



Summer School Celebrates Black History Month

See page 8

BOSTON TEACHERS UNION, LOCAL 66, AFT
180 Mount Vernon Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02125



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Boston, MA
Permit No. 52088

Boston Union Teacher








The Award-Winning Newspaper of the Boston Teachers Union, AFT Local 66, AFL-CIO Vol. 54, No. 5 • March, 2022

President's Report Jessica J. Tang

Lessons Learned From Our Winter Conference

On February 12, 2022 over a hundred and fifty BTU members registered to take part in our annual winter conference. This year's theme was *"Cozy Up to the Contract"* and the goals included a "focus on fighting burnout, prioritizing educator well-being, and ramping up the contract campaign." Many of our member-organizers and staff worked for months leading up to the conference to plan thoughtful workshops and panels, as well as activities for members to focus on wellness and de-stressing. It was also our first major in-person event, with special considerations taken to ensure everyone's safety and health.

Unfortunately, what was planned that day was not able to be executed in the manner in which those who had worked hard to put the day together had hoped for and imagined. Instead, what began as a hopeful day centered in togetherness, healing and building strength within our BTU community was disrupted by small group of protesters who caused much harm to those who were there. The lessons learned were not just those that were originally planned, but important ones nonetheless.

The day prior to the conference, there was a planned protest already outside of the BTU by an organized group of mostly public safety union members who oppose the city's vaccine policy, which requires vaccination for continued employment. We were aware of the protest as a dozen or so people gathered at the start of the two-hour protest, it grew at one point to a couple dozen, and then dispersed after two hours. Although our parking lot and building are private property, we did not ask the protesters there that day to leave—we had no issue with people sharing dissenting views and there were no major incidents to report.

The next day, however, some of those protesters returned at the start of the Winter Conference, apparently invited by some of our own BTU members who are a part of this dissenting group. This time, they came back with megaphones

and harassed participants entering the building. As the conference started, protesters tried to enter the building, trying to push past staff and others who were trying to block them from coming in. So that no one got hurt, those BTU members who were trying to block them from entering moved out of the way and the protesters headed in.

As conference participants were in the middle of a physical warm up activity involving relaxing music, movement and poetry, the protesters barged in with a megaphone, without wearing masks (against the city's indoor mask wearing

policy) and chanting including "Where is Jessica Tang!" for a full twenty minutes straight, mocking members about engaging in "arts and crafts," hurling insults and refusing to leave. I also knew not just from the chanting and signs outside, but also the constant Twitter, email and social media attacks that they were making this protest personal, so upon seeing the protesters and hearing their chanting, I left through the back service hall to get to a safer place in the building. I also felt a great urgency to leave the hall because I had my baby, whom I am still nursing, with me. He had been sleeping next to me in his carseat, but was awoken by the noise.

In the back of my mind, I also knew what Mayor Michelle Wu has been facing these same protesters every morning outside her house at 7 am for over eight weeks and that the protesters had swarmed around her mother when she took out the trash one morning, repeatedly called the mayor racist names and even calling her "Hitler" in front of her young children, and made the situation unsafe for her to the point where a security detail is constantly stationed outside her home. I also knew the protesters had gone to Superintendent Cassellius' home to

protest one morning as well. I was not taking chances and was not going to be bullied into a confrontation, particularly with my less than four month old baby with me.

Police were called to the scene as the protesters purposely yelled and coughed, unmasked, in our members' faces outside of and then in our building. A few of the protesters were BTU members and our Executive Vice President Erik Berg negotiated with them that they could speak to conference participants if afterwards they would leave. To their credit, once they were given a chance to

speak, they did leave. Unfortunately, the other protesters that they invited to our union hall did not leave and stayed for almost four hours. It was during this time that the most abhorrent acts took place.

A police officer was able to get the protesters to leave the halls where the conference was taking place, but other protesters continued, with a megaphone indoors, to harass, assault and terrorize those who were trying to keep them from further disrupting the conference and standing at the doors to block them from re-entering our hall. Throughout this time several of our staff and E-board members were called "Nazis"



Jessica J. Tang
BTU President

See more on the BTU's Winter Conference on pages 4 & 5.

and "bitches." Two Asian members were questioned whether they were "communists" when they entered and one was mistaken for me as they tried to leave and was heckled before being told she was not me. Black staff and E-board members took the brunt of the vitriol and were even told to take off "Black Lives Matters" attire, accused of "segregating" against those who were unvaccinated and compared those who didn't support the unvaccinated with perpetrators in the Civil Rights movements and the Holocaust.

That rhetoric, those actions, and the harm caused has absolutely no

continued on page 5



My Third First Year of Teaching

During snow and ice storms I picked up David Russell's book *To Change The World: Reflections of a Teacher* and found it quite applicable to how I see our profession during The Great Resignation. David's introduction states what many of us - including myself - are thinking about: leaving education. In David's case he is talking about his retirement after 34.5 years of teaching, 32 of them at the McKinley. In my case, and in conversations with so many of my colleagues, we are contemplating our own exit from teaching.

Let me say now what I say most often: I love teaching. I do. Teaching is the most important, most rewarding, and most challenging task a person can undertake. As a teenager I could have dedicated my education to medicine, accounting, or engineering. I had the grades for those professions but instead I focused on the law. I double majored in Political Science and Classical Languages. I had the background and the grades but when it was time to apply to law school I no longer had the desire.

