

CELEBRATE

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

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President's Report Jessica J. Tang

Cozy Up to Our Contract This Winter

As falling temperatures, snowfalls and windy days continue to cause unwelcome impacts on our schools and classrooms, there is no better time to “Cozy Up to Our Contract,” this year’s Winter Conference theme. Amidst the many challenges of pandemic teaching and learning, it is hard to continue the momentum of our contract campaign—there have been many emergent, urgent and ever-changing challenges that the longer-term campaigns are easy to forget about.

These urgent concerns, particularly during this pandemic, include cold classrooms on freezing days when windows are still supposed to be cracked open for air ventilations. Many students have lost loved ones and primary caretakers, increasing the need for stable relationships and support from mental and behavioral health providers. Many students are also dysregulated, needing extra attention from their educators who often are also managing their own stresses and

anxieties throughout this pandemic.

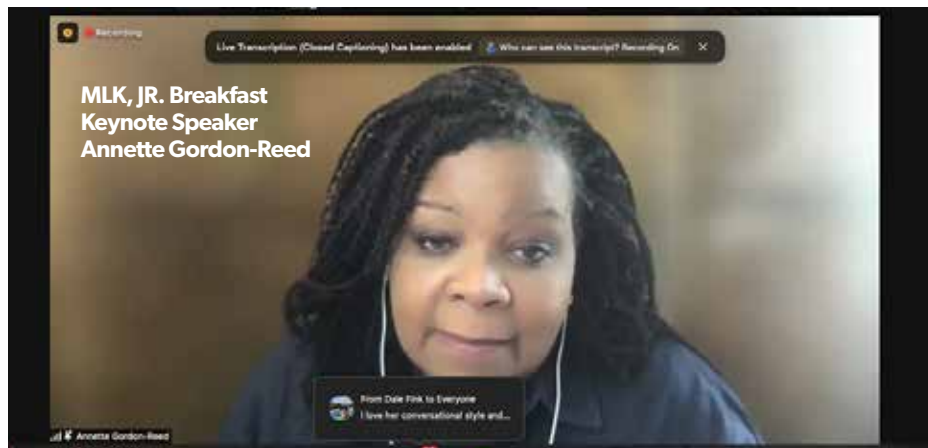
However, it is through our contract campaign that we can address many of the conditions have been exacerbated by the pandemic: Green, updated facilities with HVAC, sustainable caseloads and workloads, more social psychologists and mental health providers. The pandemic has also underscored the need for family friendly policies such as a parental leave policy on part with other city workers.

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Jessica J. Tang
BTU President

Annual MLK, Jr. Breakfast Honors Black Women



This year the 52nd Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. breakfast was held virtually. The keynote speaker was Dr. **Annette Gordon-Reed**, a Pulitzer Prize winner and history professor at Harvard University.

The theme of this year’s breakfast was “From Resistance to Representation: Black Women Proving the Dream.” In her speech, one sentence above all others resonated with me. “School was the site of resistance.” Dr. Gordon-Reed explained how “teaching was part of the movement.” Professor Gordon-Reed

explained how the day to day battles for equal justice occurred in the schools and in the homes. Without those supports, the more popularized events of the 1960s would not have been possible.

“When my parents sent me to integrate the school system,” Gordon-Reed said, “it was an act of defiance.”

The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments were designed to bring black Americans into citizenship. Lawyers in the 1920s challenged the ensuing Jim Crow laws. A generation later Dr. King and others took to the streets when the legal challenges failed.

Dr. Gordon-Reed encourages all of us to keep the movement going. Certainty times now seem like one set back after another (the US Senate filibuster and the stalled Voting Rights Bill), but this reentrenchment is not impossible to overcome. “The cuddly King is not the man who changed the elite.”

Professor Gordon-Reed emphasized that black humanity has been a central question since the founding of our nation. “Even though it is bleak now, it is not harder today than it was for our ancestors,” she said.

From Resistance to Representation: Black Women Proving the Dream

52nd Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Breakfast

Martin Luther King MEMORIAL BREAKFAST COMMITTEE



Students' Mental Health Issues

The greatest disservice we do to children is to pretend that the past two years had no ill effects upon their mental health. Adults have fully developed brains and years of experience to draw upon, whereas children – especially teenagers – are still developing both their brains and their understanding of the world around them. While students are back in their schools, the ramifications of prolonged remote learning and the psychological effects of combating a deadly virus are only just unfolding.

To teach this year as if it were any other pre-pandemic year is to ignore the development (or lack thereof) of our students. Imagine if you hadn't walked on your ankle for a year. Let's say it was injured but now it is healed. Do you think you'd be able to run the day the doctor took the cast off? Of course not. You'd need physical therapy first. Then, after careful and steady escalation, you'd be walking and then running.

Our society does much better with physical illnesses, whereas we tend to either shrug off or disbelieve mental illness. Maybe the difference is that we can see the broken limb far easier than we can discern an ailment in the brain or with emotions. Maybe, despite all our affirmations of self-care, as a society we still hold to the centuries' old stigmas associated with mental issues.

The mental issues we teachers see most are anxiety, depression, a general listlessness, and/or a reluctance to engage in the work. Any teacher today can tell you that the kids just aren't the same now as they were pre-pandemic.

Some will say that I am exaggerating. I wish I were. Many BPS students lost family members to COVID. Broadly

speaking, the families of my students had to work during the lockdown. They are the essential employees we all praised for showing up to work every day while most of us, myself included, worked remotely. Far more urban families lived with the daily stress of contacting COVID than did their suburban counterparts. And I tell you that my urban students are still in a type of survival mode.

My colleagues and I have noticed that the students tend to be "on" one day but "off" another. They have a hard time remembering. They lose focus easily. These symptoms are consistent with trauma brain. In simplest terms, the students are still in a flight or fight mode. Their cognitive development depends upon our helping them to heal from the trauma before we press on.

So, what should we do? Roman Emperor Augustus taught us *festina lente* or make haste slowly. We advance our students' learning but with an understanding that their formal education was in fact severely interrupted. My current 9th graders last had a full year of formal schooling in the 6th grade. They missed out on crucial social development, so I allow them time each day to get to know their classmates.

Boston Latin Academy is a 7-12 grade school. Of course the 7th graders are new to our building, but so too are the 8th graders for they were taught at home last year. All schools must welcome all their "new" students with equal joy and orientation. To do anything less is to compound their year of isolation.

All students, regardless of age, need more experiential learning and less time

sitting in chairs. They need more field trips, more recess, more time to make friends. Maria Montessori famously said "Play is the work of the child." So let's allow them the time and means to work hard at play.

Most importantly the students need to feel heard. Some days we don't finish what I had planned because a spontaneous discussion breaks out in the classroom. Teachers need and students deserve the freedom to explore their world. We can certainly cover the material another day. Having administrators stress over pacing guides does not alleviate the anxiety the students feel, it only makes it worse.

Action steps: I suggest having honest heart-to-heart conversations with program directors and principals. Tell them that the pre-COVID pacing guides are hopelessly out of date. Tell them your stories and observations. Invite them to be partners with you in redesigning curricula and expectations.

Call, not Tweet or email, your elected officials. Share with them your stories and observations. When speaking with our state representative and senator, ask for their assistance in postponing the MCAS for several years. When you get the standard line "well, the MCAS will help us to diagnose the students' learning loss...", please tell them that

- a) the MCAS takes weeks to administer and that that time would be better spent on the students' wellbeing, and
- b) the money spend on MCAS could be put to better use (like N-95 masks), and
- c) the MCAS will tell you that urban and rural kids are faring worse



Michael J. Maguire
Boston Union Teacher
Co-Editor

off during the pandemic than the suburban kids are, and

- d) it just sends the wrong message: that test scores are more important than the social-emotional well being of the students.

If you still get push back, tell them you are a union member who votes. Just those few words will get the politicians' attention.

Honestly, just tell them what you see, feel, and observe. Tell them what you think is needed to improve public education. Then call them back a couple of weeks later to ask them what they've done. Frankly, the lobbyists are doing this same thing every single day. So why can't we?

All of this is exhausting. The powers that be hope we will tire of the constant, relentless obstacles placed in front of us and that we will go away. We all become weary and withdraw for a bit.

