Exercising Democracy to Lift Our Voices: January School Committee Action on Educator Pay

On January 18th, the BTU took action to address ongoing pay and human resources issues. Ten educators joined the President in testifying about the ongoing concerns and issues. That evening the chair of the School Committee called to share that the whole School Committee was fired up to ensure that the issues were addressed. Subsequently, we also had conversations with the Superintendent and Mayor’s offices as issues finally began to get resolved in a much more timely manner. Our organizing efforts also included reaching out to elected leaders at all levels of the government, convening our contract organizing committee to plan future actions if needed, and pursuing legal action as well. The action resulted in media coverage from multiple media sources, including the Boston Globe. front page of the multiple media sources, including the action resulted in media coverage from multiple media sources, including the Boston Globe.

As always, when we come together to advocate and elevate our issues, our collective power helps us to get those issues addressed. We will continue to use our collective voices to fight for the respect our members deserve. The following is the testimony shared to kick off our action that evening:

Chair Jeri Robinson, Superintendent Mary Skipper, Members of the School Committee. I am here tonight to raise further awareness of an ongoing issue that has impacted thousands of BTU educators. The issue at hand is educators describing the myriad of issues and the impact those issues have had on them, their students, their families, many of whom are also BPS students. These educators are not asking for anything more than what they are already due. If staff even get a response from BPS on these matters, it is oftentimes incorrect, and we have to follow up again. To give you all a sense of just how bad the issues have been, we gathered some data. We used a data tracker where issues are entered into a shared document with the Office of Human Capital to ensure that the issues are addressed.

Tonight, you will be hearing from educators describing the myriad of issues and the impact those issues have had on them, their students, their families, many of whom are also BPS students. These educators are not asking for anything more than what they are already due. If staff even get a response from BPS on these matters, it is oftentimes incorrect, and we have to follow up again. To give you all a sense of just how bad the issues have been, we gathered some data. We used a data tracker where issues are entered into a shared document with the Office of Human Capital to ensure that the issues are addressed.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Tracker Items</th>
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<tr>
<td>SY 18-19</td>
<td>197</td>
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<td>SY 21-22</td>
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<td>SY 22-23</td>
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In SY 18-19 over a 12 month period, there were 197 tracker items.

This year, in just five months, there are already 345 pay related issues. We have seven more months to go.

We have had MORE problems with OFC and payroll issues in less than 5 months this school year than any previous ENTIRE school year since we started using the tracker system in 2015. This doesn’t even include all of the other outstanding contract implementation items.

And this is drastically still under-counting pay issues because many members never even bring their issues...
Go to members.btu.org
Sign in to the member portal using your BPS employee number, email, or BTU-provided Retirement Number and your password. There is a “forgot password” button and there are directions about how to register and log in if you haven’t before. If you need help logging in, please call Regina at 617-227-3636 or email members@btu.org.

Click NOMINATE
Put in the first and last name of the candidate you wish to nominate. (Note that the spelling must be correct.)
From the drop-down menu, select the office you want to nominate them for.
When the system locates the candidate, click SUBMIT to nominate.
Each time you log in, your page will show you the candidates you have nominated for each office.
You can also view the candidates you have already nominated on the NOMINATE tab. Be sure to nominate no more than 1 candidate for officers and single-holder offices, and no more than 12 for Executive Board. Delegate nominations are unlimited.
You can track any nominations that you have received by clicking MY NOMINATIONS.

FAQs
What if two people have the same name?
If the system locates multiple members with the same name, the nominator will be shown school and/or departmental affiliation so they can choose the right person.
Will I be able to see a record of who I have nominated for each office?
Yes. That information will appear each time you log in.
Will the candidate know who has nominated them, and how many nominations they have?
Yes. Once submitted, the nomination “attaches” to the candidate. The candidate will then be able to log in to the portal to view all the nominations they have received. (You can see this under the MY NOMINATIONS tab.)
Does the system preserve confidentiality?
Yes. Each nomination will only be able to be viewed by two people: the nominator, and the nominated candidate. Eventually the Election committee will view the nominations to validate them.
How many candidates can I nominate for each office?
As in the past, the system will not allow a member to nominate more candidates for an office than there are positions – for example, no more than 1 nomination for president, no more than 12 nominations for Executive Board. However, the system will allow a CANDIDATE to receive an unlimited number of nominations.
Corporal Punishment

What is Considered ‘Corporal Punishment’ in BPS?