Instead, I went full-time in what had been my part time job since I first got my working papers. I worked full time as the dairy manager in the Sudbury Farms grocery store in Randolph. That job was good for me for a while as I figured out what I wanted to do. However, since I didn't really figure out what I wanted to do, like so many of my fellow Gen Xers, I prepared for law school. Fortunately for me, I got a call asking me to be a substitute teacher...and the rest is history. 28 years later I am still in the job I love.

Until the pandemic changed things. As I am sure you have all heard before, the

pandemic didn't really change things, it only shone a light on an already untenable situation. I like to think the pandemic poured gasoline on an already smoldering fire. Our job was always impossible, lately it's become unenjoyable too.

Enter David Russell's memoir. David did what I was told to do. When I was a rookie teacher my former tenth grade health teacher, Mr. Lavey, advised me to keep a journal of my first year of teaching. I wish I had. David Russell seemingly kept a log of all his teaching experiences.

Even though I am in my 28th year of teaching, this year feels like I was starting over. Being remote for a year and a half felt like a different job and a different life altogether, it was like my second time starting new. Returning to the classroom, a classroom frozen in time, was like walking into a classroom for the first time again. It felt like my third first time teaching.

In 1994, when it actually was my first year, my mentor, Mr. William F. Sullivan, gave me friendly advice on various topics. Now as I read Mr. Russell's reflections, I get that same friendly vibe.

In one of his reflections from over twenty years ago David wrote about the difficulty of motivating reluctant learners. It's hard to explain to those not currently teaching, but something this year is collectively off. There is a malaise which permeates everything. And it's not just one thing. It's not wearing masks or participating in COVID testing pools. It's rather like the ennui at the beginning of *Avengers's End Game*, for many of our students have lost loved ones to the coronavirus.

After having been told that education

was the path to a brighter future, the pandemic interrupted their learning. After having spent over a year at home - with all the accompanying liberties and autonomy - many of my high school students are questioning the meaning of it all. Their worlds came to a quick and unceremonious end two years ago, and although they are back in school, things are not what they expect or remember.

They chafe at being told to use the bathroom only when they ask when last year they could do as they pleased. They dislike coming to school for the work but not being able to do the "fun" activities they took for granted pre-pandemic. Sure, we adults can intellectualize the need for social distancing, but to children they only know that they are back in school but can't go on field trips or play games/sports or hang out with friends. Things are improving, sports are back on, but we are not in the same place we were pre-pandemic and the students feel it.

So what to do? In his 1999 essay for the Boston Writing Project Summer Institute called *Motivating Reluctant Learners* David gives sage and universal advice. "The number one motivator is the personal relationship you can develop... and catch (the students) doing good things." What caught my attention is his advice on grades.

"Grading has gotten something of a bad reputation among many teachers these days, but I think grading can be used as a way of structuring a classroom for success and as a way to motivate students. Many students hate grades because they feel they cannot earn any good ones, either because they are not capable or because grades are based on the subjective judgement of teachers."



Michael J. Maguire
Boston Union Teacher
Co-Editor

"If a system is set up which is clear, objective, and quantifiable, where students understand 'if I do this, I earn this,' and which is based on more than just quizzes, tests, and homework, it can be motivating."

"I've seen numerous students start to see grades as something they can control as opposed to something that is imposed on them."

Boston Latin Academy, my school these 28 years, is reviewing how it approaches grading. So David's words hit the mark for me.

David's book is both a quick read (at under 200 pages) and a long ponder. Each chapter is short but very powerful. If you've ever met Dave, then you can hear his soothing voice in your head as you read his stories. If you haven't, you can see and hear him by scanning the various QR codes in his book. You can read the book in chronological order or pick and choose the topics that interest you in the moment. Either way, David reminds us with his stories what we all already know but sometimes need reminding. To quote Henry Adams: "A teacher affects eternity; he never knows where his influence stops."

★★★★★★★★

You can contact David Russell at russell.woodman@gmail.com



The "I Have A Future" Coalition met at the Massachusetts State House on Thursday, February 24, 2022 for the 14th Annual Youth Justice Rally



The goal of the rally was to take action in support of legislative advocacy on such issues as youth jobs, education, housing, and juvenile justice. Youth, young adults, and leaders across Massachusetts presented their perspectives on how to shift disparities young people experience across these issues and share demands that improve mental health, create safer environments, and uplift resources (both in our schools and in our communities).

- Photos by Natalia Cuadra-Saez

What is the Role of the School Site Council's Personnel Subcommittee in Hiring?



Caren Carew
BTU Secondary
Field Representative

The role of the Personnel Subcommittee of the SSC is to: **1.)** approve the hiring of new BTU teachers' bargaining unit staff, the in-transfer of BTU teachers' bargaining unit staff from other schools in the system through the transfer lists. **2.)** approve the selection of Lead Teachers, [school based] New Teacher Developers {mentors for 1st year teachers}, and new athletic coaches; and **3.)** determine the schedules and procedures for reviewing candidates for positions.

The Personnel Subcommittee is comprised of the Principal/Headmaster, two teachers and one parent as well as one student on the high school level [who are elected members of the SSC]. Decisions are urged to be made by consensus. Decisions need to be formalized by majority vote with the Principal/Headmaster voting with the majority. The decisions of the Personnel subcommittee are not subject to the approval of the School Site Council as a whole. The Personnel Subcommittee is required to meet for all hires made from the beginning of one school year through the last day of the same school year.

