

## Boston Teachers Union Election Info

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BOSTON TEACHERS UNION, LOCAL 66, AFT  
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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

## Moving From Defense to Offense: The BTU 2023 Legislative Agenda

As we move into March, we are also making moves to achieve our strategic priorities, including through our legislative agenda this year. As a reminder, this past fall we shared three strategic priorities for the upcoming school year. They are:

- 1) Build strong union structures at school sites.
- 2) Educate about, implement, and enforce the new contract.
- 3) Be more on the offense, rather than on the defense as a Union.

We have been very busy throughout this school year to **continue building strong union structures**, including ensuring that each school has Building Reps, Faculty Senates, and School Site Councils. For example, we are piloting a new three part series of Building Rep workshops this calendar year to add more supports for Building Reps and organizers have visited dozens of schools to assist with and support Faculty Senates. We have also been supporting schools to both implement and grow new Inclusion Planning Teams, engage our activist list in planning for actions regarding pay issues, and encouraged more members to become Black Lives Matter at School point people for activities during Black History Month.

To reach our second strategic goal, we have created print and online resources as well as visited dozens of schools to **educate about, implement, and enforce the new contract**. The school visits are part of our Contract Coffee Hours where we give a brief presentation on highlights of the new contract, share a "plain language summary," give an overview of the new special education inclusion language, share guidance and then answer questions. All schools in the first cohort of the special education Inclusion Planning Teams as well as the high schools have hosted BTU staff for the Contract Coffee Hours, and dozens more are being scheduled in the upcoming month. We are also launching a new contract explainer video and community meetings as well.

Moving into March, we are zeroing in on our third strategic priority, which is to **be more on the offense, rather than on the defense as a Union**. This includes leading the narrative around inclusion and what is needed, developing

materials to make it easy for members to understand our priority campaigns, and investing proactively in our relationships with community allies. It also includes filing and supporting proactive legislation that provides solutions for many of the challenges members are facing whether it be addressing the COLA for retirees or replacing state legislation that allows for harmful receivership threats based on high stakes MCAS scores. We have a robust list of priority legislation both locally and nationally.

For example, we are proud to be a part of a coalition of educator unions, families and community organizations that have put forward the Thrive Act. This legislation would end the practice of school receivership, dramatically reduce the harm caused by standardized testing, and provide local school communities with the resources students need to succeed. Our members have also been leaders in filing legislation that would correct the inequitable Retirement Plus transition, and nationally, our national affiliate is leading the fight to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO).

We are continuing to review the hundreds of bills filed at the end of January as we continue to lobby for the schools and communities our students deserve. Below is a list of our priority list so far, although we will continue to also support priority legislation as part of the AFT-MA and other labor affiliations and community coalitions as well. The list will grow in the next few months, and at the same time we will also need to grow our membership involvement to strengthen our electoral and legislative power to enact the solutions we are putting forward. Our power, as always, is in our unity and members, and it will take all of us coming together and lifting our voices this year to move from defense to offense and win the legislation that we need and deserve.

These priorities were shared at the February membership meeting by BTU Political Director **Johnny McInnis** and BTU political organizer **Roberto Jimenez**, and the full list is still being compiled as we continue to review the thousands of bills filed both locally and nationally and meet with our allies and partners:

### BTU Legislative Priorities List as of February 2023

#### BTU Bills:

##### *Our City, Our Schools!*

**HD 3162 (Hawkins and Montano) / SD 2067 (Comerford) An act empowering students and schools to thrive [Thrive Act]**

In 2022, the BTU and our community allies successfully defended BPS from being placed in state receivership. We remain strongly opposed to receivership and other forms of state takeovers, in Boston and anywhere else. Research shows that takeovers disproportionately impact majority Black and Latinx districts and punish educators for working in districts with disadvantaged populations. There's also an extremely poor track record for districts and schools that have been taken over. Like any school district in the state, Boston has room for improvement, but top-down, punitive, and ineffective state interventions that wrest control from parents and local communities are not the answer.

**SB (Lewis): An Act establishing a special commission to re-imagine school assessment and accountability**

**HB (Hawkins) / SB 293 (Comerford): An Act expanding opportunities to demonstrate academic achievement**

We have spent over 20 years using MCAS and have only seen growth in the gaps between wealthy students and both low-income students and students of color. Research also shows the high correlations between parental income and standardized testing results, meaning that these tests are mostly a proxy for income and not a measure of a student's achievement or potential. Using standardized tests has also been harmful to both students and educators. The curriculum has been narrowed and hyper focused on English Language Arts and mathematics, often at the expense of science, civics, history, arts, music, and other disciplines. In addition, students spend far too much time preparing for these tests instead of learning new material. We also believe that we should join the other 39 states that have eliminated standardized testing as part of their graduation requirements.



**Jessica J. Tang**  
BTU President

**HD 31594 (Consalvo) / SD1049 (Miranda) An act relative to teacher retirement [Retirement Plus]**

(a) Notwithstanding the provisions of any general or special law to the contrary, any member of the teachers retirement system or any teacher who is a member of the Boston retirement system, who (i) became eligible for membership before July 1, 2001.

##### *Solving the Educator Shortage and Supporting Educators of Color*

**Diversity:** Boston Public Schools is one of the most diverse districts in Massachusetts, both in our student body and our faculty ranks. In fact, over a third of Black educators in Massachusetts teach in BPS! However, there still remains a huge gap between the population of students of color, who make up the vast majority of students in Boston and other urban districts, and educators of color, who are a minority even in Boston. We know that educator diversity is crucial for both students of color and white students. A report from the Learning Policy Institute outlines the benefits to students of color, whose academic performance is boosted when taught by educators of color. White students also benefit from educators of color because they are exposed to different perspectives and further learn how to navigate an increasingly diverse society. BTU is committed to expanding the educator pipeline so we can address the existing educator shortage, and particularly to continuing to diversify the education profession.

**Licensure:** Our state licensure system remains woefully inadequate to support the needs of our students and the realities of the education profession. The MTELS present an unnecessarily high barrier due to the financial burden it imposes on educators, and prevent otherwise-qualified educators from becoming educators. There are also racial gaps in

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# Boston Teachers Union Election Information



## Notice to members running in the 2023 BTU election

**T**HANKS for participating in the BTU election – Participation keeps our union strong and democratic!

Nominations are open until March 8<sup>th</sup>. Nominations can be made electronically (<https://members.btu.org/login>). These will automatically be submitted to the election committee. Nominations can be collected on paper signature pages (available at the union hall) and **MUST** be submitted at the March membership meeting by the candidate or designee. All pages must be submitted at one time starting at 4:00 pm and ending at 6:00 pm or when the union meeting ends – whichever is last.

Candidates for full-time office, executive board, Paraprofessional council, and RTC are invited to submit a statement with a current picture to be published in the *Boston Union Teacher* newspaper. Candidates with a primary must submit these by March 12. For candidates who do **NOT** have a primary, statements must be submitted by March 21. Statements are limited to 400 words for candidates for full-time office and 300 words for Executive Board, Para Council, and RTC officers.

It is the responsibility of the candidate to put at the top of their statement their name and office for which they are running (counted in word limit). We expect the wording of a candidate's statement will be printed exactly as received. Candidate statements shall be presented in alphabetical order by last name for each position. If a candidate statement is not received the candidate name and office will be listed with the words "No statement provided." All submissions should be addressed to both [aslater@btu.org](mailto:aslater@btu.org) and [mmaguire@btu.org](mailto:mmaguire@btu.org).

## Notice to all BTU members

**E**lections are conducted both in person (May 3 Primary if needed, June 7 Final) and by mail. You will receive a ballot in the mail. Please be sure that the union has your current address in order to receive your ballot in a timely manner.

