2020 will be a year for the history books: an unprecedented pandemic, a redefinition of racial justice, a historic election with record voter participation and a turbulent school year throughout the nation. All of us have been tested in many ways—our capacity for adaptation, isolation, anxiety, and working under duress to name a few. It has been a year of chronic stress, trepidation, anger and frustration for so many, and as we emerge from a divisive election that felt like a battle for the soul of our nation, many of us are also exhausted—emotionally, physically and mentally.

The good news is that a new year is just around the corner—we can finally leave 2020 behind and welcome in what we hope will be a new era. The hope that a new presidency comes with—including a new Secretary of Education and a First Lady who is an educator herself—is one that we have long hoped for. President-elect Joe Biden has promised to immediately reverse many of the most harmful policies dismantled by the Trump and DeVos administration. He has also committed to choosing an educator for the new Secretary of Education. Our national unions have many members on his transition team. These are all promising developments.

On the horizon is also hopes for a vaccine, that by next summer, is believed to finally be within sight. The New Year will continue to require patience, empathy and forgiveness as we heal not just divisions within the nation politically, but within our own communities as well. Our neighborhoods, schools and our union has been tested and divided during this pandemic: teachers pit against parents; school versus school; and also union member to union member. It was a difficult year because tensions were high, needs were great, resources inadequate and emotions ran high. In this environment trust was running low when we needed it most and we all had to dig deep to not just take care of ourselves, but strive to self-regulate not just to support our students, but so that we could take care of our families and others as well.

My hope is that in this New Year, we will find the kindness that I know is in each of us to help us heal, reflect and strengthen. It is what brought us to this point. It is what brought us to this profession. To make connections in math, science and technology. I have the power within me. To make my school safe. To make good choices and work hard to succeed. To make my school; and also union member to union member. It was a difficult year because tensions were high, needs were great, resources inadequate and emotions ran high. In this environment trust was running low when we needed it most and we all had to dig deep to not just take care of ourselves, but strive to self-regulate not just to support our students, but so that we could take care of our families and others as well.

As we hold memories and people brought us. As the YA anthem goes, “I have the power within me. You have the power within you.” We, both—individually and collectively, have the power to make a difference and carry on the legacy of all those fought bravely before us to create a better, and more just world. As we leave 2020 behind, and welcome 2021 ahead of us, let us remember that we are stronger and better together, and we have the power to make the new year what we need it to be, through learning, kindness and believing in each other.
Commentary

Garret Virchick

Open Letter to the Labor Movement – Defend Each Other – Demand Democracy!

Our country stands at a moment of peril. A rejected president threatens to overturn the clear verdict of the American people.

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We assure you, I have seen them all. I assure you, I have seen them all.

When I see my students on Zoom, I am in full control of the noise and I can turn off their microphones with omnipotence. I can create silence, and it is deafening.

When I see my students on Zoom, I am in full control of the noise and I can turn off their microphones with omnipotence. I can create silence, and it is deafening.

I’m Mourning the Sounds of Kids Arguing in My Classroom

Noisy Disagreements are Fuel for Social Growth in Childhood

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The School Site Council is the central governing body of the school under the school-based management/decision-making concept. The contract stipulates; "Elections for new SSC members shall be conducted as early in the school year as possible." By October 15th and a first meeting of the new council shall be held no later than October 31st. At the first meeting, a monthly calendar should be agreed upon by the SSC members for the entire school year and be made public through distribution to all staff and parents. Any change must be approved by the SSC with at least one week notice to all staff and parents. SSC Meetings shall be conducted as early in the year as possible; the time and date of the meeting shall be determined by consensus. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss and develop the school site plan, and to carry on the business of the SSC and its subcommittees as necessary. The principal is responsible to conduct an SSC meeting, to lead the meeting, to make the decision, and to record the minutes.

SSC Take Toward Decision

It is expected that the SSC will function by consensus or general agreement of its members. Members of the SSC are expected to operate as a self-governing decision-making team. Their task is to work together to fashion effective solutions to the school’s educational challenges. SSC have parent, BTU staff, student, and associate member to guarantee that decisions reflect the viewpoints of everyone in the school community. This consensus process does not mean that all members must agree with decisions unanimously. Consensus is a way of working together where some members may diverge with a final decision but yet agree to support it. Consensus occurs when most, if not all, members agree on the matter to be decided.

