President’s Corner by Richard Stutman

ELT – Let’s Work to Get it Right

WHEREAS, the parties’ shared goal focuses on improving student learning and achievement by providing students with a wide diversity of academic and enrichment options within their school day; and
WHEREAS, the parties also agree that in expanding instructional and student learning time, the quality of extended daily learning and teaching time is as important as the quantity thereof; and
WHEREAS, experience has shown that collaboration within the school community is the key to the parties’ success in achieving a quality ELT program;

The School Site Council has a major role, if not the major role, in many of the implementation steps that must be in place before long, and certainly well before June.

School Site Councils have responsibility for a myriad of ELT-related tasks, with many of these tasks having to be completed before the year of entry onto the extended day program.

Let’s me go over the different stages of input.

Planning and Allocation of Time—Whose Responsibility?

The school site council, along with the faculty and the school administrator, shall plan how the ELT time is allocated and worked into the school schedule. Notice please that the word is ‘shall,’ not ‘should.’

Here’s the precise Collective Bargaining Language:

“The principal/headmaster, in concert with the faculty, and school site council, shall plan how this time shall be allocated and worked into the weekly schedule. Faculty chosen by the staff in the building shall meet with the Instructional Leadership Team and the building administrator three times per year to access, review, and change, if decided, how the extended time shall be allocated.”

Should the school concentrate exclusively on math or ELA? How about music and movement? Foreign language? How will it play out at the school? Will all grades teach the same subject areas? These are questions that the staff, school site council, and the administration plan jointly. There is not a dictate ‘from above’ lurking over your shoulders here.

The language speaks for itself. The key to success is joint planning. And joint follow up, three times per year. Again, the language speaks for itself. We designed ELT as a collaborative effort, as we see that that’s the only way to insure buy-in and success from the school community.

What Are the Added P & D Time?

Each school has a threshold issue to decide as to whether to adopt an additional 35 minute block of teacher planning and development time per week or a different model of five 7-minute daily extensions of P & D time. How is this decided?

Here’s the contract language:

“All Schedule ‘A’ schools shall have the option of having teacher planning and development time increased by seven (7) minutes each day, five days per week, or having a block of 35 additional minutes per week. Exercise of the option shall be by vote of the School Site Council taken in June.”

This is a huge issue, and there will be school-wide lobbying on both sides of the issue. Staff will decide what works best for them and their students, and should communicate their wish to the teachers elected to represent them on the school site council.

As above, there is no dictate from above on this issue. This is a school-based decision. For questions on the council’s operation or member selection — don’t wait until June to find

Richard Stutman
BTU President

out. Please call either Caren or Michael now to go over the rules of operation.

Please note that in addition to the above choice of 5 x 7 minutes or a 35-minute block, each teacher receives an additional 40-minute block of teacher-directed planning and development time per week. This additional time is facilitated by school site council-selected teachers (400 in all for the 60 schools) who will be compensated $1,000 per year to facilitate these teacher-directed planning and development periods.

What About the Planning Grants Leading Up to Implementation of the Program?

Here’s the contract language:

“The School Site Council at each school shall approve a plan for directing these funds, including stipends for participants and shall select the teachers and paraprofessionals chosen to receive the funds. All plans shall be reviewed by the network superintendent and approved by the Assistant Superintendent —”

Again, the school site council plans how to use these funds, which will be distributed on a per-capita basis and which will be spent in the year prior to implementation.

How Are the Teacher Facilitators Chosen?

Beginning in SY 2015-2016, teachers selected by the School Site Council shall be eligible to receive a stipend of one thousand dollars ($1,000) per work year and shall be responsible for planning and facilitating the teacher collaboration time (the 45-minute teacher-led planning and development time mentioned above) for the work year. It is the parties’ intention that the number of educators eligible to receive the stipend shall be chosen on a ratio of one (1) for every five (5) teachers in the school. In addition to the one-time allocation of $400,000 described above, and

continued on page 2
Thoughts From a Snow Pile

By Garret Virchick

O h, my aching back. Looking out my window the snow is again starting to pick up and I am not looking forward to lacing up my snow boots and going out to shovel. Again!!

The plows go by and I know they are doing the best they can. But there is increasing snow that won’t put this stuff. I guess there is nothing we can do. Or is there?

