

CELEBRATE



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180 Mount Vernon Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02125



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Permit No. 52088

Boston Union Teacher



The Award-Winning Newspaper of the Boston Teachers Union, AFT Local 66, AFL-CIO Volume 53, Number 5 • February, 2021

President's Report Jessica J. Tang

Building A Bridge to A Better Future

The month of January and beginning of 2021, like much of 2020, was unprecedented and historic. While we watched in horror as events unfolded on January 6 as a violent mob descended on the Capitol, two weeks later we also watched the deeply moving inauguration of President **Joe Biden** and Vice President **Kamala Harris**. During the international AFT watch party, eyes were brimming with tears of joy, relief, hope and pride.

This new administration is our hope for the future. As the young poet laureate **Amanda Gorman** recited that day, "Somehow we've weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken, but simply unfinished." There is much work to be done to repair the harms and rebuild not just our nation, but our communities, our relationships, our schools and so much

more. However, we are not broken, our advocacy must continue and our fight for all forms of justice must continue.

There is some silver lining: With our growing collective power, throughout this pandemic, we have been able to win five reopening related agreements: The first in the spring and then four more throughout this school year. The fights have sparked growing activism and while the agreements have not been perfect, they were significant and absolutely impacted the trajectory of this year and protected lives. Getting those agreements has not been an easy feat, and it has not been an easy process as we responded to an unprecedented situation, but they are five more agreements that most unions across the nation were unable to achieve and that others are still fighting for.

However, the process and reopening fights have sown rifts and divisions

amongst our union and community. There have been no easy solutions as we balance the priority of safety and health of all with the needs of students and families who have not been given the financial support or assistance they need to stay at home with their children, stay housed and stay fed. Instead, parents are forced to go to work to pay bills or face eviction, foreclosures and put their lives and their loved one's lives as risk — including our own members. There are strong feelings on all sides of the struggle and no one group is monolithic.

Regardless, educators have worked tirelessly to support their students and struggling families, while also trying to support their own children's learning and meet their family's needs at the same time. Despite these herculean efforts, inequities continue to grow and there is no strong consensus in our communities



Jessica J. Tang
BTU President

about how to best address all of the needs and balance the priorities as metrics change, understanding of the Covid 19 virus changes, and the virus itself literally evolves. The incoming influx of support and resources in President Biden's first Executive orders and new \$1.9 trillion relief bill is a sign of much overdue change and help to come.

And while we have many challenges yet to overcome, there is hope on the horizon. And as we enter the next phase of school reopening, particularly during Black History Month, we must continue to center our work through a lens of racial justice.

January 20, 2021 was a symbol and start for new beginnings. We will have to work together, have tough conversations, engage in dialogue, and sometimes put our differences aside and remember how much more we have in common with each other as we continue to build the bridges we need to strengthen our union, build power and reach the goal we are continuously striving for: the schools and communities our students, educators and families all deserve.

As **Amanda Gorman** also recited on Inauguration Day:

"If we're to live up to our own time, then victory won't lie in the blade. But in all the bridges we've made, that is the promise to glade, the hill we climb. If only we dare."

Our nation must heal and our union and communities must, too, by continuing to build and mend bridges. Our union members are a reflection of this nation and it is up to us. We can and must continue to lead, to keep climbing and keep daring to do what is right as we move forward together, **BTU All-In**.

The Hill We Climb by Amanda Gorman, America's Young Poet Laureate

When day comes we ask ourselves,
where can we find light in this never-ending shade?
The loss we carry, a sea we must wade.
We've braved the belly of the beast,
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace, and the norms and notions of what just is isn't always just-ice.
And yet the dawn is ours before we knew it.
Somehow we do it.
Somehow we've weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken, but simply unfinished.
We the successors of a country and a time
where a skinny Black girl descended from slaves and raised by a single mother can dream of becoming president only to find herself reciting for one.
And yes we are far from polished,
Far from pristine.
But that doesn't mean we are striving to form a union that is perfect.
We are striving to forge a union with purpose,
to compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and conditions of man.
And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us,
but what stands before us.
We close the divide because we know, to put our future first,
we must first put our differences aside.
We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms
to one another.
We seek harm to none and harmony for all.
Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true,
that even as we grieved, we grew,
that even as we hurt, we hoped,
that even as we tired, we tried,
that we'll forever be tied together, victorious.

Not because we will never again know defeat,
but because we will never again sow division.
Scripture tells us to envision
that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree
and no one shall make them afraid.
If we're to live up to our own time,
then victory won't lie in the blade.
But in all the bridges we've made,
that is the promise to glade,
the hill we climb.
If only we dare.
It's because being American is more than a pride we inherit,
it's the past we step into
and how we repair it.
We've seen a force that would shatter our nation
rather than share it.
Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy.
And this effort very nearly succeeded.
But while democracy can be periodically delayed,
it can never be permanently defeated.
In this truth, in this faith we trust.
For while we have our eyes on the future,
history has its eyes on us.
This is the era of just redemption
we feared at its inception.
We did not feel prepared to be the heirs
of such a terrifying hour
but within it we found the power
to author a new chapter.
To offer hope and laughter to ourselves.
So while once we asked,
how could we possibly prevail over catastrophe?

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To Our Next Mayor

February, 2021

Future Mayor of Boston
1 City Hall Square
Suite 500
Boston, MA 02201-2013

Dear Future Mayor:

Congratulations on your splendid achievement. You have worked hard, spend many nights away from home meeting with your fellow Bostonians, and have demonstrated an unswerving dedication to our city. You are the embodiment of civic pride and responsibility.