Please know that when you do re-engage that you are not alone. You are loved and supported by your union brothers and sisters. We all know how hard the fight is and we all appreciate your efforts.

(Michael J. Maguire is co-editor of the Boston Union Teacher and teaches Latin at Boston Latin Academy.)

12 Ways to Stay Positive... from Stephanie Castro

By Anne Slater and Stephanie Castro

Having trouble staying positive? And I don't mean your COVID test.

Caught up with Stephanie Castro, Instructional Coach at the Irving Middle School and Ray of Sunshine to all, about her contagious positivity and how to get some.

Stephanie:

When I was diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer in March of last year, I immediately felt that the Lord wanted me to share my journey with others. I felt like it would be the best way for me to cope with what was to come. By sharing my journey on social media I have been able to impact so many people who are either survivors or thrivers. Social media was one way to share, but I also felt the calling to write a book that I am going to title: *This Joy I Have: Discovering Joy on the Mountaintop and in the Valley*. I really wanted a medium where I could share with others going through the same experience to let them know that there is hope and there is a way to keep your joy through rough times.

[@pinkladysteff](https://www.facebook.com/pinkladysteff)
[@pinkladysteff](https://www.instagram.com/pinkladysteff)

The purpose of this book is to share how we can discover joy during the good times and bad times, and to ultimately know that joy is not something that the world can give, but it is something that comes from within. There are things in life that can make us happy, however, joy is not manufactured by having things. Once those things are gone, happiness goes right along with them. Being happy is a temporary state of mind, but joy from within is permanent when you



Stephanie Castro

know, that you know, that you know, that everything will be alright.

It's no coincidence that my blood type is O-positive. LOL, I have always said that cancer messed with the wrong boobs because my positive energy is no match for cancer.

Positivity is a state of mind that resides within. What I have found for myself is that positivity is a gift. My purpose in life is to bring joy to other people. When I enter a space, the space is immediately brightened. People say things to me like you make everything bright. For me, that light comes from my belief in a higher power. I am an ordained clergy person in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Growing up in the church I was exposed to people who have gone through serious issues and have gotten through it. That has always been my example of how joy remains despite circumstances.

I am reminded of a Saturday during intercessory prayer where I finally understood my purpose. My husband had prepared tent cards with different prayer concerns on each one, and they were placed on the back of the pews at the church; and we would go to each

card and lift that concern up in a silent prayer. I was at a point in my life where I was doing so many things but I wasn't fulfilling anything that I was engaged in, mom, teacher, wife, selling Mary Kay. One of the cards said, Understand and Know God's purpose for your life.

I thought to myself, what is my purpose? What is the common thread in everything that I do? The answer is that I give joy in everything I do and positive energy. I bring it to everything that I engage in. This was God speaking to my spirit and confirming my purpose. Bring joy to my people!!!

I am so glad that I don't look like what I'm going through or what I've been through and that has a lot to do with my frame of mind. My natural state is joy and positive energy. I am an energy giver, but I need energy to thrive. I can't thrive in a negative environment. It's not uncommon



Anne Slater
Boston Union Teacher
Co-Editor

for me to speak up when I'm in a negative space. If we spend a lot of time harping on what is terrible or what is wrong, we can't see the possibilities. Focus on what

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12 Tips for Staying Positive from Stephanie

1. Faith it - believe that things will always get better for you and someone else is going through worse.
2. Greet people with a, "Hey! How are you doing?"
3. Have a Mindset of *Everybody is Important!*
4. Focus on what you have, not on what you don't have.
5. Keep a grateful journal. Write one thing every day you are grateful for.
6. Get dressed, put on some makeup (from Mary Kay of course!) and put on a nice outfit
7. Some things you take to heart, but let other things roll off like water off a duck's back.
8. Find that thing that brings you joy: a mani/pedi, a massage, spending time with your family, taking a drive to the water. Be intentional about doing that thing.
9. Positive affirmations are my number one tool.
10. Remember what it feels like to be in a place of joy - When things are going awry, access that memory of when things were going great! All in all... Focus on the positive!
11. Kill them (negative people/thoughts) with kindness.
12. Be present and listen. People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care.

What is Considered "Corporal Punishment" in the BPS?

Referring to Superintendent's Circular LGL-20, 'Corporal Punishment':

"Corporal punishment includes but is not limited to the following

- Slapping or hitting students
- Pulling students by their arms, shoulders, etc.
- Pushing students from one location to another
- Forcibly causing students to sit down
- Grasping students by any body part

Staff may restrain students only in order to protect students, other persons or themselves from an assault and may only use such force as is reasonably necessary to repel such an attack. Violation of the policy and law will result in disciplinary measures and may result in the filing of abuse and/or criminal charges." The circular states, "...the use of corporal punishment is strictly forbidden by BPS Committee policy as well as by Massachusetts State Law G.L.c. 71. [37G]."

This information may seem self-explanatory, but we all should be mindful of the moments in the hallway when a challenging student isn't moving in the direction so told, isn't sitting down after repeated requests to do so, is behaving in a manner that is confrontational or overly playful, will not extricate themselves from a potentially volatile situation, etc. It is in these moments that our intellectual filters can slip and exasperation or desperation can rear its ugly head resulting in a momentary lapse which in some cases can result in ruining one's career. Even if there have been no repercussions for previously putting one's hands on a student, it is just a matter of time that there will be. When in doubt, do not touch at all. If the act can't be construed into corporal punishment, it could be interpreted as sexual harassment. Don't laugh - there have been many BTU staff who has found themselves in the hot-seat discipline wise over what they honestly viewed as an inconsequential or innocent act. Re-reading the list is a good exercise in prevention.

What should BTU members include on home Covid-19 rapid tests result report to upload according to Covid compliance?

At home rapid tests are approved for use in reporting employee Covid status by BPS. If you should choose to use this method, write your name, DOB, date of test and EID# on the front of the test. Please be sure the results are clear and visible and take a picture of it to upload as you normally would your test results. If you do not have enough space on the test for all the information, **please write the test date on the test result itself** and provide the other information on a sheet next to the test in the picture to upload.

What happens when there is no heat in my Class?

The contract is clear on this issue. "A classroom will be closed when the temperature falls below 60° f, or whenever the temperature or climate becomes too oppressive."

Report and record the actual temperature in writing to the Principal, keeping a copy yourself. The Principal must assign your class to an available space that is heated adequately as well as remedy the heating problem in your classroom. Keep a record or log of all of the days without heat and the temperature in the room at that time. The Principal should immediately report this in order to have the heat restored. Teachers should file a Step 1 grievance with the Principal as well.

If the entire school falls below the

acceptable heat level, each building has an alternate plan in case of emergency. If the heating issue can't be fixed quickly, then the emergency plan for relocation should be employed. The BTU members at the affected school should file a Step 1 grievance at the school in addition. If the entire school is without heat and it has been reported to the School Department, please contact the BTU office as well.

Do I get time off to go to court?

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

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

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

Can a School Site Council (SSC) Meeting be called anytime? What constitutes a quorum? Who sets the agenda and where are the minutes?

The School Site Council is the central governing body of the school under the school-based management/shared decision-making model. See BTU contract (*burgundy book*) pages 9-16. Mass. State law mandates that each public school have a SSC, thus pilot, innovation, in-district charters, and level 5 BPS schools must all comply with the state law and contract language. Some of these schools call their SSC a governing board, but the same SSC principles apply to them as well.

At the first meeting of the newly elected SSC, a monthly calendar should be agreed upon by the SSC members for the entire school year and be made public through distribution to all staff and parents. Any change to this calendar must be approved by the SSC with at least one week's notice to all staff and parents. SSC Meetings should be at times convenient for all members. Times of the meetings may alternate to meet this goal.

SSC's are public bodies, and as such must adhere to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. SSC's are required to open all meetings to the public with any person being permitted to attend and to tape a meeting. Notice of SSC meetings must be posted in a public place at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. SSC's

must keep minutes of each meeting including date, time, location, members present and absent, action(s) taken and must adhere to quorum requirements. Under this provision of the law, there is no reason for the SSC to go into executive session.

