As the coronavirus pandemic moves society toward a new era, many are asking what tools Boston Public Schools students, educators, and parents need to preserve educational progress and continue in elementary and secondary education.

Some have wondered why there are disparities or inconsistencies between districts, within the school district, or even within a school. Many were surprised by the lack of both technology access and skills by students and families. The last several weeks have starkly exposed the existing inequities that prisoners the context for how questions about every day. Access to food, housing, health care, medical copayment, they can’t purchase concentration. If a family can’t afford a quiet space for each other. But for thousands of students in Boston and other cities across the state, the reality at home — if they have a stable home — is quite different.

At the same time, we must ensure that learning continues for the students who are ready to learn, regardless of whether or not they face challenges at home. We have much work ahead to ensure existing gaps do not get wider, particularly for special education, English learning, and low-income students.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the trauma and inequities already faced by many of the communities we serve as front-line educators. Now we must meet this unprecedented moment together in ways that empower communities that face a disproportionate impact. That means adopting trauma-informed teaching methods, trusting educators, affirming the necessity of direct student and teacher interaction as essential, and avoiding models that are one-size-fits-all.
Commentary Garret Virchick

For a People’s Bailout

During the Great Recession the corrupt banking system that was responsible for the economic collapse was rewarded with a taxpayer bailout. Millions of people lost their jobs as banks rewarded CEOs with bonuses. Because of the coronavirus pandemic and the ensuing shutdown 10s of millions of people have again lost their jobs. This time we need a People’s Bailout.

The People’s Bailout: By and For the People

A grassroots coalition that has arisen to champion the cause of people who seem less important than corporations to the Republican Party and the Trump White House. The sponsoring organizations for The People’s Bailout includes the Working Families Party, The Center for Popular Democracy, Climate Justice Alliance, MoveOn, and other environmental and social justice grassroots organizations.

In addition there are literally 100s of other environmental, labor, and grass-roots organizations that have signed on to the principles. The 100s of thousands of individuals represented by these orga- nizations are saying with one voice, to paraphrase the Irish poet Dylan Thomas, “We will not go gentle into that good night.”

The People’s Bailout is organized over 5 demands:

1. Health is the top priority, for all people, with no exceptions

We support the calls of commu-
nity leaders, public health organizations, unions, and others for free and acces-
sible testing, treatment, and protective equipment; expanded hospital capacity, including in rural areas, territories, and tribal lands; paid sick leave and paid fam-
ily medical leave for all workers without exception; expanded federal funding for Medicaid; and full funding for Indian Health Service and urban Indian health centers.

Critically, the government must ensure such health protections cover all people, including low-wage workers, health workers, independent contractors, family farmers, Black and Latinx com-
munities, undocumented immigrants, Indigenous peoples, people who are incarcerated, people who are homeless or housing insecure, and others likely to be hit first and worst by COVID-19 and the economic downturn.

2. Economic relief must be provided directly to the people

We support the urgent calls to expand the social safety net by broad-
ening unemployment insurance, vastly increasing food aid programs, extending housing assistance, expanding childcare for working families, relieving student debt, and halting evictions, foreclosures, and shut offs of water and electricity. As with expanded public health measures, these economic measures must be imple-
mented to ensure coverage of workers and communities likely to be hit first and worst by COVID-19 and the economic downturn.

In addition, to counteract the eco-
nomic downturn, the federal govern-
ment should immediately direct sizable cash payments to every person. Larger payments should be made to lower-income workers and the poor, who are disproportionately exposed to both COVID-19 health risks and heightened job insecurity. These payments should be made swiftly and regularly throughout the duration of the economic recession.

3. Rescue workers and commu-
nities, not corporate executives

Any financial assistance directed at specific industries must be channeled to workers, not shareholders or corporate executives. Specifically, any federal loans must be used to maintain payroll and benefits, not executive bonuses or stock buybacks.

