In 2012, pro-charter and privatization forces in Massachusetts introduced legislation in the State House to expand Commonwealth charter schools. One of the main targets of the legislation was Boston, which was getting close to reaching the cap on expanding charters. In response, a small group of students, led by the Boston Student Advisory Committee, Youth on Board and the Boston Area Youth Organizing Project joined forces with the BTU and other allied organizations to put together, in just two weeks time, a press conference in the State House as well as a rally. Subsequent rallies were organized to stop the legislation.

This collaboration became the seeds of a new coalition comprised of student, parent, educator, labor and community allies. Originally named “Boston Truth” and later renamed the Boston Education Justice Alliance (BEJA), our coalition of organizations and individuals would continue to fight not just against the charter legislation, but also against school budget cuts, and supported the BPS student walk-outs in the 2015-2016 school year. The coalition also created a platform for a vision of equitably funded schools/No On 2 campaign to fight the 2016 ballot question.

After the incredible and resounding victory to defeat Question 2, our coalition regrouped and turned its attention to the root problem facing public education: inadequate and systemic underfunding of our highest needs districts. The Foundation Budget Review Commission found in 2015 that public education was being underfunded by $1 to $2 billion dollars due particularly to raising health care costs and underfunding for special education. This was further exacerbated by unfilled charter reimbursements, the special education circuit breaker and transportation costs.

The MEJA coalition, now with close to a dozen new local tables modeled after the original Boston Education Justice Alliance, launched the Fund Our Future campaign to pass state legislation to invest in K-12 public schools and higher education. Building upon our relationships and experience over the last few years, we had a new goal, to pass the legislation in the State House that would commit $1.5 billion over inflation to our public school systems with a progressive formula directed towards districts with the highest needs students.

This past November, after months of intense advocacy, lobbying and activism, both houses unanimously passed the Student Opportunities Act (originally the Promise Act) and Governor Baker signed the bill at English High School in front of students, parents, legislators and, of course, the many educators and members of the coalition who were there from the start. It was a historic win and the first funding bill since the 1993 Education Reform Act.

This history, of how a moment – the threat of a charter expansion bill that would have decimated public schools – became the blueprint for the statewide allies across the state, parents, educators and labor allies across the state, organized not just to defend and defeat, but to fight and win. This history was shared at the recent MEJA Boot Camp, held at the Boston Teachers Union on December 15. We regroup once again, but with a new goal: to ensure that the funding won by this movement gets to the students and schools that need them the most.

Our work continues as we ensure that those closest to the work, the stakeholders who work in and use our schools, who live in our neighborhoods, are the ones who inform the decisions that impact our students, educators and schools. Our work continues through contract enforcement, impact bargaining including K-5 expansion to 6th grades and bilingual endorsement. It continues through our Inclusion Done Right Campaign, and it continues through our health care negotiations, for which we have just signed a tentative agreement for December (details forthcoming at our January membership meeting).

Our work is part of a national movement of teachers across the country speaking out and taking action – through walkouts, strikes, sickouts and teach-ins. It is #RedForEd. It is FundOurFuture. It is from the East Coast to the West Coast, from Detroit to Florida, West Virginia to New Mexico. And it is critical and never needed more at this point in America’s history, when democracy, justice and human decency are threatened. That is why, as the new year begins, we must now turn this moment, this movement and our collective power and action towards the 2020 election.

The recent Boston City Council election, where the election results were decided by just one vote, was a timely reminder about the importance of voting. Although we may be in a “safe blue state,” we still have an incredibly important role to play, and we are calling on all of you to do your part. We can and must influence this election – by growing our political muscle with boots on the ground door knocking and phone banking. By having conversations with friends, neighbors, and family in other states. By getting others engaged and involved in the upcoming election. We are joining #AFTvotes with #BTUVotes and will be rolling out opportunities to get informed and to take action!

This is how we will continue build from not just a moment, but a movement and onward to fight not just for the schools our students think deserve, but for the communities we all deserve, too.