SSC's must have Co-Chairs comprised of two voting members of the SSC. SSC's may establish alternating Co-Chairs. The Co-Chairs may be the Principal and one other voting member elected by the Council. A quorum of SSC members must be present to conduct SSC business, make decisions, and the like. Without a quorum, it is just another meeting as no decisions may be rendered; only discussed. A quorum is constituted by the presence of the Principal, at least two teachers and two parents for Councils with 9 to 12 voting members; at least three teachers and three parents for Councils with 13 or more voting members.

Agendas for Meetings are set by the SSC members. Items for the agenda can be submitted by members of the SSC and school community at large to a SSC Co-Chair to be included on the agenda, as long as the items fall within the scope of SSC's authority.

Minutes of SSC Meetings should include the agenda, date, time, location, members present or absent, and actions taken (if quorum existed). The BTU contract details, "A notice of all actions taken by the SSC will be distributed to all BTU Building Representatives and the President of the Faculty Senate within five school days following a council meeting."



Caren Carew
BTU Secondary
Field Representative

Minutes can be amended at the following SSC for corrections as a group if needed, not reviewed/approved by the administration prior to posting. Minutes should also be distributed/posted on the BTU bulletin board in each school. In order for SSC's to work, there must be inclusion of all voices and communication to all members of the school community.

The contract states, "All available information concerning the school budget and other matters over which the SSC has authority must be shared with members of the SSC at least five school days before they are expected to vote on these issues." Administrators should not call a last minute meeting and expect members to sign off on these matters without this process taking place. Shared decision making is just that - **shared**.

Who is responsible for plowing school parking lots?

The contract states, "The School Committee shall guarantee that snow is plowed from school yards used for parking at no expense to bargaining unit [BTU] members."

BTU DEPENDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

This year there will be 16 scholarships in the amount of \$2,000 awarded to high school seniors who are **dependents** of BTU members. To apply, please obtain an application from Adrienne Washington at awashington@btu.org or download the application from the BTU website at btu.org and return with: 1) a transcript of the dependent's last two years of academic work; 2) evidence of acceptance by an accredited college, junior college, vocational school or equivalent institution; 3) member's notarized federal tax return for the year 2021; 4) a one-page statement of the dependent's goals. **The application and the four supporting documents must be received in the Union office no later than April 25, 2022.**

RETIRED TEACHERS CHAPTER SCHOLARSHIPS

Each year, the Retired Teachers Chapter of the Boston Teachers Union awards three scholarships in the amount of \$2,000 to deserving high school seniors who are children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, grandnieces or grandnephews of RTC members. One of these scholarships is earmarked for a student who chooses to attend a vocational school or equivalent institution.

Applications for these scholarships can be downloaded from the BTU website at btu.org or obtain an application from Adrienne Washington at awashington@btu.org. **The deadline to apply is April 16, 2022.** Envelope must be postmarked by this date.

Boston Union Teacher

EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE!

¡TODOS SON BIENVENIDOS AQUÍ!

EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE!

BLACK LIVES MATTER

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All correspondence to the *Boston Union Teacher* must be typewritten and include the author's name and school or department if not school-based.
All articles must be appropriate and exclusive to the publication, and in good taste.

DEADLINE:
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All copy should be e-mailed to mmaguire@btu.org and aslater@btu.org
This deadline will be strictly adhered to.

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Being/Becoming a Critical Consumer of Your Curriculum

A few thoughts on what it means to become a critical consumer of your Curriculum, how to go about it, and the benefits.

By Dr. Nadine O'Garro

I write this opinion piece from a place of personal experience with this very topic: becoming a critical consumer of my Curriculum. Let's start at the beginning. In my first SEVERAL years of teaching I was skeptical about everything; the curriculum, its editors, the grade level content standards and my students abilities. I did not at all believe that anyone KNEW my students better than I did. In my first SEVERAL years of teaching I did not know or understand my grade level content and I rarely assigned work from the curriculum, because it looked way too hard for MY students.

My "lesson plans" during that time, if you could call them that, were a hodge-podge of worksheets and activities that I photocopied from several different workbooks (teacher.pay.teachers and internet searching for material wasn't yet a part of my arsenal). I'd find a Do Now, make a classwork packet 2-3 pages, never enough for students to finish. Whatever students did not finish in class became homework. Rinse and Repeat. Until Friday, which was quiz day (all skill and procedural based) that would take the whole period. If students dared to finish early, they were instructed to take out their independent reading book.

There were a few group assignments and mini-projects here and there but they were limited because although my students were more engaged (some even smiling) I had less control and that was uncomfortable. Thinking back now, these mini-project and group assignments were performative (lots of color and glitter) but not a very good demonstration of what students learned or understood.

An observer visiting my classroom would see a mostly orderly and organized classroom with zero energy and zero drama. But the truth is I was always pausing from "teaching" to lecture my students about their behavior, their lack of motivation, and how important education is ... blah blah blah. In this seemingly orderly class my students and I were not on the best of terms and none of us were having fun, much less learning.

Then I taught in a different, much smaller school district, where an instructional consultant was hired to help improve teaching and learning. It was during this very painful time that I learned I was not teaching and my students were not learning. That the material I put in front of my students was grade levels below and I had not at all made the common core shifts. I was then strongly encouraged to work over the summer to unpack my grade level content standards, read through the curriculum, complete the major assessments of the year and DO some of the lesson activities of the first unit that I would be presenting to students in the fall.

Fellow educators, though it was an absolutely tense time and I was under extreme pressure (my job was on the line) it was no doubt the exact experience I needed to catalyze my becoming a critical consumer of my Curriculum. Without that experience I would not have come to appreciate how knowing my standards and doing the work would empower me with the freedom, flexibility and joy that comes with being truly prepared to deliver high-quality lessons.

And so I write this opinion piece from a place of knowing and having experienced a powerful shift in my teaching practice that sparked the kind of

joy for and in teaching and learning that we could all use a lot more of, especially now.

What does it mean to be a critical consumer of your Curriculum (big C)?

Being a critical consumer of your Curriculum means you KNOW the following:

- **The grade level assessments:** MCAS, Interims, Unit Tests, etc
- **The grade level standards:** in general and more specifically the priority standards for your grade: Common Core, the MA Frameworks and a Priority Standards resource
- **The curriculum (little c):** the digital or printed version of a coherent body of learning developed by several experts with a clear vision for how each unit and lesson builds on one another to prepare students for the learning that will happen in the next grade and beyond.
- **And your supplements:** the lesson and unit enhancements that you select to meet both the learning and cultural needs of the specific group of students you have in front of you that year; nearpods, videos, inter-activities (think 4-corners, group work, mini-projects).

What are your go-to sources for supplements?

Word on KNOWING: Knowing means you have done the work i.e. answered the MCAS, Interim and Unit Test Questions so you KNOW the level of rigor your students will be assessed at.

Here's a great resource: Standards for your content and grade: very cool backward and forward standards mapping to help inform scaffolding as well as enrichment and there are sample MCAS questions included.

Doing the Work: If you don't remember or read anything else in this opinion piece, I implore you to remember to: **DO THE WORK.** By that I mean, before you assign a Do Now, Classwork assignment, Homework, Assessment, Essay, Reading, etc. be sure to do the work yourself, first. This is your homework, to be completed no less than the night before.

For me doing the work is where I found the joy in teaching and learning. Before becoming a critical consumer of my Curriculum I rarely (more like never) did the assignments I gave my students. And when they had a question I distinctly recall the following feelings - confusion, incompetence, and defensiveness. Which would inevitably lead to me accusing students of not reading the directions or not paying attention (to what, I don't know). But when I started **DOING** the assignments I then understood the curriculum developers intentions. I was able to identify where my students might struggle and proactively plan a mini-lesson, and during classwork time and the summary discussion I was better able to facilitate my students' learning because having done the work I understood where students needed to end up to meet the learning objective. Doing the work also provided me an opportunity to brush up on skills and concepts I did not understand (#googling with a purpose).

Being prepared to support my students and provide them with access to grade level content through mini-



lesson. Facilitating student thinking and class discussions with forward moving questions that encouraged multiple perspectives, and sometimes even debate, was the noticeable shift that brought joy into teaching and learning for both my students and myself, we were having fun while learning.

