

# Boston Teachers Union Election Info

See pages 4 & 5.

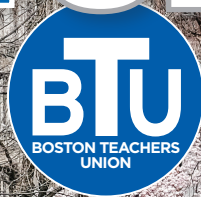


BOSTON TEACHERS UNION, LOCAL 66, AFT  
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Boston, Massachusetts 02125



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# Boston Union Teacher



The Award-Winning Newspaper of the Boston Teachers Union, AFT Local 66, AFL-CIO

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## President's Report Jessica Tang

# BTU is On the Move... Figuratively and Literally

Over the last two membership meetings, we have been sharing all of the different ways that the educators of the BTU have been moving, grooving and leading – whether it be addressing issues ranging from special education inclusion to educator pay **OR** advocating for issues ranging from climate change curriculum to addressing affordable housing for our paraprofessionals **OR** on the legislative side, fighting for a fair COLA for retirees and a chance to fix the muddled R+ situation. Our BTU members, RTC members and committees are very active and very much on the move!

Over the last month, two Inclusion Planning Teams have completed the process laid out in the new contract to address staffing needs and supports for special education in the district. The first school was the Ellison Parks and the second one was the Curley School. Both teams have convened to share their experiences and learnings from the process, and while aspects of the process were certainly challenging, both schools now have plans in place to bring them both significantly more staffing for their students and their needs. **Kafunda Banks**, ABA educator and newly-appointed Inclusion Work Group member shared both some of the challenges and highlights from her work both on the Inclusion Planning Team at the Curley and as one of the co-chairs of the BTU Inclusion Committee.

In addition to Kafunda, **Anne Brochu** of the Murphy K-8 School, **Nicole Mullen** of Boston Arts Academy and **Jonathan Bynum** of the O'Bryant School were also appointed to the new BTU/BPS Inclusion Work Group, joining the BTU President, School Committee Chair, and four members appointed by the Superintendent: **Natalie Ake**, **Charles Grandson**, **Sherri Neasman** and **Ana Tavares**. This group will have the final in regards to plans submitted that are appealed by school Inclusion Planning Teams, but the hope is that schools will not need to get to that point, because they will be able to resolve discrepancies through the new BTU Inclusion Liaison first. We are thrilled to welcome **Katie DeLarosa**, long-time Mary Lyons inclusion educator to that new role. There is still much work to be

done, and we hope that more educators will join our advocacy in the Inclusion Done Right Committee.

In regards to the pay issues, while we are happy to know that the vast majority of educators have received their correct retroactive pay, there are still many outstanding issues that need to be addressed. Our plan is to continue

**2023 continues to be a busy year for us, as we both address the new realities of the pandemic and prepare for the future ahead. The good news is that, as always, we are stronger, together and our members are on the move to ensure that we continue to build towards a more powerful union, and a powerful future where our educators, students, and families have what they need to thrive.**

testifying at the School Committee meetings until all of the issues are resolved, pursuing legal remedies, and keeping the public pressure on whether it be through potential actions or council hearings. Being a part of the Contract Action Committee and thinking forward to being a part of the new Collective Bargaining Committee or serving as a Silent Rep. will be important as we move towards preparing for a new round of contract negotiations as we continue to implement and enforce this one.

Our Housing Justice Committee has launched a new survey aimed at collecting information from paraprofessionals and what their needs are for affordable housing in Boston. Our Climate Justice Committee has been busy partnering with the Zinn Education Project to develop professional development on student climate curriculum as well as partnering with the City of Boston and BPS for BTU – specific listening sessions on the Green New Deal for new BPS schools. All of this, too, is part of the process that informs what our new priorities will be in the coming months for our new contract proposals.

On the political advocacy front, the RTC Legislative Committee fought hard for and won, in coalition with many other public sector unions, a one time, much-deserved COLA increase, as allowed by the state legislature. However, now the focus will be on increasing the COLA base permanently. Meanwhile, active educators are also fighting through the R+ Committee for state legislation to allow current educators to join Retirement Plus, which unbeknownst

to many members, required a change in retirement contributions from 9% + 2% to 11%. Confused? So were many of our members when this change happened, and why this issue needs a legislative fix.

There are many other ways our members are activating and moving on the myriad issues that impact our members, both currently in-service and retired, but one way we will literally be moving is in regards to our long-time BTU headquarters. As we shared at our membership meetings in January and February, the land surrounding the BTU is being developed by Accoria Partners. Under the leadership of Erik Berg, the Health and Welfare

Fund Building Corp. has entered into an agreement to sell a portion of our property to help fund the reconstruction of a new headquarters on an existing, but smaller footprint on the BTU site. The new building will have over twice as much space, but over multiple floors and overlooking Dorchester Bay.

However, for this building to be built, we shared that we anticipate having to move out of the current building and relocate temporarily for at least two and a half years while the new building is



**Jessica J. Tang**  
BTU President

being built, and, yes, it will have parking. Providing the same amount as now, but having ample parking was a non-negotiable as we negotiated the terms of the new building agreement. Before the designs for the new building are created, we will have opportunities for our members to weigh in on what they hope to see in our new site!

2023 continues to be a busy year for us as we both address the new realities of the pandemic and prepare for the future ahead. The good news is that, as always, we are stronger, together and our members are on the move to ensure that we continue to build towards a more powerful union, and a powerful future where our educators, students, and families have what they need to thrive, as we also work in coalition with our many partners to pass the Thrive Act at the State House this year as well! We are on the move, and we are building the movement – hope to see you at one of our upcoming events soon!



**Veronica Robles of the Veronica Robles Cultural Center performs at the East Boston EEC.**

## From Chaos to Healing

### Can I tell you a story?

I was doing a practicum in Memphis during grad school, teaching an all-boy 5<sup>th</sup> grade class, alone for the first time. For weeks the students and I learned and had fun. Then one day one of my best students walked into class, attacked three students and began to destroy the room. After 15 minutes, I finally got him to calm down and talk to me. He broke down and sobbed. Our anger, mine and his, turned into sorrow.

He told me through tears, moaning, and emotional agony, that the police had kicked in the door to his home that morning and dragged his mother away in handcuffs. They wouldn't let him say goodbye. Then the police forced him to come to school. They didn't have anywhere for him to go.

My students and I hugged him and cleaned up our room together. That was the first time, but far from the last time, I cried at work. Children's behavior is complex, and after years of teaching, I have seen every level imaginable. When society suffers, schools suffer more.

As a society, we are prone to mete out punishment. We have mandatory sentencing, the war on drugs, supermax prisons and the death penalty. Politicians run on being "tough on crime."

Now, the harsh punishments of our society have become the harsh punishments of our schools.