There is a way to involve others on the Personnel Subcommittee who possess more expertise in a particular position to be filled. Teacher and parent representatives on the SSC may designate temporary replacement representatives on the Personnel Subcommittee according to the positions being filled. These temporary replacements do not need to be members of the SSC. For example, a special education teacher may replace a teacher on the Personnel Subcommittee when a special education position is being filled, only if the elected SSC BTU members [or parents] choose to do so. The administrator **cannot** appoint people that they choose. It is up to the BTU elected SSC members to caucus on their own to elect the two that will be the BTU Personnel Subcommittee members. It is prudent to also elect an alternate in case one of the two selected is unable to participate on a particular day/time. BTU members are not obligated to select someone that possess a particular expertise that is a BTU member to serve on the Personnel Subcommittee. It is entirely up to the BTU SSC members as a whole to decide this option on their own. They cannot be compelled to do so by the administration. The same is true of the parent members. SSC parents select their own member to serve on the Personnel Subcommittee as their representative by caucusing on their own to do so. On the high school level, the two elected SSC student members also select which one of them will serve as a member of the Personnel Subcommittee.

The BTU SSC members shall select the BTU representatives to serve on any screening committee convened to make recommendations for permanent appointments to administrative positions within the school consistent with screening committee guidelines and policies distributed by the school department. Please see Superintendent's Circular, "SSC Personnel Subcommittee"; FAM-04 for details.

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 sick/personal days.

What is job-sharing and who can participate?

Eligible participants in the Job-Sharing program are; all permanent BTU members including teachers, psychologists, nurses, guidance counselors, etc.; provisionals, once they have been hired for the next school year, and substitutes once they have received a provisional contract. Please refer to Superintendent's Circular on *Job Sharing; HRS-HS2* for full details. Job-sharing is when two eligible participants split a single job in a manner agreed upon by the job-sharing partners and the principal who will be hosting them. The principal must approve the job-sharing to occur as well as how the logistics are carried out. Job-sharers each must work half time. As a result, they earn one-half the pay, full health insurance and health & welfare benefits, one half of the allocated sick and personal days, for retirement purposes a job-share year counts as half-salary, they maintain a full year's seniority, they must work the entire 18/24 hours of professional development and must attend both parent conference nights and all professional development days. The teacher, who is job-sharing in their own school, retains attachment rights to that site. The visiting teacher who is job-sharing retains attachment rights to their former site for one year. If the visiting teacher job-shares at a school other than their original site for more than a year, they lose their attachment rights back to that site. In order to apply for and to receive literature from the BTU and the School Department about job-sharing, you must fill out an application of interest form through the *Office of Human Resources Circular HRS-HS2* with an application deadline of March 25, 2022.

What's the Small Necessities Leave Act for and who is eligible to take it?

Under State law, eligible employees can take up to 24 hours for annual leave for family obligations. See Superintendent's Circular HRS-PP13A, 'Family And Medical Leave Act And Small Necessities Act'. The purpose of

the Small Necessities Leave Act (SNLA) is to allow employees to: **(1)** Participate in school activities directly related to the advancement of employee's child such as parent teacher conferences or interview at a new school. **(2)** To accompany a son/daughter to a routine medical/dental appointment such as a routine check-up or vaccination. **(3)** To accompany an elderly relative (60 or more) to a routine medical or dental appointment or for other professional services such as interviewing at a nursing home. The length of the leave is up to 24 hours during any fiscal year (July 1-June 30). Leave may be taken in increments of at least one hour for up to 24 hours in a fiscal year. To be eligible, employees has had to have been employed by BPS for at least 12 months and have worked for BPS at least 1,250 hours in the prior 12-month period. This leave augments leave taken under the federal family and medical leave act, as it is for a different purpose. If the leave is foreseeable, employees must give the BPS Office of Human Capital at least seven days prior notice. If need is not foreseeable, the employee must notify their building administrator as soon as practicable given the circumstances of the case. To the extent possible.

In addition to a Primary Program Area (PPA), don't I also have an active alternative program area (APA) in BPS if I have a current Mass. license on file at OHC in case I want to transfer into a position using that certification?

No. In addition to having an active license in the subject area you are currently teaching in aka your primary program area (PPA), you must apply for your other current licenses on file at Court St. to become "active" in Boston. To do so, you must fill out an *Application for Additional Program Area(s) in Boston Public Schools' [attachment 1]* Superintendent's Circular HRS-HR-7 "Staffing Reassignment And Hiring For School Year 2022-23" which must be submitted on or before February 1st. In order for the active license to be considered an APA in Boston Public, one of the following criteria must be

met, in addition to submitting the aforementioned application; **(1.)** Your state certification must be five years old or less. This means you need to have obtained it for the first time, not just recertified it, within the last five years. **(2.)** Submit 15 course credits [grad or undergrad] earned within the last five years, which are relevant to the cert area. **(3.)** A mean score on the National Teachers Exam earned within the last ten years. **(4.)** Two years of teaching experience within the last 10 years where you've taught at least 50% of the week or more all year in that subject area. In order to verify this, you must obtain and submit with the application, a letter from your principal detailing the specific years you taught the subject area 50% of the week or more.

