



AFT MASSACHUSETTS 2020 CONVENTION PROGRAM



SATURDAY, MAY 2, 2020

**LET'S KEEP WINNING: ADVANCING EDUCATIONAL AND
WORKPLACE JUSTICE THROUGH UNION ACTIVISM**

2020 Convention Program Table of Contents



Navigating the AFT Massachusetts 2020 Convention Program

Click on any Table of Contents page number to go that story.

Click on any URL to go to that web page or any email address to send an email.

▶ Indicates story continues, click to go to next page.

◆ Indicates end of story.

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|
| 1 | Get Ready for the 2020 AFT Massachusetts Convention! | 21 | We Care. We Fight. We Show Up. Why? How? |
| 2 | 2020 AFT Massachusetts Convention Report from President Beth Kontos. | 22 | “A Nurse In Every School”: New Boston Union Contract Wins Increased Resources. |
| 8 | 2020 AFT Massachusetts Secretary-Treasurer’s Report from Brant Duncan. | 25 | Lynn Educators Working Together for a Successful Contract Negotiation. |
| 10 | 2020 AFT Massachusetts Distinguished Service Award Recipients. | 27 | Amesbury Educators’ Political Engagement Leads to Victory. |
| 11 | 2020 AFT Massachusetts Scholarship Recipients. | 30 | Paras Bring Free Books and Joy to Springfield Kindergartners. |
| 12 | Victory for Equity! Historic School Funding Bill Signed into Law. | 33 | “Unafraid Educators” Are Welcoming Undocumented and Immigrant Students. |
| 15 | May 16, 2020 Fund our Future Rally | 37 | BPL Professional Staff Association Joins AFT MA and MA Library Staff Association. |
| 16 | AFT Massachusetts Member Organizers Are Building Union Power Locally. | 38 | Our Members Make AFT Massachusetts Strong! |
| 19 | AFT Members Bringing Pro-Public Education Agenda to Local Elected Office. | 39 | AFT Massachusetts Executive Board and Staff |

Get Ready for the 2020 AFT Massachusetts Convention!

When we launched the Fund Our Future campaign, we were told we were asking for too much, and that we would never win the resources our students needed in the classrooms. But we stuck together, we organized, and we advocated, and we won a historic \$1.5 billion funding commitment that prioritizes low-income communities that were being harmed by the old, inequitable system.

As an AFT Massachusetts member, you know that we have more power when we join together through our union. We're most effective when we tap into our most enduring source of power: our collective engagement and activism as educators, finding common cause with parents, students, and community.

Our solidarity is our strength, and nobody can take that away from us. From the Fund Our Future campaign and our work with the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance, to growing political engagement in last year's local elections and successful contract fights across the state, we're growing our membership engagement, working with parents and students in our



communities, and winning victories for our schools and students.

In 2020, we're working to pass the Cherish Act and restore funding to our public colleges and universities, ensure effective and equitable implementation of the Student Opportunity Act, and secure a living wage for paraprofessionals. We're working to increase student access to educational opportunities and supports including social-emotional learning,

gain more voice and decision-making power for AFT members in the workplace, and grow our internal organizing and power-building campaigns.

As we continue this critical work, get ready to join us for the 2020 AFT Massachusetts Convention! On Saturday, May 2, we'll hear from labor leaders and elected officials, present Distinguished Service Awards and scholarships, and further develop our collective strength as educators and organizers.

Join your fellow educators and AFT Massachusetts members in celebrating our success and organizing for our future. ♦

Solidarity and Mutual Care Produced Our 2019 Wins. That Same Spirit Will Get Us Through the Crisis of 2020



*May 2020 Convention Report from
AFT MA President Beth Kontos*

Many of us know the famous opening line from Charles Dickens' classic novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." It's a fitting sentiment as we review the last year, take stock of where we are now, and look ahead to the challenges before us.

Since our convention last year, our union and our movement produced some of the greatest political and educational victories of our lifetimes. These victories were exemplified by the passage last November of the historic school funding bill, the Student Opportunity Act.

And, then, in the blink of an eye, our world changed — tragically and with far-reaching and yet-to-be-understood consequences. By mid-March, we were living in a world that was unimaginable just one month earlier — schools closed; our students, their families, and our co-workers at risk of getting sick or suffering hardships; an uncertain public health, economic, and educational landscape before us.

How do we, as a union, navigate all of this?

First and foremost, I want to express my concern for all of you and those you care about, including your students and their families. We need to look after ourselves and each other by attending to our basic needs, including our physical and mental health. That should always be our number-one priority.

Second, I want to stress that we will get through this. There will be loss and there will be pain. And we will grieve and mourn individually and as a union family. But we will get through this by doing what we've always done — pulling together in solidarity and relying on each other for ▶

May 2020 Convention Report from AFT MA President Beth Kontos

comfort, support, and strength. And we will once again muster the resolve to create the schools, colleges, libraries, and communities that all of us deserve.

Reflecting on the Good

Before looking ahead to our challenges, it is important to reflect on our work in 2019, which was a truly remarkable year for our union. **When We Fight, We Win** — that was our guiding mantra in 2019. It was rooted in the belief that collective action leads to good outcomes for students, educators, and working families. And that mindset carried us to many victories at both the state and local levels.

At the state level, thousands of educators from cities and towns across Massachusetts descended on the State House last May, demanding that legislators **“Fund our Future”** and make a once-in-a-generation investment in K-12 public education. It took thousands more phone calls and in-person meetings — and some skilled advocacy by AFT MA staff and our coalition allies — but eventually lawmakers ceded to our demands by passing

“When We Fight, We Win — that was our guiding mantra in 2019. It was rooted in the belief that collective action leads to good outcomes for students, educators, and working families. And that mindset carried us to many victories at both the state and local levels.”



the historic **Student Opportunity Act (SOA)** in November 2019.

The final signed law makes an extraordinary investment in K-12 public education. Once fully phased in over seven years, SOA will deliver **\$1.5 billion in additional annual state aid to local public schools**, with the bulk of those

resources rightfully going to the neediest schools and students. SOA addresses all of the major recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission, the bipartisan group that five years ago studied and suggested fixes to the state’s funding formula: more resources for educating students who have disabilities, are English learners, and/or are from low-income families; and adequately funding the rising cost of health insurance for staff and retirees.

Next school year is slated to be the first year of SOA implementation and funding. While it’s unclear at this time how the Covid-19 crisis may affect available revenue and funding for SOA, one thing is certain: AFT MA and our allies will lead the fight to keep our funding promise to students, leveraging both federal and state funds. This is not the time for austerity; during and after the crisis, our students — especially our most vulnerable students — will need these investments more than ever.

The SOA bill wasn’t the only victory in 2019. Our political, member, and community engagement efforts reaped rewards in communities across ►

Solidarity and Mutual Care Produced Our 2019 Wins. That Same Spirit Will Get Us Through the Crisis of 2020

the state. The victories are too numerous to count, but the examples below give a flavor of the many successes we enjoyed last year:

- ★ Working with labor and coalition allies, the **Amesbury Federation of Teachers** mounted an unprecedented grassroots political action campaign featuring the message “Public Services = Public Good” and highlighting the contributions of educators and public employees to the community. The mobilization efforts helped secure a strong four-year contract and resulted in the election of a pro-public education mayor and school committee. Amesbury members look forward to ramping up their political action even more in the years ahead.
- ★ Working in coalition with the AFL-CIO and other labor and community allies, the **Chelsea Teachers Union** helped lead a successful effort to strengthen health insurance coverage for active members, retirees, and other city employees. The CTU also increased its political action efforts, resulting in the election of pro-public education school committee members.



- ★ **The Lynn Teachers Union** ran a successful contract campaign, engaging members to demand “RESPECT” from city officials. More than a thousand members wore RESPECT stickers during the district’s first staff training on September 3, also the day of a critical bargaining session. After work, members showed up to support the LTU bargaining team and deliver a clear message to city officials: “Thanks for the praise, we need a raise!” The show of solidarity worked, resulting in a strong contract that increased both salaries and student supports.

