President’s Report  Jessica J. Tang

We Care, We Fight, We Show Up, We Vote!

September signals the start of a new school year and also signifies not just the start of fall, but the importance of the election season as well. As we settle back into our classrooms, we ask our members to turn their attention to three important strategic goals for our union as well:

- Implement and enforce contract wins for educators and students through building member power at school buildings and sites.
- Win statewide funding and make funding a priority for electoral candidates both locally and nationally.
- Keep membership strong with the BTU All-In membership drive and member engagement.

These strategic goals reflect what we heard from members throughout the last school year and were informed by our elected Executive Board and office staff. The goals were then brought to our September membership meeting, where 99% of the members surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that these priorities are the right ones to focus on for the near future. We will continue to incorporate feedback from our members and allies as the plans progress. At the membership meeting we shared why each of these priorities is important to achieving our goals and advancing public education.

We had significant and meaningful wins in the contract, for both students and educators, that was ratified in June. However, the strength of our contract is only as strong as the strength of its enforcement. That is why we must pay attention to both implementation and the fidelity of what has been negotiated. We need to hear from our members in our schools, and from our building reps, if what was promised is actually happening and if not, we must take action to enforce it. As the year progresses, we will also start preparing to negotiate a successor agreement.

Second, 2020 is an incredibly important election year. Who we elect matters, voting matters. Currently (at the time of press), State legislators are discussing and writing legislation to update the Foundation Formula used to give state aid to district public schools. While the summer appropriation included a significant increase, Boston may not see the benefits of any of this increase. This is why we must advocate through the Fund Our Future campaign. Thank you to the over 2,000 members who have signed cards, made calls, and visited legislators to let them know that Boston students cannot be left behind. If legislation comes out that hurts Boston, who can we call on to help us file amendments and advocate for us? Again, voting matters.

Local city elections, absolutely matter, too. Our City Council passes the school budget. Councilors can call hearings to raise issues that are impacting our school and help to advocate for specific line items or considerations to the budget. They vote on appropriations for our contract and they help advocate for school needs and solve problems — not just staffing and funding, but also issues ranging from parking to facilities. We need to be able to count on our City Councillors to advocate for our members, students and schools.

While the focus of our Fund our Future fight has been in the State House and locally, we are also a part of a national AFM movement to Fund our Future through the federal Promise to America’s Children and Teachers Act (PACT Act). This would create a 10 year “glide path” to fully fund Title 1 (funds for low-income districts) and IDEA (special education.) We need representatives at the federal level advocating for schools as well and passing education bills that help our students and schools.

This means getting involved in electoral politics and voting! If we are to have allies in City Hall, the State House, and Congress we need to get involved. If we want a Secretary of Education that actually believes in public education, that means we must take action. This means voting, of course, but this also means helping to get out the vote: door knocking, phone banking, fundraising and educating our neighbors, colleagues, families and friends about both our issues and the candidates who support them.

So this fall and this school year, we cannot sit on the sidelines and be bystanders. We need all our members engaged in our work, not just at the building level, but beyond. We often hear that educators feel overburdened and stressed out. That our...
P resident Donald Trump and the Republican Party have been attack-

ing the Democratic Party recently for being “radical socialists.” What’s all the fuss?

Socialism has a long history. The ori-
gin of the union movement in our coun-
ty is closely tied to the industrial explo-

ration from Europe started organizations like the National Typographic Union (1852), the United Hatters (1856), and the Iron Moulders Union of North America (1859). The mostly German immigrants were escaping tyranny and poverty and, along with their labor, brought with them socialist ideas of solidarity among the working classes. The Union move-

ment was started by socialists and one of the early demands of this socialist move-

ment was the 8-hour day.

If that’s socialism, then sign me up.

In the fight to limit the number of hours the bosses could demand from workers, the International Workingmen’s Association sought to unite various strands of socialists. Across America there were bloody battles around this issue.

