President's Report  Jessica J. Tang

Building BTU Power Through Policy, Legislation and Political Progress

Throughout this school year and throughout the pandemic, we have continued to build BTU power through multiple means. We have strengthened internal organizing through the creation of Contract Action Teams at dozens of our schools with the support of BTU member organizers and coaches. We have continued to support our BTU organizing committees, such as Ethnic Studies Now, Inclusion Done Right and, our most recently created Housing Justice committee. We have had the most participation ever in our contract survey, with over 3,000 members having shared their priorities as we enter new master contract negotiations.

On the community front, we have consistently partnered with dozens of coalitions and organizations ranging from education focused groups such as the Boston Education Justice Alliance, MA Education Justice Alliance to civil rights groups including the NAACP, AFTs CAN and Lawyers for Civil Rights. Our coalition participation works spans from housing justice work to climate justice and, of course, labor councils and labor affiliated groups. We recently held forums for families, students and the larger community to hear from stakeholders and engage them in our upcoming contract work as well.

Our focus in April, May and much of this year, will continue to be on the political and legislative front. Our Political Director, Political Organizers and COPE committee has been busy preparing and reviewing questionnaires, interviewing candidates and organizing events for member engagement in our electoral work. In May alone, we are hosting three candidate forums: running in our electoral work. In May alone, we have also been busy meeting with members of the Boston delegation to share our legislative priorities including full funding of the Student Opportunities Act and support for our home rule petitions to address the Retirement Plus issue impacting hundreds of BTU members who are ready to retire. We are reviewing dozens more pieces of legislation that may be added to our agenda as well, and are organizing around taking power back from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education already approved by the Executive Board as we begin to finalize our legislative agenda for the year.

In addition to our filing of an amendment to fully fund the Student Opportunity Act based on pre-pandemic enrollment and advocacy for formal funding over the next six years as originally passed, we will be supporting state efforts to pass the Fair Share Amendment to tax individuals who make over $1 million. At the AFT-MA Convention, two resolutions related to addressing climate change were passed, which include support of the Green New Deal as well as Massachusetts Senate Bill 9, An Act Creating a Next-Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy. Locally, we will be advocating for a Green New Deal for Green New Schools to improve the facilities, efficiency and environmental climate of our schools.

As part of the AFT-CIO, we are also supporting the following legislative priorities:

- Essential Workers Bill of Rights: sick time, hazard pay, occupational presumption, childcare relief, drivers licenses, etc.
- Safety nets and jobs for struggling workers: Progressive revenues to invest in the public good and stop layoffs, Right to Recall, strengthen and defend UI, save film production and live theater jobs, etc.
- Protecting public transportation: As part of the Public Transit Public Good Coalition, advocating for progressive revenue investments into public transportation (the same 3 measures we have been advocating for with RUM, just in the context of public transportation), to ensure that we don’t cut transportation that essential workers need and that unemployed people need to have access to jobs; ensuring workers have a voice in MBTA decision making; and fighting back attempts to privatize.
- Investing in public education by funding the Student Opportunity Act to inject directly needed funds into most under-resourced schools, and stopping the layoffs that have been sweeping Higher Ed.
- Ensuring Community standards: Wage theft, closing the prevailing wage loophole on offsite prefabs.
- Gearing up for a battle over employee classification, based on ads we’re seeing from Uber. Uber and Lyft spent over $200 million to pass Prop 22 in CA to undermine decades of progress on core workers’ rights and protections essential workers need now more than ever. The employee classification law that they weakened in CA is based on the worker classification law that we have here, and we’ve already seen ads from Uber here saying its time for MA to do what CA did. We’re not about to let gig companies carve themselves out of labor laws and expedite the gig economy creeping into more and more sectors, so please stay tuned as this potential fight unfolds. In this vein, as we gear up for a defensive fight against Uber/Lyft, we are also working on refileing a similar version of the bill we filed last session to give "TNC" drivers the right to organize into unions.

On the national front, AFT President Randi Weingarten is leading the fight for national legislation and policy to strengthen worker organizing and empowerment. This includes the critical funding passed by the Biden administration for pandemic funding, as well as the more recent America Recovery Act. The AFT is also advocating for the important Protecting the Right to Organize Act (PRO Act). Our MA Senators and Congress members have continued to be incredible allies in these efforts. (Please see the companion piece by President Weingarten on page 2.)

We have much work to do, but as always, our political power is dependent on the activism and involvement of our members. We hope you will take some time to get involved in helping us to grow our influence at City Hall, the State House and beyond. Every action matters — attending a whether it’s signing a petition, calling or emailing your legislators, attending a candidate forum, meeting with your legislators, taking just an hour time to phone bank for a BTU endorsed candidate or help with door knocking — it all matters. Ready to get involved?! We would love to hear from you! Join our BTU Electoral Action Team by contacting Roberto Jimenez at rjimenez@btu.org.

Thank you to everyone for your continued perseverance and commitment during this difficult year. We look forward to seeing more of you in person soon and in the meantime, urge everyone to remain vigilant and safe.
CAT: Building Structures to Give Our Union Claws

By Caitlin Gaffney (Tobin K-8, Executive Board), Cecil Carey (Charlestown High), Chelsea Ruscio (Channing), Ari Branz (organizer), and Natalia Cuadra-Saez (organizer)

Contract Action Team Context

nailom Klein, author of The Shock Doc-
trine, has taught us that “in moments of crisis, people are willing to hand over a great deal of power to anyone who claims to have a plan.” But she has also taught us that another response is possible: We do not always respond to shocks with regression. Sometimes, in the face of crisis, we grow up — fast.