Our neighbors to the north in Canada are used to this and they are prepared for this. While we are looking at the 7th school cancellations in the past three weeks, they go on in the great white north. On average the city of Montreal gets 59 days of snow per year and a whopping seven feet of snow. It is a rare day that school is closed. In fact, from 2008-2010 Montreal had one day of school cancellations.

America’s infrastructure is woefully inadequate and falling apart. Bridges are disintegrating faster than we are repairing it. Public transportation regularly breaks down whether there is a storm or not. And yes our schools, especially those that serve the children of poverty, could use a splash of paint...not to mention window repair, heating systems, plumbing upgrades, science equipment, books, and countless other improvements. (Ok...so I guess I did mention a few.)

And...in the middle of writing this article the MBTA announces that it is shutting down for the day. There will be the usual political bullying that happens when the public is affected by the breakdown of an agency. But will Charlie Baker do the right thing and let people know that the MBTA has been underfunded and corporate taxes might have to be increased to bring the “T” into the 21st century? Or will the blame game commence again a jig to be missing school. Not so at all. Sure one, two, even three snow days a year is exciting and we do kind of like those. But to be missing this much time, with our kids home with their poor parents - temps can be short and often there just isn’t enough to eat in their homes. This is very concerning.

Plus we have the testing-fire breathing down our necks...So no, we are not dancing. I understand why these days are necessary but there is no joy in BPS-ville...?

Being a teacher is not just about lesson plans. It’s about the lives of the children we serve. We are also working people affected by the decisions of elected officials. So call yours today. It’s time America invests in its infrastructure. It’s time to tell politicians to put people to work for the common good.

Commentary

by Michael J. Maguire

Frozen in Time

The recent “winter vacation” got me thinking about my favorite educational reform idea: adjusting the school year calendar. In our current agrarian school year calendar, snow days are pit against the remaining days in June.

If there are too many snow days, then we run out of days in June to hold classes. Year after year Court Street (can we still call the administration by this address?) performs a kabuki dance of the calendar.

What if we update our school year calendar to reflect “21st century learning expectations” instead of 19th century farming demands?

Imagine if we started the school year in March instead of September and we ended in December instead of June?

Farfetched, I know, but let’s have fun exploring the concept using 2015 as our model. If teachers reported on the first Monday of March and had two days to set up their rooms, then the students would report to school on Wednesday, March 4, 2015.

March (19 school days). Just as the Romans began their campaigns in March, even naming this month for the god of war, so will we begin our educational campaign. And just like the Roman soldiers, we too would be coming out of our winter hibernation. Think of it as “sprouting into learning.”

To help us ease into things, we’d still have a week off to enjoy our marathon but there would be no need for a week long vacation at the start of the year.

May (16 school days). May can be a very long month in our current schedule, but hopefully we’d still be fresh enough to enjoy the sunny days. Since there are fewer holidays in the spring/summer as opposed to autumn/winter, I suggest a week off for Memorial Day weekend. Just think of all the great Memorial Day vacations to be spent on Cape Cod.

June (19 school days). Bunker Hill Day would be a well sought after prize instead of the current “can’t-just-finish-the-year obstacle. (I mean no disrespect, Charles-town.) Imagine organizing trips to the monument for field days. Four months into the school year is just the right amount of time to study about our history and the weather is perfect for exploring it.

July (20 school days). Independence Week off from classes. It has a nice ring to it.

August (21 school days). A very long month, rather like March in our current model, only without Evacuation Day. Surely something historic happened in August that’s worthy of a holiday.

September (17 school days). Labor Day weekend could be extended like Memorial Day, another vacation week. Just think of all the barbecues.

October (21 school days). With a chill in the air and the Columbus Day weekend, students would know the end is near. The only thing scarier than Halloween might be the grades. :-)

November (18 school days). Veterans Day and Thanksgiving would mark the beginning of the end. Talk about being thankful.

December (8 school days). The last day of school would be December 10, 2015.

Stay warm until March 10, 2016. Just think of the cheap airfares to Florida during our winters off. Imagine no longer having to book flights to warmer climes during specific, peak season weeks.

Boston students could become major competitors in skiing, skating, and snowboarding. The Bruins might become the most popular of our sports teams. And we would be well positioned to host the Winter Olympics...