On May 1st, 1886, 35,000 workers in and around Chicago walked off the job. A peaceful crowd gathered at Haymarket Square. One of the speakers, a socialist named Albert Parsons said, “There seems to prevail the opinion in some quarters that this meeting has been called for the purpose of inaugurating a riot, hence these warlike preparations on the part of so-called ‘law and order.’” However, let me tell you at the beginning that this meeting has not been called for any such purpose. The object of this meeting is to explain the general situation of the eight-hour movement and to throw light upon various incidents in connection with it.

But a bomb was thrown into the crowd by an unidentified person during the rally. As a result, police raided and a “Red scare” were initiated by the authorities. Although there was little evidence that the organizers were to blame, Albert Parsons and seven others were tried and convicted of the crime and were executed. It took another 50 years for the eight-hour day to be real-

ized for most Americans. Passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act during the New Deal, enacted by Franklin Roo-

svelt (another Democrat accused of being a socialist), made eight hours the standard workday.

The eight-hour day was an enormous and hard-fought victory. If that’s socialism, then sign up my tired bones.

Many of the struggles during the Great Depression, such as the fight for Social Security were also part of a socialist agenda. The great industrial unions like the United Auto Workers, United Steelworkers, and United Mine Workers often had socialist leadership. The Inter-\n
national Ladies Garment Union elected socialist to the leadership in New York, Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia. The National Textile Workers tried to orga-

nize in the South in the face of brutal repression of the organizers. They were often labeled as “godless communists” by the racist Southern bosses.

If that’s socialism, I’ll walk the line.

The history books do not include socialists in the Civil Rights movement, but that is far from the truth. A. Philip Randolph, the African-American president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, ran for New York State Comptroller on the Socialist Party ticket. He was one of the original proponents of a March on Washington along with another prominent African American socialist, Bayard Rustin.

The great Paul Robeson, actor, singer, athlete, and political activist was an American communist who founded the American Crusade Against Lynching. He was the first African-American to play Shakespeare’s Othello. During the Spanish Civil War, he gave concerts in support of the Republican anti-Fascists who were fighting against the Franco government. He was blacklisted during the McCarthy hearings in the 1950s, and the FBI destroyed many of his films.

Another important socialist in the Civil Rights movement was James Farmer. As a member of the NAACP, Farmer helped found the Congress of Racial Equality and helped organize the Freedom Riders. Ella Baker, an organizer of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and the student movement and in 1963, when Martin Luther King Jr. led the March on Washington, was part of an anti-Stalinist socialist group called the Lovestones. She was also a prominent organizer for Martin Luther King Jr. for the Southern Christian Lead-

ership Conference.

Some of you may remember Bob Moses, a teacher who worked with Ella Baker. He taught high school math in Cambridge and founded the Algebra Project to promote math learning in inner city schools. During the Civil Rights movement, he organized voter registration in the South and helped start the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. When he started the Algebra Proj-

ect, he called the learning of math the new Civil Rights movement because it gave individuals access to good jobs.

If that’s socialism, then sign me in a chorus of We Shall Overcome.

Socialists have always been at the fore-

front of the peace movement and against imperialist war. During World War I, many marched against a war where the sole purpose was to divide up the world for colonialism and the exploitation of workers. Helen Kent was a prominent socialist who opposed the war. Jane Addams was a pacifist who did the same.

Also opposed to the war was Eugene Debs. Debs was a trade unionist, found-

ning member of the Industrial Workers of the World (The Wobblies), and five-time candidate for president for the Social-

ist Party ticket, getting almost a million votes in the 1912 election.

During the Vietnam War, members of the Students for a Democratic Society, inspired by the Civil Rights movement, led marches and sit-ins in opposition to a war that eventually became the domi-

nant view in this country. Many of these students became socialists, including Bernie Sanders, and they continue the fight for social justice today.