The contract reads, "Teachers may be considered for transfer in any subject area in which they recertify under the 1993 Massachusetts Educational Reform Act, even if they do not hold an active Boston Program Area; however; a schools Personnel Subcommittee shall not be required to select any such individual." Often, if a teacher applies to transfer in an area that they do not hold a BPS APA, HR will not forward the info to the school for consideration. Why do we have to jump through these hoops if we have already recertified the license, isn't that redundant? In my opinion, yes it is. This process is a holdover from long ago and far away, when Mass. teachers were issued 'licenses for life'. A teacher could be certified in an area they hadn't taught in or taken course work for in decades, and still be eligible to transfer into teach that subject area. This APA process was negotiated in order for the BPS to ensure the teacher be 'current' in the subject area in question. The BTU attempted to negotiate elimination of this arguably antiquated process, but the BPS wanted too much in return for agreeing to do so which would have further limited a teacher's flexibility and rights. We couldn't settle for that!

BTU Phone Numbers	
Office.....	617-288-2000
Health & Welfare.....	617-288-0500
AFT Massachusetts.....	617-423-3342
Function Office.....	617-288-3322
Lounge Office.....	617-288-3322
Vision Center.....	617-288-5540
Tremont Credit Union.....	781-843-5626

Boston Union Teacher

EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE!

¡TODOS SON BIENVENIDOS AQUÍ!

EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE!

BLACK LIVES MATTER

The Boston Union Teacher is published ten times a year September - July, inclusive.

EDITORIAL NOTE:
The opinions expressed in the *Boston Union Teacher* do not necessarily represent the views of the Boston Teachers Union, or those of its members.

WHEN WRITING:
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:
The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue of the *Boston Union Teacher* is March 16th.
All copy should be e-mailed to mmaguire@btu.org and aslater@btu.org
This deadline will be strictly adhered to.

180 Mount Vernon Street | Boston, MA 02125
617-288-2000 | Fax 617-288-0024 | www.btu.org

Cozy Up With the Contract

On Saturday, February 12, 2022 over 100 teachers, paras, and nurses gathered at the BTU for a morning workshop on developing an understanding of the specific measures we are fighting for and the steps we need to take to win a new contract. Tangentially, the conference also focused on how to inspire members to come together as we fight for what our members and students need; as well as to build a sense of community so that we can reduce the feelings of burnout.

While the morning welcome was underway, a small but very vocal group of BTU members carrying signs and loudly chanting entered the hall and interrupted the meeting. They expressed their disagreement regarding the new Memorandum of Agreement between the City of Boston and the BTU regarding the status of non-vaccinated BTU members. (see sidebars)

BTU VP Erik Berg negotiated a resolution to the disruption. Three BTU members from the group of protesters were allowed to address the conference for five minutes. After they had their say, they left the hall and the work of the day continued with three workshops and wrapped up with a panel discussion.

Pulling back the curtain: your role in a transparent contract campaign

The BTU has revamped its contract negotiations to fit our vision of a democratic, social justice union which fights for our members and for our community. We heard from our Silent Reps on where negotiations stand and what all of us can do to help move things forward.

Building Rep Basics

We heard from our building reps about what is needed in order to be a strong and effective building rep in our schools, including the challenges and rewards. Dates and Deadlines were stressed so that everyone is prepared and up to date on expectations.

Jessica Tang, BTU president, wants to share the following message: “It was incredibly unfortunate that a small group of protesters tried to disrupt our event, but it was a testament to the solidarity, strength and resilience of those in attendance that we were able to carry on and continue with the agenda. No one should ever have to feel unsafe in the union hall, and we condemn the actions of those that harassed, assaulted, verbally abused and spewed hatred and racist rhetoric to our educators. While we welcome democracy and peaceful protest, hateful and unsafe actions will not be tolerated. We will be taking further steps to ensure the safety of our members in our building moving forward.” 2022.

All new hires would need to comply with the December vaccination policy. No one will go on unpaid leave so long as the court stay is in effect. Full MOA can be read at bit.ly/BTUMOA2022.

The topline of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) are summarized here: BTU educators who are currently unverified for vaccination will not be terminated if they do not comply with the December 20, 2021 policy. Instead, when certain BPHC metrics are met during a surge “Red Zone,” they would be temporarily placed on unpaid leave. This helps us to retain the 116 teachers, 133 paraprofessionals/ABAs and 118 Substitute teachers (out of 8,403 total BTU members) who are currently unverified and at risk of termination under the current policy.

While on unpaid leave, BTU members would be able to access some of their accrued days of paid time off and continue to have their health care with the employer portion covered.

While in the “Yellow Zone,” un-verified educators would have to test twice a week using either PCR or rapid antigen tests.

During a “Green Zone,” there would be no difference in the mitigation policies between vaccinated and unverified members.

Those who have retired or resigned due to this policy would be able to be rehired and return to their positions if they choose to do so before March 15.

Fighting to Save Our Schools!

Our school buildings are not cozy. Enrollment continues to drop. The state’s racist accountability system threatens receivership. The prospect of more school closures is imminent. The discussion focused on how to organize with fellow educators, students, families, and the community to improve our buildings.