You must be a member in good standing in order to run and to vote. Please be aware of the following by-laws change, which was passed in January:

- a member must be in good standing to vote;
- a member who is in arrears in dues payments for three (3) or more months is not in good standing and not eligible to vote;
- members on unpaid leave may make arrangements to pay their dues directly to the Union;
- upon payment of all back dues, the member shall be restored to good standing;
- members on unpaid leave shall be required to pay only half the amount of dues that would normally be due; this reduction shall only apply to each full month of unpaid leave;
- a written message containing the above information must be provided to all members electronically or by regular mail; or, in the alternative, it can be included in the election information provided to each member from the election committee;
- a member on paid leave as a result of a criminal indictment shall not be eligible to vote.

Watch the weekly e bulletin for more information about candidate forums...

For questions you may contact the BTU election committee at [electioncommittee@btu.org](mailto:electioncommittee@btu.org).

## Moving From Defense to Offense: The BTU 2023 Legislative Agenda...

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pass rates, and educators of color are less likely to retake the test, further harming educator diversity.

### SB (Lewis) / HB (Peisch): An Act relative to educator diversity

This bill, co-sponsored by the two Education Committee chairs, would establish a pathway for alternative certification to the MTEL by 2024 and provide safeguards for negative impacts of certification on candidates of color. It would establish an Educator Diversity Data Dashboard which would create greater transparency and set clear targets for the diversification of the educator pipeline, elevate the voices of diverse educators by establishing advisory Educator Diversity Councils in every district, and establish guidelines for diversity & inclusion and anti-bias trainings for staff and hiring committees.

### Fund Our Schools!

With the passing of the Fair Share Amendment, we have successfully set up a funding mechanism for education at all levels. The BTU is committed to the timeline laid out in the Student Opportunity Act and will continue to advocate for all components to be fully-funded as soon as possible. Beyond that, we are committed to overhauling funding for our public higher education system so that it is accessible and affordable to all families in Boston and across the Commonwealth. This will not only ensure that our students are able to have successful careers, but that we can continue to meet the demand for critical professions such as educators, social workers, and counselors. Lastly, many of our members and community

allies have felt the increasing cost of childcare deeply. For that reason, we are advocating for increased funding to childcare and early education programs. This will help reduce racial gaps in early education, which are magnified as children enter and navigate our K-12 system. Research shows that investments in early education have a very high rate of return in the form of benefits to children in the long term.

### Safe, Clean, Healthy Buildings

From leaky ceilings to a lack of air conditioning, lackluster bathrooms, old boilers, and windows in need of retrofitting, most of our buildings are not meeting students' most basic needs. We have had members in classrooms where lead paint falls on them and their students. Our buildings are in disrepair, and so BTU fully supports the Green New Deal for BPS initiative. This is "our shared commitment to expanding access to safe, healthy, energy-efficient, and inspiring learning spaces, with state-of-the-art classrooms, cafeterias, auditoriums, and athletic, outdoor, meeting, and support spaces." We are committed to being allies to BPS as they engage community stakeholders, renovate and develop new school buildings, and create the spaces that our students and educators deserve.

### SB (Crighton): An Act modernizing school construction

The COVID-19 pandemic has only made it even more obvious how we have disinvested from upgrading school facilities for decades. In Boston Public Schools only 35 buildings have a full HVAC system, so many of our educators

resorted to having windows cracked open to increase ventilation. Our students and staff need us to upgrade these sick buildings and ensure that every school has high quality facilities. This bill would increase the tax allocated to the school modernization and reconstruction trust fund and allow districts to use additional local funds to improve buildings. In addition, it seeks to target the use of those funds to projects that will reduce racial segregation.

### Secure and Dignified Retirement

Educators play a crucial role in shaping the minds of the next generation, and as such, they deserve to be able to retire with dignity after years of dedicated service. Unfortunately, as

allows educators to enjoy their later years without worrying about financial insecurity, and also provides them with the means to continue contributing to their communities in meaningful ways without having to worry about their basic needs. Furthermore, providing educators with access to a dignified retirement can help attract and retain top talent in the field of education, which is essential for the long-term success and well-being of our society.

### Antiracist Curriculum

#### HB (Elugardo) / SB (Lewis): An Act relative to anti-racism, equity and justice in education

The BTU's Ethnic Studies Now Committee has been working with the coalition that helped draft this



Ted Chambers addressing the membership about the retirement plus legislation recently filed on Beacon Hill.

the cost of living continues to increase, especially in the last year, cost of living increases to pensions have not kept up. Access to a dignified retirement

legislation, which would promote the development of a statewide curriculum around a social justice perspective

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# What is the BTU/BPS Program to Assist Teachers With a Less Than Proficient Evaluation Rating?

The Educator Supports Program (ESP) is a partnership between BPS and BTU that offers coaching, support, and evaluation for teachers who are not currently rated as “Proficient” on their evaluation. ESP offers two levels of support. One level is the Peer Assistance (PA) Program and one is the Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) Program.

The contract language details: “Permanent teachers and provisional teachers in their third year who have received an overall rating of Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory and been placed on a Directed Growth or Improvement plan will be assigned a Consulting Teacher (CT). After their initial meeting with the CT, they may opt into the Peer Assistance (PA) Program. The teacher will be informed whether there is space in the PA Program. During the plan, the CT will visit the teacher regularly and provide support, which may consist of observing, modeling, coaching, or any other support the CT and the teacher deem necessary.”

“The Peer Assistance program is designed and intended to help teachers in need, and the Peer Assistance program will be separate from the performance evaluation of teachers.”

In the contract, the PAR Program is detailed in the following manner: “Permanent teachers who have received an overall rating of Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory will be assigned a Consulting Teacher (CT). [Please refer to the contract which details who the CTs are, caseload and the like]. After their initial meeting with the CT, they may opt into the PAR Program if they are found to be eligible. The teacher will be informed whether there is space in the PAR Program, and the CT will be designated the primary evaluator. An initial three-way meeting between the teacher, the evaluator, and the CT shall take place, and the group will review the goals and any prescriptions.”

[The] “Eligibility [into the PAR Program] Permanent teachers and provisional teachers at the end of their third year whose last rating was needs improvement or unsatisfactory and are placed on a Directed Growth Plan may be eligible for PAR. This shall not impact the district’s authority to make renewal and non-renewal decisions.”

“Educators who receive an overall rating of Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory shall have their plan length designated in writing within one calendar month of issuance. For educators who receive their overall rating in May or June, the new plan length shall be designated on or before the last day of school.”

If the plan length is not decided within these parameters, a Directed Growth Plan will have a default length of six calendar months excluding July and August, and will be eligible to enter PAR. [For example, a teacher who receives an overall rating of NI on June 1 and no plan length is designated on or before the last day of school will be placed on a DGP [Directed Growth Plan] which will end six calendar months from the date of goal approval.]”

“During the plan, the CT will visit the teacher regularly and provide support, which may consist of observing, modeling, coaching, or any other support the CT and the teacher deem necessary. The principal/headmaster may continue observing and providing support as a secondary evaluator. At least two other three-way meetings must occur over the course of the plan (at least one month between each), and after each, the CT and school-based

evaluator will issue a brief update (if there is a discrepancy between school-based evaluator and CT; or if both agree that the teacher is not making adequate progress) to the ESP [Educator Supports Program] Panel. The final three-way meeting must occur at least one month before the scheduled end of the plan.”

“At the end of the plan, the CT will issue a summative evaluation with an overall rating. The ESP Panel will convene within one month to review the evidence provided by the CT, the principal/headmaster, and the teacher and make a recommendation to the Superintendent whether to place the teacher on a Self-Directed Growth Plan, an Improvement Plan or Directed Growth Plan (in the case of a teacher who began the program on an Improvement Plan), in which case the PAR program may continue, or to dismiss or non-renew the teacher.”