We have Kindergarten suspensions, massive in-school suspensions, lines in the hallway, quiet lunches, fines, school police, arrests, 9-year-olds being body slammed. Naturally, those under the knee of such harsh punishment reject it and ask for culturally responsive environments, for social workers, for healing. Instead, the community receives apathy. As a society, when we can't punish people we throw our hands up and surrender. If we do that in our schools, we have double trouble: no consequences for bad behavior, and no tools for healing.

Can I tell you a story? I once had a 7<sup>th</sup> grader who kept coming late and kept getting detention.

One morning he sprinted late into school again. Exasperated, I stopped him and checked his phone. No alarms. "Do you have an alarm clock at home?" I asked. "What's an alarm clock?" he said. I set up three alarms. If he woke up for the first alarm he could walk to school, for the second one, jog to school, and for the third alarm, he would have to run, but he wouldn't be late, I explained. He served his detention that day but he was on time for the majority of the rest of the year.

This student had already faced consequences for his tardiness, multiple times. What he needed was an intervention, a strategy to help him with his lateness. Without consequences negative behavior festers and hurts everyone. Without intervention students lack the tools to correct their behavior. We need both. We can all agree that certain behaviors are absolutely unacceptable and deserve punishment. At the same time if the behaviors keep happening there is a deeper issue that requires intervention. If a student keeps running in the hallway and the consequence is that they lose recess for the day, the hopeful logical outcome is that the student stops running in the hallway because they would rather go to recess. If the student continues to run despite the consequence then there has to be an intervention. You are not helping

the school community at all, allowing negative behavior to fester.

### Apathy causes violence

"During the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war, and such a war as is a war of every man against every man," wrote philosopher **Thomas Hobbes**. Without an established school culture of consequences and restoration, the students are at war, with the school, with other students, and with themselves.

### Can I tell you a story?

One day a boy pulled another boy's pants down in front of a group of students. I redirected, I yelled, I did all I could to stop a fight until I was exhausted. Other students tried to assist. There was no one to call for help and nowhere to send the student that had committed the act.

After that, I spent my entire break time convincing the student who had been wronged not to use a chair to attack the student who had targeted him. He cried and told me if he didn't retaliate the student would think he could do it again. The students got into a huge fight later, which then prompted friends and family to join the all-day fight.

When I left my classroom that day after school a student was waiting for me. The child kept talking to me, asking if I was walking home. This was a cousin of one of the students fighting, afraid to walk to the train by themselves – and they knew I walked home every day. They cried as we walked to the train together. I cried too, by this time I had lost count of how many times I had cried at work.

Not all, but the majority of violence stems from two things: perceived violence and actual violence. If a student doesn't feel safe, then they feel they have to be violent. If a student is being bullied and there is no intervention then the student feels they have only two options: continue to be bullied or violence. We have to provide our students the tools they need to feel safe, while allowing schools to administer consequences. We need students to have the time to work through emotional problems, but we also need a school culture where a student understands certain behaviors are unacceptable.

### Who is safe?

Teachers need to feel safe, too. It's no secret that we are sometimes assaulted by students.

And the student is often back in class right after the assault, whether the assault is verbal or physical. And it's not just our own safety at risk here. How would any student feel if the adult who is their protection figure can be assaulted with no consequences or intervention? Any student would ask themselves, what does that say about my safety? What does it say about my worth?

Teachers have been sexually harassed and sent sexually explicit emails and still there is no intervention, no consequences. If their protector can be sexually harassed what does this communicate to the rest of the school about the safety of women and girls at the school? If there is no authority or culture of dignity, how can anyone truly be safe?

We need to address safety for students and educators in our schools, with predictable consequences and a culture that is caring and not threatening.



Joel Richards

### Can I tell you story?

I was once having a restorative justice circle with students. A little girl had been beaten up on the bus and was scared to ride it to and from school. Through tears she described the years of being bullied by another girl.

All the students confirmed her story and even asked the principal to remove the girl from the bus. The students even decided and advocated for the bully to get therapy and counseling.

Their requests were ignored and as a result the bully was assaulted by a group of the girl's family and friends which led to weeks of violence.

We should not tolerate this neglect and violence. The children understood that the bully's behavior was irrational and she needed care. We need the deep, systemic buy-in they demonstrated, joined with school cultures that have both restorative practices and consequences for unacceptable behavior. We need serious consequences in conjunction with serious restorative practices.

We can do this!

### Can I tell you a story?

I had a young girl who used to visit my class from time to time, a class where the other girls were very close. Every time she showed up, they would yell at her and tell her to get out. They were incredibly aggressive towards her. I would tell them to stop, tell them, "you don't know her." They would respond "yes we do, she's a

bully and we aren't scared of her."

Then one day we had a school performance. The "bully" had created an entire dance routine, taught her friends, made her own DJ mix and performed for the entire school. They gave her a standing ovation. And the next time she came to my class the other girls treated her like a celebrity. They were excited to see her and couldn't resist giving her a big group hug, one of the most touching things I've ever experienced in the classroom.

### What changed?

They saw her for who she truly was: a passionate child with a beautiful soul. Imagine a school system with a culture that allows students to be their true selves. Where students can feel safe and be loved by their fellow students. We can do this. We can make a system that consistently provides the opportunity for students to shine and express themselves. We can make schools that promote healing with constructive interventions. We can limit violence, we can implement consequences and deliver social and emotional services. We can choose to create schools that help students reach their full potential.

*(Joel Richards is a technology teacher at Blackstone Elementary School in Boston and a co-chair of the Boston Teachers Union Black Lives Matter at School committee. You can follow Joel on Twitter at @MrRichardsBos.)*

### Letter to the Editor

May I offer a short history lesson for young teachers as to what teaching in Boston was like before there was a Boston Teachers Union. I began my career as a fourth grade teacher at the Sarah Greenwood School in 1962 fresh out of Boston State College. BPS that year had an enrollment of 93,000 students. My class of 42 students sat in chairs at desks screwed to the floor in neat rows. Teachers taught every subject including music and art. Specialists visited very infrequently. Teachers ate their lunch with the class in the classroom. If you did not have recess duty that day you got a 20 minute break.

If you called in sick your pay was reduced by 1/180<sup>th</sup> of your yearly salary. If a woman teacher became pregnant she was required to resign forthwith. There was no recourse if you ran afoul of a principal who took a dislike for you.

When BTU became the bargaining agent, things began to change for the better. Sick leave, duty free lunch, planning time, Health and Welfare, better pay and so much more are not to be taken lightly. Thank those who came before you for all the benefits and protections you have.

I retired after a 41 year career in BPS and my youngest daughter has been a teacher in Boston for many years. My admiration for you all in these difficult times for public education continues to grow. Hang in there!

