

*Happy New Year*  
from the Boston Teachers Union

**BOSTON TEACHERS UNION, LOCAL 66, AFT**  
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# Boston Union Teacher



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

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**President's Report** Jessica Tang

## A Year to Review and a Year to Preview as We Say Goodbye to 2022 and Hello to 2023!

As we head into the New Year, it is a good time to look back on what we were able to accomplish together at the BTU in the last calendar year, and there is much to be proud of. Despite another incredibly challenging year as we continue to address the myriad new challenges caused by the pandemic—while also continuing to address the many challenges that existed prior—our BTU educators, alongside our students, families and community allies, won a number of critical campaigns.

Despite the fact that we were deep into a contract campaign and negotiations to win a successor agreement to our master contract, we were able to simultaneously lead a strong and successful effort to fight off real threats from the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to take over the whole school district and put it under state receivership. Together, with our stakeholders and allies including families, elected leaders, non-profits, faith-based leaders, and so many more, we were able to defeat the attempt by many vocal BESE members to take away our community's ability to govern our schools. It was no easy feat and we were not just able to win, but to change the narrative.

As we look towards 2023, we are now engaging in a statewide campaign to repeal the law that allows for receivership; a drastic step that has no track record of success. We are working with the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance and other statewide partners to repeal the law, reform the failed, punitive high stakes MCAS policies, and instead, to pass legislation that would actually support our students and schools.

In July of 2022, we were also able to come to a tentative agreement on a new contract. In addition to a 9.5% pay raise, there were also many firsts in this historic agreement, including paid parental leave, the recognition of Juneteenth and Indigenous People's Day, housing for homeless students, lowered class sizes, historic ratios for school psychologists, social workers and guidance counselors and a comprehensive new set of goals and guardrails to get inclusion done right.

Paras now have a 30% increase in coverage pay, which now includes all paras and also an improvement in inside service credit to boost their salary. The new agreement ensures that veteran educators who were licensed prior to 1998

cannot be forced to get a new license. It includes access to facilities updates so that at least one BTU representative in each school is able to see the status of requests. These are just a few of the many new wins in our latest contract.

Winning a new contract for our City on a Hill bargaining units was a major win as well, and this two-year agreement is the first multi-year contract they have ever had. As the first Commonwealth charter school to join the BTU, we are proud of the educators there who continue to organize and fight for the teaching and learning conditions they deserve.

As we head into 2023, we will be continuing our Contract Coffee Hours to share all of the new provisions in our contract, but also to ensure that we are implementing and enforcing our new contract with fidelity. This includes making sure that the spirit and vision in which the inclusion aspects of the new contract continue to guide the inclusion work in our schools. This contract was also one year retroactive, so we will be getting ready to put together a new process, new campaign and new proposals for the next successor agreement as we head into the new year as well.

Throughout 2022, there were wins for many of the smaller groups we represent as well. For example, Family Liaisons, who joined the paraprofessionals unit of our union, won their first contract and many received significant pay raises above the COLA increase as a result of their

new pay grids. We were able to negotiate a settlement for nurses who all received at least \$2,000 for the herculean work they did during the pandemic. We negotiated bonuses for per diem substitute teachers and nurses, who now receive \$250 extra for each ten days they work.

As we head into 2023, we are looking forward to closing a deal for our COSE members, Supervisors of Attendance, newly negotiated Hub Schools Coordinators and many more. We also are looking to win COLA increases for our retired educators in addition to winning a one time 5% increase. We certainly still have much to do, but we will as always continue to fight for all of our members, together.

On the facilities front, we were able to advocate for and win a Green New Deal for Boston Public Schools in addition to data access on facilities requests. This includes not just a historic multimillion dollar investment in new school buildings, but also an investment in critical infrastructure updates, including AC in every school. It also includes investment in Green Spaces. We were proud to join Mayor Wu at the press conference at the Horace Mann School when the new investment was announced.

We have since met several times with both BPS and the City of Boston as our BTU Climate Justice Committee, in partnership with the AFT, continues to advocate for Green New Schools and the facilities our students and educators



**Jessica J. Tang**  
BTU President

deserve. Heading into 2023, we will be hosting forums for the City of Boston and BPS where our BTU educators can give input and feedback into the plans. We are also a part of a new national network of educators who are working together both for Climate Justice and Educational Justice.

At the state level, we won two historic ballot questions. The Fair Share millionaire's tax as well as the Safe Roads ballot question that protects the right of undocumented immigrants to get a driver's license. We joined the Massachusetts Teachers Association and AFT-MA as well as the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance to win the first question — the result of years of work in the making — and we joined SEIU 32BJ and other community groups to help win the latter. The Fair Share campaign in particular, is a historic win, and we are now just one of only a very small handful of states that have won a revenue ballot fight.

These are just a few highlights of the many ways we have fought for and won in the past year. Of course, there is always, more work to do. However, what

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**On December 19, 2022, the BTU hosted our first Kwanzaa celebration and it was a hit! Special thanks to the BTU members who planned this event, and also to the incredible Edison students and their teacher, Lovely Hoffman-Wine, who performed at the event.**



## For An Elected School Committee

Even though nearly four out of five Bostonians voted on November 2, 2021 in support of an *elected* school committee, the mayor continues to *appoint* people to the Boston School Committee. By the time this newspaper is printed Mayor **Michelle Wu** will likely have already made two, four-year appointments. I am the BTU representative to the Citizen's Nominating Panel. Allow me to give you a brief tutorial on how the whole operation works.

