President’s Report  
Jessica J. Tang

Healing, Recovery and Hopes for a New Year!

At the start of the summer, there was hope that this fall we would be able to return to a greater level of normalcy for in-person learning. Fall is now almost here, and it has become much clearer that we are not out of the woods yet, and that the Delta COVID variant is a true threat that must be both mitigated and addressed. As we prepare for the return to school, there is much to think about, reflect on and hope for.

First, to heal and move forward, there is much to acknowledge and understand. Over the last year and a half our students, families, union and larger community have often struggled through a roller coaster of uncertainty, fear, anxiety and loss. The impacts on both physical and mental health are real. Many are still recovering from sickness, loss and/or grief from losing loved ones and now have further anxiety about the unknowns: What will the impact of the Delta variant be? What will school look like this fall? Will I get sick? Is the vaccination safe for me or my students? When will we really be able to put this all behind us?

While we do have some answers—for example, there is conclusive evidence that vaccines do work and are the most effective mitigation strategy along with masking for those who cannot get vaccinated—there also are many questions we do not have the answers to. We have been working hard throughout the summer to learn as much as we can so that we can both advise our members and advocate for what is needed to have as smooth a school year as possible.

We hope that everyone was able to take time this summer to heal and recover emotionally, physically and mentally. Self-care throughout this school year will be key so that we can continue to be our best for our students, families and each other. Undoubtedly, there will be stressful times and remembering to take a deep breath, centering ourselves and self-regulating our own emotions so that we can treat each other with grace, patience and kindness to the best of our abilities will serve us all well as we struggle together to find solutions and confront the challenges ahead.

In addition to social emotional, mental and physical health healing and recovery, our attention, of course, is on supporting our students and their academic, social and emotional needs as well. We have been advocating for ESSER funds to be used specifically for these goals, in addition to many other needed supports, including those for our highest needs students, special education students, EL students and early education students. Facilities continue to be a priority as we confront both the challenges underscored by the pandemic due to our aging buildings and prepare for the reality of climate change.

Our new contract proposal, “Creating the Schools Our Students and Communities Deserve, Post Pandemic and Beyond” lays out our vision for what our students and schools need both in terms of physical and holistic needs. Please do visit our website www.btu.org to read the whole proposal and learn more about how to take action to win our next contract. It will take all hands on deck to heal, recover and achieve the hopes we have for our students and schools.

We have new member-led structures including Contract Action Teams (CAT), member-organizers, a new Contract Organizing Committee, Silent Representatives and, of course our existing critical structures including Building Reps, Faculty Senates, Executive Board, organizing committees and others leadership groups that will all be working together to build power and strengthen our union. These structures are there to ensure all of our members have a voice, are able to get involved and stay engaged as we start a new year.

While the challenges ahead are not all known, we are well positioned to confront them, and to lead in the process. Doing so, however, will require thoughtful solutions and proactive positions. It will also require us to look beyond our differences, open our minds to learning and growth and try to do things differently when needed. We will need to be flexible, adaptable and reflective as well. We will touch on these themes in more detail at our fall leadership conference, “Be Water: Building Flexibility, Unity and Strength.” We hope to see you there!

The theme is adapted from Bruce Lee, who said,

“Be like water making its way through cracks. Do not be assertive, but adjust to the object, and you shall find a way around or through it. If nothing within you stays rigid, outward things will disclose themselves. Empty your mind, be formless, shapeless, like water. If you put water into a bottle it becomes the bottle. You put it in a teapot it becomes the teapot. Now, water can flow or it can crush. Be water, my friend.”

Water may be flexible, but it is also strong and can move boulders, carve mountains and nourish us. Let us start the year strong, unified, and looking out for each other.

Notes From the Executive VP  
Erik R. Berg

Class Size FAQ

Big Idea: Class Size Payments are Way Up so Class Size Violations are Way Down!

It’s critical to file a class size grievance via the BTU website as soon as the violation occurs!

Class Size Violations are Down

We are pleased to say that due to our aggressive stance to ensure that our students are able to learn in reasonably sized classes, the district has violated our contract less and less. For example, in SY 2016-17, 289 teachers had class size violations, and this past year, the number was down to only 61. While that is still too many, we are making great strides towards reducing the number of violations. Since 2016, BTU members have received settlements totaling over $2.5M for class size violations, including $494,000 for SY 19-20.

What are the class size limits?

In general, the class size limits are as follows:

- Elementary Schools: 21:1
- Special Education: 20:1
- Kindergarten: 25:1
- Pre-K (Head Start): 15:1

For more information, please visit our website www.btu.org.
The Boston Teachers Union – Who, What, When, Where...

What Are the BTU’s Primary Responsibilities?
- Negotiate and enforce the contract
- Provide the best education we can for the system's 60,000 students
- Work with the school community to ensure our schools are as good as they can be
- Represent the membership in all matters related to their professional work
- Answer job-related questions and assist in any job-related matter, i.e., help our members navigate through the Bobbing Building bureaucracy
- Promote public education
- Promote the growth and well-being of our profession
- Work politically through COPE to elect pro-public education, pro-union candidates
- COPE or the Committee on Political Education is by federal and state law a separate entity within the BTU devoted to supporting candidates who support public education and who otherwise favor our positions on a variety of work-related issues.

The BTU is Affiliated With:
- American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
- AFL-CIO, Massachusetts AFL-CIO
- AFT-Massachusetts (formerly called the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers)
- Greater Boston Labor Council (GBLC)

How to Get in Contact With the BTU
- Visit office at 180 Mount Vernon Street, Dorchester, MA 02125
- Business Hours, 8 am-5 pm, all weekdays – holidays
- Log onto btu.org
- Email staff and officers; for an index, please see btu.org/about/contact-us/

How to Join the BTU’s 15,000-Member Listserv
Go to btu.org upper right is sign-up box. The listerv is used only for the dissemination of the weekly BTU e-Bulletin. The list is not used for any other purpose including, business, political or personal. The list is fully protected and will not be used for any other purpose.

The BTU Officers and Staff
- President ....................................................................
  Michael W. McLaughlin, Secretary-Treasurer .................
  Colleen M. Hart, Field Representative.........................
  Lea Serena, Elementary Field Representative ...............,
  Colleen M. Hart, Paraprofessional/ABA/Substitute Teacher
  Field Representative ..............................................
  Brenda B. Chaney, Parent and Community Liaison .......
  Michael J. Maguire, Co-Editor, Boston Union Teacher.....
  Natalie Cuadra-Saez, BTU Organizer .........................
  Ariel Branz, BTU Organizer
  Erica Kouka, BTU Organizer
  Roberto Jiménez-Rivera, Political Organizer

Check your status or sign up for membership at members.btu.org

Class Size FAQ…

Grades K-1 .................................................. 22
Grades 2-3 .................................................... 25
Grades 4-8 ...................................................... 28
Grades 9-12 ................................................... 31

In elementary classes, there can be no more than 20 students at any grade level, with not more than 6 inclusion students.

In Bilingual, ESL, and SEI classes, there can be no more than 20 students at any grade level, or 25 if a paraprofessional is provided (though only 22 with a para in grades K and 1).

In elementary schools where there is only one regular education class in a grade level, the above maxima may be exceeded by one or two students. Similarly, in secondary schools where there is a singular regular education course offering, the maxima may be exceeded by one or two students.

Are these strict limits?

BTU members, and the students we serve, have among the strongest class size language in the state. While we might want the actual limits to be lower, the limits themselves are firm. The most important sentence in our contract around class size is this: “Ultimately, the classroom teacher may insist that the class size maximum be enforced.” (p. 25) This right was reinforced by a settlement agreement reached in 2004 between the BTU and the BPS, and each year members insist on enforcement, which results in students being moved or staff being added.

When the Boston Public Schools assigns more students to a class than are allowed under our contract, they do a disservice to those students. It is our job to ensure that our kids get the differentiation and personalized attention that they deserve. We can do this by insisting that our class size limits are enforced.

What should I do if my class size is over the limit?

First, file a grievance immediately. Do not wait. You can do this from the BTU website. At the same time, please download and print the form at the same web address and record your class size each day throughout the year. We will need this at the end of the year to process your grievance and ensure proper payment if compensation is required.

Second, you should insist that the class size issue is addressed. This could involve moving a student or students to a different class or section, opening a new class, or adding a teacher. The district may offer a paraprofessional or other educational solution to you, and you should engage in a good faith discussion about it. But under no circumstances should you agree to anything without the knowledge and advice of your field rep, and our advice is to “insist that the class size maximum be enforced.” This follows our contract, and ensures that our students get the education they deserve.

My principal gave me a form to waive the grievance and accept some other solution. Should I sign it?

Do not sign any form without consulting with your building representative, field representative, or BTU Vice President Erik Berg, at eberg@btu.org. We believe that class size issues are most effectively addressed by adding personnel.

What payment is owed to teachers who taught oversubscribed classes and the grievance was not resolved?

There are two arbitration decisions governing this situation, if the violation is not resolved within 15 school days of filing the grievance. The calculations are different for elementary and secondary teachers, and in some cases are many thousands of dollars.

I filed a class size grievance in a previous school year. What is happening with that grievance?

Class Size grievances filed through the 2019-2020 school year have been resolved, and payment should have been made in August. We are continuing to work through the class size grievances from SY 2020-2021 in an effort to resolve them and ensure compensation if the violation was not resolved within 15 school days.
Why is Filing a Class Size Grievance Important and How it is Done?

Data shows that the lower the class sizes the better when it comes to meeting student's needs. As soon as class size maxima have been exceeded in your class, file the information immediately with the BTU directly on the btu.org website. Refer to the grade and type of class you teach (elementary, middle, high, regular ed., SPED, gym, SEI, etc.) in the BTU contract on pages 49-40 to determine the appropriate number for your respective class. You should file a class size grievance once the number of children reporting to your class is in excess of the contractual maxima – it can’t just be the number on your class list, the students must have physically attended school at least once and then not have been officially discharged.

