Proposed Election By-Law Changes

(The below proposal will be reported to the membership at its May meeting as notice for the June Membership meeting where it will appear for a vote. It was drafted by a committee of six people who met over a course of two months and many hours to put together a comprehensive document that lays out a series of procedures designed to correct the problems and issues that surfaced on the last election cycle. The language below was drafted by BTU Gen’l Counsel, Matthew Dwyer, who sat through each of the aforementioned committee meetings. The BTU Executive Board has approved a motion to pass along the below as delineated.)

Article VI, Section 3 shall be stricken in its entirety (including all language appearing in the paragraphs under the title “Election Procedures”), and replaced with the following new Section 3:

Section 3. An Election Committee consisting of fifteen (15) members in good standing of the BTU and/or the RTC shall be selected from among nominees who have submitted a written statement of interest to the President of the Union by the September 20th immediately preceding the preliminary and final elections. The President shall submit to the Executive Board the names of all such members in good standing who have submitted a timely statement of interest at the Executive Board’s first meeting after September 20.

The candidate for any office or position on the Executive Board shall be eligible to serve as a member of the Election Committee.

The Executive Board shall be solely responsible for selecting by majority vote at an open Executive Board Meeting Election Committee members from among those who have submitted a timely statement of interest to the President. The Election Committee members chosen by vote of the Executive Board shall be recorded in the minutes of its meeting and reported to the membership at its next regularly scheduled membership meeting.

The Election Committee shall be responsible for ensuring the accuracy of voter eligibility lists and for all aspects of responsible for ensuring the accuracy of membership meeting.

(a) The co-chairs, after consultation with the other members of the Election Committee, shall establish a schedule of meetings, an agenda for each meeting and shall notify all committee members of same.

(b) The secretary of the Election Committee shall keep written minutes of all meetings, which shall be scheduled outside regular working hours. Except for meetings dedicated to the validation of signatures, all meetings of the Election Committee shall be open to the membership of BTU and RTC. The minutes shall be published and made available for inspection.

(c) The Election Committee shall allot a reasonable time at each of its meetings for members in attendance to ask questions relating to the Committee’s proceedings and the election process. The questions, responses and discussion relating thereto shall be included in the minutes of the meeting.

Section 3 continued on page 4
Parent Group Uncovers “McKinsey Report” Rejects Legitimacy of Audit of BPS

Quality Education for Every Student (QUEST), a grassroots organization of Boston Public School parents, questioned the legitimacy of a city-commissioned audit of Boston Public Schools by McKinsey and Company and asked Mayor Marty Walsh and school officials to ensure that no policy decisions are made based on McKinsey’s flawed analysis. As Patricia Kinsella, a parent of two BPS students said, “The McKinsey report is wrong both in its numbers and its values. It treats students as commodities and schools as real estate investments. As a parent, I find this appraisal, which cost a huge amount of money at a time when our school budgets are being cut and which uses misleading data to undercut a real planning process, immoral.”

The report, which the city ordered and for which Boston Public Schools paid $660,000, concludes that BPS has 93,000 seats for 54,000 students and recommends the closure of 30-50 district schools. Though the McKinsey report was completed in April 2015, the public was not able to read the full document until April 27 of this year, after the city was ordered to comply with a public records request initiated by parents last December. In addition to problems with the report’s content, there are multiple examples of unsound methodology, particularly around the number of excess seats in Boston Public Schools. “The Mayor and others should stop falsely referring to BPS having 93,000 available seats,” said parent Mary Lewis-Pierce. “The McKinsey report’s ‘seats’ aren’t real. They don’t look at educational needs, and count the square footage of hallways and bathrooms as classroom space.” Parents said the report’s recommendations, which include selling school buildings with high resale value, closing schools with low test scores or which are expensive to repair, increasing class size, and cutting costs to students in need of special education services, would harm children and communities. QUEST stressed that in cities such as Chicago and Newark, school closures have disproportionately impacted children and communities of color, and undercut efforts to close achievement gaps.