In addition, such funds should come with pro-worker conditions, such as requiring worker representation on the company’s board of directors, company-
wide enactment of a $15/hour or higher minimum wage, and compliance with high-road labor standards such as pay-
ment of prevailing wages, use of project-
labors agreements, adoption of a neutral-
third party mix of workplace flexibil-
yty policies with regard to union collective bargaining, and adoption of a “ban the box” hiring policy to ensure fair employ-
ment opportunities for all.

4. Make a downpayment on a regen-
erative economy while preventing future crises.

While we urgently need a large, short-term stimulus to protect the health and economic security of those on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, it is imperative that policy makers also plan for a large, medium-term stimulus to restructure the economy downward and ensure a just recovery. This stimulus should create millions of jobs, family-
sustaining jobs with high-road labor standards; counter systemic inequities by directing investments to the work-
ning families, communities of color, and Indigenous communities who face the most economic insecurity; and tackle the climate crisis that is compounding threats to our economy and health.

All three goals can be achieved simul-
taneously with public investments to re-
build our infrastructure, replace lead pipes, expand wind and solar power, build clean and affordable public tran-
sit, weatherize our buildings, build and repair public housing, manufacture more clean energy goods, restore our wetlands and forests, expand public services that support climate resilience, and support regenerative agriculture led by fam-
ily farmers. Critically, stimulus packages should include conditions for industries to implement high-road labor standards, workforce development, and reductions in climate emissions and toxic pollution. The response to one existential crisis must not fuel another.

5. Protect our democratic process while protecting each other

People must not be forced to choose between exercising their rights as citizens and protecting public health. The federal government must support states, by pro-
funding and technical support when needed, to ensure that every American can vote safely in primary and general elections.

Specific life-saving and democracy-
defending measures include expanding vote by mail, online or automatic voter registration, among others. The 2020 Census must be fully supported and resourced to achieve an accurate and safe count under the new and evolving condi-
tions. US Congress, state capitals and city halls should not shut down until they have amended rules to ensure continuity of governance in the case that in-person sessions are suspended.

In addition there is a Massachusetts Covid-19 Response Coalition that has formed here in the Commonwealth. This coalition includes organizations like Community Labor United, The Mass Voter Round-
table, The Right to the City Alliance, City Life, Mass Budget and Policy Center, and others are demanding immediate action in the face of this pandemic that is rooted in the lives of those most vulner-
able. They are also demanding long term structural changes to insures the interests of working people be put front and cen-
ter in rebuilding Massachusetts and the country as a whole.

As a union we need to be part of this growing movement of people who want one thing: A safe environment and a socia-
ty net that doesn’t let people fall through the cracks in an increasingly hostile and autocratic world.

We are on the front lines. The teachers of Boston have risen to the occasion dur-
ing this pandemic. We will continue to stand with the families we partner with every day (again Dylan Thomas comes to mind) as we rage against the dying of the light and demand justice.

Garret Virchick
Boston Union Teacher
Co-Editor

The Massachusetts School Library Association has named Rose Marz, Library Director of Boston Arts Acad-
emy, as a recipient of the 2020 President’s Award. This award honors an MSLA member who in a career of one to five years has made a significant impact on student learning through a quality school library program.

Since being promoted to Library Director in 2018, Rose Marz planned and implemented a physical move of the entire library collection. This involved reducing the size of the collection by half while making sure to carry the necessary academic topics for an arts school with five distinct majors. Library circulation continues to increase, placing Boston Arts Academy in competition for the most circulated Boston Public School library with much larger schools like the Boston Latin Academy. Deborah Fregg-
gatt, Boston Public Schools Director of Library Services states, “The BAA Vir-
tual Learning Commons is robust, well designed and fun to use. Ms. Marz is an integral part of the BAA community.”

MSLA Names Rose Marz 2020 President’s Award Recipient

Ms. Rose Marz

Ms. Marz will receive the award on a date TBD at the MSLA Awards Banquet. She will also participate in the IdealLab, featuring projects/initiatives from Boston Arts Academy’s Library program.