Only in special cases are additional students able to remain in the class thus exceeding the maxima as negotiated. The contract states: “In elementary schools where there is only one regular education class in a grade level, the School Department may exceed the class size maxima by one or two students. For one student in excess, the teacher will receive $3,000.” The contract continues: “In secondary schools where there is a singular regular education course offering, the School Department may exceed the class size maxima by one or two students. For one student in excess, the teacher will receive $300 per class and for two students, $600 per class.” For example, in a secondary school if there is only one physics class offered, this portion of the contract could kick in. This cannot be employed where and when it suits the administration except within the narrow parameters outlined above. Under no circumstances can this passage of the contract be implemented with special education classes. As it states in the collective bargaining agreement; “Class size for program prototypes 502.2, 502.3.

and 502.4 shall conform with Regulations published by the State Department of Education.” It is illegal to increase SPED class sizes. There is an arbitration award that the BTU obtained which states that even if these narrow parameters exist, the teacher thus affected has a right to decline said stipend and instead may insist on the standard class size being enforced. 

Filing the class size grievance puts pressure on the BPS to deal with the issue as quickly as possible or compensate the teacher for this contract violation. Money is a motivator for them to solve the problem. The teacher only gets credit from the day they file the grievance until the day it is resolved if it exceeds 15 school days. Let’s focus on children with the smallest class size possible. We fought for it – let’s maintain it.

Must Elections Be Held for BTU Building Reps and/or School Site Council Members if the Number of Candidates Running is Equal to/Less than That Allocated?

Yes, according to the BTU by-laws, elections must be held. Running elections allows for write in candidates promoting increased participation and capacity building within our union. Many times buildings with long time BTU Reps, people assume it’s pointless to run even if interested because it is unlikely they’d win. Even if that likelihood is the case, getting their name out there allows for increased interest in the positions on the ballot as well as for future elections, committees, etc. It is in the membership’s best interest to have more people being mentored to familiarize themselves with a variety of roles for teacher leadership in schools and within the BTU. Without active participation, rights and benefits we have long fought for will steadily erode. We cannot sit back and rely on someone else to stand up in our stead. We all must do our collective part in order to remain strong. We can only be divided and conquered or isolated and bullied if we don’t support each other. If each one of us decides to take on a small piece of what needs to be done, there’d be a more empowered membership, stronger communities in our schools and a better educational environment for our kids. While it is sometimes difficult to stand up for what we know is right, it is far more difficult in the long run not to have done so.

Health Insurance – When Do New Teachers Sign Up, When Can We Change Our Plans, What if Someone Gets Rehired or Returns From Unpaid Leave…?

City of Boston Employees join health plans by contacting the Health Benefits and Insurance Division (Group Insurance) located on the 8th floor of Boston City Hall, telephone 617-635-4570. New hires have 60 calendar days from the time they are hired in order to sign up for health insurance. Provisional or permanent teachers, who were laid off and then recalled/rehired, must contact Group Insurance within 60 days of being rehired from lay off in order to reenroll. Some people assume that because they have their job back, the insurance is automatically reinstated – this is not the case. These deadlines are hard and fast. Open enrollment is the window of time when you can change your type of health insurance plan, or sign up for the first time if you’ve missed another deadline. This period is held annually for five weeks in April and the first week of May. Those wanting to partake in open reenrollment must act before these deadlines end at City Hall. If a teacher takes a leave of absence and decides to let their insurance lapse during their leave, they must sign up again to reactivate their health insurance during the spring open-enrollment period prior to their return in the fall. They will have to pay premiums out of pocket beginning on July 1st. “The 1st” after which time; deductions will be taken from their paychecks. Their insurance will take effect July 1st as a result. During the year if a teacher gets married/divorced, has a baby, or the spouse who carried the health insurance for the BPS teacher loses their job, then the BPS teacher has 30 calendar days to notify and submit proof to Group Insurance of this event in order to qualify for the change to be made in their health insurance coverage.

Who Determines When Parent Open-Houses are Held?

The BTU contract states, teachers will be available to attend two evening parent-teacher meetings during the school year. Such meetings shall be planned by the building administrator in cooperation with the faculty senate and the parent council with one month’s advance notice. Such meetings shall not be scheduled to exceed two hours each. Adequate security will be provided by the School Department.”

Each school is strongly encouraged to have an active faculty senate. However, if that is not the case, the faculty still must have a months advance notice of the meetings. No (traditional school) teacher can be compelled to attend longer than two hours, twice a year in a traditional BPS school.

Do I Have to Accept an Intern or Student Teacher?

No. The contract clearly states, “Any teacher requested to accept a trainee shall have at least one week’s advance notice, and may refuse.”

If a teacher does become 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 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 still in the classroom, the cooperating teacher loses the benefit. It’s a use it or lose it scenario.

What are the Primary Responsibilities of the BTU and With Which Groups are We Affiliated?

The BTU is the exclusive collective bargaining agent for the BPS’s approximately 7,000 active teachers, other non-administrative / management related service providers, paraprofessionals and substitute teachers. The Union also represents over 2,600 retired BTU members. The BTU promotes public school education, its importance in a democracy and the continued improvement.
Empowerment Through School Site Council Shared Decision Making

By Karen Carew, BTU Secretary-Native Representative

It's continued to be out front in the area of school reform initiatives at each one of our schools through shared decision-making as a part of our School Site Councils.

When we are part of shared decision-making, we are part of the solution. Many initiatives that a school community wishes to implement in order to effect change at their school can be modified or 'waived' through our collective bargaining agreement. Much of what people have been claiming when proposing to become pilot, innovation or in-district charter school can largely be achieved through the SSC waiver process. As a school community, let's become more a part of the active solution of these concerns now facing us, rather than allowing by tacit agreement educational reforms to be done to us not with us.

Shared decision-making utilizing the School Site Council model works better with increased BTU members' active involvement. The time is now for all of us to believe, to stand up, be counted, and to become involved.

The active member of the community is hard. It is harder still to not act and to suffer the consequences of our voices, expertise, and concerns not being heard and included in the mix. Our everyday work requires us to focus on children – let's make sure the decisions made through the School Site Council (SSC) do just that through our active BTU involvement in the decision-making impacting our collective futures.

While all schools in Massachusetts are mandated to have School Site Councils (SSC) composed of parents, teachers, and the principal – it is only an advisory body to the principal. In contrast, the Boston Public Schools defines SSC as a shared decision-making body with actual authority and responsibility for their schools. School Based Management/Shared Decision Making (SBM/SDM) is the process that School Site Councils use to engage the school community in the planning and implementation of school improvement/decision-making efforts. In each school, first there is an election to choose Building Representatives who run each year in May/June. Once BTU Building Reps are in place, they run elections prior to October 15th, for BTU members to serve on the School Site Council – Shared Decision-Making Team. The BTU Building Representatives also run an election to select Faculty Senate members. The faculty elect representatives to these positions and the elected representatives, be they to the BTU, SSC, or Faculty Senate need to be supported by the faculty that elected them as they in turn, support their colleagues. We are all connected.

The role of the SSC, as established in the contract between the Boston School Committee and the BTU, is to manage all matters that relate to the operation of the school including the development of a QISP; design and scheduling of instructional program and curriculum; budgeting and fund raising aligned with schools' academic goals; purchasing and disbursement of discretionary funds; space utilization; hiring of new staff and second and third year Provisionals; staff assignment including teaching and non-teaching duties; parent-teacher relations and counseling; and BTU members. The SSC is elected to represent their constituency, no decisions may be made. A quorum must be present at the SSC meeting in order to take a vote or make a decision. A quorum includes the principal, two teachers and two parents/BTU members. Each school must have 13 or more members, a quorum includes the principal, three parents and three teachers. If a quorum is not present, no decisions may be made.

Shared decision-making is a process in which all members of the education community at the school level collaborates in identifying challenges, defining goals, formulating policy, implementing programs, and learning from experience. In BPS the SSC is an elected group of parents, teachers/BTU members, and students at the high school level, including the principal – that has the authority to make many of the decisions about the school. There can also be Associate Members as well as the general public who are non-voting that can participate fully in SSC meetings. Elections for new BTU members to the SSC should be held by each school's BTU Reps for openings on the SSC prior to the Councils first meeting which contractually must be held no later than October 31st. The parent members on the SSC are elected by each school's parent council.

Minutes of the meetings must be made available to all school day voting members said meetings. If this does not occur, there is not adequate communication within the school community of what is occurring in the decision-making body of the school which often results in a feeling that the principal and other SSC members are the only one who are making decisions. Each meeting must be held no later than October 31st. The parent members on the SSC are elected by each school's parent council.

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Continued from page 3

Know Your Rights...

The American Federation of Teachers [AFT] – our national federation – as well as with the Massachusetts AFT [formerly the MFT] which is our state federation; the national and state AFL-CIO; and the Greater Boston Labor Council (GBLC) – a group of state federations or ‘state feds’ of various labor unions within the greater Boston area that form an alliance primarily related to political and social justice issues. We are all connected work for people, their families, community, and our collective futures!

An Itinerate Teacher, Do I Get a Desk?

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

This structure is a potentially powerful tool enabling the SSC to effectively ‘waive’ certain components of the BTU Contract. The Union has provided a means for individual schools to have more autonomy as it relates to our contract – if the procedure is followed properly. This tool can result in the solution to school improvement efforts.

Our Contract reads in part, “The purpose of shared decision making is to create a climate in the schools where the faculty, parents, administrators, work together to develop and maintain accountability for school improvement, better student performance, increased satisfaction among professional educators, greater involvement by and with parents, and stronger support from the community.”

