for the last few years, we have been working to stabilize our schools from the unprecedented impacts of the Covid pandemic. We are in many ways still doing that work — whether its addressing social emotional challenges, academic gaps, housing challenges, lack of health care, behaviors stemming from dysregulation and more — the work is not done. However, our upcoming contract fights and proactive campaigns are an opportunity post-pandemic to refocus our energy and organizing on not just reacting to events beyond our control, but to amplify and fight for a broader vision for what our students, educators, schools and communities DO need to succeed and thrive.

Our work to build collective power to fight for this vision is well underway. In just two weeks, we had over 3,000 BTU members fill out our new contract survey. Our goal is to hear from at least 5,000 of our members as well as community members, so that the package we put together for our new contract campaign is informed and supported by priorities from both our own educators and our community allies who have continued to join us in advocating for our students and schools. Our collective power is what enables us to win at the bargaining table and share the solutions that we know come from those impacted.

In addition to our contract campaign, we are also refocusing on proactive campaigns. The Thrive Act and MCAS Ballot Question are the solutions to combat the harmful effects of high stakes testing, that enables the state to put districts and schools in “receivership” and prevents students from getting their high school diploma. These combined efforts ensure there is a better path forward, including a commission to create a more valid and effective accountability system and take away the punitive aspects of MCAS testing that has harmed our students and schools. While a performance and task-based system is being created, MCAS would still exist, it would just not be used a high-stakes way that narrows the curriculum, puts our EL and special education students at a disadvantage and guts hard won contractual rights. This is the focus of the Our City, Our Schools committee.

We are also fighting for legislation that would increase our educator diversity. The BTU has long supported efforts to create pathways, such as the para to teacher, community to teacher, and student to teacher pipelines. We have also continued to advocate for the return of early permanent status for provisional educators of color — a policy that is already written into state law, but that the district abandoned over a decade ago. Unlike the Educators for Excellence bill that — under the guise of “educator diversity” would actually gut job security and harm educators of color who speak out, speak up or disagree with their administrators—the Educator Diversity Act that we have signed on to and have been lobbying for has real solutions from advocates who have been doing this work for decades.

If you would like to get involved in any of these campaigns, please contact Johnny McInnis at jmcinnis@btu.org or by calling 617-288-2000.
**Commentary Cecil Carey**

**Convening of Contract Bargaining Committee Marks Beginning of Our Campaign!**

On September 6th, just hours before the 2023-2024 school year was set to begin, more than 50 BTU members and officers met at our Union Hall for the first official meeting of the 2023-2024 Contract Bargaining Committee, or CBC. The CBC is an organizing committee approved by the membership to support the negotiating team in determining our contract priorities and contract proposal package and help plan and carry out our organizing actions as we all make our voices heard at our schools and in our community.

We were led through an orientation by BTU President Jessica Tang, Vice President Erik Berg, Member Negotiator Anne Brochu, director of Professional Learning Paul Titter, and Executive Board Member Casandra Samuel. We learned about the timeline and process for working with the city to ratify a contract that improves our Working Conditions and our students’ Learning Conditions. We also had an opportunity to share our own hopes and questions for this contract campaign.

Your Boston Union Teacher co-editor overheard the following quotes:

- “This time, we’re going ALL IN for paraprofessionals!”
- “We should be looking to the example of the UPS workers, SAG-AFTRA, WGA, and other unions, so we can win what we need in this contract fight!”
- “Last contract campaign is the first year we ever did any sort of open bargaining. I learned about how negotiations work and I loved it. I can’t wait for this time!”

How Can You Get Involved?

- Fill out the BTU Membership Survey! You should have received a survey sent to your email with the subject “2024 Contract Bargaining Survey.” If not, it is available in the btu.org Member Portal. We are pleased to report more than 3,000 members have already filled it out, but if you have not yet, please take 10-15 minutes to do so. This is a great opportunity to make your voice heard as we determine what issues we should prioritize in our negotiations with the City.
- Join CBC! We are still looking to expand the Contract Bargaining Committee. In particular, we’re looking for educators of color, guidance counselors, substitutes, coaches, and interpreters. Sign up at btu.contract
- Stay tuned for Community Forums and Organizing Updated! As we move forward in this campaign, you will be invited to 1) Community Forums to help us bring students’ and families’ voices and perspectives into our contract proposal and 2) show solidarity at your school through Faculty Senate, Wear-It-Wednesdays, and more actions. Showing our BTU Strength at every school site will help ensure BPS and the city takes us seriously at the negotiating table.