If we’ve learned anything over this past year of struggle with school reopenings, it’s that we need to be united as a union and be ready to stand together in solidarity to fight for what’s right for students and educators. Over the last few months, we’ve grown up, not just into a deeper model of organizing: CATs, or Contract Action Teams. The idea to bring CATs to the BTU began at our June membership meeting when a resolution written and brought to the floor by Jonathan Haines and other rank-and-file members proposed “that the BTU imme-
diately prioritize its internal organizing efforts towards establishing an action net-
work similar to the Contract Action Com-
mmittees in CTU [Chicago Teachers Union] and the Contract Action Teams in UTLA [United Teachers Los Angeles].”

Role and Function

CATs are an invaluable structure that enables increased member involve-
ment at the school level. This is one way our union grows more nimble and more inclusive of member voice as a way to build our collective power.

Each school-based CAT is headed by a CAT leader, who recruits CAT Members to form a small group that has the ability to quickly and effectively reach the rest of the school’s staff. Often, CATs will map out their schools to ensure they can reach every member and then begin to have conversations to understand the school-based challenges and issues. CATs meet regularly to support Build-
ing Reps in union work, such as inviting members to Faculty Senate, encour-
aging participation in school-based work actions, or mobilizing members to union-wide actions.

CATs are a tool for BTU members to communicate and disseminate informa-
tion quickly by establishing connections between col-
leagues at the school level, but they are much more than a phone tree. They are a way of building solidarity at the school-level and enhancing rank-and-file member voice. It’s a way to make a union what it should be: workers who help other workers, both BTU members and nonunion.

CATs strengthen a school community’s two-
way communication, provide extra support for building reps in carry-
ing out BTU actions and initiatives, build solidarity to help schools fight to do what’s right for students, families, and educators, and find solutions for school-level issues.

CATs improve the immediacy, frequency, and personal follow up on union communications and actions. This does not absolve nor impede the building reps’ responsibili-
ties and role, but enhances the timeliness and effec-
tiveness of total open commu-
nication, sense of member-
ship, connection, and unity.

CATs also serve as a reminder that the individualizing build-
ing reps can feel when trying to make union business a priority with large num-
bers of staff. When members are hearing from colleagues beyond the reps, it mes-
sages that this work is a priority to multiple people in the building.

At the school level

When the call to be a part of CAT went out to educators at the Tobin School, a large number immediately stepped up and wanted to help lead the work. In talking to folks, it became clear that there was a desire to be more actively involved and excitement to contribute in a new way. While second jobs and familial responsibilities can impede some mem-
bers’ ability to join after-school commit-
tees and attend in person meetings, CAT opened up a door.

First, our building reps and CAT met to talk about the purpose and vision for the work. Then, we divided our staff list in a way that made the most sense for ease and speed of communications. CAT leader MaryAlice Sandy matched one CAT member to each floor for our middle and elementary specialist team, SEI team, ABA team, special education team, and our itin-
erants. In order to enable more intimate outreach, each CAT group does not exceed eight. Next, each CAT member reached out to their colleagues to be connected to a personal email and phone number so we could update our outreach list. This step was crucial in ensuring that our dissemina-
tion was complete and that each member in the school was receiving the same mes-
saging.

We have activated our CAT structure a number of times this year. It has served to reinforce union communications, share information in an expedient and expedi-
ent manner, remind members to commit to actions, and when utilized as a two-way flow has brought feedback to the building reps that otherwise would have taken a more circuitous route. CAT has enabled our BTU members to shift from peripheral involvement to being central to the union work happening at our school. It is enthralling to think about the possibility for growth going forward. We have encouraged each of our members working with the BTU’s committees on Ethnic Studies, BLM in Schools, COPE, and more. The hope is that we will be able to evolve, increasing our prowess at sharing all of the great work hap-
pening in various committees and spaces beyond our monthly Faculty Senate. We want CAT to serve as an internal informa-
tion superhighway for any member looking to bring knowledge to peers as well as home our mobilization capabilities to be ready to act when called upon.

How to build a CAT at your school

The full potential of CATs will only be realized when we have active CATs at every school site in our union. Hopefully, we’ve convinced you that CAT is some-
thing you want to start or get involved in at your school! Reach out to your BTU CAT Coach and ask for support in establishing a team at your school. If you aren’t sure who this member is, ask your organizers! Our union provides training on setting up CATs, with clear next steps and resources you can take back to your schools.

Think about how you want to organize...

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Commentary

Creating the freedom to thrive

Randi Weingarten, President
American Federation of Teachers

America’s once-thriving middle class did not appear out of thin air. Federal economic policy helped seed it: New Deal programs, the GI Bill, and other Deal programs, the GI Bill, and other Deal programs, the GI Bill, and other Deal programs, the GI Bill, and other Deal programs, the GI Bill, and other Deal programs, the GI Bill, and...
What kind of vote do we take to change the school's class schedule for next year?