(November 18 school days, Veterans Day)

Michael J. Maguire
Boston Union Teacher
Co-Editor

Commentary

by Michael J. Maguire

On March 11, 2015 the Election Committee will be available from 3:00 pm up to 15 minutes before the end of the membership meeting to accept nomination papers for all BTU offices.
What is the Considered “Corporal Punishment” in the BPS?

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 HR and to the ones at your school if kept.

The BTO labor-management contract 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 be entitled to copies of such material and an opportunity to object to the inclusion thereof.” Such signature does not necessarily indicate agreement with its content.” The contract continues, “The teacher shall have the right to answer any material filed and his or her answer shall be reviewed by the Personnel Manager and attached to the file copy. Upon receipt of a written request, the teacher shall be furnished a reproduction of any material in his file.” If you are denied access, find information enclosed that you were unaware of but has been described above, and the like, you have a right to file a grievance to remedy the situation.

Who Determines When Parent Open Houses are Held?

T he BTO contract states, “teachers will be available to attend even evening parent-teacher meetings during the school year. Such meetings shall be planned by the building administrator in cooperation with the faculty senate and the parent council with one month’s advance notice. Such meetings shall not be scheduled to exceed two hours each. Adequate security will be provided by the School Department.” Each school is strongly encouraged to have an active faculty senate. However, if that is not the case, the faculty still must have a month’s advance notice of the meetings. No teacher can be compelled to attend longer than two hours, twice a week. If there is an “act of God” that requires the parent open house to be cancelled (snow, shutdowns, etc.) it must be rescheduled using the contract language outlined earlier in this paragraph.

How Much P&D Time Do Middle/Grades 6-8 and High School Teachers Get?

A ll Secondary teachers (contractually defined as teachers of grades 6-12) are entitled to Professional Development (P&D) time. Traditional schools are to be scheduled for a minimum of 240 minutes for planning and development (P&D) per week. The contract reads, “Secondary teachers will have planning and development time each day and will be scheduled in blocks/periods of continuous time that are no less than 40 minutes in duration.” P&D may not be chopped up or segmented into smaller aggregates of time. Some secondary teachers are scheduled for 40 minutes, 5 days a week, which is 40 minutes less than the minimum amount mandated in the collective bargaining agreement/contract. This violation should be immediately remedied by the School Department.

If a teacher unavoidably loses a P&D period due to coverage issues and the like, you have a right to file a grievance to remedy the situation.

Where are Upcoming School Site Council Trainings going to be Held?

U pcoming BPS training sessions are:
- March 2nd and 3rd at BTO from 4:15-6:00 pm (dinner served)
- March 12th, at BTO from 9:00-12:00

Mailing List

The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue of the BTO is: February 25th.

Letters to the Editor should be sent to: letters@btu.org

The opinions expressed in the Boston Union Teacher do not necessarily represent the views of the Boston Union Teachers, or of those individuals.

Boston Union Teacher

Published by the Boston Teachers Union, AFT Local 66, AFL-CIO
Moving to Action
Empowering Our Members to Make Change in Our Schools

Registration is now open for the first BTU Winter Mini Building Rep Conference: Saturday, February 28, 2015, 9:00 am-2:00 pm

This conference is free and open to all BTU Building Reps [past and present], Faculty Senate Chairs, and interested BTU members. Please help us to spread the word to interested parties!


Agenda:

9:00-9:30 am: Registration and breakfast

9:30-10:20 am: Welcome and opening presentation

- Framing of the conference: Using existing and new structures to empower our members and turn negative energy into positive action.
- Introduction to the proactive “Community Empowerment Schools” campaign that the Boston Education Justice Alliance is planning. (It is a school improvement/pro-public schools response to attacks on public education.)

10:30-11:20 am: Workshop Sessions 1

- Mobilizing Community and Parent Allies at Our School Sites
- Rethinking and Revitalizing Faculty Senates
- Utilizing School Site Councils and School-Based Governing Structures for ELT planning and School Improvement

11:30 am-12:30 pm: Lunch break-outs by regions, topics, and/or committees

- Utilizing School Site Councils and School-Based Governing Structures for ELT planning and School Improvement

12:30-1:30 pm: Session 2 (repeat of Session 1 workshops)

- Rethinking and Revitalizing Faculty Senates
- Mobilizing Community and Parent Allies at Our School Sites
- Utilizing School Site Councils and School-Based Governing Structures for ELT planning and School Improvement

1:30-2:00 pm: First Books Book-Drive Launch, Goal setting/Next Steps, Closing

Questions or Ideas? Contact Jessica at jtang@btu.org or your Building Rep Regional Leader.