QUEST would welcome a genuine audit focused on improving educational opportunities for all students and noted that a different facilities process is ongoing. But QUEST said the city’s use of McKinsey has tainted the overall facilities review. “Why hire a firm like McKinsey with a reputation for closing schools if that wasn’t your end goal?” Lewis-Pierce asked.

QUEST asks city and district officials to repudiate McKinsey as a credible source of data on school capacity. Further, QUEST says city and school officials should halt discussion of school closures, consolidations, or “right-sizing” until there is credible, publicly available, and locally-valid data regarding capacity. QUEST called on City Hall and BPS to commit to a planning process for the future of Boston Public Schools that is fully transparent, and fully vetted by the public. “The goal of any review,” concluded Kinsella, “must be equitable access to quality schools for all children, not short-sighted cost-saving.”


BTU Members are Active at the AFT-MA Conference

Music Teacher Sherry Pedone and Mildred Ave. K-8 students perform for delegates at the AFT-MA conference.

AFT-MA delegates debate a bylaw change on union dues.

Photos by Colum Whyte

Photos by Colum Whyte
What is the Process for Scheduling the 18 Professional Development Hours?

The contract language for Article V, Section 1 (a) reads, “The building administrator may establish professional development schedule provided that the meeting schedule be provided to the staff no later than the end of the school for the proceeding year.” The purpose of the time scheduled over the summer unless there is a waiver vote under CBA, and provided that no professional time be scheduled over the summer unless there is a waiver vote under CBA, and provided that no professional development time be scheduled on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, and must be at least two hours in length.”

The CBA (Collective Bargaining Agreement / Contract) provision referred to above speaks to the section under SSC (School Site Council) which calls for PD time if proposed by administration to be held during the summer, Saturdays, etc. as part of the 18 hours must be subject to a waiver vote of 66 2/3% to pass. For this type of vote the waiver provision under SSC in the contract must be followed. The contract language for Article V, Section 1 (a) reads, “The building administrator may establish the professional contract provisions in the previous contract. None of the contract provisions in the previous contract must be followed. The contract must be followed. The contract language for Article V, Section 1 (a) reads, “The building administrator may establish the professional contract provisions in the previous contract.

Vote of 66 2/3rds to pass. For this type of vote the waiver provision under SSC in the contract must be followed. The contract language for Article V, Section 1 (a) reads, “The building administrator may establish the professional contract provisions in the previous contract.

The contract also provides, “If a teacher at a school waive a provision in this contract as described [in the contract in detail] objects to the impact of that waiver on his or her job responsibilities, he or she shall be afforded an opportunity to appeal to another zone in the system without loss of seniority or benefits. The implementation of any such waiver shall be delayed until such transfer opportunity has been provided or voided the Teaching Committee reaches a decision within 30 days.”

The Teaching Committee is a joint labor-management team co-chaired by the BTU President and the BPS Superintendent, comprised of an equal number of BTU and Management selected members.

What is the Process for Scheduling the 18 Professional Development Hours?

The contract reads, “Whatever master schedule (e.g., six period day, seven period day, block schedule) is in effect in a middle or high school, the remain in effect in subsequent years unless a new type of schedule is approved through the waiver provisions under school-based management by a vote of 53% of the BTU staff.”

If there will be a change in “work conditions” – such as exceeding the maximum teaching load of 160 minutes per day, requiring teachers to teach more than 160 minutes in a row without a lunch break, planning and development periods, or the like – an administrative decision is made providing a minimum of 240 minutes of planning and development time each week, then the waiver process under School Site Council (contract pages 15 – 16) needs to be followed. The BTU allows portions of the standard contract to be waived utilizing this very specific process. Waiving (giving up or modifying) hard fought collective bargaining rights should not be entered into lightly or in an uninformative manner.