If that’s socialism, in the words of the folk singer Phil Ochs, then I ain’t a marcher anymore.

Trump and the Republican Party are counting on fear to fool the American people. We would be foolish to discount this fear. The fear is rooted in the failure of too many socialist countries failing to uphold the democratic rights of people. Social justice must mean more than eco-

nomic justice. Citizens of all countries must have the right to participate in the decisions of their lives. Whether it be at work or in their communities. Socialism without democracy will always fail.

We live in dangerous times. The Trump presidency has instituted policies that benefit the few at the detriment of the many. His white supremacist rantings against immigrants have emboldened his base and unleashed violence as a political means to an end. As the Republicans rail against socialism, they turn a blind eye to the rise of violent white supremacy.

As educators we are about unleash-

ing human potential. We know that a training tide lifts all boats. We understand the importance of cooperation to bring about this end. These are all socialist ide-

als. And there are no ifs about that.
As an Itinerate Teacher, Do I Get A Desk?

Yes, the contract language mandates, “All teachers shall have an exclusive working desk in one room of the building that they use.” If you are a teacher who must travel between rooms, in at least one of the rooms you teach in, must be provided with a desk that is yours alone in good repair for your exclusive use. If this is not the case, please grieve it immediately.

Do I Have to Accept an Intern or Student Teacher?

No. The contract clearly states, “Any teacher requested to accept an intern shall have at least one week’s advance notice, and may refuse. If a teacher does not accept a cooperating teacher, the contract outlines the following: ‘Each cooperating teacher shall be given two days of leave with pay, without loss of benefits. Such days shall be taken as mutually agreed upon by the teacher and the administrative service, and shall be scheduled within the last two weeks of the student-teacher training period. In cases of conflict, seniority shall prevail in the selection of days.’” This coverage was designed to be given by having the student teacher cover for the days so that it is no cost item for the BPS. If a cooperating teacher is not arranged for the coverage while the student teacher is still in the classroom, the cooperating teacher loses the benefit. Is it a use it or lose it scenario.

What is the Policy on Scheduling Individual Parent/Teacher Conferences?

According to the collective bargaining agreement, better known as the contract,” “Individual parent/teacher conferences shall be held at the school at a time that is mutually agreed upon by the parent and the teacher. If a parent is unable to come to a conference at the school, the teacher/parent conference regardless of the school attendance shall be conducted by telephone.”

Is There Coverage for Elementary Individualized Education Benchmarking?

The contract states, “All elementary teachers for grades K-3 will be provided with substitute teacher coverage while administering individualized benchmark testing. Teachers will receive substitute coverage for the equivalent of two days—equivalent of one in September and two equivalent of one in June—per teacher per year. The substitute will be compensated at the rate of $15.00 per hour. The union will facilitate the hiring of a retired teacher and others by the school for this purpose. But if a regular substitute is used, he/she will be paid in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement.”

BOSTON UNION TEACHER  October, 2019  3

Phone Numbers

Bostons Teachers Union, AFT Local 66, AFL-CIO

Health & Wellness: 617-288-1990
PT Massachusetts: 617-433-5142
Function Office: 617-288-5322
Lounge Office: 617-288-5322
Tremont Credit Union: 781-845-5626

Editorial Board

MICHAEL J. MAGUIRE
GARRET VIRCHICK

Editor-in-Chief

Caren Carew

BU Teaching Union

Field Representative


Bilingual, ESL and Sheltered Eng. Immersion: ANY Grade: [20] with one para: [25].

Can the Nurse Be Required to Stay After Administrators Leave the Building?

No, the contract is clear in that it reads: “School Nurses shall not be required to remain in the building after administrative personnel leave…” at the end of the school day after nurse/teacher sign out time.

When Do ‘Specialty’ Teachers Obtain Common Professional Development Time?