I have heard you - and many of you competitors - say that nothing is more important to our city than its youth. I have heard you say that education is a priority. We all applauded you when you said that you would be a strong advocate for the Boston Public Schools. Such is the reason for my letter to you today.

Our students are amazing people. They are weathering a storm the likes of which the adults in their lives have never experienced. Many students are in fact taking on the roles of adults in helping their younger siblings navigate the many demands - and the many tabs - of remote learning; all while keeping up with their own studies. Yes, remote learning has been hard on us teachers too, but we at least can orchestrate the curricula; the students have to play the music as the notes are being written on the pages.

Resilient may be the best way to describe their generation.

Nonetheless we, the adults, are their caretakers. In fact it is you who must become a better steward than your predecessors. Our school buildings are crumbling, quite literally in too many cases. Our transportation system was imperfect before the pandemic, it is utterly in shamble now. Our curricula was too heavy on bubble tests and too light on recess, creativity, the arts, et cetera.

The problems listed above are not your fault, but they are now your problem. Please know that you are not in this struggle alone. The teachers are willing to help you.

School Buildings

Our school buildings are suffering from decades after decades of deferred maintenance. Even pre-COVID our ventilation systems were poor and in some cases unhealthy. The vast majority of schools lack modern HVAC systems. Forget about HEPA filtration systems, these schools have some combination of no air conditioning, uneven heating, sealed windows, windows which bearly open, and dust or mold or mouse droppings in the vents.

Whatever happened to BuildBPS? One billion dollars over ten years may have sounded impressive but that was only \$100m extra each year, hardly enough to repair the decades of not-so-

benign neglect. How many buildings are now modernized as a result of BuildBPS? (Insert the sound of cricket's chirping here.)

Transportation

Moving students from their homes to their schools is a challenge in any district. In Boston we shall now suffer even more so from reduced MBTA services. In recent years the service of the yellow school busses has been unsatisfactory, often by having students arriving late to school. Now in the time of COVID, transportation is an even bigger issue. What are your plans to transport our students to and from school?

Start and Stop Times

Intertwined with transportation, school start and stop times became a controversy recently when the BPS asked MIT to program an algorithm to determine optimal start and stop times. A noble goal indeed. The project was doomed to failure because its primary goal was to cut costs. In the aftermath of parent protests, the school committee said it would re-evaluate and come up with another plan. We. Are. Still. Waiting.

Changing school start and stop times is even more important due to the pandemic. I am a high school teacher so in my case my students used to start school at 7:20 in the morning. (I believe Boston Latin Academy has the earliest start time in the district.) During remote learning my students now start school at 9:00 a.m. Are we really going to simply revert to the "good ol' days," or are we going to come up with a rational way to allow teenagers to sleep later?

Representation

The Boston School Committee is composed of dedicated individuals who profess to having the best interests of the students at heart. I do not doubt their sincerity, as I have interviewed each and every one of them. I represent the Boston Teachers Union on the Citizens Nominating Panel and have had conversations with all the current members of the school committee. Some I have liked more than others. But my opinion is insignificant compared to the opinions of all the parents who send their children to the Boston Public Schools.



Michael J. Maguire
Boston Union Teacher
Co-Editor

Will you, as our new mayor, allow the parents of Boston to vote for their school committee?

Remote Learning

Please, I implore you not to use the phrase "learning loss" when you discuss the current state of education. Our students are surviving a pandemic, and they are doing so with grace and dignity. Any pre-pandemic goal posts are mere suggestions at best this year. Most importantly we have to make our students know that we care about them. There will be plenty of time to "make up" what was missed. While remote learning is not the same as in person instruction, it can be used as a tool to help children to prepare for the world around them.

MCAS

Please join with educators around the state who are calling for a multi-year moratorium on the MCAS. There is no equitable way to administer such an exam. Indeed even if we return to full time, in person instruction tomorrow, it will take a couple of years to get the students back on track. Any standardized test in the next few years will be meaningless. Let's not waste what precious time we have with students on exams which only accurately measure the household income of the students.

Lunch

The Boston Public Schools has done, and is continuing to do, great work distributing food to our students. When we do return to in person learning we need not only to address how we feed our students, but we also have to vastly improve what we serve to our students. A few years ago I started inviting civic leaders to have school lunch with me. Will you join me (again)?

Field Trips

Once we are back in the buildings, we cannot simply carry on as if nothing had happened to our students. They will have spent over a year inside their homes. When we are given the all clear to resume normal life again, we owe it to our students to show them the city around them. Will you pledge that every student, in every school and in every grade, will get at least one field trip in the first year we return to in person learning?

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,
Michael J. Maguire

AFT President on Biden COVID-19 Rescue Package

American Federation of Teachers President **Randi Weingarten** issued the following statement as President-elect **Joe Biden** released his comprehensive COVID-19 rescue package tonight:

"We are grateful that someone is finally acting like a real president. Joe Biden is meeting the moment — a moment of deep national crisis, a worsening virus, a weakening economy and a growing number of struggling Americans — with tangible actions for emergency relief. Our country is crying out for a leader prepared to truly fight COVID-19 and help us recover, and this package shows

the Biden administration is ready to hit the ground running.

