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Boston Union Teacher



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

Volume 55, Number 5 • February, 2023

President's Report Jessica Tang

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



Jessica J. Tang
BTU President

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 front page of 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 being denied wages they are legally entitled to and having not received pay that they were due many weeks ago. Over the last few months, educators have experienced an unprecedented set of problems getting paid for their work by BPS – even for work completed over this past summer. There have been continual and chronic errors in pay and/or they have not been paid in a timely manner. Teachers and paraprofessionals have regularly had to wait up to six months or more for payment of stipends, settlements, or for errors to be corrected. This is tantamount to wage theft and it needs to be resolved right away.

We have been patient, listened to explanations and have waited for resolutions, but the latest announcement of another delay in retro pay to mid-February after promises of disbursement on January 20th – for a tentative agreement we reached LAST JULY – is beyond unacceptable. We have no choice but to speak up and to

demand accountability and recourse.

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.

School Year	Tracker items
SY 18-19	197
SY 19-20	174
SY 20-21	201
SY 21-22	315
SY 22-23	345

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 OHC 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 undercounting pay issues because many members never even bring their issues

continued on page 7



The Boston Teacher Union was proud to attend the 53rd Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Breakfast



BTU at the MLK breakfast at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, L-R: Johnny McInnis, Marilyn Flowers-Marion, Erica Kouka, Lea Serena, Katina McClain, Jessica Tang, Caren Carew, Michael Maguire, Brenda Chaney.

See more photos on pages 6 & 7.

Step-By-Step Directions for the Nomination Portal

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?

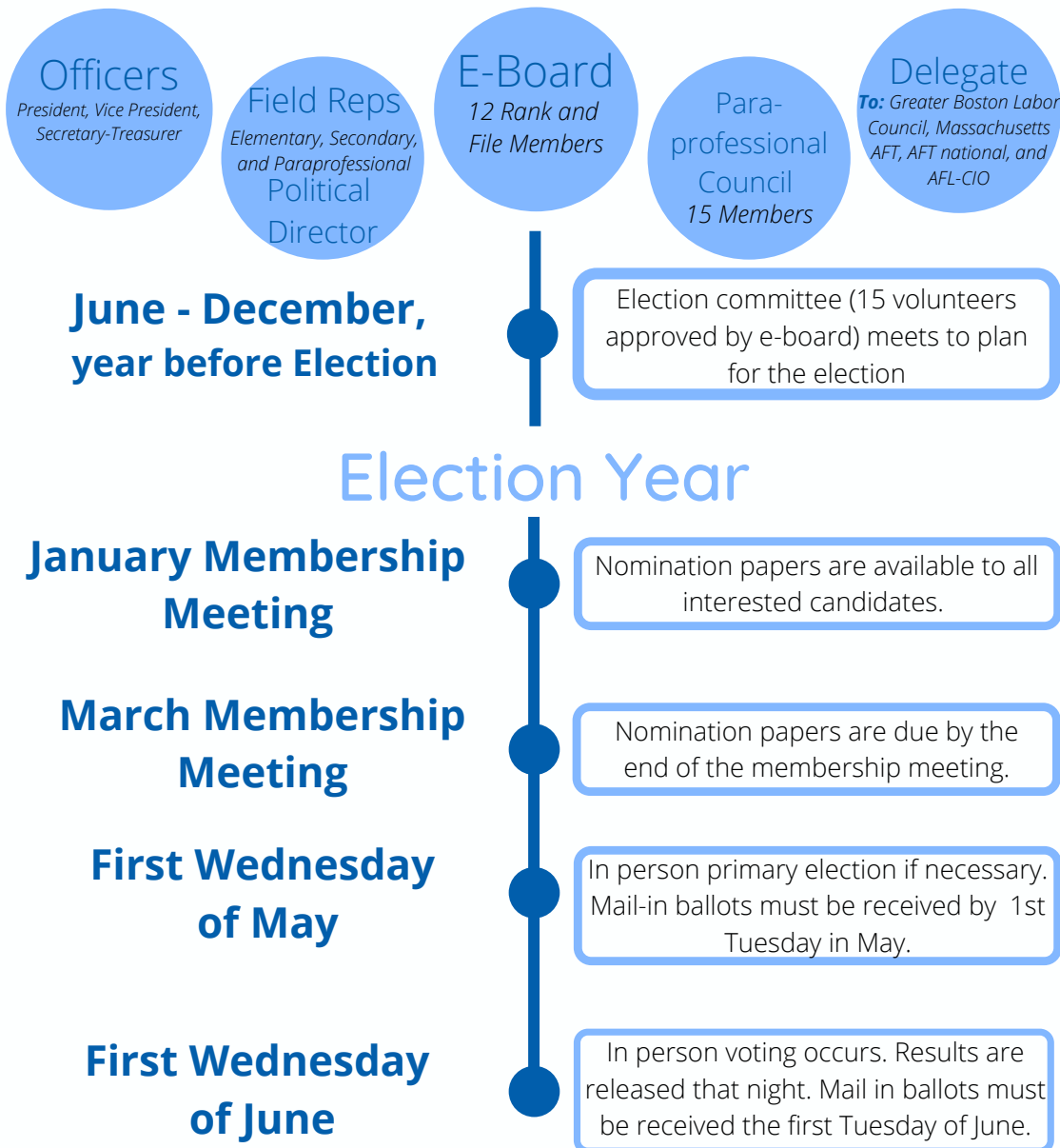
Yes. Each nomination will only be able to be viewed by two people: the nominator, and the nominated candidate. Eventually the Election committee will view the nominations to validate them.