The Consulting Teachers are veteran BTU teachers who are trained as coaches and evaluators. If you are a teacher who is not eligible for the ESP program due to being a first or second year provisional remember that first year provisionals are provided with a New Teacher Developer and second year provisionals receive mentoring beyond the first year. The ESP program also offers consultancy visits if a teacher would like some feedback on their practice. ESP offers PD workshops on coaching, peer evaluation, and best teaching practices as well as share online resources like “Lesson Planning 101” at [tinyurl.com/BPSESP](http://tinyurl.com/BPSESP).

The mission of the Educator Supports Program (ESP) is to “strengthen student learning and teacher performance through coaching and/or evaluation that feels fair, transparent, and humane for all stakeholders”. They seek to accomplish this through two main support options: Peer Assistance (PA) and Peer Assistance & Review (PAR). Contact the program at [esp@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:esp@bostonpublicschools.org). To enroll fill out a contact form: [tinyurl.com/espcontact](http://tinyurl.com/espcontact) and a consulting teacher will meet with the eligible teacher to discuss the program and then the teacher can decide whether they want to join. If you are in need of assistance, check it out. Better to have done so, than to wish one had.

## Has the BTU agreed that teachers are to implement ‘Advisory Classes’?

No, there is no agreement between the BTU and the School Department concerning ‘Advisories’ being implemented. Student advisory periods are appearing primarily on the high school level. The BTU has won grievances that if Advisories are implemented; they are to be done as part of **instructional time**. The implementation and form of these ‘Advisories’ appear to be done in a variety of ways at different schools. As a result, the BTU needs to be sent descriptions or copies of the curriculum as well as schedules of when the ‘Advisories’ are being done, and by whom. There has been erroneous information circulated that the BTU has agreed that these programs/classes are ‘administrative’ period worthy. We do not agree that this is the case in fact; they are to be done **only** during instructional time. If an Administrator is attempting to implement Advisories during a time other than instructional, it should be grieved immediately. Advisories are not designed or intended to take the place of guidance but rather, when

utilized, should act as an enhancement to an already strong student support program at your school.

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

Under State law, eligible employees can take up to 24 hours for annual leave for family obligations. See Superintendent’s Circular HRS-PP13A, ‘Family and Medical Leave Act and Small Necessities Act’. The purpose of the Small Necessities Leave Act (SNLA) is to allow employees to: (1) Participate in school activities directly related to the advancement of employee’s child such as parent teacher conferences or interview at a new school. (2) To accompany a son/daughter to a routine medical/dental appointment such as a routine check-up or vaccination. (3) To accompany an elderly relative (60 or more) to a routine medical or dental appointment or for other professional services such as interviewing at a nursing home. The length of the leave is up to 24 hours during any fiscal year (July 1 – June 30). Leave may be taken in increments of at least one hour for up to 24 hours in a fiscal year. To be eligible, employees has had to have been employed by BPS for at least 12 months and have worked for BPS at least 1,250 hours in the prior 12-month period. This leave augments leave taken under the federal family and medical leave act, as it is for a different purpose. If the leave is foreseeable, employees must give the BPS Office of Human Capital at least 7 days prior notice. If need is not foreseeable, the employee must notify their building administrator as soon as practicable given the circumstances of the case.



**Caren Carew**  
BTU Secondary  
Field Representative

## Is there new contract language about teachers being required to obtain a second license to retain their position?

Yes, previous contract language provided only one school year to a teacher who is being required to obtain a second license to retain their current teaching position. The new contract language states: “Where a position requires two licenses, that teacher may be excused for the lack of holding the two licenses provided they are notified two (2) years in advance. They must be given two entire years after being notified in writing, consistent with staffing timelines, to obtain the required licensure provided they demonstrate each year in writing in a process designated by the Office of Human Capital by January 15 that they are making “continuous progress” as informed by the DESE guidance as of July 2022 and included below, toward meeting the requirements for licensure in the field in which the additional license is required. Teachers who have demonstrated progress who then have not obtained the license by the third July 31 after the following written notice, they may apply to the Superintendent for an additional year if they can show they are still making continuous progress.” The new contract’s

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**BTU Phone Numbers**

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

## Boston Union Teacher

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE!**

**¡TODOS SON BIENVENIDOS AQUÍ!**

**EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE!**

**BLACK LIVES MATTER**

**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 March 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.

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## Artificial Intelligence (AI) Education

While COVID is continuing to have a major impact on education, the real “game changer” today is artificial intelligence (AI). The problem AI imposes on educators is not new, but it has unquestionably upped the ante.

Let’s say you didn’t read the book for your Literature 101 class. No need to panic, just open up a web browser, find your AI program, give it some parameters, and the computer will do the rest. Viola! 2,000 words, complete with quotes, on the role of dreams in John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men*.

By now most of us have interacted with AI when calling a company for customer service. At least when we do so we know we are talking with a computer and can press 0 to get an operator when the computer voice is unable to answer our questions. In the world of academia, however, there is no way to tell if the work handed in is legitimate or downloaded.

Let us not blame the students for wanting to take shortcuts. On May 22, 2018 the *Boston Globe* ran a story on the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s contemplation of using AI to grade students’ essays on the MCAS. I said at the time, “If you want students to write, then you

have to have a human sit down and read it.” Now I’ll say “If you want to ensure that students are doing the writing, then you must have them sit down in front of you and produce the work in class with pen and paper.”

I teach high school students and my approach to Pandora’s box of technology is to have the students produce the work in front of me in the classroom. I have been doing this for nearly ten years with good results. It does take more time, but the work is authentic.

The solution to both the AI dilemma and to the after effects of disrupted education due to COVID-19 is to invest time and attention in our students. Growth and learning come after the students trust that their teachers know and appreciate them. Building a strong relationship takes time. Like a financial investment, we start out slowly and steadily build. When done right, the rewards are rich indeed.

When I was a novice teacher in the 1990s, I would instruct my students in grammar in the classroom and assign them translations to do for homework. Now I do the opposite thanks to the ease of cheating due to the Internet. In eduspeak it’s called a “flipped classroom,” but the reality is I’m just adjusting to the

evolving world.

Of course cheating occurred before the world wide web; it’s just that the ubiquitous translation programs have reduced copying to a mere click. At least in the old days when students copied one another’s work, there was actual writing involved and it was limited to person-to-person contact. This is no longer the case. With one click work can be shared with dozens or hundreds of dozens of people all at once.

So what to do in the new Age of AI? We become like John and Sarah Connor, we go off the grid to combat the new academic Skynet.

In my classroom students may not use their cell phones. In order to encourage students to free themselves from their devices, I have purchased charging stations for my classroom. (Students do appreciate this service.)

Next we work on translations in class. Mistakes are welcomed as it allows me to help students refine their thinking. We go at a slower pace than if the students had already prepared their work, but my method ensures that the students haven’t simply copied from the internet.

Homework in my class now largely consists of copying out - by hand - noun



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

and verb forms to keep the students’ memory sharp. It’s an old-school, analog approach to today’s technology-driven world.

The internet is terrific for research and students should be taught how to judge if a website has academic value or is just digital junk. Such analytical skills are crucial to academic success. After their research is completed, let’s then have the students compose their essays in class so that we know the work is actually theirs. Such an approach is more time consuming but it ensures authenticity.

To paraphrase Peter Stenge, we must take the time to go slowly if we want the students to go far.

(Michael J. Maguire teaches Latin and Ancient Greek at Boston Latin Academy.)