The SSC is able to adopt waiver proposals which must then be brought to a vote and approved by a specified threshold of BTU staff which then must be agreed upon by the SSC and the BTU Contract Steering Committee. These waivers can include decisions which are contrary to the contract rules, regulations and policies of the School Committee and the Superintendent. There are very specific things that can be waived through the SSC and there is a specified process listed in the contract in which things that are able to be waived may be waived. Please refer to the official BPS SSC Manual and the BTU Contract. The SSC has a very specific role with respect to the school's budget process as well. SSCs must adhere to all federal and state laws, regulations and court orders.

Well-planned, well-attended SSC meetings are at the heart of successful SBM-SDM. The SSC monthly meetings must be convened at times mutually agreed upon by the parent and teacher elected members with the established schedule then publicized for the entire school year. The SSC sets the agenda for meetings and items can be submitted by any SSC member. The School Administrator and the other SSC Co-Chair must solicit agenda items from all SSC members well in advance of the school community prior to each meeting date. Minutes of each SSC meeting must be distributed within 5 (five) school days of the meeting according to the BTU contract and in the interest of keeping the school community fully informed.

There is a joint Union/Management Steering Committee co-chaired by the BTU President and the BPS Superintendent to monitor SSC concerns such as those that do not operate in compliance with the terms of the collective bargaining agreement or where Councils are frequently unable to reach decisions by consensus, or where the principal repeatedly exercises a veto despite the voting of a council member. ”The contract explains that any SSC member may file a complaint with the Steering Committee concerning the operation of their SSC and that such complaints... "should involve serious problems or non-compliance for the implementation of SBM/SDM [School Based Management/Shared Decision Making] and that there has been a good faith effort at the school level... continued on page 7
Why is Political Action Important for Our Union?

COPE is the BTU’s Committee on Political Education. This program supports political action for the Boston Teachers Union. The COPE committee members are appointed by the BTU President for a two year term. The BTU uses COPE to endorse candidates in state, local, and national elections.

The political action program makes decisions to endorse candidates. The program follows a process for endorsing candidates after completing a questionnaire, interviewed then voted upon by the committee for recommendation to the executive board then recommended for a vote to the membership for the final approval. Elected officials affect education through decisions they make which becomes policy or law. They vote on education initiatives, funding, and they set policies that affect our members and schools. These decisions can have an impact on our collective bargaining ability to negotiate issues such as salary, class size, transfer provisions, school building improvements, and many other factors that impact our students, members working conditions, and schools. Elected leaders can have a huge impact on our ability to do our job well and support our students!

The Union’s Committee on Political Education (COPE) has five main purposes as described in the BTU bylaws:

- To support and strengthen the government to excellence in public education at all levels.
- To promote and strive for the improvement of the public schools by encouraging and stimulating educators to take a more active part.
- To encourage educators to know and understand the nature and actions of their government and the important political issues, as they pertain to public education.
- To assist educators in organizing themselves for more effective political action, and in carrying out their civic responsibilities.
- To engage in any suitable activities to achieve the purposes stated above.

What is the process used by the Union to endorse candidates?

The COPE committee meets when needed to make decisions on whether or not to make a recommendation to endorse a political candidate running for office. First candidates are provided a questionnaire with a series of questions pertaining to issues that would support our members before being asked to come before the committee for an interview. Decisions are made via candidate voting records by incumbent candidates, responses to questionnaires, and in-person interviews. Decisions can also be made based on support for or against bills presented for upcoming legislation or City Council Motions that are voted on. That legislation could include COLA for retirees, support for English Language Learners, funding for education, educator licensure, MCAS moratorium, and other interests on education. The COPE committee then votes by a 2/3’s decision to recommend to the Executive Board. The Executive Board votes on the recommendations from COPE by a 2/3’s decision before sending it to a vote by the members for a 2/3’s decision at the membership meeting. If the membership endorses the candidate, the candidate will be backed by our Union throughout their campaign.

Why are members asked to pay into COPE?

Based on state and federal laws there are restrictions on what Union dues are used for. A member can voluntarily decide how much is deducted for COPE. For example, members can contribute through payroll deduction by a suggested minimum of $2.00 for Teachers and $7.50 for Paraprofessionals on their COPE card which is attached to the Membership card. COPE reports political actions to members at membership meetings. As required by law there is a yearly audit to confirm that funds were documented for appropriate use.

Members’ help is always needed after endorsing a candidate. Please contact us to join our BEAT (BTU Electoral Action Team). This group volunteers with candidates during their election campaign, organizes support on legislative bills, and other political actions as needed. Volunteering can also include canvassing door to door, standing out with signs at an event, or phone banking on behalf of a candidate. Contact me if you would like to join our BEAT or if you would like to come to support a particular candidate we endorsed.

Contact Political Director, Johnny McInnis by email jmclinnis@btu.org or Political Organizer, Roberto Jimenez by email rjimenez@btu.org or at the BTU office 617-288-2000.
If there is anything I am going to miss about the classroom it’s going to be read alouds. I don’t mean the kind they “make” you read or the kind you really want to read. I mean the kind me and my work best friend would randomly drive to Barnes & Noble – or even better, Frugal Bookstore – and just be there for hours picking out. I mean the kind that lights up a child’s face and really sparks a whole classroom conversation and boy did I miss a good ole’ rug read aloud during the pandemic.

So here it is “Lit with Lea,” because chances are you will still find me at your local bookstore after a long day at the office! This month, I am reading all my favorite back to school books, which include establishing community through understanding who we are, what we all bring to the table, and we can’t forget all our September festivities!

I love First Day Jitters with jitter juice, The Best Part of Me with positive affirmations and photos, and The Color of Us with self portraits. They are on my list of September favorites for sure! However, I started noticing more and more all my amazing students were coming in having done all my activities already, so I had to switch things up! Luckily (even though we have a long way to go) the world is doing better with diverse book selections too!

For instance, have you ever read Brown: The Many Shades of Love by Nancy Johnson James and Constance Moore? In this story the main character talks about how everyone in his family has different shades of brown skin color. He compares his skin color to gingerbread, but his uncle’s to coffee, and aunts to the desert sand.

Similarly to the story The Color of Us, James and Moore end by talking about painting the different shades of brown. This book is short and sweet and definitely celebrates and encourages welcoming of all skin colors. Highly recommended for Pre-K-2nd.

Speaking of second grade! I’ve lived there for the last five years! So I’m not sure if it’s just me or what, but one of my pet peeves that I try to nip right from the start is hair playing/idolizing! I do not enjoy seeing children playing with each other’s hair or making fun of each other’s hair or being embarrassed by their own hair. So here is another all-time September favorite! It’s another great way to establish owning who you are, being proud of who you are, and understanding our differences right from the start.

If you can’t tell I love a good September read aloud and I am also very proud of my big hair, especially on the days I just don’t want to do it. Don’t Touch my Hair! by Sharee Miller is about a girl who is annoyed by people asking or not asking to touch her big beautiful hair all the time. By the end of the story she learns to simply say no.

I could go on for days, but I will leave you with just a few more. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur by Cathy Goldberg Fishman is a great informational narrative that teaches children about these two holidays. The young girl in the story shares the joy of the New Year for her family. I love teaching about holidays and I think it’s so important to start the year off remembering to embrace and celebrate the different holidays and cultures that may and may not be celebrated in your classroom.

Now in honor of International Literacy day and the love of reading, I love the book SCHOMBURG, The Man Who Built a Library by Carole Boston Weath-
erford. In this book, Arturo Schomburg collects achievements of people of the African diaspora and turns them into the New York Public Library. This book is definitely geared more towards grades 3-5 and is broken into different headings. It’s a remarkable tribute to understanding the creation of libraries and also understanding of how history/ books are collected. I love thinking about understanding how access to literacy and seeing ourselves in literature is just as important as being able to decode and comprehend, so we need to understand history in all contexts.

I hope you enjoy these books and consider signing up to have me visit your classroom and share a read aloud with you and your students at https://bit.ly/readwithLea. For September and in the honor of organizing and activism I am planning on reading Click, Clack, Mo, Cows That Type, Side by Side, and experts from We Rise, We Resist, and We Raise our Voices. I am also always open to book and holiday suggestions for future articles and the calendar, so please feel free to share them with me at https://bit.ly/readwithLea.

I leave you with this, the great Toni Morrison once said, “If there’s a book you want to read, and it hasn’t been written yet, then you must write it.” I told my students every day that they were authors and even if they never published a physical piece to be sold, they wrote their own story each and every day. Happy September, go on and write your 2021-2022 story; I sure do hope that when this chapter closes in June we all have plenty to laugh and smile about!

### Classroom Visit Read Alouds

**K-2**

*Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type* by Doreen Cronin, picture by Betsy Lewes

**3-5**

*Side by Side* by Monica Brown, translated by Joe Cepeda

**6-8**

*We Rise, We Resist, We Raise Our Voices* by Monica Brown

### Contractual Benefit Package for All Teachers*

All BPS teachers (*) are eligible to take advantage of a range of contractual benefits and provisions that have resulted from years of collective bargaining between the School Department and the Boston Teachers Union. A summary of many of the more important benefits and provisions follows.

Where mentioned, the BTU office can forward more detailed information. The BTU Field Reps., Caren Carew and Lea Serena can provide more information. Or please feel free to call or email me (jtang@btu.org). Also, please note that each school has BTU Building Representatives, elected at each school, who can provide more detailed information. Further, we now have BTU Regional Leaders, just one more way we are trying to meet your needs by bringing better service.

(*) includes nurses, psychologists, SLPs, OTs, PTs, etc., and all other covered professional members in our bargaining unit. There is another article in this newspaper that relates to paraprofessionals.

Copies of the BTU Contract are available through BTU Building Representatives or by calling the BTU office. The contract is also available on line. For more detailed information on any of the below, please call the BTU office. All references to the BTU Contract are to the burgundy contract booklet.