So let's say you don't have time to become a critical consumer of the curriculum you are being asked to use... because you were given the curriculum in the middle of the first term, instead of at the end of the school year to work on over the summer. In a very unfortunate case such as this - the shortcut is to do the assignment(s) before you give them to your students.

Ex. Unit 1, Lesson 5

Think Aloud

What is the objective? Let me do this work. What parts of this lesson am I keeping and emphasizing? What part of this lesson am I going to need to provide a mini-lesson for? What parts of this lesson am I going to de-emphasize? Which students will I need to support and how? Which students will I need to provide an extension for and how?

This will allow you to:

- Identify what it is students will experience and whether that experience will result in them having access to the learning objective.
- Help you to further clarify both the learning and language objectives *i.e. by the end of this lesson students will be able to _____ by _____ (using what skill, knowledge or understanding) and Students will use the follow academic vocabulary _____ when explaining and summarizing their thinking.*
- And let's not forget the opportunity you will have to brush up on forgotten or unclear concepts for yourself.

Doing the work yourself will allow you to be able to collect data during class about whether students are grasping the learning objective. Sometimes this will mean stopping and providing a quick mini-lesson, other times it might mean highlighting student work that is on the

right track, asking students to compare what they have and to ask questions about any differences they notice.

The goal of doing the work yourself is that you will be able to think on your feet about your in the moment teaching moves; stopping to clarify misconceptions, pulling a small group aside, providing an extension for those who are ready to move on, etc. *What teacher moves do you use during the lesson to make sure students are meeting or exceeding the learning and language objectives of the day?*

Okay, if you are still with me let's keep going.

Why is this important?

Becoming a critical consumer of your curriculum is important because we are not curriculum developers. Classroom teachers, it is imperative that you use a curriculum (small c) to ensure a coherent learning experience for your students. Beware of curating a hodge podge of activities. I'm talking to you internet gurus who spend hours searching for "something" your students can do, that seems aligned with grade level goals. This is a slippery slope we want to avoid because there is far too much room for us, as non-curriculum developers, to water down the grade level learning experience. It is far too easy for us to lose sight of the rigor students need to grapple with in order to engage in meaningful learning.

Ex. In some cases that might look like avoiding problems with rational numbers in high school or accepting summaries of readings instead of evidence based reflections.

Using your curriculum will save you hours of internet searches that lead to rabbit holes and result in activity based teaching and learning which is more than likely the opposite of high quality, coherent, or on grade level.

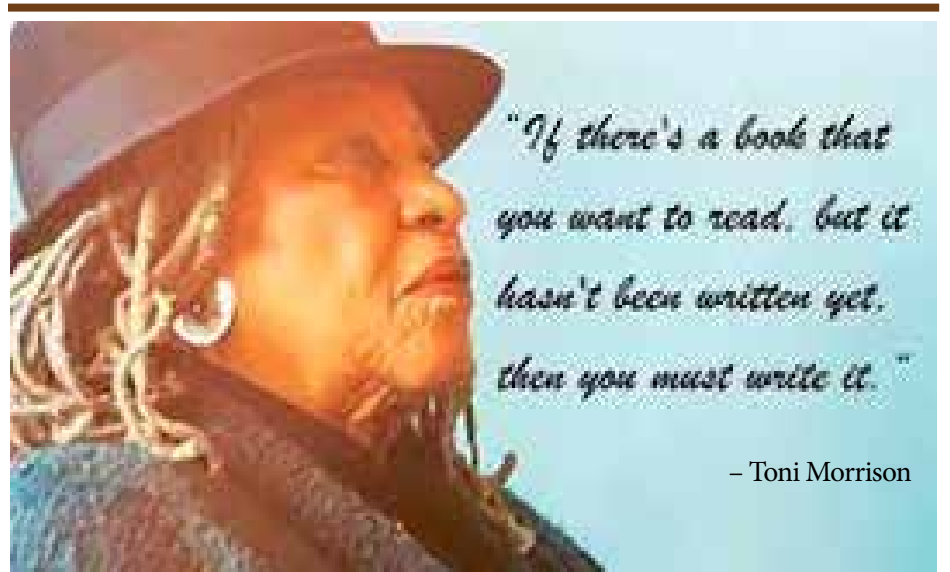
Use the internet and other curriculum resources to search for supplements that enhance your lessons.

Additionally, by doing the work and becoming aware of what has been included and left out of the curriculum you will be able to pre-plan ways to make connections to your students' lived experiences, i.e., be culturally responsive to the students in your class and the experiences they bring with them to school.

Here are questions you might ask yourself (do these look familiar)

- Who's at the table? Who's missing?
- How can I include those whose perspectives have been silenced historically?

continued on page 9



Happy Black History Month!

This month's February calendar is brought to you by **Brianna Perkins**, literacy specialist teacher at the Condon Elementary School.

In June 2020, Brianna created an Instagram page and instinctively named it *litforblackkids*. While she was not sure what the end game would be, she knew that she wanted to share books that feature Black authors and Black protagonists with the world. It was important for others to know the authors and the books exist despite hearing time after time in the media that they did not.

Fast forward to today and the Lit for Black Kids platform is flourishing. With a community of over 15k followers, Brianna's page has become known as the place to go on Instagram when one is in search of children's books that highlight Black authors and Black characters. In 2020, Brianna set out on a mission to amplify the voices of Black authors during Black History Month. She partnered with Scholastic, Inc. for their Share Our Stories initiative and separately used her platform to enable more than 80 Black authors to share their books via live read alouds. Brianna's stretch into the world of literary advocacy continues as she sets her sights on the creation of the LIT Mobile, a bookmobile that will travel around the greater Boston area to bring books and literary programs to children in underserved communities (As written on her website - <https://www.litforblackkids.com/>).

You can also follow her on Instagram [@litforblackkids](https://www.instagram.com/litforblackkids). I have followed litforblackkids for the past year and a half



Lea Serena
BTU Elementary
Field Representative

and love seeing how stories with black children are amplified. Representation matters and her instagram always comes through with fantastic suggestions! Whether it's a snow day, a holiday, or any day Brianna's instagram has the story for you! These February suggestions are absolutely beautiful! Last year I ordered "Wash Day" for my goddaughters with big beautiful hair! This book really encourages enjoying your wash day and different hair types. My students also performed "Black is a Rainbow Color" for our virtual African American history celebration. I love teaching students that black is beautiful! When I first started teaching I noticed how often black and brown crayons were the colors not used. I actively tried to change that in my classroom. This book talks about all the beauty in black!

I encourage everyone to always have a diverse library and classroom! However, I task everyone with adding at least two new books to your classroom library this month (or watching a read aloud virtually). Finally, I leave you with this quote by Toni Morrison: "If there's a

book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet then you must write it". I used to have this in my writing center, as I instilled in my students that they were today and tomorrow's authors and how much I could not wait to have their books in my library one day.

A Union Epistle

(to be read aloud to fellow Union members)

Dear Union Brothers and Sisters,

My name is Joel Richards. And I work as a technology teacher at the Blackstone school. I have been a teacher for fifteen years, eight of those in BPS. Like many of you, I have experienced the highs and the lows of teaching. More and more the best parts of being a teacher are because of the students and you, my fellow teachers, and I am so grateful for those moments. But like many of you I have also experienced the lows. I have been assaulted by students, threatened by parents, I have been exsessed. I have spent thousands of dollars on classroom supplies, been to countless PDs that don't apply to me, and been given low ratings on evaluations for things not on my wall. I have been to summer PDs to learn for a new curriculum that was never implemented. I have stayed till 8pm with a late bus, fed children, broken up fights. We, as teachers, have received new students in June and had our schools closed in the middle of the year. More and more it seems like the lows we face come multiply. Yet, like you, I come back every year!

Yes we are crazy!