## Commentary Abe Abadi

### On Critical Theory

*I am writing in response to what I see happening in Florida schools: the banning of books, and the government’s attempt to control curriculum and to dilute subject matter for fear it might make students “uncomfortable.”*

In philosophic circles the word “critical” has a specific meaning, referring to the understanding of a concept from various points of view. It also requires discerning the agenda(s) of those who proclaim a particular truth about a subject, person, or ideology.

Once that agenda is made clear, the ideology is not necessarily abandoned.

But an important facet is now open for discussion. Critically understanding a topic involves studying the causes for the premise, idea or theory. It is not an attack, or an attempt to disprove, a particular ideology. Rather it is an attempt to gain a clearer picture of the intellectual and social milieu which gave birth to the idea.

One of the most influential field theories of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was proposed by Sigmund Freud. The pleasure principle, a compensatory

personality theory, and the power of the unconscious are key elements in his well known tripartite architecture of the mind: Id, Ego and SuperEgo.

Does it help us to know that Freud was born in 1856 in Victorian Europe, was 15 years old when Darwin published his *Descent of Man*, and the Newtonian world of causality was not yet challenged by Einstein’s theory of relativity?

Darwin placed humans in the animal kingdom. We are here due to the long process of evolution. Freud integrated Darwin’s universe and made Id the biological source of instincts. We know what kind of controversy that inspired. Freud accepted Darwin’s premise and searched for a “biology of the mind.” And found it in the Id.

Science in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century was firmly Newtonian. The world was governed by absolute rules and finite definitions. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Freud knew that energy could not be created or destroyed, it could only be transformed. He accepted this model of the Id. The Newtonian model told us that everything that goes

up must come down. Freud used that same logic and told us that everything that goes down must come up.

Freud can be described as a Victorian middle class male influenced by Newtonian science and Darwinian evolutionary theory. And this analysis only deals with the intellectual climate surrounding Freud. We have not touched his personal and family life.

Does gaining a critical understanding of Freud nullify all of his insights? Perhaps not, but it gives us deeper knowledge of the man, his environment and his writings. The more deeply we investigate a topic, the more we see its connection to other topics.

A critical understanding requires an open environment. Previously accepted knowledge is a bridge, an indicator of the existence of new knowledge. Indeed, our previous understandings brought us to our current state of commitment to continue to search for understanding.

When teachers are asked what they enjoy most about their jobs, rarely do we get responses like: my students learned the multiplication tables, or my students know all the state capitals. More often we get responses like: my students gained a greater understanding of a concept, or

they learned the value of investigating a topic.

I had the opportunity to interview a group of Boston 8<sup>th</sup> graders who were constructing portfolios of their work. When students completed their portfolio presentations, I asked them the following question: Can you point out an event, a unit of study or a lesson you have learned this year that has changed your attitude or understanding of the world?

One student was very clear about his transformation. “I used to look at things as just things. A chair was a chair. But then I learned about atoms and particles. And now I know that there is movement even if I don’t see it.” Has this helped you in subjects besides science? “Yes, now I know to look behind things.” Incredibly effective teaching and incredibly indelible learning.

The American educator/philosopher John Dewey wrote that knowledge is a process of *making sure*. It is a dynamic process; it is ongoing. Knowledge moves us in the direction of making sure. And that, most surely, is a never-ending journey.

(Abe Abadi is a retired BPS teacher now living in Florida who is both working on his backswing and his memoirs.)

## Know Your Rights...

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chart details that the parties agree that the definition of “Continuous Progress” shall be defined by 8 different options or combinations thereof – please see details in the new contract.

**Wonderful picture/chapter book from the “Women Who Broke The Rules” series: “Coretta Scott King: I Kept On Marching”**

This series celebrates the bold & brave women who have forged their own paths – breaking rules along the way – to help shape our country’s past, present, & future. Coretta Scott King played a pivotal role in the civil rights movement, not just as the wife of a powerful man but as an

influential woman, she gave concerts to raise money & awareness for her causes, winning people’s hearts with music, in addition to participating in politics, marches, & demonstrations. After Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination, Coretta kept on marching & stepped in to fill his shoes, at first using his words to carry on the work & then finding her own. Acclaimed biographer & award-winning author Kathleen Krull & illustrator Laura Freeman bring Coretta Scott King’s extraordinary & rule-breaking story to life in this engaging & informative biography. This book is a gem with something new for all readers. A great companion prior to experiencing “The Embrace” sculpture in the Boston Common! She was a courageous leader.

## Moving From Defense to Offense: The BTU 2023 Legislative Agenda...

*continued from page 2*

towards dismantling racism. Ethnic Studies pilots have been implemented successfully in districts like Boston and Holyoke. Over seven years, Holyoke’s program has grown to be a grades 7-11 program with dual enrollment options through UMass Amherst; in Boston, we recently hired our first Ethnic Studies Coordinator in 2021 as a result of BTU advocacy. However, all Ethnic Studies educators we’ve spoken with are also wary of state mandates on this, which is why this bill only empowers districts to pilot programs.

This type of curriculum has shown to

be highly effective in engaging students of color in particular, especially those who are at highest risk of dropping out. Stanford researchers found that students who went through an Ethnic Studies program made gains in attendance and grades, and also increased the number of course credits they earned to graduate. We believe that expanding opportunities for this type of curriculum will allow us to empower students within their communities so they can do better in school, graduate, and become effective citizens and leaders within their communities.

# LUCK

Telescope Network hosted a night of open-mic storytelling on Thursday night February 9<sup>th</sup> at Dudley Café.

The theme: **OOPS!** Prepare a five-minute story about a time when things didn't go as planned.

If it wasn't so dark and cold, I would have gone down there.

This is the story that I would have told:

It was a foggy summer night on Martha's Vineyard. Headlights trailed across the windows of my little cottage. Heavy boots thumped up the steps. I opened the door. A large cardboard box addressed to me was my steps. Finally, the cat food. I dragged the box inside. It looked quite busted up and someone had retaped the seal.

I took a knife and cut through the tape. For a while, I don't know how long, I just stared at the contents. It was not cat food. It was a giant box of lottery tickets. MASS lottery scratch tickets. The tickets were shrink wrapped in bundles, but they were all jumbled in the busted up box. And they looked very real.

My daughter came out of her room. We arranged the bundles in different groupings on the table. Sasha used her phone to calculate that the tickets were worth \$20K.

The next morning I called the police because I didn't want to get arrested for fraud. Some thought I should wait a minute. Chilmark is a very small town so the police chief, officer Slavin, answered



the phone himself. He told me to come down to the station with the box. At the police station it was just me, Slavin and one officer who looked like he was 15 years old. The three of us were very excited. Slavin thought it was some kind of scam where someone would come to my house and offer me the chance to buy the tickets. We took them out and examined them. We were ready to start a

true crime podcast. Both Slavin and I had purchased Powerball tickets for that very night's drawing. We both felt it would look weird if we won. We googled *fake lottery tickets*. Joke lottery tickets exist, but my tickets looked totally legit. There was an activation code on each bundle.

Slavin said he would contact me when he found something out. Then he went into the back office to make some calls.



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

I said goodbye and turned to leave. Then I rolled my ankle and collapsed on the floor of the police station. I popped up real fast. My back was to the desk and I hoped no one had seen.

"Are you ok?" asked the 15 year old deputy. I didn't even turn around.

"I'm fine!" I yelled back, and limped outside.

Slavin called me later that day. Apparently, at the airport sometimes the boxes get smashed when they come down the shoot. So after my box of catfood and the box of lottery tickets collided, the guys there accidentally switched the contents and taped them up. Those tickets were meant for Cumberland Farms. Slavin sent the tickets back and said that someone was going to call me to award some non monetary prize for being so honest, but I never got anything.

★★★★★★★★★★

Do you have a story to tell? Send your story to [aslater@btu.org](mailto:aslater@btu.org)

## An Open Letter to the Boston Schools Superintendent Mary Skipper by Theodore Loska

The following is an open letter originally sent to Superintendent Mary Skipper on November 1, 2022. To date Mr. Loska has not received a reply.

