

# Happy Holidays

From the BTU Executive Board and Staff

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



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# Boston Union Teacher

The Award-Winning Newspaper of the Boston Teachers Union, AFT Local 66, AFL-CIO Vol. 54, No. 3 • November-December, 2021

**Executive Vice President's Report** Erik R. Berg

## BTU Contract Campaign Ramps Up *United We Bargain, Divided We Beg!*

It's been a challenging year, to say the least. But through it all, BTU members have stepped up for their students, showing up to provide the best possible education in the midst of a continuing pandemic, staffing shortages, social emotional turmoil, and inadequate facilities.

And through it all, the BTU's dedicated negotiating team, along with a rotating crew of silent representatives, has been diligently working to bargain a fair contract that provides improved working conditions for our members, and schools that our students deserve. The silent reps, a newly-established group of rank-and-file members who attend bargaining sessions as observers, have been a fantastic addition to the process, and part of our strategy of openness and transparency. Another element of increased transparency is the bargaining updates we are posting on the BTU website. Please be sure to check the website frequently for updates!

We have met eight times since August, and the team has formally presented proposals in 12 of 19 categories. It is always inspirational to hear BTU educators lift

up their voices at the bargaining table to management. At a recent bargaining session, we heard ABA specialist Kafunda Banks speak powerfully about the BTU's proposal for necessary supplies and a simple place for ABAs to "hang their hat": "Imagine you're an ABA. You have a caseload anywhere from 14-22 students. And your students are sprawled between seven classrooms.

And you have no designated work space, unlike any of the other bargaining units in the district. It's a winter day and you need to take your coat, your boots and all your belongings to each class with you. Or petition a teacher for a small corner in his/her classroom. You might need to also ask for the use of her color printer so that you can make necessary visuals, token boards or other materials that are necessary for our students. You'll have to apologize for using his/her ink or paper that we are all aware is in limited supply and did not factor in being used

by another entire department."

We also heard from **Lindsay Thornquist**, 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at the Hurley School, speaking on the BTU's proposal to expand the parent mentor program to 10 schools: "Words cannot describe the effect this program has had on our school and our parents. One mother said to me recently, 'I finally have a purpose

in my life.' And one of the participants at my school has recently been hired as a para."

**Our team and silent reps bring to the table over**

**20 members who work in schools with students every day, while on the other side, there are zero people who work in schools.** And the powerful voices of those who do the actual work will always win the argument over management's attorneys and central office personnel.

However, that does not mean we will prevail. For that, we need the support of **ALL** of you! Our strength is in our solidarity, and that is why our contract

**And the powerful voices of those who do the actual work will always win the argument over management's attorneys and central office personnel.**



**Erik R. Berg**  
BTU Executive Vice President

campaign is so important. We have established, for the first time, a Contract Organizing Committee which consists of representatives from the negotiating team, the staff, building reps, member organizers, the Executive Board, and rank and file members, to design an escalating campaign so that BTU members can mobilize and force management to meet our needs and our students' needs.

So, throughout this winter and spring, you will be asked to wear a button, a BTU shirt, sign a petition, hold a sign, write a letter, walk in, attend a rally, etc. **We ask that you DO IT! We are the BTU and we are ALL-IN!** Our unity is our power, and our voices are the tools that we can and must use to get the contract that our students and our members deserve!

## We are Latinx! Celebrating Our Heritage at the East Boston Early Education Center

By **Anne Slater, Co-Editor, Boston Union Teacher**

This month, we celebrated National Latin American Heritage Month at the East Boston EEC with poems, self portraits and murals. We ate sweet treats like conchas and churros from Lolly's bakery and paletas. We celebrated the artwork of **Fernando Botero, Frida Kahlo** and **Diego Rivera**.

Art teacher **Sarah Goldsmith** helped students create self portraits.

"In Grade 1, we looked at the artwork of Colombian artist **Fernando Botero**. We read the book, *Frida Kahlo and Her Animalitos* by **Monica Brown**, illustrat-

ed by **John Parra**. The illustration style is kind of blocky and imitates collage. We looked at the book *Count Me In*, a parade of Mexican Folk art numbers in English and Spanish by **Cynthia Weill** featuring ceramics by the **Aguilar Sisters** and used these images to create self portrait collages to bring through the idea of celebration with paper streamers and bright colors similar to Parra's illustrative style."

Students used the book, *Yes, We Are Latino!* Poems about the Latino Experience by **Alma Flor Ada** and **F. Isabel Campoy** as a frame for their identity poems.

First Grade teacher **Stephanie Leon**



Teacher **Nina Cora** created this mural with her KO-K1 class.

shared her love of Mexican culture by celebrating *Dias De Los Muertos* with a slide show of Mexican artwork, sugar skulls, and the book *Day of the Dead* by

**Tony Johnston**. Stephanie, who is Salvadorian, became fascinated with Mexican culture when she traveled to Mexico

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### What Makes Someone Latinx?

There are more than fifty million people in the US who identify as Latinx – a population larger than that of many countries. Latinx people come from diverse backgrounds. Some are descendants of the first Europeans who settled in what is today the United States: Spaniards who created cities like Saint Augustine, Florida; Santa Fe, New Mexico; El Paso, Texas; Los Angeles, California... Others immigrated to the United States at different times from Spanish-speaking countries...Most Latinx people have mixed origins: they are mestizos, whether by blood or by culture. Their heritage includes roots from indigenous, African and Spanish people, as well as many others who of settled in Latin America over centuries.

Artwork from the East Boston EEC students will be presented throughout this issue of the *Boston Union Teacher*. Look for the green boxes!



# Immovable Objects

I hope you had a good start to the year. Mine had an unfortunate – but all too predictable – beginning. I tore my left medial meniscus while setting up my room. Thanks to physical therapy and some patience I shall likely make a full recovery. As you all know, I am not alone in this type of injury.

Another teacher I know (*whose name I am withholding*) hurt her back setting up her room this year. Twice in the past I ignited my sciatica by moving desks before the start of school.

You'd think that I would know better than to move furniture. But what else are we teachers to do when our rooms are in disarray? We must demand better from the BPS.

I do not blame the custodial staff. By my estimate the BPS needs to hire at least 200 more full time custodians. The custodians I know work very hard and are dedicated to their jobs. That task before them is Herculean. Nonetheless, we teachers cannot continue to enter our classrooms year after year and be expected to move bookcases, desks and chairs on our own in order to meet the needs of the students.

Certainly the rooms need to be well



**Deskhenge - putting heavy desks on their legs can injure one's back faster than you can say "have a seat."**

cleaned every year. In my classroom the wood floors are sanded and shellacked every summer. In order to work on the floors, the custodians need to completely empty the rooms. They put the contents of the rooms in the hallway, work

on the floors, and then refill the rooms. Occasionally I need to rearrange the classroom. So I ask: when a teacher thus needs to move/rearrange some furniture, what's that teacher going to do?

Of course every school has its own



**Michael J. Maguire**  
Boston Union Teacher  
Co-Editor

challenges and special set of issues, but suffice it to say most teachers have to pack up their rooms so that either cleaning can occur or summer programs can be run. Packing, moving, and unpacking heavy items are not part of our job description but we all do it because it just has to be done.

In a perfect world the administrators of every school would inspect every classroom to ensure that they are properly arranged.

Again, I do not blame the custodians. They were short staffed before COVID-19, they are over taxed now. Even though they are understaffed, the *status quo* cannot continue.

Therefore I suggest that we negotiate a specific date by which all work in the classrooms is complete and the rooms are set up the way the teachers want them. On that date the principals or their designees should inspect every classroom to ensure that the furniture is set up the way the teachers want. If any classrooms are not prepared by this date, a grievance would be filed for the offense.

Some will claim that I am over-reacting; but my torn meniscus says otherwise. On a philosophical level why should teachers have to become movers in the first place? Imagine if surgeons had to set up the operating table the night before the patients arrived. Imagine if lawyers had to set up the courtroom the day before a trial. Teachers moving desks and bookshelves ought to draw the same incredulous reaction as the aforementioned scenarios do.