When my wife learned she was pregnant with our second child she made me promise never to let her have another baby. Through the morning sickness, the swelling, the discomfort my wife kept saying, we are never having another baby. But not even thirty seconds after she gave birth to our beautiful

Johan Sebastian Richards, she looked at me with all sincerity, and said "I can't wait to do this again." The bond she instantly made with our son is the same bond we have created with our students, communities, and fellow teachers. So at the end of the year no matter how fed up we are, we come back. Love causes situational amnesia. No matter how bad our experiences are as teachers, we keep coming back. So yes we are crazy because we are in love. And love makes us abandon all reason.

What we did

After everything we go through in a typical year, none of us could have imagined the COVID pandemic. It was an incredible tragedy. The whole world suffered and we as teachers suffered new stresses too. Nothing could have prepared us for that, but we survived. We learned to teach in a way that has never been done before on such a massive level. We read to our students over zoom. We had graduations, celebrations and costume parties for our students to keep their spirits high. We visited their houses and dropped off food and supplies. In spite of the challenge of an entirely new situation, teachers were still evaluated. We didn't get a grace period for adapting to an incredibly difficult situation. It was business as usual. After all we did for the city of Boston, some of our colleagues lost their jobs.

We lost family, our students lost fam-

ily. We lost students!

We made school literally out of nothing.

Returned

Finally we returned. We could have returned to a new way of doing things, a better way than before. The powers that be could have learned from the lessons of a global pandemic. Instead, what did we return to? More meetings and more busy work that will lead to more burnout. A new curriculum, once again. Less staff after seeing how short staffed we already were. There are more fights, there are no busses and no bus drivers. We returned to staying till 6 pm waiting on buses. We returned to chaos.

This is not normal.

How were we not given time to readjust. How, after all we went through, did they expect us to return as if nothing had happened and implement new things?

It is okay

This has to be said. We have all thought of quitting! Why? Because inside of us we know that this isn't right, we are being asked to pretend that things are back to normal. To pretend that there are enough of us to do the job, that we are being supported, that the students are being given the things they need equally and without bias.

More than ever the inequities and stresses of the job are mounting, not decreasing. Our hearts know that what



Joel Richards

is happening to us and our students is wrong. If you took six months off from training for a marathon, would you start the same grueling training routine immediately? Wouldn't you take the time to ease back into it? Wouldn't you allow your body time to adjust? We have been thrown back into the marathon and we are being asked to perform at the highest level, as if nothing happened. Without even giving us new shoes to run this race.

The love

Love is helping us power through this marathon, despite the worn and terrible shoes we are wearing, but is this sustainable? Passion can only carry us so far, without the needed support. We have to ask ourselves how much longer can we run this marathon? How can we get the shoes we need to run this race? How can we finally get the support that we, our students and the families we serve so desperately need?

BTU Works Toward Housing Justice

by Ana Shapiro

It is a contract bargaining year for the Boston Public Schools. As we have done in the recent past, the BTU is continuing to bargain for the "common good." We recognize that many of the issues of importance to our members are important to our students and to their families. Common good bargaining demands in teachers' contracts often focus on issues like affordable housing and procuring resources for students both in and out of school.

The idea behind common good bargaining is that teacher working conditions are directly related to our students' material circumstances. Teachers unions across the country from Los Angeles to St. Paul to Chicago are attempting to use their contracts to fight for student needs in and out of the classroom. Many unions are demanding more affordable housing and assistance for families dealing with housing instability. As we continue to battle COVID, putting our collective power behind these demands is now more important than ever.

Teachers know that stable and safe housing is a prerequisite for student learning. We also know that when our students are displaced from Boston and have to move to other districts, not only do those individual children suffer, but it is a huge loss for our schools. Reductions in enrollment ultimately result in reductions in funding and yet more instability within our school communities. This year the BTU passed a housing justice resolution and wrote four contract demands that focus on housing justice for our students and families.

These are the housing justice demands the BTU put forth to BPS:

1. Create a working group to iden-

tify unused city owned spaces to be converted into public housing for families of Boston Public Schools students.

2. The City of Boston and BPS are partners in a pilot program to house homeless families of 165 students in Boston schools. The BTU is calling on BPS to expand their work with the pilot partners with the goal of eliminating homelessness for families of students in Boston schools within five years.

3. Advocate that no evictions or foreclosures take place during the school year for BPS families and support small scale landlords who need financial assistance to ensure that they are able to maintain their mortgages.

4. Call on the city to require developers who are building within ½ mile radius of a BPS school to meet with the school site council to negotiate affordable housing and ongoing community input, with an opportunity to consult with the BTU Housing Justice Committee beforehand.

Negotiations for Boston Public Schools teachers contract began in October, 2021. In the first session, the district rejected all four demands, claiming that the housing demands fall outside of what is reasonable to push for in a contract. While the BPS negotiating committee claimed to agree that "having students have secure homes and not being homeless" is a priority for them, they made excuses that school committee members are very busy, and condescendingly urged the union to put its 10,000 members to work advocating for equitable housing.

Our Union's response is that pushing for housing justice is directly in line with supporting our students and families and fully in the purview of what we should advocate for as a district. The BTU also



BTU Members in East Boston join a City Life/Vida Urbana rally in solidarity with tenants who faced a no-fault eviction, and in support of a Bill to Stop COVID Evictions. (August, 2021)

pointed out that the union is already advocating for these demands. In fact, for the past year and a half, the BTU has had an active Housing Justice Committee that has partnered with City Life/Vida Urbana and worked together to create trainings for educators on how to best support students experiencing housing instability, has turned out at City Life/Vida Urbana rallies to support the Housing Equity Bill, has worked to connect families to eviction defense resources, and wrote and passed the Housing Justice Resolution among its membership. Now, the BTU is asking BPS to join us in this advocacy by supporting and fighting for stable housing for students.

As stated earlier, the BTU is one of many teachers' unions nationwide to be advocating for common good demands. By rallying with community groups, members, and families, the Chicago Teachers Union ultimately won an additional position to support families experiencing housing instability at schools with a certain percentage of students experiencing housing instability as well as quarterly \$500 stipends for families experiencing housing instability. Additionally, the Saint Paul Federation of Educators advocated for and partially won the demand of "No Foreclosures During School Year," so that "the District cease all business with banks that foreclose on families with school-aged children during the school year."

There is even historical precedent within our own contract right here in Boston. Our current contract includes these provisions for "students with high needs":

- A citywide commission shall be created including at least three BTU educators appointed by the BTU to address the needs of the student homeless population.
- In school year '19-'20 BPS will work to provide additional guidance to schools for utilizing funding associated with homelessness.
- For the life of this contract (2018-2021) the District will increase funding to support students who are experiencing homelessness by \$100,000 per year.

Contract bargaining is not over, and now is the time for us to organize and fight for what we know our students, their families, and our members deserve! If you support the BTU's effort to get the housing justice demands passed, please:

Record a testimonial explaining why at https://bit.ly/BTU_Voices, password: [BPSHJC2021](https://bit.ly/BTU_Voices)

If you'd like to learn more about the Housing Justice Committee or get involved, fill out this quick form: bit.ly/BTU_HJC_Interest

(Ana Shapiro teaches 7th and 8th grade science at Charlestown High School and is a member of the BTU's Housing Justice Committee.)

Kudos To Our Legislative Committee On Their COLA Fight

Every year, the RTC Legislative Committee fights for an increase in the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and an increase in the COLA base. Many new retirees do not realize that any COLA increase is applied to a portion of your pension, not to the total amount of your pension. Unlike social security, where the cost of living adjustment is based on the total amount of social security that you receive, public pensions in Massachusetts only increase by applying the COLA (percentage increase – currently 3% – voted on by the Boston Retirement Board) to the adopted COLA base.

The minimum amount for the COLA base is set by the Massachusetts Pension Laws. The minimum base is \$12,000. There is no maximum amount in the law. Every city and town votes to set the COLA base for all retired public employees.

Mayor **Thomas Menino** raised the COLA base in 2013 to \$13,000. Mayor **Martin Walsh** raised the base to \$14,000 in 2017; and in 2021 then Mayor **Kim Janey** included an increase in the Boston COLA base from \$14,000 to \$15,000. The RTC Legislative Committee and Executive Board engaged in letter writing and phone calling efforts to encourage the Mayor's Office and the City Council members to raise the base from

\$14,000. We had the full support of the BTU, AFT-MA, and many labor and local leaders in contacting City Council members and the Mayor. Our COLA in 2021 resulted in an increase from \$420 per year to \$450. We are grateful for the work that the committee and members did to achieve this increase.