The contract reads: "Whatever master schedule (e.g., six period day, seven period day, block schedule) is in effect in a middle or high school shall remain in effect in subsequent years unless a new type of schedule is approved through the waiver provisions under school-based management by a vote of 55% of the BTU staff.

If there will be a change in ‘work conditions’ – such as exceeding the maximum teaching time at the secondary level of 240 minutes per day, requiring teachers to teach more than 160 minutes in a row without a lunch break, planning and development period, or an administrative duty, or not providing a minimum of 240 minutes of planning and development time each week (in a ‘traditional school’), then the waiver process under School Site Council needs to be followed. The BTU allows portions of the standard contract to be waived utilizing this very specific process. Waiving (giving up or modifying) hard fought collective bargaining rights should not be entered into lightly or by an automatic administrator.

Briefly put, in order to waive work conditions as stated above, the School Site Council must approve the waiver, the Principal must approve the waiver, at least 60% of the members of the eligible BTU members affected who are present and voting must approve the waiver; such a vote to be conducted by the Union Representatives using a secret ballot after five (5) days' notice to all those eligible to vote. If and when such a waiver vote is taken and passes all of the steps, ‘The Steering Committee shall be notified in writing of all waivers within five (5) days of their adoption.’ Please notify the BTU Field Representatives in writing of a successful waiver vote as well.

The contract also provides, ‘If a teacher at a school waiving a provision of this contract as described [in the contract in detail] objects to the impact of that waiver on his or her job responsibilities, he or she shall be afforded an opportunity to transfer to another position in the system without loss of seniority or benefits. The implementation of any such waiver shall be delayed until such transfer opportunity has been provided or the impact of the waiver on this teacher has been eliminated. Any dispute arising out of the provisions of this paragraph shall be referred to the Steering Committee for resolution and shall not be arbitrable, provided that the Steering Committee reaches a decision on the matter within 30 days.’ The Steering Committee is a joint labor-management team co-chaired by the BTU President and the BPS Superintendent, composed of an equal number of BTU and Management selected members.

Who determines the content of and when the 18 hours of mandated teacher unit professional development are scheduled?

The 18 hours of professional development beyond the regular school day hours must be scheduled each year. The content of the professional development is determined by the school administration to reflect each individual school’s Whole School Improvement Plan. However, the configuration of how the hours is to be scheduled is to be done with a secret ballot vote with five days’ notice of the faculty conducted by the BTU Representatives. The schedule is determined by a majority vote of the faculty and the approval of the BTU administrator. The vote can be done by subject area, grade level, or other groupings of educational interest.

The contract states, ‘If the administrator and faculty fail to agree on a professional development schedule, three six-hour professional development days shall be added to the end of the school year. Teachers shall be required to participate in 18 hours of professional development plus one full day of professional development on a Monday or Tuesday following the Columbus Day vacation or the April vacation, at the discretion of management. This full day of professional development may be converted to professional development hours by a majority vote of the faculty.’

The professional development schedule for a school year shall be finalized before the end of the previous school year and the schedule shall be distributed to the staff. In the event that more than 25% of the staff is new to the building the following September, the faculty may re-vote. [Vote to be conducted by secret ballot with 5 days’ notice to the faculty by the BTU Reps, which must be completed by 9/15].

When an 18-hour professional development activity is scheduled after regular school hours to take place for 2 hours or less, if a person is out sick or has a personal day, they do not have to make that time up. However, if the professional development activity is scheduled for more than a 2-hour block, the time does have to be made up by the faculty member or they are subject to loss of wages for that time. Paraprofessionals vote on the professional development hours only if such a vote entails the conversion of or breaking up of an entire day into hours.

What is the BTU contract language about LATF (Language Acquisition Team Facilitators)?

The contract language reads: "The Language Acquisition Team Facilitator (LATF) at all schools at the elementary level shall be granted an extracurricular payment of $300 per every 25 English Learners at their school to complete Language Assessment related duties. This will be the amount for school year 19-20 FY 20 and be eligible for annual wage increases thereafter."

At the middle and high school levels, the LATF shall be allowed two (2) administrative periods to perform these duties."

Do itinerate service providers receive testing kits or a budget for supplies?

The contract language reads: “The School Department will provide the testing kits and other protocols to all itinerant service providers. In addition, the BPS will budget $200 per itinerant service provider for supplies related to their discipline. Itinerant service providers, upon request, will receive $200 per year in materials from this disciplinary catalogue.”

What’s the contract language about Professional Development for Related Service Providers?

The contract language reads: “A separate yearly budget will be allocated for the related service provider disciplines (including but not limited to, occupational, physical and speech and language therapies, vision services, psychology, adapted physical education, Guidance Counselors, Student Support Coordinators, and nurses), for planning and implementation of relevant professional development to satisfy contractual professional development requirements. The BTU and administrative members of the joint union management committee will plan the allocation of these funds for discipline specific professional development. The BTU will provide space for the meetings to be held when available.”

Caren Carew
BTU Secondary Field Representative

Do I get time off to go to court?

The contract states; “The Boston School Department will provide release time without loss of pay for court appearances on school business, including cases involving job-related teacher assaults.”