Dear Superintendent Skipper:

While I am addressing this letter to you, I am under no delusions that you will actually read it. It is understood that upper level management has staffers who screen letters like mine and make sure you do not have to "waste time" reading communications from some one without position or influence. That has never stopped me in the past, and is highly unlikely to do so now.

I am concerned with the state of our arts and athletic opportunities as presently available in Boston Public Schools. Our students are being short-changed when it comes to these opportunities. Your hometown Arlington High School, for example, offers twenty eight athletic teams, more than twenty five performing arts classes--including orchestra, band, and drama. There are fifteen visual arts classes and eleven different foreign languages. This puts our best-resourced high school, Boston Latin, to shame. Boston Latin offers "only" fourteen music performance classes and twenty-eight different athletic teams. While there are opportunities at our other high schools they are nowhere near as good, as varied, or as numerous, as either Latin School or Arlington High School.

I have spent just short of thirty years as a volunteer track coach with Boston Public School athletes. To put that into perspective, if I use the hourly rate paid to teachers when I started in 1994 I have donated about a quarter of a million dollars to BPS and if we compute this in the hourly rate paid to BPS teachers today I have donated close to a half of a million dollars to Boston youth. This does not count the hundreds of hours and the thousands of dollars I gave to give

the children at my last school a chance to play a musical instrument. It is important to point this out because administration tends to devalue volunteer involvement. If I had mailed a check for a half a million dollars with this letter to BPS I feel confident the superintendent would read this letter. I am writing this because I have skin in this game. The disrespect from administrators and dismissive attitudes toward efforts like mine are common and unacceptable.

First, let us look at where we stand in regard to the arts. There has been an initiative labeled AE or arts expansion since the early 2000s. It has made some progress through private grants and partnerships, and that is a good thing. But the initiative falls far short of creating equitable opportunity across BPS and certainly not when compared to the school districts around Boston. Every high school in Boston should have a band or an orchestra. There should be some form of drama or theater and a variety of visual arts offered as part of the academic day.

The best way to start is to create instrumental music programs in middle or elementary school, again as part of the academic day. Music teachers should have instrumental instruction as part of the curriculum, and this should not be dependent on grants for implementation. I know this is not an easy lift, but we can't stop lifting until all of our students have the same opportunities as the students at Boston Latin. We can begin by creating small orchestras in our elementary schools and make sure the opportunity to continue with the instrument is available when the student arrives at high school. Dance and drama should be treated the same way. These are the classes that excite students. I recall you saying you wanted our children to look forward to school everyday. A robust arts and music program built into the

academic day is one way to achieve that. We need to strengthen our after school offerings as well, but that should be the responsibility of BCYF. (BCYF, in my opinion, is the City's most under-used resource. The programs at some sites are passable, but at others they are severely lacking. I realize that BPS does not have any control over the management of BCYF, but at some point there should be coordinated efforts.)

Athletics, almost by definition, are an after school activity but no less important. This is where I have the most involvement over the years, and the most knowledge as to what is possible. The inequities here are most obvious. While the students at Boston Latin and the surrounding districts enjoy a wide variety of sports, the students in BPS schools are very limited.

First task is to offer at least the same *kind* of opportunities Boston Latin students enjoy; if not exactly the same sports, the same opportunities. The response to this idea from the Latin School community and from BPS is that Latin School's endowment pays for the opportunities not offered to the rest of the BPS community, and that they get the same support from the BPS athletic department as any of the other schools in the system. This may be true, but does not address the inequity, merely excuses it. One thing we often hear from people involved in athletics is that the system only cares about basketball, football and baseball. This may not be true but it certainly seems to be so. I coach an event with no available facility. In spite of decades of presenting remedies, I am ignored, possibly because some funding would be required or possibly that there are only a dozen athletes affected. Who can say?

Basketball, football, and baseball have been well established in our schools. Perhaps it is time to start looking into

how we can offer something different for our students, as not all students are able to participate or are interested in these sports. As an example, a woman from New Jersey took up fencing in high school because the uniform worn to compete was compatible with her religious modesty requirements. She went on to be a world champion and an Olympic medalist. In Boston, if she were not lucky enough to attend Boston Latin she would not have had that opportunity. An excellent example of how we give our BPS students (who do not attend Boston Latin School) the same opportunity can be seen in the Boston Rows program presented by Community Rowing, Inc.

What is offered at Boston Latin School can be a good rubric, but we should think *beyond* what is offered at Boston Latin School. What an idea! Give everyone a chance for more. I can think of several sports. We might use the Olympic program as a rubric, or make sure BPS students could participate in every MIAA sport at some level.

Interest requires a spark. To educate a child well, we need to turn a spark into an ember and have interest motivate the craving to attend school, to feed that fire. Thank you to whomever reads this, and if by some miracle my words actually make it to Ms. Skipper, you should know that all the things you are trying to accomplish are unlikely to succeed unless we have robust arts and athletic programs. That spark! It is not just test scores that attract parents to a particular school. They want their children coming home with a backpack full of books in one hand and a lacrosse stick or violin in the other.

Most sincerely,  
Ted Loska, M.Ed  
USTF Level 4 Throwing Coach  
USTF Official  
BMRB Shattuck Award 2016  
Dorchester, Massachusetts

# Para Leadership and Family Engagement in the Blackstone Walking School Bus

By Paul Tritter, BTU Director of Professional Learning

In 2019, educators at the Blackstone were focused on improving attendance. While long commutes and inadequate transportation can get in the way of regular and on time attendance the attendance team noticed a different problem. “We are a huge school that has students from every part of Boston but we are also a neighborhood school,” said **Emmie Leostakos**, and many students who lived within walking distance of school were chronically tardy or absent. “We thought that if we could offer families and guardians another solution then some weight would be taken off of their morning routine and alleviate a stressor in their lives,” said Emmie Leostakos.

The team applied for and received a BPS/BTU Teacher Leadership Fund Grant, to create a “Walking School Bus” an increasingly popular approach nationwide where school based educators walk with students to school. Walking School Buses can benefit student physical health, improve relationships, and increase on time attendance. When the pandemic hit, for obvious reasons, the team pushed back the implementation of the project by one year. However, when schools reopened the program became even more necessary than before as students and families needed to recapture the routines of daily school attendance.

Along with her colleagues **Karla Rolon**, **Amber Bennett**, and **Anuedy Navarro**, Leostakos identified 15 Blackstone students who were chronically absent and invited them to join the program. It wasn’t perfect right away, but engaging with families made it a success. “This project had so many highs and lows, however ultimately this project was about about listening to families and their needs. At the end of the day, as educators our first job is making sure students get to school safely and on time. If they are unable to do that, then they are unable to learn.” Another key was leveraging the leadership of Blackstone Paraprofessionals who were essential to the project’s success. And was it ever successful! All of the students who participated in the program showed increased overall attendance, and the walking school bus was always on time.

Leostakos and her team are hoping to continue the program into the future and believe it is a great way to connect with families and build relationships with benefits beyond attendance. Asked what advice they have for other schools who want to try a walking school bus, the team was clear, “We urge other teams to trust their gut, trust their students, trust their families and then figure out what needs to be done!”



Boston School Committee Chair Jeri Robinson came to the BTU Hall on February 8, 2023 to express her regret that BTU members are still awaiting either their back pay or proper pay adjustment or both. In a heartfelt talk Chari Robinson thanked the teachers, paras, and nurses for their dedication to the children of Boston.