- ★ **The Salem Teachers Union** launched its inventive “bargaining for the common good” campaign last summer, using the fall to engage educators, parents, and community members in dialogue around what Salem students need and deserve — a process that built tremendous solidarity among and between educators and families. Based on this dialogue, the STU-crafted contract proposals organized into four areas: The Staff Our Students Deserve, the Health Our Students Deserve, the Leadership Our Students Deserve, and the Schools Our Students Deserve. The STU presented these proposals to Management in an attractive booklet that also featured photos of members and petition signatures. Virtual negotiations have begun, and membership solidarity remains stronger than ever.
- ★ AFT MA continued its successful member engagement efforts through **benefits forums** and **debt clinics** held across the state. The benefits forums, coordinated by Secretary-Treasurer Brant Duncan, allow members to learn about the many “extras” (insurance discounts, etc.) that come with membership. Members can ►

May 2020 Convention Report from AFT MA President Beth Kontos

also ask questions about retirement, union operations, and other issues, all while forging new connections and relationships. That same union-building dynamic was on display at AFT MA-sponsored debt clinics, many of which I led or participated in. At these clinics, members learn new strategies and tips for managing their student loans while also realizing that student loan debt is not a burden they carry alone.

- ★ AFT MA continued its community engagement efforts through the spectacular **First Book program**, which delivers high-quality and age-appropriate books to students who often lack reading material in their homes. Boston, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, and Springfield all held successful First Book events, building on their previous efforts. The Chelsea Teachers Union held its inaugural First Book event in December, delivering 45,000 books to the children of Chelsea, pre-K to high school — all made possible through the hard work of CTU volunteers. Beaming with pride, one veteran CTU member spoke for many in saying: “This was the best thing our union has ever done for the boys and girls of Chelsea!”

“We also immediately mobilized to attend to the basic needs of our students — shelter, food, mental and emotional wellness, and Internet access so students could remain connected to their teachers, counselors, school nurses, paraprofessionals, and peers.”



We were also proud to grow our membership last year, thanks to successful organizing drives at the **Boston Public Library, the Greenfield Virtual School, and the Salem Public Library**. We are thrilled to welcome these dedicated public employees into the AFT MA family. We are a stronger union as a result.

Rising to the Covid-19 Challenge

Today, we find ourselves amid a challenge that none of us could have imagined at the start of 2020. This insidious virus can strike suddenly and tragically, and it is causing great economic hardship and mental distress for so many of us and the people we love.

As always, we are doing our best as educators and public employees to rise to the challenge. We advocated for the closure of schools and libraries to protect our students, their families, and members of the community. The state listened, and libraries remain closed and schools are closed through at least June.

We also immediately mobilized to attend to the basic needs of our students — shelter, food, mental and emotional wellness, and Internet access so students could remain connected to their teachers, counselors, school nurses, paraprofessionals, and peers.

The actions of the **Boston Teachers Union** are just one example of how our locals responded to the ►

Solidarity and Mutual Care Produced Our 2019 Wins. That Same Spirit Will Get Us Through the Crisis of 2020

crisis. Within days of the closure, hundreds of BTU members signed up to form the BTU Volunteer Corps, putting an army of school staff on the streets to distribute resources door-to-door while doing everything possible to maintain social distancing and public safety. The BTU acted quickly to ensure Chromebooks, Internet hot spots, and free meals were distributed widely to students, reaching students in their homes and in homeless shelters. The BTU is also working with the city to conduct needs assessments and to ensure those assessment surveys are available in nearly a dozen languages.

After attending to our students' basic needs, we turned our attention to academics — figuring out on the fly how to facilitate meaningful learning remotely. Within the first two weeks of the closures, AFT MA worked closely with the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) to craft remote learning principles, and we shared these principles with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to inform **common-sense remote learning guidance**. On March 26, DESE issued guidance to school districts that reflected our core values, including prioritizing the mental and emotional



wellness of students, making equity a top consideration, and employing a definition of remote learning that goes well beyond screen time to encompass creative project-based learning.

Using that state template, our local leaders, field reps, and attorneys went to work to negotiate **remote learning agreements** that facilitate productive learning while respecting the rights, autonomy, and professionalism of educators. I am so proud of the work conducted by AFT MA staff

during this crisis and how everybody has stepped up to do their part, often amid trying personal circumstances. I've said it before, and I'll say it again: We have the best union staff in the state!

And our collective union work will continue, recognizing it could be a while before we return to any sense of normalcy. Over the next several months, some of our priorities will include the following:

★ **Fighting for the necessary federal and state funding to support our schools, colleges, libraries, and students.**

Given the social and economic impacts of this crisis, the needs of students and families will be greater than ever. This is not the time to revert to an austerity mindset. We will push to use the federal stimulus funds and the money promised through SOA to keep students whole and to advance their social-emotional wellness and academic learning. We will continue to support our libraries as essential community hubs. And we will continue the fight to increase access to and affordability for higher education.

★ **Advocating for our most vulnerable students who are most at risk of falling behind during** ▶

May 2020 Convention Report from AFT MA President Beth Kontos

the crisis. These include students with disabilities, English learners, students living in unstable ▶ home environments, and those lacking basic technology to access remote learning opportunities. When schools re-open, all students will need some remediation to catch up, with our most vulnerable students needing the most help. This crisis has exposed deep inequities along racial and class lines, and these inequities will only worsen if we don't proactively address them during and after the school closures.

★ Strengthening economic security and providing debt relief for working people.

This crisis has also exposed how many essential workers live paycheck to paycheck, on the edge of economic hardship and even financial ruin. We need to ensure all that working people — whether grocery store clerks or trash collectors or janitors — earn a living wage and have basic healthcare and sick leave security. Likewise, training for an essential public service job, be it teaching or nursing, should not result in a lifetime of debt. We need serious debt relief that students and workers can count on today.

“I want to close by expressing how grateful I am to be the president of this wonderful, amazing organization. I continue to be inspired and humbled by the unsung acts of heroism displayed every day by all of you.”



This is also a good time to give a shout-out to our heroic healthcare workers, our sisters and brothers across the state. They are risking their own lives to save others; our appreciation is immense.

Finally, I want to close by expressing how grateful I am to be the president of this wonderful, amazing organization. I continue to be inspired and humbled by the unsung acts of heroism displayed every day by all of you. In the face of unfathomable

hardship, you remain committed to our students, families, and communities, always going that extra mile to make life easier, better, and more hopeful for others. Please know that your sacrifice and devotion have purpose, and please know how committed I am to always having your back and maintaining your trust.

It has certainly been a whirlwind two years since my first election, starting with our remarkable response to the Janus challenge, shifting to the fight for equitable funding which resulted in SOA, and now confronting the unprecedented Covid-19 crisis with its agonizing public health, economic, and educational impacts. But I remain confident that we'll get through this because I've seen how effective we can be when we all pull together and work with families and communities for the common good. We will take care of each other and our loved ones, and we will learn from this crisis, applying its lessons to make our world a better place. That is our mission as educators, public employees, and unionists. Together, our work goes on.

In solidarity,

Beth Kontos

As We Prepare to Face The Challenging Times That Lie Ahead, the State of Our Union's Finances is Strong.



2020 AFT MA Secretary-Treasurer's Report from Brant Duncan

Since last year's AFT Massachusetts Convention, we've achieved major victories as a union. From the Fund Our Future campaign that won a historic \$1.5 billion school funding commitment at the state level, to growing political engagement in last year's local elections and successful contract fights across the state, we've moved the ball forward for our students, our communities, and each other.

As we meet remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we also face immense challenges brought on by the virus, from managing the abrupt shift to remote learning while ensuring our students have food to eat, to advocating for our budget priorities amid plummeting state revenues. This pandemic has changed our work immensely, and it's clear that the effects — on our students and our entire communities — will be felt long after our schools reopen. We also know that anti-worker organizations will use this disaster as another opportunity to privatize public schools, demonize unions, and attack our rights.

We won the past year's victories while continuing to strengthen our locals and AFT Massachusetts through collective organizing and engagement, and we're prepared to face the challenging times that lie ahead. As we enter an unpredictable year, I'm pleased to report that the state of our union's finances is strong.