The Citizen's Nominating Panel creates the application, solicits applicants, interviews applicants, and then submits a list of three to five names per seat. (Most years we submit two lists as there are two seats to fill, every fourth year there is only one seat to fill.) The mayor must pick a name from each list.

There are 12 members of the panel, each representing a specific segment of the Boston community. The members are selected by their individual constituency groups. Here is the breakdown:

- Boston Parent Organizing Network (1)
- Special Needs Parents Advisory Council (1)
- Citywide Parent Council (1)
- Bilingual Master PAC (1)
- Higher Education (1)
- Commissioner of Education (1)
- Boston High School Heads Association (1)
- Boston Teachers Union (1)
- Municipal Research Bureau (1)
- Mayoral Appointees (3)

The mix is fairly evenly split three ways among the major stakeholder groups. Four parent groups, four education groups, and the last four are what I like to call the "business" section which is the business community (Municipal Research Bureau) and the mayor.

On the surface it would appear that the twelve member panel - divided into thirds - is a fair way to portion out the roles. But when you look at why we have an appointed school committee, then you might question the whole process.

Originally founded in 1789, the first school committee had 21 members who divided their tasks to function much like a combination of our modern day school committees and district office. For the majority of the twentieth century (1909-1983) the Boston School Committee had five members all of whom were elected citywide. Then Boston moved to a model just like our present day City Council, nine districts and four citywide. Lastly, Boston moved to the current appointed model in 1992 after a vote to disband the elected school committee.

So here we are: the voters of Boston, in a non-binding referendum, voted in support of returning to an elected school committee. Yet we are still appointing members, not electing them. Why?

To answer this question you have to know the history of the Boston School Committee. For an excellent summary, please visit [electthebsc.org/history](http://electthebsc.org/history) The short version, in this writer's opinion, is control. Whoever controls the process also controls the outcome.

I was born in 1970 so I have some memory of the tumult at the time. I have vivid memories of the triumphs and turmoil of the 80s. I began teaching in the 90s just after the narrow vote to change to an appointed school committee. This past decade I have been the BTU person on the Citizens Nominating Panel. I, like many of you, have lived and seen a lot of changes.

At the heart of the matter is what process is better for our schools? The "old days" are often characterized as partisan and an era of political grandstanding. The current model has been criticized as ineffective and a rubber stamp. Both situations have been racially charged.

So what to do? If you, like me, believe in an elected body, please lobby the mayor and city council to amend the process. The difficulty is that when Boston needs to make such major changes to its rules, it has to go through the State House for a Home Rule Petition.

The states have ultimate control over local issues. Cities and towns have limited control over issues. The result is that often local municipalities have to ask the State Legislature for permission to do or change things. Usually such requests are handled without much fuss. But things will likely be different in the case of changing the school committee.

Boston is a multi-racial, multi-ethnic community. The State House, by contrast, is not. There are those who believe that Boston moved to an appointed school when non-whites were being elected. Likewise some



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

believe that getting permission from the State House, which has more suburban representatives than urban representatives, will be an issue.

Hopefully we can move the process along quickly. We will have to be ready to battle dark money and outside influences. But with the right approach and a positive, pro-education campaign, I am confident we can return to an elected school committee, restore local control, and give both voice and power to people who have been historically marginalized.

The *Boston Globe* very recently (December 11, 2022) printed an editorial calling for the ultimate change in the Boston School Committee: disbanding it all together. The *Boston Globe's* editorial board would rather have all school matters be in the domain of the mayor. The editorial suggested that since Bostonians don't have elected people running the parks then we don't need elected people running our schools. Well, at least we know where we stand in their eyes.

## Curley K-8 Students Let Their Creativity and Activism Shine in Their Murals!

Two years ago, several students at the Curley K-8 in Jamaica Plain approached Art teacher **Katherine Freiburger** about painting murals based on topics they are passionate about. The existing murals were in disrepair and needed replacement, but the school didn't have the means or the supplies to start mural painting projects. Freiburger applied for a grant from the Teacher Leadership Fund so that she could purchase the supplies needed to create school-wide murals, making an opportunity to build a creative outlet for her middle school students as they returned full time to school post-pandemic.

Together with colleagues **Danielle West, Sugeily Santos, Adrian Ward-Jackson, Curtis Warren, and Emanuela Alves**, she created "The Mural Painting Elective" where students decided what walls needed to be updated, brainstormed ideas in their sketchbooks and created digital drafts. "After coming

up with ideas, I would consult with the students and combine images and words together that were based on their ideas," Freiburger says. "Drafting and planning out ideas is how one can get better at their craft and can have a transformative effect on learning. Furthermore, planning and drafting fosters craftsmanship for work." Students projected digital drafts on the wall, and outlined them in chalk before adding the color that brought them to life.

Challenges arose when the effort moved outside. "Before we could even get started on the mural wall, we needed to power wash it because mold had developed on the brick. I was lucky enough to find a parent that was willing to power wash the wall for me. We came across some other issues such as not having an outdoor outlet for the machine and a leaky hose," but ultimately they were able to work through the issues and get the project started.

Freiburger reflected on the impact



the work had on the Curley community. "Students have felt proud of the work they have achieved. Murals are very large scale pieces of art and we have been fortunate enough to be able to work on numerous walls within the school building." These murals have uplifted students and staff in a variety of ways, even beyond those who directly participated. The murals brightened and put life back into the walls of the Curley community at a critical period. Students in lower grade levels love looking at the murals and have said they can't wait to paint their own. Colleagues have told Katherine how happy the murals have made them.