(Cecil Carey is a teacher and is a Building Rep. at Charlestown High School and he is currently on the BTU Executive Board. Cecil is co-editor of the Boston Union Teacher.)

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**Commentary Anne Slater**

**A Pause for Reflection and a Happy New Year**

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, marks the year 5784. For thousands of years the Jewish people have marked the new year with rituals of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and the ten days between them with a time of reflection, forgiveness, and turning to do better. Rosh Hashanah celebrations welcome the new year with apples of reflection, forgiveness, and turning to do better.

The Low Road

*Excerpt from the poem by Marge Piercy*

Alone, you can fight, You can refuse, you can take What revenge you can But they roll over you.

But two people fighting Back to back can cut through A mob, a snake-dancing file Can break a cordon, an army Can meet an army Two people can keep each other sane, Can give support, conviction, love, Massage, hope.

Three people are a delegation Committee, a wedge.

With four you can play bridge and Start an organization.

With six you can rent a whole house, Eat a pie for dinner with no seconds, And hold a fund-raising party.

A dozen can hold a demonstration. A hundred can fill a hall. A thousand have solidarity and your own newsletter.

Ten thousand, power and your own paper; A hundred thousand, your own media Ten million your own country. It goes on at a time.

It starts when you care to act, It starts when it do it again After they said no, It starts when you say We And know who you mean, And each day you mean one more.

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**BTU Rallies for Black Educators and Racial Justice**

By Amrita Dani and JD Davis, BTU Ethnic Studies Educators

On Thursday, August 24th, educators, students, parents, and community members rallied in front of the Bolling Building to demand accountability and transparency regarding the mistreatment of Black educators in the district. Edith Bazile, a BTU RTC member who is a retired Black educator and anchor in BPS, planned the rally and many organizations committed to education justice – including our union – endorsed the action.

The rally took place on the eve of the one year anniversary of the open letter penned by retired Black administrators to Superintendent Mary Skipper expressing their concerns that administrators of color are disciplined at higher rates than their white counterparts and that Black administrators’ disciplinary processes are not fair or impartial. To date, BPS has failed to take any action.

The rally had a dynamic lineup of speakers who spoke to a wide range of conditions of Black educators and students in BPS, ranging from mistreatment in the classroom to inequities built into MTELs to racial justice in the curriculum to the fight against criminalization of Black youth in schools.

One theme across the board was simple yet profound: Black educators matter. For example, Elementary Field Rep. Lea Serena spoke powerfully to this point when she shared, “It was Black teachers who pushed me to turn my words into pain, and Black teachers who are the very reason I not only became a Black teacher, but the first Black elementary rep of the Boston Teachers Union.”

Executive Board member Cecil Carey spoke truth to power as he addressed the inequities of attracting – and retaining – educators of color and what should be done. He illustrated this issue clearly when he said, “according to FairTest, in 2009 54% of African-American test-takers did not pass the writing portion of the exam, while only 23% of whites failed. Does that seem right or fair to you? – These tests are racist. We’ve got to get rid of the MTEL!”

The authors of this article, members of the BTU Ethnic Studies New Committee, drew connections to the fight for Ethnic Studies and the struggle for treating Black educators with the respect they deserve. As we said in our speech, “In the current political climate, educators who are conscious about the realities of race continued on page 7
BTU Election Protocol

1. Elections are run by the Building Reps or Faculty Senate Election Committee. If BTU Reps are on the ballot, they organize and run the election but ballots must be distributed, collected, and counted by a BTU member other than candidates for election. The election must be held in a neutral area such as the library or cafeteria, wherever possible.

2. Give at least five (5) School Days written notice including time and location of vote.

3. Conducted by written secret ballot of those BTU members who are presently on duty.

4. Building Reps control location and time for voting which shall be listed in notice.

5. Ballots counted by BTU members other than candidates for election, ex. Faculty Senate Chair, BTU volunteers.

6. *Voters are BTU members assigned more than half time to your building. Eligibility depends on type of vote. Please see below. Please use this protocol even when the number of candidates is equal to or less than the number of openings to be filled.