*Sincerely, John LoConte*



# How is my attendance being monitored and what are the potential consequences as a result?

There is a Superintendent's Circular on "Employee Attendance" HRS-PP5 that outlines how the BPS monitors employee's attendance throughout the year, investigates perceived abuse of time/leave benefits, and treats documented "abuse" as disciplinary worthy.

The circular outlines how the attendance monitoring process calls for sign in/out procedures in order to provide an accurate record of all employees. It states that "An employee who fails to comply with the procedure, falsifies such a record and/or who fraudulently reports his/her/another's time, will be subject to discipline up to and including termination." Prior to discipline being meted out, BTU members' due process rights must be followed. Reporting your absences or early departures to your supervisor must occur by following the school department's protocol. It states that if an employee fails to follow the proper protocol, the employees' absences / early departure will be unexcused and the employee will not be paid for the day(s)/hour(s) of absence(s) as well as potentially subject to further discipline. \*Prior to docking of pay or other discipline, the BTU member's due process rights must be adhered to. BTU employees must report their condition if it is chronic or disabling that may qualify for consideration as a handicapped individual: "any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as: caring for ones' self, performing manual tasks, hearing, speaking, breathing, or learning." Such a person would contact the BPS Office of Equity. "An employee who fails to contact the Office of Equity cannot claim lack of assistance by the District and/or manager.", according to the circular.

If the manager determines the employees' attendances exhibits a pattern of abuse/raises concern, the Supervisor will address it with the employee. Scenarios that constitute a pattern of abuse outlined in the circular include, but are not limited to:

1. "Four or more separate absences before or after a weekend/holiday/vacation."
2. "Sick absences lasting six or more consecutive days without a doctor's note."
3. "Scattered sick days/leave throughout the school year exceeding or projected to exceed 15 or more days."
4. "Two or more absences, consecutive or closely patterned, following layoff (excessing) info."
5. "Two or more absences immediately following poor performance evaluation."
6. "Absence during a previously scheduled Investigatory Meeting or after receiving a notice of an Investigatory Meeting."
7. "Absence on a day of release or scheduled release of poor performance evaluation."
8. "Patterns of two days out, two in, one out, etc."
9. "Tardinesses: two days or more within a one-week period or tardiness: two or more days within a two-week period."

According to the circular, the consequences an employee will face when they have been deemed to engage in a pattern of abuse and/or excessive absenteeism/tardiness include:

"Discipline up to and including termination." (After a BTU members' due process rights are followed relevant to all discipline.)

"Employee will be required to provide

medical documentation substantiating each and every absence (past, present, future)."

"If employee fails to provide requested medical documentation for absences, the absences will be unexcused and he employee will not be paid for the time he/she is out of work." Due process must be employed prior to docking.

"Employee may be issued an "unsatisfactory/does not meets standards" on the employee's Performance Evaluation attendance/punctuality standard."

## What is the new 'contractual hourly rate' for teachers for school year 2022-23?

The contractual hourly rate for teachers is currently \$55.16. During the standard school day, individual teachers are paid at their own rate (pro rata) based on the amount of years teaching (step level) and the amount of educational degrees obtained and graduate credit earned (salary lanes) applied for, approved, and on file at BPS Office of Human Capital.

## Does the Union offer Occupational Liability Coverage for its members?

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) our national affiliate (the BTU is local 66 of the AFT), provides liability protection for claims or charges arising out of the employment activities of its' members. The Plan offers members from participating locals broad protection for legal defense costs and court judgements. The coverage protects members from a wide range of employment related issues, including defense of alleged criminal acts.

Coverage under this Plan includes the following:

\$1 million of protection per members per occurrence for damages arising out of the following: bodily injury; property damage; personal injury.

**Criminal Defense:** The Plan also reimburses certain legal expenses to defend any claim made against a member resulting from the commission of a criminal act, where such a charge arises out of the members' employment-related activities. \$5,000 per member per year, regardless of the outcome; Reimbursement up to \$35,000 in total, which is made only if the member is completely exonerated. Complete exoneration means that a finding or verdict of not guilty has been entered into the record and the charges are dismissed in their entirety without appeal. In both cases, reimbursement is for reasonable and approved legal expenses.

**Denial of constitutional rights:** In cases where such charges arise solely out of the members' employment activities, the Plan will pay up to \$250,000 per member per calendar year and up to \$1 million for any one incident.

**Licensing:** \$5,000 reimbursement for legal representation before an administrative board for licensing, where the proceeding arises out of the members' employment activities and involves the issuance, maintenance or revocation of a members' license.

**Assault death benefit:** If a member dies as a result of assault that occurs at work, the Plan shall pay a \$50,000 death benefit to the beneficiary if the members' death occurs within 90 days of the assault.

You must be a member of a participating AFT local to access the

benefits and protections of this coverage. The BTU is Local 66 of the AFT. To file a claim, contact: John Eastern Company toll free AFT line: 877-590-5562; fax: 813-402-7943; email: [AFT@JohnsEastern.com](mailto:AFT@JohnsEastern.com) to obtain a claim form: [www.aft.org/OLIclaim](http://www.aft.org/OLIclaim). American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO; 555 New Jersey Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20001; 202-879-4400; [www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org).

## What is the BPS Nondiscrimination Policy?

The BPS Equity Department details their policy in Superintendent's Circular EQT-4: "Nondiscrimination Policy". The BPS states that it is 'committed to maintaining an educational environment and workplace where individuals of all backgrounds and experiences are welcomes, encouraged, included, and can flourish' by aiming to eliminate all forms of bias and bigotry in order to resolve that prejudice and disparate treatment will never impede their learners or educators.

The Circular explicitly states, "The BPS will not tolerate discriminatory behavior, including intimidation, threats, or harassment of employees, students, or anyone else who visits or is part of our learning community. Retaliatory conduct toward persons who have reported possible bias, discrimination, or inappropriate behavior, who have assisted in an investigation, or who have otherwise exercised their rights under this policy is also prohibited."

"Unacceptable conduct includes any action, including verbal or nonverbal communication, that contributes to promotes, or is passively or actively complicit in disrupting the districts inclusive learning and working environment. Derogatory or intimidating statements, threats, acts of exclusion, or other mistreatment regarding a student's or employee's membership in or association with a member of a protected group be tolerated toward students, members of student's families, employees, contractors, or other parties who support or participate in district programming." The aforementioned circular details the various educational practices and programs included under this policy. The BPS states that they are committed to 'vigorously implement and actively



**Caren Carew**  
BTU Secondary  
Field Representative

enforce this policy to ensure that all of its daily operations are characterized by fairness, respect, & equity. Please refer to EQT-4 Superintendent's Circular for specifics and for more info email [bpsequity@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:bpsequity@bostonpublicschools.org).