This work has inspired Freiburger to look for other ways to create public art with students in the community. "I would like to continue doing this work with students for years to come. One idea that has been sparked by this project is thinking of ways to expand this to other grade levels. I'm thinking of a



**Paul Tritter**  
BTU Director of  
Professional Development

summer mural program for the students to participate in that could potentially occur for next summer."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

More photos here: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1kQ9md3dshQIM6XcezILsNUNBT5s7RaIAjBNR2kpjn1o>



# What is the New 'Contractual Hourly Rate' For Teacher Unit Members For This School Year?



**Caren Carew**  
BTU Secondary  
Field Representative

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

## Where do School Site Councils/Governing Board members obtain on-going training to become effective representatives participating in their school's governance?

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

Trainings on Budget and SSC Basics were already held in December. There will be more trainings going forward – please keep your eye out for upcoming flyer in the BTU weekly e-bulletin at [btu.org](http://btu.org).

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

**SSC 106: Personnel Subcommittees; January 23, January 30.** This session focuses on the roles and responsibilities of the SSC in selecting a Personnel Subcommittee to hire schoolteacher bargaining unit members; and provide support to ensure that the subcommittee works effectively.

## When Do Programming Preference Sheets Come Out?

The contract states, "No later than February 1<sup>st</sup>, programming preference sheets shall be distributed to all teachers." For High and Middle School teachers it reads, "Programming preference will be honored to the extent consistent with the provisions of this Agreement [contract]. All preference sheets shall be returned by March 1<sup>st</sup>." This means that a 'preference' is just that, it does not mean that the teacher is guaranteed their choice as submitted.

The contract also details, "On or before February 1<sup>st</sup>, a list of all non-teaching assignments for which administrative periods are given in a teachers' program shall be posted in each school. These assignments may be applied for in the teacher's program preference sheet as herein [within the

contract] provided.

An applicant for such a non-teaching assignment who does not receive the assignment shall, upon his/her request, be given the reasons for not having been selected by the Principal or Headmaster."

## What Happens When There is No Heat in My Class?

The contract is clear on this issue. "A classroom will be closed when the temperature falls below 60°f., or whenever the temperature or climate becomes too oppressive."

Report and record the actual temperature in writing to the Principal, keeping a copy yourself. The Principal must assign your class to an available space that is heated adequately as well as remedy the heating problem in your classroom. Keep a record or log of all of the days without heat and the temperature in the room at that time. The Principal should immediately report this in order to have the heat restored. Teachers should file a Step 1 grievance with the Principal as well.

If the entire school falls below the acceptable heat level, each building has an alternate plan in case of emergency. If the heating issue can't be fixed quickly, then the emergency plan for relocation should be employed. The BTU members at the affected school should file a Step 1 grievance at the school in addition. If the entire school is without heat and it has been reported to the School Department, please contact the BTU office as well.

## How Are Bylaws/Operational Procedures for SSC's Determined?

Each School-Site Council determines most of its own operating procedures through the adoption of SSC bylaws. Each SSC is required to pass bylaws to govern its operation. The bylaws must be approved by two-thirds of the BTU members in the school and by two-thirds of the parents who come to a parent meeting for which there must be at least two weeks' notice.

The SSC bylaws must include the following operational procedures: how elections will be organized and conducted; when meetings will be held; the notice procedure for announcing meetings; who is responsible for co-chairing the SSC with the Principal and for recording minutes; what the system is for selecting alternates who have the same racial identity as the members they would be representing; the terms of office and how they will be staggered; and what the salary is in regards to members who fail to regularly attend.

The bylaws may also include provisions that address the following:

what subcommittees will be established in addition to the Personnel Subcommittee; if a portion of each meeting is set aside for public comment by individuals in attendance who are not SSC members; how the SSC will inform the wider school community of its decisions and activities; where minutes will be posted and distributed; what the process is for amending the bylaws.

## When Does the Principal Make Recommendations to Grant Permanent Status to Provisional Teachers?

According to the contract, "Principals will be required to make recommendations as to which provisional teachers they want to make permanent teachers by February 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. Principals will be notified by February 15<sup>th</sup> if their recommendations have been approved. The Superintendent shall make permanent appointment of provisional teachers by March 27<sup>th</sup>."

## What Are Career Awards?

Career awards are money earned after a BTU member has worked a specific number of years in BPS. The career award is reflected in the member's pay beginning the school year after the year of the award listed. As when running a race, the runner is awarded the prize after they have finished the race. In a career award, the person is given the award after they have finished the year listed on the award- in the pay of the next school year. In the contract it states that:

Teacher unit members shall be paid career awards as follows:

After 9 years	\$1,250
After 14 years	\$1,950
After 19 years	\$2,350
After 24 years	\$2,550
After 29 years	\$3,550
After 34 years	\$4,050
After 39 years	\$4,550
After 44 years	\$5,050

"All [teacher] bargaining unit members not on the salary grid shall be eligible for their first career award after nine (9) years of service. Teachers shall automatically receive career awards to which they are entitled. Effective July 1, 2004, retroactive career

award payments shall not exceed three (3) years."

Paraprofessional BTU bargaining unit members also receive career awards as follows:

After 9 years	\$2,350
After 14 years	\$2,850
After 19 years	\$3,350
After 24 years	\$3,850
After 29 years	\$4,350

"For paras who have become or do become teachers in the BPS, years of service as paras in the BPS will count towards career awards in the teachers' unit."