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.

BTU ELECTIONS TIMELINE

Every two years, the BTU has an election for all elected positions:



Boston Teachers Union show support for the Canton Teachers Association by joining their rally prior to contract negotiations on January 14, 2023.



What is Considered 'Corporal Punishment' in BPS?

Referring to Superintendent's Circular LGL-20, 'Corporal Punishment':

"Corporal punishment includes but is not limited to the following:

- Slapping or hitting students
- Pulling students by their arms, shoulders, etc.
- Pushing students from one location to another
- Forcibly causing students to sit down
- Grasping students by any body part

Staff may restrain students only in order to protect students, other persons or themselves from an assault and may only use such force as is reasonably necessary to repel such an attack. Violation of the policy and law will result in disciplinary measures and may result in the filing of abuse and/or criminal charges." The circular states, "... the use of corporal punishment is strictly forbidden by BPS Committee policy as well as by Massachusetts State Law G.L.c. 71. [37G]."

This information may seem self-explanatory, but we all should be mindful of the moments in the hallway when a challenging student isn't moving in the direction so told, isn't sitting down after repeated requests to do so, is behaving in a manner that is confrontational or overly playful, will not extricate themselves from a potentially volatile situation, etc. It is in these moments that our intellectual filters can slip and exasperation or desperation can rear its ugly head resulting in a momentary lapse which in some cases can result in ruining one's career. Even if there have been no repercussions for previously putting one's hands on a student, it is just a matter of time that there will be. When in doubt, do not touch at all. If the act can't be construed into corporal punishment, it could be interpreted as sexual harassment. Don't laugh - there have been many BTU staff who have found themselves in the hot-seat discipline wise over what they honestly viewed as an inconsequential or innocent act. Re-reading the list is a good exercise in prevention.

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

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

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

The Personnel Subcommittee is composed 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 to be filled. Elected teacher and parent representatives on the SSC may designate temporary replacement representatives on the Personnel Subcommittee according to the positions being filled. These temporary replacements do not need to be members of the SSC. For example, a special education teacher may replace a teacher on the Personnel Subcommittee when a special education position is being filled, only if the elected SSC BTU members [or parents] choose to do so. The administrator can not appoint people that they choose. It is up to the BTU elected SSC members to caucus on their own to elect the two that will be the BTU Personnel Subcommittee members. It is prudent to also elect an alternate in case one of the two selected is unable to participate on a particular day/time. BTU members are not obligated to select someone that poses a particular expertise that is a BTU member to serve on the Personnel Subcommittee. It is entirely up to the BTU SSC members as a whole to decide this option on their own. They cannot be compelled to do so by the administration. The same is true of the parent members. SSC parents select their own member to serve on the Personnel Subcommittee as their representative by caucusing on their own to do so. On the high school level, the two elected SSC student members also select which one of them will serve as a member of the Personnel Subcommittee. There is a Superintendent's Circular on-line at the BPS website detailing the SSC Personnel Subcommittee's function and protocol. Please refer to it for details.

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.; provisionals, 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, one 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 must work 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 site for 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 (PTS) [provisional or not permanent] educators hired after September 15th would need to be placed on a Developing Educator plan in keeping with DESEs guidance that teachers and long-term substitutes in position longer than 90 days should be evaluated. In cases where hire occurs between December 2nd and February 1st (the approximate 90th 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's possible for the educator to get their goals in earlier than that, all the better. When OHC advises the evaluator to find the midpoint between the date of goal approval and May 15th (the unmoving summative 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 can choose to just release a form on time by January 15th."