Our absurd situation is made all the worse when we switch classrooms or even schools. If we were treated like professionals, teachers who move classrooms would have their boxes of supplies picked up and delivered - in an expedited manner - by moving professionals.

Contractually we have one day to set up our classrooms. Many of us spend a good week or more preparing for each new school year. We love making our rooms fun and welcoming places for our students. But our love of doing our jobs does not justify the district's failure to treat us well.

Professionals get paid to do a job. Nowhere in our job descriptions does it say that we must volunteer our time and risk our health in order to have a properly outfitted classroom. This year I suggest we put in writing what we all know to be just and fitting.

If you wish to discuss this subject in further detail with me, you can find me twice a week in my physical therapist's office.

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

## We Are Latinx! Celebrating Our Heritage at the East Boston EEC...

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with her husband. Stephanie decided to introduce the celebration of Dias De Los Muertos, a holiday that is celebrated by many Latin American cultures to cel-

brate loved ones with traditional foods, marigolds, bright colors and shared memories. Steph loves the artwork of **Frida Kahlo:**

*"Frida Kahlo was an outspoken no fear role model for women. Nothing stopped her from being herself and I kind of look up to that."*

### Books That Celebrate Latin American Heritage

- *Family Pictures and In My Family* by Carmen Lomas Garza  
These two books written in both English and Spanish include detailed paintings of family memories.
- *Experience* by Alma Flor Ada and F. Isabel Campoy
- *We are Latinos! Poems about the Latino*  
is a collection of prose poems celebrating Latin American identity
- *A Tree is Older Than You Are* by Niomi Shihab Nye and *Laughing Tomatoes and other spring poems* by Francisco X. Alarcon are both collections of poems in English and Spanish. *A Tree is Older Than You Are* has a large collection of observational prose style poems that don't rhyme and make great mentor poems.
- *Celebrations: A Year Full of Celebrations* by Christopher Corr is a collection of beautifully illustrated celebrations from around the world
- *Finding Frida* by Laura Callaghan and Catherine Ingram
- *Frida* by Jonah Winter
- *Vamos! Let's Go Over the Bridge*  
is a graphic picture book featured by the Boston Book Festival's East Boston Story Walk
- *Day of the Dead* by Tony Johnston
- *Viva Frida!* by Yuyi Morales
- *Day of the Dead: A Bilingual Celebration* by Bob Barner
- *The Day You Begin* by Jaqueline Woodson
- *Island Born* by Juno Diaz
- *Coqui in the City* by Nomar Perez
- *Dreamers and Viva Frida* by Yuyi Morales
- *Skulls!* by Blair Thornburgh
- *My Two Border Towns* by David Bowles
- *If Dominican Were a Color* by Sili Recio



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



# Where Do School Site Councils/Governing Board Members Obtain On-going Training to Become Effective Representatives Participating in Their School's Governance?



**Caren Carew**  
BTU Secondary  
Field Representative

SSC/Governing Board trainings are currently scheduled from November – January of this school year jointly run by the BTU & the BPS Office of Family & Community Advancement. To register or for more info contact [ccarew@btu.org](mailto:ccarew@btu.org). Workshops are open to all elected SSC members including parents, BTU members, high school students & school administrators all of whom are encouraged to attend.

Trainings will be held virtually by Zoom from 5:30-7:00 p.m.

**SSC 101: 101 SSC Basics & Shared Decision Making: November 15; November 17; January 10** - This workshop focuses on the roles and responsibilities of the SSC in the school's decision-making process. Explore & master the foundational concepts needed to develop and maintain an effective School Site Council.

**SSC 102: School Site Council & Budget: December 6, December 13, December 15** - This session focuses on the important role of the SSC in developing and approving the school's budget. School teams will learn about the BPS weighted student funding budget process, and get experience with building consensus.

**SSC 104: Recruiting & Retaining. January 19.** Effective recruiting strategies are critical to developing a Council that reflects the diversity of the families and staff in the building – racial, ethnic and programmatic including ELL and students with disabilities.

**SSC 106: Personnel Subcommittees; January 24, January 31.** This session focuses on the roles and responsibilities of the SSC in selecting a Personnel Subcommittee to hire school staff; and provide support to ensure that the subcommittee works effectively.

## What approach should the SSC take toward decision making?

It is expected that the SSC will function by consensus or general agreement of its members. Members of the SSC are expected to operate as a single decision-making team. Their task is to work together to fashion effective solutions to the school's educational challenges. SSC have parent, BTU staff, student, and associate members to guarantee that decisions reflect the viewpoints of everyone in the school community. Reaching consensus does not mean that all members must agree with decisions unanimously. Consensus is a way of working together where some members may disagree with a final decision, but yet agree to support it. Consensus occurs when most, if not all, members agree on the matter to be decided.

Consensus won't necessarily result in endless discussions and no decisions, particularly if the following guidelines are followed: Prioritize the importance of the issue at hand. Normally, the more important the issue, the more time members should be willing to devote to reaching consensus decision. Routine matters should be given much less valuable time and energy than fundamental issues. Provide opportunities for all views to be expressed. Members with differing views should have the opportunity to make sure other members have understood their views before ending the discussion. Although others may still not be persuaded, everyone must have a chance to state their views and to have others listen.

The strength of feeling about an issue must be gauged. How strongly members feel should guide how much time should be devoted to an issue as well.

SSC meetings are not competitive, win-or-lose events. Making decisions solely on the basis of majority votes runs the unacceptable risk of dividing the Council. School improvement is defiantly a matter of teamwork, trust, and shared commitment on the part of everyone in the school community. This team approach doesn't prohibit voting in every case. Occasionally, periodic 'straw polls' may be a good idea to identify the common ground on the way to reaching consensus decisions. Voting can save valuable time reaching decisions on routine matters. Under the terms of the BTU Contract, decisions must be formalized by a majority of the SSC. The Principal must vote with the majority of the SSC and they may not delegate their vote. Here, the purpose of voting is to validate and to make official consensus decisions. Formal voting should be the last step in the decision-making process. If the vote results in a simple majority but does not reveal consensus on the issue debated, it should be viewed as a signal that the best option has not yet been developed and proposed. Unless all members are willing to support a majority decision, more discussion is needed. Votes which split parents and BTU members are of particular concern and a clear indication that consensus hasn't been achieved. In such cases, the decision should be set aside and the issue should be revisited.

The Principal may veto a majority decision of a SSC. The Principal must vote with the majority for a decision to be adopted and carried out. In the event of a veto, the Principal is required to give their reasons in writing and in person at a following meeting for any vote that is in opposition to a majority of the Council. Successful School Based Management demands cooperation, trust, and mutual regard of every one!

## 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.

## How many personal days do teachers get and how do we take them?

Generally, teachers are entitled to four (4) personal days per school year. There are specific provisions for bereavement in addition to these days. Requests to take a personal day should be submitted to the building administrator as early as possible prior to the day requested off. Each school may have developed a written/on-line form. Except at the discretion of the building administrator (such as a school emergency), not more than 5% of teachers are eligible for a personal day at one time. No teacher may take a personal day on both the day before and the day after a school break/vacation, including the Thanksgiving recess. Personal days not used each year are rolled into your accumulated sick days in the following SY.

## How much P&D time do Middle/Grades 6-8 and High School teachers get?

All Secondary teachers (contractually defined as teachers of grades 6-12) in "traditional schools" must be scheduled for a minimum of 240 minutes for planning and development (P&D) per week. The contract reads, [Secondary] "Teachers will have planning and development time each day and will be scheduled in blocks/periods of continuous time that are no less than 40 minutes in duration." P&Ds cannot be chopped up or segmented into smaller aggregates of time. Some secondary teachers are scheduled for 40 minutes 5 days a week, which is 40 minutes a week less than the minimum amount mandated in the collective bargaining agreement/contract. This violation should be immediately grieved.