Consensus won't necessarily result in endless discussions and no decisions, particularly if the following guidelines are followed. Primarily the issue is how to handle the question of the issue at hand. Normally, the more important the issue, the more members should be willing to devote to reaching con- sensus decision. Routine matters should be given much less time and energy than fundamental issues. Provide opportunities for all views to be expressed. Members with differing views should have the opportunity to make side other members understand their views before ending the discussion. Although others may still not be persuaded, everyone must have a chance to state their views and have others listen. The strength of feeling about an issue must be gauged. How strongly members feel should guide how much time should be devoted to an issue as well.

SSC meetings are not competitive, win- lose events. Making decisions solely on the basis of majority votes runs the unacceptable risk of dividing the Council. School improvement is definitively a matter of teamwork, trust, and shared commitment on the part of everyone in the school community. This team approach doesn’t prohibit voting in every case. Occasionally, a “majority of the majority” of participants may be a good way to identify the common ground on the way to reaching consensus decisions. Voting can save valuable time reaching decisions on routine matters. Under the terms of the BTU Contract, decisions must be formalized by a majority of the SSC. The Principal must vote with the majority of the SSC and they may not delegate their vote. The purpose of voting is to validate and to make official consensus decisions. Formal voting should be kept to a minimum in the decision-making process. If the vote results in a simple majority but does not reveal consensus on the issue debated, it should be viewed as a sign that the problem has not yet been developed and proposed. Unless all members are willing to support a majority decision, more discussion is needed. Votes which split parents and BTU members may be a signal that the best option has not yet been identified and proposed. Occasionally, there must be at least two weeks notice.

What Should Approach the SSC Toward Decision Making?

The purpose of voting is to validate and to make official consensus decisions. Formal voting should be kept to a minimum in the decision-making process. If the vote results in a simple majority but does not reveal consensus on the issue debated, it should be viewed as a sign that the problem has not yet been developed and proposed. Unless all members are willing to support a majority decision, more discussion is needed. Votes which split parents and BTU members may be a signal that the best option has not yet been identified and proposed. Occasionally, there must be at least two weeks notice.

Overview of the SSC’s Decision Making Process

E ach School-Site Council determines most of its own operating procedures through the adoption of SSC bylaws. Each SSC is required to pass bylaws to govern its operation. The bylaws must be approved by two-thirds of the BTU membership of the school and by two-thirds of the parents who come to a parent meeting for which there must be at least two weeks notice. The SSC bylaws must include the following operational procedures: how decisions will be organized and conducted; when meetings will be held; the notice procedure for announcing meetings; who is responsible for communicating with the Principal and for recording minutes; what the system is for selecting alternates who have the same racial identity as the members they would replace and representing the terms of office and how they will be stag- gered; and what the salary is in regards to members who fall ill or are unable to attend.

The bylaws may also include provisions that address the following: what subcom- mittees will be established in addition to the Personnel Subcommittee; if a portion of each meeting is set aside for public comments in regards to issues which are not SSC members; how the SSC will inform the larger school community of its decisions and activities; where minutes will be posted and distributed; what the process is for amending the bylaws.

What Can Be Done If Someone Is Being Harassed in the BPS?

The BPS has a Superintendent’s Circular #EQT-4 “Non-Discrimination and Zero Tolerance Policy,” which outlines BPS com- mitment to “maintaining an educational environment and workplace where bigotry and intolerance, including discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, dis- ability, or age have no place, and where any form of intimidation, discrimination and/or harassment that ridicules the dignity of others and interferes with their freedom to learn or work is unacceptable.”

The circular emphasizes, “Therefore, any form of discrimination or harassment, as described [in the body of the circular], of any BPS student or employees shall be viewed as serious misconduct and shall result in discipline, up to and including termina- tion of the offending employee or expulsion of the responsible student.” It is suggested you review the circular in its entirety and if after doing so feels compelled to report such matters as set forth should do so in Superintendent’s Circular EQT-3 “Employee Grievances of Discrimination or Harassment”, EQT-3 “Student Grievances of Discrimination or Harassment”. For additional information, contact BPS Equity Office at 617-635-9650.
My grade book, the subjunctive mood. My grade book, however, dwells in the indicative mood. (Latin humor.) But just because I must use As and Bs does not mean that I have to project a rigid grading scheme or adhere to a rigid submission schedule. I am very tolerant and understanding of the numerous crises my students are facing, primarily because I am undergoing similar difficulties. I’ll be blunt, I am 50 years young. While I can set the clock on the microphone, I often seek help from my teenage son on which cable remote I need to start the TV. I unashamedly ask advice from my younger colleagues on how to use the latest Chrome add-on. I am trying my best to be a 21st Century Classist; and I will not be first to admit that some teachers are worse than others. (Don’t get me wrong, I am a wizard when the wifi goes down because I started teaching with paper and chalk.) All of which is why my guiding principle in remote learning is this: I am not going to mark my students down for any mistakes I am making in transitioning to a digital world.