The second phase of the conference was **Our Vision For An Anti-Racist Union, Part 2**. Following up from the Fall Conference’s Part I, Part 2 examined the BTU’s history by reflecting on stories of the past and present. We had a multi-generational family panel discussion with former and current BTU members. Participants had the opportunity to



Michael J. Maguire
Boston Union Teacher
Co-Editor

engage in a discussion with the panelists, who were:

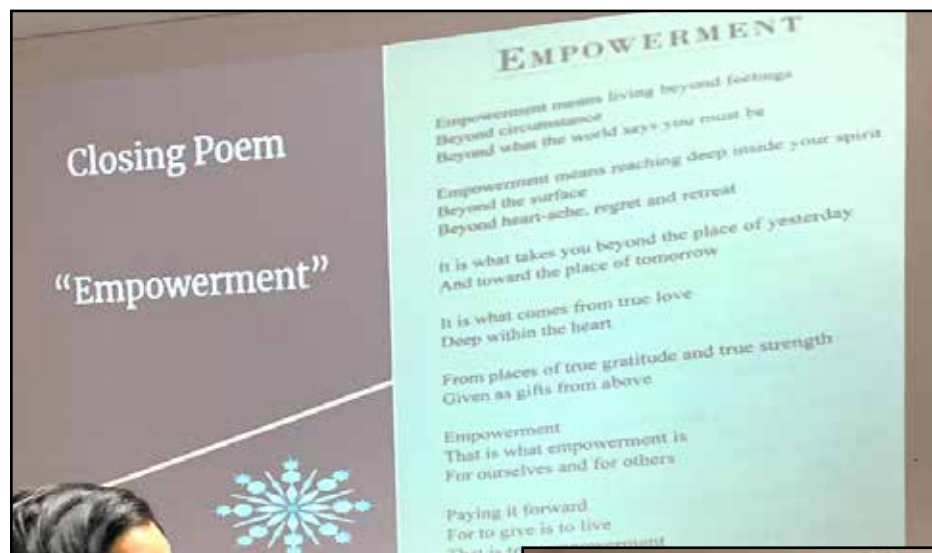
Clifford Weeks - one of the first black educators in South Boston. Mr. Weeks worked as a substitute at Campbell (now the Martin Luther King School) then was a music teacher at the Patrick Gavin Junior High and then monitored how BPS was enforcing desegregation and became an Executive Director to Superintendent Thomas Payzant.

Michelle Davis - taught at the Warren Prescott for 17 years. Ms. Davis then became an Assistant Principal and is now a principal at the Warren Prescott.

Randi Davis - currently a social worker at Madison Park. Ms. Davis previously worked at the Gardner with City Connects and in an administrative role at the Kenny School.



L to R, Clifford Weeks, former music teacher at Gavin; Michelle Davis, principal of Warren Prescott; Randi Davis, social worker at Madison Park.



Lessons Learned From Our Winter Conference...

continued from page 1

place in our union hall and amongst our membership. Those who came to our conference in the spirit of “fighting burnout, prioritizing educator well-being, and ramping up the contract campaign” should not have had to leave the conference early, or in tears, traumatized or deeply harmed. Staff and E-board members should not have had to intervene and literally put their bodies on the line. It is not dissent or disagreement that is the problem, it is the way in which some of the protesters clearly perpetuated racist bullying tactics with the aim to threaten and disrupts our convening. It is also problematic that some of our own members were complicit and did not stop the behaviors of those they had aligned themselves with. Our hall became very unsafe that day, and it continues to feel like an unsafe place for many.

After the conference I shared a follow-up statement in a communication to participants: *“It was incredibly unfortunate that a small group of protesters tried to disrupt our event, but it was a testament to the solidarity, strength and resilience of those in attendance that we were able to carry on and continue with the agenda. No one should ever have to feel unsafe in the union hall, and we condemn the actions of those that harassed, assaulted, verbally abused and spewed hatred and racist rhetoric to our educators. While we welcome democracy and peaceful protest, hateful and unsafe actions will not be tolerated. We will be taking further steps to ensure the safety of our members in our building moving forward.”* It was a message I should have shared with the whole membership via the e-bulletin following the conference.

Despite the trauma and ugliness of the day, there were also bright spots and silver linings. Many members took it upon themselves to share supportive messages in the days following. Our staff and Executive Board took time to process, reflect and recommend action steps moving forward and many of those members were the ones who stepped up that day and stood up to the protesters to ensure that the day could continue. Conference participants, when given the choice to leave or stay, chose to stay and were determined to continue with the day’s program. Our commitment to what we were there to do was tested, but we collectively prevailed.

We will continue to assess the situation and take all possible legal, internal and



BTU President Jessica Tang speaks to the assemblage of the Annual Winter Conference.

external steps needed to ensure such a disruption does not take place again as we continue to resume in person gatherings and events at the BTU office. Hopefully, they will not come back. The protesters chanting my name were demanding to meet with me and demanded to know where I was. I and other officers have always met with members who have asked to meet and if an audience or meeting was what they actually wanted, they just had to ask the way any other member does. Unfortunately, I don’t think that was actually the goal. Instead, the goal appears to have been to threaten and intimidate. It is doubtful that a productive conversation could have been held under those circumstances.

After the incident, I was advised by many not to share what happened, not give the protesters “air.” That we shouldn’t talk about it because some of the BTU protesters were BTU members, too. I understand that perspective, but, ultimately, I believe that to be silent and not speak about it would be to try to sweep under the rug an ugly moment that not only harmed many of our members but that is also an important teachable moment. Our union is not immune from hateful rhetoric, misinformation* and harmful acts against each other. We are still a reflection of larger society, which was built on a foundation of white supremacy that has existed for hundreds of years longer than the last few decades which have witnessed just the beginning of a reckoning. And if we cannot see it, name it, and point it out, then we cannot also learn from it, correct it and heal from the harm.