The Massachusetts School Library Association works to ensure every school has a school library program that is fully integrated at all grade levels across the curriculum and has a significant and measurable impact on student achieve-
ment. For more information, consult the MSLA website, massachusettslibrary.org.
During COVID-19 School Closures, Hiring Teacher Bargaining Unit Members Must Be Done Utilizing Full Personnel Subcommittees Using a VIRTUAL Platform

The Superintendent’s Circular FAM-4 “School Site Council Personnel Subcommitte” circular states, “Consistent with the principal of school-based management, School Site Council (SSC) engages parents, students [and teachers] in shared-decision making as a lever for school improvement. The intention of the Personnel Subcommittee is to actively involve members of the school community in the teacher hiring process as these decisions will have a significant impact on the practice and the lives of students.” The Personnel Subcommittee of the SSC/governing board must consist of 3 members, one on high school level and the Principal/Headmaster or their designee. The teacher, parent and student members are selected by their respective constituent groups elected to the SSC.

Recent BTU e-bulletins have included a brochure for Teacher Bargaining Units which states, “Interviews for teacher bargaining unit members must be conducted utilizing full Personnel Subcommittees [of the SSC] and are to be conducted virtually during social distancing mandates. Please see the BPS OHC protocol for doing so (link included). If your school is not following this protocol, please contact Carey Carew at ccarew@BTU.ORG to refer to said link in the BTU e-bulletin for full details.

The BPS OHC link is titled, “Virtual Interviewing: Strategies, Resources & Dates” and was sent to all of the BPS school administrators to utilize when hiring. The BPS OHC guidance includes, “The BPS OHC guidance can assist prospective candidates and is: things are uncertain for our schools and the students and families we serve. For school leaders and hiring managers, this crisis comes as the hiring season starts to pick up, meaning that they must not only support existing employees, through school closures, but also plan for next year’s staffing. Ultimately, we know that the best teachers and staff are hired early and must work smart to prepare for an uncertain time. Please review the resources below to support your hiring teams to move forward with candidates virtually.”

What to Do Ahead of Time

1. Test Your Tech: The last thing you want is to join a virtual interview and discover that your audio isn’t working or that you don’t know how to share your screen. This is why it’s so important to do a test run ahead of a virtual interview. Make sure you know how to work all of the necessary features. Do a sound and video quality test to ensure things are functioning properly.

2. Find a Quiet Distract-Free Space: Even though that interview is happening virtually, it still deserves the same level of respect and professionalism that you would command to any other job interview. You need to find a quiet place where you can get that candidate (hiring committee) your undivided attention. Don’t choose a room where people will be popping in and out or milling about in the background. Additionally, make sure to ditch your phone and silence any notifications on your computer. Take a priority to create a distraction-free space where you and that candidate (personnel subcommittee) can talk.

3. Dress the Part: Despite your preparation, technical glitches can still occur. If that happens, don’t hesitate to direct the candidate (personnel subcommittee). If the video freezes or the audio skips out and your unable to hear that person’s response, ask them to repeat it. It’s far better to be upfront and get the interview back on track that you need rather than simply nodding because you’re too embarrassed to admit that you missed something.

4. Remember Your Body Language: As mentioned previously, it might be happening virtually, but this is still a job interview—which means it’s your time to shine and behave professionally. Sit straight. Make eye contact by looking directly at your camera. Don’t get distracted by emails or social media notifications. Remember, this person can see you, which means your body language matters. Plus, candidates will likely follow whatever example you set (school administrator set). So, the more professional you are, the more professional they’ll be.

5. Empower Your Candidates with Information: Make sure all of that excellent groundwork you did for this virtual interview such as testing your technology and finding a quiet space? Things run even smoother if your candidates do the very same things.