Caren Carew
BTU Secondary
Field Representative

For educators expected to be in position less than 90 days, OHC allows evaluators to open plans in order to provide feedback in the form of observations and artifacts, but OHC does not require evaluators, although Formative Assessments can be done if there is time."

Is there any life insurance through the BPS for teachers?

The BTU/BPS labor-management agreement details; "The employer [City of Boston] contribution to the life insurance portion of the group insurance plan (\$5,000 policy) shall be 50% with a provision for teachers to purchase more life insurance at a low rate" If you are interested in looking into this option, contact the City of Boston's Group Health Insurance Office at 617-635-4570, located on the 8th floor of Boston City Hall.

What's the contract language about Professional Development for Related Service Providers?

The contract language reads: "A separate yearly budget will be allocated for the related service provider disciplines (including but not limited to, occupational, physical and speech and language therapies, vision services, psychology, adapted physical education, Guidance Counselors, Student Support Coordinators, and nurses), for planning and implementation of relevant professional development to satisfy contractual professional development requirements. The BTU and administrative members of the joint union management committee will plan the allocation of these funds for discipline specific professional development. The BTU will provide space for the meetings to be held when available."

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!

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EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE!

BLACK LIVES MATTER

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

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

WHEN WRITING:
All correspondence to the *Boston Union Teacher* must be typewritten and include the author's name and school or department if not school-based. All articles must be appropriate to the publication, and in good taste. Letters to the Editor should be sent to letters@btu.org

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 and aslater@btu.org. This deadline will be strictly adhered to.

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2023 AFT Massachusetts Convention and Awards Dinner Coming Up

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>.

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 Freepoint 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.



AFT Massachusetts 2023 Convention

Saturday, April 29, 2023
IEBW Local 103 Hall
Boston, MA

SAVE THE DATE



AFT Massachusetts Presents

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>



AFT MASSACHUSETTS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS PROGRAM 2023

Help AFT Massachusetts celebrate the service of an educator, librarian, nurse, or school related personnel whose leadership has made our union stronger. Nominations are now being accepted for our 2023 Distinguished Service Awards!

The AFT Massachusetts Distinguished Service Awards are presented annually to AFT Massachusetts members who have demonstrated an outstanding level of service and dedication to their local union. 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.

We're excited to celebrate the 2023 award winners at the Kennedy Institute. Senator Kennedy was a champion for working people who always fought for good jobs, full employment, and safe working conditions. Unions are the backbone of our public institutions, and it's important to celebrate the members who keep our schools, libraries, and colleges running every day.

Interested locals are asked to return both a cover letter signed by the local president and a one-page narrative for each nominee no later than March 1, 2023, to:

AFT Massachusetts care of Jennifer Daniel, Office Manager
Via US Mail: 38 Chauncy Street, Suite 402 Boston, MA 02111
Via email: daniel@aftma.net

BTU Membership Meeting Participants Discuss Green New Deal

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 a 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 support classrooms, teachers' 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? How much advance notice can the school community expect? Is there a publicly viewable timeline even if it's a draft?* - Melanie Allen

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



Jena Silsby and Pedro Hernandez



Ethan D'Ablemont Burns



Caitlin Gaffney speaks in favor of a by-laws change regarding voting in the upcoming BTU election.

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 we'd get a 21st century building that fits 7th-12th grades.*



Boston Arts Academy students visit the BTU meeting to raise money for their service learning trip to Puerto Rico later this year

That didn't happen. Currently, we are in two different locations because there isn't enough space for all grades. - Jenny Trieu

Answer: That particular school's project manager was not one of the three guests who spoke. However, they asked that all such questions be sent to BTU

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."

Retired Teachers Chapter Joan Devlin, RTC Secretary

Active Teachers Demand Pension Changes

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. And it is not just a little short of your full pension amount, any COLA applies only to the first 15,000 of your pension. That \$15,000 is the COLA base. So, you might have a pension of \$75,000 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 opposed any increase in the base.

This year the RTC is meeting with other unions over changes in our pensions that will benefit all of our members while keeping the city solvent. We are meeting to accomplish four goals:

- COLAs for the FY23, retroactive to July 1, 2022, to 5%.
- Increase the COLA base to at least \$18,000 with provisions for regular increases.
- Establish a Senior COLA to raise pension payments for retirees that fall below the average of \$51,000 (average pension for all Boston Public employee retirees).
- Work for the repeal of the federal Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension

Offset (GPO) provisions of the Social Security Act.

The next RTC Legislative Committee and Stakeholders meeting is January 30th. 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 change in federal laws like repealing WEP and the GPO is unlikely.

WEP and GPO apply to those states, like Massachusetts, that do not have Social Security but rely on state pensions. 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 legislators to support 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/retirees)

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..)