In the Collective 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 one city of the wide school professional development days already scheduled on the academic calendar.” Please let the BUU know if this is not occurring.
**Commentary**

**Michael J. Maguire**

**On Wealth and Privilege**

For her role in the so-called Varsity Blues bribery scandal, award winning actress Felicity Huffman was sentenced to 14 days in prison, a $30,000 fine, a year’s probation, and 250 hours of community service. I’m sure your social media immediately lit up with comparisons of Ms. Huffman’s sentence to Ohio mother Kelly Williams-Bolar who used her father’s address to enroll her children in a different school district. Discussions of race, wealth, and privilege dominated my news feed. And rightly so.

Certainly we all know too well that wealthy towns have better buildings, more extracurricular activities, and higher state ratings than their urban and rural counterparts. What doesn’t get enough attention, in my opinion, is that we have codified Varsity Blues into our laws by basing educational funding on local property taxes. Felicity Huffman used her wealth (illegally) to purchase an advantage for her child while suburbanites use their wealth (legally) to purchase a superior school system for their children.

Last month, the Boston Globe ran an in depth story entitled “Neighboring schools, worlds apart,” on the vast differences between Brighton High School and Newton South High School. The schools are just under five miles apart, but they may as well be on different planets. The article isn’t hard hitting enough for it to be shared on the huge platform that accompanies high property taxes. The high real estate taxes don’t just fund a school district, they also dictate the type of people who will live in the town. This financial segregation, while completely legal, allows wealthier people to give their children an advantage over children of poorer families. Take a minute to google the median family income of Massachusetts towns and then google the latest list of school rankings. For the most part you’ll notice the same names on both lists. None of this is new, but it is aggravating to see the Varsity Blues drama play out while our state legislature stalls on both the Promise Act (S.238/H.586) and the Cherish Act (S.341/H.1412) collectively known as Fund Our Future. Time and time again, wealth prevails.

Closer to home Boston School Committee Vice Chair Alexandra Oliver-Davila sent shockwaves through the district during the first school committee meeting of the year when she stated that she’d like to discuss the inequities in school fundraising. Every school has different resources to fundraise, and I think there are some inequities in that, and some schools get more dollars than others, and I actually advocate for schools to actually share some of the dollars that they’re raising,” she said.

Boston Latin School sits on a pile of money, some $650,000 according to its 2017 tax filing. BLS spends over $3.3m “to supplement funding of programs in technology, library, the arts, music, drama, athletics and the general academic program.” The mountain of money is also used “to fund college scholarships to graduating seniors.” All noble goals, but all highly inequitable. I’m sure all BPS schools could use a million extra dollars to supplement their current budgets. I don’t blame any school for wanting more. I blame the City of Boston for not providing for all the needs of all its students. I also blame the City of Boston for turning a blind eye to the enormous inequities in school fundraising. Private foundations at public schools ought to be an oxymoron. I support the Vice Chair’s courage and efforts on this topic.

Finally a Facebook friend of mine, who is arguably the most conservative person in my social media universe, has one of the most progressive ideas on education: outlawing private schools. His argument is that it is why the wealthy are attending schools with the very poor, then the wealthy parents would demand that the public schools be run the way private schools are now. He means that there would be a modern plant, an abundance of extracurriculars, good cafeteria food, and everything else that goes into a quality school. I say it’s worth a try and all progressive ideas are better than separate-but-equal isn’t working so well.

Horace Mann said, “Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery.” Too bad our urban public schools are being crushed under the wheel of inequitable funding. (Michael J. Maguire teaches Latin at Boston Latin Academy)

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**Corrections from September, 2019**

**Boston Union Teacher**

### Paraprofessionals – Additional Changes for 2011-2020

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### ABA’s – Additional Changes for 2016-2020

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**Organizing Committees**

Organizing committees are vehicles for our members who are concerned with specific issues to work together and advocate for the improvements and changes our educators and students deserve. Many work side by side with allies including families, students and community partners.