If a teacher unavoidably loses a P&D period due to coverage issues and the like, the administration should make every effort to free them up on their

administrative period or on another agreed upon time. If the teacher does not receive the time off, they must keep good records of when, date and duration of the missed P&D and submit this info to the school secretary for inclusion for compensation on the "Class Coverage" form. This form is to be submitted twice a year for the reporting times to BPS Payroll Department, Bolling Building, 2300 Washington St. 4<sup>th</sup> floor. If you need a copy of said document, the BPS Payroll Department will fax it to you.

If you lose a P&D period due to being deprived of same through administrative directive, and are not given another period during that day in lieu of the originally scheduled P&D period or if a Sped teacher-SEIMS period(s), please keep very good notes of the date, and length of period your missed P&D was in order to submit accurate records on the aforementioned form. Prior to the submission date listed on the form, please make a copy of your completed form & pass both forms in to your school secretary, having the secretary date & initial/sign one copy confirming receipt of said document which you will take back as reference if needed to keep in your personal/home file. The secretary then would obtain the school administrator's signature and submit the other copy to the BPS Payroll Dept. This way, if, by chance, the form never is submitted by your school to the Payroll Dept., you have an exact copy with the proof (secretary's signature/date) that it was submitted & received at your school in a timely fashion. This will be important if a grievance has to be filed due to the potential lack of compliance of your school in following through with the process of submission of the form to the Payroll Department in order for you to receive your earned compensation. These forms should be submitted and are paid out twice per SY in January and in June PRIOR to the end of the SY. Coverage is paid by the number of periods (not days or hours) that the teacher covered.

## Boston Union Teacher

Boston Teachers Union, AFT Local 66, AFL-CIO

**BTU** **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 December 15th.  
All copy should be e-mailed to [mmaguire@btu.org](mailto:mmaguire@btu.org) and [aslater@btu.org](mailto: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](http://www.btu.org)**





# UNDERSTANDING YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE

## BASIC DEFINITIONS

### COINSURANCE:

The percentage of costs of a covered health care service you pay after you have paid your deductible.

### COPAYMENT:

A fixed amount you pay for each covered healthcare service, in addition to your deductible, as applicable.

### DEDUCTIBLE:

A fixed amount you pay for certain services before the insurer begins to pay for those services. Members pay in full for certain services until reaching the annual maximum deductible amount.

### ADVANCED IMAGING:

CT/PET scans, and MRIs

### INPATIENT HOSPITAL:

Care that you receive when admitted (acute, medical rehabilitation, and skilled nursing care).

### OUTPATIENT HOSPITAL:

Care that you receive without being admitted or for a stay of less than 24 hours.

### PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN (PCP):

A physician who directly provides or coordinates a range of health care services for a patient.

## BREAKDOWN OF SERVICES

Deductible and copay application effective July 1, 2021:

### Deductible\* Only:

- Ambulance transport
- Diagnostic x-rays and lab tests
- Durable medical equipment and prosthetic devices
- Home health and hospice services

### Deductible\* and Copay:

- Advanced imaging such as MRI, CT scan, & PET scan\*\*
- Hospital outpatient services and day surgery (except mental health)\*\*
- Inpatient hospital services (except mental health)\*\*
- Emergency room services
- Skilled nursing care

### Copay Only:

- Office visits - illness or injury
- Outpatient mental health and substance abuse services
- Outpatient pharmacy
- Specialist visits
- Therapeutic visits such as occupational, speech, & physical therapy
- Telehealth
- Urgent care

\*Deductible only needs to be satisfied once per member per year up to the family max of two times.

\*\*Advanced Imaging, Outpatient Hospital, and Inpatient Hospital - maximum of one copayment per category per member per year.

## Financial Information Upcoming

### AFT Massachusetts Member Benefits Workshop – December 2, 2021

AFT Massachusetts will host a virtual benefits workshop to showcase the products and services available to AFT members through our members benefits program. Whether you're looking to purchase insurance, buy or refinance a home, or plan for retirement, you can find experienced and dedicated professionals who will work with you every step of the way to fulfill your goals! Go to the following address to register and an automated email with the details of the Zoom meeting will be sent as well as a link to a folder of resources: <https://actionnetwork.org/events/virtual-benefits-workshop-for-aft-members>

### Retirement Planning Workshop – January 26, 2022

The financial professionals of Teacher Retirement Solutions (TRS) have partnered with AFT Massachusetts and specialize in providing independent financial guidance, strategies and solutions to educators, school employees, librarians and their families throughout New England. Join TRS' John Gregorio, a Certified Financial Planner, on January 26 via Zoom for a comprehensive workshop for prospective retirees. The Massachusetts' public employee retirement formula, Social Security and living in retirement will be among the topics discussed. An automated email with the details of the Zoom meeting will be sent to members who visit this site: <https://actionnetwork.org/events/retirement-planning-workshop-for-aft-members-2>

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CITY of BOSTON

## LEARN ABOUT YOUR NETWORK BLUE® NEW ENGLAND DEDUCTIBLE HMO PLAN



Find out how your plan works and what the differences are between deductibles and copayments. Learn what you can expect to pay out of pocket for covered services under this plan.

### Questions?

If you have any questions about the Network Blue New England Deductible plan, please call Member Service at 1-888-714-0189.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts is an Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.



CITY of BOSTON

## LEARN ABOUT YOUR BLUE CARE ELECT DEDUCTIBLE PPO PLAN



Find out how your plan works and what the differences are between deductibles, copayments, and co-insurance. Learn what you can expect to pay out-of-pocket for covered services under this plan.

### Questions?

If you have any questions about the Blue Care Elect Deductible plan, please call Member Service at 1-888-714-0189.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts is an Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

Michael W. McLaughlin  
Workshops



**Michael W. McLaughlin**  
BTU Secretary-Treasurer

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**Student Debt Clinic –  
February 15, 2022**

The AFT has been working to address the student debt crisis for nearly a decade. The union has counseled thousands of members at our student debt clinics, provided a free benefit to union members that will save them an estimated \$500 million, taken student loan giants like Navient to court, and sued the Trump administration to protect borrowers. As a union, we are fighting to make college affordable and student debt manageable. However, 45 million people in the United States owe \$1.6 trillion in student loans.

**Do you or a family member  
have student loan debt?**

Are you struggling to make monthly payments or worrying about student loans following you throughout your life?

Are you tired of getting phone calls from loan servicers, or concerned about how to tell scams from genuine help when it comes to debt forgiveness?

Go this website to register today: <https://aft.knack.com/member-mobilization-tracker/#register-for-debt-clinic/>

**REGISTER TODAY: VIRTUAL  
BENEFITS WORKSHOP FOR  
AFT MEMBERS**

AFT Massachusetts will host a virtual benefits workshop to showcase the products and services available to AFT members through our members benefits program.

**What:** Member Benefits Workshop for AFT members

**Where:** Virtual Workshop via Zoom

**When:** December 2, 2021 from 6 to 7:30 pm

Whether you're looking to purchase insurance, buy or refinance a home, or plan for retirement, you can find experienced and dedicated professionals who will work with you every step of the way to fulfill your goals.

Register here:



During the workshop, presenters will discuss:



AFT Plus Benefits



Auto & Home Insurance



Supplemental Insurance



Home Financing



Long Term Care



Retirement Planning



**RETIREMENT  
PLANNING  
WORKSHOP FOR  
AFT MEMBERS  
JANUARY 26TH AT  
6 PM VIA ZOOM**

Follow the link to register or scan the QR code and learn more: <https://shar.es/aWjdU2>

STUDENT DEBT CLINICS

JOIN US AT OUR NEXT

**Student Debt Clinic  
for AFT Members in Massachusetts**  
February 15, 2022 at 4:30 pm via Zoom  
Register today:  
<http://go.aft.org/StudentDebtClinicRSVP>

IS STUDENT DEBT STRESSING YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW, OUT? **YOU'RE NOT ALONE**

More than 45 million US workers owe \$1.6 trillion dollars in student loans, with ~93% of it owed to the US Department of Education. Workers are going into more debt to finance their education, and more workers are defaulting on those loans because wages aren't rising to keep up with the costs. **THE SYSTEM IS BROKEN!**

THERE'S GOOD NEWS!  
AFT, OUR NAT'L UNION, HAS DEVELOPED STUDENT DEBT CLINICS THAT WILL:

- Educate you on the national student debt crisis
- Show you how to lower your payments, sometimes to \$0, through enrolling in income-driven repayment programs
- Teach you how to meet the requirements for Public Service Loan Forgiveness, which will get your debt forgiven, tax free, after ten years worth of payments
- Inspire you to join with your union as we
- **ORGANIZE** and **MOBILIZE** for a more just system of paying for college.