If you need a booklet, please call the BTU office. References to the school department’s web page are accurate as of mid-August, though they will change as the department updates its yearly circular offerings. A complete listing of department circulars can be found at http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/domain/1884 as of mid-summer, 2017. All web pages referred to are accurate as of early August 2017 but all locations may have changed when newspaper appears in print. The postings are yearly staples and are easy to track down. If you have any questions, please call the union office.

Incidentally, all of the below applies generally to all teachers, etc. However, some schools are in state receivership (Hollond and Dever) and certain benefits – like the right to file a grievance – may not apply. Similarly, we have dozens of other schools (Innovations, Pilots, Horace Mann in-district charters, Turnarounds) whose members are subject to an election-to-work agreement (EWA) that in some cases trumps the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Given that there are 40+ schools with some autonomy, it is impossible to give a complete listing here of what benefit does or does not apply. However, we are working on getting all of these agreements on the new BTU website under “Contracts.” It is reasonably safe to assume that all financial benefits – salary, career awards, lanes, maternity leave, retirement savings’ plans, flexible spending plans, health insurance, tuition reimbursement, and so on – do apply to all. The only exception here is that the schools in receivership have developed some of their own rules and should you work there, you are advised to call the BTU office and speak to Michael.

Please remember that the links on the BPS webpage below are subject to change (but they won’t go far!).

All references to the BTU contract refer to the red contract booklet, which goes from 3/1/2018 through 8/31/2021, and continues until a successor agreement is reached and ratified.

Booklets can be obtained through your BTU School Building Rep., or by calling the office at 617-288-2000. You may also access the information online here: https://bitu.org/contracts/

Continues on pages 8 & 9
**SALARY & BENEFITS**

**Salary Step Placement**
Up to 3 years' credit for both inside and outside the system. 5% total if service meets certain criteria.

**Salary Lane Placement**
8-15: Masters, M15, 30, 45, 60, 75, Doctorate

**Salary Lane: In-Service Credits**
Limit of in-service credits increased to 30

**Health Insurance**
3 different plans, PPO, 2 HMOs

**Health and Welfare**
Includes Dental, Eye Care, and Legal benefit. City pays plan premium, but some benefits have small co-pay.

**Salary Item:** Tuition Reimbursement
All permanent teachers on steps: 1.9 for the 1st term get up to $1,000/yr. Prev. get $500. Pairs with these or more years of service are covered with similar benefit

**Salary Item:** NBPTS Teachers
Members certified under the standards of the NBPTS now get a 4% raise. Members also get reimbursed for the cost of application fees upon successful attainment of certification.

**Performing Arts Teachers**
Performing Arts, theater, music, drama, drama, and choral group teachers can get $1600 stipend.

**Flexible Spending Program – Dependent Care**
Use up to $5,000 in pre-tax dollars for dependent care. Excellent tax benefit. This is an IRS-approved program that is quite beneficial when used properly.

**Flexible Spending Program – Medical**
Use up to $2,500 (new cap this year) in pre-tax dollars for out-of-pocket medical expenses; excellent tax benefit.

**Flexible Spending Program – Transportation and Parking**
As with the above programs, though subject to different dollar limitations, this program allows the use of pre-tax dollars to be spent on mass transit and parking activities.

**Life Insurance**
City sponsors standard $5,000 term insurance plan for BPS employees and city vendor sells additional coverage. See here: http://www.cityofboston.gov/city/benefits-life.

**Disability Coverage**
Public Pension Law grants limited coverage for total disability, none for short term disability.

**Debt Forgiveness**
The AF has now has a resource for those who need to learn the landscape of free and underused federal programs that help many student loan borrowers lower their monthly payments and, in some cases, even have their debt forgiven.

**HOW IT TAKES EFFECT?**
You must apply with app and documentation. Not necessarily retroactive, so do not delay filing.

**HOW TO LEARN MORE?**
See: https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/cms/4607/MA006644/CentriCityDemos/2973/ Cavs/ (or)

**WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR?**
Maintain date-stamped records of all transmissions to the Bolling Building. It is suggested that these documents be hand delivered as the lane change may sometimes take time.

**BENEFIT**

**(Your Name)**

**SUMMARY DETAILS**

**HOW TO LEARN MORE?**

**WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR?**
Inside or prior Boston service includes substitute teaching time under certain conditions. Outside service does not.

**MAJOR (BUT NON-INCLUSIVE) LIST OF CONTRACTUAL WORKING CONDITIONS**

**Class Size Maxima; Casedloads**
Enforces class size maxima and caseloads. Important benefit.

**Sick Days**
Grants paid leave when ill, up to time accumulated.

**Personal Leave**
Grants paid leave for personal reasons with one day’s notice.

**Professional Leave**
Grants limited paid leave to attend educational conferences.

**WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR?**
Do not procrastinate! File actice size grievance on the BTU website as soon as your class is over the limit.

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Enforces class size maxima and caseloads. Important benefit.

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Grants limited paid leave to attend educational conferences.

**WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR?**
Do not procrastinate! File actice size grievance on the BTU website as soon as your class is over the limit.
MAJOR (BUT NON-INCLUSIVE) LIST OF CONTRACTUAL WORKING CONDITIONS

Bereavement Leave
- Giants paid leave under limited circumstances.
- Summary Details: Depends on family relationship to the decedent.
- What to Look Out For: For more info.

Religious Holy Days
- Giants paid leave under limited circumstances.
- Summary Details: Depends on holiday specifics.
- What to Look Out For: Complicated procedure; it is suggested you call one of field reps. for more information.

Maternity Leave
- Giants paid as well as unpaid leave & city continues to pay its share of health coverage.
- Summary Details: Paid maternity time limited by number of sick days accrued.
- What to Look Out For: Complicated procedure; it is suggested you call one of field reps. for more information.

Leave for Adoption
- Giants paid as well as unpaid leave.
- Summary Details: Limited to 40 days per school year if you have ‘accumulated’ days in your bank; used to be 30 days.
- How to Learn More: Contract, p. 117.
- What to Look Out For: You do not have to complete ESSP or any other administrative work on this. It is your time and you cannot be assigned a specified duty or meeting. If you leave a P&D, you are eligible for pay for the lost time unless it is made up. Call the BTU office.

Leave for Family Illness
- Giants paid leave for family member’s illness.
- Summary Details: Limited to 30 days per school year if accumulated, though more can be granted.
- What to Look Out For: May need a note from family member’s doctor, those who need more than 30 such days are advised to contact the BTU office.

Planning and Development Time
- Giants staff unscheduled time when one is not given a programmed duty or responsibility. P&D periods are ‘teacher directed,’ i.e., teacher alone decides what he/she does during that period.
- Summary Details: Middle and High Teachers – 5 full length periods (48+ minutes per) per week, Elementary Teachers get four 48-minute P&D periods per week, plus one CPT period that is administratively directed.
- What to Look Out For: You do not have to complete ESSP or any other administrative work on this. It is your time and you cannot be assigned a specified duty or meeting. If you leave a P&D, you are eligible for pay for the lost time unless it is made up. Call the BTU office.

Schedule A EIT Schools
- Giants daily duty-free time to all for lunch, in addition to daily P&D time.
- Summary Details: Middle and High Teachers – no less than 25 minutes per; Elementary Teachers – no less than 40.
- How to Learn More: Contract p. 31; or see Building Rep. or call BTU office at 617-288-2000.
- What to Look Out For: This is your time and you cannot be assigned any duty during this time.

Duty-Free Lunch
- Giants daily duty-free time to all for lunch, in addition to daily P&D time.
- Summary Details: Middle and High Teachers – no less than 25 minutes per; Elementary Teachers – no less than 40.
- How to Learn More: Contract p. 31; or see Building Rep. or call BTU office at 617-288-2000.
- What to Look Out For: Start early in the year if looking for a partner; this is most difficult for many, as good matches are hard to find.

Job-Sharing
- Giants paid leave under limited circumstances.
- Summary Details: Middle and High Teachers – 5 full length periods (48+ minutes per) per week, Elementary Teachers get four 48-minute P&D periods per week, plus one CPT period that is administratively directed.
- What to Look Out For: You do not have to complete ESSP or any other administrative work on this. It is your time and you cannot be assigned a specified duty or meeting. If you leave a P&D, you are eligible for pay for the lost time unless it is made up. Call the BTU office.

Peer Assistance Program
- Giants paid leave under limited circumstances.
- Summary Details: Middle and High Teachers – 5 full length periods (48+ minutes per) per week, Elementary Teachers get four 48-minute P&D periods per week, plus one CPT period that is administratively directed.
- What to Look Out For: You do not have to complete ESSP or any other administrative work on this. It is your time and you cannot be assigned a specified duty or meeting. If you leave a P&D, you are eligible for pay for the lost time unless it is made up. Call the BTU office.

Accepting a student teacher
- Giants paid leave under limited circumstances.
- Summary Details: Middle and High Teachers – 5 full length periods (48+ minutes per) per week, Elementary Teachers get four 48-minute P&D periods per week, plus one CPT period that is administratively directed.
- What to Look Out For: You do not have to complete ESSP or any other administrative work on this. It is your time and you cannot be assigned a specified duty or meeting. If you leave a P&D, you are eligible for pay for the lost time unless it is made up. Call the BTU office.

Mileage
- Giants paid leave under limited circumstances.
- Summary Details: Middle and High Teachers – 5 full length periods (48+ minutes per) per week, Elementary Teachers get four 48-minute P&D periods per week, plus one CPT period that is administratively directed.
- What to Look Out For: You do not have to complete ESSP or any other administrative work on this. It is your time and you cannot be assigned a specified duty or meeting. If you leave a P&D, you are eligible for pay for the lost time unless it is made up. Call the BTU office.