- **Climate Justice:** Advocates in solidarity with local climate justice movements, as well as for science educators in BPS.
- **Early Educators:** This committee has been in conversation with BPS Early Ed. Department, gathering data and advocating for best practices.
- **Haitian Educators:** Haitian educators and allies working to support the needs of Haitian educators, students, and parents in our schools.
- **New Educators:** Plans and outreaches for events and opportunities where early career educators meet for both social and support networking.
- **Restorative Justice:** Works to improve and expand RJ practices in the district and to bring PD on restorative practices to BPS educators.
- **Unafraid Educators:** Educators working to build sustainable schools from the ground up where immigrant and undocumented students feel supported. Their work includes an annual Unafraid Educators Week of Action as well as a scholarship fund for undocumented students in BPS.
- **Inclusion:** Members of this committee are concerned about special education and inclusion implementation in the district and advocates for thoughtful implementation.
- **Dual Language:** Educators from dual language programs sharing resources and advocating for increased supports from the district and state.
- **Visual and Performing Arts:** Advocates for the needs of expanded arts education in BPS.
- **Ethnic Studies:** Advocating to bring Ethnic Studies curriculum and course offerings to BPS students.
- **Black Lives Matter at School:** Planning committee for the annual Black Lives Matter Week of Action in February.

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**Please contact Khalida (ksmall@btu.org) if you are interested in joining one of these organizing committees!**

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**REGISTER and VOTE!**

**Wednesday, October 16** is the last day to register for November Election Day.

**Tuesday, November 5** is Election Day.

Polls are open 7:00 am-8:00 pm.
On September 4, 2019 we had the first ever Para PD Conference at the union hall. It was a collaborative undertaking by BTU and BPS. The committee met for almost a year to discuss how to get this to happen. After many meetings and discussion it came to fruition. The day was attended by almost 200 paraprofessionals from many schools. Training on behavior plans were offered by the Office of Special Education. Workshops on prevention and de-escalation, specific learning disabilities, and intellectual impairment were also offered.

BTU Vice-President Erik Berg welcomed the paraprofessionals. The day couldn’t have been more successful. Everyone enjoyed the opportunity to engage in meaningful professional development and felt the experience was an important opportunity for the paras to improve their craft.

On September 6, 2019 we hosted the Paras as Partners Conference at BTU. The conference was a collaborative effort between the BTU and BPS Para PD Committee.

Ideas for the conference came from a survey that BTU Early Childhood Committee conducted.

The conference was attended by almost 200 paras from different early education classrooms within BPS. Jason Sachs and Marie Enochty and the Early Education Department were all in with planning and executing this conference. Sel Wel offered a workshop on creating a safe and healthy learning environments in the early grades. Judy Storeygard worked alongside some amazing Para facilitators to offer math in small group learning.

Betsy Drinan and Erik Berg welcomed the participants to the BTU and reminded them how important their role is in the classroom.

The conference was a great opportunity for training for early education paraprofessionals.
Retirement Seminar

with
Michael W. McLaughlin
BTU ELEMENTARY FIELD REPRESENTATIVE
and Trustee, State-Boston Retirement along with
staff from the State Boston Retirement System,
and Group Health
Tuesday, October 29, 2019
4:30 PM • BTU Hall

RETIREMENT PLANNING SEMINAR

NAME: ______________________________
SCHOOL/DEPT.: ______________________
EMAIL: ______________________________

Please visit the website to RSVP or fax form to 617-288-0024

BUILDING COMMUNITY IN OUR SCHOOLS

Fall Leadership Conference for all BTU Building Reps and Member Leaders

OCTOBER 18-20
DEDHAM HILTON

LEARN MORE AND REGISTER:
btu.org/FallConference
Free conference with meals and lodging included

Congratulations to the recipients of the 3rd Annual Teachers Classroom Scholarships, offered by Tremont Credit Union.