**“The Purpose of Education” by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

As I engage in the so-called “bull sessions” around and about the school, I too often find that most college men have a misconception of the purpose of education. Most of the “brethren” think that education should equip them with the proper instruments of knowledge so that they can forever trample over the masses. Still others think that education should furnish them with noble ends rather than means to an end.

It seemed to me that education has a two-fold function to perform in the life of man and in society: the one is utility and the other is culture. Education must enable a man to become more efficient, to achieve with increasing facility the legitimate goals of his life.

Education must also train one for quick, resolute and effective thinking. To think incisively and to think for oneself is very difficult. We are prone to let our mental life become invaded by legions of half truths, prejudices, and propaganda. At this point, I often wonder whether or not education is fulfilling its purpose. A great majority of the so-called educated people do not think logically and scientifically. Even the press, the classroom, the platform, and the pulpit in many instances do not give us objective and unbiased truths. To save man from the morass of propaganda, in my opinion, is one of the chief aims of education. Education must (continued on page 4)
“Don’t Segregate Our Schools”:
A Conversation with Kim Crushfield from the Little Rock Education Association

By Natalia Cuadra-Saez, Organizer, Boston Teachers Union

Kim Crushfield is a psychology and sociology teacher at Little Rock Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas and a proud member of the Little Rock Education Association. Outside of her full-time teaching job she also coaches cheerleading and works part-time at TJ Maxx and the Marriott. I interviewed Kim on December 7 to learn more about what inspired the one-day educator strike on November 14 and what lessons we can takeaways here in Boston.

Timeline and Background:

- **January 2015**: The state of Arkansas assumes control of Little Rock’s public schools
- **September 2020**: The State Board of Education proposes to return local control to Little Rock, but only to schools that do not have “failing” grades according to the state’s accountability system. These schools with “failing” grades all have a majority black and brown student population.

**October 10, 2020**: The Arkansas Board of Education votes to end recognition of the Little Rock Education Association as the exclusive contract bargaining agent for employees. The Board also voted to return the Little Rock School District to a locally-elected school board but with very limited authority that would leave the door to school closures and charter schools.

- **October 30, 2020**: Thousands of high school students in the Little Rock School District participate in a sick-out in support of their teachers.
- **November 14, 2020**: Little Rock educators go on a one-day strike. Slogans include “Don’t Segregate Our Schools” and “Separate is not equal – one district for all our students.”

Natalia: Why did the union decide to go on a one-day strike on November 14?

Kim: The first thing we want is a locally-elected school board and for them to have full power. They are setting up an MOU with the state board that is now taking power they have. One of the restrictions is that they cannot re-recognition the union. Then we want the union to be re-recognized as the negotiating body for all teachers, staff, and faculty within the district. And we want to get a raise for all classified employees, which include janitors, cooks, and paraprofessionals, because they haven’t had a raise in five years. Some of these people are only making $20,000 a year.

Natalia: Can you describe what happened during the one-day strike in Little Rock on November 14 of this year?

Kim: The community, the teachers, and all the stakeholders from Little Rock and the surrounding area came together to unite our voice, to show our strength and our concern, and to send the message that we want our schools back. We want our kids to have a quality education. No matter where they live, no matter what color they are, or what their socio-economic status is. By 6:30 or 7 a.m. all teachers went to their schools to picket there. Around 11a.m we went to the state board building and we did a protest, including a march. Then we went inside and a lot of people signed up for public comment. I was one of those people who signed up for public comment. At the end when they were due to vote we did protest and we were able to make them adjourn the meeting until the next day. Little wins here and there.

Natalia: What did support look like from the community, including from students who had staged a sick-out a couple of weeks before?

Kim: It was awesome. People from the surrounding community came out to support. People from more affluent and predominantly white areas came out to support. I had a student and his parent walk by the picket line and after learning why we were out there the parent said, “Well I stand with the teachers and my child is not going to school today and I’ll be back to picket with you all.” It’s heartwarming. These are unofficial numbers, but we had 2,500 kids in our school, approximately 400 kids were in school that day. I saw a lot of my students out there picketing with me. It was heartwarming to see the amount of support we had, even from people who didn’t have children, people who didn’t live in Little Rock.

