens during Annual Meeting. Some of us think that elections are an important part of Annual Meeting, and that the delegates – not just the board – should be the ones to set the rules for elections.

RECOMMENDED VOTES

Amendments to Bylaws: Oppose 1, 2, 3, 4. Support 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.
Amendments to the Standing Rules: Oppose all of them (1 through 11)

EDUCATORS FOR A DEMOCRATIC UNION supports the following New Business Item at this year’s Annual Meeting

THE SCHOOLS OUR COMMUNITIES DESERVE by Jim Murphy

Public education is under attack at both ends of the term and it’s time to organize within our communities to articulate a vision of our schools that not only stands in opposition to the view of children as economic inputs, but offers an alternative as well.

“Public education is under attack at both ends of the term”? Yes, that’s exactly what’s been going on for the past thirty years. So-called “education reform” has been nothing short of an attempt to remove the public from education, and turn education into personal training. The voices of

privatization, standardization, and races to the top have been allowed to dominate the educational conversation about what our children and communities should be and, as a result, teachers and parents have been forced into opposing the individual manifestations of that agenda: charter schools, high-stakes testing, the de-skilling of teachers, and so on. They are important struggles, but without a vision of what our schools *should* be – one that represents the best that educational research has to offer, along with the common sense of what par-

ents, teachers, and communities want for our children and their future – even the occasional success is both limited and temporary.

We cannot win by continuing to play defense because it allows those who would dismantle public education to define us as negative and self-interested. This NBI is about developing voice, vision, and common cause in an effort to change the conversation and give our children and communities the schools they truly deserve.

EDUCATORS FOR A DEMOCRATIC UNION supports the following New Business Item at this year’s Annual Meeting

TUITION-FREE, PUBLICLY FUNDED HIGHER EDUCATION by Mary Rapien

Members of EDU are submitting a New Business Item calling on the MTA to publicly support the goal of free, fully publicly funded higher education. Affordable, high-quality public higher education is consistently near the top when MTA polls members about their priorities, as it is essential for ourselves, for our own children, and for the students we teach heading to college. And yet student debt continues to rise. Our motion calls on the MTA to 1) convey this support to key elected officials

and publish it on the MTA website and 2) assist interested MTA chapters to organize community forums around the state to discuss this important issue. One such forum, organized by EDU members and PHENOM, has already taken place at Bristol Community College. The forum, held on April 28, involved faculty, students and staff in a thoughtful conversation (only the first of many) on the issue, and can provide a model for organizing such forums in the future.

Contrary to the widely publicized views of the MCCC leadership, many union members are eager to engage in open discussion of the topic of free (to students), fully publicly funded higher education. Rather than taking the view that community colleges must be fully funded FIRST, we believe that the two demands go hand in hand. Full funding will be won when obtaining a college education becomes a democratic, publicly supported right for all.

EDUCATORS FOR A DEMOCRATIC UNION supports the following New Business Item at this year’s Annual Meeting

A FAIRER SYSTEM FOR ELLs AND TEACHERS by John Fitzgerald

In 2002, the Unz initiative was passed by Massachusetts’ voters, effectively ending bilingual education and making Massachusetts one of only three states to do so. The consequences for English Language Learners (ELLs) would have come as no surprise to language acquisition experts and ESL teachers. ELLs have had consistently worse outcomes than their native English-speaking counterparts.

In response to Massachusetts’ failure to implement Sheltered English Immersion (SEI), the US Department of Justice initiated an investigation that has resulted in Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners (RETELL). RETELL essentially requires that all core content teachers obtain an SEI endorsement by 2016 in order to renew or advance their license.