During the Executive Board meeting following the Winter Conference, we spent a significant amount of time reflecting and processing the events that occurred. Several of the Black board members who faced the most reprehensible attacks, when asked to share thoughts, said that they were okay because they were “used to it.” And that they faced such comments and attacks even in their own schools throughout the years. Not all of the protesters were white either. That is how pervasive racism and prejudice can be. Sometimes it is internalized, and sometimes people of color can still be prejudiced towards other people of color. Acknowledging and facing the unflattering parts of our history, actions, and inaction has to be a part of the learning we are a part of if we are truly to be an anti-racist union.

It should also be noted that these events happened during Black History Month. One of the panels of the conference was three generations of current and former black BTU members – all from one family – reflecting on the past, present and future. They reflected on what has changed and what has not, and where we need to go as a union when it comes to our anti-racism work. The irony that this panel was postponed and almost canceled due to the disruption, a disruption that some of the perpetrators were claiming to be for people of color, is not missed. The irony that black members standing up for others were then accused by some of the protesters of segregating against them all the while co-opting civil rights language also does not go unnoticed.

When it comes to promoting civil discourse within our union, undoing white supremacy, addressing racism, and navigating the reality that democracy within our union doesn’t always mean consensus or that everyone agrees, there is much we still have to learn together as a union. It is not easy work, particularly during a pandemic, previous presidency where bullying became normalized and back to back school years that have heightened

stress, anxiety and emotions. But it is the work we must continue to do as we think about not just what an anti-racist union must be, but a trauma sensitive one as well.

One of our strategic goals this year is about changing organizational culture: creating more joy, appreciation, connectedness and positivity within our union. This may feel overwhelming on the organizational level, but at the end of the day, the change begins with individual interactions, one on one. It begins with each one of us trying to be better and looking out for one another, even if we don’t always agree. Ultimately, that is the whole point of a union—not letting others divide us, but finding the common ground that makes us all stronger. It begins with small acts of kindness and that, to me, was one of the greatest lessons of the day. It was the kindness and courage of others on a day that so many felt very vulnerable that I will ultimately choose to remember the most.

★★★★★★★★★★

*The protesters advertised that they were there because we had negotiated an agreement that would terminate teachers jobs due to the vaccine mandate. However, the MOA actually specifically prevents anyone who is unvaccinated from getting terminated because of their vaccination status. There have also been accusations that we held a vote incorrectly, that I didn’t know what was in the agreement before it was brought to the membership meeting, that we negotiated a “backroom deal” with the mayor or made promises to the mayor without telling the membership. All of these are examples of inaccurate misinformation.



Happy Women's History Month!



Lea Serena
BTU Elementary
Field Representative

Submitted by Tracey Billy,
Librarian at the Mather School

Happy Women's History Month! My mom's birthday is March 8th and so is International Women's Day!! When I was growing up my mom always made sure we knew she was born on Women's Day and that in Cabo Verde, where she was born this was celebrated. My mom was a single mom of three girls and always told us we deserved a seat at every table! She raised us to be independent and strong, but also was

"Women belong in all places where decisions are being made. It shouldn't be that women are the exception."

– Ruth Bader Ginsburg

the life of every party so we always knew how to take breaks!

This month's calendar was submitted by Tracey Billy, a fantastic librarian at the Mather and features amazing books by and about women we love! Amanda Gorman's book *Change Sings* celebrates change. I loved sharing

Amanda Gorman's story with my students. Growing up I also had a speech impediment, my mother loved to tell me I did not fully talk until I was eight and have more than made up for the missed years! Her story inspires all to know we can overcome anything! Then of course, read *Kamala Harris*:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 	2 	3 	4 	5
6	7 	8 	9 	10 	11 	12
13	14 	15 	16 	17 	18 	19
20	21 	22 	23 	24 	25 	26
27	28 	29 	30 	31 		

Rooted in Justice and hear how Kamala Harris accompanied her parents to civil rights marches and teach your students where she is now! These two stories can create a powerful lesson about history and current civis, while inspiring our students to be their very best no matter what! I can also see adding in Stacy Abrams Stacy's Extraordinary Words to continue a lesson of resilience and using your voice for change!

Memory Jars Vera Brosgol is also a great story about a little girl who finds a creative way to collect things she loves! *Your Name is a Song* by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow is a great story that teaches everyone to be proud of their name. It is about a little girl who never wants to go back to school because everyone keeps pronouncing her name wrong until her mother teaches her about all the beauty in her name. This one hits home, as I listen to my name being mispronounced constantly but hope our students are correcting people every single time!

I hope you all are given the opportunity to teach about Women's History Month this March and that all of our students see themselves reflected in our stories! Also Lit with Lea is back in the classrooms! Please sign up for read alouds with me! Meeting your students is the best part of my job! I will leave you all with this quote in honor of the great Audre Lorde: "When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid".

Happy Women's History Month and congrats on another month of helping to encourage our future leaders, may they always be powerful!

The Boston Globe Salutes BPS Retired Teacher Edith Bazile During Black History Month for Making a Difference

On February 19, 2022, *The Boston Globe* ran the following story by Naomi Martin honoring BTU retired teacher Edith Bazile. Here is what the *Boston Globe* wrote:

Edith Bazile is long-retired from Boston Public Schools, but she still spends her time

there, challenging leaders to offer better educational opportunities to Black and Latino students and those with disabilities.

"When are we going to stop the madness?" Bazile, a past president of Black Educators' Alliance of Massachusetts who taught and supervised special education

in BPS for 32 years, asked at a public meeting last year. "Adults are creating policies that shut out, particularly Black students, out. Black students are our most underperforming students, not because they're not capable, but because they have not gotten an opportunity."