GRIEVANCE RIGHTS

As a covered member you have a right to an interpretation of any provision of the collective bargaining agreement. In the event of an uncertainty or dispute regarding any provision of the Contract cited above (or any other provision, for that matter), it is in your best interest to call the BTU at 617-288-2000 or speak with a building representative. Also see btu.org.

RETIREMENT, TAX-DEFERRED SAVINGS PLANS

Public Pension
- Giants paid leave under limited circumstances.
- Summary Details: Depends on family relationship to the decedent.
- What to Look Out For: Complicated procedure; it is suggested you call one of field reps. for more information.

Participation in a 403(b) or a Tax-Sheltered Annuity (TSA) plan
- Giants paid leave under limited circumstances.
- Summary Details: Pre-tax salary contributions grow tax-deferred until withdrawn.
- How to Learn More: See accompanying article.

Participation in the State’s Deferred Compensation or 457 Program
- Giants paid leave under limited circumstances.
- Summary Details: Pre-tax salary contributions grow tax-deferred until withdrawn.
- How to Learn More: See accompanying article.

Social Security
- Giants paid leave under limited circumstances.
- Summary Details: Pre-tax salary contributions grow tax-deferred until withdrawn.
- How to Learn More: See accompanying article.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR?
- If you leave the system prior to retirement, consult the BTU before withdrawing your funds out.
Update on Retirement+/
Teacher Accelerated Retirement Plan

Still a hot topic, the reopening of the eligibility for R+/TARP is still unresolved. Although we remain hopeful we can't help but feel our Boston legislators have not been as responsive as we hoped. We have spent several hours in and out of the State House expressing the importance and urgency of this issue with no results to date. We remain committed to correcting this inequity. As such, please see the accompanying flyer below. This is our lobbying document. It has gone through several iterations and we believe that it is currently ready to present to the legislature. Our R+ Committee has been diligent and relentless making this a priority. We will be calling on everyone to contact their state legislators to get a bill numbered assigned and then passed at the State House.

Home Rule Petition for Retirement (R+)/
Teacher Accelerated Retirement Plan (TARP)

SPONSORED BY: COUNCILOR ANNISSA ESSAIBI-GEORGE
REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

In January of 2001, TARP, an enhanced retirement option with a deduction rate of 11%, was introduced and offered to teachers, school nurses, related service providers and other educators throughout Massachusetts. Educators had the option to elect into R+/TARP and increase their retirement contribution and end the additional 2% on regular earnings over $30,000, which would thereby accelerate their retirement. During the six-month period starting January 1, 2001 until June 30, 2001, members had the option to elect into this program. (All educators hired from July 1, 2001 and thereafter were automatically enrolled at an 11% contribution rate.)

During this six-month period, the communication from the Boston Retirement System involving the rollout of TARP was extremely complicated and confusing. Eligible educators received conflicting information and flawed data about the impact of R+/TARP. Additionally, the branding of TARP as “Retirement Plus” caused eligible teachers to think they were already in the program when they saw 9 +2% on their paychecks. Other educators were unenrolled when they transferred from other school districts, and the BRS sent them checks for “overpayment” without informing the educator that he/she was being removed from the program. Because of these and other administrative errors, all of these disenfranchised educators will have to work from 3-5 years longer to earn the maximum retirement benefit of 80%.

The R+ Committee convened in 2018 with the goal of reopening the availability of TARP to educators hired before July 1, 2001 that were unable to register. The Boston Teachers Union and the R+ Committee is now asking for this Boston home rule petition to be passed to recognize the service and commitment of educators employed by the City of Boston.

If passed, current non-TARP educators hired before July 1, 2001 will be given an opportunity to elect into TARP. If a member elects to join TARP, Boston Retirement System will calculate the difference between the members current contribution rate and the TARP rate of 11% from July 1, 2001 to the date of the passing of the bill. Ordinary interest will be added. The “make-up amount” can be paid in either 1, 2, or 3-year increments (via payroll deductions) or in one lump-sum payment.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts funds the retirement benefits of Boston teachers by making annual appropriation to the Boston Retirement System. The Commonwealth’s appropriation would need to increase by approximately $3 million, increasing 9.63% per year, to fund these additional benefits.

However, passage of this legislation will result in substantial savings to the city of Boston and the Boston Public Schools, which could reduce current expenditures by approximately $38 million through the attrition of R+ educators and the hiring of new teachers at significantly lower salaries.
Check your direct deposit receipts to make sure the correct amount is being deducted. If there’s a mistake, you should report it immediately. Boston Retirement System (BRS) policy adopted in 2011 allows BRS to collect errors in deduction rates. The deduction rates are entered by the Boston Public Schools Office of the City’s Department of the Civil Service. You have seen many mistakes over the years. Contact BRS, Room 816 at City Hall, 617-635-4305. You may have to leave a message as many of the BRS staff are still working remotely. Members can also contact me directly for information and help with retirement procedures or with questions emailing mmcLaughlin@btfu.org.

A simple example is used to determine your retirement allowance. Your age factor (hired pre-2012):

<table>
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<th>Age</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Discount Factor</th>
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<tr>
<td>54</td>
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</table>

**Example Calculation:**

For members of Group 2:

Multiply the indicated percentage by the average of your highest consecutive five-year annual rate of regular compensation for earnings over $30,000.

July 1, 2001 and thereafter: 11% deducted

### MASSACHUSETTS GROUP 1 RETIREMENT PERCENTAGE CHART

For Members-In-Service Hired On OR AFTER APRIL 2, 2012

#### AGE AT RETIREMENT

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<th>Age</th>
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<th>62</th>
<th>63</th>
<th>64</th>
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<th>66+</th>
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<td>17.0</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>19.0</td>
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<td>30.0</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Members-In-Service Hired Before APRIL 2, 2012

Multiply the indicated percentage by the average of your highest five-year annual rate of regular compensation for earnings over $30,000.

July 1, 2001 and thereafter: 11% deducted

### Retirement Information

By Michael W. McLaughlin,
BTU Secretary-Treasurer / Boston Retirement Board

Retirement is governed by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 32. Your contribution rate depends upon the date you were hired.

**HIRE DATE**

Prior to Jan. 1, 1975: 5% deducted
Jan. 1, 1975: 7% deducted
Jan. 1, 1984: 8% deducted
July 1, 1996: 9% deducted

If hired between 1/1/79 – 7/30/81: an additional 2% is deducted for earnings over $30,000.

July 1, 2001 and thereafter: 11% deducted

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**Two notes on “years of service”:**

1. Regular Plus % increases, only whole years of creditable service will be counted (the amount is not rounded up).

2. Percentage of available salary average, your full years and full months of creditable service will be counted.

For example, Jane Educator is a teacher on a 10-month contract, and is retiring mid-year, on March 10. At that time, she will have 32 years, 6 months and 10 days of creditable service—or 32.649 years of creditable service. The amount of creditable service that will be used to calculate Jane’s available percentage of salary average is 32.6 years. (Because the first decimal place represents full months, and the last three decimal places represent only partial months, the last three decimal places will not be included in Jane’s final benefit calculation.)
Why is it Important for Teachers to Be Unionized?

The history and importance of the teacher unions in America

The importance of teacher unions in American education dates back to the late 19th century. In 1898, the first teacher union was established in the United States, and since then, the movement has grown significantly. Teacher unions have been instrumental in advocating for fairer pay, better working conditions, and better representation for teachers. They have also played a key role in protecting the interests of students and the broader community.

In recent years, teacher unions have been at the center of debate, with some arguing that they are necessary to ensure that teachers have a voice in the decision-making process and that they are adequately compensated for their work. Others have criticized teacher unions, arguing that they are too powerful and that they can hinder educational reform.

One of the main reasons why teacher unions are important is that they provide a means for teachers to collectively bargain for better wages and working conditions. When teachers are organized, they are more likely to have a say in decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their students. They can also negotiate contracts that include provisions for paid sick leave, child care, and other benefits.

Another reason why teacher unions are important is that they provide a source of political power for teachers. When teachers are organized, they have a collective voice that can be used to influence policy decisions. They can also use their political power to advocate for educational reforms that they believe are necessary for the success of their students.

In conclusion, teacher unions are an important part of American education. They provide a means for teachers to collectively bargain for better wages and working conditions, and they also provide a source of political power for teachers. As such, they are an essential aspect of the democratic process in American education.

Works Cited


Zaryah Qareeb was a student in Ms. Chastain’s Humanities 3 class last school year.
**Letter to the Editor**

**Edith Bazile Deserves To Be Heard**

I n the late 80s, I had the privilege, yes, I mean privilege, of working with Dr. Edith Bazile at the Michael J. Perkins in South Boston, where she was on staff as a Speech Therapist while I was teaching K-1, in the half-day program, with a large number of students who were serviced for Speech Therapy, by Edith, who could readily identify speech/language delay and articulation issues, which, if not serviced early, would only serve to become a yoke around the neck of a child, and proceed to phonics struggles in the later grades and psychological problems. Early Intervention. Solve small problems before they become big ones. Edith helped them not only succeed in K-1 but down the line, when they hit Grade One. Edith treated and advocated for them as I hope I treated and advocated for them – as I would my own children. In loco parentis.

A short time ago, I pulled up her article, re-read it, and now realize that it comes from a place of deep frustration and almost a primal scream. I share some of that collective rage, maybe for other reasons.

Renaming a school for a more appropriate role model is not a bad thing. My only connection to Mel King is when I was lifeguarding at Magazine Beach Pool for the MDC (before DCR) while attending summer school trimester at the 1980s cancelled college called Boston State College, my father’s alma mater, for its real estate value and lack of pedigree, before my pool shift. Mel would come in at about 7:30 and swim laps by the Charles River sunset in the lopsided, 50 yard Magazine Beach Pool in Cambridge. When the pool was stepped off and filled, usually on Sundays, one side would overflow on one side, towards the banks of the Charles River – the Dirty Water that Edith Bazile Deserves To Be Heard.