"We are also grateful for a congressional leadership that will work with Joe to overcome these crises, while simultaneously acting to defend our democracy. The AFT will join them to distribute the vaccine, scale testing, expand healthcare, maintain public services and safely reopen school buildings within the first 100 days. These actions will give families and communities the chance to thrive after so many months, and years, of pain — and we can't wait to get started."

The Hill We Climb

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Now we assert,
How could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?
We will not march back to what was,
but move to what shall be.
A country that is bruised but whole,
benevolent but bold, fierce and free.
We will not be turned around
or interrupted by intimidation,
because we know our inaction and inertia
will be the inheritance of the next generation.
Our blunders become their burdens.
But one thing is certain,
If we merge mercy with might, and might with right,
then love becomes our legacy,
and change our children's birthright.
So let us leave behind a country
better than the one we were left with.

Every breath from my bronze-pounded chest,
we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one.
We will rise from the gold-limbed hills of the west.
We will rise from the windswept northeast,
where our forefathers first realized revolution.
We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the midwestern states.
We will rise from the sunbaked south.
We will rebuild, reconcile and recover.
And every known nook of our nation and
every corner called our country,
our people diverse and beautiful will emerge, battered and beautiful.
When day comes we step out of the shade, aflame and unafraid,
the new dawn blooms as we free it.
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it.

What is the role of the School Site Council's Personnel Subcommittee in hiring?

The role of the Personnel Subcommittee of the SSC is mandated to:

- 1) Interview and approve the hiring of BTU teachers' bargaining unit staff, the in-transfer of BTU teachers' bargaining unit staff from other schools in the system through the transfer as well as inside teachers and outside applicants to the Open Posting lists throughout the entire school year.
- 2) Approve the selection of Lead Teachers, [school-based] New Teacher Developers, and new athletic coaches; and
- 3) Determine the schedules and procedures for reviewing candidates for positions.

The Personnel Subcommittee is comprised of the Principal/Head of School/Director, 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/Head of School/Director 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 poses more expertise in a particular position to be filled. Elected 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 can *not* 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 poses 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. There is a Superintendent's Circular on-line at the BPS website detailing the SSC Personnel Subcommittee's function and protocol. Please refer to it for details.

How are bylaws/operational procedures for SSC's determined?

Each School-Site Council determines most of its own operating procedures through the adoption of SSC bylaws. Each SSC is required to pass bylaws to govern its operation. The bylaws must be approved by two-thirds of the BTU members in the school and by two-thirds of the parents who come to a parent meeting for which there must be at least two weeks notice.

The SSC bylaws must include the following operational procedures: how elections will be organized and conducted; when meetings will be held; the notice procedure for announcing meetings; who is responsible for co-chairing the SSC with the Principal and for recording minutes; what the system is for selecting alternates who have the same racial identity as the members they would be representing; the terms of office and how they will be staggered; and what the salary is in regards to members who fail to regularly attend.

The bylaws may also include provisions that address the following: what subcommittees will be established in addition to the Personnel Subcommittee; if a portion of each meeting is set aside for public comment by individuals in attendance who are not SSC members; how the SSC will inform the wider school community of its decisions and activities; where minutes will be posted and distributed; what the process is for amending the bylaws.

Do itinerants get a place to secure files in schools they service?

There is an item in the contract that addresses this issue. It is found under a new area, Article VII, Section A, 18 and states; *"The school committee agrees to provide a lockable file cabinet in each school and location serviced by itinerants (e.g., school psychologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech and language pathologists) for secure storage of student records."* Please let the BTU know if this is not occurring.

What do I do if I'm injured on the job?

Even if you feel as if your injury is relatively minor, one never knows if there may be complications later, so please immediately fill out City of Boston - Worker's Compensation Services - Report of Occupational Injury or Accident found in Superintendent's Circular HRS-PP7, Workers' Compensation Procedures. You can download it from the BPS website or get a copy from your school secretary or nurse. All work related injuries must be reported as soon as possible, preferably within a day of the accident. The Workers' Compensation Service is on the sixth floor, room 613 in Boston City Hall. To contact a case manager there, call 617-635-3193.

If your injury requires emergency services you should go to the nearest emergency care facility, make sure someone completes the accident form mentioned above for you or contacts the Workers' Compensation Department within 24 hours. Do not assume this has been done, follow-up on it when able. The written reports can be hand delivered or mailed to the address listed above or faxed to 617-635-3119. If some of the info asked for on the form is unknown to the person filling it out for you, it should be left blank and the form should still be sent in to Workers' Comp. A supervisor's signature is required on this form only to inform them that the injury occurred and does not mean that they either agree with the contents of said form or that they witnessed the accident. Always keep copies of everything for your own records.

Your first follow up appointment after the emergency care must be with one of the City's preferred provider medical vendors. The list of these sites is in Superintendent's Circular HRS-PP7. You will be contacted by a Workers' Comp. representative as a follow-up to the report you filed, to explain the process, and to make sure you are getting the necessary medical treatment. If you are not contacted, call the number listed above to insure they are in receipt of your accident report. Always make sure you write down the date, time, to whom you spoke and what they said. Failure to do so lessens the efficacy of follow through later should a dispute arise. This is also the case when dealing with BPS Office of Human Capital. If your accident is not an emergency, your first scheduled appointment must be with one of their preferred providers as listed in the circular HRS-PP7. If you do not do so, you may then be charged for the service. Please see the circular for more specifics about Workers'



Caren Carew
BTU Secondary
Field Representative

Comp. If you have been out of work and have been approved for Workers' Comp. benefits, and then are able to return to work, you must obtain a medical clearance from your doctor releasing you. You will then receive a return to work release card from Workers' Comp. Even if your injury isn't serious, it's always better to be safe than sorry to document the injury - fill out and submit the form.