The BPS OHC guidance continues to provide info to the administrators re: Q&A format. It is suggested, that if you are a job candidate, this is a worthwhile link to look at which is contained in the BTU e-bulletin. The website does not have the same features as the content of the above mentioned BPS OHC guidance, nor does it proprot to agree with all of the guidance and links provided thereon. However, it is the mandated usage of the SSC personnel subcommittee in hiring. However, this guidance can be well prospective candidates in better assessing the district’s and schools expectations.

What is the ‘Interim Memorandum of Understanding’ (MOU) between the BTU and the BPS?

The “Interim Memorandum of Understanding” (MOU) between the BTU and BPS signed March 17, 2020, outlines the contractual changes in working conditions related to the Coronavirus for the period in time that the date it was signed to the last day of school closure in the 2019-20 school year. The standard BTU-BPS collective bargaining agreement (contract) is still in effect but is modified for the period of time that this MOU covers and only in the areas that this MOU explicitly sets forth in writing. This MOU is as if it were contract language for this finite period of time in the detailed finite areas included therein. This MOU applies from March 17 until the school closure continues or until the end of June 2020, whichever occurs first.

Please refer to the MOU in its entirety located in the BTU e-bulletin or btu.org. Excerpted from said MOU: The remote school day — “Each school shall create an age-appropriate student remote learning schedule, with teacher input, that provides for student instruction or student facing time for at least 3 hours per day, preferable between the hours of 9:00-12:00 and/or 1:00-4:00.” Excerpted from the MOU FAQ: “In other words, students will have an opportunity to connect with an adult educator from their school for at least 3 hours of each day. Teachers have input on the schedule to provide that opportunity for students, but we do want to give them final say; nor do we have complete responsibility for creating that schedule. One teacher alone is not responsible for three consecutive hours.”

Asynchronous time defined in MOU is: opportunities to engage in real time with another person that is not in the same physical location as the employee (e.g. on a call, zoom, etc.).

Synchronous time defined in MOU is: “work that the employee can do without the “real time participation” of another person.”

Student-facing time defined in MOU is: “include, but not limited to, student centered activities including small groups, one to one instruction, office hours, for responding to student questions & to help direct student learning.”

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EDITORIAL NOTE:
The opinions expressed in the Boston Union Teacher do not necessarily represent the views of the Boston Teachers Union or its members.

WHEN WRITING:
All correspondence to the Boston Union Teacher must be typed and include the author’s name and school or department if not school-based. All correspondence must be sent to editors@btu.org.

DEADLINE:
For submission articles for the next issue of the Boston Union Teacher is May 31. All copy should be e-mailed to editors@btu.org. This deadline will be strictly adhered to.
I know I shouldn’t read Twitter as much as I do. I know that most of social media is an echo chamber which reinforces pre-existing beliefs. I know that bombast is the yeast in the dough of increasing followers. I know all this, yet I still click the blue and white logo on my iPhone.

On April 2, 2020, I came across a nugget from President Donald Trump. Like I mentioned in last months newspaper, I believe that President Trump often reveals his true self in unguarded moments. On that afternoon the president was tweeting about every 80 minutes or so, which were spread throughout scheduled meetings he grabbed his phone to brag about his accomplishments. I pass over the president’s praise for autocratic and hierarchal rulers. I’ll focus on oil. As of the time I submitted this article for publication, US oil prices had just fallen to the lowest prices in history. The price was -$37/barrel, which means the oil company was paying to have the oil taken away. Unimaginable.

On the one hand it’s good to help US companies—even oil companies. What’s troubling is that Trump truly doesn’t care about the little guys. Sure he’ll talk about it, tsk about it, and even convince many Americans that he does care about the little guys. Talk is cheap, maybe not as cheap as oil, but cheap nonetheless.

Aside from keeping the IR. Ewing of the world happy, it is important for our nation to have a viable petroleum system. Those of us old enough to remember the gas embargo of the 1970s understand the nation to have a viable petroleum system. Those of us old enough to remember the gas embargo of the 1970s understand the importance of self-reliance. I only wish that same do-it-yourself spirit permeated the market for other products.