It is Election Year at the BTU and RTC

Officers of the Retired Teachers Chapter are the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. To run for office in the RTC you must be a member for one year preceding the election and submit nominations by 25 RTC members supporting you for that office.

Retired members are also eligible to serve as Officers, or the BTU Executive Board and Delegate.

You can read about the Election process and rules on the BTU website. The Election Committee posts the minutes of the committee's meetings and the information needed to run for any of the positions and to cast your ballot.

Nominations are open. You can sign nominations for office on-line and on paper. Nominations are due by the close of the March membership meeting.

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

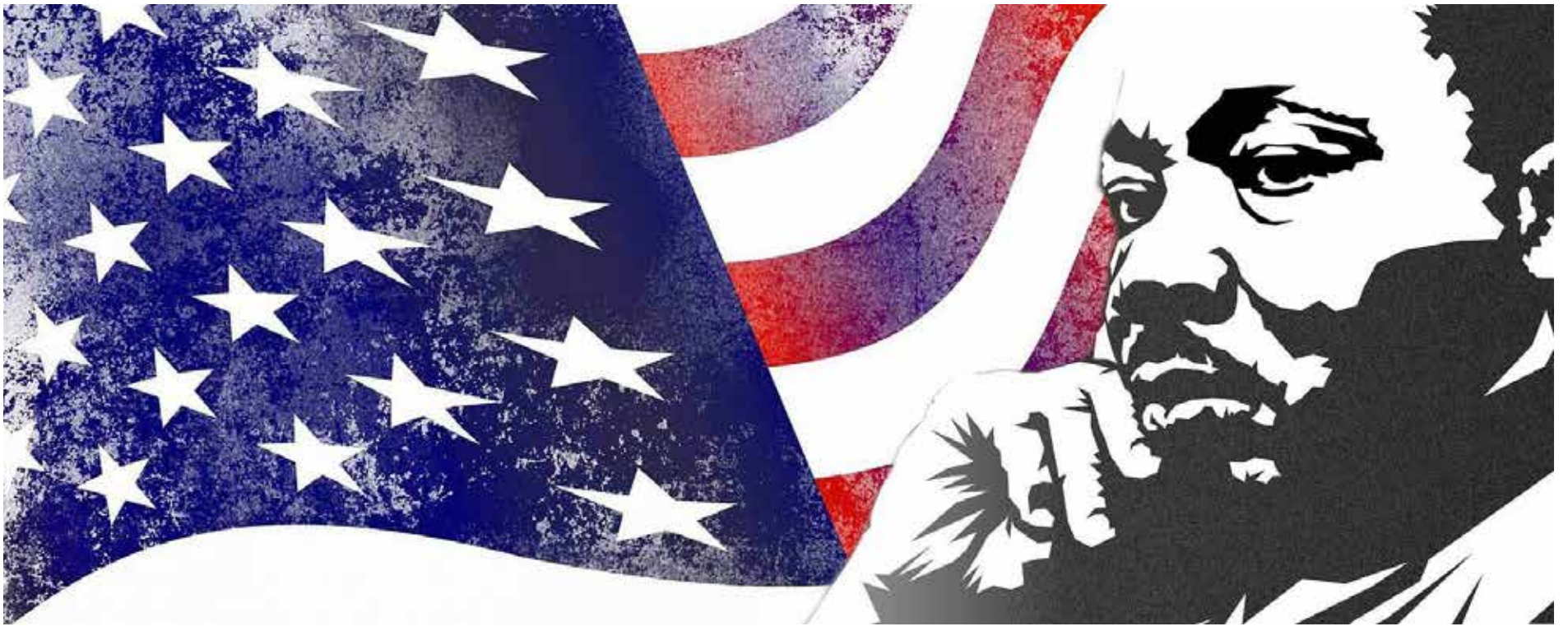
Each year the Retired Teachers Chapter of the Boston Teachers' Union awards three two thousand-dollar (\$2,000) scholarships to deserving high school seniors who are the children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews of RTC members. One of these scholarships is earmarked for 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**. The envelope must be postmarked by this date.

Office Hours

The RTC office is open on Wednesday and Thursday from 10:00 a.m. -2:00 p.m.