Given the current rate of inflation, you can be sure that a \$30 increase over the course of a year will not cover the increases in groceries, utilities, gas, insurance and prescription costs. We must continue to fight for further increases in both the COLA and the base used to calculate the increase.

Legislative Committee Co-Chairs **Larry Connolly** and **Sandy Carle**, Legislative Committee Secretary **Janey Frank** and other committee members know that in order to increase the COLA base we need to influence the budget process. We cannot wait until May to start contacting the retirement board members, City Council members and the Mayor. If we want to have retirees' needs included in the city budget, we need to start our campaign earlier than ever. We will need RTC members to write letters to the members of the Boston Retirement Board, the Mayor and the City Council.

The Legislative Committee is researching information that we will share with the membership so that they can have facts to quote in those letters. More importantly you should share your story of what an increase would mean to you. As our experiences have taught us, we can do more together!

Other Committee News

While the Social Committee remains hopeful that we will have a Spring Luncheon at Venezia's on May 19, the RTC Executive Board will hold its meetings via Zoom until this surge passes. **Mary Jo Murphy** and **Annemarie Aducci** will send you information about the Spring Luncheon as we get nearer the date.

The Benefits Committee Chair **Timo Philip** and Vice Chair **Roz Avant** have worked with the Eye Care Center and the Secretary-Treasurer to implement a credit card payment for RTC members for their glasses. Active teachers have been able to use their credit cards for payment for a while now and we are grateful that the opportunity to enjoy that benefit has been extended to us.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to engage in any trips again this year. With the burden of enforcing safety

provisions falling on the organization, it is not practical to plan trips at this time. **Ruthanne Kennedy** continues to explore all possibilities.

Don't forget to sign on to follow our Facebook page. Social Media Chair **Mae Bishop** welcomes your engagement and comments.

We have a long list of members that have passed away during these past two years. Remembrance Committee Chair **Linda McNamee** has sent condolence cards to the families of our deceased members. The RTC has three scholarships that are given in honor of all our deceased members.

It certainly has been a difficult two years and we have many new members who have joined our ranks this year. Membership Committee Chair **Eileen Ganley** reports that we have over 3,200 members of the RTC. If you know of teachers who are planning to retire, please let them know that they must apply for membership in the Retired Teachers Chapter. Even though you were a member of the union as an active teacher you are not automatically a member of the RTC.

RTC office hours are Tuesday and Wednesday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

Please be safe and well!

Rally for COVID Safety

by Heidi Winston

On the afternoon of December 15th, a rally/vigil was held in front of the State House in the name of fighting for COVID Safety in Boston Public Schools. The rally was an important and unified effort led by "Families for COVID Safety", (FAM-COSA) and organized with BPS school nurses and the Boston Teachers Union. The unity and commitment needed to **STOP** the spread of COVID through our school buildings — and to support

our children fully was evident in the speeches made by parents, school nurses and community supporters and healthcare professionals.

Families for COVID Safety (FAM-COSA) was created by BPS families in response to the Curley School's closure for 10 days due to 46 cases of COVID. The families believe that more needs to be done to protect our students – their children from the spread of COVID.

The demands of the FAM-COSA rally are as follows:

- Safety and ventilation especially during mealtimes;
- consistent pooled testing;
- prompt and reliable contact tracing in every school;
- increase the percentage of students who are vaccinated;
- ensure equity in COVID safety efforts; and

DESE must count all the remote days for any school that has to close because of an outbreak.

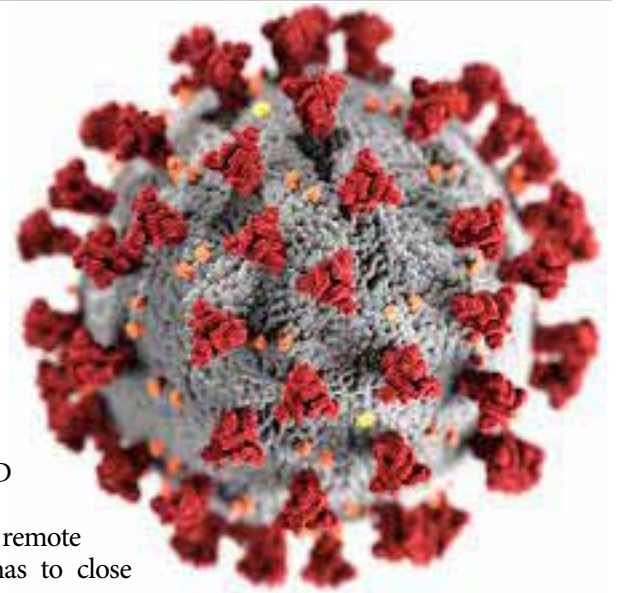
School nurses spoke about the importance of the unity between families and BPS staff in this struggle and the importance of not being divided. Nurses and parents also spoke about fighting racist inequities in healthcare which this pandemic has brought to the surface.

Nurses and BTU members informed the audience of onlookers and the media that the COVID health and safety improvements – such as improved ventilation – were fought and won by us as unionized workers and healthcare workers. However, the COVID testing that we fought for has been underfunded and privatized thus much of the work involving testing and contact tracing has fallen on BTU staff, especially the nurses.

Mothers spoke eloquently of the hardship they experienced as breadwinners and caretakers of their families when children suffered or died from the effects of this deadly virus. We spoke and chanted in unison as the sun set, holding candles in memory of those lives lost to COVID.

Since the December rally the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has reported that there are more than 50,000 known COVID-19 infections in students and staff in the first two weeks of January.

More than 89,000 public school children and 20,000 staff have tested positive for COVID-19 since school began in September. There are a disproportionate number of COVID



When Colleen Mason, K0-K1 teacher from the East Boston EEC asked her 3 year old son Liam to tell her about this picture and he said, "It's my Covid test results!"

cases in children in several cities, including Boston, where more than one thousand children in each of these cities and towns have tested positive since September (*DESE report, 1/2022*).

By January 10, 2022, the US had the most infections since the start of the pandemic of any country – 61,263,030 and the most deaths – 851,356, (<https://ourworldindata.org/explorers/coronavirus-data-explorer>).

It is clear, looking at these numbers that not enough has been done nationally and locally regarding policies and funding to effectively mitigate or end this pandemic. As it goes for our schools and our school children and their families and for us – we must fight harder and join with FAM-COSA to take a stand against the lack of funding for public health and COVID prevention in our schools.

COVID has made the staffing needs in our schools greater than ever. We need more nurses, more health paras, and more staff. This pandemic has caused great hardship for many families. We need more staff than ever to support children and teens emotionally as well as academically. Importantly, these needed improvements which support our students have come through our struggles as unionized workers. Any health and safety improvements regarding our buildings since COVID has come through our struggles via the BTU, and from parents demanding them.

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Boston City Council

Politics in Education Johnny McInnis

Boston City Council

The Boston City Council is elected by residents of the city of Boston every two years. The council is made up of four at-large councilors that represent the entire City, and nine district councilors that represent specific areas within Boston. The current term is from January, 2022 to December, 2023.

The Boston Teachers Union endorses candidates for the Boston City Council. During the election cycle, both

incumbents (those who are currently in office) and new candidates will reach out to the Boston Teachers Union, requesting an endorsement. The BTU responds to this request by sending a questionnaire referencing issues that are important to our members. After a completed questionnaire is returned, the COPE committee (Committee on Political Education) will review it to decide if the candidate should be interviewed.

If COPE decides the candidate would be a viable candidate supporting our issues a recommendation is made. The decision to make a recommendation to the E-Board is made by a 2/3's vote by the COPE Committee members.

Next, the E-Board receives the recommendation and reviews information about the candidates. A vote is then held by the E-Board members to decide whether the candidate should be recommended to the membership. Again a 2/3's vote is required.

Lastly, a vote is held at the BTU monthly membership meetings during which members have the chance to approve or oppose candidates. A 2/3's vote is again required to pass.