"ABA's shall receive career awards as follows upon their anniversary date:

After 7 years	\$1,250
After 14 years	\$1,950
After 19 years	\$2,350
After 24 years	\$2,550
After 29 years	\$4,050
After 39 years	\$4,550

[ABA] employees who have Master's degree plus 45 credits or a J.D. will receive an additional \$800 per year. [ABA] employees who have earned a doctorate from an accredited institution will receive an additional \$3,000 per year. For ABA Specialists who have become or do become teachers in the BPS, years of service as ABA Specialists will count towards career awards in the teachers' unit."

Even though career awards are supposed to be automatic, sometimes they are not, so it is prudent to check your paystubs to make sure you are in receipt of the proper career award when it is due you.

**BTU Phone Numbers**

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

## A Year to Review and a Year to Preview...

continued from page 1

we also know is that when we continue to organize, engage with and mobilize our allies and continue to not just fight back, but fight FOR what we know our students, schools and communities deserve, we

know that we can win. We have much to be proud of what we have accomplished in the last year, and we have much to look forward to as we continue to move from defense to offense in the next year!

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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.

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

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**DEADLINE:**  
The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue of the *Boston Union Teacher* is January 18th. All copy should be e-mailed to [mmaguire@btu.org](mailto:mmaguire@btu.org) and [aslater@btu.org](mailto:aslater@btu.org). This deadline will be strictly adhered to.

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# Eureka! Learning About Productive Struggle at the East Boston EEC

A moment of silence crept into the EEC Library. Teachers furrowed their brows while they tried to solve an array of mechanical and wooden puzzles while guide Rafi Benjamin of *Eureka!* circulated the room nudging teachers to work through their frustration.

David Leschinsky, owner of *Eureka! Puzzles and Games* thinks that this kind of thinking is critically important to understand and succeed at many endeavors. “*Flexibility of Mind* is the ability to look at problems from many perspectives, properly understand the situation and derive a solution. Some people are able to sit with challenging problems for long periods of time but often problems are abandoned. This is how we define the *Frustration Threshold*. Research has shown that discrete thinking processes can be strengthened through solving puzzles and game play. Graduated puzzles and games can increase frustration threshold and develop flexibility.”

David feels that it is critically important for teachers to actively try the puzzles themselves. “When the teachers are engaged with the material, kids are engaged. If you try it, the kids will be fearless. I was appalled when we did an event for the space engineering PhD program at MIT. These students had gotten into one of the most competitive schools in the world but they had no idea what to do with mechanical puzzles. They did everything on computers but we live in a 3D world with texture. There is not a screen in the world that will tell you what things feel like in the real world. Pick up a puzzle and actually turn it.”

David recommends getting started with graduated materials like *Kanoodle*. This kind of puzzle goes through graduated levels that build stamina. Games like *Brain Builder’s Keva blocks*, *Chocolate Fix*, *Chroma Cubes* and *Marble Maze*, sequence spatial relations in a way

that gets gradually more difficult. They all contribute to a better sense of pattern recognition, spatial relationships, and three dimensional views.

task by first completing it yourself. In general, the more challenging you find it, the more rigorous it is.

**Explicitness of task:** Don’t mistake

## Examples of puzzle master questioning:

- What are the ways it moves and how can you interact with the materials?
- What option presents a path to get to the final position?
- Start at the easier ones on the table.
- Look for the movements.
- This one has the most negative space.
- You can team up with a friend.
- Think about where you are and where you want to get.
- This one is designed to mislead your instincts.
- Ready for a hint?
- For this one, you have to reverse engineer.
- Ok, good now try this one. It’s going to be technically the same solution but the orientation matters more.
- Let’s switch gears.

In Edutopia’s article, *How to Increase the Cognitive Demand of Lessons*, author Christopher Klein compares cognitive demand to: “Bringing students to that mental state where they’re so engaged with a task that they use all their mental resources and don’t notice time passing. Getting clear on the distinction between rigor and cognitive demand can make a difference for each student in every classroom. Rigor is, roughly, complexity of thought, while cognitive demand refers to sustained mental taxation. In other words, cognitive demand is holistic, and rigor is just one of its components.” (Christopher Klein, *Edutopia*, March 2020)

Klein suggests the following steps to increase cognitive demand:

**Preassessment:** You need to know what your students know and are able to do before you can tell what will stretch but not break them. Also, kids stick with the hard stuff longer when they care about it.

**Rigor:** You can more accurately determine the level of rigor of a student

complicated for complex. Make sure your directions are precise and clear.

**Criteria for success:** Students can’t hit targets they can’t see. Spell out exactly what you’re looking for, then make it visual.

**Differentiation:** Students’ confidence and endurance soar with the right supports. When students have choices of process, product, and content, their sense of pride and accomplishment can push them to new heights.

**Metacognition:** Increase the likelihood that students will engage in productive struggle by explicitly repeating that the feeling of struggle is the feeling of learning.

**Uninterrupted processing and application time:** Give students the time to process and ask questions, but once you set them to work, let them work.