In order to waive work conditions as stated above, the School Site Council must approve the waiver, the Principal must approve the waiver, at least 66/2/3% of the members of the eligible BTU members affected who are present and voting must approve the waiver; such a vote to be conducted by the Union Representatives using a secret ballot after five (5) days’ notice to all those eligible to vote. If and when such a waiver vote is taken and passes all of the steps, “The Steering Committee shall be notified in writing of all waivers within five (5) days of their adoption.” Please notify the BTU Field Representatives in writing of a successful waiver vote as well.

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What Does the Contract of Interest Law Have to Do With Me?

The BPS Superintendent’s Circular LGL-19 “Conflict of Interest Law – City Employees” must be reviewed in its entirety, but is outlined here. This section seeks to prevent conflicts between private interests & public duties by placing restrictions on offering an agreement to stay to the job, after hours, & after leaving public service. If the law has been violated, serious civil penalties up to $10,000 or $25,000 for bribery cases may be imposed for each violation. You do not have to be a full-time, paid municipal employee to be considered for conflict of interest purposes. Anyone performing services for a city or town, holding a municipal position, paid or unpaid, including full & part-time employees, elected officials, volunteers, & consultants as well as consultants from private firms with a contract with the city/town in which the person is providing work/services to the municipality is subject to the provisions of this law.

The following are considered as the job restrictions under this law:

• Gifts, asking for & taking bribes is prohibited.

• Gifts & gratuities; Asking for or accepting a gift because of your official position, or because of something you can do or have done in your official position, is prohibited. In sum, gifts of $50 or more or a number of smaller gifts together worth $50 or more given to influence their official actions or because of their position may violate this section of the law.

• Misuse of position; Using your official position to get something you are not entitled to, or to get someone else something they are not entitled to, is prohibited. Causing someone else to do these things is also prohibited.

• Self-dealing & nepotism; Acting as a municipal employee in a matter in which you, your immediate family, your business organization, or your future employer has a financial interest is prohibited.

• False claims; presenting a false claim to your employer as a current or benefit is prohibited, & causing someone else to do so is also prohibited.

• Appearance of conflict; acting in a manner that would make a reasonable person think you can be improperly influenced is prohibited.

• Confidential information; improperly disclosing or personally using confidential information obtained through your job is prohibited.

• Voting to be conducted by the Union Representatives using a secret ballot after five (5) days of their adoption.

The following are considered as the job restrictions under this law:

• Taking a second paid job that conflicts with the duties of your municipal job is prohibited.

• Divided loyalties; receiving pay from anyone other than the city or town on a matter involving the city or town is prohibited. Acting as an attorney or agent for anyone other than the city or town in a matter involving the city or town is also prohibited whether or not you are paid.

• Inside track; being paid by your city or town, directly or indirectly, under some second arrangement in addition to your job is prohibited, unless an exemption applies.

• Forever ban; after you leave your municipal job, you may never work for anyone other than the municipality on a matter that you worked on as a municipal employee.

• One year cooling-off period: for one year after you leave your municipal job you may not participate in any matter over which you had official responsibility for your first two years of public service.

• Partners: your [business] partners will be subject to restrictions while you serve as a municipal employee and after your municipal service ends.

When to 'specialty' teachers obtain common Professional Development time?

In the collective current Bargaining Agreement (CBA or contract), this issue is addressed in the following manner. “All specialty teachers such as but not limited to art, music, physical education, guidance, district-wide shall meet as a group at least once annually during the contractual school year for a professional development day. On any one of the city-wide schools professional development days already scheduled or the academic calendar.” Please let the BTU know if this is not occurring.

Do itineraries get a place to secure files in schools they service?

There is an item in the contract that addresses this issue. It is found under a new area, Article VI, Section 18 and states, “The school committee agrees to provide a lockable file cabinet in each school and location serviced by itinerants (e.g., school psychologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech and language pathologists) for secure storage of student records.” Please let the BTU know if this is not occurring.
History Lessons on the High Seas

This past April break I sailed aboard the Disney Fantasy with my family. If ever there were a magical escape from reality, the Disney Cruise Line has found it. We sailed from Port Canaveral to Cozumel, from there to Grand Cayman, and finally to Disney’s private island in the Bahamas. As we sailed around the Caribbean, I would point out to my children where we were on a map that hung on a wall on Deck 5 Amidships.