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- Boston Latin Academy
- Burke, Jeremiah E. High
- Community Academy
- Dearborn, Henry Stern Academy
- Dudley Street Neighborhood School
- Ellis, Davis A. Elementary
- Frederick, Lila G. Elementary
- Greater Egleston High
- Hale, Nathan Elementary
- Haynes Early Education Center
- Hernandez, Rafael K-8
- Higginson Elementary
- King, Martin Luther, Jr., K-8
- Madison Park Technical Vocational High
- Mason, Samuel Elementary
- Mendell, Ellis Elementary
- O’Bryan, John D. School of Mathematics & Science
- Orchard Gardens K-8
- Timothy, James P. Middle
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- McKinley South End Academy
- McKinney Prep HS
- McKinney Prep MS
- McKinley Elem.
- Quincy Lower
- Snowden HS
- Roosevelt Lower
- Roosevelt Upper
- BTU Pilot School
- Haley
- Conley

See more on page 7.
On weekend of February 6-8th more than twenty BTU members including teachers, paraprofessionals, special ed coordinators, and union staff were honored to attend The Boston Teach to Lead Summit organized by the US Department of Education and the National Board and sponsored by the BTU, AFT and many other organizations. At the summit, members developed their teacher leadership ideas and connected with hundreds teachers and education leaders from around the country and the world.

Ideas proposed by BTU members and developed at the summit included:
• Affinity group professional development where educators in and across schools can learn with colleagues who work in similar roles and are interested in the same topics
• Equity issues for low income students and students of color
• Writing across the curriculum for English Language Learners with disabilities
• Collaborative professional development between Public, Charter and Catholic schools in Dorchester
• Using video for peer observation
• Common Core professional development for teachers by teachers

Congratulations to those who attended. We look forward to your continued teacher leadership. You make the BTU Proud!

– Paul Tritter, BTU Director of Professional Development
Unite to Fight Racism – To Improve Conditions in Our Schools and Communities

In addition to our organizing committees, there are many other teacher-leader opportunities for our members. Here are a few:

AFT/BTU Teacher Leader Fellows Program • Professional Learning Advisory Board

**Elected BTU positions:** Building Reps, Delegates, Executive Board, and Staff • Ad-hoc Teacher feedback committees on policy

**Teacher Leader Opportunities for BTU Members**

**AFT/BTU Teacher Leader Fellows Program**
The AFT Teacher Leaders Program identifies and brings together a select group of educators each month throughout the year to learn how to take active leadership roles in their schools, unions, and communities. It began as a pilot program at five local schools in the 2011-12 school year. For the 2013-14 school year, the program developed cadres of 15 teacher leaders in thirteen locals to help build and strengthen relationships with the community as well as generate support for public schools and their unions.

Overall, over the years, our fellows have met with the MA Secretary of Education, Chair of the MA Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, Boston City Council Education Chair, and many other leaders and elected officials. The participants discuss union and community priorities, identify issues important to their practice, conduct research, and propose policy solutions to the issues they identified. These recommendations are then presented and shared with policy makers.

*Applications for the 2015-2016 school year will be available August of 2015. Please contact Jessica Tang, attang@btu.org, or Paul Tritter, pitter@btu.org for more information.

**Professional Learning Advisory Board**
The Professional Learning Advisory Board (PLAB) is a workgroup of educators dedicated to the advancement and improvement of professional learning in the district in order to improve the learning and well-being of our students. Members of the PLAB are jointly appointed by the Boston Federation of Teachers Union and the Boston Public Schools Central Office. The PLAB’s responsibilities include:

- Advise the district on Professional Learning
- Guide the work of the Professional Learning Initiative
- Advise BPS central offices on matters related to training and professional learning of BTU members
- Advise the district on BTU policies related to educators’ practice

Being a member of the PLAB is a long term commitment, a minimum of three years. Open seats on the board will be filled at the beginning of each year through a rigorous application process. Please contact Paul Tritter, pitter@btu.org for details.

**Organizing Committees for Professional Issues and Outreach**

These ad-hoc committees are ways for our members who are concerned or interested in specific issues to work together to address concerns and advocate for specific goals. Many of these committees partner with our community, parent, and student partners to work towards their goals as well. We have committees addressing the following issues and would love for you to get involved.