“When things that are fun and engaging kids don’t know that they



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

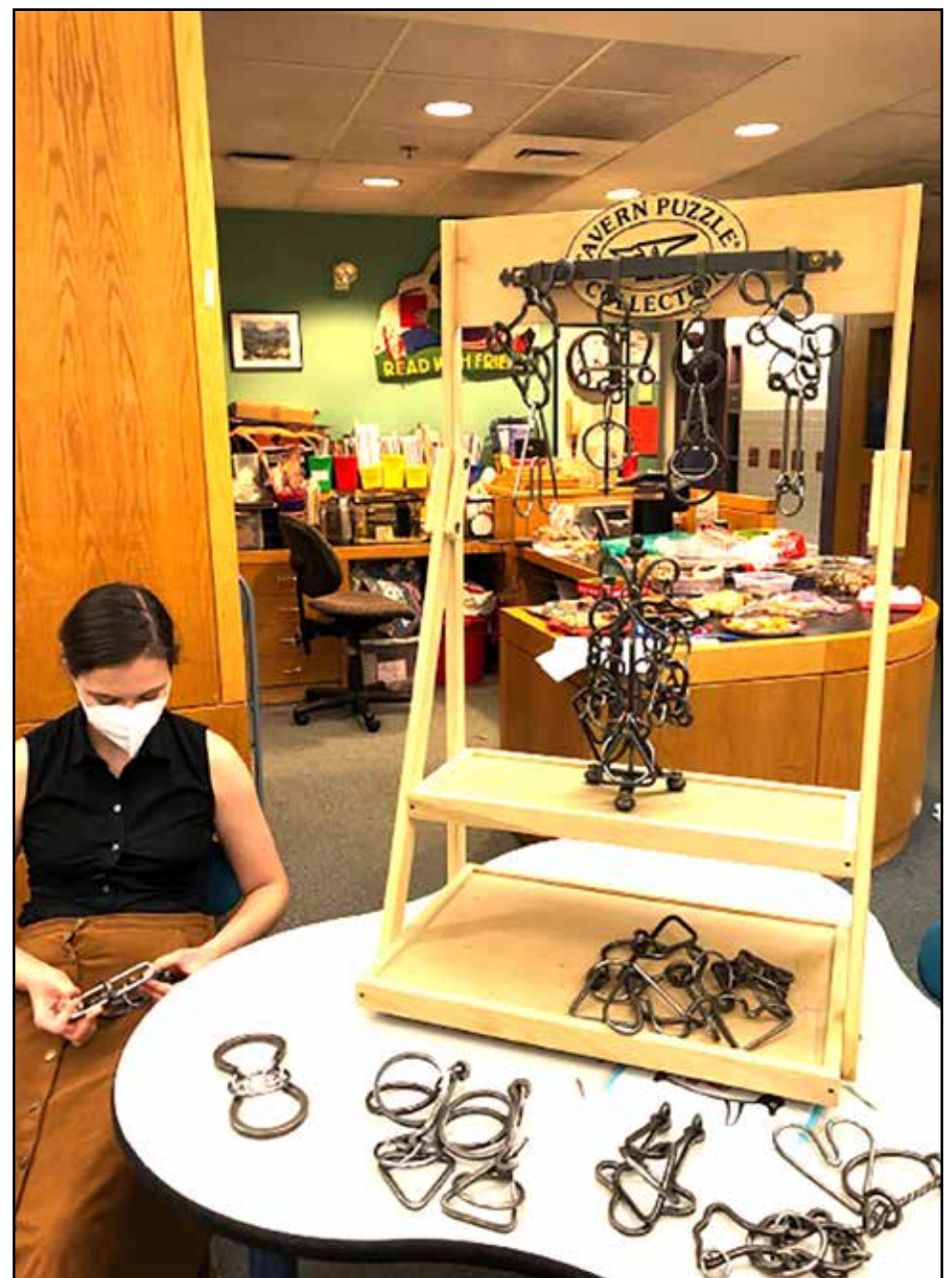
are working hard. When I worked with the teachers in Brookline I ran a teacher course on strategy and gaming and how teachers could better incorporate scaffolded puzzles as a way of understanding what their goal was, practice with them and give puzzles that were more of a reach. The issue is that people crash and burn and give up, but you have to go one step at a time and see where it gets a little bit hard, then you feel that sense of success and move on. I tell kids all the time when people say, I can’t do it, and I say, you can’t do it *yet*. When they come back I hear them saying it, “I can’t do it *yet*.” That reflects a different world view. A view of optimism.” David Leschinsky



If you would like Eureka! To come to your school, contact them at [eureka-puzzles.com](http://eureka-puzzles.com)



Adeleine Mannion



Elizabeth Self

## November 9, 2022



Jessica Pumphret,  
Stephanie Leon,  
Kelsey MacDonald and  
Annmarie Blaney

Candice Freeman



Josh Hardester,  
Joy Ramnarine,  
Rosemary Whiting  
and Diana Chow



Kelsey MacDonald

**S**am DePina, Deputy Superintendent of Operations, and **Jillian Kelton**, Chief of Student Support, came to the November membership meeting to answer questions.

The first question was from **Caitlin Gaffny**, “When will people who were hired three months ago be receiving their BPS ID badges in order to safely enter the building?”

Mr. DePina acknowledged the delay was problematic and said “We will streamline it, it will be a rolling process.”

The second question up voted was also by Caitlin Gaffny, “When will there be a **REAL** conversation about late schools who are in neighborhoods that directly face the uptick in violence but dismiss in darkness and buses that show up over an hour late? Our elementary students are not getting home until after 6:00pm.”

Mr. DePina stated that the superintendent is assessing the situation but that the BPS has no firm action at this moment. “We are doing our best, we are working with Transdev (the bus contractor).” Mr. DePina promised that the district would “continue to chip away at it” but Boston’s overall traffic is the biggest problem. Finally, Mr. DePina said

there will be an increase in collaboration with the Boston Police Department and the transit police, as well as with other community based partners.

The third question was submitted anonymously “What about teachers who have been assaulted? Will BPS ever develop a comprehensive discipline plan with counselors and outreach?”

