



N.E.W. News

Winter 2019

The New Education Workers quarterly



MTA Members at the 2018 ESP Conference in Falmouth

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ESP Conference Time is Here!

by Audra Makuch

Every April, the MTA offers a conference designed for and by education support professionals (ESPs). This year's conference is on April 5 & 6 on Cape Cod. This event is a great opportunity for new ESPs to meet other paraprofessionals, secretaries, cafeteria and maintenance staff and clerical workers from higher ed and preK-12.

Designed for education support professionals, this conference offers a weekend of professional development, networking and fun. If you have not attended the ESP Conference in the past, get ready for a great experience.

Workshop topics this year include: *The Fund Our Future* Campaign, The Legal Rights of ESPs, Health and Wellness, Microsoft Excel, Classroom Management, Occupational Safety & Health, Retirement Planning, and more!

NEW IN 2019: MTA education policy staff and retiree consultants will be available for individual appointments to assist and answer questions about licensure and retirement plans.

First-time attendees can apply for a grant that covers up to \$125. Some local unions and school districts cover costs as well. Check with your local leadership to learn more.



To learn more about the MTA ESP Conference or to register, visit massteacher.org/esp.

A New Member Success Story

An Interview with Rebecca Cusick, Fall River Educators' Association President

by Ashley Adams

Hi, Rebecca. I notice that you have had a lot of New Member activity in Fall River during the past 12 months. What have you done? And why did you decide to involve your local in this way?

Over half of our members are in the first three years of teaching. We know they have specific needs and we want to support them as they launch their careers in a challenging urban environment. The most successful training we offered with the MTA was on professional status. Many of our members were not aware of how PTS is obtained and what their rights are without PTS. Some of our building reps, with PTS, also attended the training and found it helpful as they were unsure of the requirements. We also had trainings on licensure and loan forgiveness and several of our members attended the MTA Early Career Educators Conference.

What did you have to do to get your leadership group to buy in?

Our Executive Board is always looking for ways to be supportive of our newest members. The discussion on how to best do that is ongoing, and we know we can always get better. Our E-board and our reps had already set up building communication structures that we used to get the information about training out to members.

Some locals have decided to do their trainings in one central location for all of their teachers without Professional Teacher Status. You've gone a different route. Please tell us about that.

After working a long school day, people find it challenging to meet for a training in one central location. They have work that they take home and families to spend time with so we wanted to make things easier for them. We held PTS trainings at individual schools and placed a focus on the buildings that had the highest number of teachers in their first few years. We have had a couple of trainings in one building, but we try to move the location around to other parts of the city to limit travel time.

What do you think your new members have gotten from the trainings?

They have gained valuable information on loan forgiveness and pathways to licensure. They now know how PTS is earned and they know that even without PTS, they are entitled to all the benefits of our contract. They now know that the MTA offers helpful workshops and conferences throughout the year. Additionally, they see that the Fall River Educators' Association cares about supporting them as they support our students. And hopefully, they experience the FREA as "all of us", not just those elected to leadership.



Rebecca Cusick

I know that you recently scheduled a credit counseling and loan forgiveness training for your members. Would you tell us about it and whether you think it was worthwhile?

This was such an important topic for us to address. So many of our teachers have enormous student loans and they are trying to pay for a master's degree at the same time. Many of them do not know that there are loan forgiveness options out there. This workshop contained so much information my head was spinning, but it was critical information to know.

The MTA also offers professional development – through the Early Career Educators Conference in the fall, New Educator Workshops in February, and the Summer Conference in August. Have any of your members participated? Do you have any impression of how this professional development has helped your newer members?

Yes. Our members have participated each year, and while they find the PD valuable, the ability to network with others is priceless.

The MTA also offers training on licensure and re-licensure. Has your local taken advantage of this yet? Do you have any plans to do so in the future?

Yes. As I mentioned above, we have held two licensure workshops each year — one on relicensure and the other on pathways to licensure. There are now several different pathways to licensure and our teachers need up-to-date, relevant information. We continually hear that the DESE is not user-friendly, so we hope to boil things down for them.

Overall, what impact would you say these trainings have had on your members? Have they helped?

These have made us a more supportive and comprehensive union. They help our members see that while we support them by bargaining over their salary and working conditions, we also support them in being the best educators they can be. They want the best for our kids, and we share that interest.

What has been the biggest challenge in doing this work?

We struggle with constant teacher turnover, which means that we continually have new educators to reach out to. Every year we have to update our building-level communication systems to be sure those critical two-way conversations are happening. It's also challenging to get exhausted and busy educators to stay after school for events. The work is so hard it can leave you with little energy for much else.

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NMC Member Amber Roderick (middle) and fellow Fairhaven Education Association members

Coming Soon: New Member Program at Summer Conference

by Amber Roderick

What is this Summer Conference you've heard about? Or maybe you haven't heard about it yet. Maybe you are heavily involved in your local...Or maybe you're not but want to learn more about it, and you're not sure where to begin. If you relate to any of these statements, then take a few minutes to learn about Summer Conference and hopefully you'll want to attend an amazing few days at UMass Amherst.