For educators expected to be in position less than 90 days, OHC allows evaluators to open plans in order to provide feedback within 18/24 hours of professional development and must attend both parent conference nights and all professional development days. The teacher, who is job-sharing in their own school, retains attachment rights to that site. The visiting teacher who is job-sharing retains attachment rights to their former school for up to one year. If the visiting teacher job-shares at a school other than their original site for more than a year, they lose their attachment rights back to that site. In order to apply for and to receive literature from the BTU and the School Department about job-sharing, you must fill out an application of interest form through the Office of Human Resources Circular HRS–HS2.

What are the evaluation protocols/timelines for teacher unit members who are hired later in the school year?

The evaluation component of the BPS Office of Human Capital detailed the following in response to this matter. “Generally, non-Professional Teaching Status (FTS) (provisional or not permanent) educator hired after September 15th would need to be placed on a Developing Educator plan in keeping with DfSE’s guidance that teachers and other personnel in stop-gaps in position for longer than 90 days would be evaluated. In cases where hire occurs between December 2nd and February 1st (the last 4-6 weeks to submit self-assessments day), BPS OHC advises the educator to start a plan and give the educator up to 4-6 weeks to submit self-assessments and goals, with the explanation that goal approval would happen in short order afterward. If it is possible for the educator to get their goals in earlier than that, all the better. When OHC advises the educator to find the midpoint between the date of goal approval and May 15th (the uncontracted evaluative date) to determine the anticipated Formative Assessment date, as well as artifact submission date. If the new hire comes on board early enough in their fall/winter the evaluator, if they choose to just release a form on time by January 15th.

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

President JESSICA L. JANG
Vice President ERIK K. BERG
Secretary-Treasurer MICHAEL MCLAUGHLIN

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

When writing, “Boston Union Teacher” must be typed in and include the author’s name and school or department if not school-based. All articles must be appropriate for the publication, and in good taste. Letters to the Editor should be sent to letters@btu.org

Deadline

The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue of the Boston Union Teacher is February 15th. All copy should be e-mailed to mmaguire@btu.org.

Bostom city Hall.

The personnel Subcommittee is comprised of the Principal/Head of School/Director, two teachers and one parent as well as one student on the high school level [who are elected members of the SSC]. Decisions are urged to be made by consensus. Decisions need to be formalized by majority vote with the Principal/Head of School/Director voting with the majority. The decisions of the Personnel Subcommittee are not subject to the approval of the School Site Council as a whole. The Personnel Subcommittee is required to meet for all hires made from the beginning of one school year through the last day of the same school year. There is a way to involve others on the Personnel Subcommittee who possess more expertise in a particular position or area.

On the Personnel Subcommittee, the SSC members also select which positions will be filled. Elected teacher and parent representatives on the SSC may designate temporary/fill-in representation on the Personnel Subcommittee according to the positions being filled. These temporary replacements do not need to be members of the SSC. For example, a special education teacher may replace a teacher on the Personnel Subcommittee when a special education position is being filled, only if the elected SSC BTU members [or parents] choose to do so. The administrator can not appoint people that they choose. It is up to the BTU elected SSC members to caucus on their own to elect the two that will be the BTU Personnel Subcommittee members. It is also possible to also elect an alternate in case one of the two is selected. Unable to participate on a particular day/time, BTU members are not obligated to select someone that poses a particular expertise that is a BTU member to serve on the Personnel Subcommittee. It is entirely up to the BTU SSC members to decide this option on their own. They cannot be compelled to do so by the administration. The same is true of the temporary/representation positions.

On the high school level, the two elected SSC student members also select which one of them will serve as a member of the Personnel Subcommittee. There is a Superintendent’s Circular on-line at the BPS website detailing the SSC Personnel Subcommittee’s function and protocol. Please refer to it for details.

What is job-sharing and who can participate?