In reply, “The answer is yes,” assured Mr. DePina. “What have Succeed Boston,” he continued. Mr. DePina cautioned that out of school suspensions are not always the right fix for students. He also stated that Superintendent Skipper plans to increase the number of alternative education placements. Mr. DePina did remind the teacher that they do have the right to press charges against students if the situation warrants it.

The final question was “Is Restorative Justice discussed in these city meetings?”

Jillian Kelton replied “Yes. Such conversations take place at police stations, community centers, fire stations, libraries, but not at churches (or other religious spaces). Restorative justice is not a one time thing; as a practice it has to work at the school level.”



## December 14, 2022

**S**uperintendent **Mary Skipper** joined the membership meeting via Zoom on December 14, 2022. Mrs. Skipper began her remarks by thanking the teachers for doing their job. She informed the audience that both her daughter and her husband are teachers. Thus she wants to be “in partnership” with us. Mrs. Skipper pledged to “problem solve” with us, and that there would indeed be problems. We shall face them together.

“Jessica (Tang) is a tireless advocate for you,” the superintendent said. “A good union has its membership at heart.”

Mrs. Skipper outlined three areas she wished to discuss with us.

1. **Office of Human Capital (OHC) and related payroll issues.** The superintendent prefaced her remarks by saying there is “no excuse” for the delayed and missed checks some employees have faced. She did offer some “context” to the situation, namely that OHC is severely understaffed in key positions. Add to that the sheer volume of work being done and that’s way OHC seems – or is – perpetually behind. However, Mrs.

Skipper stressed that pay/compensation is a priority.

2. **Substitute teachers.** “Our pool is small for a district our size,” she said. “We are asking for more time (days) from our existing daily substitute teachers. We are giving them cluster sub pay.” Mrs. Skipper says the district is recruiting at welcome sessions, reaching out to parents, and has signed new contracts with LinkedIn and Indeed. Staff from central office will continue to be dispatched to schools with the highest absences.

3. **COVID, RSV, and influenza.** The superintendent said that the flu is causing the most absences at the moment. RSV is affecting our youngest students and our staff who have young children at home. Mrs. Skipper said she is not renewing pool testing because the rapid tests are more available and more reliable. Masking after holiday breaks is a consideration. Representatives from the Horace Mann School for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing asked the superintendent that their needs into consideration when making masking decisions.



# Annual Wrap Up for the Retired Teachers Chapter

The RTC held its Fall Business Meeting at the BTU Hall on October 6, 2022. Members also attended the meeting virtually.

Roz Avant, the RTC Vice-Chair, informed the members that Marilyn Marion, RTC Chair, was not present because she was recovering from a fall that resulted in a fractured her hip. Marilyn did speak to the members and thanked members for their attendance and assured everyone that she was recovering and would be back to work soon.

After the salute to the flag and the introduction of the Executive Board members, Larry Connolly and Janey Frank gave an important Legislative Committee report. For the first time the Legislative Committee met with representatives of the other city unions whose retirees also receive their benefits from the City of Boston Retirement Board. Also attending was a representative who is the labor representative for Mayor Michelle Wu.

It was a productive meeting with all of the attending unions expressing support for five goals:

- Passage of legislation allowing local cities and town Retirement Boards to increase COLAs for the FY23, retroactive to July 1, 2022, to 5%. (*The senate passed the bill and awaits the governor's signature*).
- 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.
- To obtain the actuarial study of an enhanced COLA proposal that was begun in the Walsh administration but never completed.
- Work for the repeal of the federal WEP and GPO provisions of the social security Act.

The group will focus their efforts on the mayor to appoint her representative to the Boston Retirement Board. The city can afford to raise the COLA base if they push the full funding date back from the 2027 date.

Members heard a presentation by Lisa Caruso, a geriatric specialist. She explained that geriatrics is similar in structure to pediatrics in that the practice includes nurse practitioners, physician assistants and social workers as well as nutritionists and doctors.

Geriatrics help address the complex problems of cognition and functions. She encouraged all of us to stay active physically, focus on diets like the Mediterranean Diet and make life style changes that engage us in activities that strengthen our endurance and flexibility. Tai Chi and Yoga classes are excellent

examples of programs that most seniors can do. Many seniors find meditation an important step in strengthening mental focus.

### In-person annual luncheon resumes

The Social Committee worked overtime to find a place to hold the Fall Luncheon, Restaurants and hotels still suffer from a lack of sufficient staff to cook and serve a large number of people.

They were able to secure the Venezia restaurant for the Fall Luncheon on November 14<sup>th</sup>. By the time you read this of course the luncheon will have happened. Look for pictures and a full run-down of all the fun and food that we enjoyed.

And no holiday season would be complete without the Jazz Brunch to be held on December 5, 2022 at Florian Hall. We will tell all in the next issue of the *Boston Union Teacher*!

### BTU/RTC Elections in 2023

The RTC elects the four officers as part of the BTU elections. The Election Committee has been holding meetings since October and keeps updates on the BTU website.

Officers of the RTC are the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.

You can read about the duties of the officers in the RTC by-laws that are printed at the back of the Contract books. We will detail the duties of the officers closer to the election in 2023.

### Do you get the E-bulletin?

In order for you to receive the electronic bulletin from the RTC we need to have your personal email. We never give your email to anyone. We use it to send you information that you might need or might be of interest to you.

Of course, we also need your correct address and telephone number. When you move please contact us and change your address. If you change your phone number, we need to know that, too.

