President’s Corner
by Richard Stutman

Yearly Budgetary Uncertainties Create Chaos

Is this any way to run a school system?

“Outraged by a $51 million gap in the Boston Public Schools budget and cuts related to it, local community leaders supported by Boston City Councilors Chuck Turner and Charles Yancey demanded a meeting with Mayor Thomas M. Menino yesterday to insist he reverse the budget decisions of Superintendent Thomas W. Payzant and the mayorally-appointed school committee…”

Boston Globe, April 10, 2002

This is not an article about how our schools can obtain more funding – rather, it’s about how yearly budgetary uncertainties cause unnecessary chaos. Our schools do not have independent funding sources, although some small number have the capacity to raise a few thousand dollars here and there. Our schools are totally dependent on the resources given them by the city, which could do a better job, and the state, which does a terrible job. The city has some – but not great – authority to raise its own revenue, but its tax collection system is over reliant on property taxes, which have two significant and self-limiting flaws: 1) the property tax is regressive and not income-based; and 2) about one half of Boston property is tax-exempt, so our large local institutions like Northeastern and the Museum of Fine Arts don’t have to contribute one dime towards the running of our city. And that’s about what they contribute. But let’s not let the city off the hook – other city departments do not have to beg for adequate resources year in and year out.

“Mayor Thomas M. Menino said yesterday that Boston will tap into its emergency reserve fund and make deeper cuts to other departments to help the school district make up a $120 million deficit, but acknowledged the city will not stave off teacher layoffs or prevent school closures…”

Boston Globe, March 26, 2003

The state has cut back on aid (educational and “local”) for decades and under the current state leadership this dynamic is not going to change short-term.

“…The School Committee is scheduled to vote on the district’s final budget on March 24. For this school year, Boston faced a $55 million budget shortfall - the biggest fiscal crisis in three decades…”

Boston Globe, January 15, 2004

“…While the drop will not greatly affect next year’s budget, he said, the district anticipates losing at least $35 million in state aid because of students who leave the district for charter schools…”

Boston Globe, February 2, 2006

On Wednesday, February 17, hundreds of Boston education activists, organized by the Boston Education Justice Alliance, participated in “walk-ins” of both Boston City Hall and the Massachusetts State House. These “walk-ins” were part of a National Day of Action coordinated by the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools.

See more photos on pages 6 & 7
The Death of Justice Antonin Scalia and its implication on the Friedrichs Case

The news of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia’s death sent shockwaves around the nation. When I learned of his passing, I was speaking with teachers from California and Arizona. They were as stunned as I. Naturally, we all pondered how the Friedrichs Case would be affected and what the predicted 4-4 decision would mean to each of us in our various states. My California colleagues had plenty to say, as you might imagine.

Few people have as much impact upon our country as our Supreme Court justices. Reversing a SCOTUS decision is rare, costly, and time consuming. Thus great efforts are made and enormous resources are consumed by both sides of a SCOTUS case. For us Massachusetts teachers the biggest case of our careers hangs in the balance.

To make a long story short, the Friedrich’s case is whether or not employees in a so-called union shop (like the BPS) who do not want to join the union (BTU) must still pay an agency fee, also known as fair-share dues. In a 1977 ruling, *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education*, SCOTUS said that non-union members did not have to pay union dues but had to pay a fee to cover the cost of negotiating and enforcing their employment contracts. The distinction being that “dues” include support of political agendas but “fees,” a lesser amount than dues, would only cover contractual issues. *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association et al.* would change that.

Should the petitioners in Friedrichs prevail, no one would be required to pay even the agency fee. Such payments would be optional. The American Federation of Teachers brought to life, we are witnessing the beginning of a major political circus.

With Justice Scalia’s death, even more drama has been added to the ruling. It is believed that the Court will rule 4-4 on case. Any tie vote by SCOTUS means that the lower court’s decision stands. In this situation, Friedrichs would lose and the California Teachers Association would win.

Before the oral arguments began in January of this year, many people on both sides of *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association* believed that Antonin Scalia would be sympathetic to the unions. However, on the first day of hearings, Scalia was noticeably aggressive in his questioning of the California Teachers Association. Many court watchers suspected that Scalia would become the fifth tie-vote on the Friedrichs case. Now SCOTUS maybe deadlocked on the case. A tie reverts to the findings of the lower courts, which means *Abood* would be upheld.

**FRIEDRICHs: What’s at stake?**

Why billionaires and corporate CEOs are trying to end fair-share

America’s economy has swung out of balance.

