As we move to close school year 2017-2018, it is fitting that we recognize and celebrate the school year by remembering our New Haven Teacher of the Year for 2017-2018, Mike Pavano, and the three finalists for this prestigious award. Mike is an incredible Art teacher at New Horizons. Students at this high school hand-picked their projects where Pavano emphasizes “student-centered learning”. To keep his programs running, Mike has to raise hundreds of dollars for renewed computer licensing. It is becoming an ever more common theme whereby New Haven Teachers extend themselves to obtain materials by their own means to provide enhanced and unique opportunities for our students. Mr. Pavano, in his quiet, unassuming manner, demonstrates collaboration, growth, innovation, and equity through his work with students, staff, and the greater community. Mike Pavano was chosen as the Teacher of the Year as one of four finalists.

New Haven Teacher of the Year 2018 – Mike Pavano

...continued on page 8

Contractual Matters for the End of SY 2017-2018

This article will focus on several items that are pertinent as we close SY 2017-2018.

Collaborative Time Plans

The Collaborative Time Plans are unique to our contract in that teachers and school administrators determine how to best utilize the time between the student day and teacher day. For our 2014-2017, contract we negotiated the creation of Collaborative Time Plans. The research is clear that collaborative time is essential in increasing teacher effectiveness and, ultimately, student learning. In most schools it is 30 minutes a day. (The student day is 6 hours, 15 minutes and the teacher day is 6 hours 45 minutes.) As an FYI, virtually no school districts anywhere allow this type of input and contractual

...continued on page 2
adherence whereby teachers are allowed to determine the daily schedules in their respective buildings. Everywhere else that is a management right whereby central office creates the schedule and merely distributes it to teachers and staff.

Each school creates and proposes a Collaborative Time Plan where the principal and at least 75% of the staff agree via a ballot vote (per our NHFT contract). The time plans remain in place from year to year unless there is a vote to change the plan. The process for changing a Collaborative Time Plan is very specific in terms of procedures. It is not merely something that is discussed at a staff meeting and voted upon that same day. If any changes are being contemplated in the time plan we (the NHFT) must ensure that the process is consistent from building to building. Schools cannot unilaterally change time plans without NHFT guidance and adherence to protocols.

The reason I am so adamant about the process is because the time plan may, in fact, change the schedule of the building, perhaps calling for morning meetings before the students arrive or afternoon meetings after the students leave. This may have daycare implications for teachers or interfere with their part-time jobs after school. Teachers must know this before the close of the school year in order to make necessary adjustments to their schedules.

**Bereavement Policy**

The bereavement policy in our contract has been enhanced per a MOU between the NHFT and the NHPS. Whereas the policy once stated the leave must commence immediately upon the passing of the relative, our MOU now allows for greater, and much needed, flexibility. Additionally, the calculation of the 5 days has been altered. The MOU governing our bereavement leave is as follows:

“When interpreting Article VI, Section 6 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement and calculating the 5 days allotted for bereavement leave, weekend days and holidays will not be included in this 5 day bereavement period, or the one day bereavement for an aunt or uncle. The first day of bereavement will commence on the first workday immediately following the death of the respective family member. The cases where funeral services are held at a later date due to extenuating circumstances, the administrator responsible for managing the teacher will have the discretion to allow the teacher bereavement leave to coincide with the date of these services up to the 5-day (or 1 day) contractual limit. It is further agreed that the following vacations will not apply to this Memorandum of Understanding: Christmas break, school vacation week(s) in February and/or April if they are a full week vacation, and summer vacation. For these breaks, the 5-day bereavement will commence on the day immediately following the death of the relative and extend into the vacation.”

**TEVAL**

The following are a few common TEVAL items that are pertinent to the end of the school year:

1. **Signing the Evaluation**
   Evaluations must be signed electronically within 10 days. “Signature shall not be construed to mean agreement with the evaluations (Article VIII, Section 2b).”