If you are being brought to court by or are bringing a student to court, you get release time. If you have jury duty, you must give a copy of the jury duty letter to your school secretary. Once you have successfully completed the jury duty service, give a copy of the certificate/letter you receive from the court indicating the same. You will then have that time properly coded by the school secretary so it will not be deducted from your sick/personal days. Make sure you carefully scrutinize your pay stub to determine if that has occurred.

If you are subpoenaed to court by someone non-related to school business, or if you are appearing at court for an appeal of a moving violation, the like, that is not covered under court leave and will be deducted from your sick/personal days.

How may bereavement days are teachers entitled to?

In the event of a death in the immediate family, including mother-in-law, father-in-law or anyone residing in the same household with the teacher, up to five (5) days without loss of pay shall be provided. Days are consecutive school days.

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Fix Boston’s McKinley Schools: Rename Them “Melvin H. King Schools” and Reimagine Their Vision and Purpose

by Edith Bazile

On October 23, 1899, a group of prominent Black citizens from Boston wrote a strong letter of protest to President William McKinley imploring him to speak out against the escalating incidents of lynching and ongoing acts of vicious racial violence against Black people in the South.

Here’s an excerpt: “Are you silent because without any fault of our own we were enslaved and held for more than two centuries in cruel bondage by your forefathers? Is it because we bear the marks of those sad generation of Anglo-Saxon brutality and wickedness, that you do not speak?”

President McKinley did nothing. In fact, he placated the white supremacists and affirmed their citizenry.

In a stinging open letter, Black citizens of Boston exposed the hypocrisy of President McKinley’s claims that America stood for freedom and democracy in foreign countries while he refused to speak, let alone take action, against the murders and other violent abuses whites in the South were using to suppress Black people.

Boston’s McKinley Schools are named after this 25th U.S. president. That should change.

The McKinley Schools (a group of four schools within BPS) should be renamed in honor of Melvin H. King, a BPS graduate and legend known as “The Son of the South End.”

An inspiring Boston leader

Mel King is the former director of Boston’s Urban League, created innovative community-based programs, and founded the South End Technology Center. King’s life’s mission led him to become a stalwart community leader, organizer, author, educator, and the first BPS graduate and legend known as “The Son of the South End.”

Black Boston mayoral candidate.

He dedicated his life to urban renewal and sparked protest against gentrification in the South End.

Mel King successfully organized a massive sit-in, known as Tent City, which led to affordable housing for low-income Black residents who were threatened with relocation due to gentrification of their neighborhoods.

Mel tirelessly fought for his community and community-based schooling, including the McKinley School at 90 Warren Street, where he mentored youth. Students constructed a huge school mural in honor of Mel King.

Decades later, the McKinley Schools have lost their way in educating Black students. It is now time to reimagine their name, vision, and purpose in honor of the living legend, Mel King, now in his 90s.

Today, when a white man says, “Give me liberty or give me death,” he is considered a hero. When a Black man says, “Black Lives Matter,” he is sucked into the vortex of racial hatred and labeled a criminal.

Black boys more likely to get a “substantially separate” placement

For Black boys, the process of criminalization begins early with harsh disciplinary practices, often leading to segregation in substantially separate special education settings. I argue that the purpose of public education in America has been to maintain the balance of power in society and ensure it does not shift.

The McKinley Schools were founded in 1978 for a population of students between the ages of five and twenty-two who have reportedly failed in school due to primary emotional and behavioral problems as well as concomitant academic challenges. These students are assigned to McKinley through BPS’s special education process.

Since the McKinley design did not address the root cause of structural racism as a reason for referral to special education, the IEP process disproportionally targeted Black males, resulting in significant over-representation of Black boys. Once they go in, they don’t get out, which makes a McKinley placement a sentence, not a service for Black students. This often leads to higher dropout rates, unemployment, underemployment, or imprisonment.

According to historian Carter G. Woodson, “…to handicap a student by teaching him that his black face is a curse and that his struggle to change his condition is hopeless is the worst sort of lynching.”

Once they go in, they don’t get out, which makes a McKinley placement a sentence, not a service for Black students.
Justin could not return to school until he was less innocent, dangerous, in less need of therapy. Specifically boys, because they are more likely to engage in aggressive behavior, to be arrested, convicted and incarcerated in DYS facilities. In January 2021, a 9-year-old Black girl from New Rochelle, N.Y. was dragged through the snow by several white officers, then handcuffed and pepper-sprayed in the face while she cried out for her father. One police officer said, “Stop acting like a child.” The 9-year-old girl tearfully responded, “I am a child,” to which the officer replied, “You did it to yourself, hon.”

On the other hand, Kyle Rittenhouse, brandishing an AR-15 type rifle, shot and killed two people, then calmly walked past police, who did not intervene, and went home. News stories portrayed him as a 17-year-old boy who was afraid and defending himself, even though he killed unarmed men.

But Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old child, was shot dead in two seconds as he played with a toy on the playground. After the killing, the police officer reported on his walkie-talkie, “Shots fired. Male down. Killed two people, then calmly walked away.” The McKinley Schools are disproportionately populated with Black students, specifically boys because they are erroneously viewed as more aggressive, less innocent, dangerous, in less need of nurturing, much older than their chronological age, and emotionally and behaviorally impaired.