As your AFT Massachusetts Secretary-Treasurer, it's my job to make sure that our union's resources are used strategically, and I work closely with President Beth Kontos and our Executive Board to appropriate funds. My work is guided by a commitment to maintaining the quality services provided by the AFT Massachusetts staff to members and their communities. ►

2020 AFT Massachusetts Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Nearly two years after the U.S. Supreme Court's anti-worker decision in the Janus case, which talk-show pundits and anti-worker lobbyists said would be the end of organized labor, our membership level remains at more than 95% of its peak. We've been able to maintain this high membership level by proactively organizing and communicating the value of collective action and the fact that we can accomplish together what we cannot accomplish alone.

The bulk of our AFT Massachusetts budget supports our expert and diligent professional staff, who provide excellent legal and field support to our locals, from assisting with contract fights to supporting local organizing campaigns. We also support special projects, campaigns and organizations that advance the interests of our students and schools, including Citizens for Public Schools, Jobs with Justice, the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance, MassAlliance, the NAACP, and the AFT Member Organizing Institute.

Finally, a major priority is the ongoing Fund Our Future campaign, which won passage of

“We've been able to maintain this high membership level by proactively organizing and communicating the value of collective action and the fact that we can accomplish together what we cannot accomplish alone.”

Brant Duncan, AFT Massachusetts Secretary-Treasurer



the Student Opportunity Act to fund public K-12 schools and is now working to pass the Cherish Act to fund public colleges and universities. The AFT Massachusetts Executive Board has authorized the use of up to \$400,000 to support this critical school funding campaign.

I know how important member engagement is, and I spend a lot of time in the field with our

members and partner organizations. I provide regular training and support to AFT locals on managing member data, financial management and communications. I also coordinate member benefits workshops to educate our members about the many benefits available to them as union members, and work closely with AFT partner First Book to provide books to locals to support member engagement and literacy.

As a past president of the Lynn Teachers Union, I strongly believe that the labor movement is the best vehicle to advance our rights in the workplace and improve our entire educational system. In my roles as Vice President of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO and an executive board member of the North Shore Labor Council, I see every day how working people win when we stand together and organize our workplaces and our communities.

I know that strong AFT locals rooted in engagement and organizing are key to building strong communities, and I look forward to working with you to keep building our strength as a union, and winning victories in our workplaces, at the State House, and in our communities. ♦

Congratulations to Our AFT Massachusetts 2020 Distinguished Service Award Recipients



The AFT Massachusetts Distinguished Service Awards are present annually to AFT Massachusetts members who have demonstrated an outstanding level of service and dedication to their local union

Educators in the K-12 System Award

Nancy Chakarian – United Teachers of Lowell

Nicole Reminder – North Attleboro Federation of Teachers

Municipal Librarian

Daniel Haacker – Massachusetts Library Staff Association

School Related Personnel Award

Deborah Murphy – AFT Amesbury

Fay Borgatti – Springfield Federation of Paraprofessionals

Retired Member Award

Garret Virchick – Boston Teachers Union

Member 35 or Younger Award

Katharine Visci – Salem Teachers Union

Chantei Alves – Boston Teachers Union

Congratulations to Our Massachusetts AFL-CIO 2020 Labor Scholarship Award Recipients



Kathleen A. Kelley Scholarship Award

Tyler Nolan

Chelmsford High School

Albert Shanker Scholarship Award

Matthew Lyons

Framingham High School

Kian McCabe

Saugus High School

Mary McCloskey

Littleton High School

Aine Powers

Holliston High School

Louisa Sullivan

Braintree High School

Sandra Feldman Scholarship Award

Riley Birchall

North Andover High School

Andrew Wallace

Bishop Fenwick High School

Jay Porter Scholarship Award

Kyle McGinnis

Foxboro High School

All recipients will receive a \$1,500.00 scholarship award. Winners were selected based on their score on the Massachusetts AFL-CIO annual labor examination and must have a parent or guardian who is a dues paying member from one of our AFT Massachusetts locals.

Victory for Equity! Historic Public School Funding Bill Signed into Law.



Signed law makes an extraordinary, once-in-a-generation investment in K-12 public education.

Tens of thousands of public-school advocates across Massachusetts let out a collective cheer after Governor Charlie Baker signed the landmark Student Opportunity Act (SOA) into law at a signing ceremony at English High School in Boston on November 26. The new law commits the state to achieving equitably funded public schools over a seven-year span, promising billions in additional state aid over that period.

“Today is a day to rejoice and celebrate,” said **AFT Massachusetts President Beth Kontos**, who attended the signing ceremony. “The strength of this new law is a testament to the tens of thousands of AFT members, parents, and activists who poured their hearts and souls into this multi-year struggle for equitably-funded public schools. Make no mistake: Our hard work and dedication paid off. The Legislature and governor heard our voices and saw our determination. Consequently, we won a great victory for students, educators, and parents.”

Funding changes

The final signed law makes an extraordinary, once-in-a-generation investment in K-12 public education. Once fully phased in, it will deliver \$1.5 billion in additional annual state aid to local public schools, with the bulk of those resources going to the neediest schools and students. Many schools and communities will begin to see the benefits of the law as soon as the next school year, the first year of implementation.

The biggest driver of the funding increases are changes made by the law to the state’s antiquated foundation budget formula, which determines how much state school aid — or “Chapter 70 aid” — local communities need to provide students with an adequate education. The law’s changes ►

Victory for Equity! Historic School Funding Bill Signed into Law.

address all four major recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission, the bipartisan group that studied the funding formula four years ago: more resources for educating students who have disabilities, are English learners, and/or are from low-income families; and adequately funding the rising cost of health insurance for staff and retirees.

The funding formula changes are expected to generate an increase of \$1.4 billion annually in Chapter 70 aid to local schools once the law is fully phased in. By design, and as a result of the advocacy of AFT Massachusetts and coalition allies, low-wealth communities serving high numbers of low-income students will receive the most money under the updated formula.

In addition to dramatically increasing Chapter 70 aid, the SOA:

- ★ Expands the special education circuit breaker program, which reimburses districts for extraordinary special education costs, to include transportation costs in addition to instructional costs, phased in over four years at an estimated annual cost of \$90 million.



- ★ Fully funds charter tuition reimbursements, which provide transitional aid to help districts when students leave to attend charter schools, within a three-year timetable.
- ★ Increases the annual spending cap for Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) projects by \$200 million to \$800 million.

The version of the SOA signed by Baker into law is identical to the one passed by the Legislature on November 20. That was a compromise bill that emerged from a House-Senate conference committee charged with ironing out modest policy differences between the version of SOA passed by the Senate on October 3 and the version passed by the House on October 23.

New law requires district plans

The final law requires districts to develop three-year plans outlining how new funds will be spent to address educational disparities. The plans are to be developed by the superintendent, who must consider input and recommendations from parents, educators in the district, and other relevant community stakeholders. The plans must then be viewed ►

Victory for Equity! Historic School Funding Bill Signed into Law.

by the state commissioner of education, who can require districts to amend any plans “deemed not to conform with the requirements” in the bill that spell out what the plans must include.

“We were happy to see that the bill requires district plans to consider input from parents and educators — something we fought for,” said Kontos. “On the state review piece, it’s a satisfactory compromise when you consider the totality of the bill. Still, we will need to remain vigilant and engaged during implementation to ensure that parent and educator voices are respected, and to make sure that new funds are spent on the correct priorities — direct supports and services for students.”

Overall, public-school advocates across the state, including AFT MA’s coalition allies, are thrilled that everybody’s hard work over the last three years has resulted in such a strong final law. Upon enactment of the SOA, Massachusetts will likely have the most progressive school funding system in the nation, building on its national reputation as a trailblazer for equity in public education. That’s because the bill directs the lion’s share of resources

“The strength of this new law is a testament to the tens of thousands of AFT members, parents, and activists who poured their hearts and souls into this multi-year struggle for equitably-funded public schools.”

Beth Kontos,
AFT Massachusetts President



to communities with the highest concentrations of low-income students.

“The Student Opportunity Act will deliver increased state funding to every district, but the greatest increases, rightfully, will go to low-income districts whose students have the greatest needs,” said Kontos. “That means that students of all backgrounds will finally be able to enjoy the benefits — everything from smaller classes and additional counselors to up-to-date classroom supplies and more art, music, and enrichment — that their peers in wealthier districts take for granted. It’s a true game-changer for low-income students and their communities.”