Who's 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."*

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"*

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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

Boston Teachers Union,
AFT Local 66, AFL-CIO

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

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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 to the publication, and in good taste. Letters to the Editor should be sent to letters@btu.org

DEADLINE:
The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue of the *Boston Union Teacher* is February 10th. All copy should be e-mailed to mmaguire@btu.org and gvirchick@btu.org. This deadline will be strictly adhered to.

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The Education of a Nation

Schooling, Conspiracy Theories and Changing How We Teach

It is incumbent on us, as the frontline defense against ignorance, to look closely at what has happened to our country over the last 4+ years. Free speech has come to mean spewing hate, lies, and conspiracy theories to achieve whatever end one deems important.

I never used to think the 1980s were a bright time in American education. A Nation at Risk had just been published which was the opening salvo in the war against America's public schools. But in the 1980s I had so much more freedom in the classroom than today's teachers. And I took full advantage of that freedom.

As a new teacher I came into the profession with new ideas that might unleash the critical and creative thinking of my students. As a biology teacher I felt that this kind of education was essential for building scientific literacy in the nation's children. After all, the nation's children were going to grow up to be the voting public. And the voters had to elect leaders to tackle the complex problems of life in the late 20th century and beyond. We knew then that global warming would be an issue requiring changes to the way we lived on planet

Earth. And there was no time to waste.

In 1986, I was using a textbook that included a whole slew of activities on critical and creative thinking developed at UMass-Boston. Many of the activities concentrated on building reasoning skills in students. Ordering Information, Compare and Contrast, and Classifying Objects were some of the lessons designed to build higher level thinking in students. And every activity had prompts that asked students to think about their thinking in order to build an awareness or cognition that would last beyond the immediate lesson.

The first three activities were important to anyone looking to understand science. Observation, Using Primary Sources, and Secondary Sources. When we look back on the last four years, years filled with lies and conspiracy theories that led to an armed attack on the nation's Capitol by white supremacists, Nazis, and QAnon conspiracy theories all essentially brainwashed by politicians unwilling to give up power, we should take seriously the importance of building an educated citizenry capable of discerning truth from lies and reality from conspiracy.

Observation, Using Primary Sources, and Secondary Sources are essential lessons. And many teachers in science, history, language arts, and math still try and build those kinds of activities into their curriculum. But as schools and education were taken over by the gods of standardized testing it became increasingly difficult to build the kind of critical thinking into the biology curriculum.

When I think back to the science I was taught in high school the depth of information we were expected to digest paled in comparison to the depth of information 20 years later when I first became a teacher. In 2021 the textbook I was using in high school would look virtually prehistoric. And the breadth of information we are expected to cover to ensure "success" on the Biology MCAS test makes it difficult to spend a lot of time on the deep cognitive development of students that is necessary to create a critical thinking citizenry.

I am not an education researcher. And my understanding of the effects of 20 years of standardized testing on American students is not based on an exhaustive study. But the questions I pose here



Garret Virchick
Boston Union Teacher
Co-Editor

are still important. Why did over seventy million Americans believe the lies? Why do conspiracy theories flourish in this country? How do we have to change education to confront the scientific and social illiteracy that led thousands of our fellow citizens to feel they were justified in following the rantings of an authoritarian whose only goal was power and profit?

The pandemic has put a stop to the standardized testing that has been a plague on our schools. It is incumbent on all of us to insist on its elimination going forward. And in its place propose a system of education that values critical and creative thinking. The kind of thinking that citizens of the modern will need to live productive and full lives.



News from the American Federation of Teachers

AFT's Randi Weingarten on President Biden's Executive Order on Safely Opening Schools

American Federation of Teachers President **Randi Weingarten** issued the following statement as President **Joe Biden** prepared to sign an executive order to formulate a national strategy to safely reopen schools in the first 100 days of his administration:

"Finally, we have a president who is committed to doing what educators, parents and students have yearned for since the first weeks of the pandemic — a real national plan to crush COVID that follows the science and secures the resources to make in-school learning safe.

"All too often in this crisis, educators' concerns were dismissed or derided to downplay or minimize the virus. We are already seeing the opposite with the Biden administration: They recognize that safety is paramount, and we are working with them to relay the direct experience of teachers who've tried valiantly to educate their kids absent any federal leadership or support.

"This executive order will produce guidance that embeds and disseminates best practices — based on the science — for safe and effective in-person, remote and hybrid learning. It will source emergency supplies, such as personal protective equipment for schools and childcare providers. It will help establish early warning and screening systems — including testing and contact tracing — and require school districts to consult teachers and their unions to make these plans happen. It will kick-start the

equitable rollout of vaccinations and accommodations for educators who need them.

"Crucially, we are grateful the president recognizes the pandemic is rapidly evol-

AFT on Nomination of Marty Walsh as Labor Secretary

American Federation of Teachers President **Randi Weingarten** and Boston Teachers Union President **Jessica Tang** issued the following statements after President-elect **Joe Biden** nominated Boston Mayor **Marty Walsh** to be the next U.S. secretary of labor.

The AFT's Weingarten said: "While wealthy Americans have done extraordinarily well in the last two decades, too many workers have lived paycheck to paycheck, with COVID-19 making the divide even worse. Workers need a champion in Washington — and Marty Walsh would be a crucial addition to an administration dedicated to fighting for the forgotten and rebuilding an enduring middle class.

