



**MTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
FRIDAY/SATURDAY FEBRUARY 2, 3, 2007**

The MTA Board met recently in Natick. Selected highlights of the several dozen items on the agenda which may be of interest to MCCC members follow.

MTA Public and Member Attitudes are Surveyed

The Board heard the results of a survey done by Kiley and Company, a polling firm. Among many detailed results we note the following. The parenthetical remarks reflect speculation by the Board, and your directors.

- Public favorability towards all public education is down. This seems to be occurring in other states too. (*We had a governor who assured that. Massachusetts public schools perform at the top of the national scales, but all we hear is how bad they are.*)
- MTA members rate public schools much higher than the public. (*Yes they are prejudiced, but they see much better than the public what the schools are doing.*)
- Tax sensitivity in the public is much higher than two years ago. (*Bad news for us and the quality of life in the Commonwealth, especially with a structural deficit in the state budget. Note that structural means that even if the economy gets very strong, tax collections won't go up a whole lot, since the legislature rolled back so many taxes in the last six or so years.*)
- Voters think there is a lot of "waste" in public education. (*Their excuse for not supporting public education. They aren't against education, just waste!*)
- The "achievement gap" means the poorer achievement of economically disadvantaged groups in our public schools. Most voters have heard of it and rate it as a very important issue. But they are against directing more support to the relevant schools. (*Perhaps because they feel their own schools need more support too.*)
- MTA members strongly support higher pay for teachers in high-poverty communities.
- Neither MTA members nor voters support paying a premium for math/science teachers.
- 13% is the number. It seems to be about the number of MTA members who are actively involved in their union. The percentage of involvement peaks around age 50. The main reason given for lack of involvement is lack of time, not antipathy towards the union. Thirteen percent seems to be about the percentage of involvement in many organizations here and elsewhere.

Strategic Direction Initiative Update and Training

Richard Sanders, MTA Director of Affiliate Services and George Luse, MTA Regional Services Consultant, gave an excellent presentation on the Strategic Direction Initiative they are leading on behalf of the Board. This is the program under which thirty or so MCCC leaders just participated in a retreat in Worcester. This program has as goals member-driven, strategically minded, organized, and purposeful locals.

Jobs with Justice

The Board heard an excellent presentation by Andrei Joseph, MTA Representative, and teacher at Concord-Carlisle high school, and Russ Davis, Executive Director for the Massachusetts branch, of Jobs with Justice. This organization has as its main goal mutual support between unions. Members pledge to support the labor issues of other labor organizations regionally, or wherever, at least five times per year. To participate or for more information visit their web site at www.jwj.org. The MTA has been a participant since JWT's inception – there are 90 member organizations.

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Recommendations of the Government Relations Committee

The Board adopted a list of legislative support and opposition statements recommended of the Government Relations Committee. This list is in addition to the MTA legislative agenda, and provides general organizational guidelines for MTA lobbyists, public relations, and officers on legislation for the current 2007-2008 two-year legislative term. This long list includes statements about almost every issue you might think of, from charter school laws, health and safety in schools and colleges, and vocational-technical education, to health care benefits and tuition retention.

Region H gets more NEA RA Delegates

Region H is the MTA's higher education "region". Most regions are geographically oriented and comprise the MTA affiliate locals in that region, but retired members and higher education are designated as regions too. With the addition of over 3,000 new members, over 2,500 of which are from recently incorporated SEIU locals (at their and SEIU's request, by the way), region H will get 12 regional delegates to the NEA-RA, up from 10 last year. These delegates are elected by statewide ballot – you'll see it in the mail in a few weeks. Vote for your MCCC colleagues!

Support to Allow Cities and Towns to provide health GIC health coverage

One of the major bargaining issues facing K-12 locals is bargaining for health coverage. Cities and towns contract for health benefits for municipal employees, and of course health care costs have skyrocketed. So our K-12 colleagues, who currently bargain over policies, co-pay amounts, and member contribution rates (between 10% and 50%) are facing major bargaining pressure over these costly benefits. There is a lot of talk, and a legislative bill, to allow cities and towns to offer health benefits through the GIC (Group Insurance Commission). All full-time and some day part-time MCCC members receive health benefits through the GIC now, and as you may know, we cannot bargain over these benefits (though we perennially fight politically to keep our contribution rate at a reasonable level). The Board has voted to support the bill which would permit cities and towns to offer GIC health benefits to their employees on an optional basis. The city of Springfield, in its ongoing crisis, has already moved over to the GIC.

The MTA is Growing!

The Executive-Director-Treasurer Ed Sullivan reported that as of February 1, 2007, MTA membership is at an all time high of 106,432, including over 80,000 active teachers, 12,000 paraprofessionals, and close to 4,000 secretaries/clerks/custodians.

Strategic Direction

The Board approved a recommended sunset of the Strategic Direction Committee and creation of a Strategic Action Committee. This reflects a renewed commitment by the organization to facilitate action on matters of political import to MTA members. Of course this may sound familiar to MCCC members, we have had a strong Strategic Action Committee for 15 or more years, and it gets stronger each year, thanks to very active MCCC leadership, and you!