The final conference-committee bill passed unanimously by the House and Senate on November 20 and signed into law by the governor on November 26 can be found at the Legislature’s website: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S2412>.

AFT Massachusetts will provide much more information about the new law and what it means for local communities in the weeks and months ahead. ♦

**Fund Our
Future Rally
May 16
2020**



AFT Massachusetts Member Organizers Are Building Union Power Locally.



Improving the operational capacity of our locals and empowering our members to be activists.

Member engagement is the core of what we do as a union. It's how we build the power we need to win contract, legislative and other advocacy campaigns. One of AFT Massachusetts' top priorities is building power in our locals and our communities by improving the operational capacity of our locals and empowering our members to be activists.

One important way we do that is through the AFT Member Organizing Institute. A jointly funded program of the AFT, AFT Massachusetts, and local unions, now in its second year, the AFT Member Organizing Institute capitalizes on one of our most valuable resources — our members — to help build union power and activism.

“Our member organizing institute for this wave has had a record number of participants at 13 and we continue to applaud the vital work being done in our locals to build capacity, identify emerging leaders and of course, continue to internally organize our rank and file members,” said **Brian LaPierre, AFT Massachusetts Director of Organization**. “They are doing spectacular work in our communities that supports a progressive, grassroots movement to win the battle of properly funding our schools so that all of our students have the tools they need to be successful.”

Advancing important issues

Through the program, union members are trained and work as part-time member organizers, under the direction of local presidents, to help increase capacity in their local unions and advance issues important to the local school community. Initial and ongoing training and support is provided to participants by AFT national. After training, member organizers are ►

AFT Massachusetts Member Organizers Are Building Union Power Locally

paid to work 10 hours a week (40 hours monthly). This work is to be performed during non-work hours, such as during weekends and evenings. All Member Organizing Institute work is aside from normal work duties.

“In Amesbury we have been working on engaging more members in contract negotiations and signing four therapists that we were previously unaware were eligible to join AFT,” said **AFT Amesbury member organizer Laurie Williams**, who participated in the first year of the AFT Member Organizing Institute.

“We are increasing our interactions with members by holding regular 10-minute meetings in each building, utilizing our Facebook page and holding spring and fall mixers, including September’s New Member Greeting and Solidarity Mixer. I have also been meeting with more members one on one.”

Supporting engagement efforts

“The member organizer program has lifted a load off my shoulders and has allowed me to focus on other important parts of my job as President. It



has invigorated our Executive Board and membership!” said **AFT Amesbury President Cindy Yetman**. “It has increased the visibility, notability, accountability and professionalism of our union. I never want to be without this position now!”

The AFT Member Organizing Institute is designed to support our union’s member engagement efforts through one-on-one conversations with members, leadership identification and development, and increased member activism. Member organizers conduct small-group meetings, home visits and one-on-one conversations in other locations; listen to and talk with workers; make assessments; identify social networks and leaders; and move workers to action.

“Nothing beats a union member’s ability to draw from personal work and union experience to engage and activate potential members,” said **AFT Massachusetts President Beth Kontos**. “In order to win the schools our students deserve and the working conditions we need to help them succeed, we must foster a culture of organizing, member engagement and accountability in our locals. The AFT Member Organizing Institute has been a terrific success in helping to focus our local organizing and member engagement efforts.”

Applauding the program

Local union activists in Lawrence and Billerica, which both participated in the first year of the AFT Member Organizing Institute, applauded the program.

“There’s no stopping Lawrence Teachers’ Union, Local 1019 in 2019! As member organizers, we continue to have one-to-one conversations with our members and track our data. Our ask is to attend 10-minute meetings in their building and attend the monthly union meetings, as well as completing a membership form if they haven’t ▶

AFT Massachusetts Member Organizers Are Building Union Power Locally

already,” said **Lawrence Teachers Union member organizers Kim Barry and Lori Burnham**. “The great news is that we have seen new faces each month at our union meetings! Several members wore ‘Red for Ed’ in support of our brothers and sisters in LA!”

“As we transition from wave 2 to wave 3 of the Member Organizing Institute, we are having conversations with members who are asking, ‘What can I do to get more involved?’ Our plan is to continue throwing pebbles into our ‘pond’ and see the ripples move throughout our local,” said **Lawrence Teachers Union President Frank McLaughlin**. “Membership engagement is essential to a union that wants to thrive, not just survive. We organize because the strength of the union is each individual member, and the strength of each member is the union.”

Developing political power

“Local elections are showing to be an exciting time to get more involved the federation and my local,” said **Billerica Federation of Teachers member organizer Jen Cedrone**. “I hope to

encourage more members to join me in becoming involved with our local government!”

“We appreciate the opportunity that AFT and AFT MA gave us to develop our union through the Member Organizer institute. Right now, we are focused on developing political power in town, by getting more teachers elected to town meeting, and by engaging our members in the school board election,” said **Billerica Federation of Teachers President Dave Adams**.

“We hope that we can develop this role of organizer into a permanent position within the BFT, because we also understand that developing power and relationships in the community is a process that requires an extended commitment. We think this program is a great way to jump start this type of engagement.” ♦

To learn more about how your Local can participate in the AFT Member Organizing Institute, please contact Brian LaPierre, AFT Massachusetts Director of Organization, at blapierre@aftma.net

“We appreciate the opportunity that AFT and AFT MA gave us to develop our union through the Member Organizer institute. Right now, we are focused on developing political power in town, by getting more teachers elected to town meeting, and by engaging our members in the school board election”

**Dave Adams,
Billerica Federation
of Teachers President**



AFT Members Bringing Pro-Public Education Agenda to Local Elected Office.



Active in dozens of local electoral campaigns this fall: knocking doors, holding signs, calling voters.

This November saw local elections for School Committee and City Council all across Massachusetts. As local communities prepare to receive millions of dollars in new state funding from the Student Opportunity Act, educators and their parent, student, and community allies are working to ensure that local officials are committed to spending that money in the classroom to support students' needs. AFT Massachusetts members were active in dozens of local electoral campaigns this fall: knocking doors, holding signs, calling voters, and casting their ballots to support pro-public education candidates.

Several of those candidates happen to be AFT Massachusetts members themselves.

Providing oversight

Andrew Lipsett, a history teacher at Billerica Memorial High School and a member of the Billerica Federation of Teachers, was elected to an open seat on the Woburn School Committee in November.

"It's not an exaggeration to say that I might not have won my election had it not been for the support of educators throughout Woburn," he says. "People understood and appreciated the need to have people who had worked in education providing oversight for our schools."

Adam Steiner, a technology integration specialist for the Holliston Public Schools and a member of the Holliston Federation of Teachers, served as a Framingham Town Meeting member for five years. After Framingham residents voted to change their form of government from town to city in 2017, Steiner won a seat on Framingham's first City Council. He was elected to a second term this November. ▶

AFT Members Bringing Pro-Public Education Agenda to Local Elected Office.

“There has been no greater honor in my life than to serve on my hometown of Framingham’s first City Council over the past two years — and I am looking forward to continuing in this role for the next two years,” said Steiner. “The devoted work of my colleagues continues to be a source of inspiration for me in my work on the Council and I can think of no better experience for a role in local government than being a public school teacher.”

A seat at the table

A model for many of the AFT members running for public office is **Brian LaPierre, a member of the Lynn Teachers Union and AFT Massachusetts’ Director of Organization.** Since first being elected in 2015, he has served as an At-Large member of the Lynn City Council. He was most recently reelected in November.

“I enjoy bringing my union experience and labor background to my fellow Council colleagues and my re-election means that I will be able to continue to advocate for our teachers, paraprofessionals, therapists and the broader organized labor community in Lynn,” said LaPierre. “It is critical that union

“It is critical that union members become candidates for public office. It enables us to shape a working families agenda so that union members not only have a voice in collective bargaining, but also an opportunity to shape and enhance public policy.”

Brian LaPierre, Lynn Teachers Union and AFT Massachusetts’ Director of Organization



members become candidates for public office because it allows for a seat at the table. It enables us to shape a working families agenda so that union members not only have a voice in collective bargaining, but also an opportunity to shape and enhance public policy that is going to have a long lasting and positive effect on our membership.”

AFT Massachusetts members who hold public office agree that union members having a voice in public affairs is critically important.