Heather Mook, a special education teacher at Ohrenberger School in West Roxbury received a $1,500 scholarship. Tawonia Queeley, an early education teacher at Ellison/Parks School received a $1,000 scholarship. Felicia Andre, an ELA Enrichment teacher at Community Academy of Science & Health received a $500 scholarship.

The scholarships were designed to help ease the burden and expense of Boston teachers, who on average, spend $1,000 personally on their students and classroom needs.

Teachers were nominated by colleagues, friends and family members who believe these teachers go above and beyond. This year, the credit union received 900 nominations!
AFT President Randi Weingarten Joins AFT Nurses and Leaders to Condemn Trump’s Policy to Deport Children and Families Seeking Medical Treatment

Statement of American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, Ohio Nurses Association CEO Kelly Trautner, AFT Connecticut Vice President and registered nurse John Brady and United University Professors President Frederick E. Kowal, following reports that the Trump administration is unfairly deporting foreign-born children who have been granted special immigration status for medical treatment.

The AFT’s Weingarten said: “First, he separated families. Then he threw children in cages without food, water or showers. And now, in his cruellest move yet, Donald Trump is signing death sentences by deporting children with cancer and other chronic illnesses, and in some cases deporting the parents of their sick and dying kids, leaving children alone in their most vulnerable hour. Just when you thought the callousness couldn’t get worse, Trump rose to the occasion and proposed the unimaginably inhumane.

The long-standing legal practice of medical deferred action has been used by this country to show compassion and humanity, keeping families together when children are critically ill and will die if they are deported. Sadly, as we have come to find out, humanity is not in Trump’s lexicon. As the families of these sick children look desperately for answers to keep those children alive, let the history books show that Trump led the charge to promote this depraved indifference to children’s lives.

The Ohio Nurses Association’s Trautner said: “As a union of nurses and other health professionals, every day we see firsthand the toll terminal illness takes on families. At their lowest and most vulnerable time, families look for compassion and care. But with Trump’s new policy to deport sick immigrant children, we are adding insult to injury, isolating and abandoning the very children we signed up to protect. He should be ashamed.”

AFT Connecticut’s Brady said: “I recently visited McAllen, Texas, where union leaders, community members and clergy were barred from seeing the children in detention. As a nurse who has spent 21 years at the bedside caring for sick children, I was ashamed then, but this new policy takes my shame to another level. This is a horrendous act that goes against our ethics as healthcare professionals, public employees and educators. We cannot tolerate this inhumanity.”

United University Professors’ Kowal said: “This latest Trump administration edict is heinous, hateful and inhumane. These critically ill children — we’re talking about kids with diseases like cancer, leukemia and muscular dystrophy — will certainly perish if they are deported because in many cases, the lifesaving healthcare they so desperately need isn’t available outside the United States. This heartless act must not be allowed to stand, and UUP members will do all we can to challenge and defeat it.”

AFT President Randi Weingarten Slams DeVos Borrower Defense Rule

New rule would hurt students already defrauded by for-profit colleges, a callous one-two punch

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten issued the following statement after the Education Secretary Betsy DeVos issued a new borrower defense rule on the Friday before Labor Day:

“There’s a reason that releasing bad news on the eve of a long weekend is called ‘taking out the trash,’ because that’s exactly what this new rule is — trash. Betsy DeVos has again shown just how determined she is to hurt students while helping her friends who are failing for-profit colleges.

“The rule takes a scythe to defrauded borrowers, limiting their loan forgiveness by millions of dollars and forcing arbitration clauses that erase their rights. For many affected students, disproportionately veterans, first-generation college-goers and older workers, it’s a double whammy — not only are their finances and careers wrecked by worthless degrees, any chance at justice is then callously denied to them by DeVos.

“The rule eliminates the possibility for group claims, so each individual borrower will have to come forward with evidence, a tactic meant to stop people fighting back as one. And it imposes a new three-year time limit on claims. It’s why we argued that the entire rule should be scrapped and replaced with something — anything — that strengthens rather than guts protections.