The initial response of some EDU members who had taken the SEI course was to push for the return of bilingual education. At the 2014 Annual Meeting, a

Bilingual Education Task Force was created as a result of an EDU New Business Item (NBI). The Task Force is mandated with developing a plan for bringing about the return of bilingual education. The MTA has also helped to draft legislation that would take away the legal prohibitions against bilingual education. We recognize, however, that regardless of the outcome of the work of the Task Force or the proposed legislation, there will still be plenty of ELLs who will find themselves in an SEI classroom. While we have our concerns with the SEI course, we recognize our responsibility as educators to be better prepared to teach this often poorly served population. We also feel, however, that it is the collective responsibility of all the people of the Commonwealth to support ELLs. We, therefore, think that it is unfair that only classroom teachers, and those who directly supervise them, are being directly held accountable for the failure of Massachusetts to effectively implement a plan to

support ELLs after bilingual education was prohibited. Because of the flawed way in which RETELL has been rolled out, some classroom teachers WILL be denied their license to teach. Some teachers have been unable to find a place in one of the available SEI courses, while others have been kicked out of courses for which they had successfully registered because they would not have an ELL in their classroom. This is completely unacceptable.

In order to make sure that teachers, through no fault of their own, will not be denied their license to teach, EDU will be submitting an NBI asking that the MTA send a letter to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education calling for a moratorium on the denial of licenses based on lack of SEI endorsement until all currently licensed teachers who want to take the SEI class have had an opportunity to do so at no cost to themselves.

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EDUCATORS FOR A DEMOCRATIC UNION supports the following New Business Item at this year's Annual Meeting

EDUCATORS STAND AGAINST RACISM by Kourtney Senquiz

“I must say tonight that a riot is the language of the unheard”, said Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. If you live in America today, you know that racial and socio-economic oppression is real. We can see the riots on the streets and hear the calls for justice. As public education workers, we see the evidence of racial and socio-economic injustices as soon as children enter the pre-K. Unfortunately, our schools themselves are part of the problem.

In the Spring of 2012, Robin L. Dahlberg, the American Civil Liberties Union, and Citizens for Juvenile Justice conducted a study of three of Massachusetts’ largest school districts; Boston, Worcester and Springfield. The reports, published in *Arrested Futures; The Criminalization of School Discipline in Massachusetts’ Three Largest School Districts*, documented how the use of police officers to enforce Zero Toler-

ance policies within the public schools facilitates what has become known as the “school-to-prison-pipeline”—students that are arrested in school are more likely to drop out and become part of the prison system. The Massachusetts Appleseed Center for Law and Justice further reports that, “In fact, each year, some 32,000 students are excluded from school. Preschoolers as young as four years old, and sixth- and ninth-graders making the transition to middle and high school, are especially at risk. Excluded students are likely to be male, poor, or receiving special education; a disproportionate number are Latino or African-American. Once excluded, a majority of these children—our children—drop out, end up in ‘the system,’ or serve time.”

The school-to-prison-pipeline is real and is feeding the terrifyingly high rates of mass incarceration of our minority pop-

ulation. We need to create avenues to educate the community, public education workers, and students about this dangerous trend. The MTA in its role as the voice for public education workers in Massachusetts should create a working group of members charged with developing educational materials about these issues which can be provided to every member so that they can speak out about these issues effectively.

As educators, it is our responsibility to help our students examine the world in which we live and uncover its truths; and as unionists it is our responsibility to fight against oppression. With the MTA’s help, we can each do our part and help give a voice to those who are “unheard”. Vote to support this NBI against Racial Oppression!

EDUCATORS FOR A DEMOCRATIC UNION : SAVE THE DATES!

Friday, May 6th and Saturday, May 7th: EDU Caucus Meetings at the 2015 MTA Annual Meeting. On Friday, we meet from 10am to noon. On Saturday, we meet from 7:30am to 9am.

Saturday, June 13th: We'll be holding a statewide meeting of the EDU from 10 am - 2 pm in Boston (location TBA). Keep an eye out for an announcement confirming the times and location. Among other things, we'll be holding elections for our coordinating committee, discussing plans for Summer Conference, and brainstorming fall organizing efforts.