**Justin: Emotional impairment or dyslexia?**

Here’s an example that illustrates the challenge: Justin, eight years old, is a shy student, an excellent soccer player, well behaved, and good at math. When his third-grade teacher asked him to read aloud in class, Justin threw a fit, “I’d rather die than read.”

As he sprinted out of the classroom, he bumped into his teacher, who tried to block his exit. The teacher summoned the principal, who discovered Justin hid- ing in the bathroom stall. After coaxing him out of the stall, the principal guided Justin by the arm to the office. Justin instinctively wrested to get free and sprinted toward the school’s exit, but was caught and restrained by staff.

Justin’s parents, who never received a call on disciplinary matters, were told Justin could not return to school until he received medical clearance from a doctor. After returning to school, Justin was repeatedly disciplined and spent much of his time in the principal’s office.

The McKinley Schools are dispro- portionately populated with Black stu- dents, specifically boys because they are erroneously viewed as more aggressive, less innocent, dangerous, in less need of nurturing, much older than their chronological age, and emotionally and behaviorally impaired.

**Diagnosis rejected, child saved**

Justin’s parents reported that the discipline complaints were unfounded. Justin started experiencing sleep diffi- culty and began resisting going to school. The school recommended a referral to special education. Although assessments revealed Justin demonstrated difficulties with phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, word recognition, and reading fluency, the IEP Team determined that Justin had an emotional impairment and recommended a substantially separate special education program for students with primary emotional impair- ments. In this case, the parents rejected the IEP recommendation and enlisted advocacy to get the right services for Justin.

Justin’s story is common for Black boys who require academic support yet don’t get the necessary and early inter- vening literacy and academic supports. Then they are blamed for not perform- ing, disciplined, and placed in substan- tially segregated school settings where literacy and academic supports are still not provided.

The cost of a McKinley seat is approxi- mately $77,000 per student annu- ally, which does not include an extended school year that students are entitled to attend during the summer. The 2020 enrollment is 319 students.

The Black student population sig- nificantly exceeds its percentage in the district. According to 2019/2020 DESE data, Black student enrollment in the district was 29.3%; McKinley is comprised of 41.9% Black students. Latina students are slightly overrepresented; there are 42.4% Latinx students in the district and 43.1% in McKinley schools.

**What are the results of a $77,000 seat at a McKinley School?**

A 7:1 student to staff ratio. According to DESE, the four-year graduation rate for Black students is 18.5%; the rate of four-year graduation for Latinx students is 20%. Despite the requirement of transi- tion planning, 74.3% of the McKinley students responded that their aspirations for college and high school were “unknown.” No McKinley graduates enrolled in a four-year college. McKinley students are more likely to be suspended in school and incarcerated in DYS facilities.

Justin threw his book to the floor, kicked it and shout- ed, “I’d rather die than read.”

Justin’s parents, who never received a call on disciplinary matters, were told Justin could not return to school until he received medical clearance from a doctor. After returning to school, Justin was repeatedly disciplined and spent much of his time in the principal’s office.

**“McKinley is at the intersection of a number of our failures.” — Nate Kuder**

Edith Bazile and BPS Chief Financial Officer Nate Kuder had a remarkable exchange at the March 12 Zoom meeting of the citywide “Equity Roundtable.” Here are excerpts:

**Bazile:**

The McKinley Schools serve the largest population of students who are segregated in a special school, primarily Black students, primarily males who are classified with emotional and behavioral impairments, and they are completely left out of the conversation. There are no students, zero, who go on to a four year college. Less than 20% graduate in four years.

I urgently challenge you to address the crumbling structure where students must go through metal detectors, are met with school police, yet they have to take the same tests, and then they’re blamed for failure. There’s no gym, no cafeteria, no labs. This is the reality of being educated while black.

**Kuder:**

You’re right to call that out. The McKinley is at the intersection of a number of our failures. We don’t have a 125 school plan. ... Building that plan is going to take us time.

The other thing that has not happened is a rigorous equity analysis about our capital plan, certainly in recent memory, starting with the data of who has access to high quality buildings, where do we see the least access. And what is the explicit racial strategy for addressing that? That’s the part we’re building now, and I’m committed to that.

McKinley Schools require immediate systemic reform to dismantle unjust poli- cies and practices and provide McKinley students a quality education in the cur- rent school setting.

BPS made quiet plans to demolish the 90 Warren Street McKinley site, build a new $83 million dollar state-of-the- art building for the high-performing Quincy Upper School, and displace the current school population. McKinley staff staged a protest, the project was abandoned, and there has been no new plan to repair or reconstruct the building.

BPS must resist gentrifying the McKinley buildings for other students and keep the sites for its current students.

**How to fix it**

The McKinley Schools’ vision and purpose must be reimagined and reconstructed with a renaming cer- emony and fresh leadership dedicated to equity, diversity, and inclusion. To reframe the conversation and provide aspirational and excellent educational leadership, the Equity, Strategy and Opportunity Gaps (ESOG) team should lead the charge. BPS has not funded the ESOG team and must do so to ensure this unit has adequate resources to conduct transformative work with school staff, revise practices in all BPS sites, and hold schools accountable for educating Black and Brown students — wholly, equitably, and successfully free of bias and racism.