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



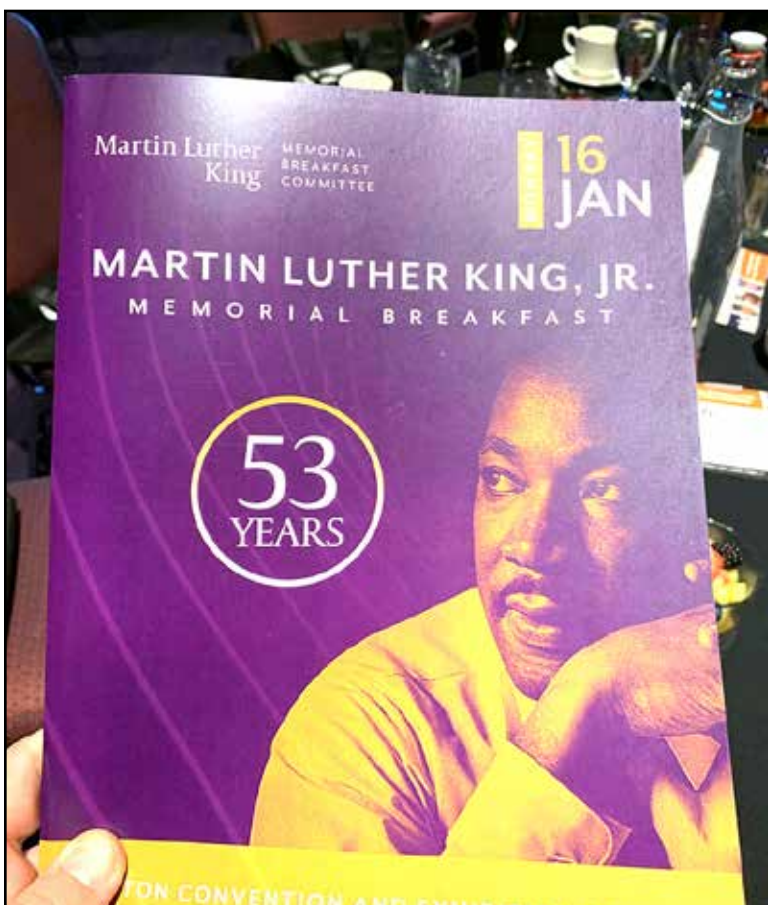
Executive Board member Michael Maguire with his former student Segun Idowu, Boston's Chief of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion.



Executive Board member Brenda Chaney with BPS grad Michael Curry, CEO of MA League of Community Health Centers.



Students from Madison Park High School win an award.



Testimony Before the Joint Education Committee November 22, 2022

Overview: *Biggest Challenge this Academic Year* Resources and Supports Needed Now Compared to Prior to the Pandemic and Strategies for Reducing Teacher Turnover

Testimony by Erik Berg, BTU Executive Vice President

We're in our fourth academic year now affected by the pandemic, and while the challenges that have emerged from the large amounts of time lost in the classroom are monumental, many of the issues we face are nothing new. I'd like to frame the response to the question of solutions to these challenges in terms of two things: space and time.

I had the opportunity to walk through the new Boston Arts Academy the other day, which opened in September. It is one of only nine new schools in the City of Boston built in the last 40 years. That's out of 120 buildings. If we keep this up, we will fully replace our school buildings in 530 years. And the staff who were showing me around said something fascinating, when I asked them about how the social turbulence they experienced last year was going.

They both agreed, as they showed me the spacious new suite dedicated to counseling and wellness, that the new building itself had contributed greatly to a much more successful year. Students and staff had space to breathe. They could see a counselor in a well-appointed room with windows rather than a repurposed closet. They could walk down a wide hallway between classes rather than a claustrophobic and narrow corridor. They could eat in a spacious and well-lit cafeteria, and all of these things actually changed their learning experience. So one thing that our schools need is space; space to learn in flexible and differentiated ways, space for counselors, occupational therapists, special education teachers, reading interventionists, and tutors to work individually or in small groups with students. Or for students to work in groups themselves.

We've been advocating for updated facilities for decades – that's how long some of our buildings have been in need of repair. It wasn't until we desperately needed proper HVAC systems in order to curb the spread of COVID did folks begin to take those needs seriously, but the problems that come with dilapidated facilities long precede the pandemic. So a real focus on new and renovated facilities is necessary.

The second thing our students and our educators need is time. And by time I don't necessarily mean just MORE of it, but rather re-examining how it is used. We have all experienced trying to rush through a project in a hectic, stressful way, under pressure. Whether it's painting your porch or making dinner or writing legislation, the results of that rush are usually worse than the outcome if we had taken our time.

The social-emotional needs of our students have changed drastically since the pandemic. Each student had a different experience during this time – some lost family members; some experienced illness themselves; all of them lost time in the classroom with their peers. It's imperative that we take all of this into consideration as we continue to provide students with the supports they need. So while there is no doubt that our students have suffered, and need to recover and learn, we need to remember that what they need in order to learn what they were not able to learn, is varied.