“Central to my motivation to run for public office has been a commitment to public service developed over a 20-year career as a public educator and as a proud union member,” said Steiner, the Framingham City Council member. “I have seen firsthand how a union can support teachers in doing the best they can for student learning and well-being.”

“As teachers, we know that policy doesn’t always take into account the perspectives of those of us who work with students every day, who see both the triumphs and the struggles of modern education, and who truly know what we need from decision makers,” says Lipsett, the newly-elected Woburn School Committee member.

“That’s why we need to use our collective power to make sure our schools are focused on what students and teachers need. That means getting involved in local politics — advocating, voting, and even running.” ♦

We care. We fight. We show up.

WHY



A Union of Professionals

We care, fight and show up for a better life, for our students and our patients, and for our families and our communities. Our union is a vehicle for good jobs, for equitable access to healthcare, for high-quality public education and public services, for racial and social justice, and for democracy.

WE ARE

1.7 M
members strong
in
3,472
union affiliates.

WE LIVE & WORK IN

47
states and
3
territories.



WE ARE nurses, college professors, paraprofessionals, teachers, scientists, police officers, graduate teaching assistants, office employees, doctors, physical therapists, counselors, psychiatrists, nursing assistants, bus drivers, custodians, preschool teachers, child care workers, adjunct faculty, groundskeepers, librarians, technicians, lab assistants and more.

Let's Keep Winning!



From districts large and small, teachers are on the front lines of the education debate and AFT Massachusetts is here to offer information, advice and support so that they can all do their jobs with courage and confidence.



We care. We fight. We show up.

HOW



do we get power?



A Union of Professionals

At the
Bargaining Table



At the
Ballot Box

Nearly 90% of AFT members voted in the 2016 election. Only 55.4% of eligible U.S. voters voted overall.



Through
Member Engagement



With
Issue Expertise



Through
Community Involvement



By
Setting the Narrative



A Union of Professionals



aft.org AFTunion @AFTunion

#IamAFT

“A Nurse In Every School”: New Boston Union Contract Wins Increased Resources for Students.



Brings additional resources into Boston schools to address the varied needs of students.

A new three-year contract negotiated by the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) contains provisions that will improve the compensation and working conditions of educators in Boston, including a 2% raise for educators in each of the three years covered by the contract, and increased compensation to promote equity for some of the district's lowest paid educators. These provisions indirectly benefit students by helping the Boston Public Schools attract and retain qualified educators.

But notably, many of the provisions in the contract directly impact students, bringing additional resources into Boston schools to address the varied needs of students.

“Deep support from members”

The new contract guarantees a full-time nurse in every Boston Public School, 23 new student-facing licensed mental health providers, additional ESL and special education teachers for inclusion classrooms, and a full-time paraprofessional for all K2 classes city-wide, among other provisions. The contract was ratified by each of the BTU's four bargaining units — teachers, paraprofessionals, substitutes, and applied behavioral analysts — in a vote on June 12.

“The overwhelming approval of this contract demonstrates deep support from members of the Boston Teachers Union for the new resources we have won for students,” said **BTU President Jessica Tang**. “It is symbolic of our continued commitment to fight for the schools our students deserve.”

“The BTU's new contract is a great example of the amazing work we can do as educators when we bargain for the common good, winning improvements to our schools that benefit students and educators ▶

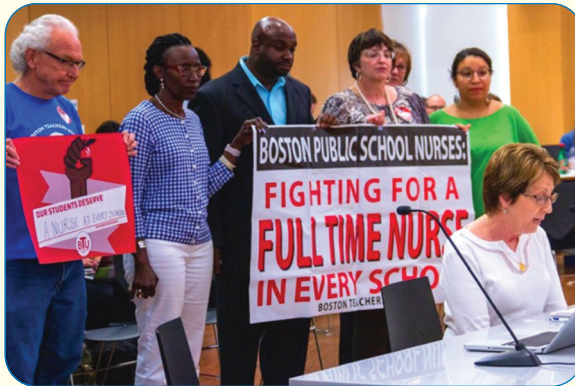
“A Nurse In Every School”: New Boston Union Contract Wins Increased Resources for Students

alike,” said **AFT Massachusetts President Beth Kontos**. “From the Fund Our Future campaign for increased state education funding, to local contract campaigns around the state, AFT members are all in for our students. We’re fighting to give them a great education no matter what challenges they face at home.”

Organizing for years

The BTU’s fight to win additional supports for their students didn’t start with this contract fight. Members have been organizing for years to win student resources like a nurse in every school.

“When an emergency takes place, it can turn into a crisis without a nurse. It’s something we’ve been fighting for a long time,” said **Jonathan Haines, a nurse at the McKinley Middle School and a member of the BTU’s Nurse Faculty Senate**, which helped organize the campaign to win a nurse in every school. “When we started, 44 schools didn’t have a full-time nurse. Our previous contract guaranteed a half-time nurse, and we built on that progress, and kept up the momentum.”



BTU members advocated for a nurse in every school by doing research to demonstrate the benefits to our students, by speaking up at school committee meetings and hearings, and by building strong allies with city councilors, school committee members, and parent and student groups.

“We look at our schools as more than just a building; a school is a community. If you don’t have health-care in your community, that’s a problem,” said Haines. “We’re also dealing with our students’ emotional and mental health concerns, especially in schools without a licensed mental health provider. Working in a therapeutic day school, a lot of my students have been exposed to violence. They have a lot of things working against them, and this shouldn’t be one of them.”

Combating student homelessness

The contract also contains several provisions focused on combating student homelessness and supporting students in poverty, including a \$300,000 investment from the City of Boston for additional support of homeless students, and a new citywide Hub Community Schools Coordinator ▶

“A Nurse In Every School”: New Boston Union Contract Wins Increased Resources for Students

FIGHTING FOR THE CONTRACT & SCHOOLS OUR #STUDENTSDESERVE

WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING FOR?

Through our contract negotiations we are advocating for the teaching and learning conditions that will help our students succeed.

INCLUSION DONE RIGHT

One teacher with multiple licenses cannot meet the needs of all the students in his/her class. Students deserve adequate staffing to meet the needs of students with disabilities now!



A FULL TIME NURSE IN EVERY SCHOOL
Every student deserves a school with a full-time nurse now!

A COUNSELOR IN EVERY SCHOOL

Every school should have a licensed mental health professional, such as a school counselor, psychologist, or social worker. Students deserve counseling and mental health supports now!



MORE HUB COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
Hub community schools offer expanded curriculum, community involvement, and wraparound supports for our most vulnerable students. Let's create the schools our communities deserve now!

LEARN MORE AND
JOIN THE FIGHT AT
[BTU.ORG/STUDENTSDESERVE](https://btu.org/studentsdeserve)
#REDFORED



STUDENT SUPPORT

to support expansion of wrap-around services for students.

“Some of our students are dealing with homelessness, poverty, and trauma, and social emotional learning is an important part of the work we do to support them, says **Lucinda Mills, a pupil adjustment counselor/social worker and member of the BTU’s Social Emotional Learning Committee.**

“Having licensed mental health professionals on hand to support students isn’t a bonus — it’s a fundamental need, especially in high-need districts like Boston. We’re going to continue our advocacy until we win the services that our students need.”

BTU members say they’ll continue to put forward proposals to improve their schools.

“We’re also fighting for a licensed mental health counselor in every school. We didn’t win that in this contract but we’re going to keep fighting for it,” said Haines. “There are a lot of other needs we have in our schools, and we’re going to continue to put the needs of our students and our communities out front. We’re going to continue to fight for justice.” ♦

“The overwhelming approval of this contract demonstrates deep support from members of the Boston Teachers Union for the new resources we have won for students. It is symbolic of our continued commitment to fight for the schools our students deserve.”

**Jessica Tang,
Boston Teachers Union**



Lynn Educators Working Together for a Successful Contract Negotiation.



Contract includes increased 'step increase' pay for new teachers and higher pay for substitutes.

A new contract for Lynn educators includes a two-percent across-the-board raise, additional preparation time for elementary school teachers, increased 'step increase' pay for new teachers, and higher pay for substitutes. Contract negotiations formally began last October, but the union's work to prepare for a successful contract negotiation began far before that.