As we twice passed by Cuba, I would give my children a brief history of the island and its relationship to the United States. (My children cringed when I would remind them that I met their mother in a US History class wherein we both studied the Cuban Missile Crisis.)

On Thursday, April 21, 2016 history came to life for us. While I was at breakfast that morning, a fellow passenger told me that there was a man overboard. I joined scores of other passengers to chance a glimpse in the waves. I wasn’t entirely certain I could see something. I could nearly convince myself that I had, but that would have been wishful thinking.

Just when I was thinking that maybe the report was a hoax, the commodore announced on the public address system that he was stopping the Fantasy in order to mount a rescue of three men whose boat had capsized. Since we were 40 miles from Cuba, he presumed the men were refugees seeking asylum in the United States. Thus, he declared, we would wait an hour or so for the U.S. Coast Guard to rendezvous with us.

As soon as the commodore finished his remarks, my children asked dozens of questions. What’s a refugee? Why did they want to leave Cuba? Where were they going? How long does it take to row from Cuba to Florida? So on and so forth.

The symbolism was not lost on me that a very ostentatious example of American capitalism would rescue three Cuban refugees from drowning.

Around noon that same day while we watching The Jungle Book in the movie theater, I went out for a popcorn refill just as the U.S. Coast Guard was taking possession of the three Cuban men.

Our vacation resumed as normal. A few days later we docked in the United States and began our journey back to Boston. In the Orlando airport my wife showed me an article published that day in the SunSentinel. Our assumption about the Cubans was wrong.

It turns out that the men were fleeing to Cuba. They were attempting to escape the U.S. in order to avoid charges of credit card fraud. As you can imagine, another series of questions from my children ensued. You never know when a teachable moment will pop up, or when it has to be retaught.

A Lesson in Family Engagement and Community Building...

continued from page 1

were amazing, and it was all donated by local businesses. When teachers, families, and the community all cooperate we all win. The cliche “many hands make light work” is advice that we all should follow. No amount of help is too little, or too much. What matters is that we are together.

Photos by Katie Manning and Colum Whyte
Engagement and Motivation

By Mark Lonergan with Anne Slater

It’s a little bit after 10 a.m. on a rainy April morning when I walk into Brenda Rosado’s class. The sixth grade class is at a Public School in Roxbury. Students are concluding their morning meeting on a rainbow-colored rug by playing a quick game of "Simon Says." (Simon Says) and getting ready to transition to their center work. A moment after the game wraps up, students go to their tables and get to work. Really get to work.

At one table, students are doing math problems: writing diagrams and explaining strategies to solve a word problem that they’ve glued into their yellow math journals. At another table, students are reading about polar bears and are writing down facts and an illustration in their green writing journals. Back on the rug, four students are listening to an audiobook and leafing through the pages to read along. Students at another table are holding magnifying glasses as they closely investigate a whelk egg case. Or, they are very eager to show me what else they are doing.

A brief summary of what Brenda checks in with. Then they get back to work, some staying where they are and others moving on to the next task. Students are right in the middle. It’s a level of productivity and focus that would make Henry Ford jealous. When I come back later, the students who were hard at work are still hard at work. What exactly is going on here? Are students motivated, engaged or both? And what conditions foster this level of engagement and motivation?

This month, we’ll look at what several experts have to say about the topic of DESE rubric element III,2.B (Student Engagement) and element III.B.3 (Student Motivation).

When I stepped into the role of coach and mentor 20 years ago, I knew they would be asking me, "What do you think student engagement and student motivation really look like and what conditions foster it?"