# Great Read Alouds for Nov.-Dec. 2021

After 199 years, **Kim Janey** became the first female and Black mayor of Boston. Her time was short but revolutionary! I remember gathering with my students to watch this inauguration, half on zoom and half in person, in Covid fashion. After the inauguration we analyzed these words by Mayor Janey, “And I owe a debt of gratitude to my sister in-service, U.S. Representative **Ayanna Pressley**. You are not only a friend, but you are **MY** congresswoman. I would not be here today, standing as mayor of the great City of Boston, if it were not for the glass ceilings that you have shattered not only as the first Black woman elected to the Boston City Council, but as the first Black woman to represent

Massachusetts in Congress... To think, my teenage grandsons were born at a time when there had never even been a Black woman on our City Council. Today, my six year old granddaughter Rosie, and other little girls, can see themselves represented in Massachusetts’ highest court, the halls of Congress and now in the 55<sup>th</sup> Mayor of Boston.” My students and I talked about what this meant and how important it was. We also talked about how far we came to get here and how much further we need to

go. I loved talking about elections with students, and we would vote every year in the classroom. I want my students to know the importance now and take it with them to the polls when they are 18, I want voting to be the norm for them. Two of my favorite books to encourage this are, *Grace for President* by Kelly DiPucchio and *Vote For Our Future* by Margaret McNamara. *Vote For Our Future* talks about a school that is closed for voting and how voting can change our future. It is really simplistic but explains the importance




**Lea Serena**  
BTU Elementary  
Field Representative

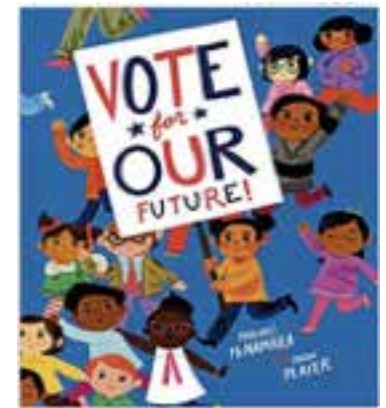
## NOVEMBER 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1) National American Indian Heritage Month	2) Election Day	3)	4) Diwali	5)	6)
7)	8)	9)	10)	11) Veterans Day 	12)	13) World Kindness Day 
14)	15) 140th Anniversary of the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions 	16)	17) International Students' Day	18)	19)	20) Transgender Day of Remembrance 
21)	22)	23) Mamie Till Mobley born 	24)	25) National Day of Mourning	26) Mahalia Jackson born 	27)
28) First Day of Hanukkah	29)	30)  				

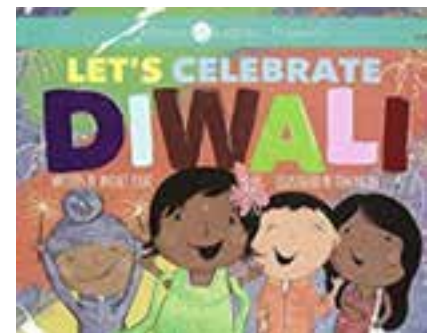
## DECEMBER 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1)	2)	3) International Day of Persons with Disabilities 	4)
5)	6)	7)	8)	9)	10) Human Rights Day	11)
12)	13)	14)	15)	16)	17)	18)
19)	20)	21) Winter Solstice	22)	23)	25) Christmas	25) First day of Kwanzaa
26)	27)	28)	29)	30)	31) New Year's Eve	

of voting and how some people win and some do not. However, *Grace for President*, follows a young girl who is upset because when her teacher shows her all the past presidents they are all men and decides she is running for class president. This book explains the electoral process, campaigning, and Election Day.



*Vote For Our Future* talks about Election Day not being a holiday, but still an important date. However, there are many important Holidays in November. Teacher authors make my heart melt. *Let's Celebrate Diwali* is a book by Anjali Joshi, a science teacher. This story introduces students to Diwali. Diwali is a five day festival of light, celebrated by Hindus, Sinks, and Jains. Another beautiful book to teach about Diwali is *Festival*

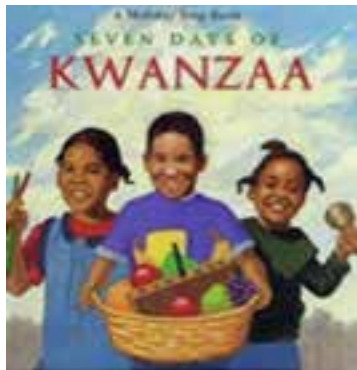
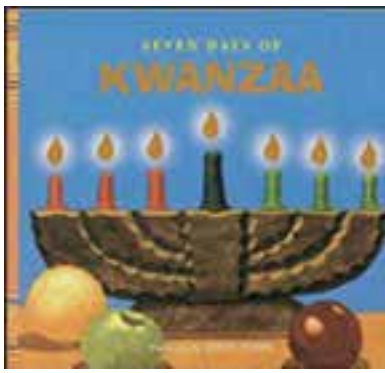


*of Colors* by Surishta Sehgal. Another “Festival of Lights” is Hanukkah, an eight day Jewish holiday celebrating the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem. It is believed that after a successful revolt the Jewish community could find very little oil to light the Menorah, but the oil that was supposed to only last for one day lasted for eight instead! I love the story *Dear Santa, Love, Rachel Rosenstein* by Amanda Peet and Andrea Troyer. In this story Rachel is jealous of all her friends celebrating Christmas around her, so tries to force Christmas into her house. However, in the end she learns that some of her friends celebrate Chinese New





year, Diwali, or Hanukkah too instead of Christmas. This story really digs into being proud of the holidays/traditions of your family. I dream of a world where Christmas isn't the only highlighted holiday in every store, movie, television station, workplace, AND school.



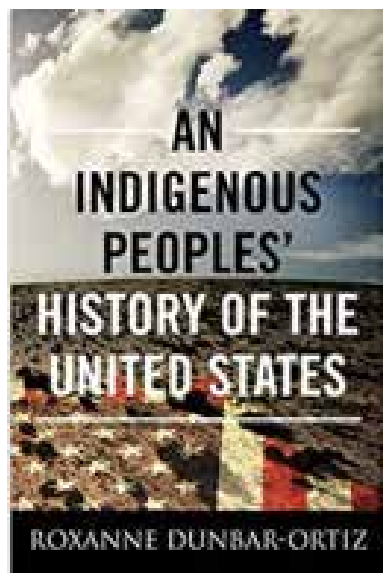
Another holiday I like to teach about is Kwanzaa. Kwanzaa was created by African Americans to give black people an opportunity to celebrate themselves and their history. My son and I use this holiday to really think about the contributions Black people have made to the world we live in. We talk about the unity, self-determination, creativity, and faith of the Black leaders who came before us. We also talk about our purpose and place in the community and bettering ourselves and the world we live in. We also take the week to really support Black businesses. We strive not to put money into any business that is not Black owned during the seven days of Kwanzaa.

I have so many November and December favorites but I will leave you with these final two. Let's teach the truth about Thanksgiving, or as I like to call it Day of Mourning. It was not a joyous feast full of love and thanks and telling the history wrong only perpetuates stereotypes and white supremacy. Wampanoag leaders did reach out to the



English for an alliance, but not because life was great, but because he wanted to fend for his people. We need to tell how the relationships deteriorated and the stories of Native survival and adaptation. I also like to tell people how the idea of Thanksgiving became widely accepted and declared a holiday by Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War to foster unity. *Thank You, Sarah* by Laurie Halse Anderson does a great job of highlighting how "Thanksgiving" became popular, but must be accompanied with the truths. A good book to learn the truth for the older grades is *An Indigenous People's History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. So I encourage us all to spend these next two months, speaking the truths and empowering inclusivity. Mexican-American author Sandra Cisneros said "I try to be as honest about what I see and to speak rather than be silent, especially if it means I save lives or serve humanity." Let's save humanity!