To address the longstanding problem of sentencing Black students to segregated settings, BPS should do the following:

A new name and a new approach for the McKinley Schools

- Change the name of the McKinley Schools to the Melvin H. King Schools.

There is already a beautiful mural cre- ated by students and staff to honor King for his work in establishing the school and defending the neighborhood from gentrification. His name should be on this school as it launches a community-focused vision reflective of Mel King’s life work.
CAT: Building Structures to Give Our Union Claws…
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your CAT structures. Does it make sense to do it by grade level team? To do it geographically by where folks are in the building? To do it by established social connections? There is no wrong way as long as it makes sense to you and your school. Think about relationships and who talks to one another!
CATs are all about organizing, and that means having real conversations and forming real connections. Start with one-on-one conversations with members where you elicit some of their concerns, needs, and ideas for improvement. Let them know that there is a way to be more involved and to have their voice heard. Organizing conversations are about listening, but then turning issues and concerns into plans to come together and take action. Building those authentic relationships with our fellow workers leads us to care about the issues they care about and to be willing to stand up and fight for each other.
In her book Emergent Strategy, adrienne maree brown spells out her core principles, one of which is “Move at the speed of trust. Focus on critical connections more than critical mass — build the resilience by building relationships” (42). Our experience with the new CAT Action Team structures has shown us once again that our power as a union comes from our relationships with one another.

CATS in the context of leadership
CATs represent an opportunity for our union to build a structure of deep, shared leadership. Marshall Ganz, a professor of Leadership and Organizing at Harvard University, elaborates various models of leadership. In one model, the leader is a dot at the center of all the people, represented by arrows. This is not only overwhelming for the leader, who has to do all the work and make all the decisions, but frustrating for all the other people. Sometimes the leader is so busy that people can’t even get through to them. And often people’s skills, capacity, and time go under-utilized. What happens, too, if the leader in the middle suddenly disappears? There is not enough knowledge or power to create a sustainable organization. Think about this model. Have you ever experienced it in your school or in the BTU? How does it feel?
The flip side of the single-dot model is one in which we say, “everyone’s a leader.” In this model, people are allotted far more responsibility and decision-making power. But where is the unity? Often, this model results in chaos and disorganization. There is no coordination between all the leaders. Decision-making is unclear. Under this model, it’s nearly impossible to move with unity to achieve shared goals.
The final model Ganz offers is a snowflake. In this model, there are many leaders, but they’re coordinated. Each leader is connected to the central decision-maker, as well as to one another, creating layers of communication and support. And each leader is responsible for coordinating only a small number of people, allowing them to build real relationships and clear communication. Furthermore, the success of each leader depends on developing the leadership of others.
We are building a snowflake model of leadership in our union. Building BPS work with CAT Leaders, who support their CAT Members, who communicate with membership. Each school is supported by a CAT Coach, a rank-and-file member whose role is to focus on supporting a handful of schools to develop strong CAT structures. CAT coaches are supported by organizing staff. For some schools that have struggled to maintain union involvement, CAT teams can become pipelines for leadership development.

Know Your Rights…
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days immediately preceding, following or including the day of death. Holidays, vacations, and suspensions shall be considered school days under this provision. One (1) day without loss of pay shall be provided for a niece, nephew, uncle, aunt, and in-law other than above. Three (3) days without loss of pay shall be provided for a grandchild/parent.

What is the severance pay policy in the BPS for teachers?
The BTU Contract details, “Persons who retire, resign, or die after ten (10) years of teaching in the BPS shall be paid at the ratio of 40% of accumulated, unused sick days, without limitation. Payment shall be based on the annual rate of pay of the person at the time of death, retirement or resignation. In the event of death, payment shall be made to the estate…” “Severance shall be paid in two installments. One half of the payment shall be made on or before December 31st of the year of retirement, and the other half shall be paid on or before December 31st of the year after retirement.” If a person has taught less than ten full years in the BPS, they lose their accumulated sick days if they leave the system.

Do I get time off for having a student teacher or intern?
If a teacher becomes a cooperating teacher, the contract outlines the following. “Each cooperating teacher shall be given two days of leave with pay, without loss of benefits. Such days shall be taken as mutually agreed upon by the teacher and the administrative head during the last two weeks of the student-teacher training period. In cases of conflict, seniority shall prevail in the selection of days.” This coverage was designed to be given by having the student teacher cover for the days so that it is a no cost item for the BPS. If a cooperating teacher does not arrange for the coverage while the student teacher is in the classroom, the cooperating teacher loses the benefit. It’s a use it or lose it scenario.

How is the student member selected to serve on high school SSC’s?
Student members of School-Site Councils at the high school level must be elected by the entire student body. They cannot be appointed by the administration; they must be elected expressly for this purpose. The student member represents all students on the SSC.