It’s unforgivable that the US, the so-called richest nation in the world, can’t manufacture enough personal protective equipment for its doctors and nurses. Well, it’s not that we can’t, it’s that we’ve chosen not to. Hopefully we will no longer give tax incentives to companies to move overseas. But I am not hopeful. Here’s why:

One of my teacher friends posted a Quora article by Peter Kruger. It was on the theme of what liberals don’t understand about rural America. About 2/3rds of the way through the story Kruger states that conservatives are just better at marketing. Kruger elaborated that liberals care more about explaining why they are right and spend too much time complaining that conservatives are wrong.

I wish we could dismiss such outlandish rhetoric, but sadly it is effective. A former student of mine who is now a full grown adult posted on Facebook the Trump advertisement depicted here. Every fiber of my teacher-being screams “but that’s all wrong” and when I do I remember Kruger and I sigh.

Letters to the Boston Globe

Submitted on April 1, 2020 to the Boston Globe but not published.

Dear Editor:

Im Stergios’ Op-Ed (Students still need to learn during the coronavirus pandemic, April 1, 2020) is a thinly veiled promotion for privatizing public education. Stergios grossly misrepresents the equity implications of online learning, while propounding discriminatory Catholic schools as paradigms of learning. Far from stating that no learning should occur, districts like Boston are working hard to ensure that students with disabilities are not left behind as schools move to online learning. Moreover, to ensure that all students have equal access to the new online learning, Boston spared no expense in quickly handing out Chromebooks to anyone who needed them. BPS teachers and administrators even drove to students’ homes to ensure proper delivery.

Stergios is right that students should be learning during the pandemic, but he leaves out mention of special education. Not only is educating special needs students a legal responsibility, it is the heart of BPS Superintendent Cassellius’ JUCE motto. (Joy, Unity, Inclusion, Collaboration, and Equity). Private schools, like the Catholic schools Stergios championed in his Op-Ed, do not educate all types of students. Private schools are exclusionary by definition and are an odd choice for Stergios to use to promote education in these challenging times. Rather we look to Boston as an example of fast, fair and effective online learning.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Maguire

Pushing An Agenda; Not The Unions

Michael J. Maguire is a BPS parent, serves on the Executive Board of the Boston Teachers Union, and is a Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts.

Published in the Boston Globe on Friday, April 17, 2020.

I read Keri Rodrigues’ letter of April 10, 2020 with dismay. (Unions were trying to capitalize on a crisis.) Ms. Rodrigues implies that teachers care not for the struggles of students and families during the Great Quarantine. The facts say differently.

From day one of school closures the Boston Teachers Union has partnered with the Boston Public Schools both to hand out and to deliver meals and chromebooks. Hundreds of teachers have been volunteering every day to feed both bodies and minds. The BTU also has partnered with the Massachusetts Teachers Association to petition rent relief in both Boston and Cambridge. All such actions are designed to help students and their families cope in these troubling times.

Certainly one of the teachers’ long stated goals is not to have MCAS be the sole determinant for graduation, but to consider the teachers for not wanting the MCAS when students have been out of school for over a month bespeaks of another agenda. Ms. Rodrigues’ organization, the National Parents Union, is funded by the Walton Family Foundation, which is notoriously anti-union. It seems that Ms. Rodrigues is the one taking advantage of a crisis to push an agenda, not the teachers.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Maguire
BTU Members Serving on the Front Lines During the COVID-19 Crisis
Peer-to-Peer
Anne Slater with Lauren Clarke-Mason
Teaching in the Time of Coronavirus

I get up at the usual time, wash, dress, and prepare a cup of tea. I am thankful the plastic color coded tray that keeps my vitamins organized reminds me what day of the week it is or else I’d be totally lost, I walk through the house to wake up the kids. My middle-schooler at BLA is first. He stumbles through his routines, stares at some Netflix show as he vacantly chews on something toasted and buttered, then heads upstairs to the almost ancient desktop to begin his lessons on Google Classroom. I might see him again around noon or so when his stomach has fully woken up and he begins foraging for snacks.