P.S. I read to an amazing group of K2 students at the Tynan! Thank you Ms. Bryant, it brought me great joy and I hope it was fun for them too! Please consider signing up to have me visit your classroom and share a read aloud with you and your students at [https://bit.ly/readwithLea!](https://bit.ly/readwithLea)



## Countrywide Wellness Plan

By Karen Cross, Prepaid Legal Trustee

Did you know that the BTU offers teachers a financial wellness plan?

Are you having trouble paying medical bills? Or student loan debt?

Do you want counseling on debt management?

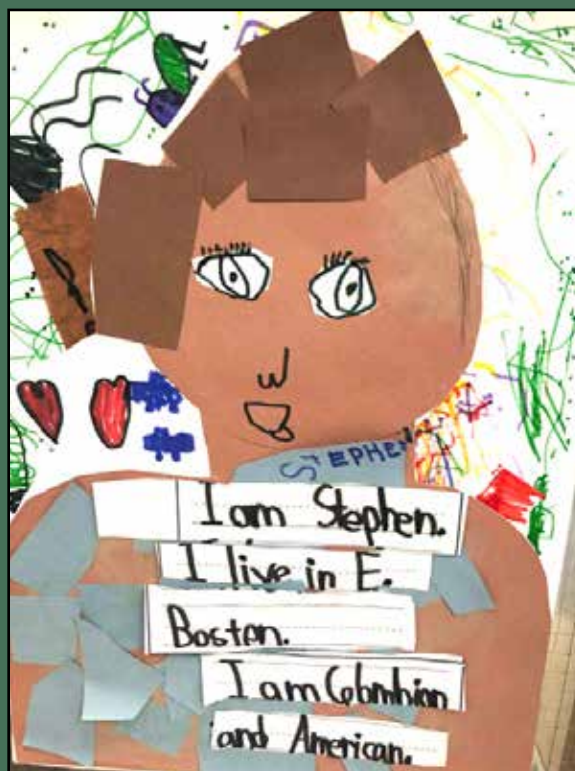
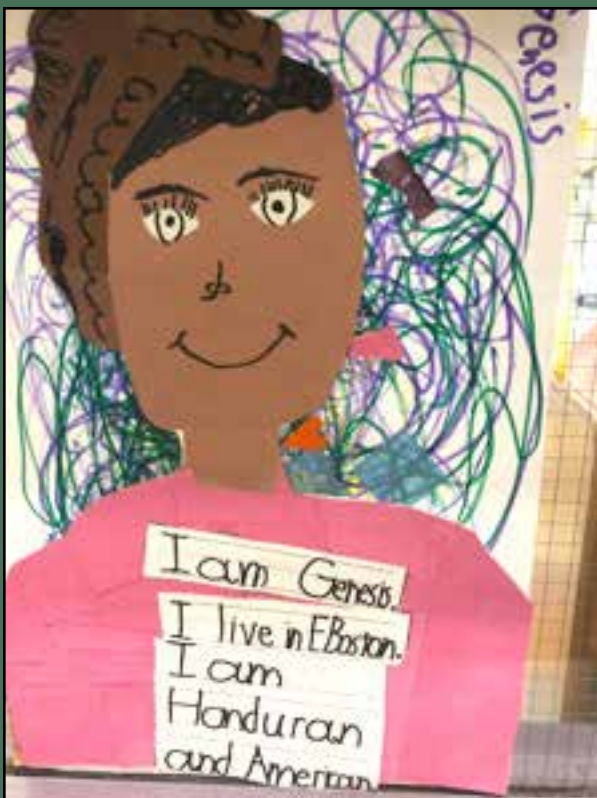
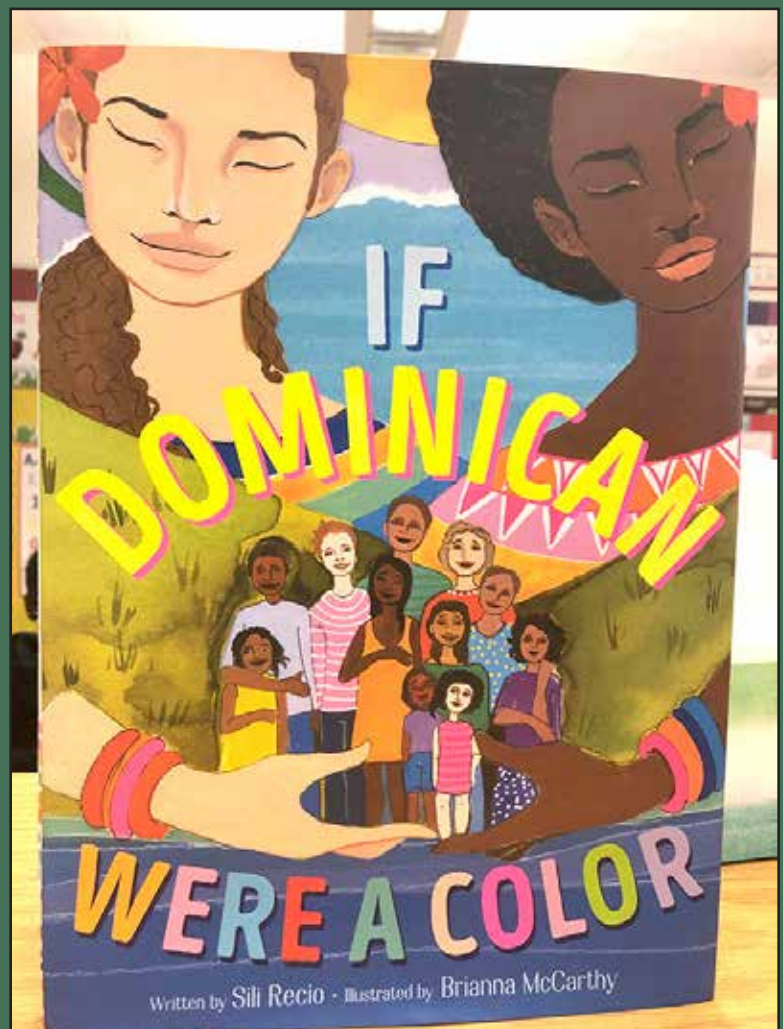
The *Countrywide Wellness Plan* offers a variety of benefits for BTU teachers who are having financial hardships including health education and wellness.

Financial Education includes but not limited to:

- Budgeting and Tracking Expenses
- Understanding Credit Reports
- Dealing with Collection Agencies
- Refinancing
- Buying a Home
- Consolidate debt into an affordable repayment plan
- Re-Establishing Credit
- Foreclosure prevention
- Asset inventory management

Prepaid Legal Trustees have made this benefit a part of the BTUHWF (Boston Teachers Union Health and Welfare Fund) benefit package for all BTU teachers.

For more information, visit the BTU website under Health and Welfare to find out all benefits: <https://btuhwf.org/benefits/health-welfare-fund/>





# Retirees Hold Fall Business Meeting

by Joan Devlin, Secretary and Marilyn Marion, Chair, BTU-RTC

The Retired Teacher Chapter held its Fall Business meeting on October 19, 2021. Once again, we met through Zoom and it is clear that many of our members are sick and tired of virtual meetings. But we need to keep safe so continue to mask up, wash your hands, get your booster shots (or vaccinations) and hope that Spring brings both an in-person business meeting and a Spring Luncheon. We cannot wait to see you all in person.