2. **Disagreements on the Evaluation**
   If there is any disagreement with the evaluation, teachers should amicably discuss this with their IM’s. There is plenty of “room” in TalentEd to include information pertaining to any area of disagreement. If a teacher wishes to enter a comment(s) in their evaluation, there are places on the form where that can be done. If there is not sufficient room in the box on the form, an attachment can be included.

   If, despite best efforts, the teacher and IM cannot reconcile the differences on a final rating, then contact NHFT Vice President Tom Burns or me and we can have the rating reviewed at Central Office.

3. **End of Year TEVAL Meetings**
   The End of the Year meeting is particularly significant as this is where the final summative rating is shared (Effective, Strong, etc). All TEVAL meetings are contractually one-to-one meetings with the IM and teacher only. No additional administrators or union representatives are present, as TEVAL meetings are not disciplinary. However, if for any reason a TEVAL meeting might be consequential (nonrenewal,termination), then a union representative is allowed to attend. A
The NHFT welcomes Tracey Paige-Harris (Ross Woodward K-8) as our newest Executive Board member. On a personal note, I would like to thank Tracey for her willingness to serve our union by accepting my request that she fill the vacancy on our Executive Board. Our by-laws dictate that when a vacancy occurs, the NHFT President makes a recommendation to the Executive Board. I introduce the nominee (Tracey, in this case) to the Executive Board, and they, in turn, have an opportunity to both meet Tracey and ask questions, comment on the nomination, etc. Then the Executive Board moves to executive session to further discuss and, ultimately, vote on my recommendation (per our by-laws, I do not vote). The NHFT Executive Board unanimously voted to appoint Tracey to the position of PreK-8 representative. She replaces Merri-Ellen Berrios-Gunn (Truman School), who served the NHFT faithfully and steadfastly for many years and chose to step down for personal reasons.

Tracey, a product of the NHPS, attended Lincoln Bassett, Jackie Robinson and James Hillhouse High School. She returned to New Haven from Delaware State University, and has been a teacher for the NHPS for 22 years, working as a teacher facilitator, a team leader, and an active member of the New Haven Federation Teachers Union. Tracey stated at the time of her nomination “I believe in the Union process and I look forward to working with all of you.”

“\textbf{I believe in the Union process and I look forward to working with all of you.}”

New executive Board member Tracey Paige-Harris with her family

NHFT Delegates at the AFT-CT Convention • May 12, 2018

Left to right: Joe Steele, Wilbur Cross; Toni Criscuolo, ESUMS; Peter Wilson, Central Office; Judith Leach, Columbus K-8; Al Meadows, Wilbur Cross; Kristin Wetmore, Co-op HS; Chris Willems, MBA (Metro); Dave Cicarella NHFT President
You've read about the teacher strikes in West Virginia, Arizona, Oklahoma, Colorado... but what about Puerto Rico? Fighting to keep the island's public schools open in the wake of Hurricane Maria, teachers there are boycotting standardized tests and even teaming up with parents to occupy their schools.

The cutbacks and anti-worker attacks in Puerto Rico kicked off well before the hurricane, when an act of Congress in 2016 handed dictatorial powers to an unelected Fiscal Oversight and Management Board in the name of debt restructuring. But the crisis has intensified in the aftermath of the storm, as the government moves to privatize schools and the electric power authority.

In February, Labor Notes intern Meghan Brophy spoke with Mercedes Martinez, president of the Puerto Rican Teachers Federation (FMPR), about how privatizers are taking advantage of the disaster and how educators are fighting back. Since then, while teacher strikes spread on the mainland, teachers in Puerto Rico have also ramped up their struggle and faced heightened repression. Police brutally attacked demonstrators on May 1. To update us on this fast-developing story, Jonah Furman spoke with Martinez again May 4. Both interviews appear below.

LABOR NOTES: HOW ARE TEACHERS ORGANIZING NOW?

Mercedes Martinez: We are going to schools that are facing shutdown to start a boycott against standardized testing, in order to pressure the government to keep those schools open.

First they said 305 schools were to be closed, then they lowered that to 283, now it’s 266. There are 1,100 schools on the whole island. They want to shut down almost a third of the schools.