Eligible participants in the job-sharing program are all permanent BTU members including teachers, psychologists, nurses, guidance counselors, etc., provisional, once they have been hired for the next school year, and substitutes once they have received a provisional contract. Please refer to Superintendent’s Circular on Job Sharing: HRS–HS2 for full details. Job-sharing is when two eligible participants split a single job in a manner agreed upon by the job-sharing partners and the principal who will be hosting them. The principal must approve the job-sharing to occur as well as how the logistics are carried out. Job-sharers each must work half time. As a result, they earn one-half the pay, full health insurance and health & welfare benefits. Half of the allocated sick and personal days, for retirement purposes a job-share year counts as half-salary, they maintain a full year’s seniority, they retain the entire 18/24 hours of professional development and must attend both parent conference nights and all professional development days. The teacher, who is job-sharing in their own school, retains attachment rights to that site. The visiting teacher who is job-sharing retains attachment rights to their former school for up to one year. If the visiting teacher job-shares at a school other than their original site for more than a year, they lose their attachment rights back to that site. In order to apply for and to receive literature from the BTU and the School Department about job-sharing, you must fill out an application of interest form through the Office of Human Resources Circular HRS–HS2.
Planning for the 2023 Awards Dinner and the 2023 AFT Massachusetts Convention is underway and I hope you and your colleagues will join us!

2023 Awards Dinner – Friday, April 28, 2023 – Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate

The 2023 Scholarship Winners and the 2023 Distinguished Service Award Winners will be honored at the AFT Massachusetts Convention Awards Dinner on Friday, April 28, 2023 at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate located at 210 Morrissey Boulevard in Boston.

We’re excited to celebrate the 2023 winners at the Kennedy Institute. Senator Kennedy was a champion for working people who always fought for our public schools, good jobs, full employment, and safe working conditions.

How do I attend the awards dinner? Interested members and guests are asked to complete the registration form linked below to attend the dinner. Register here: https://aftmassachusetts.tiny.us/AwardsDinner.

2023 AFT Massachusetts Convention – Saturday, April 29, 2023 – IBEW Local 103 Hall

On April 29, AFT Massachusetts convention delegates from across the state will celebrate our victories, discuss the battles we face, and be inspired to act. We’ll hear about important initiatives and further develop our collective strength as educators and organizers.

How do I attend the convention? The 2023 AFT Massachusetts Convention will be in-person at the IBEW Local 103 Union Hall located at 256 Freeport Street in Boston.

Distinguished Service Awards – Help the AFT Massachusetts celebrate the service of an educator, librarian, nurse, or school employee whose leadership has made our union stronger. Nominations are now being accepted for our 2022 distinguished service awards. The deadline to submit nominations is March 1, 2022.

Constitutional Amendments – Any local may present a constitutional amendment to the convention. Proposed amendments are due in the AFT Massachusetts office no later than January 29, 2023.

Proposed Resolutions – All proposed resolutions, signed by the local President and postmarked or emailed no later than March 29, 2023 must be sent to the AFT Massachusetts office.

2023 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Every year AFT Massachusetts awards thousands of dollars in scholarships to eligible high school seniors. The awards, named in honor of former AFT leaders Kathy Kelley, Albert Shanker and Sandra Feldman, and for long-time AFT Massachusetts field representative Jay Porter, are awarded on the basis of a labor history exam administered by the Massachusetts AFL-CIO.

Learn more here: https://aftmassachusetts.tiny.us/Scholarships2023
Pedro Hernandez, Jena Silsby, and Ethan D’Ablemont Burns came to the January membership meeting to discuss the Green New Deal. The trio stressed that the planning process for new buildings would be multi-staged, community event with the goal of uplifting marginalized communities. They stressed collective ownership of the process.

They said they wanted to be honest about difficult choices. For example, when we look at new building plans, do they start classroom, libraries, lounges, and community spaces? The Green New Deal will be split into the following buckets:

• Highest need
• Vision for Teaching and Learning
• Systems (e.g., heating, furniture)
• Project Priority Rubric.

They will also elicit the expertise of families and students, of educators and students, and of designers and construction professionals. The first round of listening sessions will be in March.

Next was a Q & A session.

**Question 1.** What is the timeline for schools to learn their “fate” if they will be merged, reconfigured, or relocated?

