



Students march during Fund Our Future rally on May 16, 2019

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MTA, Allies Win School Funding and Launch Higher Education Funding Campaign

by Laura Barrett, MTA Communications

Together we achieved a tremendous victory for students, educators and communities when the *Student Opportunity Act* was signed into law on Nov. 26.

School districts will receive a projected \$2 billion above inflation in new state education aid when the bill is fully phased in. Much of the new money will go to low-income districts that have been left behind by our Commonwealth's outdated and inequitable funding system.

The MTA and our allies in the Fund Our Future coalition fought for the bill for more than a year. Both the House and Senate ultimately passed it unanimously in what has been called the biggest State House news story of the the year.

Now, the MTA is helping local associations make sure their members have a role in determining how the new money will be spent.

But we're not stopping with grades preK-12. We have our sights set on significantly improving funding for public higher education. Members at all levels have said this is a priority. Our preK-12 members recognize how important it is for their students to have access to affordable, high-quality public higher education. Many new MTA members have to pay for higher education themselves as they pursue advanced degrees. Other members also have to worry about paying for higher education for their own children.

We are continuing to push for passage of the *Cherish Act*, which would increase state funding for public higher education campuses and scholarship accounts by \$600 million when fully phased in after five years. The MTA will also wage a legislative battle seeking the first year of new funding — \$120 million — through the state budget, even if the *Cherish Act* has not yet been approved.

Adding to Your Union Activist Toolbox

by Becky Herring



When the decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Janus v. the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees* was made in the summer of 2018, it was a huge blow to labor unions all across the country. However, almost two years later, the Massachusetts Teachers Association, the largest union in Massachusetts, remains stronger than ever.

Chants in support of strong unions and the power of collective bargaining could be heard for miles around as hundreds of educators gathered together in the Springfield Sheraton Monarch Place on Jan. 11. Aspiring, Retired, and Active members spent their Saturday at the MTA's Union Skills Winter Conference. There was much to celebrate that day: a win for the Fund Our Future campaign, Dedham public school educators achieving an incredible deal to end their strike, and the ability to come together as one body to learn how we can continue to grow and support our local unions, as well as the MTA.

Tim Dwyer, president of the Dedham Education Association, surrounded by his constituents and union brothers and sisters,

said, "Anytime you enter a bargaining year, be prepared to strike." These words did not fall on deaf ears, as educators attended conferences to help strengthen communication, racial justice, effective leadership, bargaining and other skills within themselves, with the charge to continue this work when they returned to their buildings and locals on Monday. Members made connections within their districts and with other MTA members, and they interacted with the Executive Committee, Board of Directors and various committees such as the New Member Committee. It was truly a time for members to network, make connections and continue to add to their union activist toolbox.

There is a lot on the horizon, including things like bargaining by the Springfield Education Association and other locals and advocating for the *Cherish Act*, which would increase funding for public higher education. Conferences such as the Union Skills Winter Conference are always a great reminder that your union cohorts always have your back. I would encourage any MTA member to attend in future years. ■

Trainings for New Members

Below are new member trainings, available to teachers and/or ESP locals as indicated.

PROFESSIONAL TEACHER STATUS (PTS): Thirty-minute training on how teachers acquire PTS and what their rights are before they get PTS.

PARAPROFESSIONALS AND OTHER ESPS – RIGHTS ON THE JOB: This is a 30-minute training on the rights of ESPs both before and after they pass a probationary period. It covers anti-discrimination laws, union rights, contractual rights, the evaluation process, and whistle-blower protections.

CERTIFICATION/LICENSURE: Ninety-minute training explaining the sometimes labyrinthian process of getting a teaching license in Massachusetts.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: The MTA sponsors a few all-day sessions of professional development, such as at the Summer Conference, August 2-5, 2020, and the Early Career Educators Conference on November 14, 2020. Other PD may be available in your local by request.

CREDIT COUNSELING AND LOAN FORGIVENESS: New members often have enormous debt. This 75-minute training provides guidance on how to handle debt while qualifying for loan forgiveness.