“The Friday of Labor Day weekend, DeVos is gleefully forcing hundreds of thousands of students defrauded by for-profit colleges to suffer yet another indignity. Shame on her.”

AFT’s Weingarten Reacts to Damning GAO Report on Temporary Expanded Public Service Loan Forgiveness

Statement of American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, released a report showing that the Temporary Expanded Public Service Loan Forgiveness program approved just 1 percent of applicants. Hundreds of thousands of AFT members are eligible for loan forgiveness but are yet to receive it.

“Once again, Betsy DeVos has refused to do her job when it comes to the millions of American teachers, nurses, firefighters and public employees promised loan forgiveness. DeVos and the Trump administration have the capacity and authority to fix Public Service Loan Forgiveness to help these workers — just as they just did for disabled veterans — but choose instead to stymie it. DeVos stands silly by while borrowers and in some cases try desperately to do the right thing, blame Congress, and then uses the courts to stop anyone else from getting borrowers the relief they’ve earned.

“Congress deliberately and purposefully required simple TEPSLF processes. But the secretary is throwing up roadblocks at every turn. Only $27 million out of the $700 million allocated by Congress for the program has been utilized.

“It’s because of loan forgiveness debacles like this that we’re suing DeVos for her refusal to side with borrowers. And it’s why we’re also suing Navient for its rampant profiteering off of students’ misery. DeVos can make good on the bipartisan promise of PSLF. Sadly, she still refuses to do her job.”

The Trump administration eliminates protection that lets immigrants avoid deportation when they receive life-saving medical treatment

The AFT joins AFT Nurses and Students Call for Action on Gun Safety in Full-Page Ad

The American Federation of Teachers, Brady, and March for Our Lives will run a full-page ad in Tuesday’s Politico. The ad features a young female student hiding under her desk during an active-shooter drill. Today, 95 percent of public school students participate in these drills. The ad calls on Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to stop blocking gun violence prevention legislation already passed in the House of Representatives. A copy of the ad is available upon request and can also be viewed on the organizations’ social media feeds: @aftunion, @bradybuzz, and @AMarchForOurLives.

“Educators and students went back to school this year feeling deeply anxious; in fact, gun violence is the No. 1 thing most teenagers in this country are afraid of. But no one should be scared to go to school, or should spend more time in drills hiding under desks or running for exits than they spend focused on coursework or pursuing their dreams. Schools must be safe and welcoming environments for students and staff alike, and that’s why America’s teachers and students are championing gun safety policies. It’s time for politicians to care about kids’ safety more than they fear the National Rifle Association. As McConnell tries to spin blame for his inaction, we’re here fighting for commonsense gun safety laws like background checks, red flag protection orders, safe storage provisions and high-capacity magazine bans — laws that will actually keep our kids alive, not hiding under desks in schools.”

Brady President John Brady said:

“Teachers and students should be able to focus on teaching and learning — plain and simple. When voters elected a gun violence prevention majority last fall, we saw them take action immediately. Those bills have been sitting on McConnell’s desk since March. And every day they’ve sat there, another 100 people in America lost their lives to gun violence. Our Senate can end this carnage today, but they must take action.”

March For Our Lives’ Emwees said:

“Educators and students went back to school this year feeling deeply anxious; in fact, gun violence is the No. 1 thing most teenagers in this country are afraid of. But no one should be scared to go to school, or should spend more time in drills hiding under desks or running for exits than they spend focused on coursework or pursuing their dreams. Schools must be safe and welcoming environments for students and staff alike, and that’s why America’s teachers and students are championing gun safety policies. It’s time for politicians to care about kids’ safety more than they fear the National Rifle Association. As McConnell tries to spin blame for his inaction, we’re here fighting for commonsense gun safety laws like background checks, red flag protection orders, safe storage provisions and high-capacity magazine bans — laws that will actually keep our kids alive, not hiding under desks in schools.”