- It’s getting harder to get by, let alone get ahead.
- Everyday Americans are working more than ever, creating record wealth for an economic recovery that’s shown up everywhere but ordinary people’s wallets.

- Our economic rules unfairly favor corporate CEOs and the rich because they manipulate the rules in their favor.

Unions are groups of everyday people who come together to make their voices heard on issues that affect all of us:

- Fighting for adequate funding for schools, colleges, hospitals and public services;
- Holding billionaires and corporate CEOs accountable for paying their fair share;
- Bunding together and speaking with one voice that benefits our communities and the people we serve.

Why is fair-share fair?

- Everyone can choose whether or not to join a union at work, and nothing in this case will change that.
- No employee is required to join a union and no employee is required to pay any fees that go to politics or political candidates.
- Employees who don’t want to belong to a union only have to contribute to the costs of the representation they receive—their fair-share.

Why do billionaires and corporate CEOs want to wipe-out fair-share?

- When the majority of people vote to form a union, the union is required by law to represent everyone in the workplace, whether that employee is a union member or not.
- Friedrichs-backers are betting that, if the courts throw-out fair-share and our unions are forced to give away services for free, this will leave our unions without the resources we need to advocate for working people and the communities we serve.

Corporative CEOs and wealthy special interests are backing Friedrichs because:

- They want to continue manipulating the economic rules in their favor.
- They want to prevent us from organizing and restoring balance and stability to the economy.
- They want to make it even harder for working people like us -- teachers and school employees, nurses and public service workers -- to come together and speak up for each other and the communities we serve.

**The Pelican Brief**

Michael J. Maguire
Boston Union Teacher
Co-Editor
How Do I Interpret the BPS Seniority List?

The seniority list for BPS employees in the teachers bargaining unit includes only those teacher bargaining unit members who have been assigned a Professional Teaching Status or as BPS refers to it, permanent status; provisions or those in acting positions are not included, and thus have no bearing on the interpretation of this document. It is very important to annually review the seniority list to make sure your information is up to date, to see what status your licensure, assignment, and PPA designation stands. The Program Area is listed as, whether your (APA) Alternate Program Area(s) are up to date, and to monitor your seniority order by PPA in your school/district. The list is usually updated mid-January of each school year, just prior to the staffing season and on-line on the BPS website.

The teachers’ seniority list is aggregated in three separate ways. Each of these lists contains the same information that is grouped in a way that accesses the information differently. One way is by alphabetical (alpha) order; this list contains all personnel teachers in its correct order listed by alphabetical order irrespective of their PPA or school department. The second way is by (PPA) Primary Program Area; this list reflects all of the teachers aggregated by the PPA they are listed in currently by seniority order. This section of the list has a hierarchy that is grouped in a way that accesses the information differently. Another way a teacher may have activated an additional program area through filling out a form the SY prior in the Superintendent’s Circular IRS #7. This list contains all permanent teachers in the district that is grouped in a way that accesses the information differently. These lists contains the same information that is grouped in a way that accesses the information differently. One way is by alphabetical (alpha) order; this list contains all personnel teachers in its correct order listed by alphabetical order irrespective of their PPA or school department.

Further along the top line of the seniority report form are designations for Gender, Equity Group, Veterans Status and Status. Next to the teachers’ name – Primary Program Area is a component of the process that the teacher is in charge of initiating and once approved by OHC, is good for five years.

The following info describes how to read the seniority list by reconstructing the form. Look at the top row of labels listed vertically above the top line on the page of the seniority report. Start at the far left side of this area of the form. Employee ID # speaks for itself. Directly next to the actual ID#, in the body of the report will be the teacher’s name, last name first as it officially appears in the BPS records. Very important is what is listed directly below the teachers’ name – Primary Program Area (PPA). This is what each teachers PPA is listed as for purposes of excessing, layout, and is supposed to reflect what the teacher is qualified to teach. Please keep track of this designation as it is how each teacher is listed on the school’s roster. Only the school administrator in conjunction with the Department of Capital and Staffing can change this designation. However, it is if absolutely not what the teacher is teaching, that teacher should question it with their school/department administrator and let them respective BTU Field Rep know as it could adversely affect the teacher in being wrongfully excessed, etc.

Looking back to the top line of the seniority report page is listed Dept ID which is the number for the school and next to that is the teacher’s title which is the name of the school the teacher is assigned to. Below the top line, on the same level and to the right of the PPA, is the Alt. Program Area. Next to the teacher’s name – Alternate Program Area is a component of the process that the teacher is in charge of initiating and once approved by OHC, is good for five years.