August 2nd – 6th: Are you going to the MTA's Summer Conference in Amherst? If so, plan to attend our caucus meetings scheduled throughout the conference. Details will be emailed to our mailing list in July.

EDUCATORS FOR A DEMOCRATIC UNION supports the following New Business Item at this year’s Annual Meeting

FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE BY DIVESTING FROM FOSSIL FUELS by Lauren Ockene and Ferd Wulkan

This NBI urges the MTA to endorse legislation (H. 2269, S. 1350) requiring the Pension Reserve Investment Trust (PRIT) to cease new investments in the fossil fuel industry and to divest its existing holdings in fossil fuel companies over 5 years. Similarly, it urges the University of Massachusetts to divest. There are moral, political, and financial reasons to do so.

Scientists worldwide overwhelmingly agree that climate change represents a grave risk to the future of human society and have determined that to maintain a livable planet for our students, ourselves and future generations, up to 80% of known fossil fuel reserves must remain unburned. So it is morally and politically problematic to see our pension funds invested in fossil fuel companies that would like to burn those reserves and further raise the temperature of our planet to an unacceptable level. We also note that independent financial analysts predict that fossil fuel reserves will become stranded assets when

regulations on carbon emissions go into effect, thereby making fossil fuel divestment not only the moral choice, but a financially prudent one as well. Continued investment in fossil fuel companies is a bad risk for our retirement savings.

Labor unions, especially one the size of the MTA, can play an important role in advocating for policy changes on social and political issues with consequences for broad segments of the population. PRIT has successfully divested in the past from companies doing business in South Africa and Sudan, as well as from tobacco companies, when sufficient public outcry demanded such divestment.

Passing this NBI would mean that the MTA would communicate this resolution widely to members, legislators, the NEA, labor councils and coalitions to which we belong, and would encourage members to contact their legislators in support of the legislation.

Having the pension fund and UMass join the quickly growing number of academic institutions, municipalities, religious institutions, and foundations that are participating in this movement will send a powerful message that in order to save our planet, we must quickly transition to renewable sources of energy. As long as fossil fuel corporations remain profitable, and as long as they are able to spend millions of dollars each year lobbying government for policies that allow them to uphold their interests at the expense of the well-being of the planet, there is no hope for a sustainable future. We need to stand strongly for a viable and healthy alternative and stop investing in companies that perpetuate social inequity through their controversial and harmful practices.

MTA has long had a social conscience, and this new business item, while protecting our pocketbooks, is consistent with that tradition.

EDU Guide to the Massachusetts Teachers Association 2015 Annual Meeting

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EDUCATORS FOR A DEMOCRATIC UNION supports the following New Business Item at this year’s Annual Meeting

SUPPORT THE OPT-OUT MOVEMENT by Dan Clawson

Perhaps the most powerful lever against high-stakes testing is the opt-out movement. The MTA is pushing a bill calling for a three-year moratorium on any high-stakes use of testing, but the only way the legislature will adopt that is if they feel the pressure. If students and parents opt out of high-stakes tests, and if our members help make that possible, it will generate debate and make the issue hard to ignore.

The MTA is actually behind the curve. The NEA affiliates in Maine and Rhode Island have already adopted statements supporting the opt out movement. This year, we are proposing a statement to help MTA catch up to our New England neighbors, and adopt almost exactly the same wording that they used. (The MTA language is actually a little softer, saying for example “the rights of free

speech *should* apply in every situation in discussing student opt out options”; the Maine and Rhode Island statements omit the “should.”)

Opponents of this New Business Item will argue that it is illegal for a teacher to take any stand against what their district is legally required to do, which includes testing kids, and therefore, they will say, any on the job statements about opting out are illegal. Opponents have a point: there *are* legal issues, as is indicated in this MTA legal opinion about opting out, and members need to be aware of them (You can read more on MTA Legal’s opinion on the matter at [goo.gl/TAVt84] - you have to enter your member info to see it).