Type of vote

1. Waiver votes on contractual changes
   - 66% (⅔) majority
   a. School site council must formally vote in approval in advance of faculty vote.
   b. Members of any BTU bargaining unit affected by the waiver may vote. For instance, if it is about the length of PandD periods, only members of the teacher bargaining unit would vote because they are the only ones with PandP periods in their contract.

2. Middle / High School Teacher Schedule Changes
   - Any Master Schedule change (e.g. 6-period, 7-period, block schedule) from one year to another requires a waiver vote in accordance with regular contractual provisions, except a 55% vote is required instead of a 66% (⅔) vote.
   a. Elections for BTU members on School Site Council/ Governing Board
      - Any eligible BTU member can vote and run for office

2. Note: Building Reps have no obligation to run a fraudulent vote. Some common examples:
   - School Site Council did not previously and formally approve by vote an issue where approval is necessary.
   - Proposed schedule too vague

Know Your Rights

Careen Carew

What is the Protocol for Conducting BTU Elections

When are School Site Council/Governing Board Elections and Meetings Held?

The School Site Council (SSC) or Governing Board is the central governing body of the school under the school-level management/sharing decision-making model. The contract stipulates, "Elections for new SSC members shall be conducted as early in the school year as possible [by October 15], and a first meeting of the new council shall be held no later than October 31st." At the first meeting, a monthly calendar should be agreed upon by the SSC members for the entire school year and be made public through distribution to all staff and parents. Any changes are to be approved by the SSC with at least one week's notice to all staff and Parents. SSC Meetings should be at times convenient for all members and times may alternately meet to address this goal.

Where do School Site Councils/Governing Board Members Obtain On-going Training to Become Effective Representatives Participating in Their School's Governance?

The SSC/Governing Board trainings will be scheduled this school year jointly run by the BTU, and the BPS Office of Family and Community Advancement. 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 will be held virtually by Zoom from 5:30-7:00 p.m. The upcoming training already scheduled is: SSC 101; SSC Basics, November 2nd, November 13th. This session focuses on an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the SSC in order to ensure it works effectively. There will be additional workshops focusing on various aspects of the SSC functioning such as SSC budget, personnel subcommittee, etc. TBD. Please keep an eye out on the BTU e-bulletin for additional sessions. To register or for more info contact careen.carew@boston.org

What is the Role of the School Site Council's Personnel Subcommittee in Hiring?

The personnel 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 list throughout the entire school year.
3. Schedules and procedures for reviewing candidates for positions.

The Personnel Subcommittee is comprised of the principal/head of school/director, two teachers and one parent as well as one student on the high school level. [If vacant at the beginning 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 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 cannot 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 matter on their own. They cannot be compelled to do so by the administration. The same is true of the parent representatives. SSC members 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.

How do we know if a facilities work order has been filed and keep track of its status?

The latest contract language adds the following paragraph: “One building representative at each school shall have access to view the database, Asset Essentials, which will allow the representatives to view and track status of work orders.”

The BTU Reps at each school need to decide amongst themselves which one of them shall be the designee in the group to assume the role of keeping track and reporting back to the affected folks in the building to the status of the work orders that they have filed in order to determine what, if any actions need to be taken to advocate for timely resolutions to the matters reported. Please inform the school’s administrator in charge in writing which Rep will require said access and then follow up on it. Knowledge is power. Work orders now can be tracked with your access to them rather than being submitted into the seemingly black hole of non-response.

Is there Coverage for a Special Ed Paraprofessional When They Are Absent?

The BTU/BPS Collective Bargaining Agreement in Article VII, Section 2A, continues on page 7.
By Brendan Deady, BTU Communication Assistant

Happy October! I’d like to take this space to briefly introduce myself to BTU members. My name is Brendan Deady and I began working for the Boston Teacher Union at the end of this past July. I am a lifelong Boston resident who attended Boston Latin School and eventually graduated from Brown University in 2013.

I was one of those students who struggled to focus and find a passion during my middle and high school years. However, when I took part in GHBS News Radio, student newspapers, foreign policy, creative writing and AP Literature that I found my footing.