Since it is an election year and signatures for office are collected on-line as well as on paper, you should check to see that you can enter the membership portal of the BTU website.

### Office Hours

The RTC office is staffed every Wednesday and Thursday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. You can reach us in person at the BTU or by phone at the BTU, 617-288-2000.

You can also visit our Facebook page.

### Happy New Year!

We wish you a happy and healthy 2023!



### Corrections from the last issue of Boston Union Teacher

- Virginia Tisei served as BTU Vice President from 1977-1979.
- Part of the text for the "We're Learning Here/Dearborn STEM Academy" story was omitted, we are reprinting it in its entirety on page 7.

# 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.)

## Dearborn STEM Academy

It has been more than two years since I've been able to visit schools, and I feel grateful to the BTU for the opportunity to continue creating and sharing my "We're Learning Here" series with all of you! I hope you will invite me to visit **YOUR** school!



At the beginning of this school year I was thrilled to visit **Dearborn STEM Academy (DSA)**, located in the heart of Roxbury, a few blocks from Nubian Square. Opened in the fall of 2018, DSA serves 580 students in grades 6-12. Registrar **Hakim Johnson**, a student of mine at the Blackstone Elementary School many years ago, gave me a warm welcome and a tour of this spacious, light-filled, state-of-the-art building.

I was surprised that the cafeteria, on the ground floor, is in the center of the four-story open space. Wide stairways lead to classrooms above, situated mostly along short "wings" radiating away from the center. On reflection, I think the very openness of the space helps maintain order, as students are always visible to adults throughout the building.

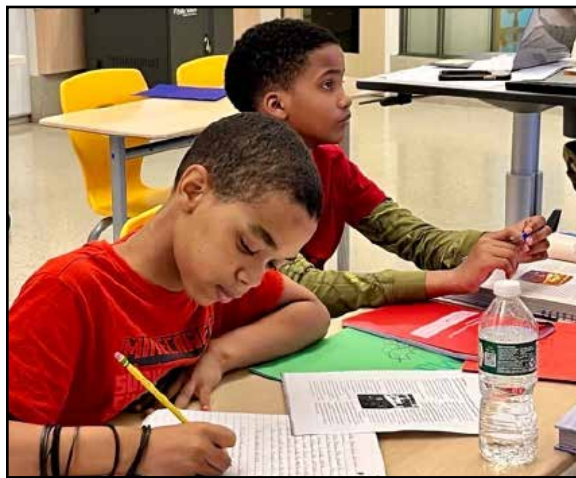
My visit started on the top floor, where most of the middle school classes are held and math teacher **Luis Bonilla** was helping his seventh graders with a pre-algebra assignment. In **Carmen Medina-Silva's** inviting ESL/SLIFE class, students in grades 6-8 with limited formal education were learning how to pronounce long and short vowels in our challenging non-phonetic language! DSA has a substantial population of recent immigrants from Cape Verde.



We are learning about the sounds of letters with Ms. Medina. In this picture we were identifying short and long vowel sounds to help us read and write better in English.  
- Students in Ms. Medina-Silva's ESL/SLIFE class, Grades 6-8



In this picture I'm writing about a math equation and Mr. B is explaining what to do. This is in my pre-algebra class where we're learning how to multiply and divide negative and positive numbers. This is my first year here and I like the building, the kind teachers, and the positive atmosphere.  
- Terrance McGhee, Grade 7



We are writing the important information from a story we read about going to a new house. We are both from Cape Verde, and we are learning how to read and write and speak English.  
- Marcos Ledo Pontes Mendes & Marcelo Teixeira, Grade 7



We were reading a story on the computer and Ms. Gomes was helping us understand the text. It is hard learning a new language like English!  
- Elias Correia & Lee Edson, Grade 11



I was asking Ms. Joseph a question about our assignment in African American studies. We start each class with a question or a quote to discuss, which I like because it gets you thinking a lot. We watched an Edpuzzle video about Mansa Musa and learned that he was a rich person who gave away gold to people in an ancient African empire. I never knew that there were many African empires in the times before slavery!  
- Larissa Barbosa, Grade 11

We were in Ms. Minchenko's ELA class, sitting in the "cozy corner" and writing letters to our senior selves, asking which goals we'd achieved and what challenges we had to overcome. We've been learning about self-identity. We each chose an independent reading book and shared our choices with classmates, learning what interests them.  
- Ceasar Glover & Danilson Barros, Grade 9



I was in Ms. Nunes' Anatomy class. I read an article about antibiotic resistance and how our body fights it. In this photo I was writing about the article's big ideas: identifying the major problems associated with antibacterial resistance and what pharmaceutical companies are doing to solve them. Over the past couple of years we've been learning about how bacteria can help or harm us, and how our bodies fight infections like COVID-19. I am in the Health & Life Science Pathway, so all my classes - ELA, Social Issues, and Science - connect, and our end of year project brings it all together.  
- Claudia Alves, Grade 12



We were looking at the map and reading the names of countries in Africa. This is our U.S. History class with Ms. Hughes, where we've been learning about the Great Depression. We learned that a lot of people suffered in the Dust Bowl. People were broke because they couldn't make a living as farmers and the banks closed. We read an article about people using corn as fuel because they couldn't afford coal. Some even sold their children as laborers to earn money.  
- Jamary Reed & Rafael Mendonca, Grade 10

# 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.)

## Joseph Lee K-8 School

The first thing I notice when I arrive at the **Joseph Lee K-8 School** in Dorchester makes me smile: the words for **WELCOME** are painted on the entrance path in a variety of languages, from Portuguese to Polish to Vietnamese. The Lee serves 560 students in grades K0-8 and its full ABA strand for students with autism comprises 40% of the school's population. This has resulted in a remarkably inclusive environment for all.