**Answer:** December, 2023. The amount of notice time has not been determined.

**Question 2.** Does your focus on PreK-6/7-12 imply that we will be phasing out our current K-8 schools and other grade configurations? - Melanie Allen

**Answer:** No final decisions have been made yet.

**Question 3.** What are the phase 2 and 3 plans for the BCLA-McCormack building? BCLA and McCormack merged with the promise from BPS that will get a 21st century building that fits 7th-12th grades.

**Answer:** That particular school’s plans for the BCLA-McCormack building will be made yet. It is Election Year at the BTU and BTC.

When Mayor Michelle Wu was a City Council member she supported an increase to the COLA base to $18,000, but as Mayor appear to support increasing the COLA for Fiscal Year 2023. We need every members’ support to increase the COLA base to $18,000 with provisions for regular increases.

Offset (GPO) provisions of the Social Security Act. We need every members’ support to increase the COLA base to $18,000 with provisions for regular increases and with urging state legislation that will provide those earlier retirees to meet current costs by providing increases based on the number of years an individual has been retired.

Offsets that might be an exaggeration, but here is why it should be true. Unlike Social Security, Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) increases are not applied to the full amount of your pension. That $15,000 is the COLA base. So, you might have a pension of $15,000, but the calculation of the 3% COLA increase is only $450 not $2,250 if you calculated the increase on the full amount.

The RTC Legislative Committee struggles each year to get the Retirement Board, Mayor and City Council to agree to an increase in the COLA base. The COLA base was increased by Acting Mayor Kim Janey. When Mayor Michelle Wu was a City Council member she supported an increase to the COLA base to $18,000, but as Mayor appear to support increasing the COLA for Fiscal Year 2023. We need every members’ support to increase the COLA base to $18,000 with provisions for regular increases.

The upcoming elections will be multi-staged, community event with the goal of uplifting marginalized communities. They stressed collective ownership of the process.

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Offset (GPO) provisions of the Social Security Act. The next RTC Legislative Committee and Stakeholders meeting is January 30. We have invited the Mayor and City Council to attend. The consent of the Mayor and City Council is essential to meeting our goals on all but the repeal of the WEP and GPO. With the Republicans in charge of the House any punitive laws.

The laws limit your Social Security payments to almost 50% of what you have earned. The claim was that allowing Social Security and state pensions meant that public employees were double dipping. Totally wrong but it is still the federal law. While it will be difficult, we remain committed to repealing these punitive laws.

**What Can BTU Members Do?** We need your support in communicating with the Boston Retirement Board, Mayor and City Council. We need every retiree and active member to support increasing the COLA base for Fiscal Year 2023. We need every members’ support to increase the COLA base to $18,000 with provisions for regular increases and with urging state legislation that will provide those earlier retirees to meet current costs by providing increases based on the number of years an individual has been retired.

Check out the RTC section of the BTU website for fact sheets and information to assist you in writing your letters of support. (btu.org/support)

You can also call, text or email your support to all of the members of the Retirement Board, City Council members and the Mayor.

As this article was being submitted to the editors to be included in this issue, the Boston Retirement Board added the increase of 2% to their agenda for the meeting on 1/20/23. The city completed its study on the effect on the budget and the Mayor approved paying the increase retroactive to July 2022. The retirement Board votes first and then must be approved by the Mayor and the city council. We will not count these chickens until the board votes on January 20th and the Mayor and Council follow.

The Election committee will certify the signatures and post the candidates for office on the website at btu.org. Please check and make sure we have your correct address so that you can receive your mail in ballot. If you choose, you can vote in person at the BTU.

On the first Wednesday in May if there is a primary election or the first Wednesday in June for the final election.

**Hear USA**

RTC members can receive reduced cost hearing aids from HEARUSA. You will receive more information in the next RTC bulletin.

**RTC Scholarships**

Each year the Retired Teachers Chapter of the Boston Teachers’ Union awards three two thousand-dollar ($2,000) scholarships to deserving high school seniors who are the children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, granddaughters and grandnephews of RTC members. One of these scholarships is earmarked for a student who chooses to attend vocational school or equivalent institution.

Applications for these scholarships can be downloaded from the RTC section of the BTU website. The specific instructions for filling out the application (s) can be found on that site as well.