The RTC Executive Board has been meeting and making plans for the upcoming year. We welcomed new members, remembered our colleagues that passed away during this frightening time, fought for an increase in the COLA base for all Boston retirees – and won! We increased the base to \$15,000 and the Retirement Board voted for an increase of 3% on that base. The Legislative Committee led by **Sandy Carle** and **Larry Connolly** worked hard contacting members and lobbying for their support for this increase. Mayor **Kim Janey** included the increase in the budget and the City Council supported both the raise in the base and the increase of 3%.

While we are not part of the collective bargaining agreement, the BTU officers work to support us in our fight for pension and health care benefits. We appreciate their continued support.

The number of RTC members that participate in the Delta Dental program continues to increase. 2,127 members participate in the individual and family plan offered. Vice Chair **Roz Avant** is in charge of our Delta Dental program and can be reached at the RTC office at the BTU every Thursday from 10 am-2 pm. Roz suggests that Delta members check out the website for good information and suggestions

Membership has grown to 3,200 members. Our Social Media Outreach continues to grow. We can be found on

our Facebook page. Please visit and don't forget to like the page.

The benefits committee is working to refine the Eye Care Center process for our RTC members. We hope to have a full report at the next meeting to share with you.

The pandemic has prevented any travel program this year. We are hopeful that spring will see a return to travel opportunities for us.

After the committee reports we had a fabulous speaker. **Nancy Emerson Lombardo, PHD**, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Neurology at Boston University School of Medicine, Alzheimer's Disease Center gave a presentation on Science-Based Memory Preservation Nutrition.

Dr. Emerson spoke about the current research that shows diet and activity contributes to disease prevention. She talked about participating in the international research that is on-going and focused on causes and prevention of this disease. A healthy lifestyle is essential and includes everything we already know, but many of us do not do – including exercise, sleep, social engagement, cognitive stimulation, creative arts, music, spiritual and purposeful activities, managing stress and depression, laughter/humor, nutrition and hydration.

Dr. Lombardo congratulated the participants for continuing to stay involved with the union and with each other, noting that that kind of social connection and cognitive stimulation is exactly what is needed to keep our brain tissue healthy. She explained why the Mediterranean Diet Plan was one way that shows a positive impact on brain tissue health. The research thus far shows that eating a combination of foods, avoiding sugar and processed foods and amping up vegetables and plant proteins can reduce the risk of converting AD by 40%. An anti-Hypertensive Diet lowers the risk of dementia.

This was such an impactful and

As we think about what has happened over the past two years and the renewed calls for equality and justice we should remember our experiences during the desegregation of the Boston Public Schools. Retired teachers and paraprofessionals who want to share your stories about teaching during the turbulent years of desegregation are invited to talk to **Anne Slater**, the new Co-Editor of the *Boston Union Teacher*. She would love to interview you. It is so important to our history as Union and as the professionals on the front lines of the school system to share these experiences with others. You can reach Anne at [aslater@btu.org](mailto:aslater@btu.org).

important presentation we hope that Dr. Lombardo will come back and present these findings again. We would like to hear more about the effects of the Mediterranean Diet, the DASH diet and the African Heritage diet with their combination of fresh vegetables, use of spices, herbs and hot peppers work to provide.

The brainwellness.com website also has a section of healthy foods and diet. You can find Dr. Lombardo's presentation of the RTC section of the BTU website [btu.org/retirees](http://btu.org/retirees).

## You Never Call, You Never Write!

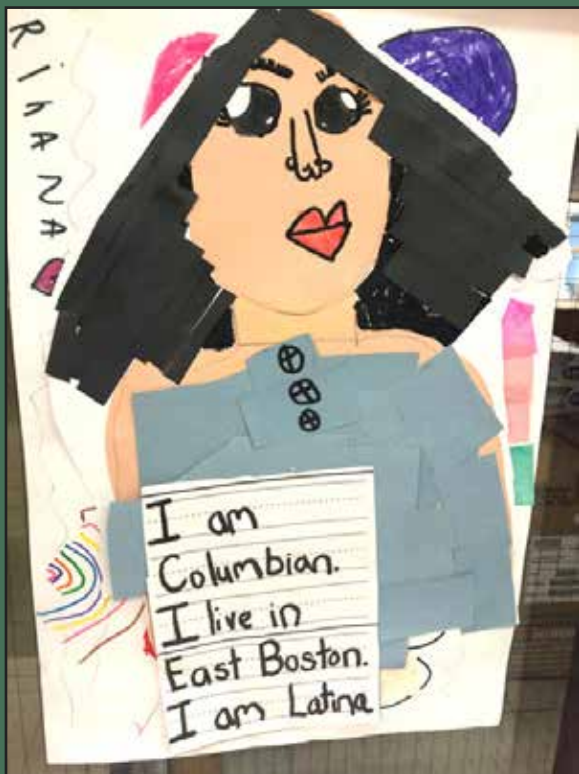
Please remember to call us when you change your address, phone number and personal email. We do not give out your personal information to anyone, but it is important that we be able to contact you.

Write to us with your ideas, activities and things that you think the RTC could do. Write to us and join one of our committees that might interest you.

Most importantly, stay well and see you soon!



**Alma Wright (left)** retired on August 31, 2021 after teaching 56 years in the BPS. Ms. Wright began her career at the Dudley Elementary School and then spent 51 years at the Trotter. **Janet Fillion (right)** retired on August 31, 2020 after teaching 50 years all in the same school. She started at Girls Latin School which is now Boston Latin Academy. Though the school changed locations several times, Ms. Fillion stayed in the Latin department the whole time. This picture was taken at Janet's retirement party on October 30, 2021. Alma's party is scheduled for 2022. We wish these two legends a happy and healthy retirement.



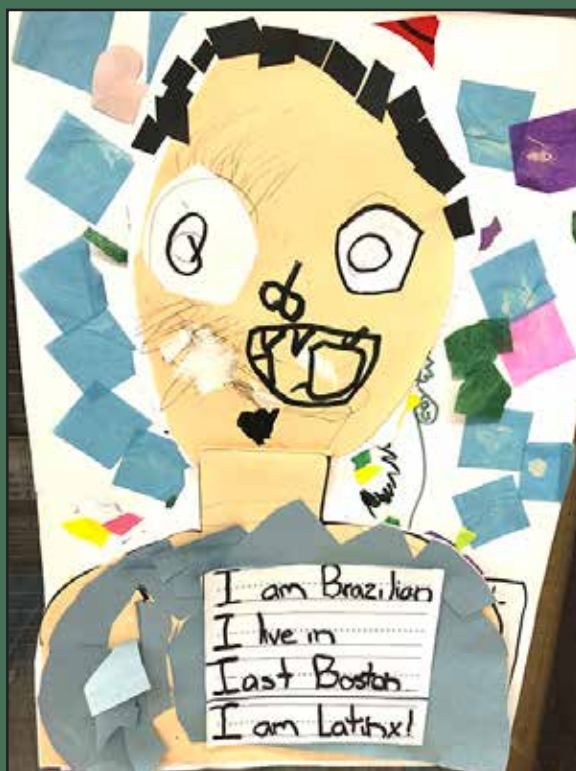
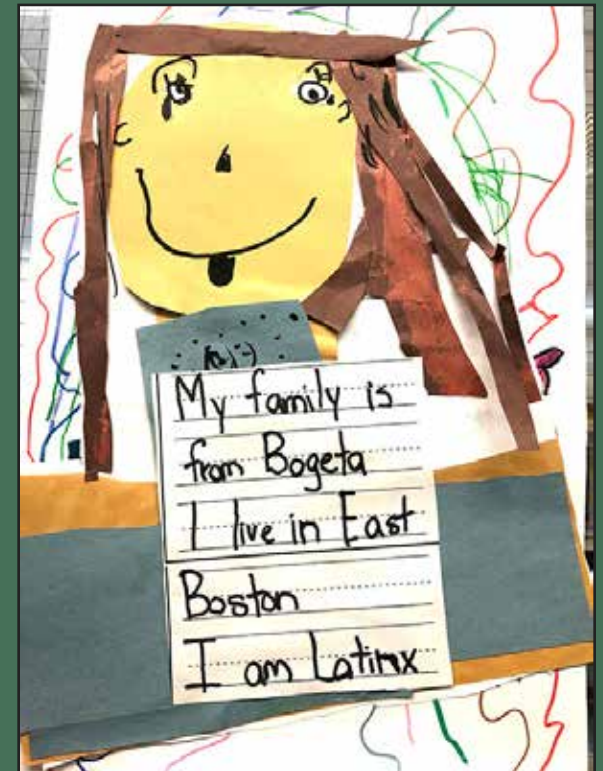
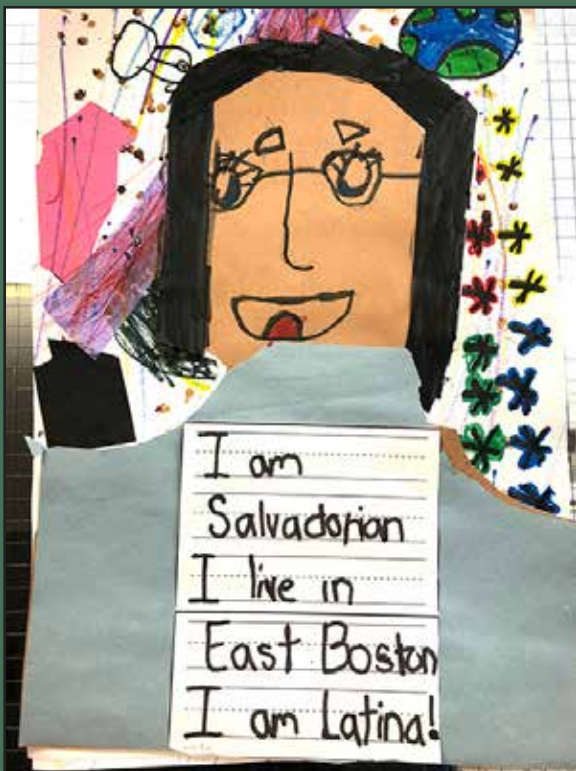