"Marty comes from a union family and a union town. He's walked picket lines and knows workers' struggles and power when they come together. He's dedicated his career to getting things done — as a union rep battling for decent wages, healthcare and retirement security — and as a Mayor knowing a well-trained and prepared workforce builds back better, whether it's infrastructure, manufacturing, public schools or other services.

"Marty will hit the ground running as a relentless worker advocate and ally, both

inside the administration and in the public sphere. He will fight for dignity and respect for all workers, including for their right to unionize, for health and safety standards, to raise the minimum wage and to ensure workers and their unions have an opportunity to thrive. And he will help reverse President Trump's four years of callous and craven attacks.

"Yesterday was a new day in America.

"The path to a better America runs through the labor movement, as the largest organized force for equality and justice. With Marty's confirmation, workers will have a trusted partner at the Department of Labor to get the job done."

The BTU's Tang said: "We applaud the appointment of Martin J. Walsh as the new U.S. secretary of labor. He will be a tremendous asset to the nation and to the Biden-Harris administration as they advance a pro-worker and pro-union agenda to build back better for the benefit of all working people. Incoming Secretary Walsh has been a champion for the public good and for the rights of working people throughout his organizing, legislative and mayoral career.

"He will assuredly help to lead the U.S. Department of Labor toward a revitalized focus on lifting up the rights and needs of workers, rather than tearing down the

rights of workers, as was unfortunately done through the Trump administration's cynical abuses and misapplications of the powers vested in the Department of Labor. Walsh has fought for the interests of workers throughout his entire career — as a union organizer, as a legislator and as mayor — and Boston communities have benefited tremendously from his leadership.

There will be daunting challenges, but President Biden, Vice President Harris and their administration are meeting the moment. This week's executive orders are a vital first step."

"While, naturally, we have at times had disagreements, he has always committed to working through them and finding a solution. In negotiations, he has been supportive, fair and focused on what he feels is best for workers and the community, all through the lens of someone who truly respects and knows deeply firsthand the importance of organized labor in building a better future for our city and for our nation.

"Along with our colleagues across the AFT, the Boston Teachers Union will work hard to support the vision that we share with the Biden-Harris administration and with Walsh of a future in which every student and worker is able to access the education, training and other opportunities necessary to achieve safe, rewarding careers and healthy lives."

The BTU Congratulates the 2020 High School Scholarship Recipients

We apologize for the delay in publishing these names. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the BTU did not hold its traditional breakfast celebration for the scholarship recipients and their families. Nonetheless we congratulate the hard work of the recipients and know that they are doing well in their continuing education.

ACC

Kaylin Gomes

BATA

Haoran Yang

Boston Arts Academy

Jacob Downey
Jaylah Gulley

BCLA

Fena Lopez
Christopher Supplice

Boston Day/Evening Academy

Erin McIssac

Boston Green Academy

Nancy Costanza
Charlie Watson

Boston International

Daphcar Borgelin

Boston Latin Academy

Brianna Bourne
Robert Hampton

Boston Latin School

Emily Jerome
Luke Van Reijendam

Brighton

Nazim Begum
Valerie Zambrano

Burke

Caitlin Bryan
Mileidy Rocha

Charlestown

Shemaiah Henry
Sebastian Plaza Ortiz

Community Academy of Science & Health

Joel Emil Blake
Rickanya Paulissant

East Boston

Katerine Cruz
Cristina Mendoza

English (Doherty Scholar)

Brandon Peña
Suane Smith

Excel

Shanice Bettick
Djessy Kunga

Fenway

Cynthia Hyde
José Gonzalez

Greater Eggleston

Clarinda Antunes Amado

Henderson Inclusion Upper

Talia Marc

Horace Mann School for the Deaf

Andy Chow

Kennedy Academy

Odayra Pimental Castillo
Milicah Turner

Mary Lyon

Luke Harrington

Madison Park

Nahoris Oleo Felix
Zashari Sanchez

Madison Park (Pirrone Award)

Samantha Decius
Pablo Ruiz

McKinley Prep

Mmafode Sulia

McKinley S.E. Academy

Sabrina Ortiz Romero

Margarita Muñoz Academy

Leidy Ramos
Jazmin Aracely Rodriguez

New Mission

Joseph Acquah
Chelseae Simpson

O'Bryant

Raully Fabian
Jimelca Suarez

Ostiguy

Luke Boyd

Quincy Upper

Tiffany Lok

Snowden

Jiayi Chen
Trevor Gittens

Tech Boston Academy

Keyshawn Barnes Lacey
Tamika Fleuranville

USA/WREC

Yvette Oriakhi

Dependent Scholarship Winners

Liliana Allegro
Ava Baldasari
Brianna Chevalier (Humphries is Mom)
Nicolina Farmer
Daphne Freeman
Ethan Gearey
Dylan Gomes
Caitlin Lydon
Ryan McCarthy
Robert McNeil
Conor Murphy
Trinity Rist
Ella Simring
Madalyn Spitz
Madisyn Vieira
Kathleen Yeomans

Retired Teachers

Anne Gallivan
Gabriel Gomez
Autumn Johnson

George McGrimley

Louisa Sullivan



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 **Jeannie Turner** at jturner@btu.org or download the form from the BTU website 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 2020; and 4) a one-page statement of the dependent's professional goals. The application and the four supporting documents must be received in the Union office **no later than April 23, 2021.**

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.