## If I move, get a new phone or email address & update it on the HUB does BPS automatically notify the BTU?

No. You must contact the BTU directly to update changes of address, phone numbers, and email addresses. The BTU does not have access to the updates you file with the BPS.

## Do performing arts teachers get compensated for putting on productions?

An item we negotiated in the contract does provide for compensation if it meets the following parameters. "Effective September 1, 2005, performing arts teachers, including theater, music, dance, drama, and choral group teachers, who conduct regular after school rehearsals and practice culminating in final productions and/or festivals shall be compensated for such after school time with a stipend of \$1,600.00 per year." This money comes from each individual school's budget. Please discuss this with your administration and document rehearsals, etc. in order to qualify for the stipend.

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

## Boston Union Teacher

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE!**

**¡TODOS SON BIENVENIDOS AQUÍ!**

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE!**

**BLACK LIVES MATTER**

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

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**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 to the publication, and in good taste. Letters to the Editor should be sent to [letters@btu.org](mailto:letters@btu.org)

**DEADLINE:**  
The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue of the *Boston Union Teacher* is April 19th. 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.

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617-288-2000 | Fax 617-288-0024 | [www.btu.org](http://www.btu.org)

# Boston Teachers Union Election Information



## Confirmed Candidates for BTU Offices and Delegates

### BTU OFFICERS

#### President

Jessica Tang

#### Vice President

Erik Berg

#### Secretary-Treasurer

1. Trevour Smith
2. Karen Cross
3. Nora Paul-Schultz

#### Elementary Field Rep.

Lea-Antoinette Serena

#### Secondary Field Rep.

Caren Carew

#### Para/Sub/ABA Field Rep.

Colleen Hart

#### Political Director

Johnny McInnis

### PARAPROFESSIONAL COUNCIL

1. Sharon O'Dwyer
2. Todd Kerr
3. Mary Thomas
4. Debra Brown
5. Sau Yip
6. CasSandra Samuel
7. Vanessa LaRocque
8. Christine Buttiglieri
9. Bianca Pierre
10. Adrienne Jordan
11. Carla Johnson
12. Sacha Ruiz
13. Tracy Romain
14. Cynthia Ferris
15. Derrick Smith

### RETIRED TEACHERS CHAPTER

#### Chair

Marilyn Marion

#### Vice Chair

Roz Avant

#### Secretary

Joan Devlin

#### Treasurer

Mae Bishop

### DELEGATE, by Last Name

Maritza Agrait  
Roz Avant  
Kafunda Banks  
Mary Bell  
Erik Berg  
Denise Berkley  
Mae Bishop  
Maria Brooks  
Debra Brown  
Molly Bryson  
Christine Buttiglieri  
Layla Cable  
Caren Carew  
Cecil Carey  
Michelle Carroll  
Robert Carroll  
Brenda Chaney  
Paul Christian  
James Cordero  
Diane Crain  
Marjorie Crosby  
Karen Cross  
Natalia Cuadra-Saez  
Amrita Dani  
Jukurious Davis  
Randi Davis  
Joan Devlin  
Elizabeth Drinan  
Connor Echols-Jones  
John Enright  
Cynthia Ferris  
Danielle Fraine  
Caitlin Gaffny  
Amy Gebo  
Christine Gorman-Arnold  
Thomas Gosnell  
Colleen Hart  
Thomas Hocker  
Claude James Jr.  
Carla Johnson  
Charles Johnson  
Marta Johnson Faldas  
Adrienne Jordan  
James Kennedy  
Todd Kerr  
Heather King  
Karen Kilmain-Patriquin  
Erica Kouka  
Samantha Laney  
Vanessa LaRocque  
Josefina Lascano  
Nina Lessin-Joseph  
Sylvaine Lestrade

Keisha Lewis  
Michael Maguire  
Timothy Maher  
Katie Mallon  
Marilyn Marion  
Gayle Marrow  
Katina McClain  
Suzanne McGlone  
Johnny McInnis  
Lucinda Mills  
Nicole Mullen  
Kimvy Nguyen  
Sharon O'Dwyer  
Catherine O'Flaherty  
Noah Patel  
Nora Paul-Schultz  
Sheryl Pedrone  
James Timo Philip  
Kristen Pinto  
Declan Power  
Teresa Reaves  
Tracy Romain  
Dana Royster-Buefort

Matthew Ruggiero  
Chelsea Ruscio  
CasSandra Samuel  
Ivelisse Santo-Hicks  
Lea-Antoinette Serena  
John Simonetti  
Trevour Smith  
Elisa Sota  
Jessica Tang  
Regina Temple  
Josette Teneus  
Paul Tenney  
Paul Tritter  
Teresa Underwood  
Mary Ann Urban  
Jose Valenzuela  
Samantha Weintraub  
Darren Wells  
Danielle West  
Tatiana Williams-Rodriquez  
Stephanie Wing  
Karen Wood  
Alice Yong

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NCUA MSIE

## Primary Election For Secretary-Treasurer

Thanks to all the candidates who submitted signatures to participate in the upcoming 2023 BTU election. Thanks also to all our members who took the time to sign. This was the first step in making this election happen!

A primary election will be conducted for the three candidates who are running for Secretary-Treasurer. See candidate statements below. Ballots for this race are expected to be put in the mail on Monday, April 10 and must be **received** at the Post Office **by Tuesday, May 2**. Best to fill in the ballot and return it immediately (before it gets lost in the bottom of that pile of bills and junk mail). **In person voting** will be conducted on **Wednesday, May 3** at the BTU Hall from 8 am-6 pm.

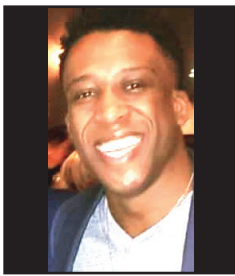
The races for all the other full-time officers are uncontested. 19 candidates are running for the 12 executive board positions and 15 candidates are running for the 15 Para Council positions. We look forward to a robust turnout in voting, which helps build our union strength.

See the full list of candidates on page 4.

### CANDIDATES BIOS FOR SECRETARY-TREASURER

#### Trevour Smith

**M**y name is Trevour Smith and I'm a mathematics teacher at Boston Latin School. I'm excited to be running for Boston Teachers Union's (BTU's) next Secretary-Treasurer because I truly believe in the power of education to transform lives.



Throughout my involvement with the BTU, whether it's been as a Building Rep, a member of the Action Committee working to build safe and welcoming sanctuary schools, or working as a Silent Rep on our latest contract campaign, I've become increasingly passionate about the ways BTU can use its power to fight for a better district for members as well as our students and their families.