In short, I’m grading lightly. Let’s say I give a five question quiz (more on that below) and a student correctly answers two of those five questions, should that student fail the quiz? If we were in a traditional classroom, with the usual schedule and with the controllable conditions, then I might be inclined to agree with 40% being a failing grade. But we are not in any way, shape or form in a usual situation. Wifi is unreliable, older students often have to care for their younger siblings when at home, a Zoom fatigue is real and consequential. The list goes on and on. Not to mention the impossibility of controlling the testing environment. Therefore I cannot with a clean conscience use the same grading schema as I did last year.

As mentioned above, assessments are a wild gamble these days. I have both paper and digital folders going back to the 1990s full of various assessments on how to translate Julius Caesar’s Commentaries on the Gallic War. Even if I pop them into Google Classroom, what’s to stop a student from opening a new table in order to ask Mr. Google for translation help? Or what’s to stop two students from texting each other during the exam? (After all, the school committee members text each other during their meetings; so I guess texting during work is officially sanctioned.)

I am trying my best to administer fair assessments so that I can tell if the students are retaining the information teaching. And, isn’t that the point? But it is a work in progress. I no longer have centuries of pedagogy to rely upon. I have my intuition and the help of my colleagues. Both are valuable and I do believe ultimately helpful. But I cannot say with certainty that my method of assessing is developed enough to quantify a student’s performance using the old metrics.

The best I can do is present the material in such a way that students can understand it. My desire in grading teaching is to help in the anxiety that is feeling so that learning can be a joy in and of itself. (Michael J. Maguire teaches Latin at Boston Latin Academy.)
Keep Our Kids Alive…

continued from page 4

ing our BPS children with Asthma and Sickle Cell Crises and Asthma Attacks, with open windows in November? These children would be immediately brought to emergency rooms all over the city. Have you prepared our city hospitals to prepare their pediatric Emergency Rooms and ICUs for this horrific scenario, Mayor Walsh?

The first reopening in October was unnecessarily terrifying. The face masks I received for symptomatic students/staff are not FDA approved Surgical Masks, as required through DESE. They’re face masks and are ineffective in preventing respiratory transmission of diseases. I’ve requested appropriate masks since October 15th. I was told they were at the Boling Building. I offered to go there to pick up the masks and I was told they’re in a vendor warehouse. I have no idea where these masks are and to this day still have no effective PPE for symptomatic children in my school.

Days into the first reopening, BPS had its first known COVID-19 + case. There was no district guidance for a building protocol to follow, so the school based nurse received telephone triage from the district-level Health Services. There is no formal guidance on what in-building procedure to follow if a student or staff is actively COVID-19 + or in a BPS building. I have asked for it multiple times including asking Dr. Cassellius personally and I have not received it. What do we do with a symptomatic student who takes a MBTA/bus/walks to school without alternative transportation? That was the exact situation at hand. I would be remiss if I didn’t also share that Mayor Walsh, you had all of this knowledge of how the first COVID-19 + case went in BPS on the eve of your choosing to keep our school buildings open. Your actions speak volumes.

As the days, weeks and months go by, we have learned more about COVID-19 that needs our attention as a city.

• Independent air quality tests to determine baseline air quality, without deviation from best standards of practice.
• COVID-19 is airborne.
  ° This means the size of a COVID-19 respiratory particle can be as small as 0.3 µm. That automatically tells us that adequate air filtration would include MERV-15 (or at least 13) filters in our filtered HVAC BPS buildings and portable HEPA filters throughout the rest.
• This also means the only PPE that effectively prevents airborne transmission is N95 respirators.
• It’s potential to be airborne increases in poorly ventilated buildings.
• We know we have poorly ventilated buildings.
• COVID-19 in its airborne state remains suspended in the air for hours and travels beyond 6’.
• Brief encounters throughout a day constitute Close Contact. This new criteria was born out of a study that aligns closely with situations we find ourselves in as school based staff. This particular statement struck me deeply:
  ° “the employee did have numerous brief (one-minute) encounters that cumulatively exceeded 15 minutes.” During his eight-hour shift, he was within six feet of an infected person an estimated 22 times, for a total of about 17 minutes of exposure.”
• Follow CDC Guidelines.
  ° Implement in-school COVID-19 rapid antigen testing with the expectation that BPS will be included in part of the 2 million test distribution to MA schools - this would require immediate attention to coordinate, as it requires particular credentialing for these rapid antigen testing to be performed.
• PPE for Airborne Transmission
  ° Air filtration for Airborne Transmission