To apply, please obtain an application from **Jeannie Turner** at jturner@btu.org or download the form from the BTU website. **The deadline to apply is April 23, 2021.** Envelope must be postmarked by this date.

Teacher-Powered Schools

I'm a fan of using a story to illustrate my point. Some have noted my excessive use of metaphors when I'm attempting to explain something and am politely amused. I hope, gentle reader, this is you. Before I go on about the Teacher Powered Schools virtual conference I attended in October, I present a related story, about my trip to the mechanic.

The Parable of the Auto Mechanic

One summer afternoon, the check engine light went off on my dashboard. I frequently play that game with the dashboard alerts, my favorite being how long I can drive with the "gas low" light before I have to push my car uphill. Though I haven't lost that particular game, I never play around with the check engine light. I had to think back to the last time I had my oil changed and estimated that it was probably time to get those fluids topped off. The sticker the dealer placed in the window confirmed it; though I didn't reach the mileage number, the lapsed months surely matched my estimate.



I pulled into my local service station where I normally get gas which is conveniently next door to the library. I spoke with the gas station attendant, let him know what my problem was and asked how long he thinks the job will take. He mumbles something about it taking an hour so I head over to the library to check on a few books. Close to an hour later, I walked back with a bag full of books to notice my car was not in front where I left it. It is not on the lift, not at the pumps, it has seemingly disappeared. Trying to seem calm while my heart raced, I went back to the gas station attendant, who was actually pumping gas, and he brushed me towards the office.

The grease stained mechanic asked, "Where you been? Your car's been done for a while. I parked it on the side so I could get other cars in here." He pointed to the fence where my car sat forlornly waiting for me to rescue it.

I apologize profusely. "The guy on the pumps said it would take an hour, I was in the library."

"Nah, a twenty minute job. I coulda told ya. You shoulda asked me," he said with a smirk as he rang me up.

I felt utterly ridiculous as I drove away in my fully hydrated car. Bottom line: If you want to know about the work, ask the people who are actually getting their hands dirty doing it.

Harnessing the Power of Teachers

Teacher-Powered schools are not a new invention. Across the country and in our own district, schools are driving innovation and meeting student needs by cooperatively making the decisions that help schools run smoothly. Not all look alike. While some schools retain the role of principal to complete much of the administrative work, others, like BTU Pilot, are run by lead teachers. In either model, final decisions are made by teacher teams and in some cases the full faculty. Teacher teams are responsible for hiring, budget, curriculum, and in some cases evaluation. **As teachers are the ones responsible for actively doing the work of teaching, planning and leading, it follows that collaborative groups of teachers at a school site are best equipped to make innovative changes necessary to drive student progress and achievement.** When I asked a colleague what teacher powered meant to them they remarked, "Teacher-Powered schools empower teacher voice without the threat of slander or termination. Our expertise is respected. The environment is more collegial. The morale is high. But, for these types of schools to work, everyone has to believe in the model." Those who are curious about how to harness the power of teachers in schools through the shared leadership model do not need to look far from your own backyard. Many of our fellow BTU members are redesigning schools of the future through teacher led schools.

The Network and Conference

As schools began popping up around the country, a network grew in 2014 tying these schools together. What began as a vehicle to share ideas, best practices, and highlight successes, the Teacher-Powered Schools Network grew over time to provide supports for members, offer opportunities for cross country collegiality, and build awareness of the movement to the uninitiated. Above all, though the mission is about the power of teachers, we use this power in service to all of our students. Despite the rhetoric of systems and media outlets that gleefully report the contrary, the learning and growth of our students is the center of all that we do. As this was my first time attending the conference, I connected immediately with the theme, Teacher-Powered Odyssey: Rethinking Power in Education. It gave me the opportunity to learn more about how schools amplified teacher power to work in the hybrid or remote model of instruction. If you can think back to October when we were all searching for models of how to teach better remotely, how to dispel the myth of



simultaneous teaching, and how to make strong connections to our students and help us all feel less isolated, this conference was what I was looking for to help me connect to a community that seemed to have everything figured out. I wanted to see those muscles being flexed, that teacher power in action.

This year the national conference, often held in cities with the largest concentration of schools in the network, was held virtually for obvious reasons. The virtual format allowed presenters to reach a larger audience. One major advantage of presenting rich content in the virtual space is accessibility. Often a conference is far too expensive to attend when held in a different state or country if you have to add travel, hotel, meals, in addition to the conference fees. To allow more diverse participation, this conference was free and as close as your wifi signal. Where only smaller teams could visit a school in person, virtual school tours and staff interviews provided increased access to those who wanted to learn more about a particular practice or teaching style. As I observed the sites in New Mexico, California, and New York I asked myself, what made each school different and how are we the same? I looked closely at the student body, the management structure, location, and other variables as I wondered how this particular school team was able to connect, create, and advocate for students.

I visited several schools virtually including Cornerstone Academy for Social Action Middle School (CASA) Bronx, NY, and Chrysalis Charter School in Palo Cedra, CA. The demographics of schools were completely different but the common thread was how teachers were able to meet the needs of students in a full child holistic approach. With teacher power, Chrysalis purchased a bus to take their students off site for science and nature themed activities every Friday. CASA staffs a working recording studio on their campus to nurture their students' love of music and hip hop culture. If you recall a time when schools had to scrape together funds for laptop carts that were often shared among several grades, imagine how having your own school bus would transform the learning experiences at your school. From another colleague, "...thinking about decision making in the context of education, I can't help but to become a bit cynical

with anyone in a position of power who makes decisions about our schools with a financial focus. When I think of all the many examples I have of political injustice against public education, I know that our young scholars are in much better hands when those tasked with the huge responsibility to teach them have the power to make relevant decisions based on teaching and learning, community needs, and true caring."