Natalia: What do you see as the connection between local control and racial justice?

Kim: When the state board of education came up with the framework, the framework stated that the schools that were still labeled as D and F schools would continue to be under state control and could be managed by an outside entity. And the schools that had A, B, or C ratings would gain their local control back. And it just so happens that all the A, B, and C schools are predominantly white schools. All the D and F schools are predominantly black and brown schools that are in low socio-economic areas. So you’re going back to segregating our students in our schools based on these falsities that they’re failing from one test. They’re not looking at the child holistically, not looking at the gains, not looking at the fact that every year they have changed the test and the criteria for passing. They’re not addressing the other issues happening at these schools.

For example at McClendon (a majority black school) where I taught for five years – in those five years we had four principals. And we know consistency helps. For example at Little Rock Central High (a majority white school) has had the same principal for many years. And that school runs like a well-oiled machine. It comes down to the black kids in one part of town being treated one way. And the white kids and the affluent kids with parents who have more money and can afford to be involved – they get treated another way and they get control of themselves.

My students at Central they were frustrated, they were mad, and it warmed my heart. Because at Central, we weren’t a school that was in trouble, but we were mad about what they were trying to do to our district. We showed them we are one LRSD (Little Rock School District) and we want all of our kids to be treated the same.

Everyone can see that it is the right thing. We feel like they’re trying to sell out our kids that they think we don’t think are important. But all of our kids are important.

Natalia: What can we do here in Boston to be in solidarity?

Kim: Social media is the biggest way to connect everybody. Tag @LRSD (Little Rock School District) and @LRSEateteach (Little Rock Education Association) and follow #OneLRSD. The more that we get the message out, the more that it filters down to everybody. This is not just an Arkansas issue. We saw this [takeover and privatization of public schools] happen in New Orleans and we’re trying to stop this from happening here.

Because we see the big picture is they try to segregate out all the low-socioeconomic schools and then our kids are going to get a subpar education with unqualified, uncertified instructors. I won’t call them teachers. We need to get the information out that the Waltons and others are trying to commercialize education. We need to get the message out to our elected officials and everyone: you’re not going to sell out public ed. That’s not going to happen.

Natalia: In Boston we have several schools that have been affected by state sanctions. Do you have a message for our members here in Boston?

Kim: Be vigilant about what is going on and the message that you are trying to send out. Be vigilant about getting the message out, especially to parents. Because as teachers, even though we are professionals, it’s the sad truth that they don’t listen to us. But they do listen to our parents. And sometimes our parents don’t know everything that is going on.

So if there’s any message I could share with Boston it would be to work tirelessly to get that message out and get that picture out—that these are the schools that they are taking over. And it’s important for all of us to be part of this fight because that’s not the America we want to create. Don’t fall asleep at the wheel. Don’t get sucked into the day-to-day and lose sight of what they are trying to do to kids who are in low socio-economic status. If our parents would have been more aware of what was going on five years ago, we wouldn’t be in the position we’re in now. (Photos courtesy of the Little Rock Education Association.)
When does the Principal make recommendations to grant permanent status to provisional teachers?

According to the contract, "Principals will be required to make recommendations as to which provisional teachers they want to make permanent teachers by February 1st of each year. Principals will be notified by February 15th if their recommendations have been approved. The Superintendent shall make permanent appointments of provisional teachers by March 27th."
The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and for some, the acclaimed 40-hour work-week. On the other hand, unions are known for perpetuating racism, furthering inequities by intentionally excluding membership for some groups, and for fighting for contracts that further marginalize groups. In recent years, the Boston Teachers Union has moved from a mostly service-driven union, focusing on enhancing and protecting wages and benefits, to a social-justice union where fighting for the schools our students, families, and communities deserve, is matched with the learning and teaching conditions our members deserve.

Gratefully, in this work, the Boston Teachers Union members have not forgotten about the needs of students with disabilities. In the Boston Public Schools, many classrooms designated as “inclusion classrooms” rely on incredibly inadequate supports. In these classrooms a single multi-license teacher is responsible for both special education and general education supports. These structural conditions, dictated by the district, are inclusion in name only. The learning conditions in these classrooms are not aware of the various models and the gross inequities, leaving families feeling like separate spaces are the best places for their child, despite the research. BPS “inclusion roll out” has undermined the potential and possibility of inclusion for our students.