In order to view your personnel file, go to the BPS Office of Human Capital on the fourth floor of the BPS Headquarters in the Building within a reasonable enough time during regular business hours (9-5) for OHC to retrieve it and for you to then look at its’ contents. A photo ID to verify your identity in order to have access to your file must be presented. If you’d like to contact the OHC Department you may call them directly at 617 653-9600. A teacher has a right to access to his or her file without delay. You also have access to your ‘teacher files’ at the individual school level, if your principal/headmaster keeps them there as well. The same parameters detailed below apply to your official files at OHC and to the ones at school if kept.

The BTU labor agreement states, “No material derogatory to a teacher’s conduct, service, character, or personality shall be placed in the files unless the teacher has had an opportunity to read the material. The teacher shall acknowledge that he or she has read such material by affixing his/her signature on the actual copy to be filed, with the teacher having a right and duty to request the return of such material to which the teacher has a right.”

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Good Night and Good Luck: Madison Park High School, 1975-2015

The above title is based on the famous sign-off by Edward R. Murrow of CBS News back in the day when Americans listened to the radio for their evening news. Today the news is CNN with breaking news from Phnom Penh to Pensacola every day, every hour, all the time. The demise of Madison Park is very personal to me. It’s something that would require a very personal response from someone committed to fairness and justice – someone like Edward R. Murrow. I was pleased to be at the birth of Madison Park entity. Madison’s demise is like a death in the family. Its about as personal as it gets.

Walk back in time. 1974 several of the staff members of Brighton High School met with several parents from the South End and Roxbury to plan a new magnet high school in Roxbury Crossing. The term magnet is archaic now but back then it connote an attractive school that would draw voluntarily all races, classes, and creeds to the site. In retrospect, in a Boston awash and aflame in racism, it was a naive, well-meaning proposal.

Everyone over the age of 50 in Boston remembers the “busing” crisis that erupt ed the following year, 1975. Our little group anticipated this and petitioned the Court to staff the new school. The petition was granted and Madison Park temporarily opened up with the buildings in Park Square.

In those days I took the “J” to Arlington Station to my job, teaching US History and World History. As I rounded the corner of Berkeley and Columbus, myself and sev eral hundred students and scores of teachers were greeted with a phalanx of Tactical Police Force men. Instead of making us safe and secure they succeeded in scaring the bejesus out of us. So long as the Court controlled every thing our lives in Park Square were relatively pleasant. The staff was given a lot of help with curriculum, discipline and parent help. Our site, unlike Southie, Hyde Park, or Charlestown was not about turf. Also, the kids – mostly from Brighton and Mission Hill wanted to be there.

It didn’t take too long for this idyllic situation to pass into history. We moved to the new Dudley site in 1976 (the street is now called Malcolm X Boulevard) and the Court left us to the bosom of our dear School Department, which was still the stronghold of rac ists who were more concerned with keeping order at the above mentioned schools.

In the 1980’s the OCR (Occupational Resource Cen ter) moved to the site with a new building dedicated to Hubert Horatio Humphrey. The OCR was the successor to Boston Trade High School, OCR merged with Madison Park High School in the mid 1980’s. I was present during the negotia tions as faculty senate president for MP and I and my colleagues were satisfied that a true vocational technical school was in the very near future.

Now the idea of vocational technical schooling was anathema to those who felt that a Humanities-based high school similar to Boston Latin or Boston Latin Academy would best serve our students. That program would probably serve at best 10% of our clients. The remaining 90% were special needs or failing in one or more traditional subjects.

Furthermore, for the school to be a true Vocational Technical High School, like Blue Hills for example, it would have to have an entrance exam. Dumping kids who had flunked every test and had no interest in skills based learning would be a true killer to a true Voc. Tech. institution.

Lest you who read this be puzzled by my point of view let me demystify the situ ation. Madison Park Vocational Technical High School was killed by incredibly bad management as well as the diffident and distant oversight by the school depart ment. The teachers were heroic and very competent in the various planning situations that they faced. The sessions were duly recorded. Historians of the mid-21st Century will see enough physical evidence to show that the teachers were right and the management horribly wrong.

Finally, who killed Madison Park? The jury returns with an unequivocal verdict: Politics and the BSC’s haphazard dealings from 1976 to 2015. Good Night and Good Luck to all!

(Paul Tenney is a member of the Retired Teachers Chapter 87TU.)

Yearly Budgetary Uncertainties Create Chaos...

Yeardly budgetary uncertainties cause chaos...

continued from page 1...

But this article is more about the yearly budgetary uncertainty that our schools face. There are all sorts of ways yearly budget fluctuations play out.