## BTU Winter Party



# Boston Teachers Celebrate the Winter!



# HAPPY LUNAR NEW YEAR 2023





# THE YEAR OF THE RABBIT



# National Board Certification: Worth the Effort

By Anne Slater

A few years back, in 2020 I decided to work towards National Board Certification. My friend **Whitney Weeder**, grade one teacher at the James Otis and NBCT had been telling me to do it for years. The benefits include a 4% pay increase, reimbursement from BPS/BTU for the program costs and an opportunity to earn 6 graduate credits for \$1000 once you complete the certification. There is also a nice ceremony at the School Board Meeting with recognition from the Superintendent. So I signed up for Literacy: Reading-Language Arts-Early and Middle Childhood. I thought, I'll just bang this out and get it done in a year. Then the pandemic hit.

I achieved the National Board Certification this year and I am proud of this achievement. But I will admit it was harder than I thought it would be. I mean, I like writing and the bulk of the work is reflective writing. I made some mistakes along the way. Here is some advice from my experience and from NBCT Cohort leader **Kerry Ann O'Rourke** and **Kelly Garafolo**, National Board readers mentors.

1. Don't do what I did and try to do it all in one year. You have five years to complete the components and it is better to space them out.
2. Read all of the directions before you start each component. I did some great projects with students but I had to retro fit them into the requirements which made it harder for me.
3. Use I statements like: I assessed, I evaluated, I adapted. You get a point for each statement of a clear instructional move.
4. Read to understand how the different components are weighted. The final score is a combination of the sum of your scores and a weighted average.
5. Join a cohort through the BTU. (see below)
6. Ask for a reader from BTU/NBCT

**Kerry O'Rourke, grade 2 teacher at the Mather and NBCT cohort leader:**

*"One thing you need to know about achieving National Boards is it does not mean you are an expert, but that you are*



*an accomplished teacher that strives to never stop learning and improving one's practice.*

*It's important to belong to a cohort because the National Board's process is unique in many ways, and can be intimidating at best. Meeting with a cohort of your peers is a time to think through your own process with real-time feedback."*

**Kelly Garafalo, NBCT Reader, Exceptional Needs Early Childhood to Young Adulthood, Certified 2010, Renewed 2020:**

*"The National Board Certification process is a truly authentic and rigorous professional development process. It places your knowledge of students at the forefront of all of all instructional decision making. It takes place within your own classroom and encourages ongoing reflection and assessment. For me, it was the most relevant and impactful professional development experience I have had in my career. I am grateful that Boston Public Schools and The Boston Teachers Union continue to invest in developing and supporting teachers through this experience."*

**Leslye Auby, K2 teacher, Edison K-8:**  
*"I think the process is very good to do once you are well into your career to keep you reflective and up on current research. It takes commitment and effort to do it but its definitely beneficial to your career, I think, because of the reflective piece."*

National Board Certification was designed to recognize and retain teachers who are accomplished in their fields. The process is voluntary and has great impact, direct and indirect, on students in Boston and across the country.

This process not only affirms, but also improves a teacher's practice. It often leads to leadership opportunities both inside and outside of the classroom. In addition, The Boston Teachers Union fought hard and won a 4% pay increase (retirement worthy) for NBCTs. Under our current BTU contract, we also enjoy reimbursement of fees upon certification along with the opportunity to earn graduate credit.

The BTU with the BPS Office of Teacher Leadership and Development supports BPS teachers pursuing National Board certification. This program seeks to increase the numbers of National Board Teachers (NBCT's) in Boston. National Board is a process designed for teachers to demonstrate, through standards-based evidence, the positive impact they have on student learning as a result of their deep and abiding understanding of students, content knowledge, pedagogical practice, ongoing reflection, and participation in learning communities. National Board Certification empowers teachers and raises the status of accomplished teaching in a demonstrable way. It paves a path for teacher leadership. Our program seeks to connect teachers in Boston to the resources they need to complete this process and become NBCTs.

The BPS/BTU National Board Program offers multiple resources and supports. One is the National Board Certified Teacher Leadership Team (NBCT LT) which consists of five NBCTs: **Margaret Arlauskas, Quayisha Clarke, Cristina DeGuzman, Suzanne Gill, and Benadette Manning.** They work to organize candidate support with no-cost, online workshops and information ses-

sions held throughout the school year. The NBCT LT has also developed a framework of support including On-Call Readers who are NBCTs and can read each candidate's component entry twice. In addition, the NBCT LT has developed Professional Learning Facilitators/Cohort leaders to run online cohorts both at the school level and regionally throughout Boston. Cohorts of teachers pursuing certification will be facilitated by National Board Certified Teacher Leaders.

In addition to this local support, The National Board has online webinars to support candidates. Candidates can watch them live or at a later time that may be more convenient. All webinars are led by National Board staff and NBCTs throughout the United States. For more information about these webinars, please visit <https://www.nbpts.org/support/webinars/> where you will find webinars on every aspect of becoming an NBCT.

**How does a teacher become involved in this process?**

New policy allows all teachers to begin the certification process before 3 years of teaching is complete. Also, now part-time and long-term substitute teaching do count towards the 3 year employment requirement. All teachers need to complete 3 years of teaching before becoming National Board certified. Prior to registering, all teachers need to hold a Bachelor's Degree and teacher's license.

**How Can You Contact Us?**

You can contact the NBCT LT by emailing [nationalboard@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:nationalboard@bostonpublicschools.org) and one of the members will answer any questions you may have. You can also visit our website [bit.ly/2019nbctlt](http://bit.ly/2019nbctlt) or announcements check us out on Twitter [@BostonNbct](https://twitter.com/BostonNbct).

More information regarding the Boston Network can be found on the National Board's website: <https://www.nbpts.org/support/in-your-state/ma/>

In addition, you can contact the National Board at 1-800-22-TEACH or submit a question online using the following link: <https://pearsonsacommunity.secure.force.com/nbptsform/sanbptswebform?nbptsid=customersupport>



News from the American Federation of Teachers

## AFT President Weingarten Reacts to State of the Union

American Federation of Teachers President **Randi Weingarten** reaction to President **Joseph Biden's** State of the Union address:

"President Biden may have been speaking from the U.S. Capitol tonight, but he could have been sitting at any of our kitchen tables, because he spoke from the heart, directly to the American people, particularly to those left behind or who feel invisible. He made that his North Star: making people's lives better, in an economy that works for all, in communities that are safe for everyone and in a world where sustainable democracies can thrive over autocracies and war. Most of all, Biden challenged us to hope and dream, and to stay united.

"His record, while still unfinished, is remarkable, and it gives us a launching pad for a more perfect union: massive job growth, the highest in a two-year period; record-low unemployment; reimagining our manufacturing base, from electric buses to bringing back

chip manufacturing; rebuilding roads, bridges and tunnels that commuters rely on; game-changing student loan forgiveness, plus critical education assistance and school safety measures that helped our students and teachers get their mojo back; and driving down drug costs and gas prices, even when it meant standing up to big pharma and big oil. This work has made a clear difference in the lives of families, regardless of where they live and who they voted for. And whether he is middle-class Joe or working-class Joe, the president stayed true to the basic value that all Americans—not just the wealthy and powerful—should feel and benefit from our country's success.

"But there is much more to do, and we appreciate that the president spoke with optimism, rooting for the American people, as he laid out a very ambitious agenda that started with safety and education, like paid family leave, child care and raises for the teachers who educate our kids. It's clear that this president recognizes the promise

and potential of public schooling—including using career and technical education and building pathways to career and college so more students can access opportunities at an early age—and the urgent need to address mental health, both in our schools and in our healthcare workforce, proposing important workplace and school-based programs to tackle stress and trauma, as well as stronger protections to rein in tech companies and address our kids' privacy, health and safety online. He voiced a strong commitment to keeping our families and communities safe from violence, building on the progress already made on gun safety, and going one step further by banning assault weapons, while also making important advances in effective, accountable policing, including reissuing the call for Congress to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. And, of course, he spoke with his signature Joe Biden vision, vowing to make good on his commitment to veterans, to continue

the cancer moonshot and to cure the opioid epidemic.