What our students and our teachers need is time to go deep rather than wide, to be more concerned about learning to think than to pass the MCAS or another test. Our teachers need more time to plan, to ensure that every minute they spend with their students is as effective as it can be. We should think about opportunities to take things off students' and teachers' plates, rather than adding more to teachers' and students' plates. Our teaching and learning will be more effective in the long run.

I would also like to suggest here that when this committee holds hearings next, you reserve a panel for student voices; they are the ones who are most affected by our policies, and they have a lot to say.

Regarding retention and preventing staff turnover, this is probably the most critical issue facing our schools in this moment.

The pre-existing issues of inadequate staffing, and being asked to do more with less are now exacerbated by our massive staff shortages. Educators are walking out the door daily, defeated by the impossibility of the task, and that makes it harder for those who remain. Paraprofessionals and special education teachers are pulled to cover, which means kids aren't getting needed services.

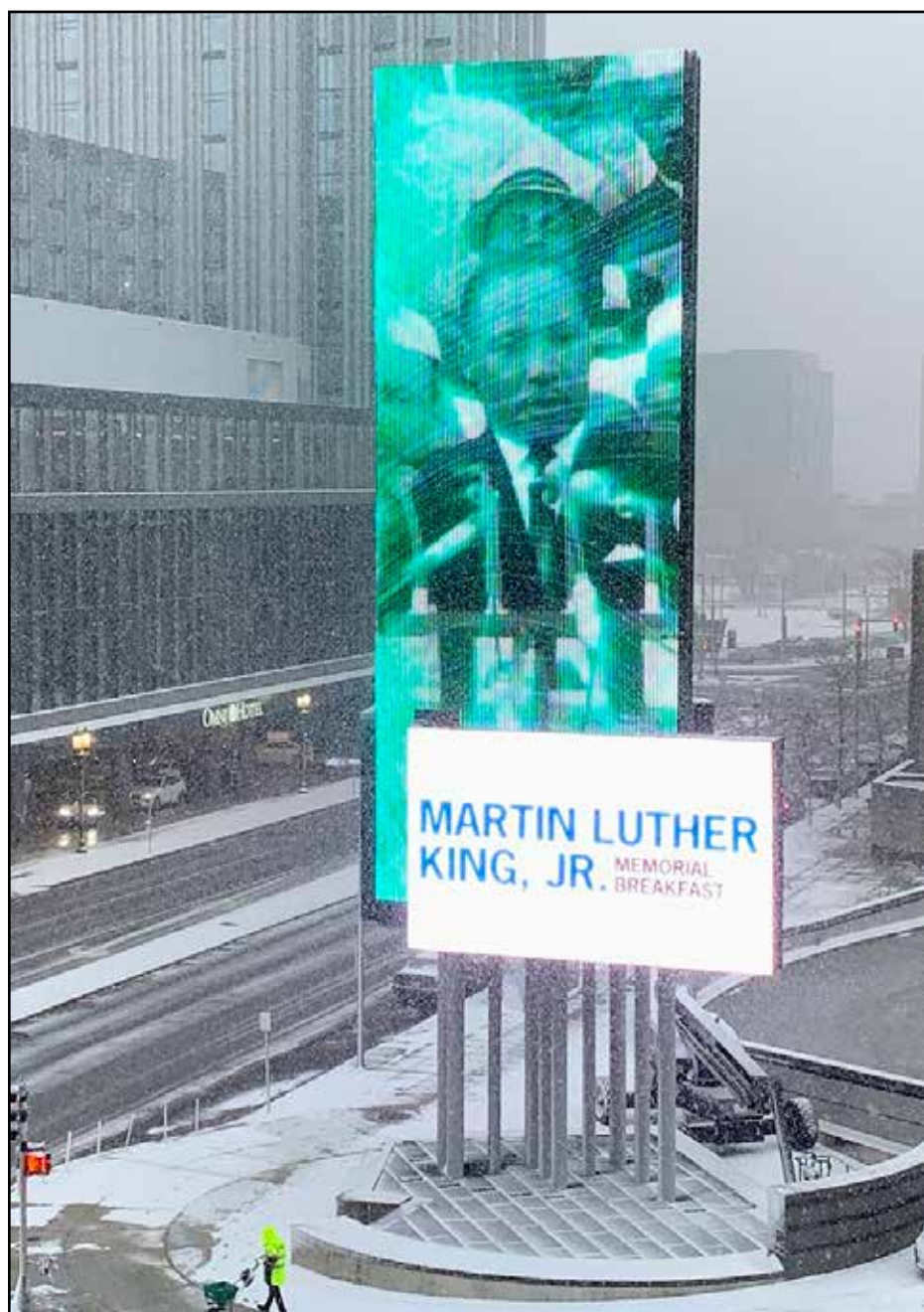
The solution comes down to respecting our school workers and understanding that they know what is needed in order to do their job effectively. Teachers have been asked to reinvent their work with limited training and support multiple times over the past three years, and they've done so in a context where they have often felt demeaned for wanting reasonable conditions in which to teach and learn. To feel so devalued and unsupported in a context where the work is increasingly difficult is a recipe for burnout and for leaving the profession.