There are two responses to this. First, there is plenty of

room to push the envelope, and a great many actions that are without question legal; the NBI tries to do exactly that, and does not call for any illegal activity. No one doubts that it is legal for teachers in District A to talk to students and parents in District B, or for retirees to talk to students and parents anywhere. No one doubts that we can have our own children opt out. No one doubts that our locals can pass resolutions. No one doubts that we can call for increased rights to discuss opting out.

The second response to the legal argument is the question: Where would civil rights in our country be without lunch counter sit-ins (which were undoubtedly illegal under segregation laws)? Many movements have advanced in part because of people pushing back against unjust laws.

UNION LED TEST RESISTANCE IN THE NEWS

From the May 2015 issue of Labor Notes: “April saw some of the biggest protests yet against standardized tests. An estimated 150,000 New York students sat out a week of testing, after the state teachers union robo-called its 600,000 members, reminding them they could opt out their own children. The teachers, parents, and students organizing opt-out campaigns say testing takes up precious class time and produces little of value – except profit for testing companies.” (p. 5)

EDUCATORS FOR A DEMOCRATIC UNION : 2015 CAUCUS MEETINGS

Hynes Convention Center Room 305

Friday: 10am – Noon

Saturday: 7:30am – 9am

EDUCATORS FOR A DEMOCRATIC UNION supports the following New Business Item at this year's Annual Meeting

Let's Be Ready To Fight For Retiree Health Care Benefits by Tom Goodkind

Last year, many of us worked with other unions to defeat Governor Patrick's *Act Providing Retiree Healthcare Benefits Reform*, which would have significantly curtailed health care benefits for those who retire with less than thirty years of service. That legislation would have had an enormous negative impact on a huge number of current and future employees, and it was a good thing that the legislation failed to make it out of committee.

But with Charlie Baker in the State House, and with right-wing organizations like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) targeting pensions and post-retirement benefits across the country, we would be foolish to remain idle. We should prepare now for anything the Governor or Legislature may do to undermine retiree health care benefits.

Why should we defend this benefit?

According to State Treasurer Deb Goldberg, the average annual state pension for Massachusetts retirees is \$27,000—and many state retirees collect little or no social security payments. In addition, state retirees receive cost-of-living adjustments only on the first \$12,000 of their

pension. Thus the value of their pension (unlike social security) declines steadily over the course of their retirement. Maintaining the current subsidized health care benefit is essential for helping retired public employees afford care that would otherwise consume a large portion of their limited pensions. Denying large numbers of retired public employees access to subsidized care will result in poorer health and increased medical costs that are ultimately borne by the taxpayers.

The Commonwealth needs to attract and retain excellent candidates for all jobs. Many analyses of public sector wages and benefits have shown that for the level of education required for our positions, public employees are paid less than the equivalent workers in the private sector. Benefits help make up for the lower salaries and attract to public service people who could earn more in the private sector.

The Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) "liability" is not new. There is no immediate funding crisis. The liability has existed for as long as we've had retiree benefits in the Commonwealth. What is relatively new is the right-wing war on state employee pensions. Taking ad-

vantage of years of starvation state budgets and increasing health care costs, organizations such as ALEC—sponsor of anti-union legislation across the country—have supported the imposition of GASB 45, an accounting rule which forces the public sector to report thirty-year amortized costs of these benefits for potential investors' review and which has accelerated this manufactured crisis. Public policy decisions should not be made about employee retirement health care benefits based on questionable accounting rules.

To the extent that there are long-term shortfalls in funds for retiree health care, they are primarily the result of a chronic lack of fair taxation and the failure to curb the rising costs of our privatized health care system. Instead of reducing benefits now, time and effort should be spent on increasing revenues and reducing the cost of health care for everybody. Such an approach will help us provide needed benefits for our retirees while also saving on health care costs. With over 110,000 members, let's put our strength into allying with others to do something about these long-term problems, rather than lying down to be railroaded once again.