"And while the president was optimistic and hopeful, he was clear that there is no place for holding hostage Social Security, Medicare or the full faith and credit of the United States. And in a brilliant master class, he got everyone in the hall to agree not to make those cuts. Further, he vowed to continue to stand up for democracy and basic human rights, both at home and abroad. He reminded us that America is a story of progress and resilience, that having a strong democracy makes this possible, and that together we can deliver on a families-first agenda that makes a tangible difference in people's lives. In true Joe Biden form, he celebrated the efforts of working people and the power of a union, urging Congress to protect collective bargaining and pass the Protecting the Right to Organize Act.

*"That was our president's message, and we at the AFT are grateful that he is our leader and wants to finish the job."*

# AFT Celebrates Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action

AFT teachers and school staff are busy with a flurry of activity this week, Feb. 6-10, as they celebrate the Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action. Literally wearing their beliefs on their sleeves, they are donning T-shirts proclaiming the value of Black students and educators; attending webinars to learn how to detect under-representation or misrepresentation of Black history in social studies texts, and how to teach about enslavement and resistance; and encouraging students to express their own pride of ethnicity and race.

“Black Lives Matter at School Week recognizes the



UTD officers: from left, Vice President Antonio White, President Karla Hernandez and Secretary-Treasurer Mindy Grimes-Festge

systemic issues that our students of color go through,” says Joel Richards, chair of the Boston Teachers Union Black Lives Matter at School committee, which has queued up a host of activities for the week. “It’s also an affirmation that tells students, ‘We’re fighting for you.’ And it’s a call to action.”

BTU offered a BLM toolkit, held a session to share resources through its ethnic studies committee, hosted a film screening, conducted a workshop on BLM principles and how to advocate for them, and organized art and essay contests for students. Meanwhile, the Chicago Teachers Union hosted a virtual student panel on reimagining school safety, exploring the demand to end zero-tolerance discipline policies and implementing restorative justice systems and funding for “counselors, not cops.”

Other educators are displaying book collections featuring Black excellence and Black history, creating

student art displays and hosting writing workshops and book signings.

Nationwide events are being hosted daily on the Black Lives Matter at School platform: Monday through Wednesday, virtual sessions included one on poetry from incarcerated young people, a discussion of equitable school communities across the globe and an informational fair about historically Black colleges and universities. Thursday features an exercise in imagining safe schools, communities and futures; on Friday, a “Black Joy Party Connection Space” will encourage participants to celebrate their authentic selves.

Many of the actions follow the demands of Black Lives Matter at School. They are:

- End zero-tolerance discipline policies and implement restorative justice practices;
- Hire more Black teachers;
- Mandate Black history and ethnic studies in K-12 curriculum; and
- Provide funding for more counselors, not cops.

We know that Black lives matter all year long, and that’s why we love the Black

Lives Matter at School Week of Action: It takes the tight and intentional seven-day focus on Black students and educators and extends it out into a “year of purpose,” with tools to work with year-round. AFT affiliates are amplifying the concept.

Throughout February, T-shirts sold by United Teachers of Dade will not only help celebrate Black History

*“Black Lives Matter at School Week recognizes the systemic issues that our students of color go through, It’s also an affirmation that tells students, ‘We’re fighting for you.’ And it’s a call to action.”*

– Joel Richards, chair of the Boston Teachers Union Black Lives Matter at School Committee

Month but also raise money to combat legislation limiting the way Black history and life is taught in public schools. United Faculty of Miami Dade College is hosting a panel discussion about the film *I Am Not Your Negro*, a documentary based on the work of James Baldwin. The United Federation of Teachers in New York City has compiled an entire collection of Black History Month resources and is screening a film as part of a series.

And, of course, the AFT has continued to act on its commitment to Black lives, celebrating Black History Month by looking back and looking forward, and continuing to build its rich collection of resources on Share My Lesson, updating it with new professional development workshops as well as lesson plans and classroom materials.

Ultimately, the Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action will extend into public education every week, every month and every year, by bolstering educator knowledge and moving policy toward a more equitable and just educational system. Because Black lives matter, always.



Members of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers

## Retired Teachers Chapter

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

Our New Year’s resolution to find sufficient time to get everything we want to accomplish done is proving harder to achieve than we planned.

Some issues have been resolved. During the 2022 inflation rise, retirees were particularly hurt by rising costs. With a limited 3% COLA increase adopted by the Boston Retirement Board and that increase only on the first \$15,000 Boston’s public employees were faced with rental increases that exceeded their income forcing cuts in basic living expenses. Those retirees in assisted living facilities were faced with increases in food costs and services that allowed them to live in some basic comforts, but the monthly increase far exceeded the \$25 monthly increase from the 3% COLA.

The state legislature passed legislation to allow cities and towns to adopt a

COLA increase of 5% for the fiscal year 2023 (still on the \$15,000 base). The Boston Retirement Board finally voted to raise the additional 2% retroactive to July 1, 2022.

We are awaiting Mayor Wu and the City Council to formally approve the increase and to begin applying the raise to our checks.

But that was just the beginning to fight for sufficient funds to help those retirees who are struggling with increases that they simply cannot pay for. We need reform in our pension system now. The COLA base must be realistic and designed to grow to meet the real life increases that we face. We are grateful for our pensions but we cannot survive on the current system.

AFT-MA along with the BTU/RTC and other public employees’ unions are pursuing an increase in the COLA base to \$18,000 and with a guaranteed increase over a period of 18 years that results in the pensions equaling 65% up

## Work To Be Done

to 85% of the maximum Social Security payment Two bills are filed that mirror each other-- the first is HB 2901 An Act to Provide Fair and Affordable Retiree Benefits can be found here at <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/HD2901>.

The Senate bill SD220 can be found at <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/SD220>.

We ask all active and retired members to call, write, email or text your Representative and Senator and urge them to pass this legislation. We need pension reform now.

At the Federal we are fighting for a full repeal of two laws -WEP and the GPO. These two laws punish public employee retirees by limiting social security payments that were earned and paid for by the retiree. The GPO will not pay social security to the spouses of deceased public employees, even though the social security was earned and paid for by the deceased spouse. You can sign the AFT petition at

- H.R.82 - Social Security Fairness Act of 2023 \* AFT petition <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/repeal-wep-gpo-2022>
- AFT phone advocacy tool [https://actionnetwork.org/call\\_campaigns/repealwepandgpo](https://actionnetwork.org/call_campaigns/repealwepandgpo)

### Thinking About Retiring?

Based on our experience, you need to begin your planning at least two years before the date that you want to retire. You should start by visiting the Bolling Building and getting your personnel file.

You need your years of creditable service, the date that you started with the BPS, the payments that you received and for how many years you received those payments, any additional payments for creditable work you performed. There is a lot of information that will affect your pension so that you need to carefully review the information and make sure that it is correct.

It will be very helpful to go to the Boston Retirement Board with all of the information that you need to apply for your pension.

### RTC Business Meeting

The RTC business meeting will be held at the Boston Teachers Union on March 13<sup>th</sup>. Doors open at 10 am. Light refreshments will be served. We will have an update on the BTU election rules, an update on the legislation and efforts to increase the COLA base.

Our Fabulous Social committee is planning the Spring lunch to be held in May. Details will follow, but start putting your tables together. We would like to see you all at the Spring Luncheon.

### RTC Office Hours

The RTC office is open on Wednesday and Thursday from 10 am - 2 pm.

Change of address, phone number, email can be made by contacting the RTC office by phone or by email. You can also drop by the office on Wednesday or Thursday and say hi to us as you make your changes!