The kid who was railroaded by the “team” in other words – “Get that kid out!” – under the direction of the principal/administration, where the core evaluation meeting often happens before the actual meeting with the parents and other members. Or, some teacher needs a few more students in their Point 4 substantially separate classroom and they steer the placement in that direction. Say it isn’t so.

Let’s separate this out from the laborers-in-the-vineyard who don’t play that game. Edith is one of those people who looked only at the kid, and their skill set. If they were on level, they got no services, and if they were not on level, she recommended services and provided them beautifully. She went by the book.

But rename for a purpose, not just to “cancel.” Edith’s story about “Justin” was very compelling. She painted the picture and I understood immediately! The kid who did not want to read orally, which triggered an outburst from shame and frustration-likely from a succession of politically-correct outsourced reading programs, (yes, I said it) which do not give kids actual skills, of reading orally, as part of the developmental reading process, from the first Dolch sight word, leading to life-skills of being able to make a presentation in front of your co-workers, or making an argument, in a court-of-law, but which served to confer doctorates on graduate students, some, outside from the US.

The fair will be scaled down this year without the usual activities, food and resource fair due to COVID-19.

What I see is not what Edith is saying, (and I may not agree with her premise, it does not matter if I agreed) but only that she has the right to say it. The editors’ job is not to vet viewpoints. This is not Twitter or Facebook. This is a union paper to serve union members’ concerns about wages, hours, and working conditions.

That is why we have a First Amendment. Edith is a dues-paying member. More importantly, she is protected by the U.S. Constitution. And, I get the position of the McKinley teachers. During the pandemic, the high-needs kids were serviced in person not online. There should always be a pathway for those kids to return to regular ed. The standard is the “least restrictive setting.” There should continue on page 14

**Save the Date! September 23-25**

**8th Annual**

**Back to School Fair**

**40,000 Free Books for Boston Public School Families!**

Sign Up to Volunteer Sorting Books at [https://tinyurl.com/3xm77sds](https://tinyurl.com/3xm77sds)

**Book Distribution Dates • Time TBA**

- September 20
  - 11:00 am-7:00 pm
- September 21
  - 8:00 am-7:00 pm
- September 22
  - 8:00 am-7:00 pm
- September 23
- September 24
- September 25

Register for Book Distribution at [https://tinyurl.com/ykhujeej](https://tinyurl.com/ykhujeej)

All Attendees Must Wear Masks and Gloves

The fair will be scaled down this year without the usual activities, food and resource fair due to COVID-19.

**BTU.ORG/BACK-TO-SCHOOL**
Let's Put Social Back Into Media

B O S T O N U N I O N T E A C H E R
September, 2021

Back to School Party at Carson Beach
Friday, September 17, 2021
3:00-8:00 pm

Fall Leadership Conference
October 22-24, 2021
at the Sheraton Harborside Hotel in Portsmouth, NH.

Our theme this year is
“Be Water: Power, Unity, Flexibility & Strength.”
Free and open to all BTU members!
Registration coming soon.

Michael J. Maguire
Boston Union Teacher
Co-Editor

Facebook
The BTU has a Facebook Page called Boston Teachers Union. Please “like” the page to receive updates of union activities. Share with your own Facebook friends those items that are of interest to you. Engage in educational talk with your Facebook friends. Ask them to repost stories that are important to you. That way the union’s message is delivered to non-union people.

Twitter
The BTU’s Twitter handle is @BTU66. All unions have a “local” number for their national affiliation. Our local number is 66, hence the handle. Please “follow” @BTU66, like and/or retweet often. Good hashtags to employ are #BTUProud or #BTUContractNow.

Twitter is very popular with news media. Follow a local reporter whose stories you like. Retweet their stories when they are promoting public education, and reply to their tweets when they are off base. Soon you’ll develop a relationship with that reporter who may ask you for a quote in an upcoming story.

Instagram
On Instagram, the BTU is bostonteachersunion. If Instagram is your preferred method of social media, we could use a boost in this realm.

Blogs
The Boston Globe, the Boston Herald, and the Bay State Banner frequently run stories and editorials about the Boston Public Schools. Print media may be alive and well. Boston policy makers read these newspapers and they read the comment sections too. If you have the time please post a comment, drawn from your personal experience, in these blogs. If time is short or you don’t quite know what to say, simply “like” the existing blog posts that speak to you.

Letters to the Editor
I f the spirit really moves you, taking a few minutes to write a letter to the newspaper will have a profound impact. Social media is nice for sharing news, but a letter to the newspaper tells the editor that you read, think, and care. A letter is far more impactful to the paper than a blog comment. Not all letters will be published, but if the paper receives many letters on the same topic it will print one or two to them. So even if your letter is not chosen, know that you helped get someone else’s letter in print.

My advice in writing a letter to the editor is to pick one topic and make one solid point supported by evidence. Don’t rebut every word in a story or editorial, letters are supposed to be short and to the point. Think one paragraph, not an essay.

Other Media
By now you get the idea. If I have omitted your preferred method of social media, I offer my apologies. The same general rules apply: be positive, focused and informed. But please don’t be shy. Your opinion matters and your advocacy is important.

Phone
Don’t be shy. Your opinion matters and your advocacy is important.

Print Media
In the Boston paper, you can write a letter to the editor under the masthead of your choice. Please make sure to include your name and address at the end. If you don’t know how to contact the editorial office, ask a reporter for their contact info. When writing a letter, avoid repetition and make your point as brief as possible. Be sure to proofread before you mail or e-mail your letter.

Mail
To write a letter to the editor, mail it to: Boston Herald, P.O. Box 81, Boston, MA 02102.

E-mail
To write a letter to the editor, e-mail it to:ihall@bostonherald.com.
Dear Paraprofessional:

Welcome to the Boston Public Schools. This memo has been written to acquaint you with some of the major benefits and rights that all members of the para bargaining unit enjoy.

Salary Step Placement

If you have college credits, you must submit a transcript (official) to the Office of Human Capital in order to receive your correct pay rate. All transcripts must be filed with the Office of Human Capital directly.

Sick and Personal Days

Commencing with the first year of service (following a ninety-day probationary period) and annually thereafter, each September, fifteen (15) days of sick leave shall be granted to each paraprofessional in actual service on or before October 1st of that year. Two (2) personal days are also granted each year. Unused sick and personal days accumulate year to year. You may use personal day(s) for any reason with notice to the building administrator. You need not give a reason for requesting a personal day, and you may take the day(s) anytime you wish. (There are a few minor contractual restrictions regarding the use of personal leave. Consult your building representative for a full explanation.)

A 10-minute break and 30-minute lunch is part of the para workday. Also, days are given for bereavement. For a complete list, please consult the contract.

You will automatically receive union mail if you complete and return an application for union membership. Call the BTU Office at 617-288-2000 for an application, or request one from your building representative.

Health and Welfare Benefits

Paraprofessionals are eligible to partake in benefits provided by the union’s Health and Welfare Fund. Major benefits include a dental insurance plan and an eye care center. For enrollment in the plan, call the Health and Welfare Office (located at Union headquarters) at 617-288-5883. Ask for a brochure which gives a detailed explanation of all benefits.

Health Insurance

Health insurance is provided through the City’s Group Insurance Office at 617-635-4570. Call that number for more information, or visit at Boston City Hall, Room 807. You have only 60 calendar days from your first day of service to register.

Joining the BTU

All of the above benefits have come as a result of collective bargaining between the BTU and the Boston School Committee. As exclusive bargaining agent, the BTU negotiates the contract, enforces the contract, and promotes the general welfare of the membership.

As a member of the BTU, you’ll also belong to the American Federation of Teachers-Massachusetts (AFT-MA), the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, and the American Federation of Teachers in Washington D.C. (AFT). You will begin to receive monthly mailings from the BTU, AFT-MA and the AFT. To sign up for AFT benefits, go to: https://www.aft.org/members/benefits.

With nearly 7,000 others makes us a stronger union, better able to help each of us. We encourage you to join. (Consult your building representative for a copy of the contract.)

A weekly bulletin from the BTU is posted in your school with pertinent information for all. Look for it posted in the building, or, you can read it on-line at www.btu.org. You can also have it emailed to you automatically by signing up for it on our website.

Credit Union

Paraprofessionals are also eligible to join the Tremont Credit Union, with offices located at BTU headquarters and at the Braintree Executive Park, 150 Grossman Drive, Braintree, MA 02184. Through the Credit Union you may authorize payroll deductions for savings and checking, arrange for a loan, and take care of many other banking needs. To join, bring $30.00 and a paystub or a copy of your individual contract to either office and fill out an application. For more information, call 781-843-5626.

Union Operations

Our membership meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month at 4:30 PM at the Union headquarters in Dorchester.

Dear ABA Specialist:

Welcome to the Boston Teachers Union. This memo has been written to acquaint you with some of the major benefits and rights that all members of the ABA bargaining unit, enjoy.

Salary Step Placement

ABA Specialists shall advance one pay step per year. The above ABA pay scales shall increase by the same percentage increases as the other BTU bargaining units for the period commencing September 1, 2018 and the effective date(s) of those percentage increases shall be the same as the effective dates applied in those other BTU bargaining units.

Sick and Personal Days

Commencing with the first year of service (following a sixty-day probationary period) and annually thereafter, each September, fifteen (15) days of sick leave shall be granted to each ABA Specialist in actual service on or before October 1st of that year. Sick leave not used in the year of service for which it was granted shall be accumulated for use in subsequent years. ABA specialists who have completed their probationary period will be allowed personal leave for personal needs not otherwise provided for, not more than four days per year without loss of pay. All personal days not used in the year for which they are granted shall be added to employee’s sick leave entitlement for use in subsequent years.