In a historic move, the union made “inclusion done right” a central component of its most recent contract negotiation. The union is fighting for inclusion where students with and without disabilities learn in classrooms with ample support (for some classrooms this means two teachers and a paraprofessional). For other classrooms, this means the right special education services beyond one dual or triple certified teacher, and for ensuring our classrooms have the natural proportions of students with and without disabilities that reflect our neighborhoods. We have some naturally recognized inclusive schools, like the Henderson Inclusion School, but our city needs more.

This is historic as often special education victories have been individual-fami- ly fights where a family is fighting for the school/placement they believe their child (and the law) is entitled to. This is historic as often, despite research stating the power of inclusive classrooms, teachers unions, and school districts have been adamant in protecting segregated classrooms, sub separate spaces, and exclusive special education policies. While Boston Public Schools on paper believes that inclusive schools are best practices, their policies reflect otherwise.

In 2013, in response to the large BPS rollout of 20 inclusion schools, Boston Teachers Union members reflecting a range of BPS schools, classrooms, grades, and special education service delivery models formed a committee to begin the work the district was not prioritizing. As a new teacher, this committee gave me hope that I was entering a union surrounded by other educators who care deeply about building an educational system that works for all.

The committee created pamphlets to help teachers and families know how to fight for the best learning conditions for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). It designed an extensive survey to collect data across BPS schools to better understand the vast models of inclusion used to help us reflect on the challenges and opportunities of inclusion in Boston. It organized events for families to work with the BTU to be advised on the best schools for their children. It worked to desegregate the schools our children deserve. All the way, inclusion, and inclusion done right was the guiding principle. The union’s members prioritized this kind of work.

While different, this history is not unlike what happened in Boston during the desegregation in the 1970s. Instead of uniting with the just demands to desegregate the schools, the union took a more narrow approach that put the weight of a reputation on the context over the aspirations of a historically under- served community. With a more social justice perspective our union of teachers could have united with parents to create welcoming schools for all children, espe- cially children of color.

As we work towards inclusive schools, I hope you will join the Boston Teachers Union in this fight. We have the opportu- nity to build the schools all children deserve. We have the opportunity to undo the racial and social inequities that our schools replicate. In Boston, white students with IEPs are more likely to be segregated than students of color with IEPs. It is often recognized as a privilege to go to an inclusive classroom - rather than a legal right. Across the nation, 83% of students with intellectual disabilities are left out of inclusive settings which leads to dis- mal graduation and employability rates. We know inclusive schools provide the best academic and social outcomes for all children, for both students with and without disabilities.

Inclusion done right means that all BTU members must examine our beliefs about what the think belongs in an inclu- sive classroom, what we think is possible for students with disabilities, and how we challenge our false-belief that inclusion is a challenge for the schools our children without disabilities.

Let’s continue to be on the right side of history and fight with disabilities. You can join this fight by:

• attending the next inclusion meet- ing (bring a family member or colleague from your school): Tuesday, January 14, 2020 from 4:30-6:30pm
• sharing the inclusion tracker with your colleagues so we can collect the data about what’s happening in our schools: https://btu.org/inclusion/
• engaging your students’ families (those with and without disabilities) and your colleagues in building and dreaming the schools we all deserve.

I am proud to be part of the Boston Teachers Union and I hope our “inclu- sion done right” campaign will inspire our members, our district and other teacher unions across the nation to get on the right side of this historic fight.

Are those the types of men we call edu- cated? We must remember that intelli- gence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true edu- cation. The complete education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objects upon which to concentrate. The broad education will, therefore, transmit to one not only the accumulated knowledge of the race but also the accumulated experience of social living.

If we are not careful, our colleges will produce a group of close-minded, unscientific, illogical propagandists, consumed with immoral acts. Be careful, “brethren”! Be careful teachers!

Who do you work with?