April 20 was a huge rally in front of the Congress from all the schools that are targeted. Parents and teachers wanted to deliver a resolution, but police blocked the entrances, even though it’s a public building. So we did an act of civil disobedience. Finally the Congress members came out and took the resolution. We went to the governor’s mansion too and presented him the teachers’ plan. They can’t claim we didn’t go through the correct channels.

They want to convert 10 percent of the schools to charters in August. They will base those decisions on the standardized testing which begins on Monday. (This interview was conducted on Friday, May 4. – Eds.)

We are focusing on the shutdown targets to boycott standardized tests. No testing, no scores, no information, no charter.

...continued on top of next page
Schools have started to do occupations. In one school, children haven’t gone to school for two weeks; they’re demanding to speak to the Department of Education. One school has been occupied for three weeks already. Another school joined in the occupation today, and they’re not going to leave until they revoke the decision. Another will join on Monday.

Five schools had a vigil today and will vote to occupy their schools beginning Sunday night, into Monday. If they don’t respond to the occupation, we are organizing trips to the Secretary of Education’s office to protest in front of her office.

Parents and teachers and community leaders, everybody has joined together. But mainly mothers. Most of all, mothers.

**WHAT HAPPENED ON MAY DAY?**

First of all, it was amazing. More than 50,000 people came together at the “Golden Mile,” where all the banks and the Oversight Board office are.

Unions, environmentalists, feminists, teachers, road workers, religious people, and professors marched together against the policies of the Board. Energy workers were chanting against the privatization of their services. Private sector employees were fighting against the labor reforms the Fiscal Board wants to implement. Elderly people were fighting against 25 percent cuts to their pensions. Mothers and parents were there to keep the schools open. Environmentalists were protesting new laws that let developers build whatever they want, wherever they want.

It was massive. It was a show of force to the government, a show of the feelings of the people.

At the same time, it was brutal. The police brutality was overwhelming. They tried to stop the march at different points. They tear-gassed thousands of people.

The protestors and the police agreed that if nothing happened for 15 minutes, they would let them go. Ten minutes passed, and they started tear-gassing. They pushed people down, women and children. They chased our students to their homes and arrested 22 of them. It was awful.

Reporters were attacked by the police, on purpose.

It was all premeditated. They thought they were going to get people to back down. Instead, they just made people angrier.

Original interview, February, by Meghan Brophy:

**LN: CAN YOU GIVE SOME BACKGROUND ABOUT WHAT WAS GOING ON IN PUERTO RICO BEFORE THE HURRICANE?**

**Mercedes Martinez:** Well, the seven members from the PROMESA Financial Oversight and Management Board are like seven dictators. The first thing they did when they were appointed was announce budget cuts to different agencies.

They also approved what they called “labor reform,” which involved the firing of many workers and the elimination of paid sick leave and overtime pay for private sector workers if they work longer than eight hours. Companies fired and rehired the same employees with lesser benefits and basic rights.

We have faced attacks against our education system for many years. They want to divert public funds to private schools. We were able to stop the bill at first, but now we are facing the same attack again. They want to fire thousands of teachers, close hundreds of schools, create a voucher program, and privatize the schools.

**WHAT HAS IT BEEN LIKE TO LIVE AND WORK IN PUERTO RICO IN THE AFTERMATH OF HURRICANE MARIA?**

**Teachers worked to fix up many of the schools even though the government didn’t want to reopen them.**

We are living what Naomi Klein calls disaster capitalism. Many people still don’t have electricity or water. Batteries are being stolen out of generators. People are tired and vulnerable—and the ruling class is taking advantage of this disaster to advance a corporate reform agenda. For all the public sector workers in our country, including in education, organizing now is very hard.

The Secretary of Education tried to shut down more schools after the hurricane, but our communities fought back and won. Teachers worked to fix up many of the schools even though the government didn’t want to reopen them. We had to protest
with the communities, requesting that children be able to go back to school. She shut down 50 schools during the hurricane, and we were able to stop the closings of 30 of them.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE ROLE OF PUERTO RICAN UNIONS IN THE HURRICANE RECOVERY?
There is devastation everywhere, and all the public unions have been working together to fix and restore our country. The electrical union is working very hard to restore power even though the government is neglecting to give them enough equipment. They are also trying to inform the public that privatization is not the answer.

WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH THE PRIVATIZATION OF THE ELECTRIC COMPANY? WHAT IS THE RESPONSE OF UNIONS?

They are doing everything in their power to let people know what privatization will look like and all the rights they will lose.

A SLEW OF EDUCATION “REFORM” PROPOSALS WAS JUST ANNOUNCED. WHAT ARE TEACHERS, PARENTS, AND STUDENTS DOING TO KEEP SCHOOLS OPEN?

We are preparing for a fight, informing people about the need to go on strike until the government gets rid of that bill.

We are preparing for a fight, informing people about the need to go on strike until the government gets rid of that bill. We are having several workshops each day to inform the parents and communities about the stakes. Teachers have gone on strike before, against the charters and attempts at privatization. We did what we had to do and they weren’t able to approve the bill. Now we are here again in the same position.

WHAT CAN UNION ACTIVISTS ELSEWHERE IN THE U.S. DO TO SUPPORT OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN PUERTO RICO?

Solidarity has been displayed by unions in the U.S. already. Nurses, doctors, and social workers have come to our schools to help children who have no medical insurance and to tend to people who are at home. The Movement of Rank-and-File Educators caucus from the New York City teachers union has been very active. They have sent us a lot of donations. They have been helping explain in the U.S. about what’s happening in Puerto Rico—and we have been doing the same by asking how we can help the fight in New York.

A lot of people have been sending us letters, calling representatives in the Senate, and starting petitions to spread the word about how the government wants to take advantage of this disaster. We started a GoFundMe since we are a small union with 3,500 members and we need money to fight back.

We demand that the Financial Oversight and Management Board leave our country and we want the $72 billion debt to be abolished. I know there are also many attacks on public education in the United States. We need to connect these struggles.

Meghan Brophy
meghan@labornotes.org
Jonah Furman
jonah@labornotes.org
There Is No Illegal Strike, Just an Unsuccessful One

By Joe Burns Originally published on March 6, 2018 at www.jacobinmag.com

The ongoing teachers’ strike in West Virginia is remarkable in many ways. Thousands of public workers are engaged in a grassroots rebellion, defying restrictions on their right to strike. They’ve forced the state’s Republican governor to grant concessions, carrying on despite an announced deal by union officials. They’ve inspired other workers to think anew about militant action, both in West Virginia and outside the state.

All of this is fitting at a time when anti-union forces are trying to turn back the clock on collective bargaining rights. The modern public employee union movement was born of struggle—the product of a great strike wave in the 1960s and 1970s. The school personnel strike in West Virginia represents a return to those militant days.

Militancy Present and Past

Teacher strikes are unlawful in West Virginia. State law does not provide for collective bargaining, and public employees have no legally recognized right to engage in work stoppages. Yet legality has a way of drifting into the background when workers organize en masse.

During the high point of the 1960s and ’70s public sector strike wave—when millions of government workers were involved in work stoppages—unionists had a slogan: “There is no illegal strike, just an unsuccessful one.” Lawmakers could impose draconian penalties, courts could issue injunctions, and the corporate media could fulminate endlessly. But if the strike was strong, if the cause was just, and if community support was robust, harsh penalties were rarely imposed.

It hadn’t always been that way. As late as the 1950s, public employee unions barely existed. The ones that were around represented just a fraction of the public sector workforce and weren’t recognized by employers as workers’ representative. With minimal leverage, they were left to beg. That began to change in 1960, when New York teachers walked off the job.

Over the next two decades, public workers across the country would follow their example.

Outlawing strikes did little to deter government workers. Work stoppages occurred more frequently in states with bans on collective bargaining and striking. With no orderly process for bargaining, workers had no choice but to illegally strike to get their demands met. Faced with such intransigence, policymakers gave in and began recognizing public sector unions.

We’re seeing a similar scene in West Virginia: after years of pent-up grievances, teachers felt there was no other option but to strike. They had little to lose and much to gain from flouting state law.