Sitting in a circle on the rug in **Melissa Angelucci's** Integrated K0-K1 class, children are engaged in their morning meeting activities. As their teacher calls out names, children choose from among eight classroom jobs and move their photo card next to its picture. Next, another student moves around the circle with a pointer, gently tapping each of his classmates' heads as he counts the number present – being reminded not to forget himself!

Third graders in **Zakia Hunter's** class are reading about Kenya, while those next door in **Lou Harris's** room are working on a variety of language arts activities. After listening to **Kathryn Grimes** read *Esperanza Rising* aloud, her fifth grade students break into small groups to read with one another.

Middle school students are making "Vision Board" collages in art class with **Steven Wilbur**, and theater teacher **Hannah Santos** is helping nonverbal children in an elementary ABA class to express themselves by moving their bodies to a music video.

Later I find her on the stage floor behind a torn curtain, putting the finishing touches on a set created by fourth graders for a performance of *Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood*, a picture book by F. Isabel Campoy.

Sensory Arts teacher **Chris Hall** says that what he likes best about the Lee is its "proactive dedication to inclusion." D.J. D'Ambrosio, a student at Mass College of Art who works with the three art teachers, adds that they keep every student in mind when planning units and differentiate instruction within their classes. Social Wellness specialist **Andrea Livesey** teaches almost every student in the school with a newly created class that focuses on social emotional learning skills.

Speech pathologist **Sarah Dubrow** says she appreciates the many support staff the ABA strand brings to the Lee. Let me know how **YOUR** school is creating an inclusive learning environment for students, and please invite me to visit!

*Amika* (with a smiley face icon)

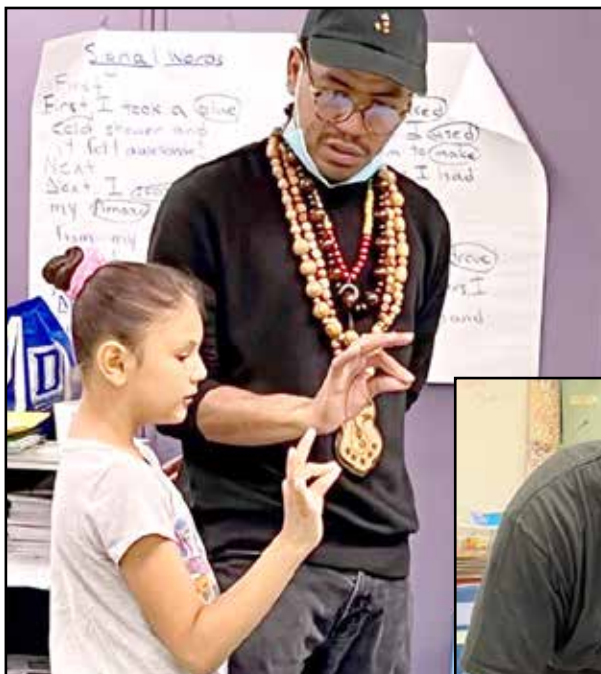
– Amika Kemmler-Ernst, Ed.D.  
[amika45@gmail.com](mailto:amika45@gmail.com)



We were in the gym, waiting to play a game called "Pumpkin Patch." We are learning how to throw a ball and how to work as a team.  
– Roland Mirabal's K2 Inclusion class



I'm helping Henry (K0-K1 ABA) illustrate his feelings after listening to the "Scribble Spot" song from a story called, "A Little Spot of Feeling." We're learning about self-awareness and identifying emotions by color.  
– Andrea Livesey, Social Wellness Teacher



I am tapping out a word with Mr. Harris. We usually tap out words and then build them on our [Foundations] boards. I've been learning about rhyming words like pig and wig. When we have stations some people do Lexia, some people read books as a group, and some of us read silently.  
– Jaliyah Quinones, Grade 2

I was making words on a white board and Ms. B was helping me. I'm learning about letters and all kinds of things in math, like pluses and minuses.  
– Kenneth Ellison (Grade 2) & Erin Bernazzani, Resource Room Teacher



I was working with Ms. Staci. She said a word out loud and I pointed to it on the whiteboard. I am learning letter sounds and how words are put together.  
– Noah Afework, Grade 6 ABA & Staci Gleason, Paraprofessional

I am helping Asante (K1 ABA) paint a spaceship using the cool color green. In sensory arts class right now we are doing "space-themed art" and working on mixing primary colors to make secondary colors. Students are learning how to mix paint while experimenting with different brush strokes to create amazing works of art!  
– Chris Hall, Sensory Arts Teacher



I was taking notes on a lesson in English class and Ms. Lam was translating for me because I am learning a new language in a new country. I just arrived from the Dominican Republic and this is a new stage in my life. I am meeting new people and making new friends – everything is new to me! In this class we are learning how to answer questions about what we read by using "claim, evidence, and reasoning. I've learned that a claim is a statement of your opinion, reasoning is what you think about it, and evidence is how to support your answer.  
– Dahyanara Muñoz Santana, Grade 7



I am writing about Nina Simone and Ms. Daly is helping me. I learned that Nina Simone was a famous African American singer who stood up for social justice. When her parents weren't allowed to sit in the front row, she refused to perform.  
– Kelly Nguyen, Grade 8, & Jennifer Talbot, ABA Strand Specialist