

8/12/21 Silent Rep Summaries

At the first official session of contract bargaining, members of the Negotiating Team, BTU Officers and Staff, and rank-and-file Silent Representatives were in the meeting to present BTU members' proposals. This session was an exciting start to the BTU's expansion of open bargaining through the addition of **rank and file members, showing the power and diversity of BTU membership.**

José Valenzuela, Boston Latin Academy history teacher, Negotiating Team member, and current parent, kicked off the proposals by presenting on Facilities, centering the idea that **teaching conditions are learning conditions.** José talked about how our school buildings have been systematically underfunded for generations, leaving many buildings unsafe, and unsatisfactory for learning and working. José highlighted proposals for air quality standards, access to usable green spaces, and timely completion of maintenance work orders.

Nicole Mullen, Boston Arts Academy inclusion teacher and Negotiating Team member, presented the BTU proposals on Inclusion and Special Education. She emphasized the **need to support students with disabilities with adequate staffing in classrooms,** including the need for multiple teachers to meet different student needs instead of having one dual- or triple-certified teacher. These included demands on prep time, class size and staffing ratios, and expanded availability of reading specialists for students.

Katie Yue-Sum Li, Ethnic Studies Coordinator and Instructional Coach, presented the BTU demands on the **continual and expanded funding for ethnic studies.** She shared from her own experiences as a student and how she yearned for a space in the classroom to learn about her own cultural history and the ways race and ethnicity impact the lives and learning experiences of students of color. She highlighted the need for continual development, support, and training for staff, adequate access to materials, and the ongoing funding for the development of Boston-specific ethnic studies curriculum.

And, finally, Shakeeda Bartee, UP Academy Boston English teacher, former BPS student, and current BPS parent, powerfully introduced the BTU demands around housing and homelessness. Shakeeda shared, “not only are teaching conditions learning conditions, but **housing conditions are learning conditions.**” Speaking from her past experience as a high school student and, simultaneously, mother of a kindergartener in BPS, Shakeeda shared how living with unstable housing threatened her lifelong commitment to education for herself and her child. Now, as a teacher, she sees how unstable housing impacts her students' mental health and success in the classroom, centering it as a key priority for ensuring student success. Among BTU's proposals, Shakeeda suggested that the city identify unused city owned spaces to be converted into public housing for families of Boston Public Schools students.

BTU lead negotiators have requested a standing meeting time for the upcoming months, but BPS has not yet committed. Within the session, BPS did respond to the proposals on facilities

with a few clarifying questions including: specific questions on which nurses offices do not have adequate sink access, how to prioritize facilities work orders based on risk level, and what the BTU means when asking for increased access to usable green spaces on or nearby school campuses. They caucused on the other topics and will bring their questions to the next meeting.

Following sessions will include discussion of social-emotional learning and mental health, hiring and retaining diverse staff, as well as time to listen to BPS questions on other topics presented and continue negotiations around session scheduling.

If you want to participate as a silent representative, you can still sign up to join in the negotiations process and represent your union [here](#).