Because of the passion and attention of my teachers, I learned vital critical thinking skills that allowed me to better examine cultural myths, challenge government messaging and connect to our shared humanity through exposure to a diverse selection of fiction and non-fiction literature. Public education is the pathway to support the intellectual and emotional growth that encourages a culturally active society.

The foundation set by my teachers directed me to focus on journalism and political science in college. I then spent six years working for the Boston Globe and Boston Public Radio. Throughout my career as a producer and general reporter, I was frequently inspired by the grassroots power and passion exhibited through collective activist and union action. The fervor exhibited by unions when holding powerful forces driven by profit challenged the notion that socialism can infect members of the media and motivated me to become a more active member in the community I’ve called home for my entire life.

It is an honor to join an institution that fights for worker respect, equality and most importantly the safety and support of children and their educators.

My goal is to increase our social media reach with a focus on reinforcing the undeniable positive impact this union has on the quality of our schools and the social health of Boston. We need to be proactive. Teacher unions continue to be unfairly maligned by organizations who don’t have the remotest idea about the effort and energy this unions members dedicate to ensuring this city has the best possible education system for all of Boston’s kids.

I look forward to meeting as many members as possible and encourage you to contact me if you know of an educator who is taking exceptional steps to make an impact in their community.

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Building Our Movement for the Schools Our Students Deserve!

Educator diversity is just one piece of the racial equity work we are leading in our union, and we have now brought in the organization Beyond Conflict to help us deepen our anti-racism work and help us to create strategies both internally and externally to help us define our various roles in this work. They will be supporting our Standing Racial Justice Committee as well as our staff Racial Justice Committee, Executive Board and Negotiating Team to ensure that the work we do as a union is aligned to our antiracist values and goal of dismantling racism and white supremacy in our union, our schools and beyond. Since the passage of the BTU 2020 Antiracism Resolution, we have met many of our goals, but there is still much work to do and it will continue to be a priority. We are also fighting for Green New Schools. Facilities in Boston have fallen into disrepair after decades of deferred maintenance. The current administration has built upon the prior administrations work to begin long overdue renovations ranging from kitchen upgrades and HVAC installation to AC window units to bathrooms. The renovations are being completed at a slower pace than anyone would have hoped for, but they are finally happening. However, with the climate crisis we are facing, the pace of renovations is insufficient. Our Racial Justice Committee is spearheading efforts to utilize the federal Inflation Reduction Act to ensure that not only build more new green schools but that our existing schools are also transitioned to incorporate solar energy sources, heat pumps and become climate resiliency hubs that our communities can turn to when and if a natural disaster occurs or there is a cold or heat emergency.

Our schools, however, cannot just be climate resiliency hubs, but must also address the wraparound supports so many of our families need so that our students can focus on academic and learning. All of our students in all of our schools deserve including access to arts, athletics, libraries, health courses, state of the art science labs and well-educated cafeteria and auditoriums. They too often need access to before and after school programs and they need resources and support for our families’ basic needs. Our partners should be fully integrated into our schools, with a focus on supporting the whole family and whole child so that academic goals can also be met. That is why we are doubling down on our advocacy for Boston Community Hub Schools. After a decade of advocacy, we have now won fourteen in the district, but every BPS school should be a Hub School.

These are a few of our proactive campaigns for this coming school year. Many other campaigns are led by our union educators, because diversity in power comes from all of you. While we are re-focusing both on our vision of what we know our students, educators and families deserve we are also re-focusing on the building blocks of organizing that will enable us to win all of these campaigns. That is why the theme of this year’s Fall Leadership Conference, our upcoming RJOC Meeting, All Things Considered and Boston Public Radio. Throughout the hopes of working collaboratively to craft solution driven recommendations for future contract negotiations, the district, and city. We hope to prioritize solutions that support student reflection/restoration while keeping safety for all paramount.