The deadline to apply is April 4, 2023.

VP Erik Berg so that Mr. Berg could then email all such questions to the team for answers.

BTU President Jessica Tang said that the BTU would indeed forward questions, adding “we want to be involved and engaged in all of this.”
The Boston Teacher Union was proud to attend the 53rd Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Breakfast, the nation’s longest celebration of the life and times of Dr. King.

Students from Madison Park High School win an award.

Executive Board member Michael Maguire with his former student Segun Idowu, Boston’s Chief of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion.

Executive Board member Brenda Chaney with BPS grad Michael Curry, CEO of MA League of Community Health Centers.
to the BTU. Additionally, some of the single items include whole job categories that affect over 100 BTU members, such as the Family Liaisons, who still have not all had a correct paystub yet this school year. It includes educators in the Adult Learning Center, Para, Sub, Hub Community School Coordinators, Teachers who did extra work and are owed stipends. And for the retro pay issues—literally, every single teacher, para, sub, nurse, social worker, librarian, ABA, counselor, coach, reading specialist...a community of over 9,000 BTU educators that have been impacted.

I recently compared the unprecedented issues to the Southwest flight disaster after waiting on the phone for over 12 hours to get help, but to my flight disaster after waiting on the phone for over 12 hours to get help, but to my

It's incredibly important that our educators are treated as human beings first. When

We are facing teacher and staff shortages. We know educators who were offered jobs but then have left because they were not onboarded on time. We have teachers who have been hired but can't get into their own schools because they are still missing ID's. The impacts have been more severe in other ways. Staff have not been able to pay bills and rent on time. Health care coverage was dropped because of mistakes made in payroll. This is not okay and it is no way to treat employees.

We need answers and recourse through an audit of OHIC and payroll at BPS and the City of Boston. At the very least, we need our lowest paid employees to receive their retro pay before mid February if not the original date share of January 20. We need Family Liaisons to get their pay corrected once and for all, without getting nickel and dimed, and we need all of our educators to get their pay corrected by February 1. Lastly, we need the district and city need to ensure that this does not happen ever again.

If the district wants to attract and retain educators so that our students have what they need to succeed, it has to begin by treating them with respect.
The BTU’s Black Caucus participated in the National Association of Black Educators’ annual conference in Maryland for four days in December. AFT supported our members who attended the conference celebrating its 50th anniversary. The event highlighted the innovators, change makers, and premier Black leaders in education across the country, Puerto Rico, and Canada. The conference offered a variety of workshops that centered around the following themes:

- Equity & Family Engagement
- Microaggressions/Macroaggressions
- Inclusion & Project Based Learning
- Mental Health Services for educators & students
- Leadership for Superintendents (Women & Men)
- Policy & Advocacy
- Let the Little Light of Shine documentary (Chicago Public Schools)
- Educators of color recruitment & retention
- Think Tank “Teacher Shortage & Educators of Color”

In addition to the powerful workshops, the opportunity for networking and learning about best practices across the nation was one of the most beneficial aspects of the conference. Dr. Miguel Cardonna, who is the U.S. Secretary of Education, spoke on behalf of the important work NASBE has been doing for students and educators of African descent. For instance, we were able to learn about a program at the University of Oregon and the local community college for encouraging black men to become educators. As a result, this has prompted the Black Caucus to discuss and lay out action steps for having a similar program that can act as a pipeline for recruitment of Black Educators, especially our males.

The Call Me Mister program prepares male educators to teach effectively using culturally responsive pedagogy and communication with students. This is an area that needs to be improved, and the group has begun to identify ways of how to resolve this issue by hosting an Educator of Color night in conjunction with BPS in March to brainstorm and discuss ways to recruit and retain educators of color in Boston.

The Think Tank session allowed conversations about the teacher shortage broken up into superintendents, administrators, and teachers. Other highlights were student performances for achieving academic outcomes that strategies used across their districts met and discussed. There were discussions about retaining educators of color, how to avoid teacher burnout, and how to support fellow educators in the classroom. During the legislative session members attended the presenter gave data on bills that passed in their neighboring states. This was apparent with bills that referenced Critical Race Theory. This was evident in the Mid-Western states. Two of the most powerful sessions members attended were titled NASBE Leading Ladies Series and NASBE Men of Iron Series.