EDU’s ANNUAL MEETING GLOSSARY by Jamie Rinaldi

Given the scope of debate at Annual Meeting, it can sometimes feel like you need to be a public policy expert to make an informed decision. New delegates will find that there are terms or references that more veteran members will use as if they were widely understood concepts. If this is your first Annual Meeting, you may be confused when a speaker ultimately refers to the “infamous STAND compromise” or asks about the status of “current MTA/JWJ collaboration in Massachusetts gateway cities.”

The following glossary is intended to provide new delegates with a basic introduction to the vocabulary of Annual Meeting. More veteran delegates will also find parts useful, particularly for members that do not work in K-12 bargaining units. Naturally, many delegates will also take great pleasure in critiquing the omissions and subjective definitions that follow. In that spirit, consider everything that follows as a starting point for debate.

Adjunct Faculty: Also known as part-time or contingent faculty, adjunct faculty teach a majority of classes in higher education institutions nationwide. Adjunct faculty often lack the job protections offered to full time faculty and rarely receive health or retirement benefits. Adjunct Faculty within the Massachusetts state college system are members of the MTA.

AFT (American Federation of Teachers): The AFT is the second largest teachers union in the US with about 1.6 million members concentrated largely in urban areas (such as Boston, New York, Chicago). In its century long existence, the AFT has always had a close relationship with industrial unions and today, the AFT is part of the AFL-CIO. In recent decades, several unsuccessful attempts have been made to merge the AFT and the NEA.

Ashburton Place: The current headquarters of the MTA is located at 20 Ashburton Place in Boston although the term often refers more broadly to the

leadership and staff that work in that building.

caucus: Within a union or political party, individuals sharing common goals and ideas join caucuses. The caucus then advocates for its member’s interests within the larger institution. Educators for a Democratic Union is a caucus within the MTA.

Common Core: Introduced in 2010, the Common Core standards outline benchmarks for student achievement in math and ELA. In an effort to incentivize adoption, President Obama offered states federal funding (called *Race to the Top* grants) if they adopted the new Common Core standards. The Common Core has generated a good deal of controversy. Critics worry that private education corporations like Pearson played a central role in designing the standards and stand to profit from adoption. Many also worry that the standards further narrow the curriculum and increase the reliance on high-stakes standardized testing to measure student learning.

CTU (Chicago Teachers Union): The CTU, an affiliate of the AFT, led its members on an eight-day strike in 2012. Prior to the strike, the CTU built deep connections within the community and they enjoyed popular support throughout the work stoppage. In addition to bread and butter issues, the CTU demanded that their settlement must provide better learning conditions for their students.

DDM (District Determined Measure): As part of the new Massachusetts teacher evaluation system, each district must create a series of assessments that will allow evaluators to measure teacher impact on student learning. Critics of the plan fear it limits professional autonomy and judges an educator’s performance on too narrow a measure. The MTA has helped many districts negotiate out the more damaging elements of the reform but the impact of future implementation is still uncertain.

DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education): DESE is the main statewide institution responsible for managing licensure, continuing (debatable) education reform efforts, implementing the new teacher evaluation system, and “turning around” so-called low performing districts. Mitchell Chester is the commissioner of DESE. Needless to say, the MTA and DESE/Chester often disagree. Critics of DESE believe their hyper focus on high-stakes testing, support for charter schools, and emphasis on narrow accountability measures do not benefit MA students and communities.

field staff: Also known as field reps, UNISERV reps, or MTA reps. Field Staff provide operational support to MTA locals. This includes assisting locals in organizing efforts, helping with collective bargaining, supporting members in their buildings, and providing a conduit between statewide leadership and local leadership. Field staff employees are generally assigned to multiple districts. The MTA and the NEA jointly fund the Field Staff program.

gateway city: In Massachusetts, this generally refers to urban centers that once housed a large, upwardly mobile working class but have experienced economic stagnation and rising poverty with the decline in manufacturing industries over the last 30 years. The Massachusetts Legislature designates the following 28 communities as gateway cities: Attleboro, Barnstable, Brockton, Chelsea, Chicopee, Everett, Fall

River, Fitchburg, Haverhill, Holyoke, Lawrence, Leominster, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, Methuen, New Bedford, Peabody, Pittsfield, Quincy, Revere, Salem, Springfield, Taunton, Westfield, and Worcester.