The third element of intrinsic motivation (Tasks and reward systems) and systems in intrinsic. The classification of reward systems and intrinsic is the first half of the book, explains how extrinsic and intrinsic motivation can be used. These "carrot and stick" reward and punishment structures, called "honest" and "dishonest" reward and punishment systems can create creativity, foster student self-confidence and extinguish the possibility that students will find deeper sources of intrinsic motivation.

Pink says, "We’re designed to be active and engaged. And we know what the best experiences in our lives aren’t when we’re clapping for validation from others, but when we’re listening to our own voice – doing something that matters, doing it well, and doing it in the service of a cause larger than ourselves." This is what makes work and the way we think about and address how we treat each other in our schools. The strength of character and self-control, the ability to work with others, and the ability to work in groups and contribute to a common goal are all intrinsically motivated.

Purpose can be achieved by communi- cating the "why" behind the assignment and how today’s task "contributes to the larger enterprise in which the class is engaged." The second element of intrinsic motivation is connection to the real world. Mastery is hard work: challenges that can be conquered in a single sitting will not promote mastery.

Pink describes mastery as "an asymptote" which you may remember from Algebra II as "an invisible boundary line that you can approach but never cross." Mastery means lots of hard work along with an understanding that there’s always room to get better.

The third element of intrinsic motivation is "flow." (which "empowers kids to be self-directed learners") and is really having on our students. And when we’re listening to our own voice – doing something that matters, doing it well, and doing it in the service of a cause larger than ourselves." This is what makes work and the way we think about and address how we treat each other in our schools. The strength of character and self-control, the ability to work with others, and the ability to work in groups and contribute to a common goal are all intrinsically motivated.

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On April 2nd, Teamsters Local 25 hosted their annual Autism Gala Fundraiser at Boston’s Intercontinental Hotel. The ninth annual Gala has raised millions of dollars over the years, making Teamsters Local 25 the top fundraiser of the New England Chapter of Autism Speaks.

BTU retiree Betty Kilgoar and I were honored at the event by Local 25’s President Sean O’Brien. As usual, many BTU members were at the gala, while even more teachers from other AFT and MTA locals enjoyed the dancing, libations, and food. The event included hosted food and wine stations - topped off with a dessert stations featuring chocolate fountains. A silent auction drew the crowd’s attention as people generously bid all night long.

WCVB’s Randy Price emceed while people danced to the lively covers of the Mar- cels and the songs played by deejay Hank Morse. The Boston Firefighters Pipes and Drum band and Irish step dancers added a ceremonial touch to a night well planned. A memorable time was had by all. I feel honored to have participated in such an important event and look forward to helping with next year’s extravaganza. Not only as teachers, nurses, paraprofessionals, and other related services in our schools- but also as parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends we ALL have been touched by a child with Autism. Although April is Autism Awareness Month let us hold close to our hearts the kids, both in school and in our families, that are represented by the Autism Awareness ribbon. The puzzle patterns speaks to the complexity of the Autism spectrum, while the different sized and colored shapes of the puzzle pieces represent the diversity of the millions of people and family living with Autism. The brightness of the ribbon stands for the hope that more people will become aware of autism. This awareness will create a future when children with autism will be supported through direct service and early intervention so that they may live their lives to the fullest. This brightness will lead to a better medical understanding of causes. Let’s be aware everyday. I hope to see more of you next April at the Gala.
New Educators Committee Takes Action!

By Jessica Tang,
BTU Director of Organizing

The BTU New Educators Committee has had a busy few months! The New Educators Committee is co-chaired by BTU teachers Natalia Cuadra-Saez (Lee School) and Genet Mehari (Curley School). The committee represented the BTU at several events over the last few months.

On Saturday, March 5th the Boston Teachers Union was proud to host the Greater Boston Labor Council’s “Pathways to Good Jobs” event for high school students. The event was organized by the GBLC’s Futures Committee along with the MassCoh Teens Lead at Work. More than a dozen unions shared resources and information for young adults to learn more about unions and union jobs. The New Educators Committee also held their last New Educator Underground social of the school year at the Blarney Stone on Friday, March 11 and were joined by members from over a dozen different schools. The socials are a way for new educators to get support, ask questions, network, and learn about how to get more involved in the work of our union. Members are encouraged to attend the End of the Year party at the BTU on June 3, from 3-8 pm in lieu of a June event.