This isn’t to say that workers can always, everywhere, simply ignore the law and dismiss possible legal repercussions. Striking air traffic controllers found out in 1981 that tactics successful in previous years did not work because the ground had shifted beneath their feet.

But the West Virginia strikers seem well-positioned. They enjoy strong public support.

There is no indication that repressive action would make the dispute go away. And finally, and of particular importance: their strike is enormous. Rather than striking one school district or county, teachers decided to shut down schools in all fifty-five counties. Given the sheer number of striking teachers, politicians can’t jail or punish them all, and they can’t run the classrooms without them. An old miners’ slogan went, “You can’t mine coal with bayonets.” The same is true with teaching children.

It’s easy to imagine a different outcome if the strike was launched on a smaller scale. Isolated groups of teachers could have been easily fired and replaced. Confined to a few locations, the political impact would have been minimal—a blip on the radar rather than an event that’s seized the entire state’s attention.

The public sector strikes of the 1960s and ’70s were similarly captivating affairs, leveraging solidarity and mass action to grab headlines for weeks. When sanitation workers struck in Baltimore in 1974, for example, they were soon joined on the picket line by a range of other city employees. As garbage piled up, and all city workers went out on strike, the dispute dominated the news in the city and forced policymakers to respond.

Employers hate solidarity. They work to particularize workplace disputes, to make them problems of individual workers rather than group disputes. In the case of public employees, this takes the form of outlawing collective bargaining or, failing that, forcing workers to bargain in small groups. West Virginia teachers have rejected that restricted framework. In doing so, they have given the most ...continued on page 8
powerful advice they could to the labor movement—“go big or go home.”

By all accounts, the strike is a bottom-up rebellion. It was organized by rank-and-file teachers, with state teachers’ unions scrambling to catch up. This, more than anything, should give labor partisans hope. We have had decades of inaction by national union leadership, thousands of pages of drivel from union pundits, and little in the way of action. If the labor movement is going to revive, it will be from the bottom up.

The early history of public employee unions is again instructive. Entering the 1960s, most public sector unions were conservative, weak, ineffectual, and adamantly opposed to public employee strikes. Most had provisions in their constitutions barring locals from striking, and believed the way to make gains was to appear respectable.

Rank-and-file workers rebelled against this framework. They ignored the national union leadership, court injunctions, and the corporate media. They dismissed union leaders who told them to go back to work. They replaced hidebound leaders, or formed new unions.

Through ambitious action, they made the public sector a bastion of unionism.

The Age of Janus

On February 27, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the case Janus v AFSCME, which will likely bring “right to work” to public workplaces across the country. Janus is not really about union dues or even about exclusive representation. It is part of a concerted attack on public employee unionism that seeks to roll back the gains achieved over half a century ago. It is part of a deeper, historic attack on the very idea that workers should be able to band together to fight corporate power.

In the Janus framework, public employees (and all employees) should deal with employers as individuals. Unions—where they are allowed to exist—are merely collections of individuals instead of instruments of the working class.

Rather than accept that defeatist framework, labor must re-embrace solidarity and militancy, and look to rank-and-file action to propel it out of its moribund state. Call it the West Virginia option.

Joe Burns is a veteran union negotiator and labor lawyer and the author of Strike Back and Reviving the Strike.

Mike Pavano, New Haven Public Schools Teacher of the Year 2018

The other finalists were:

Chevaunne Breland (top photo) teaches English at Hillhouse and is a former graduate who studied at Georgetown and Yale.

Rocio Barahona (middle photo) is a first grade bilingual teacher at Clinton Ave School (since 2006) and passionately pushes the Clinton Ave community to support the bilingual, biliterate and bicultural development of her students.

Catherine DeNaples (bottom photo) is a pre-kindergarten teacher at Davis Street Arts & Academics School. She has embraced the AFT–led Restorative Practice Program, as well as the Comer School Development Program.

As school year 2018 closes, let’s congratulate and give well deserved recognition to our colleagues. They represent the very best of the New Haven Federation of Teachers!