Overall, I was glad I attended the conference. I gained a new perspective of how other schools harness the power of teachers for the benefit of their scholars. I wanted to see more real time examples of instruction in virtual classrooms, more discussions on teacher support and self care in this period of isolation, more opportunities to ask the people charged with doing the work more questions, but that would have taken a residency rather than a conference. A colleague reminded me that, "...while some may struggle with the concept [of teacher power], they can not argue with the outcome. Our students are becoming imaginative, compassionate risk takers and critical thinkers. Students know that we are listening to them and assessing their needs, not a mandated scope and sequence that is mundane and irrelevant. Although this school model requires far more effort than a traditional school, every time a student raises their hand or shows compassion to a peer or staff member it signifies that we are succeeding in helping to nurture these beautiful people one lesson at a time."

While I am in this remarkable space I will continue to observe, question, challenge, and advocate for my community of educators, students, and families as we await our turn to share our successes at the next conference. Above all, in our teacher powered school we are out here getting our hands dirty.




Want more information?
Website: teacherpowered.org
Twitter: [@teacherpowered](https://twitter.com/teacherpowered)



Call for Submissions!
Are you a writer?
Would you like to see your work published in the BTU paper?
We are accepting submissions from all BTU members including current and retired teachers. Short story, novel excerpts, essays and poems will all be considered, Enter your submission to Anne Slater at anne.slater70@gmail.com

75th Anniversary of the Boston Teachers Union Celebration Party



October 16, 2021

Interview with Lisa Nguyen Batista, NBCT

Where do you teach in BPS? What subject do you teach?

I teach at the Richard Murphy K-8 School. I started teaching Grade 4 General Education, and the past 2 years Advanced Work Class. I began my teaching career at the Thomas Kenny Elementary School and received my National Board certification there.

What is your certificate area? When did you certify?

I earned my National Board certification in Generalist-Middle Childhood in 2012.

What inspired you to become a NBCT?

At the time, I needed a challenge in my practice. I wanted to push myself to learn about my teaching practices in hopes to figure out what I needed to work on. I had a great mentor, Karene-Sean Hines.

She was very motivating and the process understandable.

How has becoming a NBCT helped your teaching profession?

It was the best professional development I've ever given myself. It has made me think about how teaching and learning is not in isolated subjects but interwoven. It has helped me think about the cyclical process of planning, teaching, assessing, and reflecting.

Can you explain how this process has made a positive impact on student learning?

I have continued to video my teaching to analyze my own teaching/learning. I believe this process has benefited my students because I am more cognizant of the teacher moves I make. I've also used the videos to show students their own learning.

Given that there are 53,000 students in BPS and the majority of them are students of color, do you think it is important that teachers of color are more represented in the Boston National Board than they are currently? If so, what do you think we should do to get more TOC to earn their NBCT?

Yes, I think it is important to get more TOC (and all teachers) to earn their NBCT. It is the best professional development for one's own practice because it is all about self reflection.

Any helpful information you would like to share with aspiring NBCT candidates in BPS?

It is worth it. Do small chunks to keep it manageable.

Do you want to help BPS candidates through the National Board process?



Lisa Nguyen Batista, NBCT

I may be interested in helping other candidates as a reader or professional learner facilitator/cohort leader.

If you are interested in attaining your National Board certification, please contact the BPS/BPS NBCT LT by emailing nationalboard@bostonpublicschools.org. You can also visit our website bit.ly/2019nbctlt or announcements check us out on Twitter @BostonNbct

Know Your Rights...

continued from page 3

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.

When does, the Principal make recommendations to grant permanent status to provisional teachers?

According to the contract, "Principals will be required to make recommendations as to which provisional teachers they want to make permanent teachers by February 1st of each year. Principals will be notified by February 15th if their recommendations have been approved. The Superintendent shall make permanent appointment of provisional teachers by March 27th."

When do programming preference, sheets come out?

The contract states, "No later than February 1st, programming preference sheets shall be distributed to all teachers." For High and Middle School teachers, it reads, "Programming preference will be honored to the extent consistent with the

provisions of this Agreement [contract]. All preference sheets shall be returned by March 1st." This means that a 'preference' is just that, it does not mean that the teacher is guaranteed their choice as submitted.

The contract also details, "On or before February 1st, a list of all non-teaching assignments for which administrative periods are given in a teachers' program shall be posted in each school. These assignments may be applied for in the teacher's program preference sheet as herein [within the contract] provided. An applicant for such a non-teaching assignment who does not receive the assignment shall, upon his/her request, be given the reasons for not having been selected by the Principal or Headmaster."

Are we entitled to time for cancer screening?

Yes. There is a Superintendent's Circular HRS-PP-14 "Paid Leave for Cancer Screening and/or Living Organ Donation" which states that Mayor Menino signed an Executive Order allowing all city employees to use four (4) hours of leave per calendar year for various types of cancer screening including that for breast, prostate, colon, skin, thyroid, oral cavity, lymph nodes, reproductive organs, and lungs. The procedure dictates that employees are allowed one (1) four (4) hour period that cannot be broken into hourly units. It requires that they must make their leave request through their responsibility center manager [principal] and then provide them a signed copy of a medical document verifying the date that the employee was given a cancer screening. For attendance reporting purposes, the time reporting code S1200 to report time taken under this provision must be used. This cancer screening leave time is not charged to any accumulated sick time. All questions concerning this circular should be made to BPS Office of Human Capital.