Lastly, the members of the New Educator Committee joined young workers from across the state at the Next Generation Rising Conference. The conference was sponsored by the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, GBLC Futures, North Shore Next Gen Workers, and UMass Labor Resource Center. The goals of the conference were to build relationships with other young union members, participate in workshops to build their skills, learn about key issues in the labor movement, and strategize about building the labor movement for the next generation. Participants attended workshops and panels throughout the day and then joined striking Verizon workers on the picket line at the downtown Verizon store. BTU organizer Jonathan Rodrigues and BTU New Educator Nino Brown stepped up to lead parts of the march and chants on the picket line! If you are a new educator (all first year through fourth year educators welcome!) and would like to get more involved in our New Educator Committee, please contact Jessica Tang at jtang@btu.org or Jonathan Rodrigues at jrodrigues@btu.org.
RTC Business Meeting Helps Members Get Fiscally Fit

By Joan Devlin, Secretary
Retired Teachers Chapter

On April 12, the Retired Teachers Chapter held its spring business meeting at Florian Hall. After saluting the flag, Marilyn Marion, RTC chair called for a moment of silence in remembrance of our deceased members, including Leonard Miraglia, former RTC Vice-Chair.

Members heard reports from all of the RTC committees.

The legislative committee Chair Larry Connolly discussed the three major objectives of the committee. First is the COLA base. State legislation allows local jurisdictions to increase the COLA base. The legislative committee has had one meeting with the mayor and awaits a second meeting. Currently the COLA base in Boston is $13,000. The BTU/RTC seeks to raise the base to $16,000. Over ten years this would increase costs to the city by $10 million dollars. We expect that the city will fully fund the pension in 2025, making up for the years that the city did not fully fund its share of the pension costs.

The second objective is to change the current federal law regarding social security and the Windfall Elimination Provision. The Mass Retirees, a statewide organization that represents public employees throughout the state, worked with the Massachusetts congressional delegation to file legislation in the House (HR 711) that would modify the WEP provision so that retirees who have earned social security will not suffer as big a loss of benefits. We are working with them to encourage passage of the bill. A hearing was held and it seems possible that some change in the WEP could occur.

The third objective is to secure a cost of living increase from the Boston Retirement Board. Unfortunately there is no mechanism for working with other city union retirees to put pressure on the Board and on the mayor to provide a COLA increase or an increase in the COLA base. Other unions do not have a retiree chapter. Representatives of both the BTU and the firefighters are working to convince other Retirement Board members to recommend an increase in the COLA base and to provide a COLA for the upcoming year.

James “Tino” Phillip reported that the Benefits committee would like to do a survey of the kinds of benefits the members would like to see. He reminded members that costs had to be considered when suggesting benefits.

The scholarship committee co-chair Donna Cooley Hilton reminded members that the RTC offers three scholarships for the child, grandchild niece or nephew of RTC members. This year’s applications are closed, but members should think about applying next year.

The Membership Chair Raymond Lee reported that the current RTC membership is 3,092. The Social Committee Co-chair Anne Marie Adduci reported that the spring luncheon information had been mailed to members. The luncheon will be held May 19 at the Venezia Restaurant. Members wanting to reserve tables (10) or half tables (5) need to get the information and payments to the social committee by April 27.

The Fall Luncheon will take place on October 20 at Lantana’s facility in Randolph. More information will be sent closer to the event, but save the date.

The business meeting was adjourned and after a brief break, Marilyn Marion introduced two guest speakers for a panel on what every retiree needs to achieve Fiscal Fitness. Jonathan Graham, an attorney who specializes in retirement law and estate planning, and Louis Woolf, a well-known local estate planner teamed up to provide members with information that they need as they think about what they need to do to protect themselves and their families from probate courts and taxes.