The work day for all ABA Specialists shall be seven and one half hours, inclusive of lunch. ABA Specialists shall have a paid duty free lunch of at least thirty (30) minutes and not less than sixty (60) minutes of self-directed time per day without presence of students. The supervisors of ABA Specialists shall review and approve ABA Specialists’ work day schedules prior to September 1st of each year.

Health and Welfare Benefits

ABA Specialists are eligible to partake in benefits provided by the union’s Health and Welfare Fund. Major benefits include a dental insurance plan and an eye care center. For enrollment in the plan, call the Health and Welfare Office (located at Union headquarters) at 617-288-5883. Ask for a brochure which gives a detailed explanation of all benefits.

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A weekly bulletin from the BTU is posted in your school with pertinent information for all. Look for it posted in the building, or, you can read it on-line at www.btu.org. You can also have it emailed to you automatically by signing up for it on our website.

Credit Union

ABA Specialists are also eligible to join the Tremont Credit Union, with offices located at BTU headquarters and at the Braintree Executive Park, 150 Grossman Drive, Braintree, MA 02184. Through the Credit Union you may authorize payroll deductions for savings and checking, arrange for a loan, and take care of many other banking needs. To join, bring $30.00 and a paystub or a copy of your individual contract to either office and fill out an application. For more information, call 781-843-5626.

Union Operations

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### SALARY & BENEFITS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>How It Takes Effect?</th>
<th>How to Learn More?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary Lane Placement</td>
<td>Basic Rate and then Rates with 30, or 60, or 90 or In-Service and/or College credits and Bachelor’s degree plus Bachelor’s +15</td>
<td>See contract, page 139.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Awards</td>
<td>After completion of 9 years of service and increase every 5 years.</td>
<td>See contract, page 139.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substituting for a Teacher</td>
<td>Pays $10.00 in addition to regular pay for substituting in his/her regular classroom.</td>
<td>See contract, page 139.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Insurance</td>
<td>6 different plans, HMO and out of network individual and family plans.</td>
<td>See contract, page 139.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicare</td>
<td>Anyone entering public employment after 3/31/86 must pay Medicare tax and is eligible at age 65 provided he/she has 10 years’ service.</td>
<td>Employees pay 1.45% of gross wages. Deductions are mandatory and continue with employment. See contract, page 139.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTU Health and Welfare Fund</td>
<td>Includes Dental, Eye Care and Legal benefit. City pays plan premium, but some benefits have co-pays.</td>
<td>Terrific benefit! See contract, page 139.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick Days</td>
<td>Grants paid leave when ill, up to time accumulated.</td>
<td>See contract, page 139.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bereavement Leave</td>
<td>Grants paid leave under limited circumstances.</td>
<td>See contract, page 139.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Holy Days</td>
<td>Grants paid leave under limited circumstances.</td>
<td>See contract, page 139.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity Leave</td>
<td>Paid as well as unpaid leave &amp; city continues to pay its share of health coverage.</td>
<td>See contract, page 139.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave for Adoption</td>
<td>Paid as well as unpaid leave.</td>
<td>Paid maternity leave limited by number of sick days accrued. See contract, page 139.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave for Family Illness</td>
<td>Paid leave for family members’ illness.</td>
<td>See contract, page 139.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty-Free Lunch &amp; Break</td>
<td>30 minutes for lunch plus a 10 minute break per day.</td>
<td>Duty-free time. See contract, page 139.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Care Program</td>
<td>Use pre-tax dollars for dependent care.</td>
<td>For more info, call CPA Inc. @ 1-800-544-2340 or Call Group Insurance office at 617-635-4570 or see <a href="http://www.medicare.gov">http://www.medicare.gov</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible Spending Program</td>
<td>Use pre-tax dollars for out-of-pocket medical expenses.</td>
<td>Same as Dependent Care. See contract, page 139.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Insurance</td>
<td>City sponsors plan.</td>
<td>Call BTU H&amp;W at 617-288-5883 or see contract pg. 142 or see building rep. at school, or call BTU 617-288-2000.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### RETIREMENT, TAX-DEFERRED SAVINGS PLANS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Pension</td>
<td>Participation is mandatory under state law, vested employees obtain a pension at retirement.</td>
<td>See contract, page 141.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in a 403B or a Tax Sheltered Annuity (TSA) Plan</td>
<td>Participation is voluntary. 40 plus vendors to choose from. The number of vendors is likely to change.</td>
<td>Pre-tax salary contributions grow tax-deferred until withdrawn. See contract, page 141.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MISCELLANEOUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>How It Takes Effect?</th>
<th>How to Learn More?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job-Sharing</td>
<td>1/2 salary; 1/2 position.</td>
<td>Full benefits. See contract, page 135.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition Reimbursement</td>
<td>$500 per year/$1000 per year.</td>
<td>For paras with 3 or more years of service $500 tuition reimbursement. 5 years, $1,000 tuition reimbursement. See contract, page 144.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraprofessional/Teacher Preparation Grant Program</td>
<td>Legislative benefit, not contractual.</td>
<td>State provides financial assistance for a para to become a teacher by obtaining a B.S. degree at a Mass. College. Some restrictions apply. See contract, page 144.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GRIEVANCE RIGHTS

As a covered member you have a right to an interpretation of any provision of the collective bargaining agreement. In the event of an uncertainty or dispute regarding any provision of the Contract cited above (or any other provision, for that matter) it is in your best interest to call the BTU or to speak with a building representative.

Most contractual disputes are resolved informally. However, in the event an issue cannot be resolved, you have a right to have the BTU proceed with a grievance on your behalf should the Contract support your claim.

Welcome ABA Specialists… continued from page 15

Each school has Union Building Representatives, elected to serve the staff in the building in dealings with the administration. The building representative is also the first line of communications between the building staff and the Union office. Many questions can be easily and quickly answered at the building level by asking the building representative.

The Union employs seven full-time officers and staff to serve the membership. Office hours are 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. The office is open all weekdays including school vacations, but is closed on state, local and national holidays, the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and Good Friday. The office number is 617-288-2000.

The Boston Teachers Union provides a variety of services; we encourage you to take advantage of them. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me or email me at chart@btu.org.
Dear Substitute Teacher:

Welcome to the Boston Teachers Union. This memo has been written to acquaint you with some of the benefits and rights that all members of the Substitutes bargaining unit enjoy.

Health Insurance

Substitute teachers and nurses who work a minimum of three days per week are eligible for health insurance, and this should be obtained within the first 60 days of employment by calling Group Insurance at City Hall 617-635-4570. Cluster-Building substitutes are also eligible for BTU Health & Welfare benefits, including dental insurance, eye care and legal services, and should call 617-288-0500 to sign up.

You are a member of the Boston Teachers Union with full voice and vote at all membership meetings.

As exclusive bargaining agent, the BTU negotiates the contract, ensures the contract and promotes the general welfare of the membership.

As a member of the BTU, you will also belong to the American Federation of Teachers, Massachusetts (AFTMA), the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, and the American Federation of Teachers in Washington, D.C. (AFT). You will begin to receive monthly mailing from the BTU, AFTMA and the AFT. To sign up for AFT benefits go to: https://www.aft.org/member-benefits

Joining with nearly 7,000 others make us a stronger union, better able to help each of us. (Consult your building representative for a copy of the contract.)

A weekly bulletin from the BTU is posted in your school with pertinent information for all. Look for it posted in the building, or, you can read it on-line at www.btu.org. You can also have it emailed to you automatically by signing up for it on our website.

--- Colleen M. Hart, Paraprofessional/Substitute/ABA Field Representative

---

Substitute Teachers – What Has the Union Done For Me?

2018-2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substitutes who worked 120 days or more during the SY 18-19 in Schedule A schools will be compensated a retroactive payment of $500.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Per Diem Substitute Bonus increased by $220.00.

The salary grid below takes into account longer school days. There are three different rates for three different school days:

- **Per Diem**
- Long term (short)
- Long term (long)
- Cluster Sub

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6/30-8/39</th>
<th>8/30-9/14</th>
<th>9/14-1/16</th>
<th>1/16-5/31</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Per Diem</td>
<td>$148.68</td>
<td>$160.40</td>
<td>$192.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Term</td>
<td>$160.68</td>
<td>$177.40</td>
<td>$211.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster Sub</td>
<td>$182.40</td>
<td>$216.27</td>
<td>$239.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2010-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compensation (Divide by 7 for hourly rate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/1/10- 1/1/11- 1/1/12- 1/1/13- 1/1/14- 1/1/15- 1/1/16- 1/1/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Diem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster Sub</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cluster Substitute Reemployment Leave - Cluster Substitute teachers shall be granted reemployment leave as follows:

1. Death in the immediate family, including mother-in-law, father-in-law, and anyone residing in the same household with the substitute teacher: 5 days, no loss.
2. Death of niece, nephew, uncle or aunt: 5 days, no loss.
3. Death of grandchild or grandparent: 3 days, no loss.

2006-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compensation (Divide by 7 for hourly rate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/1/06- 9/1/07- 9/1/08- 9/1/09- 9/1/10- 9/1/11- 9/1/12- 9/1/13- 9/1/14- 9/1/15- 9/1/16- 9/1/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Diem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster Sub</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Per Diem Bonus - $1,000.00 after working more than 120 days by end of June. If a per diem substitute teacher works more than 120 days as a long-term sub or cluster substitute, they are no longer eligible to receive the per diem bonus. If the bonus exceeds $100,000, it will be reduced so as not to exceed the $100,000 cap.

Health and Welfare - Cluster substitutes shall be included in the Paraprofessional Health and Welfare Fund benefit for dental insurance, eye care and legal services.