In June 2018, the Lynn Teachers Union bargaining committee began working to research and develop proposals for the good of educators, students, and community members. A joint team from the union's three units — teachers, paraprofessionals, and therapists — worked together to create a survey for all members of the Lynn Teachers Union.

Over the summer, the bargaining committee gathered and analyzed the data from members and began to focus in on the greatest identified needs. At the first bargaining meetings in October and November 2018, the teachers' negotiating team submitted 36 proposals to the Lynn School Committee.

"We were patient and cooperative"

"The negotiations process was handled in a collaborative manner with an open format for discussions, questions, and answers," said **Sheila O'Neil, President of the Lynn Teachers Union, Local 1037**. "The process allowed for joint sub-committees to work on proposals from both sides in a collaborative manner. From October to April the process was respectful and open minded on both sides of the table."

But in April, bargaining for the contract came to screeching halt due to healthcare negotiations with the City of Lynn. Contract talks were delayed until June, and even then the union was met with opposition regarding ►

Lynn Educators Working Together for a Successful Contract Negotiation.

compensation from the City. The Lynn School Committee had been instructed to delay compensation bargaining until after July 1, and canceled scheduled bargaining sessions for July 8 and July 30.

“We were patient and cooperative throughout those delays, but our patience was running low by the time of our August 13 negotiation session,” said O’Neil. “During the bargaining session our frustration boiled over when we weren’t able to come to an agreement. That night became a union planning session and on August 14 we went into action!”

The bargaining committee reached out to Lynn Teachers Union members and asked them to send emails to members of the Lynn School Committee and the Mayor to demand they bargain in good faith. Educators called for an offer that respected educators, enabled the Lynn Public Schools to recruit and retain high-quality teachers, and valued the work educators do for the students of Lynn. With new education aid coming from the state, they asked the school committee and city to put that funding where it’s needed most: to the staff who serve the students.



Voices heard loud and clear

Hundreds of emails were sent and that action resulted in an emergency executive session of the Lynn School Committee bargaining committee. Unfortunately a more palatable offer from the school committee team did not come out of that session.

However, the next scheduled bargaining session was set for September 3. The Lynn Teachers Union prepared for the first staff development day, that same day, with “RESPECT” stickers and a rally that evening prior to bargaining. Over a thousand

employees wore stickers to a citywide development day, and union members and community allies showed up at the rally to support the bargaining committee, chanting “Thanks for the praise, we need a raise!” Their voices were heard loud and clear as the union and the School Committee came to a tentative agreement that evening.

“When we show up and work together, we win!” said O’Neil.

“The Lynn Teachers Union’s contract negotiation shows what we can achieve when educators identify the outstanding needs that exist in our schools and work together with students, parents, and community members to fix them,” said **AFT Massachusetts President Beth Kontos**. “From higher pay for new employees that will help the Lynn schools attract great new educators, to an extra 40 minutes each week for elementary school teachers to communicate with parents or prepare lesson plans, this contract is good for Lynn students and fair to their educators.”

“Congratulations to all the members of the Lynn Teachers Union on their new contract!” ♦

Amesbury Educators' Political Engagement Leads to Victory in New Contract Negotiations.



Campaign aimed at highlighting the contributions of public employees to the community.

In a demonstration of the incredible power educators have when we engage in political activity at the local level, Amesbury educators recently helped elect a pro-schools Mayor and slate of School Committee candidates, and won a strong new contract, after a major political engagement effort this fall.

“AFT Amesbury members were very involved with the “No on 2” campaign, but that was the first political activity for a lot of us. It made us realize the importance of remaining politically engaged in our profession,” said **AFT Amesbury President Cindy Yetman**. “We put in a lot of work into this fall’s political engagement campaign, but it was a lot of fun, and the feeling of success can’t be beat.”

Public Services = Public Good

In recent years, bargaining had stalled for or was not occurring at all for most unions in Amesbury, including AFT Amesbury Local #1033, which represents teachers, paraprofessionals, and technicians in the Amesbury Public Schools. As frustration mounted, municipal unions in Amesbury, including AFT Amesbury, engaged in a “Public Services = Public Good” campaign aimed at highlighting the contributions of public employees to the community, and working towards successful contract ratifications for each union.

“Over the past decade the population of Amesbury has increased by nearly 10 percent, but in the past six years municipal leadership has repeatedly slashed the budgets that fund public services in our city,” **said Yetman**. “These budget cuts led to significant reductions in staffing and lack of funds for quality professional development, educational supplies, and ►

Amesbury Educators' Political Engagement Leads to Victory in New Contact Negotiations

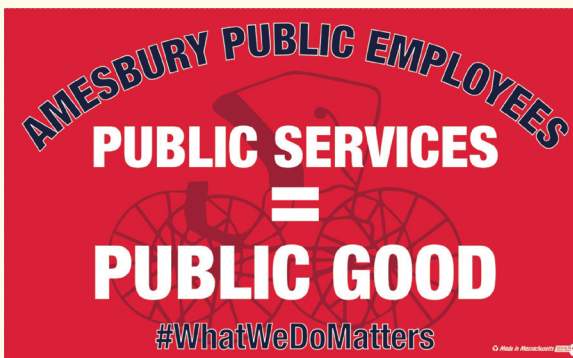
adequate maintenance and upgrades to school facilities.”

In addition to Amesbury Public School educators, the coalition includes Amesbury police, fire and emergency services employees, dispatchers, City Hall clerks and secretaries, school cafeteria personnel, library staff, and Department of Public Works employees. At an all-union membership meeting in July, 120 city employees met and discussed shared problems with contract negotiations.

“We are losing quality new teachers, and some of our veteran staff are not staying, and their wisdom and experience are leaving with them,” said Yetman. “We have reached a point where it is difficult for Amesbury public employees to provide quality public services to our residents, which they both expect and deserve.”

On the first day of school, Amesbury teachers organized outside school and marched in together, with support from parents and students and Fire, DPW, and Library employees.

On September 25, the unions held a public forum for local candidates for office. More than two



dozen candidates for local office attended, including candidates for Mayor, Municipal Council, School Committee, Library Trustee, Housing Authority, and Planning Board.

Support Amesbury Kids, Support Amesbury Schools

After that forum, the AFT Amesbury executive board voted to endorse five candidates for local office: mayoral challenger Kassandra Gove and school committee candidates Katie Currie, Jana DeBeer, Mel Webster, and Maryann Welch.

“The people working in our school system have dedicated their lives to developing lifelong learners and it is time for city leadership to stand by them,” said Yetman in the union’s endorsement announcement. “We need real leaders who will advocate for what’s best for children; fight for fair, equitable school funding and bold, innovative supports; and respect our profession and worker voice in schools and classrooms.”

Members of AFT Amesbury, along with parents and other community members, engaged in an all-out ►

Amesbury Educators' Political Engagement Leads to Victory in New Contract Negotiations

campaign to support the endorsed candidates, who campaigned together as an “Amesbury Schools Coalition Candidates” slate. AFT Amesbury held a meet-the-candidates mixer with the endorsed candidates and taped every candidate speech so that members who couldn't attend could be there. Working with AFT Massachusetts Director of Organization Brian LaPierre, AFT Amesbury sent our mailers to 850 registered voters and door knocked all AFT, MTA, and Teamster families in Amesbury.

“I want to give credit to middle school building rep Andrew Goodwin, who was instrumental to the success of the door knocking campaign,” said Yetman. “My member organizer Laurie Williams was also instrumental and supported my success in these events. And I'm very grateful to the Merrimack Valley Labor Council for endorsing all five of our endorsed candidates.”

For a week and a half before the election, AFT Amesbury members also held signs across the street from all five Amesbury Public Schools, before and after school, and talked to parents who had questions about the upcoming election.

“We need real leaders who will advocate for what's best for children; fight for fair, equitable school funding and bold, innovative supports; and respect our profession and worker voice in schools and classrooms.”

**Cindy Yetman, AFT Massachusetts
Amesbury President**



On election night, Cassandra Gove was elected mayor and all four school committee candidates endorsed by the union won as well.