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BTU Organizing Committees

F rom fundraising hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarship funds for undocumented students to winning a full-time Ethnic Studies coach position involving hundreds of educators and students in a larger movement, our BPS and the Broader Community organizing committees do incredible work! These committees bring BTU members and community members together to advance union priorities and win tangible improvements in our schools and our communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of active organizing committees:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unafraid Educators</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-chairs: Nora Paul Schultz, Adriana Costache, Max Kennedy, Julia Nucci</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educators working to build sanctuary schools from the ground up where immigrant and undocumented students feel supported. Their work includes an annual Unafraid Educators Week of Action as well as a scholarship fund for undocumented students in BPS.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black Lives Matter at School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-chairs: Amy Gebo, Cassandra Samuel, Johnny McInnis</td>
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<tr>
<td>A planning committee to advance the Black Lives Matter at School movement in Boston. Black Lives Matter at School is a national movement organizing for racial justice in education. We encourage all educators, students, parents, unions, and community organizations to join our annual week of action during the first week of February each year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haitian Educators</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-chairs: Bianca Pierre, Jossette Tenaus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haitian educators and allies working to support the needs of Haitian educators, students, and parents in our schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnic Studies Now!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-chairs: Katie Li, Jeremy Aponte, Jasleen Anand</td>
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<tr>
<td>The goal of this committee is to build a popular movement of people to advocate for the funding, staffing and professional training needed to develop, implement, and sustain ethnic studies in all BPS schools. It also serves to recruit and support educators to teach Ethnic Studies through providing professional development and building solidarity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Educators</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-chairs: Erica Kouka, Claudia James, Michelle Carroll, Ally Little</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arranges social events and connects early-career educators with each other and with resources to help them survive and thrive during their first few years in BPS. As a union committee, it also strives to identify and develop potential leaders by introducing new members to union structures and opportunities for involvement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Climate Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-chairs: Betsy Drinan, Mira Brown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocates in solidarity with local, state and federal climate justice movements. Works with BPS and the City of Boston on Green New Deal for BPS as well.</td>
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Solidarity Committee

| Chair: Cecil Carey |
| Working to build relationships and organize with workers and unions to build solidarity across the labor movement. |

Housing Justice Committee

| Co-chairs: James Cordero, Lewis Barnes |
| We are organizing the BPS community and partners to pursue safe and stable housing and to empower families and communities to organize. We are building a popular movement of people to advocate for the funding, staffing and professional training needed to develop, implement, and sustain ethnic studies in all BPS schools. It also serves to recruit and support educators to teach Ethnic Studies through providing professional development and building solidarity. |

Inclusion Done Right

| Co-chairs: Kandula Banks, Katie DeLaRosa |
| Working to expand, improve, and support Restorative Justice practices and policies in the district. |

Restorative Justice Organizing Committee (RJOC)

| Co-chairs: Adina Davidson, Susan Lovett, Jess Madden-Fuoco |
| We work to expand, improve, and support Restorative Justice practices and policies in the district. |

School Safety

| Co-chairs: Jafurkous Davis (JD) and Catlin Gaffney |
| Focusing on identifying issues related to safety that have a daily impact on our members, students, and families in the hopes of working collaboratively to craft solution driven recommendations for future contract negotiations, the district, and city. We hope to prioritize solutions that support student reflection/restoration while keeping safety for all paramount. |

Project X

| Staff: Richard Grady |
| Working to build relationships and organize educators beyond the BTU. |

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To get involved with any of these committees, please email Natalia Cuadra-Saez, BTU Organizing Director, at ncuadrasaez@btu.org
Mel King’s work is premised on collaboration, shared decision making, equitable access, love and truth. In this spirit the McKinley community began contemplating a name change during the school year 2017-2018, and it quickly became clear that Melvin King should be the only name considered. That year our community installed the Love is the Question and the Answer mural, (based on the Sean Alonzo Harris photograph), on the Dartmouth Street-facing facade of the school. Teachers Ari Hauben and F. Michael Scott, in collaboration with students from various grades, lovingly created the now iconic piece of public art. Upon completion, Mr. King graciously joined our young people for an intimate conversation, in front of the mural, on the staircase leading to the gymnasium. (Some of our young people knew Mr. King through his frequent visits to the school and his Fab Lab Technology.)

Later that year, the school community celebrated Mr. King’s 89th birthday in that very gymnasium. Spearheaded by F. Michael Scott, we showed our love and appreciation for Mr. King on a grand scale. Former Mayors Marty Walsh and Ray Flynn were present along with a cross section of community leaders/ members, the King family, and our students and their families.