Second cup of tea gets me through my inbox. I sort through the gauntlet of Google Classroom alerts, the parent questions, the companies giving away free teacher tested student facing products, if I sign up right now. I am set up at the dining room table, my new home office. My kids old Melissa and Doug easel is fold-ed nearby for when I need to work out a math problem via Google Meet or Zoom. I have markers, highlighters, and stacks of construction paper at the ready when the first frantic notification “bongs.” I’ll video conference with a few students until 10 when it is time to wake up the oldest to begin his shift on Google Classroom. There will be three of us stationed at this table, my oldest, my husband and me clicking away on our laptops, though one of my co-worker’s clicks sound less like typing and more like jump, duck, and fire of a video game, though he insists otherwise.

We are in crisis, our world upside down because of COVID-19. This pandemic, this plague has fractured each of us in a million ways that will affect us for the rest of our lives. We each have or have heard stories of recovery and triumph or sadness and loss. We may know someone who is rumored to be hoarding toilet paper and cleaning wipes and those who are cleverly sewing masks for those on the front lines or delivering food to hungry families. I have my good days–always grateful to be comfortable, well fed, and healthy enough to complain about who ate the last muffin. I also have days where I am too afraid to leave the house, shaking in a panic attack at the thought of having to go to the grocery store or downstairs to collect the mail. We are forever changed.

Teacher-parents feel pushed and pulled in many different directions. As the teacher, I want to create a sense of community for my students, to assure them that I am still here, still want to help, still want them to learn. I want my students to know that while everything feels upside down, our classroom though virtual is still firmly planted in safety and routine. That routine often looks like school work but it is also introductions to the family pets, a conference with the stuffed animal menagerie, conversations with the younger sibling who is making me laugh, talk, and negotiate with.

What I want as a parent and what I want as a teacher is for our children to come out of this happy and not be long term emotionally scarred, to paraphrase the tweet. I want to simultaneously do what is right for my kids and for every kids’ mental and physical health. If that

comes in the form of a Zoom meeting with everyone’s stuffed animal, giggling sibling, and fluffy household pet, then I guess it is somehow worth it.

The Peer-to-Peer column is written by Anne Slater (aslater@bostonpublicschools.org) and Lauren Clarke-Mason (lauren.claire.mason@bostonpublicschools.org). If you have a topic you’d like us to explore, please email us. To find out more about Educator Supports including Peer Assistance and Consulting Teachers, visit btu.org/what-we-do/peer-mentoring or bostonpar.org. And we must acknowledge the privilege of the discussion. Thanking again about the person on Twitter who felt they liberated their child from the busy work of first grade. Does the child have opportunities to see his school friends once in a while in a video call just to make sure they are still there? Does the student miss their school community where a parent reads aloud can’t fix? Our social connections are just as important as the academic ones. I feel sad for the social learning this student will not be able to work through playing at home without other first graders to laugh, talk, and negotiate with.

Some points in her message resonated with me. She wants what we all want--to protect our kids from the dangers outside while minimizing the risks of overschooling inside. Keeping families safe in the age of Coronavirus means as much to all of us. With the cleaning, cooking, and laundry of it all, checking in with my own aging parents, wrapping up in hazard gear just to go grocery shopping, homeschooling my kids on top of my own caseload of student’s educational and emotional needs is a behemoth challenge. Every version of homeschooling is pretty much just shouting out a few reminders to each of my boys to check emails and due dates on assignments a few times a day. The amount of schoolwork they are doing keeps them up front of screens much longer than I would like. It is getting much more important to get them up in the morning, their eyes showing signs of fatigue as they lumber to their computer workstations.