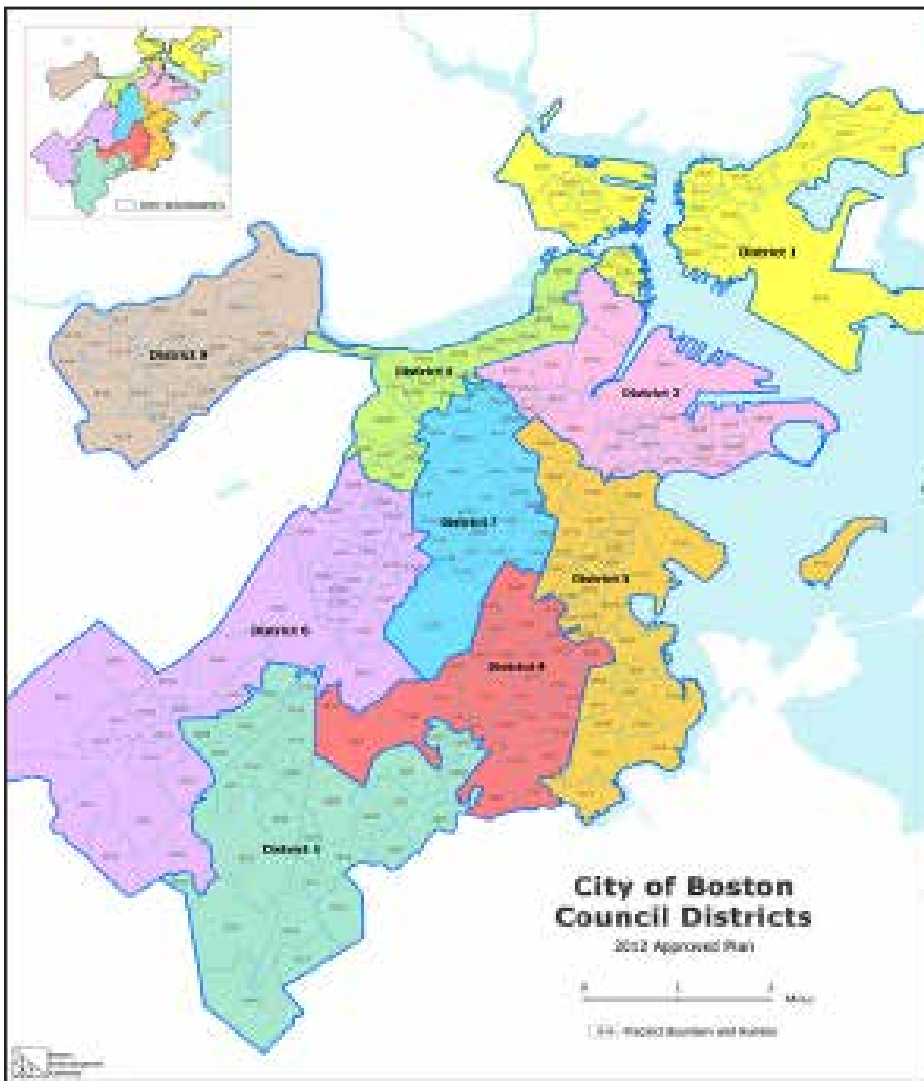
Non-incumbent Councilors who have won their election create an important relationship for advocacy on our issues. Incumbent Councilors that we have endorsed continue to support the BTU in many ways. City Councilors are important advocates for city policy as the governing body. Members often contact their Councilor as a constituent for issues



Johnny McInnis
BTU Political Director

that matter to them. The BTU contacts Councilors for support on policies and issues that pertain to our Union.

For example the BTU has had conversations that have led to hearings about school funding, PILOT, inclusion in schools, and working conditions just to name a few. Because of our professional relationship, when candidates run for reelection they often ask for support from our members. Support from the BTU includes mailings to members on behalf of our endorsed candidate, phone banking to our members via member to member calls, showing up for stand outs, and door knocking with the campaign.



Boston City Council Districts

Boston City Councilors

At-Large: Michael Flaherty
Ruthzee Louijeune
Julia Mejia (*Chair of Education*)
Erin Murphy

District 1: Lydia Edwards
District 2: Ed Flynn (*Council President*)

District 3: Frank Baker
District 4: Brian Worrell
District 5: Ricardo Arroyo
District 6: Kendra Hicks
District 7: Tania Fernandes Anderson

District 8: Kenzie Bok
District 9: Liz Breadon

Rally For COVID Safety...

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I have been asked to talk about conditions in the schools with regards to nursing, positive COVID cases and pool testing. As it stands, pool testing and contact tracing, which are public health jobs, are being contracted out to a private company. The state promised us that they would implement pool testing, find the positive cases in the pool tests, and do Test-and-Stay so students would miss minimal school. But it took months for pool testing to get off the ground.

The private company that BPS has

contracted to do contact tracing is out-of-state which makes the actual process of contact tracing impractical and burdensome. Since Health Services has been so overburdened with contact tracing as well, and the Public Health Commission doesn't have enough public health workers - private labs and companies are paid to do it. They are not contacting those who test positive or school staff until a week later or more in many cases. Nurses and health services pick up the slack. This puts us all at risk for COVID.

Money needs to be immediately allocated to our public health commission in Boston and Massachusetts. Decisions need to be based on science, not politics. We need a robust testing and contact tracing system. We need outreach regarding vaccination and a vaccination campaign that educates, dispels myths, informs and empowers our teens and families.

This "profits-first" economic system under which we live does not put children and families' needs first. It especially does not put families of color and immigrant

families first. A million deaths, many of them preventable, are apparently an acceptable loss to those in power as long as the profits keep flowing. Meanwhile, working families are struggling to hold onto their housing, their jobs, their healthcare, and struggling to provide their children with proper education and emotional wellbeing. This is doubly true for people of color and immigrant workers. This cannot continue. And we will continue to fight! We need fully funded public schools. We need fully funded public health.



House Bill 4111 (R+)

SPONSORED BY: REP. LIZ MIRANDA
REFERRED TO JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SERVICE
ON OCTOBER 19, 2021

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**.

858	CURRENT NON-TARP EDUCATORS
hired before 7/1/01 could benefit from R+:	
30 or more years	85
25-30 years	158
20-25 years	283
<20 years	332

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 \$3million, 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.

R+ Committee

Michael W. McLaughlin

Re-opening R+ /TARP by the Joint Committee on Public Service

We are keeping the momentum going towards re-opening R+/TARP. Our newest call to action is both timely and important – timely because the legislative session is returning soon from the holiday break, important because it focuses on members of the Joint Committee on Public Service (JCPS).

JCPS is the committee that currently has our bill, HB411, and held a hearing with public comment months ago. The



Michael W. McLaughlin
The R+ Committee

JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SERVICE

Democratic Members

Michael Brady (*Senate chair*)
Barry Finegold (*Senate vice chair*)
Kenneth Gordon (*House chair*)
Natalie Higgins (*House vice chair*)
Bruce Ayers
David Linsky
Kate Lipper-Garabedian
Paul Mark
Frank Moran
Michael Kushmarek
Nick Collins
Diana DiZoglio
James Eldridge
Erika Uyterhoeven

Republican Members

Ryan Fattman
(*Senate ranking minority member*)
Timothy Whelan
(*House ranking minority member*)
David DeCoste

JCPS is important and must be contacted because we need them to "report out HB4111 favorably."

The link to our MA Senators is malegislature.gov/Legislators/Members/Senate. The link to our MA State Representatives is malegislature.gov/Legislators/Members/House.

Use these links to find the contact info for the members of the JCPS. Below is a list of the members of the JCPS. Contact each member of the JCPS by phone and email. Use the information from the BTU R+ Lobby One Pager with a brief text from you about how important this is and to report HB4111 out favorably. Email rplus@btu.org with questions, etc.

Being/Becoming a Critical Consumer of Your Curriculum...

continued from page 4

- How does this lesson or assignment serve all of my students?
- How does the work serve those students who have been historically marginalized?