BTU ELECTION INFORMATION

Election Committee Meets on First Wednesdays

The Election Committee meets via Zoom at 5 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month. BTU and RTC members are welcome to attend, and can obtain the link by emailing **Denice Dwyer** at ddwyer@btu.org. Fifteen minutes is set aside at the beginning of each meeting for member questions and comments. Unlike past years (and due to the pandemic), candidates will primarily collect their nomination signatures electronically this year. The BTU tech team has been working on a secure system that will allow BTU and RTC members to nominate ("sign for") candidates by logging into the BTU member portal. A paper option will still be available for those who prefer it. The nomination/signature collection process will run through March 10. Details of the new procedures will be available shortly.

Virtual Retirement Planning Seminars!

with

Michael W. McLaughlin

(BTU Elem. Field Rep and Trustee of Boston Retirement Board)



Please Note:

- These seminars will ALL be held via Zoom
- Zoom links will be sent as we get close to each date
- These seminars are for Boston Teachers Union members only
- Each seminar will be limited to 50 participants
- Spots are first come first serve

Register for a Seminar at:

linktr.ee/BTUretirement

Each seminar will be from 4:30-6:00

Dates offered:

1/25	2/8
2/22	3/8
3/22	4/5
4/26	5/10
	5/24

Questions can be emailed to mmclaughlin@btu.org

BTU Stars on NBC's TODAY Show!

Toga Thursdays by Michael J. Maguire

At the start of this school year a colleague suggested that we wear togas for our Zoom classes every Thursday. I loved the idea from the moment I heard it.

I had worn a toga at school every now and then. It's a bit tattered so when the other Latin teachers started wearing togas, I put out a Donors Choose request and picked up two new togas and a few accessories.

Every Thursday since then I have donned a toga. One day between Zoom classes I ventured into the kitchen. (See picture below.) My wife posted it on Facebook. Her comment was "Good God - when they are in person I don't see the crazy.... Apparently it's Toga Thursday." So when the Today Show asked what teachers are doing to keep students engaged during remote learning, I explained to them Toga Thursdays.

"Why Thursdays," the production assistant for the Today Show asked me.



"Because the other days were already taken," I explained. To my students on Zoom I say "aloha!" on Mondays with Hawaiian shirts, Bowtie Tuesdays, Pink Wednesdays, and sports jersey Fridays. So Thursdays for togas.

Such costumes are simple, fun, and engaging. "You're not wearing pink," one student gleefully chided me. "It's Tuesday," I replied. We both laughed because the keeping track of time is harder than it used to be.

On a more serious note, the Zoom fatigue is taking its toll on students. My solution to the question of "how do I make Zoom classes more engaging" is treating the Zoom screen like a TV screen. Have you ever seen footage of the early Julia Child shows? While the camera sees Julia effortlessly preparing a meal, what you don't see are the three people crouched under the kitchen counter handing Julia the utensils she needs.

I explained to the Today Show that teaching on Zoom requires so much more prep time. For not only do we have to digitize our materials, but we also have to fight for the students' attention. In school we could control the environment, on Zoom we have to compete with cell phones, pets, pillows, and all the other comforts of home.

So as we translate mythological stories from Latin into English, I act out what parts I can with my costumes and accessories. I have Egyptian nemes and Greek helmets. I have scepters and swords. I have toys and trinkets just outside the range of my Zoom camera to use as props. I make exaggerated facial expressions and employ wild hand gestures. All in the hopes of transforming the Zoom class into "must see TV."

(Michael J. Maguire teaches Latin at Boston Latin Academy.)



A New Reason for Keeping a "Diary" by Lea Serena



Once upon a time, keeping a diary was thought of as a teenage movement; to circle your crush's name and complain about your siblings stealing your favorite sweater again. However, keeping a diary or better known (now) as journaling has become a pivotal part of the self-care movement.

In fact, I spent the whole beginning of quarantine following Alex Elle, a wellness consultant who praises journaling as healing, remembering, and improving mental health.

So when I got asked to do video diaries about teaching through a pandemic for The Today Show, I thought why not? It's remembering and its healing!

Thus, three times a day for three days I recorded my thoughts about teaching through virtual screens. I started my video diaries, the morning of the insurrection of the U.S. Capitol building. Needless to say the tone of the diaries changed from Wednesday morning to Friday night.

However, I have to admit it was healing and I eventually took my video journaling to paper. It really made me think wow I wonder how many people are recording memories of these moments?

Twenty years from now our students are going to say that they learned through a screen for almost a year and counting and we're going to say we taught through them. Journaling virtually seemed like the most fighting primary source, and who doesn't love a good primary source? Especially when so much history was being made in the midst of it.

I hope to play my videos for my grandchildren one day and they will hear about the insurrection, the first African American and South Asian-American Vice President, change of leadership, and the joys and difficulties of teaching through a pandemic.

I spoke about the hard stuff, the encouraging stuff, and waking one of my students older sisters up with twenty-two second graders singing happy birthday to her on zoom; the joy! So write or video those cute little diaries. One day someone's going to want to listen to them.

(Lea Serena teaches second grader at the Mather.)