Contract Breakthrough

Even before Election Day, Amesbury educators' political engagement efforts paid off. Just before the election, AFT Amesbury reached a tentative

agreement with the School Committee for a four-year teachers' contract, a four-year technicians' contract, and a one-year extension of the para-professionals' contract. The contracts include a 8.5% cost of living increase, an increase in hourly contractual work, and course reimbursement, among other changes. The contracts were unanimously approved by AFT Amesbury members, and on December 9, the School Committee approved all three contracts.

Looking back on this fall's political engagement campaign, Yetman is excited about how far the union has come in recent years.

“We've never done this type of political engagement before: never endorsed candidates, never knocked on doors,” she said. “This was new and different, but we had a lot of support from AFT MA, and we had such a great response at the doors from parents and community members. We're going to keep being involved in the political process.”

Now, AFT Amesbury members plan to start attending every single council and school committee meeting, according to Yetman. “We're going to be very involved going forward.” ♦

Paras Bring Free Books and Joy to Springfield Kindergartners at Read Aloud Party.



Program will provide every child with four free books to take home by the end of December.

It truly was an OMG moment — first, when the Springfield Federation of Paraprofessionals won a major grant from AFT partner First Book, and next, when thousands of kindergartners all over the city got to join a read-aloud party at their school on a Friday morning and take home a free book.

The “Books for Kindergarten Joy” program, a labor-management partnership by the paras and the Springfield Public Schools to hold regular read-aloud sessions with the district’s 2,100 kindergartners, won a \$30,000 grant over the summer. As the program unfolds this fall, the OMG (Offering More Great) Books grant will provide every child with four free books to take home by the end of December.

The main event kicked off at Boland Elementary School on October 4 with a visit from **AFT Secretary-Treasurer Lorretta Johnson**. Before reading to them, Johnson introduced herself to the kindergartners and told them the significance of the number five million: “That is the number of books my union, the American Federation of Teachers, has given to students, parents, paraprofessionals, librarians and teachers all across the country, thanks to our partnership with First Book.”

Beautiful moments

Joining Johnson was a raft of state and local officials, including **AFT Massachusetts President Beth Kontos**, all of whom read to the children in small reading circles of about 10 students each, modeling their love of reading. Lisa Bakowski, Boland’s principal, greeted families and visitors. After the read-aloud, children received new books and backpacks filled with school supplies. ▶

Paras Bring Free Books and Joy to Springfield Kindergartners at Read Aloud Party.

Cathy Mastronardi, president of the Springfield paras' union, describes what it was like to bring the value of our union into a collaboration with the school district in securing the First Book grant — together, winning for their community the essential resources it would be impossible to obtain alone.

“It’s been fun,” she says. “You know, we went into it as kind of a lark. We’d never written a grant before. We got to work with people we’ve never worked with before. Honestly, we were so surprised when we won. The whole thing has been fun.”

The launch event produced some lucky coincidences and beautiful moments. Mastronardi is struck by the fact that the same picture book, *My Name Is Yoon*, chosen as the read-aloud story for the kick-off, happened to be the first title the paras had selected when they began buying books in the First Book Marketplace after distributing a truckload of 40,000 free books in 2015. The book was chosen because it was especially appropriate in a school district with a high percentage of immigrant students.



The event also generated solidarity. “I had a great talk with one of the custodians at the school because they made it look beautiful,” Mastronardi says. As a thank you for the custodians’ work making the school spotless, the paraprofessionals granted them honorary membership and T-shirts, which the custodians wore proudly.

The local president feels grateful that national and state AFT officers joined the paraprofessionals for their kick-off: “When we hear Lorretta’s story, knowing she was a para in a big city and worked her way up, she is near and dear to our hearts. It’s been a unifying experience.”

Mastronardi feels that public education is gaining support. In the Massachusetts State House, senators this month passed a funding bill that would provide an increase of more than \$100 million over seven years for Springfield alone — much needed because the entire school system is a Title I district with high numbers of English learners. Aside from funding more instructional materials and staff, particularly in special education, the new funding may help defray school transportation costs for rural communities in ▶

Paras Bring Free Books and Joy to Springfield Kindergartners at Read Aloud Party.

the western part of the state. All are necessary investments to fund our future.

Family engagement

In applying for the OMG grant, paras and school officials cited a great need for early literacy. Community-level data, they said, indicates that only about seven percent of the district's children enter kindergarten with literacy readiness skills. Most require help identifying authors, illustrators and parts of a book.



“We know that there is a scarcity of books in the homes of our students,” they wrote, citing high poverty and unemployment rates citywide.

The free books, in English and Spanish, will be chosen from First Book’s “Stories for All” collection, so that children can see themselves in the books they read. These choices celebrate diversity and inclusion, with special attention to social and emotional learning.

With each book students take home, they also will bring home an activity sheet for their families to use, providing discussion prompts, activities and key ideas for kids to take away from the story. By having everyone read the same book, the paras hope to foster a sense of community.

Immediate goals for the “Books for Kindergarten Joy” program are to support early literacy, help build home libraries and encourage parent engagement in their kids’ education. Its longer-term goals are to help develop students into citizens, prepare them for college and careers, and promote a culture of equity. In their grant application, the paras noted “how important it is for children to develop a love and joy for books.” ♦

*The event also generated solidarity. “I had a great talk with one of the custodians at the school because they made it look beautiful,” says **Cathy Mastronardi president of the Springfield paras’ union.** As a thank you for the custodians’ work making the school spotless, the paraprofessionals granted them honorary membership and T-shirts, which the custodians wore proudly.*



“Unafraid Educators” Are Welcoming, Cherishing, Protecting Undocumented and Immigrant Students and Families.



At a membership meeting in early February, Boston Teachers Union members unanimously voted in support of the BTU Unafraid Educators’ work, along with community groups like the Student Immigrant Movement (SIM), to regulate and limit the sharing of student information with law enforcement. But that’s just one part of the work the group is doing to support immigrant and undocumented students and their families in Boston.

The BTU Unafraid Educators are a group of BTU members seeking to build schools where all immigrant and undocumented students are welcomed, respected, cherished, and protected.

“I and many other BTU members got involved with Unafraid Educators after seeing a rise in anti-immigration sentiment during the 2016 election cycle. Students were organizing within our schools, and we saw a need within our school community,” says **Nora Paul-Schultz, a Physics Teacher at the John D. O’Bryant School of Math and Science**. “Lena [Papagiannis, a History Teacher at the O’Bryant School] and I tried to put together a college access workshop for undocumented students, and found there weren’t easily accessible resources. We were connected to Unafraid Educators, which had been started in early 2016 by a guidance counselor and leaders from SIM. We were excited to learn there was already a group doing some of this work.”

Members of the group provide trainings to students, parents, and other educators on college access for undocumented students, working especially closely with the Student Immigrant Movement (SIM), a statewide group of student organizers, on presentations for students and families. The BTU Unafraid Educators guide for undocumented students applying to college can be found at bit.ly/unafraidcolleguide. ▶

“Unafraid Educators” Are Welcoming, Cherishing, Protecting Undocumented and Immigrant Students and Families.

“Unafraid Educators is all about helping our students feel more welcomed and more supported,” says **Lena Papagiannis, the History Teacher at the O’Bryant School**. “We see our work as building sanctuary schools from the ground up, which, to us, means empowering educators with the tools to support undocumented students and those from mixed-status families. This begins in classrooms and spreads throughout entire school communities through the Week of Action and college access programming. We also see our role in the political sphere, advocating for district policies and government legislation that protects our students and their families.”

The Unafraid Scholarship

The BTU Unafraid Educators also run the Unafraid Scholarship, which provides financial support for Boston Public Schools students who are not eligible to receive financial aid from the federal government due to their immigration status.

“I got involved with Unafraid Educators right after the 2016 election. That first meeting after the election saw a huge turnout,” says **Adriana**

“I and many other BTU members got involved with Unafraid Educators after seeing a rise in anti-immigration sentiment during the 2016 election cycle. Students were organizing within our schools, and we saw a need within our school community.”

**Nora Paul-Schultz,
Physics Teacher at the
John D. O’Bryant School
of Math and Science.**



Costache, a Math and Science Teacher at Fenway High School. “We had started a scholarship for undocumented students at Fenway High after Obama announced the DACA program [which

provides temporary protection from deportation for undocumented immigrants who came to the United States before the age of 16], and we were looking for ways to grow it. Unafraid Educators helped bring it district wide.”