JWJ (Jobs with Justice): JWJ is a national organization that advocates for a living wage, better working conditions and benefits, and the right to collectively bargain for all workers. JWJ focuses heavily on organizing and developing strong support networks within marginalized communities. The MTA is a partner organization with MA JWJ.

Level 4/5 designation: Based on a number of measures, DESE rates each school district in Massachusetts. Ratings heavily prioritize student achievement on high-stakes standardized tests. Districts rated Level 4 and 5 fail to meet DESE’s debatable benchmarks and can be placed into receivership (where the state assigns an individual or organization to manage the district). Currently all Level 4 or Level 5 districts are gateway cities. Critics of receivership argue that it is undemocratic, overly punitive, and fails to offer real solutions to impoverished communities. DESE recently placed the Holyoke Public Schools under receivership.

LPAT (Legislative Political Action Team): Also known as LPAT coordinators or MTA Activists. Each LPAT member is assigned to several MTA locals. LPATs encourage MTA members to participate in local election campaigns, lobby their

legislators, and advocate for the MTA’s Legislative Action Plan.

NEA (National Education Association): The NEA is the largest teachers union in the United States with roughly 3 million members spread across the country. Over 150 years old, the NEA traditionally defined itself as professional association (not a union) advocating for the best interests of public school employees. By the 1960s, the NEA actively encouraged its state and local affiliates to collectively bargain member contracts. The NEA began endorsing political candidates in the 1970s and by 1980, the NEA grew close with the Democratic Party, eliciting criticism that it had sacrificed some of its independence in the process.

OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits): OPEB refers to any benefits that an employee receives during retirement, excluding pension payments (hence the *other*). Most important to MTA members, OPEB includes retiree healthcare benefits. In the past few years, several legislative initiatives have surfaced that would limit OPEB eligibility for current and future Massachusetts municipal employees.

open bargaining: a form of collective bargaining where, in contrast to typically closed door sessions, negotiations take place in a public forum open to members of the bargaining unit and members of the broader community.

opt-out: Opting-out refers to a student’s refusal to take or a teacher’s refusal to administer a

high-stakes standardized test (like the MCAS or PARCC). Opt-out campaigns have been successful in several states around the country. Although there is still some debate about the legality of opting-out in MA, advocates believe that families have the right to opt their student out of testing if these students still attend school.

privatization: Privatization is the process by which publicly-owned and administered properties (schools, public transit, etc.) are transferred to private ownership and administration. Critics argue privatization is anti-democratic and reduces the public's unfettered access to institutions once considered universal. For many teacher unionists, the rise of charter schools, the increasing reliance on corporate-style accountability measures, and the influence of for-profit publishing companies signal a move towards the privatization of our public school system.

progressive taxation: Also known as a progressive tax. With progressive taxation, the tax rate increases as the amount of taxable income increases. Essentially, top-income earners are taxed on a larger percentage of their wages. Advocates believe progressive taxation would dramatically increase funding for public institutions and government programs.

RETELL: A 2011 US Department of Justice investigation declared that Massachusetts Public Schools failed to provide equitable education opportunities for English Language Learners (ELLs). As a result, DESE adopted the Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners initiative that requires all educators must receive a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) endorsement in order to renew their license. Critics of the RETELL initiative argue the coursework is too often laborious or disorganized. Even worse, districts have not been able to accommodate demand for the course and some educators risk losing their licensure simply because they cannot enroll in a SEI course.