And we must acknowledge the privilege of the person posting. She is tweet-safely from her home well stocked with food, heat, and wifi. She and her spouse have the resources to work from home and provide a stimulating environment for their child where she feels she can meet the educational needs of a first grader. She continues, “he reads a lot, plays outside a lot, we read to him… and talk to him… he gets history lessons...” and if he misses a few worksheets it won’t make much of a difference. My sons are older so my strategies are different than those who have to run a Zoom meeting bouncing between a child on their knee or muting the mic so no one overhears the tantrum in the background. Had this crisis happened when my children were younger and if my trust fund was real and not imagined, “to paraphrase term emotionally scarred,” to paraphrase the tweet. I want to simultaneously do what is right for my kids and for every kids’ mental and physical health. If that

Imagine wanting virtual school to pull teens away from the virtual world—isn’t it?

I read a Twitter thread the other day from a working parent that proclaimed to an audience of millions that she was canceling homeschooling for her first grader. She continued, that although her child’s “lovely, kind, caring” teacher may mean well, her child’s physical and emotional safety was worth more than what worksheets or Zoom meetings could provide. Her message thread received over 36,000 likes and 3,500 retweets.

We are forever changed.

Peer-to-Peer column is written by Anne Slater (aslater@bostonpublicschools.org) and Lauren Clarke-Mason (lauren.claire.mason@bostonpublicschools.org) and I confirm that school is much more than worksheets of long division problems and story questions. It is not about the work as much as it is about the connection. Thanking again about the person on Twitter who felt they liberated their child from the busy work of first grade. Does the child have opportunities to see his school friends once in a while in a video call just to make sure they are still there? Does the student miss their school community where a parent reads aloud can’t fix? Our social connections are just as important as the academic ones. I feel sad for the social learning this student will not be able to work through playing at home without other first graders to laugh, talk, and negotiate with.

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My Favorite South Shore Spots

by Cara Hamilton

I hope you are all doing well. I am a firm believer in the restorative power of getting outside and I wanted to pass on some of our favorite spots in the South Shore. So here’s a list of some cool places that usually aren’t too crowded, and a brief description of each. Also if you go to any of these places in the woods, do a good tick check when it’s over, and use some repellant. Ticks are usually pretty big and easy to spot this time of year, and they are everywhere.

1. Herring Runs: If you have never seen the herring (alewifes) run, it’s really cool and worth seeing, and happens each year mid-April. The herring are about 8-10 inches long and swim upstream to spawn. They jump over rocks by the thousands and create a really cool display. There are a few places that are set up for viewing, and beyond that there are “herring brooks” all around the south shore, so named for obvious reasons.

The most formal one closest to Boston is in Weymouth, near Jackson Square. It’s near the restaurant “Niko’s” and has a cool little park and fish ladders where you can see the herring jump. Nearby if you drive up Iron Hill St. there is a cool old iron foundry, more herring ladders, and even on a pond at the top that is full of waterfowl who come to feast on the herring. The Herring Runs in Pembroke and Hanover are in more natural settings but you can still see tons of fish. We went to Pembroke recently and there were lots. One good tip is to bring polarized sunglasses, that will help you see them under the water if it’s either overcast or really sunny.

https://www.nwrwa.org/see-herring-runs-south-shore/

2. South Shore Quests: Great for anyone and especially those with kids.

https://southshorequests.org/

These are a bunch of little trails around the South Shore with directions and landmarks and clues to look for that help you complete a little word puzzle. The booklet is available for download at the link, and they ask for a $5 donation. The narratives are also usually peppered with little facts about natural history and plant identification.

FYI: Most of the Trustees of the Reservation properties (like Norris Reservation, Weir River Farm, World’s End) are currently closed.

3. Black Pond (Norwell): This is a cool, secluded walk to a kettle pond called quaking bog. It’s a pond that was created by the removal of a big glacial rock and it’s really deep and surrounded by sphagnum moss that quakes and cool, unique plants.