I've experienced firsthand the challenges that educators of color face in Boston Public Schools, and I'm ready to work together to create a more equitable and inclusive education system that supports the success of *all* students.

My passion, coupled with my background in business, is why I'm excited to run for Secretary-Treasurer. Through a strategic and data-driven approach, I will help ensure our resources are allocated efficiently and effectively to benefit all teachers and students.

I'm committed to building strong, collaborative partnerships with stakeholders to find innovative solutions to our district's complex issues. By working together, we can create a stronger, more vibrant educational community that provides every student with the support and opportunities they need to succeed!

#### Karen Cross

**I**grew up as, what would now be called, an English Language Learner. My mom, a North Korean immigrant, didn't know a word of English. Thus, she encouraged me to listen carefully and to take copious notes to help her with anything that needed translating. That note-taking has stuck with me ever since. Even today, as appointed Secretary of the Asian American Pacific Islander task force, I am still taking notes! Since one key role of Secretary-Treasurer requires **record keeping** and **note-taking**, I believe I more than fit the bill!



Twenty-years as a Math Teacher and 25 years as a former owner of successful businesses and serving as **Secretary and Trustee of the Pre-paid Legal Fund** have certainly paid off. The position of Secretary-Treasurer is multifaceted and these various roles have provided me with such experiences as:

- Working alongside accountants;
- Scrutinizing monthly ledgers;
- Making strategic financial decisions w/Pre-paid integral to the BTU;
- Increasing revenue during my 5-year tenure as board member;
- Introducing "Countrywide," a financial wellness program.
- Overseeing all operations of my businesses including accounting, payroll and accounts receivable;
- Managing multiple employees.

My varied Union experience that will inform me as an elected officer include:

- Building relationships as a **Building Rep** of 9 years;
- Participating in **Silent Negotiations, Racial Justice Committee** and Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) member;
- Promoting awareness about the **Thrive Act**, (a bill to eliminate receivership) as **Member Organizer**;
- Being an **SEIU 509** member as **Adjunct Faculty of Northeastern Graduate School**

BTU must ensure there are no cracks where members fall through! **No BTU member left behind!** My vision for our next contract includes advocating for:

- **Increasing mental health support** for students and members;
- **Improving working conditions that produce better learning conditions**;
- Providing greater **support for new members** to encourage participation & retention
- **Ensuring presence at all School Committee meetings** by recruiting members to attend;
- Participating in/sitting on the Public Employee Committee (PEC) who negotiates our health insurance benefits;
- Serving on the **Boston Retirement Board**, as a majority of active members will spend more years in retirement than they have remaining in the field.

The position of Secretary-Treasurer is, indeed, a huge undertaking. I believe I am the right person for the job! I pledge to work to grow our finances and to be transparent about how and where our monies are spent.

I respectfully ask for your vote.

Please visit: [www.karencross4btu.org](http://www.karencross4btu.org)

#### Nora Paul-Schultz

**I** am excited to be running for Secretary-Treasurer of our union. I am a 11-year veteran physics and engineering teacher at the John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science, a current BTU Executive Board member, and co-chair of BTU's Unafraid Educators Committee. I am running for Secretary-Treasurer because I believe in the strength of our union and I want to continue to grow our power. In the last contract fight, I helped transform our negotiation process by creating the structures for silent representatives so that any member could take part in the negotiations. As a leader of the silent representatives, I attended nearly all negotiating sessions and helped to draft summaries to inform members about the process. I hope to bring this experience into the role of Secretary-Treasurer in order to increase transparency and member engagement.




Outside of my work with the BTU, I have been the finance chair of Kavod, a Jewish community in Boston. In that role, I came to see how the budgets of organizations are value statements. I want

to bring this view into how we view the BTU's budget. As Secretary-Treasurer, I would help lead conversations about our financial choices as a union so that we can be grounded in our vision of a more just district and city while ensuring that our union remains in a strong financial position.

As a leader of Unafraid Educators, the BTU's immigrants rights organizing committee, I have helped to build and promote a scholarship for undocumented BPS Students. I have worked with students, grassroots organizations, and legal groups to create and advocate for a district policy that would limit unhelpful and dangerous information-sharing between our schools and the Boston Police Department and therefore limit the access ICE and the FBI have to our students and their families. This activism led to the passage of an ordinance at the City Council level as well. Additionally, I am on the BTU's Racial Justice Standing committee and was appointed to the national AFT's Civil and Human Rights Committee.

As Secretary-Treasurer, I am eager to work alongside students, community groups, and other educators to fight for policies in BPS that humanize us all — young people, their families, and school staff alike. I would be honored to have your vote. To learn more go to [www.nora4btu.com](http://www.nora4btu.com).




# Blood Drive


## Wednesday, April 12

**Boston Teachers Union · 180 Mt. Vernon Street · Dorchester**

Join us and our friends from Boston Teachers Union and Children's Hospital and *give the gift of life!*



To make an appointment, please go to [bostonchildrens.org/halfpints](http://bostonchildrens.org/halfpints) and use the sponsor code **TCU**



For more information, contact Michael McLaughlin at [mmclaughlin@tremontcu.org](mailto:mmclaughlin@tremontcu.org)

# Wondermore: When Authors Come to Visit

**A**t the East Boston EEC, we were lucky enough to host to **Raul the Third**, author of the *Vamos!* Series and the *El Toro & Friends* graphic picture books (and more). We chose Raul because, **Vamos! Let's Go Over The Bridge!**, is the featured East Boston StoryWalk book. Raul's books are colorful, playful stories in English and Spanish.

Before our visit I was able to get several copies of all of Raul's books from my local library. Teachers read the books aloud to their classes. In grade one we used Raul's books, as well as several other comic book style books, as mentor texts and practiced writing in Raul's style.

I modeled with my own story about how our cat Benjamin tries to get in my daughter's lunch box every morning. I talked about how it would be funny

if Benjamin came to school with my daughter and then popped out at lunch time. Each time we met I demonstrated how my story started from a real event and then how I added a storyline that made the story funnier.

Students drafted their stories on comic style paper and then published in blank hardcover books (barebooks.com). On the day of Raul's visit he did a short presentation about his writing process and showed us his new book, *Tacos Today!* And talked about how he uses a large sketchpad to draft his ideas. Raul visited the grade one classrooms and conferred with students. This was an important model for young writers to see how authentic books are drafted and revised.

Finally, every student got a signed book to take home and every teacher

got a book for her classroom. It was an amazing day!