**Para Pumpkin Painting at the BTU Hall on October 26, 2021**



Photos by  
CasSandra  
Samuel





# AFT New Hampshire President Deb Howes: Guest Speaker at the BTU Fall Leadership Conference

By Michael Maguire, Co-Editor, Boston Union Teacher

AFT New Hampshire President **Deb Howes** began her remarks with a brief history of New Hampshire's politics. Most New Hampshire voters expect to be personally courted by candidates. Contrary to popular opinion, Howes told us, New Hampshire is actually a purple state. 1/3rd are solidly Republican, 1/3rd are solidly Democrat, and the remaining 1/3rd are either truly independent or who wait for the last minute to decide.

Because New Hampshire has a narrow swing margin, political organizations spend a disproportionate amount of money in the state. Even though NH voted for Biden/Harris over Trump/Pence in the presidential contest, the state legislature swung to the right.

Howes told the conference attendees that NH has the second largest legislature in the English speaking world. NH has 400 state representatives and 24 state senators. Before the 2020 election the NH House of Representatives was 230-170 in favor of the Democrats. Now the Republicans control the House 214-186. The Republicans also control the state senate and the governorship.



AFT NH President Deb Howes shows off her BTU shirt.

"If anyone tells you that vouchers are working or are effective, they are wrong," said Howes.

Additionally the state legislature has enacted, what Howes calls, anti-CRT (critical race theory) policies. "In a classroom you can mention that slavery existed but you cannot draw a connection between slavery and current economic circumstances (of

African-Americans)," Howes cautioned. "You could lose your teaching license." The same goes for gender issues.

The reason for the swing in local control, according to Howes, was due to the work of the Americans for Prosperity, the political action committee controlled by the Koch brothers.

Now NH has a voucher program which syphons millions of dollars away from public schools, and NH now has the most restrictive abortion laws in New England. The vouchers, called Educational Freedom Accounts, give funds to those who are already homeschooling or attending private schools. There is no protections against discrimination in the use of the vouchers. Schools which receive vouchers can deny enrollment.

*Editor's Note: While I was attending the conference I occasionally turned on the television in my hotel room. Nearly every commercial break had an advertisement for Sen. Hassan's 2022 re-election.*

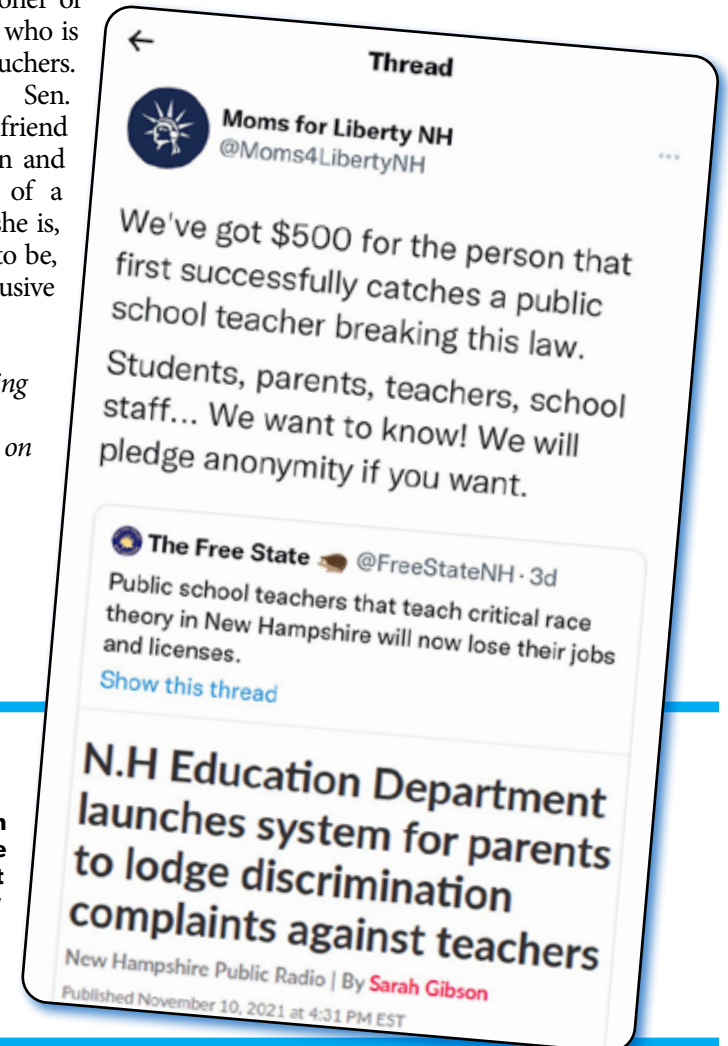
The reason the 2021 Fall Leadership Conference was in New Hampshire is because the BTU was planning to hold the 2020 conference just weeks prior to the presidential election. But due to the pandemic, travel was restricted and we did not attend. However, the Americans for Prosperity paid for local residents to go door knocking and campaign on their behalf.

AFT NH president **Deb Howes** asked us to return soon to assist in the re-election campaign of US Senator **Maggie Hassan**. Sen. Hassan will likely face a challenge from Republican **Frank Edelblut**, the current Commissioner of Education for NH who is a supporter of vouchers. Howes says that Sen. Hassan is a good friend to public education and that as a parent of a handicapped son she is, and will continue to be, a supporter of inclusive education.

*Editor's Note: While I was attending the conference I occasionally turned on the television in my hotel room. Nearly every commercial break had an advertisement for Sen. Hassan's 2022 re-election.*



AFT NH President Deb Howes address the BTU Fall Leadership Conference in Portsmouth, NH.



This is a tweet which exemplifies the type of disrespect teachers in New Hampshire face these days.





# Superintendent Cassellius Speaks at Leadership Conference

BPS Superintendent **Dr. Brenda Cassellius** zoomed into the BTU Leadership Conference. The theme of her opening remarks and of her responses to the Q&A session were primarily about including teachers' voices in decision making.

Dr. Cassellius stressed that the past two years were quite challenging. She is using the responses from February's WikiWisdom to guide her decision making in the deployment of ESSER funds and in shaping the FY'23 budget.