Robert's Rules of Order: A system of parliamentary procedure used by many organizations to run their meetings. Most unions, including the MTA and its local affiliates, use Robert's Rules to run their delegate assemblies. Robert's Rules offers a clear, organized method for managing discussion and decision-making but it can be confusing for people unfamiliar with the procedures. The MTA should provide you with a short introduction to Robert's Rules in your registration materials. Alternatively, this online "cheat sheet" is quite helpful: [goo.gl/ub4y8]

Stand for Children or **STAND:** Sometimes referred to

as "Stand ON Children" by its critics, STAND is an organization that advocates for expanding charters schools, using standardized testing to measure teacher impact on student learning, and limiting the bargaining power of teacher unions. In 2011, STAND began organizing a statewide ballot initiative that called for more stringent evaluation criteria and the weakening of teacher tenure laws. At the 2012 MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates, in what is surely one of the most heated debates in recent memory, the floor narrowly approved a measure that authorized the then MTA leadership to work out a compromise measure with STAND.

TS-Gold (Teaching Strategies GOLD): TS-Gold is a standardized test aligned with Common Core standards geared towards preschool and kindergarten age students. In Massachusetts, it the main assessment tool for MKEA (Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment). Educators evaluate their students on a number of social-emotional and academic measures. Critics have pointed out that the system simply replicates the kinds of assessments early education teachers already do, ultimately wasting time. Many also fear that TS-Gold introduces a culture of rigid, data-driven assessment at an inappropriately early age.

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Educators for a **D**emocratic **U**nion: *Principles*



We offer the following principles for public education in our Commonwealth, and principles for how our union will be most effective in achieving our goals:

- 1) We believe first and foremost in public education – education for all, paid through fair taxation, and democratically controlled. We will build a union that fights for high-quality public education by reaffirming the commitment to democracy and the public good as the foundational purpose of public education.
- 2) Schools can only succeed with well-supported and experienced educators and support staff. In order to attract and retain quality teachers and staff, our society needs to pay them well, provide job security, and above all honor and respect those who are dedicating their lives to helping students learn and develop. We will build a union dedicated to supporting all in the education workplace and fighting back when they are under attack.
- 3) An experienced teacher in a small classroom with engaging curriculum is actually the second most important factor affecting a child's ability to learn. Family and community poverty is even more important. We will build a union that sees fighting for economic justice – good jobs, progressive taxes, and aggressive social and economic investment in the poorest communities – as an essential part of fighting for quality public education for all.
- 4) We reject the focus on rote learning and high-stakes testing fed to us by both political parties, which is harmful to the education of our children. We will build a union that will stand firmly against the testing mania because we, as public educators and support staff, know it is bad for our students and our future.
- 5) Our nation has turned its back on one of the great crusades of the past half-century: ending segregation and inequality in our schools and ensuring that all public schools have equal resources. We will build a union that will reengage in civil rights struggles to end racism and discrimination, which is an essential condition for achieving quality public education.
- 6) Public education is free from kindergarten through high school. If 12th grade is free, why does it cost up to twelve thousand a year to attend **public** higher education the next year? We will build a union that ignores the naysayers and insists that free higher education is the natural next step in a two-centuries expansion of access to education.
- 7) The rise of a plutocracy and the decline of the working and middle classes over the past generation are a direct result of the decline in the power of unions and the assault on collective bargaining. We will build a union that will not capitulate to enemies, or fair-weather friends who suggest that the way toward a better society is through the weakening of the rights of working people.
- 8) Our union needs to be open, transparent, democratic, and participatory. Ordinary members should understand and debate the issues, then be involved in decision making. We will build a union that starts anew to build the confidence of the members, so that they are involved in shaping a long-range, activist vision for the MTA, a vision that reconnects the public sector with the public good.
- 9) When the MTA backs off our principles without a fight, that only leads our opponents to come back at us with a new demand for concessions. For too long we have been playing defense, always responding to the latest assault on our integrity, our budgets, or our benefits. We will build an MTA that will take a stand, put forward our vision for public education, involve the membership, and be willing to fight on principle in order to win the war for public education rather than negotiate a slow retreat.