Create district-wide policies on how to handle non-adherence to the mitigation strategies by those in school buildings. As it stands, we do not have a policy around that - it is being left up to the schools.

Create district-wide procedures on how information about a covid + case in a school is communicated to families including next steps.

Align school safety practices with national guidelines, not DESE guidelines, as Jeff C. Riley is not a medical professional nor public health expert.

As we look towards the future with BPS rushing to reopen amidst a pandemic during flu season, I remain terrified. We still don’t have PPE, safer air quality, nor do we have district guidance on in-building protocols to follow in a pandemic setting. Students and staff are being placed at risk for illness and death.

One single life lost due to the political and economic pressures trickling down to our city’s leadership is unacceptable. Further, a single life lost due to this egregious neglect of our buildings by sending students and staff into buildings with unsafe air safety will fall solely on the shoulders of our city’s leadership.

Mayor Walsh, the city is watching and we are voting.

Signed,
Lauren O’Malley-Singh, MSN, RN

Adrianne Jordan volunteering with the Red Cross to deliver turkeys to our students across the City of Boston on behalf of the Boston Teachers Union.

What a pleasure to service our students and families during these difficult times.
We do not know who they will become. We do not know how they will use their reading, writing, and speaking skills in the future. They may go to college, travel, work, or become something they could never dream of. There is no way to predict that. However, the reading, writing, and speaking skills that they learn and practice now will help them to become who they want to be. They will learn to be critical thinkers, to be able to think for themselves, and to be able to communicate their ideas. These skills will help them in all areas of their lives, not just in school. It is important for us, as teachers, to help our students develop these skills, so that they can become the best that they can be.
Reading, Writing and Talking with Kelly...
continued from page 6

means we collaborate with colleagues to ensure we are working from a strength based lens and constantly asking “what can we bring to the table, and how can we share at this moment in time?” We must work based lens and constantly asking “what can we bring to the table, and how can we share at this moment in time?”

We have a Facebook page with articles and information of interest to our members. You are invited to drop by and like our page. The latest information can be found on that page.

In the June 3, 2020 monthly article in this paper, the RTC emails bulletins with all of the information that affects our members – events; meetings; opportunities for participation in union events; like rallies and demonstrations; political action; and legislation. Please notify the RTC office of your personal email for bulletins. We keep our emails to you with quick access to information that you need. We do not share them beyond you.

The legislative committee continues to fight for a better structure for our COLA base. The base is currently $14,000.00. When we discuss the BTU’s Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) raise for retirees it applies only to the COLA base of $14,000.00. Over time, this erodes the value of the pension putting Boston retirees at a disadvantage. The committee is meeting with representatives of the Massachusetts Retired Teachers Retirement Board, City Council members and Representatives and Senators to the Massachusetts legislature to improve the COLA base. There are four elected officers of the RTC. These offices are Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. These elections to the RTC committee are held now and will be publishing the rules, regulations and timelines of the upcoming elections. Primary elections are held the first Wednesday in May if there are more candidates than positions, runoff elections are held on the first Wednesday in June.

Members are reminded to update their information if they move, change their phone number or email address. Having the latest information about you allows us to keep in contact.

Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, El Salvadorans, Peruvians, Ecuadorians, Mexicans, Brazilians and a million more. The list of those who may be Afro-Cuban, light-skinned Latinx, Indians not speaking Spanish, Asian students arrive from Cambodia and Laos or have been here for generations and are Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino. White students may be old or new immigrants from Saudi Arabia, Ireland or Armenia. Rich and poor, well educated or new to school, they are ours, our neighbors and friends, our students, our hearts, our reason for getting up and coming to work each day. There are layers upon layers of culture that the publishing industry, the market, the media and we know. But we are our students. We must let them write their stories, find their voices and teach us about the world, day in, day out.