Jonathan Graham defined fiscal fitness as having a plan that avoids probate court and allows you to keep control of your assets. To do that, you must have three critical documents: a health care proxy, a power of attorney and a last will and testament or chose a revocable trust. He advised members that the probate code was changed and you need to title your assets and assign beneficiaries so that those assets do not go through probate process. This process is public and expensive. He reminded us that Massachusetts taxes estates over $1 million dollars. Everything you owned is included in your estate. If you have assets worth $1 million and one dollar you pay taxes on all of it.

Some suggested solutions are to have a joint tenancy so that the property passes to the spouse. Do not put your children’s name on assets except as beneficiaries. Revocable trusts are the best vehicle for avoiding probate. It minimizes or eliminates taxes and allows you to use your assets any way you want during your life time. The session provided invaluable information to the RTC members.
BTU Hosts the First Annual Greater Boston A. Phillip Randolph House Fundraising Event

by Jessica Tang,
BTU Director of Organizing

On Friday, April 15, 2016 the Boston Teachers Union halls were filled with hundreds of union members from across Greater Boston, to celebrate the first A. Phillip Randolph House Fundraiser event. The Greater Boston APRI event was called “Celebrating the Life and Legacy of A. Philip Randolph” and included four award recipients: Representative Russell Holmes, City Councilor Ayanna Pressley, City Councilor Tito Jackson, and Representative Bayard Rustin. Councilor Jackson won the Advocacy Award for his commitment and advocacy around public education. His award was presented by BTU member Johnny McInnis, who is also the President of the Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts.

Shanika Houlder, BTU Internal Organizer, has also been an active member of the chapter and played an instrumental role in planning this event as part of the GB APRI Fundraising Committee. The A Phillip Randolph House Greater Boston chapter of the AFL-CIO was created last year with founding members from the Boston Teachers Union, Carmen’s Union Local 589, GBLC, IAMAW Local 264, IBEW Local 103, LIUNA Local 22, MTA, NERCC, NEJB UNITE!HERE, SEIU 1199MA, SEIU 32BJ/D615, SMW Local 17, UNITE!HERE Local 26 and WILD.

The group is self described as the “black conscious” of the AFL-CIO. Their objectives and mission include: The encouragement and expansion of black political activity at the state, local and national levels of government. To further this goal the Institute is involved in lobbying elected leaders on issues of concern to the labor movement and Black/African American community, registering voters; organizing nonpartisan get out the vote drives and voter education in partnership with the Greater Boston Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

The encouragement of Black/African American involvement in their unions through education, mobilization and leadership development. The Institute believes that Black/African American unionists must play an active role within their own unions. Such activity strengthens their local unions, the labor movement and the overall Black/African American community.

The encouragement and active support for the growth of labor unions and good jobs. The Institute believes that workers stand the best chance for racial, social and economic justice by belonging to unions. A union contract provides equity of wages and benefits based on the work regardless of race or gender.

The development of an analysis on race and the creation of a dialogue on race within the labor movement. As long as workers are divided and do not understand how this division only seeks to weaken our movement, labor cannot prosper. The Institute believes that when we understand and support each other that we can achieve a shared prosperity for all.

The development of a union presence in the Black/African American community. By playing an active and constructive role in the black community, Black/African American union members help strengthen the bonds between organized labor and the Black/African American community, while also mobilizing support for the shared legislative and social objectives of the labor and civil rights movement.

If you would like to get more involved in the Greater Boston APRI Chapter, please contact Shanika Houlder at shoulder@btu.org.

Photos by Jessica Tang
Josefina Loscano welcomed paraprofessionals from all over Massachusetts to the BTU Hall on Saturday April 9, 2016. In her remarks she gave great thanks and praise to all those who made the conference possible, from the AFT-MA and BTU leadership to her own BTU para council. BTU President Richard Stutman, AFT-MA President Tom Gosnell, and BTU Retiree Chapter Chairwoman Marilyn Marion addressed the audience and thanked them for their dedication to the students.