For example, a school adds Spanish for 6th graders and tells parents that their children can count on the language for three years, until high school. Budget uncertainty arises, and then, oops – instead of teaching the Spanish teacher go. We’ll find another potential subject for your child in the 7th and 8th grades.

“…Superintendent Carol Johnson faces a $312 million shortfall in next year’s budget as she tries to implement ambitious changes, raise graduation rates and keep the ball rolling in the Boston school system…”

Boston Globe, February 7, 2008

Or a school adopts an inclusion model calling for gradual expansion of the program, grade by grade. Oops, again – we’re having a budgetary shortfall and back to excess two teachers and a paraprofessional.

“…Johnson is seeking to downsize the school district as part of a plan to remediate a potential $63 million shortfall for the next school year, a bleak financial picture that is expected to confront the district for the next few years…”

December 9, 2010

Sometimes, it’s less drastic, but still disruptive and counterproductive: like the para librarian whose hours are cut from a full time 1.0 FTE to a “.8” or “.6”. Or the art teacher who now has to travel each week to three schools, up from two, spreading his or her time over 900 students, rather than 600. At any wonder that our students have huge gaps of knowledge? Some of our students go through to graduation without art or music. Or Spanish or French.

...”Boston public schools would close a $63 million shortfall by cutting about 250 positions and restructuring class-size averages, and will also use an infusion of city and federal funds, according to a proposed budget presented to the School Committee last night.”

Boston Globe, February 3, 2011

All of the above yearly machinations are disruptive and harmful. They hurt planning, they interfere with setting long-range goals. Or even short-term goals. It really is no way to run a school system.

It’s really no way to run any institution. Can you imagine a Fortune 500 company, like GE, having to weather a 5% to 10% budget recalculation for 15 consecutive years? Out with the Board of Directors! Speaking of GE, by now all have heard that between the city and the state, GE has received $150 Million worth of preferential tax treatment, infrastructure improvements like a helipad, and premium ferry service – not to mention a new bridge to the Financial District – as an incentive to move its corporate headquarters to Boston. But the move had generated a lot of controversy, so watch GE offer an olive branch to the city, GE will either adopt a school, probably a charter, or will offer a science-technology program to the BPS. And they’ll call a press confer ence, and all will be forgotten. Not.

“…That means that even though state aid has increased slightly for Boston, less of the money is actually going to the traditional school system. For instance this year…”

Boston Globe, February 5, 2015

...”In all, the School Department had to cut over $100 million in spending to balance next year’s budget…”

Boston Globe, March 27, 2014

An often-overlooked piece embedded in yearly budget struggles is the tremendous time and energy spent by school staff in fighting to restore budget cuts, and failing that, to prepare the school for a reduced budget. Schedules have to be rejiggered, students reshuffled, programs stripped then restarted, and staff removed. There is disruption with widespread repercussions. Do we ever see that in any of the other major city depart ments, like police or fire? Of course not.

“…The cuts, McDonough said in an interview before the meeting, are an unfort unate reality the school system must face as the cost of doing business rises faster than revenue, creating a potential shortfall of $42 million to $51 million.”

Boston Globe, February 5, 2015

So, what’s the solution? Our schools need a steady, predictable, inflation-proof source of revenue. This yearly tug of war is needless and disruptive. The loss of $121 million to charters – ongoing and increasing yearly – is unfair to our schools and our students.

“Boston Public Schools faces a budget deficit of up to $50 million for the coming fisc al year, as expenses increase and federal and state aid to the School Department declines, Superintendent Tommy Chang said Tuesday. Chang, in a letter to parents, pledged that no schools would close due to the shortfall. But he said $20 million will be cut from the central office budget and $10 million to $12 million more will be saved by trimming the per-student funding formula, affecting the budgets of individual schools…”

Boston Globe, January 12, 2016

Our school and city leaders must lead and advocate for budgetary change. To do any less is to condone the present system of uncertainty. And that is something our schools cannot afford.

NEWS ITEM: LIFE SPAN GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR LENGTHENS

HUGO DURAN/C.getFile(160x781,436x971).jpg

OR NOT...