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(Today’s CTEP is written by our special guest Kelly McDermott. Kelly is currently serving as a literacy coach grades 3-6 at The Dr. William W. Hens- derson K-12 Inclusion School. Kelly L. McDermott also works as an adjunct pro- fessor at Lesley University For Teachers. Kelly worked in the Boston Public Schools serving in the Department of English Lan- guage Arts and Literacy as the Reading Recovery Teacher Leader and still serves as chair of the Reading Recovery Council of North America’s advocacy committee.)

Letter to the Editor

Unifi’s change in name

Today, Confederate monuments, symbols of the traitors to the United States, display the false narrative that our military seeks their removal. “There is a difference in the remembrance of history and the reverence of it,” stated Mayor Walsh. In Boston, where he responded in a way that the residuals of reverence remain. So too, should the City Council and to its political officials consider the renaming of Faneuil Hall, previously nicknamed “The Cradle of Liberty,” at the time of its construction, in 1792. In the city, there is a difference.

The Walsh Administration's persistent mathematical problem of rhetoric not adding up to policies can be mitigated, to some degree, by a willingness to change the name of a “progressive city” and a “progressive” mayor.

The Boston City Council has rendered itself irrelevant on this issue, even while under the tutelage of two African Ameri- can city council presidents. It is time for the Council to address its ob- session, complicity, and reverence to the history we now know to be true.

Some city council members of many backgrounds believe the window of opportunity for change is now. Faneuil Hall no longer represents who we are as a city, as a state and as a nation. The political mission are due gratitude for the changes and improvements that our community, our neighborhood squares to changing the name of Faneuil Hall does not reflect the reality of our times or the world-wide values. Changing the name of Faneuil Hall is a difference in the remembrance of history and the reverence of it.”, stated Mayor Walsh. In Boston, where he responded in a way that the residuals of reverence remain. So too, should the City Council and to its political officials consider the renaming of Faneuil Hall, previously nicknamed “The Cradle of Liberty,” at the time of its construction, in 1792. In the city, there is a difference.

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The Boston Teachers Union Backs Winners!!!

Paraprofessional Field Rep. Colleen Hart and BTU Political Director Johnny McInnis in Weymouth.

BTU November 3 Election Results

**U.S. PRESIDENT**
Joe Biden

**U.S. VICE PRESIDENT**
Kamala Harris

**U.S. SENATOR – MASSACHUSETTS**
Edward Markey

**U.S. CONGRESS – MASSACHUSETTS**

MA 2nd Congressional - James McGovern
MA 3rd Congressional - Lori Trahan
MA 5th Congressional - Katherine Clark
MA 7th Congressional - Ayanna Pressley
MA 9th Congressional - William Keating

**MASSACHUSETTS STATE SENATE INCUMBENTS**

State Senator Julian Cyr, Cape and Islands
State Senator Patricia Jehlen, Second Middlesex
State Senator Mike Brady, Second Plymouth and Bristol
State Senator Marc Pacheco, First Plymouth and Bristol
State Senator Patrick O’Connor, Plymouth and Norfolk
State Senator Nick Collins, First Suffolk
State Senator Rebecca Rausch, Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex
State Senator Karen Spilka, Second Middlesex and Norfolk
State Senator Walter Timilty, Norfolk, Bristol and Plymouth

**MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES INCUMBENTS**

State Representative Thomas Vitolo, 15th Norfolk
State Representative Thomas Stanley, 9th Middlesex
State Representative Christine Barber, 14th Middlesex
State Representative Liz Miranda, 9th Suffolk
State Representative Jon Santiago, 9th Suffolk
State Representative Nika Elugardo, 15th Suffolk
State Representative Kevin Honan, 17th Suffolk
State Representative David Rogers, 24th Middlesex
State Representative Daniel Ryan, 2nd Suffolk

**NON-INCUMBENTS FOR MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Erika Uyterhoeven, 27th Middlesex
Brandy Fluker-Oakley, 12th Suffolk
Rob Consalvo, 14th Suffolk

Adrianne Jordan campaigns for the re-election of Gerly Adrien, the only woman of color on the Everett City Council. Adrianne Jordan is Chair of the BTU Black Caucus. Adrianne went to Everett to support our fellow colleagues of color and multicultural ethnicities in the fields of education and educational studies, as well as to bring solidarity to our union members.