4. Wompatuck Reserve (Hingham and Norwell) a vast network of trails, both paved and unpaved, several ponds and a big reservoir.

5. South Shore Natural Science Center (Norwell): A Pre-School nestled among trails through the woods, they have a lot of good signage, sometimes story book walks, and a flock of chickens, an owl and a hawk. SSNSC is right near (on the same road) two other great spots: Jacobs Pond (lovely pond, lots of trails) and Hornstra Farms a working dairy farm in a beautiful setting that often has cows out to pasture and newborn calves in the barn (if it’s open)

6. Minot, Pegotty and Egypt Beaches (Scituate): Minot and Egypt beaches are both beautiful, close together but geologically different. Egypt is pure polished rocks, a long stretch and tall dune of smooth rocks of all colors and sizes. Minot is sandy with a good view of the lighthouse and at low tide, a fabulous rock outcropping for climbing and observing tidepools. Hard to access at high tide. Pegotty has a really cool, very long jetty for climbing and is accessible at both high and low tide.

7. The North River: A beautiful, tidal estuary that runs through Scituate, Norwell, Marshfield, Hanover, Pembroke.

Lots of access points, and recently people have reported seeing a seal out and about in the river! Norris Reservation, a popular spot, is currently closed, but some good spots to see it are Couch Beach off Union St in Marshfield, which is about a mile walk from the parking to the access. It’s a little hard to find. It’s a sandy beach along the river, great place for a picnic, a really special and beautiful view of the river. Luddham’s Ford Park in Hanover is another nice spot to enjoy the river with a network of wooded trails.

For more info: https://saudishoretrails.com/coach-cemetery/


This is northwest of Boston... but there is a great long rail trail for biking and walking, and the Nashua River Watershed is beautiful. We had good luck parking in the old Groton train station and biking from there.

https://www.nashuariverwatershed.org/recreation/fishing.html

(Cara Hamilton teaches history at Boston Latin Academy.)
Joseph Hurley K-8 School

Located on Worcester Street in the South End, the Hurley K-8 School serves about 360 students. The school offers a two-way bilingual program (in English and Spanish) which looks different at each grade level.

Kindergarteners are working on lots of literacy activities - matching letters to pictures, playing games, using magnetic letters, tapping and blending letters to make words, etc. A group of K1 students practices hand signs for consonant combinations with Maritza Martinez. In K2 classes, Mariana Sanchez works with a guided reading group and Diane Bourbeau's students are learning about “CVC” words.

First graders gather on the rug, listening to Ana Laura Soto Viquez as she solicits ideas about how to solve a word problem written on the board. Erica Moen's 2nd graders are researching different animals, using an assortment of books and computers.

Third grade classes are off to the Museum of Fine Arts, and I peek into Elizabeth Belcò's room. The walls are full of full of colorful teacher-prepared posters with words to use in discussions, to describe internal thoughts or external appearance, and to help students remember that an author's purpose is “Easy as P.I.E.” - to persuade, inform, or entertain - all in two languages!

Brian Gaines helps students in his fourth grade science class wire cardboard houses they have designed. Art teacher Matthew McLaughlin supervises 8th graders who are copying animated images from their cell phone screens. Second graders are playing "Gaga Ball" behind a low hexagonal wooden fence on the field with their PE teacher, Larry Muhammad.

In middle school humanities classes, students are learning about the Dominican Republic through reading *Before We Were Free* with sixth grade teacher Helen Sullivan, while eighth graders are reading and discussing *Monster*, an award-winning novel by Walter Dean Myers about a Black teenager on trial for murder, with Rebecca Poswalsky.

Sixth grade teacher and BTU representative Lindsay Thornquist tells me she especially appreciates the support of an active parent group that has funded everything from classroom projectors to a new playing field with bright green artificial turf. Wilma Crespo, who teaches math and science to middle school students, says she feels “at peace” at the Hurley and thinks that teacher voices are heard.

Here's hoping you're feeling at peace wherever you are!