The conference provided many opportunities for learning and reflecting, but the event had many celebratory moments such as the Wakanda Forever social and theme party. Johnny McInnis was a finalist in the fashion show at the party. In addition, Sylvaine Lestrade and Tracy Romain were winners of the booth challenge, where they spoke with a variety of vendors to promote communication and interaction with other participants at the conference, and were entered into the daily drawing. All of our winners went home with gift cards. The top award went to Tatiana Ali who is an actress, humanitarian and advocate. She won an award for her work with Scholastic Books with a highlight at a Baltimore school as part of the five Female Leaders to Debut New “Rising Voices” K–5 Classroom Library Collection to Empower Girls in STEAM, which brings culturally relevant books and libraries to schools that serve large number of students of African descent.

In closing, the conference was a success and many of our members were pleased with the content and variety of workshops. Brenda Chaney exclaimed, “this was the best conference that I’ve been to… and I’m excited for the next conference” (2022). The PBS documentary “Let the Little Light of Shine” highlighted the organizing story of one school community in the Chicago Public Schools in order to fight to keep their high achieving school open that served majority students of color. The story was quite relevant to us as we continue to fight gentrification and the closure of schools in Boston. In the end, all of the participants at NASBE were able to take aspects of the conference and integrate it into their work. We as the BTU Black Caucus will continue to share and highlight those take-aways with a variety of workshops and events throughout the year. We are appreciative and enthusiastic to continue to engage in education excellence for our students, families, and fellow educators.

(Written by Katina McClain, BTU Organizer & Racial Justice Committee Co-Chair & Johnny McInnis, Political Director & Chair of BTU Black Caucus.)
The following is a tribute to a retired teacher Raymond Behenna, former Boston Latin Academy track coach and math teacher.

FLowers Ray Behenna

I awoke this morning to the sounds of Paul Anka as he sang “The times of your life”. My mind turned to Ray Behenna as it often does. Rarely do we ever acknowledge those who positively impact our lives until it is far too late. Rarely do we give them their Flowers in a timely fashion. In this instance, we are about 45 years overdue.

We first met Behenna when we entered the prestigious Boston Latin Academy. He was a math teacher who eventually became our track coach.

We tend to romanticize the past. The 70’s were certainly a wonderful decade as compared to these days. However, it was also a difficult period of adjustment. These were the days of forced busing. The integration of schools and the growing pains which accompanied a morally evolving society.

We were the third class of boys at the prestigious exam school. There were many who resented that fact alone. There were even more who resented the increasing presence of minority students in the school, scores be damned.

We were just school boys fresh from the islands. New to America and its inner turmoil. Our parents brought us here because it was, and still is the land of opportunity. Yet we encountered things we could never have imagined back in our lands of birth. Things that shook and traumatized many a young soul.

For instance, that word did not exist in our homelands. Only here in America were we subjected to that word. We heard it from classmatess who were parroting what was said within their own households. They used it to ridicule and to deride. They used it as a weapon to hurt and to bring about harm.

Today that word is bandied about as a ball kicked upon the playfield, but to those of us of a different generation it remains the most vile word in the entire English language.

On top of this we also felt the animosity of teachers and administrators alike. Schools were not exempt from the growing pains of this fair City. Yet through it all was Behenna. He was far more than a track coach to us. Much more than a math teacher. He was a life coach for us. He was our haven and our sanctuary through this difficult social experiment, whether he knew it or not.

When we felt the cruel glares and sting of students and administration, he reminded us to stay the course. He reminded us that success is the best revenge.

Truth be told we were a difficult assignment for any one person. Our response to any affront to our dignity by our classmates was violence. Truly they were unfamiliar with our kind from the islands. Anyone foolish enough to think that we would suffer the slings and arrows were in for a shocking surprise. Our spirits were unbroken and unbroken. We responded with pure unadulterated violence.

Yet Behenna never faltered nor gave up on us. It was as though he innately understood our plight. A truly kind man. Salt of the Earth as they say.