BOSTON GLOBE, JUNE 1, 2004

4 BOSTON UNION TEACHER | March, 2016

Commentary

by Paul Tenney
I love a great movie montage, where people can change leaps and bounds over the course of one song. In the 1984 movie Footloose, for example, it only takes three minutes for Andrew Shue’s character to transform from a beautiful 80’s synthpop for Chris Penn to learn how to dance. At the start of the movie, according to the advice from the experts:

Failure is part of the process. Making change requires trying out new habits and new techniques. These won’t all be a perfect fit and they won’t all be successful from day one. Patterson uses the mantra “turn bad days into good data.” This means that even our failures can be a useful learning tool to figure out which strategies work and which do not. Sheila Heen and Doug Stone, authors of Thanks for the Feedback call the “J-curve” because performance often dips down before going back up. “The truth is, at any time you’re likely to fall back into old habits, approach, or working on a new skill, you are likely to get worse before you get better. And more important, you are likely to feel worse before you feel better. In these moments, it’s useful to know that a common trajectory isn’t further downward, but eventually back up.”

Have a Growth Mindset. As educators, we (hopefully) have internalized the idea that our students and their abilities are not “fixed” and instead believe that they can build skills and become smarter over time. A few years ago, I volunteered to be in my school’s chorus to sing a gospel song at the graduation ceremony. With practice and a little help from students, I learned the tune. However, when I completely lost my depth when I realized that the performance also required me to step and clap along with the rhythm. My gut told me to drop out so that I wouldn’t look stupid in front of the whole school, but I opted instead to have a growth mindset. With the help of another rurally-challenged colleague, we practiced stepping and clapping together during our common planning time (much to the amusement of the rest of the people on our team). And we made it through the performance with our dignity intact.

Take Baby Steps. Switch has a great reminder that if baboons can be trained to ride skateboards, then we should be able to train ourselves to learn new skills as well. The authors tell us to mark off bite-sized steps along the way to your destination and celebrate each tiny step forward. Like Dorothy’s journey in The Wizard of Oz, we can choose to celebrate each step along the yellow brick road by saying “I’m one step closer to my destination,” instead of saying, “I’ve failed again to get to the Emerald City.” When we celebrate positive moments, we’re more likely to stay motivated in the face of change. And even tough guys can benefit from positive reinforcement. NFL coach Bill Parcells said,”I accentuate the positive and which do not.” Sheila Heen and Doug Stone, authors of Thanks for the Feedback call the “J-curve” because performance often dips down before going back up. “The truth is, at any time you’re likely to fall back into old habits, approach, or working on a new skill, you are likely to get worse before you get better. And more important, you are likely to feel worse before you feel better. In these moments, it’s useful to know that a common trajectory isn’t further downward, but eventually back up.”

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March/Rally for Our Public Schools at Boston City Hall & Massachusetts State House

Photos by Colum Whyte
By Jessica Tang

On January 14, 2016, over 400 parents, students, educators and community members gathered at Madison Park to attend an "Emergency Town Hall" to discuss the future of public schools in Boston. The Town hall included a panel of speakers, who presented evidence of the negative impacts of many of these challenges facing public education, including the charter ballot initiative, funding deficits, the Boston Compact and Enroll Boston. The Boston Collaborative also heard from the Boston Education Justice Alliance members and how stakeholders were working together to fight the negative impacts of many of these challenges.

Following the town hall, the BTU organizes and many BTU members, along with the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) and the Boston School Committee, plan a follow-up Day of Action on February 17, 2016. The action was a part of a national effort that involved over thirty cities and 800 schools through the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools. Most cities planned "walk-ins" (as opposed to "walk-outs") to show support for public schools across the country. In Boston, the day fell during February vacation, so the Boston Education Justice Alliance also delivered the coalition signatures. (The petition can still be signed by email at btu@btu.org)

The participants in the rally delivered a "Stop the Cuts" petition, created by BTU member Roberta Udoh that to date, has over 4,000 signatures. (The petition can still be signed at btu.org/bpsbudget). The Education Justice Alliance also delivered the coalition stakeholders’ demands for a “People’s Move- ment for Boston Public Education."

Rev. Dickerson, a BPS parent, said, “What does it say about how our city and economy. Our public schools have struggled for generations to become inclusive across differences of race and class. The Boston Collaborative Alliance for Educational Justice (AEJ) is a student at Boston Latin School, added, “The BPS budget cuts are making our schools worse, and they are pushing our students out. Teachers, leaders and staff, Implement curricula in all BPS schools that explore our diverse histories, cultures and countries of origin and expose our students to international human rights and responsibilities."