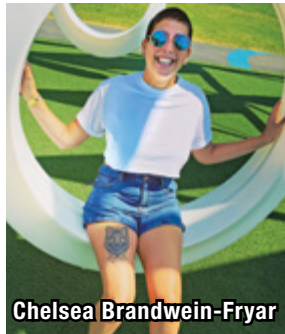
UNDERSTANDING YOUR PAYCHECK AND SALARY SCALE: Pay scales and paychecks can be confusing to new members. This 45-minute training explains the basics to help members figure out their paychecks while being able to compare salary scales.

To schedule any of these trainings, please contact Ashley Adams: aadams@massteacher.org

Summer Conference Is Great!

by Chelsea Brandwein-Fryar

No one understands an educator like another educator does: printing in the teacher's room in the early hours, with a copy machine that works 70 percent of the time; late nights spent grading essays and science labs; phone calls home to share great news about a student overcoming an obstacle that had been a struggle for weeks, and making eye contact with another educator when a student says something absolutely inappropriate — yet hilarious.



the time of their lives, and I wished I had signed up. Thankfully, many of the attendees befriended me and said I would have to do the program the next summer.

Take 2, 2018. I finally attended the unparalleled track that is the New Member Program. I connected with educators in the same boat as me — in their first few years who had a deep passion for teaching, professional development and diving into our rights as educators. I had the opportunity to hear

Being around other educators feels like home, and the MTA Summer Conference is just that. It's home, even for just a few days, for educators from all over the state.

The first time I attended Summer Conference, in 2017, I was a first-year teacher and didn't know much about my union. Most of what I had learned came from my mother, a retired teacher, who said, "You have to join the union IMMEDIATELY!"

OK, mom!

My local president, just down the hall from my classroom, suggested that I attend the conference. When I found out that it took place at UMass Amherst (I'm a UMass alum), I went online and clicked "Register" immediately. Unfortunately, that year I didn't know about the New Member Program, so instead I found workshops that were engaging and promptly signed up. At the conference, I saw the New Members having what seemed like

from educators from the West Coast who had taken charge and said No More to the unjust ways in which they had been treated. I danced the night away at all the social events with new teachers, veteran ESPs, seasoned paraprofessionals — even the president of the MTA!

I realized how much I wanted to be involved in my local and learned tangible ways to do so. I made friendships with educators whom I still talk to, in districts outside of mine and in completely different settings. That is what the union does. It reminds us of the power we have together as outside forces attempt to separate us and make us believe we have nothing in common.

If any of this appeals to you and you are in your early years as an educator, please join us this summer at the 2020 Summer Conference, from Aug. 2-5, at UMass Amherst!

Can't wait to see you there! ■

New Member Liaison Program Is Thriving

by Ashley Adams, MTA New Member Organizer

The MTA created a New Member Liaison Pilot Program for the 2019-2020 school year. The program calls for a stipend of \$350 for locals, to be paid to a designated New Member Liaison who agrees to be responsible for assisting with MTA membership signups and engagement of new hires. To qualify for the stipend, each New Member Liaison needs to attend a training on their responsibilities in the local, as well as helping to oversee membership and engagement activities and submitting biannual reports on their activities.

This program is off to an excellent start. Fifty locals, including 45 preK-12 locals and five higher ed chapters, have elected to

participate in the program. Fourteen trainings have been held, with nearly all of the designated NMLs attending. NMLs have been instrumental in helping to organize more than 50 trainings on Professional Teacher Status, the rights of newly hired staff, loan forgiveness, licensure, and professional development.

If your local is interested in getting a stipend for a New Member Liaison, you are not too late! The pilot program was funded to support up to 90 locals, so there are still 35 or so positions available this year. Please contact Renee Gatewood at rgatewood@massteacher.org if you would like a job description and application form. ■

Have an idea for a column in this newsletter? Interested in having more New Member activities or trainings in your local?

Please let us know! Contact our New Member Organizer, Ashley Adams, at aadams@massteacher.org, 617.878.8314.



Save the Dates!



2020
NEW MEMBER PROGRAM
AT SUMMER CONFERENCE
UMass Amherst



For more information: www.massteacher.org/newmembers