Because there has been no easing of conditions, people are exhausted and demoralized, and haven't been able to recover. The fundamental conditions of the work need to change if we are going to address turnover and the difficulty in hiring. Once again we have to take things OFF peoples' plates, instead of adding MORE.

Additionally, we cannot ignore pay. To reduce teacher turnover, we have to increase support to our paraprofessionals and other support staff. They deserve pay and benefits far above what they are currently receiving. Our schools don't function without them, and teachers aren't able to succeed without them. So additional pay, especially for support personnel, absolutely has to be a priority.

The good news is that we have a tremendous opportunity before us. We have a funding mechanism to provide what our schools need through the Student Opportunity Act and the revenue earned through Question 1. Let's take advantage of this moment in time to provide our students and our schools with the supports they so desperately need and so deeply deserve.

It's incredibly important that our educators are treated as human beings first. When we show that we value our educators, and provide them with the facilities and the resources they need to do their job, I believe we will be able to retain our experienced educators, and attract a diverse group of skilled and loving educators to replace those who move on in the future.



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

continued from page 1

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, Subs, 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 horror, the more I learned, the more I realized just how fitting that comparison has been. I believe that the systems that BPS and – perhaps the City of Boston as well – are using are totally outdated. But we are not here to cast blame. We simply want assurances that our members are paid accurately and in a timely way and that systems are improved and corrected.

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 OHC 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 and 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.

Black Educators Conference: Engaging in Education Excellence

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 from local schools throughout the conference. Educators from all backgrounds met and discussed strategies used across their districts for achieving academic outcomes that supported their students' learning. 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 one particular state that were also 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 NABSE Leading Ladies Series and NABSE Men of Iron Series. These two sessions were impactful with perspectives of what a district superintendent experiences throughout the year trying to balance the many facets of being held accountable for their job and family life.