We call on Mayor Marty Walsh, the City Council and State officials to:

1. Join with Boston’s students, families and community members to aggressively advocate this fiscal year for full and fair funding of public schools at the local, state, and federal levels, including but not limited to:
   a. Fully funding $18.6 million in state reimbursements required by law to compensate BPS for its loss of state education funds diverted to state-authorized charter schools.2
   b. Fully funding the Special Education Circuit Breaker reimbursements to the City.3
   c. Requiring local universities and other large nonprofits to pay the remaining $12.7 million owed in PILOT payments from FY15.4
   d. Fully funding the state’s Foundation Budget Review recommendations.5
   e. Progressively raising funds from the wealthiest in our City, including our largest corporations, in order to close the $50 million shortfall of $50 million.
   f. Restore and make whole the $140 million of budget cuts in the last three years. Create sustainable long-term funding for the BPS district.
   g. Invest in “Hub Schools” which include a multi-cultural, relevant and enriched curriculum; augmented services for students and teachers; wrap-around services and authentic family and community engagement.
   h. Prioritize investments in all level 4 and 5 schools with the highest needs populations.
   i. Address disparities of race and culture. Meet and exceed outstanding court orders to hire and retain diverse teachers, leaders and staff. Implement curricula in all BPS schools that explore our diverse histories, cultures and countries of origin and expose our students to international human rights and responsibilities.
   j. Eliminate the high stakes uses of standardized tests in K-12 and reduce the frequency of testing beyond that mandated by the recent federal law. Ban high stakes testing in grades Pre-K to 3. Implement authentic, performance based assessments that support our students to reach their fullest potential in a truly democratic society.
   k. End the school to prison pipeline, implementing policies and practices that prepare students for full and fair participation in higher education and the economy. Create a multi-social service implementation using school-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports & Restorative Justice practices.
   l. Modernize BPS school facilities. Ensure that the 10 Year Educational and Facilities Master Plan for BPS is just and equitable.
   m. Halt all efforts to implement a universal enrollment system (one lottery system for assigning students to BPS schools) as it will enshrine "neighborhood" charter schools that would further segregate students. Stop the Boston Compact’s plans to outsource school assignments to a third-party administrator, rather than BPS or the City. Across the country, these enrollment schemes increased school closures and discouraged public schools district.
   n. Place a moratorium on charter expansion, which masks the corporate privatization of public education in the City of Boston and the nation. Expansions of multiple charter districts in Boston threaten the future sustainability of the Boston Public Schools district, which serves all students including the most marginalized.
   o. Democratize the governance of public schools, with elected Boston School Committee member and 2 voting student members.

1. http://www.bostonpublicschool.org/cms/b07/M0A9016644/CntrCity/Dongan/d4Y7YF7ADF
7. http://www.masspublicschools.org/cms/b07/M0A9016644/CntrCity/Dongan/d4Y7YF7ADF

February 17, 2016 – BEJA Walk-In and Rally for Public Education Endorsements

Boston Education Justice Alliance Members:

American Federation of Teachers-Massachusetts (AFT-MA)
Boston Neighborhood Justice

Boston Teachers Union (BTU)
Boston Parent Union (BPU)
Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC) / Youth on Board (YOB)
Boston-area Youth Organizing Project (BYOP)

Boston Compact and Enroll Boston

Coalition for Equal Quality Education (CEQE)

Coalition for Quality Education (CQED) [which includes the Black Educators Alliance of Eastern Massachusetts [BEAM], the Bus Drivers Union, the City School, and El Movimiento]

Education Justice Alliance (AEJ)

Environment Justice Action Coalition

Fair Test

Justice with Justice (JW)

Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (MassCOSH)

Peace Boston

Press Pass TV

United for a Fair Economy

Winners of MassPSC’s “Our Schools Our Future” Video Challenge

Yourth Organizers United for the Now Generation

Bikes Not Bombs

Andover Bread Loaf

XQ (Youth) Coalition

Boston Parent Union (BPU) (one computer lottery) for assigning students to BPS district schools and non-district “neighborhood” charter schools that would further segregate students. Stop the Boston Compact’s plans to outsource school assignments to a third-party administrator, rather than BPS or the City. Across the country, these enrollment schemes increased school closures and disinvested in public schools district.

Place a moratorium on charter expansion, which masks the corporate privatization of public education in the City of Boston and the nation. Expansions of multiple charter districts in Boston threaten the future sustainability of the Boston Public Schools district, which serves all students including the most marginalized.

Democratize the governance of public schools, with elected Boston School Committee member and 2 voting student members.

1. http://www.bostonpublicschool.org/cms/b07/M0A9016644/CntrCity/Dongan/d4Y7YF7ADF
5. http://www.masspublicschools.org/cms/b07/M0A9016644/CntrCity/Dongan/d4Y7YF7ADF
The Stickers Tell the Story!
BTU Rallies to Support Quality Public Education

Photos by Jessica Tang
By Jessica Tang, Shanika Houlder and Jonathan Rodrigues

Part of the strategy for engaging members has been through the creation of organizing committees that are working on influencing policy and practice in a number of areas of interest. Below is a summary of recent activities and upcoming dates for each of the currently active organizing committees.