My story with the MTA Summer Conference actually began in Spring 2018, after I attended a presentation on Professional Teacher Status (PTS) that my local sponsored. The New Member Program at the Summer Conference was advertised at the end of the presentation. I had been feeling like I wanted to get more involved in the union, but didn't feel like I knew how to do so properly. I took a flier for it, went back to my classroom, and through the adjoining door to my mentor's room (who happens to be a former president and a current vice president of my local), told her I wanted to go.

"Awesome! I told (insert current union president's name here) that I bet we could get you to go!" she responded enthusiastically. She got me the Summer Conference catalogue and I registered right away. I wasn't 100 percent sure what the experience was going to be like, seeing as I had never stepped foot on the UMass Amherst campus or attended before, but I was excited that this program was free!

Fast forward to August. At check-in, I got a rush of college nostalgia, finding my dorm, meeting my suitemates, and

enjoying the UMass Campus in the middle of summer. Throughout the four days, I attended great workshops and met great educators who fill all the essential roles from across the state. I learned something new every day about how unions work, the legislation of unions, the benefits of being in the union, and how to become more involved in my local or on the state or national level. I met other New Members as well as veteran members at numerous social events throughout the week. I had the pleasure of hearing educators from West Virginia and Los Angeles on their experiences of organizing and making education better for their communities. Through my attendance, I found a purpose, in a sense, of how I want to be involved in the union, both in my local and on the state level. The networking from the conference has been so beneficial beyond union work alone. I have added more colleagues and friends due to this experience who aren't just within the four proverbial walls of my school. In a way, signing up for and participating in the New Members Program helped me find some inspiration through gaining a better understanding of my local, the MTA, and education in Massachusetts as it stands.

This year, the MTA Summer Conference is August 4-7. If you're interested in having a deeper dive into the union, you should register. If you're interested in meeting excellent educators from around the state and sharing experiences of teaching with new people, you should register. Hope to see you there this summer! ■

A New Member Success Story *continued*

What suggestions would you make to presidents of other locals about engaging in these activities?

I suggest working with the the MTA to find out how they can support the local in supporting members. As a new president, I was completely unaware of just how much the MTA can help.

I'd also suggest scheduling some social time for your members since that often results in building stronger relationships among colleagues. And if I am being honest I would say it's never easy work, so stick with it and don't give up — keep the big picture in mind. ■

How and Why to Organize Your Building

by Erin Burns

Organizing your building is crucial if you want everyone to be on the same page and feel as though they are part of the bigger picture. As a teacher, my biggest frustrations come from a lack of communication. As a building rep, I do not want people to be frustrated with union communication. Here are the steps I took to organize my building in Springfield.

1) I Mapped the school. That is to say I identified the physical areas in which every teacher worked and naturally communicated within — so I'd know who typically talked with whom during the work day. I mapped my school by floor because grades and subjects are spread throughout the school. It might make sense for you to map by grade, subject, etc. Do whatever makes the most sense for your school. No one knows your school better than you do.

2) Identify and recruit “captains” or “leaders” in each corner/area of your building. They should have 5-10 members on their list that they can easily relay information to, give a newsletter to, make aware of upcoming events, etc.

3) Test your network. Start with something easy, such as handing out the monthly newsletter. See how it goes. Did all captains get it done? Yes? Great. No? Talk to that leader.

4) Continue to use your network to get it done!

At Sci Tech in Springfield, we were able to collect 75 signatures in just a few weeks. We were able to accomplish this because of the network we had previously set up. Our next action at Sci Tech is organizing a Professional Teacher Status information session. Again, our network will be tested and will continue to get stronger with each action we take.

These networks help to connect us with one another. Teaching can be lonely sometimes; nothing brings more joy to my day than being able to take the time to have a 2-5 minute conversation with my colleagues. Utilizing members in the building in the “captain” position also causes more people to be involved, and more people become the face of the union, not just the building reps. ■

Mark your Calendars: Upcoming MTA Events

The MTA provides opportunities for New Members to acquire professional development and union leadership skills every year. Watch for e-mails as events approach. For more information, contact Ashley Adams, New Member Organizer, at aadams@massteacher.org at 617.878.8260.

FEBRUARY

2/19	New Educator Workshops	Quincy
2/20	Steps to Licensure 101	Quincy
2/20	Legal Rights of ESPs	Holyoke
2/20	Supporting Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Students	Holyoke



MARCH

3/2	Professional Learning and Networking Conference (PLAN Con)	Holden
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APRIL

4/5–4/6	ESP Conference	Falmouth
4/16	The Role of the Paraprofessional in Special Education	Auburn
4/17	Immigration in the Classroom	Quincy

MAY

5/11	Supporting Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Students	Quincy
5/18	Supporting Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Students	Pittsfield

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.