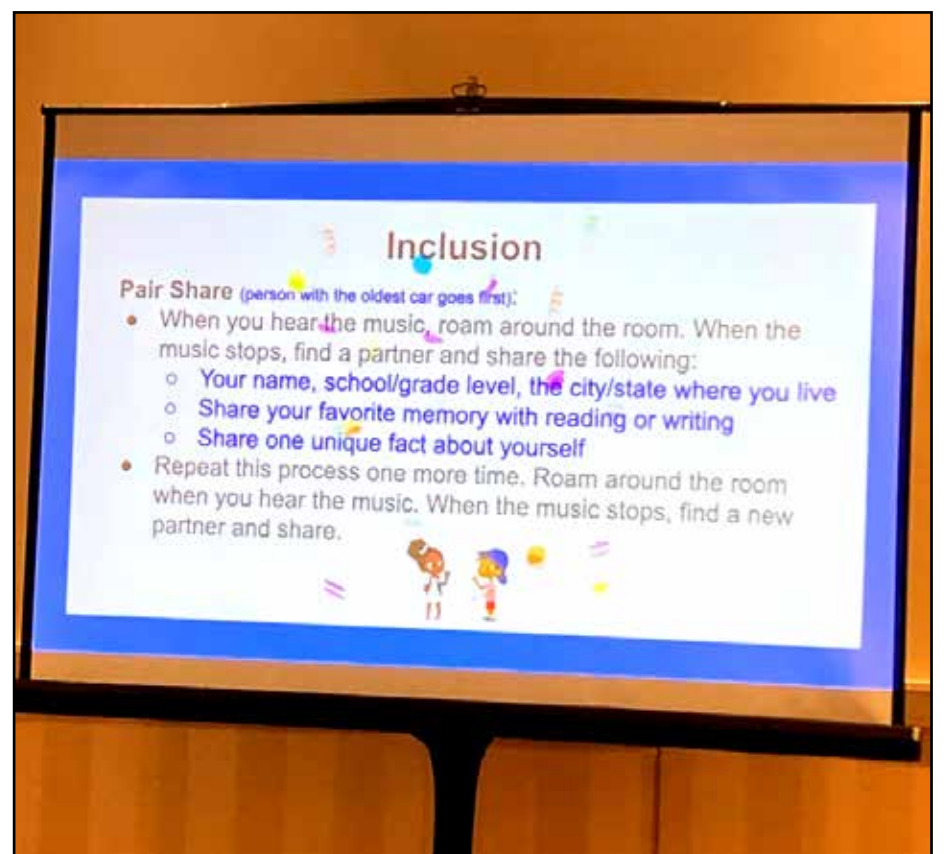


BTU Black Caucus Members - left to right: Denise Berkley, Tracy Romain, A. Vanessa Laroque, Lea Serena, Brenda Chaney (center), Johnny McInnis, Sylvaine Lastrade, Erica Kouka, Katina McClain, Adrienne Jordan, Alice Yong, Randi Davis.

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 Tatiyana 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.)



FLOWERS

The following is a tribute to 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 upon 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 resisted the increasing presence of minorities at 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 classmates 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 play field, 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 unbent 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 surroundings. You taught us to adjust and to adapt.

You helped us to understand that 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.

Although 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 of Cambridge on March 20th, 2023 at 7 PM

Noah D. Perkins, who is a teaching assistant at Margarita Muñiz Academy and is a student at Longy School of Music in Cambridge, let us know about this concert to raise awareness about the ban on music and persecution of musicians in Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban. Noah and his colleague **Arson Fahim** are organizing a concert at the First Church of Cambridge on Monday, March 20th at 7 pm.

The concert is FREE and all BTU members are invited to attend.

At the age of 21, less than two weeks before the collapse of Kabul, **Arson Fahim** moved to the US to pursue an undergraduate degree in Piano and Composition at the Longy School of Music of Bard College. To raise awareness about the plight of Afghanistan, he organized the virtual “*Concert in Solidarity with Afghan Musicians*”, which brought together over 70 volunteer musicians to make a statement in solidarity with Afghan artists.

“Since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in 2021, the country has sunk into a humanitarian crisis deeper than ever. Millions were already facing extreme poverty, and the Taliban’s unjust policies, including preventing girls and women from studying, has only made it worse. When the notoriously inhumane and cruel group was last in power in the late 90s, music was completely banned. Today, they are once again silencing the sound of music. At the hands of the Taliban, the country’s only music school has been converted into a military outpost, instruments have been destroyed, and due to the persecution, musicians have either had to flee the country or go into hiding.”

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.”

(<https://longy.edu/event/concert-in-solidarity-with-afghan-musicians-2/>)

– Noah 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





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.)

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 Colón, 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."

René Reyes animatedly gives directions to his world history class, where ninth grade students are learning about different religions. The assignment of the day has them working in small groups to address the essential question: "By comparing the lives and teachings of Jesus and the Buddha, should they be remembered as more similar or dissimilar?"

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 Panaiteanu, 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!

Amika 

Amika Kemmler-Ernst, Ed.D.
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We were correcting our homework assignment in math class with Mr. Weekes. We have learned how the x and y axes intersect on the graph of a parabola.

- Angeli Angulo, Grade 10, & Susana Cardona Restrepo, Grade 12



I am in my AP Calculus class and we were finding the limits of exponential functions using a graphing calculator. I've learned that some of the most difficult math problems have the simplest answers if you read the question carefully and use what you know already.

- Timothy Jones, Grade 12



I was using ACE programming to measure Kerlen's progress toward the goals of his IEP. I am teaching him how to identify common signs so that he can navigate locations in the community. In our class he is learning academic subjects such as math and ELA, as well as practical life skills to foster independence.

- Danielle DuBois, ABA Paraprofessional, Grade 9



I was asking Ms. Reed a question I had about atoms in chemistry class. I've learned how to find the mass of an element without looking at the Periodic Table. We did a lab experiment to change the properties of a penny to make it look like gold and then tested it to find out it was not!

- Luisana Villalona, Grade 10



Ms. Roberts was helping us with the wording of our arguments for a debate about elements in the story "Thank You Ma'am" by Langston Hughes. We're learning how to speak fluently and create an effective argument using claim, evidence and reasoning.

- Christopher Baynes & Aylah Guzman, Grade 7

I'm writing an essay about a story we read in ELA and Ms. Fuentes is helping me. In this class we're learning the format of an effective essay and how to write properly with correct grammar and punctuation.

- Josiah DeVaughn, Grade 7



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.

- Niyani Jefferson-Osborne, Grade 9



In this picture, I was working on an assignment in science class. We're learning about plants and we've looked at cells through a microscope. I've learned that photosynthesis is when a plant takes in carbon dioxide, light energy, and water to produce glucose and oxygen.

- Vaariq Brade, Grade 8