All committees are open to all BTU members, including retirees. If you are interested in joining a committee, please contact one of the organizers: Jessica Tang, Director of Organizing, jtang@btu.org; Shanika Houlder, Internal Organizer, shoulder@btu.org, Jonathan Rodrigues, External Organizer, jrodrigues@btu.org.

Inclusion Committee – Members met in February and decided to attend the March 3rd forum at the Bolling Building (4:30-6:30 pm) with new head of Social Emotional Learning, Amalio Nieves. On April 6th, members will host parent and advocacy organization allies to talk about how they can advocate together in one voice before BPS. Members are also deciding if they would like to testify their concerns before the budget season is over in March.

Less Testing, More Learning – LTML scheduled a follow-up meeting with Dr. Chang and other BPS Leaders to discuss, testing concerns in the district. The meeting is scheduled for March 28th 4:30-6:00 pm at the BTU.

ELL – Members met in February, deciding they would organize to recruit more members to participate at their schools. Also, there was a call out to members that would like to participate in OELL’s new Master Plan planning group. This is one of the principal demands from the committee so we are in communication on what would be our major principles in this process.

Restorative Justice – The RJOC is working to schedule a follow-up meeting with Amalio Nieves per his request. The RJOC professional development series has been a great success, with over sixty members in attendance at the last session. The RJOC has also collaborated its PDs with a graduate course out of Cambridge College, so that members registered for the course will attend BTU RJOC PDs as a part of the course requirements.

New Educators – The next social is at the Blarney Stone, March 11th, 4:30-7 pm. Also, a few member representatives will table and speak at the Pathway to Good Jobs event hosted by the Futures Committee of the Greater Boston Labor Council here at the BTU March 5th 10 am-2:30 pm.

LGBTQA – The LGBTQA committee has launched their art contest for BPS students, and are collecting entries. They will be sending out packages to almost 90 Safe Space Providers this week, and are planning listening sessions to hear from students on what their needs are from educators concerning LGBTQA issues. Our findings will instruct our work when building our program’s resource binders.

Visual and Performing Arts – The group will be meeting next week, Monday 29th, 4:30-6:00 pm, to analyze the district’s data concerning the arts and plan meeting with BPS leadership and committee next steps.

History and Social Studies – The committee received the five-year staff report from our data request to BPS. At our meeting last Monday we started parsing through the data, much of which is alarming due to the number of uncertified history teachers and humanities courses BPS is offering instead of history proper. A member of Councilor Jackson’s office attended as well – he will be calling for a hearing soon on this issue.

Immigrant Rights – They will be work-
On Saturday, February 17, BTU members came together for the 2nd Annual BTU Winter Conference. This year the conference was open not just to Building Reps, but to all BTU members. President Richard Stutman began with an update on the contract negotiations and major challenges facing our union this year, including staffing updates, the Friedrich’s court case and charter school ballot initiative.

AFT President Randi Weingarten was in town for the AFT-MA Board meeting, and stopped by to share remarks. Senator Ed Markey also at the BTU hall that morning for the Hillary Clinton campaign, took time to speak to our members as well. Other guests included City Councilor Tito Jackson and City Councilor Ayanna Pressley’s Chief of Staff.

The morning panel included updates about the Friedrich’s case from BTU attorney Matt Dwyer, information about the Mass Education Justice Alliance charter ballot initiative fight from Jobs With Justice Executive Director Russ Davis, a presentation about the budget and public school funding from Mass Budget and Policy Center’s Colin Jones, and ended with a discussion of the Boston Compact and “Enroll Boston” plan from Megan Wolff, a parent with Quality Education for Every Student.

After the panel, members broke out into workshops and participated in lunch-

BTU Secondary Field Rep Caren Carew leads a workshop on supporting BTU staff faced with disciplinary action.

An Education Policy Workshop was a part of the BTU Winter Conference.

An Education Policy Workshop was a part of the BTU Winter Conference.

This afternoon highlight was keynote speaker Jeanne Kaplan, who served on the elected Denver School Board for eight years. She shared data and lessons learned from reform efforts in Denver, focusing on initiatives that are similarly being pushed in Boston. Many of the facts she shared are on her blog: kaplanforkids.wordpress.com and her speech will be posted on the site as well.