Value-Added Assessment

The Board heard an excellent presentation by Kathie Skinner, Director, MTA Center for Educational Quality and Professional Development, which explained "value-added" assessment. The presentation included a great description of how MCAS is used, norm-referenced versus criterion-referenced tests, use of tests in improvement, growth, and value-added, models. She noted that MCAS testing is used in three ways: CPI, AYP, and graduation requirement. CPI is the Composite Performance Index which judges school and district performance for state accountability purposes, AYP is Adequate Yearly Progress and is the federal criteria used in the No Child Left Behind (or as one former Board member and large local president often put it, the No Child's Behind Left Alone) program, and of course MCAS is now used as a requirement for receiving a high school diploma.

Value-Added, in a nutshell, seems to be the growth that a student achieves in an academic year which is beyond the growth normally expected in an academic year. Measurement is problematic, and one must wonder about these things when Massachusetts K-12 schools perform at the top of national norms, but only get bashed based, nowadays, on international norms. You'd think someone would celebrate what they do, even as they are asked to do more.

Legislative Report

Joanne Blum, Director of the Governmental Services Division, reported on legislation. Of course we are barely into the new legislative session but things are ramping up at 20 Ashburton Place. Some items from Jo's report:

The MTA worked with legislators to file 28 bills that the Board had approved as MTA's legislative package.

The MCCC and APA (state college professional administrators) contracts were not funded at the end of the 2006 legislative session despite MTA (and MCCC!) efforts to get them added to various bills that were considered. However as you know the legislature was in informal session and wasn't agreeing on much. (You know that this is a top priority for MCCC and MTA, and there is a very strong expectation that we will be in the first supplemental funding bill submitted. No one is against the funding, but the legislature moves very slowly on almost everything, as you also know.

"The Governor's first budget must be released by February 28. At the beginning of a new gubernatorial term the Governor's budget is released a month later than it is in the other three years of a Governor's term". This will be the first Governor's budget ("House 1") that will not be dead on arrival in over a decade.

Watch out for a reorganization of many of the state's quasi-governmental boards, including those related to higher education. You only have to read the papers to know that the Governor is contemplating a cabinet post of Secretary of Education, and that Dana Mohler-Faria, President of Bridgewater State College, is a likely candidate for this position. (You may know that he served four years in the military, after which he earned an associate's degree in liberal arts at Cape Cod Community College, bachelor's and master's degrees at Boston University, and a doctorate in higher education administration at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Mohler-Faria's first professional job was at Cape Cod Community College, where he worked as financial aid director from 1975 to 1984. He then served as an assistant dean at Bristol Community College, a dean at Mount Wachusett Community College, and vice president for administration and finance at Bridgewater State.)

Important issues in bills filed/refiled include, from an MCCC perspective:

- **Retirement Benefits for Part-Time Faculty**
This bill would apply to part-time faculty that teach at least two 3-credit courses per semester, or four per calendar year, at one or more state higher education institutions, including a division of continuing education. These persons would earn a year of creditable service in the state retirement system and have earnings counted in determining a pension. Also, five years of creditable service earned through ten years of part-time work would be deemed vested.
- **Health Insurance Benefits for Part-Time Faculty**
This bill would apply to part-time faculty that teach at least two 3-credit courses per semester, or four per calendar year, at one or more state higher education institutions, including a division of continuing education. These persons would be eligible for state employee health insurance coverage.
- Full year of creditable service for sabbatical leaves.
- Fix 150E with respect to contract funding. Higher education employee contracts would be submitted directly to the legislature for funding approval.
- Establish standards governing conditions that affect indoor environments in public buildings.

Government Pension Offset Windfall Provision Elimination (GPO/WEP)

If you would like to receive email updates from the MTA on this issue at a personal email address, you can subscribe online at <http://massteacher.org/gpowep/>. "To ensure your privacy, MTA will not send e-mail to your school e-mail address. MTA does not share, sell, lease or rent e-mail lists to any other organizations." Of course the MCCC is working assiduously on the GPO/WEP as well.

MTA Dialoging with the Governor

The MTA leadership (and MCCC leadership!) has been dialoging with the governor and his staff and committees. Ann Wass, MTA President, and Paul Toner, MTA Vice President, have met with Duval Patrick, Dana Mohler-Faria and others, including legislative leadership. One thing they hear a lot is “you know there is no money” but no one expects economic miracles nowadays anyway – every economic gain is difficult. However, they report a good dialog with the new administration.

NEA Directors Meet with National Leaders

The NEA Directors from the MTA report that the MTA legislative staff has greatly facilitated meetings in Washington with the full Massachusetts legislative delegation, both representatives and our senators. They are currently ensuring the expected full support on the GPO/WEP issue, among other things.

Report Archive

MCCC-MTA Director Reports, including this one, are archived since October 2003 online, at <http://mccc-union.org/BOD.html> .

Respectfully Submitted
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