- New/Early Career Educators: This committee plans and coordinates for the bi-monthly New Educator Undergraduate events and local venues where early educators meet for both social and support networking.
- Over-Testing and Assessments: This committee educates community members, parents, and students about the national cheating scandal and the over-assessment of students and working towards solutions that promote appropriate assessments without an over-reliance on standardized tests that are not useful to teaching and learning.
- Community Outreach: This group is part of the Community Advisory Board where BTU members meet bi-monthly with community stakeholders to share information, support each other and explore ways to dialogue and collaborate to improve our communities and schools.
- Parent Engagement: A new initiative at the BTU is an effort to facilitate and improve parent-teacher relationships and engagement for advocacy. It is a subcommittee of the Community Advisory Board and convenes parents from across the district.
- Code of Conduct and Restorative Justice: Members have been appointed to advise the district on the implementation of the new Code of Conduct and to promote Restorative Justice. The BTU has collaborated with the district and Code of Conduct Advisory Committee to bring professional development to BPS educators.

Please contact Jessica Tang, attang@btu.org if you are interested in joining one of these committees!

**Elected BTU positions:**

- Building Reps, Delegates, Executive Board, and Staff

There are several teacher-leader positions within the Boston Teachers Union. Each school is elected every year to serve as Building Representatives. These representatives perform an important role as liaisons between our members at schools and the union leadership.

There is a union-wide election every two years. The next election is due at the March membership meeting – March 2015.
Unite to Fight Racism – To Improve Conditions in our Schools and Communities…

continued from page 6

disproportionately higher percentage of unsatisfactory evaluations.

In summary I would like to commend the Boston Teachers Union members for passing the motion to support the movement “Black Lives Matter” at the January, 2015 BTU meeting. We can enhance our fight against racism as well as build solidarity with our students and families. I suggest we hold a Teach-in on racism.

The Teach-in should not only address police brutality and unfair evaluations/irings in our schools. We have also collected data from over 150 mem-

bers about assessments in the district, created a list recommendations, and met with the

BPS leaders in the Data and Accountability Office. BPS has since scaled back the number of assessments, agreed that ELD Level 1 and 2 students should not be required to take addi-
tional assessments such as the Achievement Network tests, and acknowledged the need to review the type, frequency, and numbers of assessments given to our students each year.

The group has also joined with a newly formed statewide coalition of students, educators, superintendents, and community members who have adopted the Less Testing, More Learning name. This group has helped to file pieces of legislation to curb the overem-
phasis and harmful effects and consequences of high-stakes testing. Be on the lookout for the re-launch of the survey and future advoca-
cy!

Inclusion Committee

The Inclusion Committee, made up of educators in both schools that BPS has implemented inclusionary practices has been an active partner of the BPS Inclusion

Task Force. The group has met several times with the chair and members of the Inclusion Task Force to share concerns, ideas, and recommendations for the successful imple-
mentation of inclusionary practices in BPS.

Members also testified at School Committee meetings with members of the Special Education Par-
ent Advisory Council (SPEED-PAC) and met with the BPS special ed department to work on improving the implementation of inclu-
sion throughout the district.

Among other recommendations, the group is advocating for a city-wide convening of Inclusion educators to come together and share best practices for the later this year and will be meeting with BPS leaders again soon on Tuesday, February 24th.

New Educators Committee

Over the last year, the New Educators Committee has hosted highly attended bi-monthly socials and has invited speakers to give short presentations on topics important to new educators at some of these events. They also presented at the New Teachers Institute

Unite to Fight Racism – To Improve Conditions in our Schools and Communities…

RTC Executive Board Minutes December 8, 2014

Members Present: Anne Broder; Marie Broderick; Mary Cahalane; Sandy Carle; Donna Coolsey-Hilton; Larry Connolly; Martha Cotton; David Donovan; Chairman; Marilyn Maricon, Secretary; Linda McNamee; Leonard Micaglia, Vice Chairman; Mary Jo Murphy; Anne Marie Addice; Ruthanne Ken-

nedy; Paul Tenney; and Walter, Wood.

Guests: Legislative Committee Members and Jennifer Kenney, Alliance for Retired Americans.

The meeting opened at 10:30 a.m. by the Chairman.