One of her main messages was the importance of working with parents, students and community members to fight back the threats to a sustainable quality public education. She was hopeful that here in Boston, we will be able to defeat many of the harmful measures that have been passed in Denver. Fittingly, the conference was closed by Marléna Rose, Coordinator of the Boston Education Justice Alliance, who described ways that our local coalition is working with the BTU and other allies to fight for quality public schools in Boston.

SAVE THE DATES: BTU’s Summer Organizing Institute (also open to all members, including retirees) will be held on June 27-30, 2016.

MathRocks will be held on April 5th, 2016 at the BTU from 10 AM – 2 PM or so.

- We will again have a competition for two grade bands 4-5 and 6-8.
- There will be a limit of two students per grade per team.
- Each school will be allowed two teams if they have both grade bands. So a K-8 school, for example, gets one team of 4-5 and one team of 6-8.

Register your team at: http://btu.org/event/mathrocks-2016

BOSTON UNION TEACHER | March, 2016 11
The Mattahunt Elementary School is hidden away on a dead-end street off Harvard Street in Mattapan, behind a huge cemetery. It’s in a big, sprawling building serving 700+ students and organized by grade-level pods, which paraprofessional Irlanda Amado says help create a collaborative feeling among the staff.

Lesley Ryan Miller, a former NTD colleague and now Director of School Support at the Mattahunt, invited me to visit and showed me around the school. We started in the Kindergarten wing and watched K1 students making patterns with Pattern Blocks and other manipulatives. Erin Daly’s K2 students were practicing forming letters on individual white boards, while in another K2 class Matthew Conner was demonstrating how to say a long O as two boys read a book about bird nests.

Teachers and paras were helping children with autism use a variety of media in art class, from paints to modeling clay. Fourth graders in Lisaeth Minihane’s science class were learning how to make electrical circuits, working in small groups with batteries and bulbs and wire. When we walked into Jennifer Ansin’s third grade class, she asked us to contribute to the lesson she was leading on character traits! Lisa Scarlett had her first grade students eagerly researching animals with the help of laptop computers, while Flo Molyneaux was helping her fifth grade students evaluate and write persuasive arguments.

Our last stop was the swimming pool, where teacher Nigel Smith was teaching a group of fourth graders how to do the crawl, and para Kyla Tavares was providing 1:1 support to another group of students. In its third year as a turn-around school, the Mattahunt is struggling with stagnant test scores. Beth Crescenzo, whose fifth grade students all have special needs, told me she really likes being part of rebuilding and redeveloping a school. I hope she and her colleagues will have the opportunity to continue the good work they are doing on behalf of their students.

Amika Kemmler Ernst, Ed. D.
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We were making patterns with cubes. Ms. Lendy was helping us.
We’re learning how to count all the way to 100! We’ve learned how to help our friends clean up and when somebody falls, we help them get up.

Arianny Falc, Chinenye Lawrence, Kimoyo Randall, & Lailah Jabbie, K1

We were using the tiles to make arrays.
In math this year we’re learning our multiplication facts by heart. We’ve also learned about fractions and how to make up and solve our own equations.
Destenie Rodriguez, Arlyno Jones, & Justine Palmer, Grade 3

I’m following Ms. Beth’s directions to line the planets up in order. I’ve learned the names of the planets in Australia. Neptune is my favorite because it’s blue.
Makhi Tennyson, Grade 5

We were practicing math skills in technology class with the Symphony Math program. We’re also learning new vocabulary with Lexia.

Mardochie Blanc & Christian Jules, Grade 2

We were trying to make a circuit with 2 lightbulbs, 4 wires, and a battery. Our science teacher, Ms. Minihane, was helping us. We’ve learned that two batteries make the light so bright we had to shield our eyes! We’ve learned that metal is a good conductor and electricity can be dangerous if you don’t handle it properly.

Jahmir Mayard & Hosea Duverneau, Grade 4

We were looking at a website on the screen to learn all about kangaroos. We learned to work as a team and in families that help each other. They eat grass and they have a pouch to carry the baby joey.
Janyiah Greene, Chase Carter & Daniella Deeble, Grade 1

We were trying to count the animals we see every day.

Chase Carter & Daniella Deeble, Grade 1

We were practicing math skills with the Symphony Math program.

Mardochie Blanc & Christian Jules, Grade 2

We were reading Nest, Nest, Nest with Mr. Connor. We’re learning about owls. We’ve learned that they can turn their heads around without moving their bodies! We’ve also learned they are awake at night and have talons to catch their food.

Nehemiah Onujiogu & Emanuel Cardoso, K2