In its first year, the Unafraid Scholarship raised \$24,000 in 7 weeks, and gave out scholarships to 10 students in August 2017. By the time the third set of scholarships were awarded in August 2019, the scholarship had grown to \$77,000 raised and 45 students supported, with scholarship awards ranging between \$500 and \$4,000 per student. Students are able to reapply for the scholarship every year, and several students are now in their third year of receiving the scholarship, including a few who are on track to graduate in May. A total of \$176,000 has been awarded to 60 individual students over the three years of the program’s existence.

“Each year, we’ve received more applications and been able to award money to more students, but that means we really need help to raise more funds so that we can meet each students’ needs,” says Costache. ▶

“Unafraid Educators” Are Welcoming, Cherishing, Protecting Undocumented and Immigrant Students and Families.

Donations to the Unafraid Scholarship can be made here, and applications for the fourth year of the scholarship can be found here. Students must submit all materials by June 1, 2020.

The Unafraid Scholarship idea is also spreading to other districts—Somerville and Lawrence have both started scholarships, with other communities planning their own. The impact on students who receive the funds can be transformative.

“One of my 11th graders works a full time job to help her mom pay rent, and it’s difficult for her to come back to school after working double shifts during the weekend,” said Costache. “This scholarship is a light at the end of the tunnel for her.”

Political Action

In addition to supporting undocumented students with college access, the Unafraid Educators also engage in political action to protect immigrant students. The group has worked on several projects over the years and is currently focused on regulating the type of information that is shared between the Boston Public Schools (BPS) and the Boston Police Department in order to limit student infor-



mation from being shared with with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

“In 2017, we learned that that a BPS student had an incident report from a Boston School Police officer used in his deportation hearing, and the student was deported,” says Papagiannis. “School should be a safe haven for students, where they are free to learn and grow without fear.”

Over 130 reports from Boston Public Schools have ended up with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), jeopardizing these young people’s futures.

“We worked to understand BPS policies, and wrote a policy proposal that would fix this problem of excessive information sharing that endangers immigrant students. We’re now pushing the Superintendent’s team to adopt it.” says Papagiannis. “I’m excited to be part of a union like the BTU that has organizing committees that allow us to work as union leaders on projects that help our students and their communities. It’s a model of social justice organizing that goes beyond what some people would think of as union work.” ▶

“Unafraid Educators” Are Welcoming, Cherishing, Protecting Undocumented and Immigrant Students and Families.

“We’ve had over 200 people attend our community meetings to learn more about the issue and plan to take action. It’s been energizing to see how many people are passionate about this and to galvanize them to take action with us,” says Paul-Schultz. “This work has also allowed me to engage with students in new ways, as I support them in speaking out.”

Supporters can sign a petition in support of making Boston schools safe from ICE at bit.ly/noiceinbps.

Week of Action

The Unafraid Educators are currently planning a Week of Action later this spring, with actions at

over 50 individual BPS schools planned. Activities range from fundraising and rallies to simply daily actions like posting pictures saying “I support my undocumented students and families” in the classroom.

“It’s important to support our undocumented students publicly, rather than waiting for students to come to us and share their immigration status,” says Paul-Schultz.

A toolkit with resources for educators who want to participate in the week of action can be found at bit.ly/unafraidtoolkit. Organizers encourage educators across the state to get involved.

“It’s easy to start small. For the first time we had a week of action, I took a picture with a sign and posted it in my classroom, and sent an email to the other educators in my building,” says Costache. “Three years later, we organized an entire week of action including fundraising, and events every day.”

“This isn’t something to do alone,” says Papagiannis. “Find a small group: two or three other people in your school or in your union will make a world of difference. We couldn’t do this work without each other.” ♦



BPL Professional Staff Association Joins AFT Massachusetts and MA Library Staff Assoc.



In an overwhelming vote last month, the members of the Boston Public Library Professional Staff Association (BPLPSA) voted to affiliate with AFT Massachusetts and the MA Library Staff Association (MLSA). The MLSA, part of AFT Massachusetts, represents more than 500 public librarians in 31 municipalities across the state of Massachusetts.

“It is my great pleasure to welcome the Boston Public Library Professional Staff Association to the ranks of the Massachusetts Library Staff Association and AFT Massachusetts. What better way to welcome in 2020 than with the affiliation of the dedicated library professionals of the flagship library of the Commonwealth

to the MLSA and AFT-MA!” said **Pat Kelly, president of the Massachusetts Library Staff Association**. “We are excited to work with the members of the BPLPSA to further our union’s shared goals of worker’s rights and unity, social justice, and the advancement of the library profession. Welcome aboard to the members of the BPLPSA: we ARE stronger together!

The Boston Public Library Professional Staff Association (BPLPSA) was first founded as an association in the 1930’s and was recognized as a union in 1969. The BPLPSA represents professional librarians at the Boston Public Library, as well as professional staff in the Accounting, Communications, Systems, and Business Departments.

“As the oldest large public library in the country, dating to 1848, it is entirely fitting that the Boston Public Library Professional Staff Association merge with a union formed in 1916 and dedicated to advancing lifelong learning for the public and working conditions for our members,” said **Elisa Birdseye, president of the Boston Public Library Professional Staff Association**. “Thomas Paine said that it is ‘not in numbers but in unity that our great strength lies,’ but numbers help! We are glad to add ours to yours and move forward in solidarity!” ♦

“We are excited to work with the members of the BPLPSA to further our union’s shared goals of worker’s rights and unity, social justice, and the advancement of the library profession.”

**Pat Kelly,
Massachusetts Library
Staff Association President**



Our Members make AFT



Massachusetts Strong!



AFT Massachusetts Executive Board Members and Staff

Campaigns & Member Engagement Department

Brian LaPierre, *Director of Organization*
blapierre@aftma.net

Mike Canavan, *Field Representative for Legislation*
mcanavan@aftma.net

Dan Murphy, *Director of Educational Policy*
dmurphy@aftma.net

Liliana Gutmann-McKenzie, *Organizer*
lgutmann@btu.org

Gina O'Toole, *Organizer*
gotoole@aftma.net

Jeremy Shenk, *Member Engagement Coordinator*
jshenk@aftma.net

★★★ SAVE THE DATE ★★★

AFT Massachusetts Fall Leadership Conference will be held on Saturday October 3, 2020 from 8:30-2:30pm at the Doubletree in Westborough located at 5400 Computer Drive in Westborough. A full list of workshops and program will be forthcoming. Please join leaders, organizers, staff, and rank and file members from across the state to gather collectively, network and sharpen your skills.

Please join us! For more information, contact Brian LaPierre, Director of Organization at blapierre@aftma.net

Executive Board

Beth Kontos, *President*
Brant Duncan, *Secretary-Treasurer*

Vice-Presidents

Dave Adams	Johnny McInnis
Kimberly Barry	Francis McLaughlin
Deborah Blinder	Christine Moyer
Marie Cawlina-Kasle	Nicole Reminder
Brenda Chaney	Sheila O'Neil
Debbie CoFond	Rob Russo
Donald Dabenigno	Kristen Schultz
Kathy Delaney	Bruce Sparfven
Marianne Dumont	Jessica Tang
Paul Georges	Karen Tucker
Daniel Haacker	Susan Uvanni
Colleen Hart	Gale Thomas
Michael Maguire	Cindy Yetman
Mary Henry	



Field Representatives

Walter Armstrong, warmstrong@aftma.net
Eric Blanchet, eblanchet@aftma.net
Nick DiPardo, ndipardo@aftma.net
Jennifer Doe, jdoe@aftma.net
Shawn Flood, sflood@aftma.net
Caryn Laflamme (Lead), claflamme@aftma.net
Andrew Powell, apowell@aftma.net
Mike Regan, mregan@aftma.net

Legal Department

Haidee Morris, *General Counsel*
hmorris@aftma.net
Harold Jones, *Associate Counsel*
hjones@aftma.net
Jenniffer Migliaccio, *Associate Counsel*
jmigliaccio@aftma.net

Office Support Staff

Jennifer Daniel, *Office Manager*
jdaniel@aftma.net
Monique Robinson, *Secretary*
morobinson@aftma.net