(continued from page 1)
On Sunday, December 15th, the BTU hosted its annual Children’s Holiday Party. Nearly 225 adults and children attended. From all accounts it was the best children’s holiday party ever! Children and adults enjoyed the crafts, photobooths, face painting, DJ, inflatable obstacle courses and food.

Thanks to all our event volunteers Priyadarshini Kumar (Mission K-8), Daniss Lopez (Umana), Sonia Valentin (Tobin K-8), Lauren Reyes, Peggy Wyse-McLaughlin (Condon K-8), Ava McLaughlin, Johnny McInnis, Gayle Marrow, Brenda Chaney and Michelle Silvestro-Frank and all her staff.

– Photos by Michael McLaughlin
Peer-to-Peer
Anne Slater with Lauren Clarke-Mason and Gustavo Peireira
Being and Becoming a Writer

Call for submissions! Are you working on a writing project?
Submit your poem, short story or essay for consideration.
Send to Anne Slater: a Slater@bostonpublicschools.org

What helps you become a better writer?
Gustavo: My continual reading and life context enable me to stay up to date with my expressions and their modes. Also, discussions, talks, arguments around the art of writing. All of that helps me improve, strove to improve, and share.

Anne: One of the things that helped me most recently was signing up for a screenwriting class at Brookline Community Ed. It cost a mere $100, and met on Saturdays mornings. I was able to get an offer from the principal. I had deadlines and I had readers. I was able to finish my screenplay the next year.

Lauren: The big moment for me was when I signed up for Boston Writing Project. The exercises I did with Peter Golden were very empowering and helpful and I brought those experiences back to my students. We did writing circles. They workshoped their pieces and we published a book.

Anne: That’s my experience too! I took a workshop in the summer about how to listen to some of my favorite writers talk about their process. I was struck by how different the process that real writers use is from what I was going through as a student. It changed what I thought about instruction.

Lauren: Workshops provide useful, helpful feedback. I went to a workshop at Grub Street for 8-10 weeks, submitting 10 pages a week. (costs about $120) It was so important to me. We met for two years or so and the characters are still there from myself, teachers and principals that I have known.

How do you find time to write?
Gustavo: It’s natural. I write at any chance I get and when I feel compelled. I wish I were a bit more deliberate, and try to stick to a schedule of the same day every year. I try to write for 15 minutes I can get going and usually write for an hour. (I’m using that strategy right now. Having a deadline is a great motivator.) Also, another good strategy is to stop your writing in mid sentence or even mid-word. Then when you go back in, you can use it as a launch. I’ll just finish this word or this thought. The best piece of advice that I read in Natalie Goldberg’s book Writing Down the Bones was to turn off your computer: that little voice that says, you’re not a good writer, just get your pencil moving or your fingers typing and don’t edit yourself. Free flow and then go back later.

Tips for Teacher Writers
• Sign up for a workshop or class
• Go to a reading
• Join or start a writers group
• Read!
• Take a Community Ed class
• Get out there and do open mic readings

What are you working on now?
Gustavo: I am working on compiling a manuscript (of poems) that I feel lined up. With the Boston Media Lab, I am always creating ideas, noticing imagery, and jotting them down.

Lauren: I am working on a middle grade fiction novel about a young girl that has to advocate for herself against a rule that she thinks is unfair. It’s based on a true story from when I was growing up. I was commuting to school and I was always late. The principal made a rule that you had to sit on the stairs if you were late and miss your first period. I wrote her a letter. Based on that event I wrote the story. What happened for her, I’m writing a presentation, proposing it to the superintendent and change the rule.

Anne: Did you base your work on a theme? Did you say to yourself, “I want to write a book about advocacy for girls?”

Lauren: No! My book is based on a real experience. I had students at the time I started the book who were motivated to take action against the things they found unfair. The character is a made-up myself and my students and my own kids. To make the book current. I incorporated the phrases that my kids use today.

That’s where characters come from! Every character is you in a way, or an amalgamation of people around you. A trick to help me get into a comedy movie screenplay: It’s about a strange concept presentation that turns everyone who watches it into zombies. A group of non-actors, of the old bum basement teachers rooms and miss the presentation. They are the only unaffected people so they have to fight their way across Boston, fighting along the way to City Hall to destroy the source of the zombie ray and save the children. The whole book takes me back to the people and places that are important to me, the teachers and students.