Reports

Secretary’s Report: The report was read and accepted with changes.

Treasurer’s Report: The treasurer’s report was reviewed and accepted.

The Chairman suspended the meeting at 10:45 a.m. to hear from Jennifer Kenney, Alliance for Retired Americans.

Meeting reconvened at 11:25 a.m.

Chairman’s Report: Questions were raised about the process of joining the RTC and applying for Delta Dental. Those who have retired must apply for membership to the RTC in order to be part of the Delta Dental program.

Vice Chairman’s Report: Delta Dental is picking up since COBRA is ending for many members. Report Accepted.

Committees

Benefits: Question regarding receiving benefits for a “significant other” was raised. The chairman checked with Health and Welfare and they say that a marriage certificate is needed in order to receive spousal benefits; therefore, a con-

nection in correspondence to the member-

ship will clarify this requirement. Report Accepted.

Remembrance: We are still waiting for names of deceased members from the City.

Report Accepted. Scholarship: The Committee received thank you letters from scholarship recipi-

ents: Jack Radley and Genna Heaps. Report Accepted.

Social: The committee chairs have finalized the business from the November luncheon. The raffle tickets’ income goes toward the flowers. The luncheon was held quite late this year, and the pos-
sibility of holding it earlier was discussed. It was decid-
ed that this issue and parking will be tabled until the January meeting. Report Accepted.

Travel: The Committee has completed their last 2-day trips for 2014 very successful-

ly. The overnight trip to Mt. Washington will be from December 9-11, 2014. They hope to see you on one of their excursions in 2015.

Legislative: Boston City Council Ways and Means Committee will be holding a pub-

lic hearing on Tuesday, December 16, 2014, on COLA. The Legislative Committee sent out notices to encourage our membership to attend meeting. Report Accepted.

Data Processing: Raymond Lee is assist-
ing Paul Tenney with the computer work. Report Accepted.

Membership: Discussion took place regarding who qualifies to be a member. One must have been a member of the BTU for a minimum of 3 years to qualify for member-

ship in the RTC. Report Accepted.

Old Business: Questions still remain regarding the retirement pension; i.e. who runs it; the cost of administration, etc. The chairman will make every effort to pursue answers to outstanding questions.

Motion to Adjourn: The Chairman will make every effort to contact the Committee if there is a meeting date change.

Meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Marilyn F. Maricon, Secretary

RTC Executive Board

December 8, 2014

BOSTON UNION TEACHER | February, 2015 7

Jessica Tang

BTU Director of Organizing

this past summer and created a New Educator Survival Guide laying out important informa-
tion and resources for new educators. Their next event is Friday, March 13th at the Savin Bar and Kitchen from 4-7 pm!

E.L.L. Committee

One of our newer organizing committees just created this year, this group recently reviewed the BPS and Department of Justice agreement on English Language Learn-

ers. The group is planning to put together a resource document for ELL educators and also share recommendations for improving curriculum and instruction services for ELL students, with particular attention to moving beyond compliance towards a thoughtful vision of what ELL instruction in the district should be.

The next meeting is Monday, February 23rd.

History and Social Studies Committee

Another one of our newer committees, the group has just met once, but is plan-
ing to meet with the head of the BPS History and Social Studies department to share both concerns and suggestions on how we can improve history and social studies instruction in the district. The last meeting was postponed due to a snow day, but be on the lookout for the new date!

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Is there an issue or affinity group that interests you? Each of our organizing com-

mittees were created by members who were interested in meeting other members inter-
ested in or concerned about a specific topic. They are member-led and driven, these are just a few of the committees—for a full list, visit the btu website www.btu.org and look under “Member Resources” or see the short descriptions below.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

If you would like to get more involved with any of these committees or create your own, please contact the Organizing Direc-
tor Jessica Tang at jiang@btu.org.

Mary Ellen Monahan

[Related Service Providers and other non-school based members]

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School: Snowden International

Advisory P.E.

Adult Education

Behavior Specialist

Career & Technical Education

COSESS Reps.

Counseling & Intervention Center

Early Childhood

Hearing/Appeal/Attendance

Home & Hospitals

Implementation

Institute for Professional Development

Literacy Department

Nurse Rep.

Occupational Therapist Rep.

Ostiguy High

Physical Therapists

Psychological Services Rep.

Speech Therapist

Vision Rep.