Despite Bazile's criticism of BPS, Superintendent Brenda Cassellius has often tapped her for help.

"She never misses an opportunity to remind us of our moral obligation to prioritize the way we serve Black students – and all students, especially those with disabilities," Cassellius said.

Bazile's mission stems from her lifelong experience with BPS. Growing up poor in Roxbury with 13 siblings in the 1950s, Bazile was taught to value education; her father couldn't afford books, but he made his children read textbooks gleaned from his orderly job. Bazile was the first one to attend college. Some of her siblings dropped out of BPS, she said, pointing to their all-white teachers' low expectations of Black students. Others landed in special education where their needs, and

talents, were ignored, later becoming institutionalized, unemployed, or drug-addicted. Bazile's teachers told her she wasn't smart. She remembers writing a poem in 7th grade; her teacher, believing Bazile incapable, accused her of plagiarism and ripped it up.

Working for BPS, Bazile pushed for more literacy services for Black male students and fought their over-assignment to separate, under-supported classrooms for supposed behavioral problems when they really hadn't been taught to read, a problem she says continues today.

"As a school district, we need to do better," Bazile said. "There's money to fund programs so we don't have these problems where students don't get an education and we perpetuate the wealth gap. But we're going backwards. That's where I feel the urgency – but I also do have hope."



You can follow Edith Bazile on Twitter at @edith_bazile and/or reach her by email at esbazile@gmail.com

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.



Thank you to our friends at Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts for including us in their Cookies For A Cause initiative!

After receiving this generous donation of thousands of cookies, we were able to Share The Love with our awesome educators.

We felt the love when you stopped by on Valentine's Day, and for that we are grateful!



Jinny Chalmers Fund Grant Proposals Welcome

The **Jinny Chalmers Fund for Education Justice** is seeking funding proposals for projects aimed at furthering excellent, inclusive education and racial justice for children and families in Greater Boston.

Applications will be considered during three funding cycles in 2022: April, July and October.

Visit www.JinnyChalmersFund.org to:

- Read the Fund's Inaugural Report and learn about 2021 grantees
- Download the 2022 Grant Application
- Learn more about Jinny Chalmers and the Chalmers Fund

Retired Teachers Chapter Sandra Carle, Lawrence J. Connolly & Janey Frank, RTC Legislative Committee

Attention Active and Future Retirees – **YOUR PUBLIC PENSION!**

Whether you are currently retired, about to retire, or thirty years from retirement, your public pension holds great power over how you live the last thirty or forty years of your life.

Be assured that the RTC Legislative Committee has been working hard for over a decade to advocate for a fair Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) on your behalf. This year we have written to the mayor, all thirteen city councilors, and all members of the Boston Retirement Board asking them to support raising the COLA base to \$18,000. **We are asking you to do likewise.** Every one of us is feeling the impact of the largest jump in inflation in 38 years, facing astronomical price increases in food, gas, housing, health care and medications, and so much more. Think of how this affects you as a retiree, or how it may affect you in the future. One stark change, for instance, changes in the City health insurance for retirees raised drug copays up to 150% in some cases!! Your elected officials need to and are eager to hear your personal stories. Tell them how you have been adversely affected by rising costs and how a raise in the COLA is only fair.

If you are a Boston resident, contact Mayor **Michelle Wu**, the four at-large councilors, your district councilor, and the five members of the Retirement Board. Tell them you are writing or E-mailing as an employee or retiree/constituent and your vote for them

is conditioned on their support of a decent pension COLA for you. Non-Boston residents may choose to E-mail so that your residential address doesn't appear. You are integral to how this city functions, so they should listen to all workers. Also remember, you vote for the two union members who serve and represent you on the Retirement Board every two years.

Here is a little background information to help support your requests:

Massachusetts public retirees do not have terrific benefits. Boston has been paying high rates of contribution for some of the stingiest benefits in the nation. In fact, Buck Consultants, a nationwide public actuarial firm, found that **when the lack of Social Security benefits is factored into the picture, we are in the bottom 25% in the country**

Massachusetts is one of only seven states that does not pay Social Security benefits to any of its employees which **saves huge amounts for the public employer while the public employee loses out on considerable benefits.** Massachusetts never paid into Social Security/Medicare but the State mandated Medicare in 2010, saving itself tens of millions in health care contributions.. Furthermore,

The RTC office is open on Wednesday and Thursday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

Massachusetts governmental bodies pay less than 3% (excluding unfunded liability make-up payments) compared to the majority of state pensions which give a Consumer Price Index (C.P.I.) increase on the entire pension or substantially all of the pension. The **unfunded liability** is clearly **not of the employees' doing.**

In 2010, Chapter 188 of the Acts of 2010 was passed, removing the set cap of \$12,000 entirely, but still retaining the 3%. A number of cities and towns and various county systems have increased the base since then. Some went, immediately, to \$18,000, though Boston has gone only to \$15,000 as of July of 2021.