## BTU Dependent Scholarships

This year there will be 16 scholarships in the amount of \$2,000 awarded to high school seniors who are dependents of BTU members. To apply, please obtain an application from Michelle Frank in the Union office or from the BTU weekly bulletin website.

- Return to the Union Office. We will only accept mailed or hand delivery.
- Please Note: if mailing, allow additional time so it is in the office by NO LATER than April 14<sup>th</sup>. No faxes, no emails.
- Transcripts must be in a sealed envelope from the guidance department from the school. Tax returns must be notarized.

# 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.)

## Boston Arts Academy

**B**oston Arts Academy is a unique pilot school that requires an audition for admission and serves approximately 500 students in grades 9-12. Its newly renovated home is a modern four-story building with big glass windows overlooking Fenway Park and the MGM Music Hall. The cafeteria and library are located at the entrance, and large bronze images from ancient cultures around the world hang on the main staircase walls. Whiteboard-covered hallways invite hand-written inspirational quotes, drawings, and displays of student artwork. Each floor has a different Arts focus: Dance, Theater, Music, or Visual Arts at one end; academic classes at the other.

A Word Wall with visual arts vocabulary differentiated by grade level fills one side of a whiteboard in **Kathleen Marsh's** classroom. After drawing self-portraits, ninth graders are learning about form, observation, texture/pattern, and process as they create 3D terracotta heads based on the Ife tradition – an activity that parallels a unit of study in their Humanities class, *Afrika Lives*. Ms. Marsh has taught at BAA for 25 years "because as a staff we have continued to ask hard questions, push our practice, and put the students first."

Surrounded by instruments, **Chris Rivelli** checks a ninth grader's Music Theory assignment. In a large room with tables covered with a wide assortment of colorful fabrics, **Elisabetta Polito's** students are working on a variety of fashion designs -- from sketches in their notebooks to ironing finished pieces. In one classroom six students practice synchronized dance moves, while two girls independently review lines for a

performance in a tiny room nearby.

**Jenna Lord** and **Daniel Jentzen** are working with a class of ninth graders on the set design for an upcoming performance of "The Crucible". Students handle power tools with ease, wear hard hats as they work together to move a heavy ladder, and add paper mâché bark to trees.

In the hallway outside **Jean Binjour's** biology class I noticed a large poster titled "A Cell is like... A Musical!" Many academic classes at BAA incorporate the arts – **Dylan Blank's** Humanities students, for example, were writing song lyrics – and arts classes require academic skills, such as tenth graders in **Sam Mendoza's** marketing class creating a budget worksheet for their pop-up business. What he appreciates most about BAA is the support of "experienced, knowledgeable, and accessible administrators and mentor teachers [who] foster creativity and build a collaborative culture."

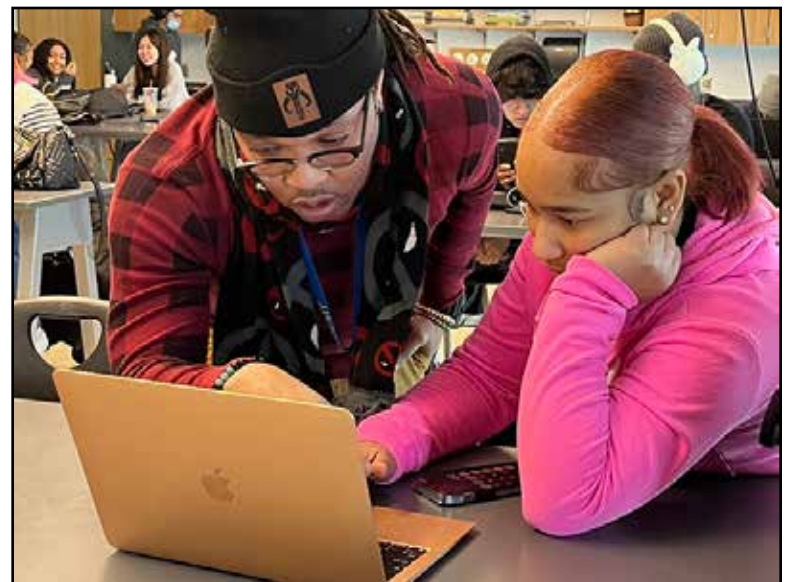
What supports do you have at YOUR school?

*Amika* (ü)

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Using paper mache to make the outside bark of a tree, **Eli (Brhane)** and I are helping build the set for "The Crucible" – a tenth grade performance – in our Tech Theatre class with Ms. Lord. In addition to learning tool names and how to use them, this class has helped us appreciate what goes on behind the scenes of a theater production.  
*Eli Brhane & Marianna McCallum, Grade 9*



This is in AP Biology and I was looking at nutrition labels with Mr. Binjour. I was surprised to find out how much information they contained. We're doing a biochemistry unit, learning about the chemical properties of biomolecules and how our bodies use them.  
*Luisa Barros, Grade 12*

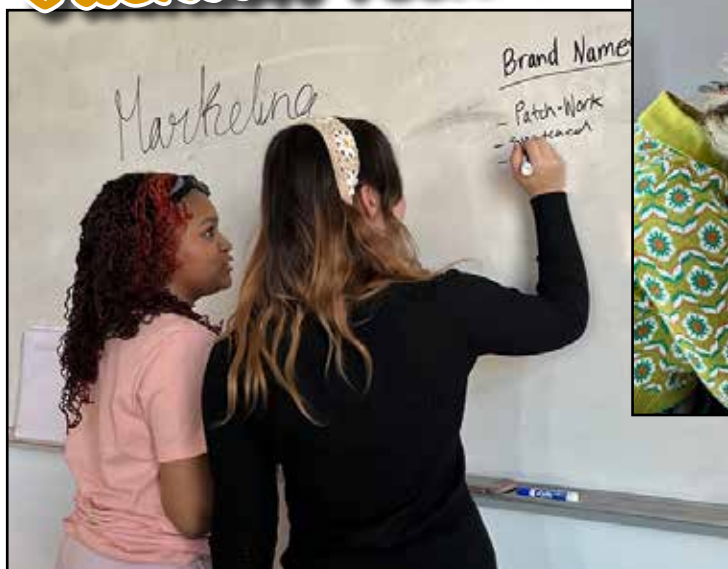
I was in Mr. Blank's Creative Writing class. We are creating a song and I was trying to figure out what notes to play. Writing lyrics is challenging because my creativity is expressed more through music than with words. In this class I've learned to be more open-minded, recognizing that I can use my awareness of things going on around me in my writing.  
*Kemoni Cartwright, Grade 12*



I was in my music theory class, where we have been learning to find the intervals between each scale. I was showing Mr. Rivelli my work to make sure I had the notes right. An interval is the space between each note, which is easier to understand on a piano.  
*Saraiya Bell, Grade 9*



## Fashion Tech Class



We are on the marketing team and we're writing down possible brand names for our product. We've learned how to get customer attention with eye-grabbing fliers, develop "customer personas" of our target audience, and create a social media account to promote the business.  
*Zoe Gillispie & Jules Martillo, Grade 10*



This is in our Fashion Tech II class, where we're doing a "Big Business" project. **Amelia** is working on creating a prototype patch for one of our products, sweatpants that students might wear, while **Nex (Project Manager)** is looking on. Last year we learned about the history of fashion; this year we are learning how to create and market a Pop-Up Shop.  
*Amelia Wolfson & Nex Johnson, Grade 10*

I am the Finance Manager for the products we're designing in our Fashion Tech class and I'm asking Mr. Mendoza to check my budget worksheet. I think it's interesting that, as high school sophomores, we're learning what it takes to run a real business out in the world!  
*Juliet Lerner, Grade 10*