News From the American Federation of Teachers

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The AFT joins AFT Nurses and Students Call for Action on Gun Safety in Full-Page Ad
James Otis Elementary School

The James Otis Elementary School is in East Boston, a short walk from the Airport stop on the blue line. The three-story brick building houses almost 400 students in grades K1-5, including an SEI strand. Inside, math facts are written on steps and hallway walls are covered with inspirational quotes — including those from children’s authors such as E.B. White and Roald Dahl, complete with illustrations from their books!

Students in just about every class I visit are working on literacy. Jessica Hyland’s fifth graders are reading and answering questions about Holes. A group of 3rd graders meets with Sheila Hanson to read and discuss Julie of the Wolves, with stuffed animals representing the book’s characters. Second graders in Meaghan Ragna’s class and students in Mari-Joy Eisele’s fourth grade are doing independent reading. Elaine Mallios’ first graders are writing in their weekend journals, while Teresa Sousa helps her 2nd grade students write poetry and third graders in Jared Prince’s class select biographies about people who interest them.

Kindergarten students are in specialist classes. Science teacher Lance Margolis is helping children in Emily Katz’s K1 class make whirligigs, while Caitlin Diehl teaches Spanish with a song. Racks of costumes, a hat tree, an ironing board, and puppets galore line the hallway leading to Drama class and fill the classroom itself. Teacher Kathleen Doyle uses her face, voice, and gestures to dramatically read aloud a “Cinderella” story — about a girl who wants to play basketball — to Kathryn Husgen’s K2 students. The Otis is fortunate to have a Community & Family Coordinator, Mara DoSantos, who facilitates parent breakfasts and workshops every Tuesday morning throughout the school year. K1 SEI teacher Maria Melohidzadeh tells me that parent involvement is high and there are numerous occasions for them to attend publication parties, test analysis sessions, and other classroom-based or school-wide special events.

Here’s hoping that you create opportunities for families to be fully engaged in your class this year. Please invite me to visit your school!

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We were listening to Ms. Doyle read us a story about a girl who wanted to play basketball. In Drama we have learned how to read and act out stories. We also learned how to move puppets and talk with them.
Ms. Husgen’s K2 class.

I’m writing about winning a game with my sister in my weekend journal. This year I learned to use a period at the end of a sentence when you’re telling something, a question when you don’t understand something, and an exclamation point when you’re telling something.
Akira Hart, Grade 1

We were doing independent reading on the rug. This year we’ve learned lots of new words and have increased our reading levels. We’ve also learned how to write all kinds of poems.
Samuel Getant, Christian Alvarado & Brooklyn Henrici, Grade 2

In this picture we are making collages of ourselves as powerful — that red, orange, and yellow are warm colors, and green, blue and purple are cool colors. We’ve also learned how to paint with watercolors and not to press down on the brush.
Diana Galdamez, Allison Tamayo & Melissa Benitez, Grade 1

Ms. Sousa is helping us with our poetry journals. First we plan our poems and then we write them in our books. From reading a story about a hero’s journey, we learned that one person can make a difference and that heroes don’t go around bragging. In math this year we learned regrouping, which makes addition and subtraction really easy for us!
Joseph Venuti & Fran Martin, Grade 2

This is in math class with Mr. Wilson and we were designing blueprints for a zoo, using coordinates to place objects like cages on our plans. We’ve also learned about powers of 10 and how to convert fractions into decimals.
Erick Villanueva & Elijah Marshall, Grade 5

We were being taken reading Julie of the Wolves with Ms. Hanson. From this book we’ve learned you need lots of equipment to survive [in the wilderness] and that animals can help. We’ve also learned how to cite evidence when answering a question, and how to indent paragraphs.
Ms Hanson’s Julie of the Wolves Reading Group, Grade 3

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