On COVID Dr. Cassellius thanked the nurses for continuing to go above and beyond. Currently BPS has 6-10 students, and 2-3 staff, per day diagnosed with COVID. These numbers are down and Cassellius hopes those numbers will trend lower with younger students being eligible for the vaccination as early as the second week of November.

"I know this is exhausting," the superintendent repeated to the conference goers as she thanked everyone for their dedication.

Dr. Cassellius said that fourteen teachers wrote the WikiWisdom report, the highlights of which are:

- Facility improvements
- Better water delivery
- Fixing broken bathrooms
- Air monitors
- Renovating five school a year
- More nurses
- Increasing technology and family engagement
- Increase translation and interpretive services
- Increase art, athletic, and libraries
- Expand before and after school care
- More summer offerings
- Changing start times

Next, Dr. Cassellius took questions from the audience.

**Our facilities are in dire need of repair, but responses are slow and often ignored. In many of our buildings, students and staff do not have access to water or hand washing. At the McKay, there is no sink for hand-washing on our floor of 300+ students. What are you doing to expedite repairs?** - Mikaela Zetley

Dr. Cassellius said she was aghast that bathrooms in many BPS schools are located only in the basement. "I've never seen that before in all my career."

"I'm going to continue to fight with the new mayor for additional funds for school repairs," Cassellius pledged.

**As educators, we see that students need stable housing in order to learn. Given that the district has rejected the Housing Justice section of our contract proposal, what do you see as the district's role in ensuring stable housing IN the city for our students and their families?** - Shakeeda Bartee

The superintendent assured the conference that the message of housing is personal to her but she said that housing is not a contractual issue but rather a strategic plan.

**My students are struggling emotionally and I understand this is true across the district. Buildings are dealing with numerous fights per day, what is the district's plan to support schools?** - Shauntell Foster

Dr. Cassellius acknowledged the challenges this year and that she is seeing

an uptick in bullying. She asked that teachers send her an email at [bcassellius@bostonpublicschool.org](mailto:bcassellius@bostonpublicschool.org) if they are not getting the supports that they need.

**What is the district doing to recruit, hire, and keep substitute teachers?** - Michael Maguire

Dr. Cassellius shared that she would like to send central office staff out to the schools to help but that the Bolling Building is also experiencing staffing shortages. Cassellius has a plan to reach out to local churches to get help filling substitute and cafeteria spots.

**My classroom and class bathroom are always running out of soap, but our custodian keeps watering the soap down and saying there isn't any more. What's the plan to keep students safe from disease when we can't get soap?** - Elizabeth Self

Dr. Cassellius said that every school is to have a three month's supplies of such products. She said to let her know if this is not the case and she will hold school leaders accountable.

**I am curious about how the COVID cases are being reported. I know that at my school there are more cases than have been reported and when there were cases in my classes, I was not informed. What is the plan to have more transparency about the rates of COVID in our schools?** - Nora Paul-Schulz

Reporting is via CDC guidelines, Dr. Cassellius said, especially for close contact cases. Reporting on the public dashboard is updated once a week, usually a Wednesday or a Thursday.

**Historically Madison Park is continuously underfunded and lacking in resources. What is the plan for MP to support the faculty and staff?** - Anonymous

"Madison Park is not underfunded but that's not to say that they couldn't use more," Cassellius insisted. "The faculty needs to know the budget, ask for transparency, and get involved in the budget process."

**ELs continue to show opportunity gaps in BPS especially ELL/SWDs. What is your plan around allocating funding and support to ELs and their families with wrap around services? How are teachers of ELs going to be supported? Can the LATF role be FT?** - Anonymous

The superintendent said this is why she wanted to add family liaisons to the schools. You should not be doing all the translation and interpretations.

**MANY middle schools are struggling right now! Lack of staffing, mental health support, consistent structures, etc. Have principals been honest about this? Can you share ways you'll research & support and mins/schools, this time is particularly hard for middle school students, families and educators?** - Chantei Alves

"Principals are (also) at their wits ends," Cassellius said. "They are being honest with me." The superintendent knows that staffing support is especially problematic for substitutes, paras, and ABAs. Let's rally the city, she said, to say that our schools and students need you.

**Some teachers are feeling unheard and demoralized. What will you do to bring more joy into the teaching profession in Boston?** - Anonymous

"Bring the JUICE," the superintendent said while smiling broadly. "Joy is feeling valued," she said. "I will do everything to hold my team accountable. I do not want people to feel demoralized. I will be a champion for your causes. But it's decades of neglect. We need to hold our next mayor accountable to give us the necessary funds."



Shantell Foster



Shakeeda Bartee



Nora Paul-Schultz



Chantei Alves





# BTU Fall Leadership Conference

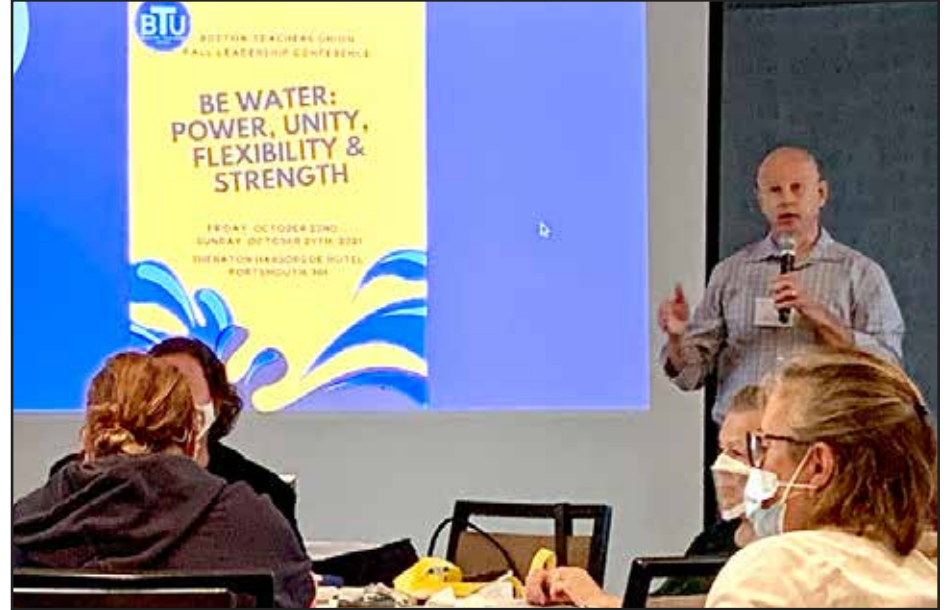
## Be Water: Power, Unity, Flexibility and Strength

Over the weekend of October 22 - 24, the BTU held its first in-person conference in nearly two years in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. BTU Vice President **Erik Berg** kicked off the conference with an analogy to water. A single water droplet is not impressive but when combined with very many others water can be a strong river, a tidal wave, or a tropical storm. There is strength in water. Water can go around obstacles. We should be like water in our organizing efforts.

Berg next covered select areas in our contract proposal to the Boston Public Schools. Unlike in previous negotiations, this time the BTU will be public with our asks and with the BPS's replies. We have many asks in our proposal which address broad, socio-economic issues inseparable from our roles as teachers. In short, the BPS feels that these are important issue but they don't belong in the contract. "If it's not in the contract," Berg stated, "then it's just empty promises."

"We are asking them to advocate with us," Berg said in reference to the BPS leadership's reluctance to accept our proposals. "We have to make them come around. That's on all of us."

The middle part of the conference was made up of various break out sessions. Participants chose two workshops to attend, as suited their interests.



Those works, in no particular order, were:

- Our city, our schools: Fighting receivership and other harmful state interventions
- Improving working conditions in non-traditional schools
- Supporting colleagues with disciplinary issues
- Cultivating better partnerships between teachers and paraprofessionals
- Building unity at your school: Faculty Senate and CAT teams
- Building partnerships with families
- Setting up strong school site councils
- Enforcing our members' contractual and legal rights
- Organizing committees: celebrate and connect



**See more on the Conference on pages 10 & 11.**