The conference began with about 150 attendees splitting up into three workshops: Teamwork, basics of Google Drive, and the Massachusetts Common Core Standards. All attendees rotated through the workshops in small groups which allowed for Q&A. The themes for the conference were selected from the survey results of the 2015 Para Conference.

The conference ended with a luncheon and a Latin dance class lead by Gilberto Rivera of the Edison K-8.
WE'RE LEARNING HERE

A project by Amika Kemmler Ernst, Ed.D.

Henry Grew Elementary School

The Grew Elementary School serves about 250 students in Hyde Park, not far from Cleary Square. In its first year of “turnaround” status, it has utilized additional resources to support teacher collaboration and students have already made significant progress.

I began my visit in the gym, where Paul Duhaime was distributing jump ropes to small groups of third grade students and helping them practice collaboration, one of the school’s core values. Behind a screen of cabinets at the back of the gym, first graders were building small houses with squares of corrugated cardboard in art class with “Miss Rose” Igoe. Despite the crowded space and noise from the physical education activity next door, she has created a welcoming environment for children to happily work on a variety of art projects.

As most of her second grade students worked independently to answer questions about the story they’d read, Elsa Bourque taught a guided reading group. Dianne Hays was showing her kindergarteners how to use their arms to sound out letter/syllable sounds as they took turns writing the words for all to see. JoAnn Brown’s fourth grade students were meeting in self-guided literature groups, one group was reading and discussing The Hunger Games. Fifth graders were reading pieces from their writing notebooks to the class with coaching from their teacher, Kevin Somers.

First grade students were working on math. Natasha Gordon demonstrated a lesson on the rug, after which her students built walls of the same height and width using geoblocks. In Nadine Riggs’ classroom, students tried to fit blocks onto different sized rectangles or worked on duplicating interlocking cube constructions. Second graders in Quayisha Ferguson’s class were also working on geometry concepts, identifying right angles in a variety of 2-dimensional shapes.

In Janet Lynch’s small science room, fourth grade students were busy building vehicles. Technology teacher Brian Vitarisi brings computers and tablets to classrooms for a variety of activities. A “Grew Specialists Newsletter” for parents briefly explains what students in each grade will be working on this spring in the four specialty classes offered. What a great idea!

ESL teachers Kara Lysy and Abda Rebecca Lee shared their enthusiasm for the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues on a regular basis. It was heartening to see one of the school’s core values modeled by the staff!

We’re taking turns jumping rope. We’re working together and trying to do it with two people at the same time. We’re also learning how to dribble and shoot when we play basketball.

Nachly Milord, Nicole Zuleta, Luz Valoy, & Claudean Hawthorne, Grade 3

I am building a house with cardboard and glue. I love doing art and learning to make things. When we made yellow flowers, I learned that they have pollen inside and green parts that grow into petals.

Jessica Etienne, Grade 1

I was cutting paper. I am learning a new way to do the ABCs backwards and I can count to one hundred!

Goulad Rashid, K1

I am writing about The Quilt Story. We’re learning to answer questions about the books we read.

Ravaly Louis Jame, Grade 2

I’m working with Ms. Gordon, putting triangle shapes together to make a wall. I’ve learned about 3D shapes and 2D shapes.

Caiden Brown, Grade 1

We were in a group reading The Hunger Games and Ms. Brown was giving us directions. We’re learning to read higher level books and we’re now at Level Z, the highest level. We’ve also learned to write different kinds of essays (expository, informative, persuasive, etc.) and we’ve written six so far.

David Peña & Michael Zuleta, Grade 4

We were in the middle of reading about Paul Bunyan and answering questions about what we read. We’re becoming more fluent readers by reading at school and at home every day.

Traveon Jones & Canton Mendonca, Grade 5

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