If you would like to bring an author to your school, contact Wondermore ([wondermoreboston.org](http://wondermoreboston.org)). Wondermore is a program that brings authors to schools, for about \$250. For this tiny fee, Wondermore hires the author, and gives signed copies of their books to all students and teachers. Wondermore hosts a wide list of authors that include **Raul the Third, J.C Cervantes, Jason Chin, Lisa Klein Ransom, Jerry Craft, Jef Czekaj, Lulu Delacra, Nathan Hale, Leah Johnson, Kwame Mbalia, Juana Media, collage artist Oge Mora and Maris Wicks**. These are just some examples of authors on Wondermore's rolodex. If you are interested in an author, they will try their best to bring that author to your school because Wondermore envisions a world in which all students can see themselves in what they read. They feel that introducing students to culturally relevant authors and illustrators allows



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

every child to see themselves in the books that they read. Anyone that is interested can reach out to **Wondermore**. In addition to author visits, when a school is opening a library they will bring an author for the celebration kick off. They also partner with the Boston Book Festival's Shelf Help program to support school libraries. It was easy to set up the visit and the Wondermore staff was organized and supportive. Call today to set up visits for next year!

*"Wondermore's Authors-in-Schools program brings acclaimed authors and illustrators directly into classrooms across Boston for curriculum-aligned presentations and interactive discussions. By working closely with teachers and librarians to connect the work of the author or illustrator to classroom studies, Wondermore author visits enhance school curriculum. At the same time, we emphasize inclusion and diversity in the selection of our authors so students can see themselves reflected in the pages of the authors' books. Recent studies indicate that interactions between the creators of children's books and the students who read them motivates children to become better readers and writers."*  
- Wondermore website



## Retired Teachers Chapter

### Can Spring Really Be Here Already?

**By Joan Devlin, Secretary, Marilyn Marion, Chair and Janey Frank, Legislative Chair**

It doesn't seem possible but April is here already. It is going to be an interesting and busy Spring. We start with the news from the Legislative Committee.

The Legislative Committee met on February 27 and had Stakeholders from eight unions, in total, including BTU, AFT MA, and ARA. They updated the status of the increase in the FY23 COLA from 3-5%. The City Council scheduled a virtual hearing on March 13 at 2:00 P.M. Even though we expect the councilors to vote to approve the local option, we planned to have a panel presenting evidence as to why this is important. Once we know when and how the extra 2% will be paid, we will let you know. We encourage everyone to write or call the councilors and thank them for their ongoing support and to share your personal stories.

We are also very actively supporting legislation at the state and federal levels dealing with COLA and the WEP and GPO provisions of Social Security. It takes 1-2 minutes to sign on to the AFT MA ([www.aftma.net](http://www.aftma.net)) website and send your message to your legislators. Ideally you can add a personal note, but it is not required.

Spring Business Meeting is scheduled for April 13. HEAR USA will make a presentation of their program and how it will operate with the over-the-counter provision of hearing aids.

The Spring Luncheon will take place at the Venezia restaurant in Dorchester on May 18. You will get the details in the mail as well.

Tickets to the luncheon cost \$50.00 per person and for the Spring Luncheon, the tickets are non-refundable.

It is never too early to set up your tables with your colleagues. To reserve a table,

you must submit all of your checks to the committee at the same time. The deadline for purchasing tickets is May 4, 2023.

Keeping connected to our friends and colleagues is one of the great benefits of being active in the RTC. Coming to meetings, hearing interesting presentations and discussing the issues that affect all of us is important. Maintaining social connections is exercise for you mind. That exercise is as important as physical activity.

BTU and RTC elections are being held this spring. RTC members are members of the BTU and may vote for all of the officers of the union that you voted for as an active teacher/paraprofessional.

In order to vote in the election, you must be a dues-paying member of the Retired Teacher Chapter. Someone asked why voting for the BTU officers was important. The answer is the same reason why everyone who is eligible should engage in the election. The officers and strength of the union are important to the pension and health benefits of the retired teachers and paraprofessionals.

We retirees enjoy the support of the officers and members of the BTU. The stronger the union is, the more influence it exerts. When we need to have a strong voice to speak to the Mayor and Councilors it is vital that we have the strong support of the President and Executive Board of the union.

Voting is by mail ballot or in person. If there is need of a primary election it will be held the first Wednesday in May. The final election will be held the first Wednesday in June from 8:00 am-7:00 pm. If you have moved please send your new address to the RTC. If you haven't received any letters from us, call the RTC office and leave your address or email us your information. We want everyone who is eligible to vote to get a ballot and instructions on the voting process.

## SLIFE Learning Cohort: Learning From & With Our Peers

By Kristen Cacciatore (Telescope Networker)

One day in October, **Ariana Sicairos-McCarthy** taught an ESL mini-lesson to three of her students in the SLIFE (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education) program at Frederick Pilot Middle School. During the twenty-five minute lesson, she led the students through saying a list of “s-blend” words like snip and swim, a card sort of the same words, a short story read-aloud featuring the target words, and a writing activity that challenged the students to summarize the story in their own words. Her students were eagerly completing the increasingly complex tasks, proud to demonstrate their English to Ms. McCarthy through speaking, reading, and writing. When the timer rang to indicate the session was over, one of the students said “I want to keep writing,” and the other two students chimed in agreement. Ms. McCarthy assured them they could continue the next day.

Just a few days earlier, in a classroom a few miles away at Boston International Newcomers Academy (BINcA), **Erin McGorty** and **Beth Nibberich** taught a HILT 1 (high-intensity literacy training) class for their high school SLIFE students. Eighteen students were present right at 8:00 am, phones away, eyes on the board as their teachers said “Good morning” and they responded as one, with an emphatic, “Good morning.” Beth and Erin led their students through a sequence of routinized listening, choral reading, brainstorming, writing, and creating on a Padlet, and scripted partner dialogue about what they did and what they ate over the weekend. Every student volunteered to come up to the front of the room and practice their English greetings with a classmate. Every student created a Padlet entry they were proud to show off during the ending partner sharing round robin.

As a former SLIFE science teacher myself, I know that these lessons don’t always go so smoothly. SLIFE students, as newcomers to the U.S. with significant gaps in their previous educational experiences, have unique needs and strengths. It was a challenge for me to adapt my instructional strategies to meet their need for practice with school routines and procedures and to amplify their many strengths. As I sat in these classrooms observing Ariana’s and Beth’s and Erin’s lessons, I recalled my struggles and questions about how to engage students, how to support the newcomer students that joined the class on a near-weekly basis, and how to balance the development of students’ foundational skills and knowledge with the expectation that students would perform grade-level work. Ariana, Beth, and Erin were grappling with these same questions and tensions and finding success with their SLIFE students.