Possible outcomes of this level of lesson reflection could lead to you supplementing the persuasive writing topic with an essay on the need for more garbage bins in a community strewn with litter or higher quality food at school. Or learning about food insecurity and food deserts and ways to address the

problem. Or having students research the differences among community, city, state and federal political action and hosting a virtual presentation for families and community members to encourage voting. Or including the analysis of conscious rap artists and lyrics as part of the poetry unit. Or exposing students to young scientists who are making a huge impact with their innovative ideas see link. *What are other ways knowing your curriculum has helped you provide meaningful high-quality learning experiences for your students?*

To be a critical consumer of your curriculum means you KNOW (all caps) the following:

- This is worth repeating
- You must know your grade level standards, with an emphasis on the priority standards.
- You must know the big idea(s) for each unit, what is it that students will know and be able to do by the end of the unit?
- You must know your classroom(s) context, which changes year to year. Who are your students this year? What are their learning needs? What lived experiences are they bringing with them to school?
- And you need time. Especially if the curriculum is new to you. So don't be too hard on yourself. Chip away at learning your curriculum by doing the work before you give it to your students.

building your Curriculum (big C): the coherent grade level learning activities + the supplements you include to ensure the students you have get what they need.

Benefits:

- Avoiding watering down the grade level learning experience
- The ability to think on your feet during the lesson to provide support or an extension
- Transferable skills that can be applied to any new curriculum you are asked to use preferably not after the school year has begun.
- And most importantly having fun!

Note to school leaders: The work of becoming a critical consumer of your Curriculum is best done over the summer, when teachers have more time and fewer competing responsibilities. To best support your teaching staff, introduce a new curriculum in June.

I know I am forgetting some important points, so let's start a conversation: *What does being a critical consumer of your Curriculum mean to you?*

What are the benefits of being/becoming a critical consumer of your Curriculum?

Becoming a critical consumer of your curriculum will save you a lot of time - however it does require an upfront investment. For me it took a full weekend to unpack my grade level standards and skim through the curriculum text book I was going to be using.

When you become a critical consumer of your curriculum you will have greater flexibility in what you present, how and in what order. For example as you are planning and you go through a unit you might decide that everything contained is valuable and meaningful for the students you are working with that year. Alternatively, you may notice there are some missing concepts or opportunities to practice skills that you need to find supplements for; this results in you

(Nadine O'Garro is an Instructional Transformation Coach who works with K-12 educators and educational leaders. With over 16 years in K-12 education as a classroom teacher and now instructional coach, Nadine supports school leaders and classroom teachers in implementing high leverage practices and instructional strategies that are effective with diverse learners. Through her coaching Nadine provides guidance on how to improve instruction to ensure ALL students receive a high-quality culturally affirming educational experience. Nadine earned her BS in Business Management and Entrepreneurship, received a Master of Arts in Education and Ph.D in Urban Education, Leadership and Policy Studies from UMass Boston. She is available and looking forward to supporting your work and can be reached at dr.nadineogarro@gmail.com.)

Congratulations to Our Newly Certified and Renewed National Board Certified Teachers

Seven BTU members recently achieved National Board Certification by completing a rigorous cycle of learning, reflection, and leadership. Congratulations to these outstanding educators and the eight BTU members who renewed their certification this year.

Newly Certified

Jesse Southwick - Boston Latin School
Emmanuel Fairley - Henry Grew School
Quayisha Clarke - Henry Grew School
Priscilla Lau - Boston Latin Academy
Sinta Cebrian - Henderson K-12
Edwin Cebrian - Mozart School
Hannah Erickson - Boston Day and Evening Academy

Renewed

Silvia Gonzalez-Powers - Roosevelt K-8
Matthew Kazlauskas - John D. O'Bryant
Amanda Minerva - Mary Lyon K-8
Aaron Osowiecki - Boston Latin School
Carla Zils - Edison K-8
Bridget Driscoll - Brighton High School
Nicole DaSilva - Boston International Newcomers Academy
Brian Leussler - Boston Latin Academy

If you achieved or recertified this year and are not listed here, please email Paul Tritter at ptritter@btu.org to let us know. If you are interested in participating in our BTU/BPS National Board support programs, please visit bostonpublicschools.org/domain/1896





The AFTMA December meeting and Distinguished Service Award (DSA) recipients. Chantei Alves received the DSA for a member 35 years of age or younger. James Timo Phillip received a DSA as a retired member.



Cozy Up to Our Contract This Winter...

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These are just a few of our many priorities as our negotiating team, silent reps and staff continue to regularly meet with BPS to share our full list of proposals.

It is understandable that as we continue to confront seemingly a new crisis every month that our contract may not be on the top of everyone's mind. However, we have been working without a contract since September, and in order to win a new agreement that reflects the schools our students and educators deserve, we will need everyone to help us elevate and amplify our demands. In February and the upcoming months, we will be ramping up our campaign. Please be on the lookout for upcoming actions as we continue to draw attention to the much-needed changes our schools and educators need to continue to address the challenges we face every day.

We are stronger, together and more than ever, we need to count on each other to get through these tough times. Our contract is one of our greatest tools to support each other and get educators and their students the respect they deserve. So in the cold weeks and months ahead, don't forget to cozy up to our contract as we turn up the heat to fight for a new contract!

To get more involved and learn more, visit btu.org and explore the "Negotiation Updates" banner at the top!

12 Ways to Stay Positive...

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you do have instead of obsessing over what you don't have. I believe everyone has a purpose for being here.

This joy I have, the world didn't give it to me, and the world can't take it away. How do we discover joy on the mountain and in the valley? Sometimes it will take some effort to find that thing that helps bring you joy and remember your joy. Remember what it feels like to be in a place of joy: when things are going really good in your class, your life, your family, your office, remember how you feel when things are going well, and hold on to that memory. When things are going away, access that memory of when things were going great! All in all...Focus on the positive!



WHAT DO BOSTON STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS DESERVE?



MODERN SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Our community deserves clean, safe, and welcoming school buildings with updated HVAC systems, working fans and/or AC, and a reliable schedule for repairs and upgrades.



ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAMS

Our community deserves guaranteed funding for arts, athletics, libraries, music, STEM, world languages, and technology.



INCLUSION DONE RIGHT

Our community deserves well-resourced and fully-staffed special education and English learner programs - not just one teacher with multiple licenses.



EDUCATORS THAT REFLECT OUR STUDENTS

Our community deserves a diverse staff from a variety of racial, linguistic and economic backgrounds.



FAIR AND EQUITABLE PAY

Our community deserves compensation and benefits that allow educators to live and raise a family in Boston. Educators in non-traditional schools deserve equal pay for equal work.



SUSTAINABLE WORKLOADS

Our community deserves a reasonable workload that can be completed in the scheduled workweek.



ACCESS TO COUNSELORS AND SOCIAL WORKERS

Our community deserves:
1 psychologist : 500 students
1 guidance counselor : 250 students
1 social worker : 300 students



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Our community deserves stable homes so that we can focus on learning without worrying about being displaced.



FAMILY-FRIENDLY WORK POLICIES

Our community deserves access to improved parental and family leave in line with other city workers.

GET INVOLVED!

Contact Natalia at ncuadrasaez@btu.org and join us at btu.org/bargaining



Tracy Romain, Chantei Alves, Denise Berkeley, A. Venessa La Rocque, Johnny McInnis, Adrienne Jordan, CasSandra Samuel and Cynthia Grant-Carter.

The BTU Black Caucus has been busy volunteering, touring and having fun. These photos are from The Black Caucus Tour of Nubian Square. History was shared with members of the Caucus from the granddaughter of Nubian Notion, a black owned family business from the 1960s in the heart of Roxbury which now is called Nubian square. There were stories told by other black business owners, Mr. Leonard Egerton of Frugal bookstore, and Mrs. Kai Grant Owner of Black Market. These are more than stories, this is the history of our culture.

- Adrienne Jordan



Adrienne Jordan and Denise Berkley volunteering at Toys for Tots at the Boston Convention Center. "I really appreciate the opportunity to support a great cause," said Adrienne Jordan. "Giving back especially at this time of season is worthwhile to so many families. On behalf of the BTU Black Caucus, I say, let's all do something positive this coming year and give. MERRY CHRISTMAS 🎄🎅"