Health Insurance - If a substitute works 20 hours per week on a regular basis, he/she may receive health insurance as follows: 75% of the total monthly premiums for the policy selected by the employer including master medical or the equivalent benefits, or 90% of the total monthly premiums for all approved and authorized health maintenance organizations. Sign up for health insurance at Boston City Hall within 30 days of employment, or at open enrollment in April of each year.

Professional Days - Long term and cluster substitutes shall participate in professional days along with regular teachers/ para/professionals and shall be compensated therefore.

Credit Union

A BA Specialists are eligible to join the Tremont Credit Union, with offices located at BTU headquarters and the Braintree Executive Park, 150 Grossman Drive, Braintree, MA 02184. Through the Credit Union you may authorize payroll deductions for savings and checking, arrange for a loan, and take care of many other banking needs. To join, bring $30.00 and a paystub or a copy of your individual contract to either office and fill out an application. For more information, call 781-843-5626.

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BOSTON UNION TEACHER | September, 2021

18
**RTC Welcomes New Members**

Marilyn Marion, RTC President and Joan Devlin, RTC Secretary

We want to extend a warm welcome to our colleagues who have retired recently and joined the Retired Teacher Chapter. Thank you for the wonderful work you did educating students in our city. Now it is time to enjoy the pleasures of retirement.

If you or if you know someone who has retired recently and has yet to join, please encourage them to contact us at the BTU office every Wednesday and Thursday for an application and information about the RTC. Remember that you must join the RTC. Membership is not automatic. Dues are $5.00 per month for teachers and $2.50 for paraprofessionals. You can download an application from the RTC section on the BTU website, sign it and mail it to the office, 180 Mt. Vernon Street, Dorchester, MA 02125. We also have a Facebook page that you can access at www.facebook.com/BTURTC or you can call the RTC office on Wednesday or Thursday and request an application.

New retirees should call the Health and Welfare Department of the BTU to apply for COBRA, which extends your Delta Dental and eyeglass benefits for two years. After two years, you can apply for the RTC’s Delta Dental plan. Joining the Retired Teachers’ Chapter of the Boston Teachers’ Union means that you are entitled to some interesting benefits. We offer RTC members the following benefits: After two years of membership, a member can receive a free pair of eyeglasses from the Eye Care Center at the BTU Health and Welfare Fund; Delta Dental Insurance for members and spouse or individual plans; discounts on hearing tests and hearing aids through Hear USA; Travel opportunities locally, and nationally. For more information on the Delta Dental Program and to get an application, please contact Roz Avant, RTC Vice-Chair, at the RTC office in the Boston Teachers’ Union on Thursday from 10:00 am-2:00 pm.

Despite Herculean efforts by the social committee, we will not hold a Jazz Brunch. The courses and events for the fall semester will be virtual. Fortunately the institute offers a course in using Zoom for productive meetings!

We continue to explore additional benefits for our members and welcome your input. If you have an idea of activities the members would be interested in doing or benefits we should explore, please let us know. You can call the RTC office Wednesday or Thursday from 10 am-2 pm or send an email to mmarion@btu.org.

---

**Boston State College and UMass Boston Alumni:**

**Get Re-Engaged with UMass Boston**

There are a lot of exciting developments over at 100 Morrissey Boulevard – new buildings, plans for more green space, even a new Chancellor! Some perks that go along with Alumni membership are: use of the Beacon Fitness Center at affordable rates; hotel, rental car and insurance discounts; and even a Virtual Book Club.

If you’re not receiving information from the UMass Boston Alumni Office and would like to, please contact Steve Whittemore from the Office of Alumni Engagement at steven.whittemore@umb.edu or call (617) 297-6531.

**For All RTC members:**

**Join the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at UMass Boston**

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) fosters accessible lifelong learning, individual growth and social connection for mature learners (aged 50 or older). Through a moderately priced annual membership, OLLI provides non-credit courses, special lectures, social events, theatre outings, day trips and travel in the US and abroad.

Check out these website links:

- [www.umb.edu/olli](https://www.umb.edu/olli) (main OLLI webpage)
- [www.umb.edu/olli/courses](https://www.umb.edu/olli/courses) (information about courses)
- [www.umb.edu/olli/events](https://www.umb.edu/olli/events) (upcoming events page, including archived copies)

Available at the following links:

- [https://www.umb.edu/olli/courses](https://www.umb.edu/olli/courses)
- [https://www.umb.edu/olli/events](https://www.umb.edu/olli/events)

** RTC Officers Re-Elected – Clockwise from upper left: Roz Avant, Vice-Chair; Marilyn Marion, Chair; Anne Broder, Treasurer; and Joan Devlin, Secretary.**

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BTU’s SOUL Brings More Interesting Ideas To Members

By Nisa Harrison

Summer Organizing Union Leaders, SOUL, for short, are a group of ten to fifteen BTU members each summer for five weeks. This summer educators, teachers, specialists, para, and ABAs worked and learned skills around organizing. Some of the more important skills we learned were creating power maps1 and having one-to-one conversations. We developed our skills, relationships, and a deeper understanding of how the BTU accomplishes its obligations.

This summer at SOUL many of us are working on projects that will extend into the school year. One of those projects was establishing the BTU Traveling Table. Four of us traveled to different communities and initiated conversations with families, community members, and parents. So far the Traveling Table has visited Hyde Park and Dorchester and the conversations have been amazing. Parents shared their challenges, struggles, and in some cases, visions of what they want for their children in BPS. Retired teachers (from out of town too!) supported our idea relative to the tenets in BTU’s proposed contract. We also asked community members to take pictures with us and highlight which of the six positions they resonated with, one parent said, “all of them!” By “all of them”, they meant facilities, social-emotional support, special education, English learners, educator diversity, and housing.

We love that families are excited about our proposals and we hope that all our members are too. I know that I am excited about all of them, particularly educator diversity! There have been so many firsts for BTU over the last two years that pertain to diversity including, the first black elementary field representative in BTU history (Lea Serena) and the most racially inclusive Executive Board. This year BTU’s contract proposal acknowledges the inequities that the pandemic has exacerbated. The proposal also attempts both to address the needs of the whole child and to create working conditions which teachers have been advocating for years.

Personally, SOUL has allowed me to appreciate where the BTU started, how far we have come, and how much more we need to fight for the teachers, students, and families so that we have the schools we all deserve.

Commentary

BTU Needs to Act to Protect Our “Right to Strike”

On July 13, 2021 the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development held a hearing on Bill H.1946. MTA President Merrie Najimy, Vice President Max Page, and educators from all around the state testified in favor of H.1946.

Ann Finkel: What is Bill H.1946?

Tim Maher: H.1946 is a bill in the Massachusetts House of Representatives that would remove the current law that bans public employees from participating in a strike.

Ann: So why did so many educators testify in favor of this bill?

Tim: The ability to strike is such a fundamental human right that it is written into the constitutions of over 90 countries. I’ll steal this line of thinking right from longtime labor organizer Jane McAlevey: as working class people in our democracy, we have two major levers to exert power. The first is voting — and we rightly condemn the attacks on the right to vote in other states. The second is the ability to collectively withhold our labor in order to force concessions from the employer. Class struggle and democracy is weakened when we do not have the legal right to collectively refuse work.

Ann: Safe learning and working conditions have been on everyone’s mind since March 2020. Does this bill have anything to do with school safety?

Tim: Definitely. Last September, when Andover teachers worked from the school parking lot rather than in an unsafe building, they paved the way for many districts to reconsider bringing adults back into poorly ventilated spaces. But within 10 days the state labor board, which typically takes cues to resolve other disputes, called their action an “illegal strike” and forced them into the building. But this goes beyond just schools and COVID concerns — let’s say a T bus driver refuses to operate a vehicle because the brakes are not functioning properly or construction workers halt a project that is violating the building code. The legality of these decisions ends up in the hands of the Governor and his appointees on the labor board, rather than the employees who would be putting themselves and the public at risk.

Ann: So let’s say we win some upgrades to our school buildings in this upcoming contract, is this bill still essential?

Tim: Well, right now, when we sit down to bargain with BPS, they are assuming that we won’t go on strike to create the schools our students deserve. The passage of this bill would drastically transform the power balance and calculations they make at the bargaining table. But organizing for and going on an all-out strike is about much more than creating a headache for the folks at the Bolling building. In order to fully fund public education in the City of Boston, to create an educational experience for every Boston student that is on par with the ones received by this country’s wealthiest families, will require nothing less than a political earthquake.

Ann: When schools are affected by a strike won’t people say that we are hurting our students?

Tim: Yes, that is exactly what most major news outlets said about Chicago, Los Angeles, Oakland, Denver, West Virginia, Arizona, Oklahoma, etc.

But Chicago’s members, students, and families were not fooled about whose side the Democratic mayor was on after permanently closing 50 schools in one year. In the midst of the 2012 strike, 66% of Chicago Public School parents supported the union over the mayor.

Likewise, LA’s strike rallies were more than twice the size of their 34,000 members, thanks to heavy support from students, families, and community. The United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) strike won a contract full of student and community-oriented provisions including Green Spaces, an Immigrants Defense Fund, more nurses and guidance counselors, and fewer students per class.

Ann: Okay, so what can BTU members do to protect our right to strike?

Tim: Talk to your coworkers about how deeply unjust it is that a progressive state like Massachusetts punishes workers who use job actions to demand more for their families and communities. Ask Political Director Johnny McNinis and Political Organizer Roberto Jimenez-Rivera the status of this bill and how we can move it forward. Vote for State Reps like ones who introduced this bill — Mike Connolly and Erika Uyterhoeven (both of whom BTU also endorsed). Call up your State Rep and ask what they are doing to see H. 1946 into law. Learn more from Jane McAlevey and Eric Blanc about the essential role strikes have played in defending public education. Keep fighting!

(Nisa Harrison teaches pre-calculus at the John D. O’Bryant School of Mathematics and Science.)

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