CATS in the context of leadership
CATs represent an opportunity for our union to build a structure of deep, shared leadership. Marshall Ganz, a professor of Leadership and Organizing at Harvard University, elaborates various models of leadership. In one model, the leader is a dot at the center of all the people, represented by arrows. This is not only overwhelming for the leader, who has to do all the work and make all the decisions, but frustrating for all the other people. Sometimes the leader is so busy that people can’t even get through to them. And often people’s skills, capacity, and time go under-utilized. What happens, too, if the leader in the middle suddenly disappears? There is not enough knowledge or power to create a sustainable organization. Think about this model. Have you ever experienced it in your school or in the BTU? How does it feel?
The flip side of the single-dot model is one in which we say, “everyone’s a leader.” In this model, people are allotted far more responsibility and decision-making power. But where is the unity? Often, this model results in chaos and disorganization. There is no coordination between all the leaders. Decision-making is unclear. Under this model, it’s nearly impossible to move with unity to achieve shared goals.
The final model Ganz offers is a snowflake. In this model, there are many leaders, but they’re coordinated. Each leader is connected to the central decision-maker, as well as to one another, creating layers of communication and support. And each leader is responsible for coordinating only a small number of people, allowing them to build real relationships and clear communication. Furthermore, the success of each leader depends on developing the leadership of others.
We are building a snowflake model of leadership in our union. Building BPS work with CAT Leaders, who support their CAT Members, who communicate with membership. Each school is supported by a CAT Coach, a rank-and-file member whose role is to focus on supporting a handful of schools to develop strong CAT structures. CAT coaches are supported by organizing staff. For some schools that have struggled to maintain union involvement, CAT teams can become pipelines for leadership development.

Hopes for the future
In working towards an organizing model of unionism we can shift our union culture to one where all workers have a voice, all workers feel like a part of something bigger than themselves, and where we can stand together in solidarity. The BTU is not just one person, not just leadership, not just our Executive Board, it is each and every one of us and the more of us who stand together the more powerful we will be and the more equipped we will be to fight and re-imagine better schools for all. We can not afford to be complacent in our membership to our union; we all have a responsibility to be active and have our voice heard if we want to impact real change. We were not fully ready to organize during the pandemic, and CATs are an important tool that will help us be prepared to tackle immense challenges like school re-opening. Improving school level organizing helps us win the fights we want to win.

To get involved, contact organizer Ari Branz: abranz@btau.org

It Must Be Spring
By Joan Devlin, BTU-RTC Secretary
We hope that you are well and have had an opportunity to get your vaccination against COVID-19. Your health and safety are of primary importance during this time.
But Spring is here and hope is in the air. We retirees know it is Spring because the Boston Retirement Board announced that it will take testimony on its recommendations for COLA increases for next year. On April 28, 2021 at 10:00 am the Board will meet and COLA is on the agenda. This article will be too late to serve as a call to action to all members express their concern to the Board that the COLA Base be increased as well.
Since the state adopted the current laws governing public employee pensions, Boston has raised the COLA base twice. Mayor Menino raised the base from $12,000 to $18,000 permitted by the law. Other cities and towns have already adopted the high-est base in the law. Boston is uniquely able to do all the work and make all the decisions, but frustrating for all the other people. Sometimes the leader is so busy that people can’t even get through to them. And often people’s skills, capacity, and time go under-utilized. What happens, too, if the leader in the middle suddenly disappears? There is not enough knowledge or power to create a sustainable organization. Think about this model. Have you ever experienced it in your school or in the BTU? How does it feel?
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Raising the base by $4,000 seems like a lot, but remember that the $18,000 will serve as the amount of money that is affected by the COLA increase. Thus, raising the base by that amount produces a smaller impact on the individual pension than you might imagine.
Using the current base, a 3% increase would mean that each member of the pension system receives $35 more each month. Even with the increase 3% produces an increase of only $45 per month for each retiree. For retirees receiving a small pension (less than $30,000 per year) every raise in monthly income is essential.
The Board will vote on a COLA increase and on increasing the base used to calculate that increase at the May 19, 2021 meeting of the board. We need your help in writing to the Board before May 19. Tell them the impact the increased care increases, increases in drug prescription costs, MPTA fares, prices food costs, taxes, etc.
Watch for the RTC bulletin that will give you additional information about how to contact the Boston Retirement Board and an update of their April 28th meeting.

Not the Only Thing!
We want to welcome our new members to the RTC. There are some things we would like to share with you.
Fix Boston’s McKinley Schools: Rename Them “Melvin H. King Schools” and Reimagine Their Vision and Purpose...

continued from page 5

• Employ and empower parents, caretakers, students, and community members who reflect the student demographics to identify highly qualified leadership with a proven track record of constructing an inclusionary school setting where students receive high-quality therapeutic and academic support necessary to create bridges to home schools. Give the new leadership the discretionary authority to achieve excellent results on behalf of Black and Latinx students who have been left behind by the racist McKinley Schools policies.

Change BPS special education

• More broadly, in the entire district, support and empower the Equity, Strategy and Opportunity Gaps team to do the work of dismantling racist structures and reconstructing policies, procedures, and practices using culturally and linguistically sustaining practices that lead to eliminating racially unjust disciplinary practices and disproportionality in special education.

• Design and apply specific protocols to ensure the practice of segregation of Black boys ends and to ensure that when special education is needed, it is the right service. The BPS special education department is overwhelmingly white. The district must employ a cadre of highly qualified Black educators to address the challenge of overrepresentation of Black students in special education.

• Provide all students high-quality education prior to kindergarten. And for students predicted to struggle, deliver rapid, early intervening, appropriately tiered literacy/readings interventions with data-driven progress in the general education classroom.