Moving to Action (from page 4)
We’re Learning Here

A project by Amika Kemmler Ernst, Ed. D.

Oliver Wendell Holmes Elementary School

The Holmes Elementary School sits inside a triangle of one-way streets in a residential area of Dorchester not far from Franklin Park. Beautiful tiles adorn the walls of the first floor corridor featuring children’s names and drawings from 1991, when the school was renovated. The Holmes serves 326 students, the overwhelming majority being Black or Latino.

Children with a variety of special needs, who make up about 20% of the student population, are integrated in all classes at the Holmes. Low class sizes and two adults in each room make this possible. Pictures on each side of primary classroom doors show students whether to push or pull to open the door – perhaps designed for children with special needs, but surely helpful to many more. Behavior specialist Tracey Williams is starting a program to bring therapy dogs into the school on a regular basis!

Science teacher Andrew Nirots asked his kindergarteners to touch a large piece of fleece, eliciting descriptive language as he explained that something so soft was made from hard plastic. Students were going to make scarves from the fleece, integrating a learning activity with a service to children who may not always have warm clothes on these cold winter days.

In other classes teachers were reading stories aloud and leading guided reading lessons. A sign in Nadine James’ third grade classroom listed “Text Talker” sentence starters to model effective discussions. Students working with the new Expeditionary Learning language arts curriculum were reading from a workbook and then answering questions, which made me wonder how this is different from Reading Street or other packaged programs BPS has adopted in the past.

Paraprofessional Cassandra Santos was helping fourth graders as they worked in pairs and small groups to write about the lives of poets. Computers are available in classrooms and the library, where Paula Pickett has students do research projects such as learning about schools around the world. Second graders in Joseph Ryan’s class used jellybeans to engage students in a math activity, while fifth graders were learning how to use exponents. Karra Wood used a pair of scissors to demonstrate how an astrolabe works, as her students read their Social Studies Alive! textbook and discussed the instruments used by 15th century explorers.

In a crowded basement room, exuberant music teacher Clifford Tetle coaxed reluctant fifth graders to vocalize and identify different notes as he played them. After his lesson, students rushed to keyboards and computers to practice what they’d learned.

When I asked staff members what they like best about the Holmes, first-year teachers as well as veterans expressed appreciation for the teamwork and professionalism of their colleagues – something that we rarely, if ever, hear from “education reformers” or policy makers. Let’s spread the word about what BPS teachers and students are doing well – please invite me to visit YOUR school!

Amika Kemmler Ernst, Ed. D.
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We were counting numbers to 100! We are learning songs. We are learning how to read and write, too!

Alyssa DePina & Diandre Figueroa, K2

Mr. Tetle was turning on my keyboard so I could play a piece of music. I have been learning how to play the blues, and how to slide my fingers down all the keys before beginning on these new words. We also learned how to play the guitar in music.

Lazette Aloje, Grade 5

I was answering a question about Rosa Parks in my composition notebook. I’ve learned that a biography is a story about a famous person.

Hannah Tran, Grade 2

Mr. Tetle was helping me. I was making a snow man and Ms. Mahoney was helping me. I was writing my name on the circles.

Tevon Devoe, Grade 3

I was reading with Ms. James about people in other countries and their traditions. In science I learned that ants are really strong and I’m learning how to multiply in math class. My favorite subject is music with Mr. Tetle. We’re learning how to play the piano.

I was doing math with jelly beans. I have learned how to count with hundreds, tens, and ones. I can also add and subtract big numbers. We are reading sentences and writing our own books!

Taniyah Simpson, Grade 2

We were making scarves from the fleece, an integration of a learning activity with a service to children who may not always have warm clothes on these cold winter days.

Amika Kemmler Ernst is a recently retired BPS New Teacher Developer with extensive experience as a classroom teacher, curriculum developer, and graphic artist.

Her “We’re Learning Here” Project features images of everyday learning in our public schools, along with the words of the students pictured.

Troy Crawford, K1

We’re Learning Here

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Jaizel Dukes-Priest & Miles McMillan, Grade 4

I was writing about Robert Frost with my buddy Iova [Fountain]. He inspired me to write poems with just important words.

We were reading about the life and writing of Walter Dean Myers. We picked him because we like his poems. Ms. Santos was helping us with the assignment. We are learning how to read and write poems. We’re also learning how to write an essay.

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