I recall the day that my Father sat us down around the dining room table and had the talk with us boys about the temptations of alcohol and drugs. I never did tell him that Selwyn Eccles father had sat us down the summer before and had the talk. Nor did I say that Ray Behenna had sat us down the winter before even that and was in fact the very first to have had that talk with the four of us.

Before making the decision to enter into the United States Military the four of us consulted with Behenna. As I said, far more than a track coach.

On behalf of each of us as well as all those whose lives you have impacted, I say thank you. You taught us some very important coping skills under extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

You taught us to navigate our world with integrity and to stand strong against the winds of change.

Truth be told we cannot judge all by the actions of some. Most importantly, you helped us to become the Men that we are today. Indeed you led by example.

Words cannot ever truly express our gratitude nonetheless we stand upon the highest pulpit and acknowledge you.

Much respect due unto you Behenna.

– Rudy Miller, Esq.

BLA Class of 1984

Free Concert to Raise Awareness About Music Ban in Afghanistan

Live at the First Church at Cambridge on March 20th, 2023 at 7 PM

In the hopes of continuing to use the power of music to make the world a better place and to protest the barbaric ban on music in Afghanistan, we are organizing a second iteration of the concert to be performed live at the First Church of Cambridge on Monday, March 20th, 2023 at 7 PM. This date is also the Afghan New Year, Nawroz, which is an occasion often celebrated with music. The concert will not only be a way to bring attention to an important issue, but also represent a symbol of hope, resistance, and freedom. We are delighted to be joined by Qais Essar, one of the world’s leading performers of the Rubab, the national instrument of Afghanistan. The concert will feature arrangements of Afghan music and compositions by Afghan composers for chamber ensembles and an orchestra formed by volunteer musicians from around the world.

“Given the incredible work that the BTU does, we thought our mission would resonate with you and we would like to humbly invite you and your members to the concert. It would truly be special to have you with us in making a stand against the Taliban’s barbaric oppression and sending a powerful and inspiring message of love and hope. The concert is completely free, and you can RSVP here.”

(Naoh D. Perkins and Arson Fahim)

(Noah Perkins is in the Master’s program for Trombone Performance at Longy School of Music in Cambridge. He has been a music educator around the US for the last five years and is currently a teacher in two Boston schools.)
Children’s Holiday Party • December 28, 2022

[Images of children's holiday party activities, including bouncy house, face painting, and holiday-themed decorations.]
New Mission High School

Serving more than six hundred students in grades 7-12, New Mission High School shares the former Hyde Park High School building with BCLA. Norma Colon, New Mission’s secretary for the past 18 years, welcomed me to the school on a warm November day.

I stop to look at eighth grade “I Am” poems, human body system posters outside the health class, and a small Day of the Dead “ofrenda” to honor people who have died. The hallways also advertise candidates for student government positions and after school activities. ABA Paraprofessional Sabrina Diaz has started a Journalism club to bring student voices to the school’s monthly newsletter. She is new to NMHS and says she has felt appreciated since Day 1: “What really attracted me is the homey feeling, a staff that is very supportive and connected and open to new ideas.”

“I was asking Ms. Reed a question I had about atoms in chemistry class. I was using ACE programming to make it look like gold and then tested it to find out it was not!”

We were grading one another’s writing about how they used claim, evidence and reasoning to solve a math problem. I’ve learned how to multiply and divide fractions. We’re also learning to solve equations with rational and irrational numbers.

In Rita Flynn’s class, 8th graders are reading I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter, while Myles McNamara’s seniors tackle A Thousand Splendid Suns, by Khaled Hosseini. Several classes are working on understanding claim, evidence, and reasoning as they analyze text or even, in Felicia Valentine-Perry’s ninth grade algebra class, solutions to math problems!

The population of New Mission HS has more than doubled since its founding as a small pilot school in Mission Hill, although its vision and values remain the same. Core experiences include project-based portfolios, AP coursework for every student, and advisories to provide guidance in identifying and reaching individual goals. Andreea Panaitescu, an engineering and physics teacher who is new to the school, says she is impressed by New Mission’s tight-knit community and the effectiveness of its outreach to families.

Enjoy the photos and voices of New Mission HS students, and please invite me to visit YOUR school!

By Amika Kemmler Ernst, Ed.D.

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