It wasn’t just me – SLIFE teachers all over BPS were hungry for professional learning focused on SLIFE based on their responses to the June 2022 Telescope Network Needs Assessment survey. These comments included:

*“SLIFE educators really do need a space where they can share best practices, curriculum choices, and troubleshoot. I think that any gathering of the SLIFE folks will be beneficial.”*

*“[Can we have] SLIFE specific PLC-curriculum sharing [such as] learning more about program models across the district, and bilingualism in our language-specific programs... SO many topics we can learn and discuss together!”*

This fall, in response to this district-wide need, Ariana, Beth, and Erin led a professional learning series for SLIFE educators, with support from the Telescope Network, to help others learn about their teaching practice and then bring their learning back to their own students. The SLIFE Learning Cohort addressed the question “How do we build students’ foundational skills in a SLIFE classroom while promoting their readiness to learn grade-level content?” Twenty-three educators from thirteen different BPS schools and departments participated, including SLIFE teachers teaching students in grades 3-12 and a wide range of content, including ESL, native literacy, science, history, and math.

Two of the participants were **Mayra Da Rocha**, a SLIFE Spanish native literacy teacher at Frederick Pilot Middle School, and **Rocio Diaz Niachi**, a 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>-grade SLIFE teacher at Blackstone Elementary. When asked why they joined the cohort, Mayra said, “I’m excited to get to know other SLIFE teachers and learn new routines I can use in my classes.” Rocio said, “I want to learn how to support my students to do grade-level work.”

As part of the first three Learning Cohort sessions, participants watched videos from Erin and Beth’s, and Ariana’s classrooms and debriefed the observations with the host teachers. During the debrief sessions, the host teachers explained some of their rationale for their instructional choices by connecting them to research-identified best practices for SLIFE students, their students’ individual needs as pre-literate or developing-literate adolescents, and their expertise as teachers.

In the remaining three sessions, participants turned their attention to their own teaching practice. They each decided on a specific change to implement in their SLIFE classroom that was similar to something they saw in one of the observation videos of Beth and Erin’s classroom or Ariana’s classroom. After getting feedback on their plans from their peers in the cohort, they each tried their ideas out and then reflected on how the implementation went in a subsequent cohort session.



Learning Cohort participant Mayra Da Rocha’s book club.

Mayra’s change idea was a Spanish book club for her students, where guest readers from the school community came to read aloud to students. Her idea was inspired by a discussion in the learning cohort around the value of connecting students to the larger school community and the importance of language-based routines she saw in the two observation videos. Mayra said “One of our school social workers, who is not a native Spanish speaker, came to read with us. She is learning Spanish. Students enjoyed having a visitor read with us and felt confident in reading aloud with another adult in the room. They were proud to be able to help her decode some words in the text or explain vocabulary to her. It was very motivating for students!”

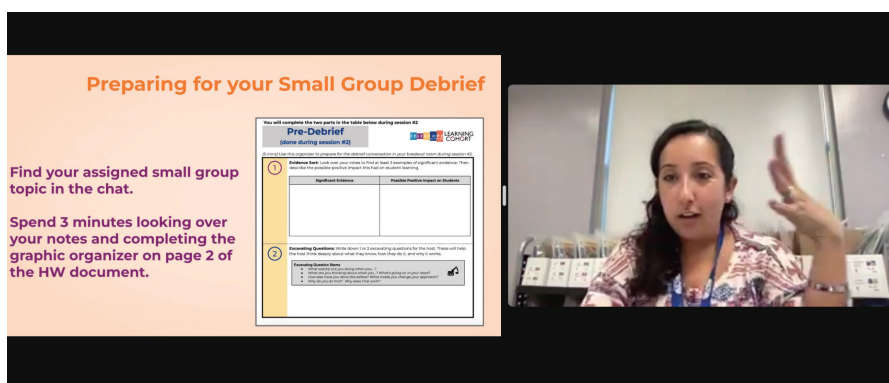
Rocio was also inspired by the use of language acquisition routines in the two observation videos, especially the consonant blend card sort seen in Ariana’s video. Her change idea was implementing a morning routine involving word study and word creation, and she reported that it was a resounding success. In her final reflection, she wrote “With my students, I started to notice that their self-confidence increased 100%. Thanks to my change idea proposal, my students were able to complete grade-level work and participate in the end-of-unit publishing party. This is something they wouldn’t have thought possible at the beginning of the school year, yet it was possible.”

The final session of the Learning Cohort gave participants the opportunity to once again work in small groups to discuss their change idea implementation, to reflect on their learning, and to share their admiration and appreciation for their colleagues and the peer facilitators. One participant said “Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this series of PDs. It was incredibly helpful to talk to other educators who are in the same SLIFE boat and be able to talk about different strategies that are working well for our students and brainstorm ideas for how to improve our practice.”

The teacher-facilitators, Beth, Erin, and Ariana, also found great meaning in their work with the cohort. Erin said, “It makes me feel good that our work was helpful in starting conversations about how best to support SLIFE students at all of these other schools.” Beth was struck by the challenges some teachers were facing in communicating the special needs of SLIFE students to other adults in their school. “I think the conversations we had will help teachers advocate for their students, which is terrific,” she said.

As the logistical facilitator of the learning cohort, my main takeaway was admiration for the incredible efforts of my SLIFE colleagues throughout the district. It is clear to me that the success of this professional learning activity resulted from centering the work on a specific challenge facing a particular group of educators and leveraging the expertise and knowledge of BPS teachers working in a similar instructional context to address that challenge. The experience was valuable for others in the cohort as well. Ariana spoke for many of them in her final reflection, saying “I hope we keep this professional learning community for SLIFE teachers going forward!”

*(Kristen Cacciatore is an instructional coach at Charlestown High School and a Networker for the BPS/BTU Telescope Network. Click here to read more about the Telescope Network’s 2022 SLIFE Learning Cohort. Check out the full calendar of past and upcoming events from the Telescope Network at [tinyurl.com/TelescopeEvents](https://tinyurl.com/TelescopeEvents).)*



Learning Cohort peer facilitator Ariana Sicairos-McCarthy explains the video observation debrief protocol.

# We're Learning Here!

By Amika Kemmler Ernst, Ed.D.



(Amika Kemmler Ernst is a retired BPS New Teacher Developer with extensive experience as a classroom teacher, curriculum developer, and graphic artist. Her "We're Learning Here" Project features images of everyday learning in our public schools, along with the words of the students pictured.)

## Gardner Pilot Academy

**G**ardner Pilot Academy is located in "Lower Allston" – an area of the city bounded by the MassPike and a bend in the Charles River. The school serves close to 400 students in grades K1-8, where Erica Herman has been the principal for almost twenty years! A big poster with "WELCOME" hand-written in many languages greets visitors.