• Employ a cadre of highly qualified reading/literacy specialists to make data-driven instructional decisions and provide evidence-based appropriately tiered interventions rooted in appropriately paced supports that result in improved performance for students who require these targeted interventions.

• Begin planning developmentally appropriate and career readiness as soon as students enter school by ensuring they are provided high-quality content instruction and positive behavioral supports and interventions that are data driven, provided by highly qualified staff who are regularly engaged in evidence-based professional learning and facilitate learning with alignment to standards-based content instruction.

Mel King had a wonderful vision, but it has been detailed. For the sake of hundreds of children, most especially Black boys, who are entitled to a high-quality education that will place them on the track to pursue their dreams and fulfill their life goals, we must get the McKinley Schools back on track. (Edith Bazile is a former BPS special education and administrator and former President of the Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts [BEAM]).
Commentary  Michael J. Maguire

An Unpopular Opinion: I Shall Miss Quarantine

I am thrilled to be getting back to normal life. My parents’ have had their vaccinations. My school district is calling students back to the classrooms. The normal cycle of life is returning just as the snow is melting. It all seems like it is part of the spring rebirth cycle.

Nonetheless I shall miss my year long quarantine. While many joke about the trouble of too-much-togetherness, I have been given a rare opportunity for this parent of teenagers. I got to spend time with them.

Both my children attend the same school in which I teach. This year my son is in the same grade that I teach. And while I knew I would not have him in my class, I thought I would get to see him every day in the freshmen wing of our school. At the very least I might get to know his friends who would be in my class. (Knowing your children’s friends is an invaluable parental tool.) Alas, COVID changed all that.

I am now Zoom teaching several of my son’s friends. Yes, they are indeed my students; but I don’t truly know them as we are on screens and they have their cameras off. And I don’t get to see my son either in the hallways or interacting with his pals.

I do, however, get to see my son every day! Yay! I see him all day, every day. While this may seem like an obvious statement, I want to remind everyone of what was and will soon be the normal teenage life: avoiding their parents. Teens go to school, have a job, partake in after school clubs, and - when they are home - sequester themselves in their rooms.

This was my daughter’s first year at the school. Do you remember your first day at a new school? Now imagine trying to do that on Zoom. Chatting in a breakout room is not the same as sharing a lean over to the person next to you to have a conspiratorial chat.

Fortunately several friends from her old school are also attending the new school. When the weather permitted these friends formed a learning pod where once a week they would gather in a backyard and attend separate Zoom classes together. What a unique experience for them. (When I went to my first day of high school I did not see my best friend at all since the scheduling gods had conspired against us.) The camaraderie of my daughter’s friends was therefore ever more lovely to watch.

I have also gained a great appreciation for the work of my colleagues. Before the pandemic I tried my best to visit other classrooms in order to know what else my students were experiencing. I’d see the posters with foreign languages captions plastered in the hallways, and maybe I’d catch a glimpse of a science experiment as I passed the labs as I stretched my legs on my off period. But this past year I had a bird’s eye view of the incredible, interactive assignments my colleagues were using in class. I’m not ashamed to say that I copied many of their ideas for my own classes.

This past year both my children have grown, figuratively and literally. Over the past twelve months I have observed my children not only master remote learning better than I have, but I’ve witnessed them gain independence in their school and homework. They have become better writers, have learned new languages, and have kept themselves on schedule far better than I did when I was their age in the 1980s.

And I have seen them literally grow. The early teenage years bring enormous physical transformations, most noticeably is height. While their growth spurts would have happened with or without the pandemic, the extra sleep from staying at home certainly helped. Pre-pandemic the alarm clock thundered in our house at 0530 hours. Our high school started at 7:20 AM – the earliest in the city - but thanks to Zoom all students got to sleep in later, sometimes until the very start of class. Thanks to a full year of a good night’s sleep, my children and indeed all students have gotten the best rest of their scholastic lives. What a change awaits us all.

Editors' Note: Colleen Hart's picture and statement were not included in the last edition of the Boston Union Teacher. We regret the error.

PARAPROFESSIONAL/SUBSTITUTE/ABA FIELD REPRESENTATIVE

Colleen Hart

My name is Colleen Hart; I am your Paraprofessional/Substitute/ABA Field Rep. I have been in this role for almost four years. It has been my pleasure getting to know my fellow union members more closely in my time as a field rep. I would love the opportunity to continue to advocate for creating a better working environment for each of us. If re-elected, I will continue to grow more training programs for the paraprofessionals and opportunities where other can share in expertise. I also plan on providing more training opportunities for substitutes, as well as advocate for the many challenges they face. Another focus, if re-elected, would be to work with the ABA’s on understanding their contract and find ways to improve as they are still the newest bargaining unit.

I feel that my experience as a paraprofessional for 21 years and a building rep for 13 years has helped me in my role as Field Rep advocating for my fellow union brothers and sisters. I hope you consider me for re-election for the Paraprofessional/Substitute/ABA Field Rep.

I am also running Delegate to represent the Boston Teachers Union. In role as delegate I have been able to meet many other union members from other locals. It was great opportunity to learn and collaborate and stand in solidarity many unions. I hope to be able continue being delegate to represent the BTU family.

Please remember to vote for Colleen for Paraprofessional/Substitute/ABA Field Rep and Delegate in your Hart you know she is right!!!!