Boston currently has an anticipated return rate of 7.0% to meet its full funding. Over the past 35 years, it has surpassed that by about 2.5% on an annualized basis. In the past three years, both Boston and State returns on assets are more than twice, even approaching triple that rate. In addition, **Boston has the highest bond rating of any major city in the USA and tax revenue is growing at an unbelievable rate.**

The City and the Retirement Board are in as great a **financial** position as they will ever be to raise the base. It is not for a lack of financial ability or pension

fund returns that the base is not at least \$18,000, but for a lack of commitment by previous administrations. Investment returns at the Board, tax revenues for the City, and an unbelievable infusion of COVID funding by both the Trump and Biden administrations have left them at a loss of how to spend the influx. In 2020, the assets in the State fund grew by almost \$10 billion and only \$1.5 billion was needed to pay all its pension benefits. **Where is the fiduciary responsibility when we see no benefit from the return on our assets?**

Also, in 2020, the Retirement Board moved the full funding date from FY2025 to FY2027 in a proactive, but unnecessary move to protect the City treasury, as a result of COVID. **Why don't we use funds from that two-year move to cover the increased base with no adverse impact to the City or Board?**

Let the writing begin!

Contact the mayor and councilors at: City of Boston, 1 City Hall Square, Suite 550, Boston, MA 02201-2043 or visit <https://www.boston.gov/departments/city-council> for their E-mail addresses and phone numbers.

Contact the Boston Retirement System at Timothy J. Smith, Esquire, Executive Officer, Boston Retirement System, Boston City Hall Room 816, Boston, MA 02201 or visit <https://www.boston.gov/departments/retirement> for their E-mail addresses.



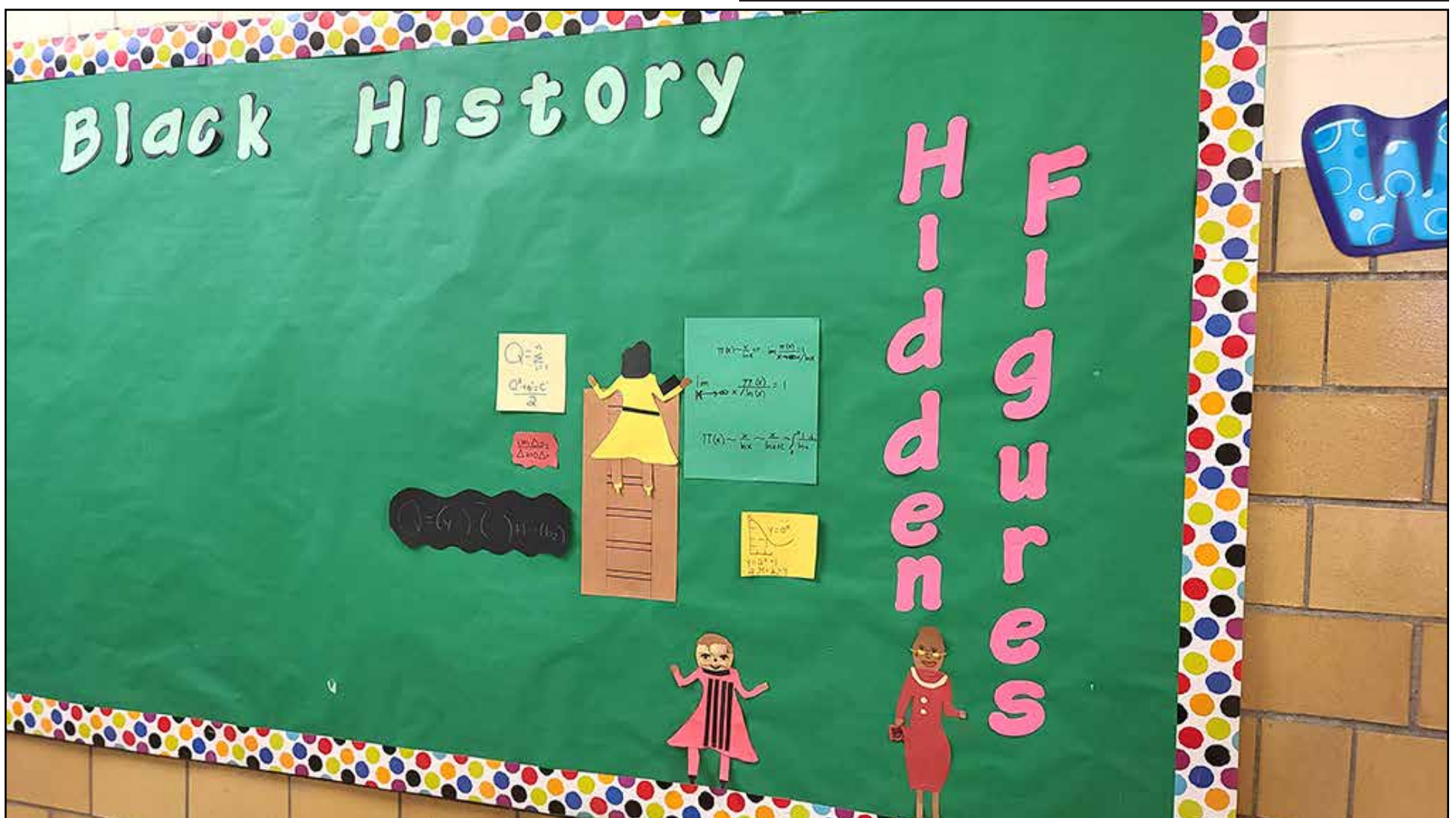
Sumner staff - 2nd grade teacher Karen Patricia, Secretary Cynthia Wiggins and 2nd grade Teacher Ms. Pam Brodie.



2nd grade teacher Pamela Brodie at the Sumner Elementary School.



Sumner School Celebrates Black History Month
Photos by Adrienne Jordan



Ms. Jordan's Black History Board in the making of "Hidden Figures."