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Portugal, Spain & Gibraltar

International Travel Program

February 13-23, 2020 • $2,799 pp/do

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POINTS AVAILABLE

Includes flights, hotels, breakfasts, and ground transfers

Visit the cobblestone streets of Sintra, Portugal where families chose house colors depending on the sex of their child. Savor the flavors and wines of Spain. Spain and Portugal offer an intertwined history revealing culinary delights, dance, art and beautiful architecture. Other cities include Sevilla, Costa del Sol, and Gibraltar. Do all this while earning PDPs!

Egypt

International Travel Program

April 17-27, 2020 • $3,500 pp/do

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POINTS AVAILABLE

Includes flights, hotels, breakfasts

Local sight-seeing guided tours • Historical tours & cultural events

Shopping • Fine dining and so much more

Minimum group size 8-10, tell your family, friends and colleagues!

Egypt, a country linking northeast Africa with the Middle East, dates to the time of the pharaohs. Millennia-old monuments sit along the fertile Nile River Valley, including Giza’s colossal Pyramids and Great Sphinx as well as Luxor, hieroglyph-lined Karnak Temple and the Valley of the Kings tomb. Hope you join us as we explore the rich history, culture, people and foods of Egypt.

Local Contacts

ed.travelpdp@gmail.com

Maritza Agrait • 617-529-0519

Dana Royster-Buefort • 617-838-9742

CHOOSE THE CORRECT ANSWER

- A low score will punish your teacher
- A low score will give your school a bad grade
- A low score will turn your school into an unaccountable charter
- A low score will fire your teacher

HIGH STAKES TESTING
Maurice Tobin K-8 School

The Maurice Tobin K-8 School is located in the heart of Mission Hill, behind the local library and community center. Serving 468 students, it is organized into two K-5 strands and one for grades 6-8. Ubuntu Academy, which welcomes visitors with middle school student drawings and selected quotes illustrating the meaning of this Southern African concept of interdependence, e.g. “I am because we are.”

K0/K1 children in Computer Technology class with Michael Gordon are exploring and creating different shapes with pattern blocks and large interlocking plastic blocks. Marlene Romero leads a small guided reading group with first grade SEI students. In grades 4/5 Samantha Sliker’s class is revising personal narratives, while Mary Alice Sandy helps her students log on to a Lexia program for individualized language support.

All classes at the Tobin study Mandarin Chinese, and third graders are learning to count in Chinese. After watching a Chinese Opera performance video clip, teacher YuanYuan Liu selects a few students to practice dance movements with large fans. At the end of each practice session, she asks for compliments for each student performer’s efforts.

Kelly Darchuk: Grade 3 SEI students are working in teams to solve math problems and practice presenting their solutions to classmates. Kyle Gichuru is introducing fourth graders to place values up to a million, and Dan Poremba works with a small group of 8th grade students creating math challenges for one another.

In Caitlin Gaffney’s science class, fifth graders are talking with one another about what they’d learned before discussing three different ways to compare salt solutions: mathematically, by drawing a model, and by using a balance.

Several teachers tell me that the best thing about the Tobin is support from their colleagues, and the flexibility to adapt curriculum to meet their students’ needs. What do you think is working at YOUR school?

I was reading The Hate U Give, about how a black teenager gets shot by a cop and his friend goes through many things. We are learning about redlining and gentrification. Gentrification is when white people get to 40 minutes). I’m getting better at reading and understanding longer words by sounding them out.

I was trying to log on to Google Drive and Ms. Slider was helping me. I am working on a fiction story. We are learning how to punctuate sentences, using quotation marks and selecting words with adverbs. We learned that an adverb is a word that tells how something is happening, it describes action words. We are also learning about similes and metaphors, and how to make predictions and connections to the text when we read.

I was writing letters and words. I am learning to write sentences. I have learned to put my pinky finger at the end of a word to make a space before the next word in a sentence.

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