With the support of a Director of Extended Services and a grant-funded coordinator hired by the YMCA, the Gardner engages a plethora of community organizations to enrich the school's academic and social offerings. A few examples: On Friday mornings every student has art enrichment classes taught by artists from Art Resource Collaborative for Kids, Young Audiences of Massachusetts, and other groups. Harvard University's "Ed Portal" programs provide classes in mindfulness, storytelling, and more – both during and after the school day.

Every inch of space in this old brick building is utilized. At a couple of cafeteria tables in the school's basement, **Jen Scioli's** third graders are making ramen with purple noodles under the direction of Ann Mendoza. Around the corner from the cooking class, science specialist **Irja Jarvis** teaches a class of primary students. In another part of the basement, K2 children walk heel-to-toe around the room as P.E. teacher **Donnell Stoute** demonstrates how to keep their balance on wooden blocks.

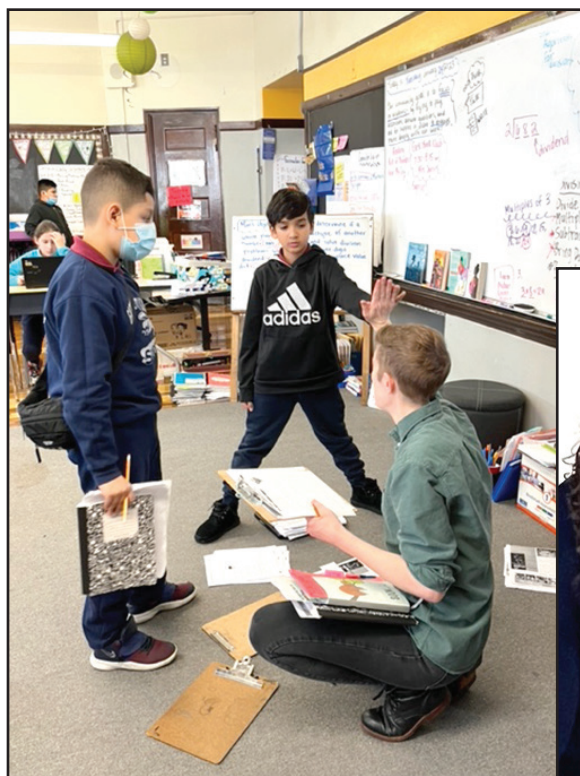
Upstairs, a young African American man from the Boston Children's Choir is teaching a song with the refrain: "Be the change... you want to see in the world..." Grade 4 students bring their personal narratives to **Lauren Fontaine** for her approval, while **Marian Barrios** is helping her second grade students review – and appreciate – one another's writing, as each piece is projected and read aloud.

In **Angelica Reza's** Humanities class, sixth grade students are reading *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* and learning about figurative language. Eighth graders in **Lesley Onuoha's** Humanities class are doing independent reading, while in history with **Maria Navarro** they are beginning a unit on ancient Egypt. Many students in the upper grades use computers as they work on developing math and language skills.

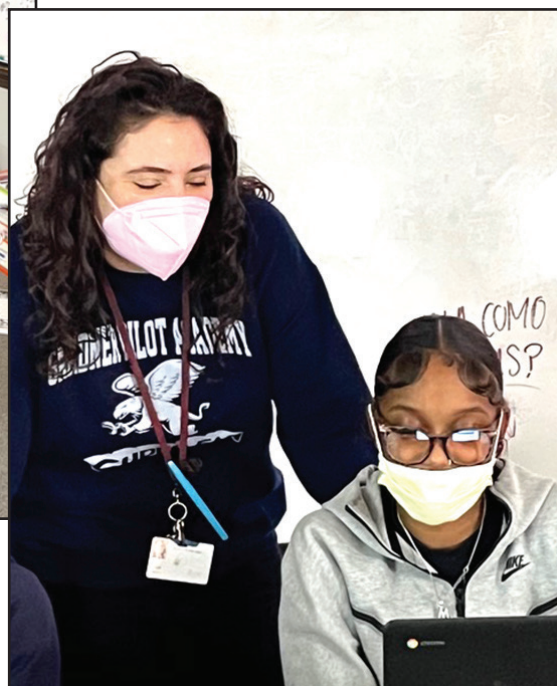
A "Consonant Sound Wall" stretches across an entire side of **Tracy Coutts' K2** class, with photos of children's mouths forming the sounds of the English language instead of a list of words. Children sit in a circle while she explains the math stations available, where they will practice measuring with cubes and popsicle sticks.

A group of K2 teachers tells me that having two family liaisons, one a parent who speaks both Spanish and Portuguese, helps the Gardner develop close relationships. They also appreciate that their pilot status allows them to be compensated for weekly and monthly professional development meetings which have created strong, supportive grade level teams. Sixth grade inclusion paraprofessional, **Raylyn Cheek**, says the Gardner gives students opportunities to "voice their opinions, feelings and ideas about everything from school culture to classroom and community activities."

*Amika*   
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I'm getting a high five after showing Mx. Fontaine my writing work. My favorite subject is math, where we're learning how to do long division.   
 Laim DeLaCruz, Grade 4



This is in math class and I'm asking Ms. Skeadas for help because I was a little confused about the assignment. Right now we're studying geometry and learning how to find the slope of a line.   
 Madison Johnson, Grade 8



We are reading *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* in our Humanities class. It is a memoir by William Kamkwamba, who built a windmill to bring electricity to his village in Malawi. In this class we're learning how to write more efficiently and to use figurative language like similes and metaphors to make our writing more interesting.   
 Andrew Arias & Jax Fallon, Grade 6



We are balancing on blocks in gym class, keeping our feet close together. Mr. D is showing us how. We learned that holding your hands to each side out helps you balance.   
 Ms. Egan's K2 Class



I am doing a math station with cubes and Ms. Coutts is helping me. We are measuring cubes. I like working at stations and on the computer.   
 Allison Gavarrete, K2



We are using pattern blocks to match pictures on the paper. We are learning about shapes like triangles and squares. We are also learning our letters. I learned that sharks live in cold water.   
 Matthew Del Gado, K2 (with Jaylah Marins)



Ms. Castillo is helping me write about soccer, my favorite game. We are learning to write good sentences with more interesting words. Today we learned about Pedro Martinez, a baseball player from the Dominican Republic.   
 Iker Santos, Grade 2



We are in Ms. Ann's cooking class and getting ready to eat the chicken and ramen we made. It had mushrooms, onions, bok choy, and purple noodles in it! We learned that you always have to wash your hands and keep things clean. We also learned how to cut stuff with a knife. Some of our favorite foods were smoothies, Vietnamese spring rolls, and quesadillas.   
 Ms. Scioli's Third Grade Class