It was during this time period that we began serious talks of renaming the school. We began the process, but we were stymied by the COVID pandemic. Finally, we were able to fully complete the formal process between SY 21-22. Decisions were made with input from School Site Council, Equity Roundtables, surveys, public comment, public hearings, The Boston School Committee, and the King family. This was truly a community endeavor. It took us five years to get here, but we did. Together. As a team. This was the product of a community, using Mel’s vision and ethos as a paradigm.
We gave a warm BTU welcome to our new members at our annual New Educators Social! Thank you to everyone who showed up and made this event possible!
and racism and who do the right thing by teaching about it – many of whom are Black – are especially targeted, undermined, and even pushed out. “We ended our speech with a call to fight for Ethnic Studies in the upcoming BTU contract campaign.

The rally was a powerful statement of what education justice for Black educators can look like: from addressing racist barriers to entering the field, to providing support and resources for workers to do their jobs with respect and dignity, to meeting the needs of Black students and ensuring community control of our schools. And it was a call to action, because the only way we will win these demands is to continue building a mass movement of workers, families, students, and communities in Boston!

2016 (currently in effect), the School Department shall hire and maintain twenty (20) “coverage paraprofessionals”. The School Department shall deploy these coverage paraprofessionals to cover for 1:1 paraprofessionals and paraprofessionals in substantially separate classrooms who are absent and to supplement current paraprofessional services.”

When do ‘specialty’ teachers obtain common Professional Development time?

In the current Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA or contract), this issue is addressed in the following manner. “All specialty teachers such as but not limited to art, music, physical education, guidance, district-wide shall meet as a group at least once annually during the contractual school year for a professional development day, on one of the city-wide school professional development days already scheduled on the academic calendar.” Please let the BTU know if this is not occurring.
10th annual
40,000 FREE BOOKS AND ACTIVITIES
FOR BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOL FAMILIES!
Stop by between
1:00 and 4:00 PM
on
Saturday, September 23rd, 2023
Boston Teachers Union & Carson Beach
180 Mt. Vernon St., Boston, MA 02125
(Entrance is off of Day Boulevard, before Carson Beach)
BUT
BOSTON TEACHERS
UNION
BTU.ORG/BACKTOSCHOOL
WE NEED VOLUNTEERS TO HELP US SORT BOOKS ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18 FROM 3-7 PM, TUESDAY and WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 & 20, 9 AM-7 PM. CAN YOU HELP OUT?
Sign up to volunteer at
btu.org/backtoschool
ALL ARE WELCOME TO PITCH IN, INCLUDING STUDENTS FULFILLING COMMUNITY SERVICE.
Please contact Katina at kmcclain@btu.org or Brenda at bchaney@btu.org with any questions!

CLOSEST MBTA T-STOP
JFK/UMASS
ON THE RED LINE
BRING
YOUR OWN
SHOPPING
BAG!

BTU President Jessica Tang and Boston Mayor Michelle Wu talk with Back to School Fair participants.

Boston Mayor Michelle Wu with BTU Elementary Field Rep. Lea Serena and Ethan at the BTU Back to School Fair.

Children enjoyed the face painting booth.

Parents and their kids had fun picking out books.

Reading the books was a feature of the BTU Back to School Fair.
BTU’s 10th Annual Back to School Fair Continues
Our Commitment to Supporting Student Literacy

The overcast skies and sporadic rain showers couldn’t dampen the enthusiasm and joy that flooded the BTU’s 10th annual Back to School Fair giveaway on Saturday, September 23rd. The BTU welcomed more than 1,200 students, educators and parents to our union hall to offer more than 40,000 free books for home and classroom libraries. The community event marked a milestone for the BTU and its partners: over the past decade the union has distributed more than 400,000 free books to Boston’s educators, students and families.

Despite the rain, BTU President Jessica Tang opened the doors to the public 20 minutes before the 1 pm start time to accommodate the growing lines of families and eager children.

For the next three hours, children, educators and parents picked through a consciously curated selection reflecting the union’s commitment to ensure that all children have access to literature that reflects their lived experiences and celebrates their respective backgrounds. The BTS fair supports the American Federation of Teachers’ Reading Opens the World Program and the literacy focus of its yearlong Real Solutions for Kids and Communities initiative. Both campaigns aim to distribute literature and encourage reading as a way to explore, imagine and experience joy during a time when access to a diverse selection of books is under attack by organizations and legislators pushing book bans.

“Across the country we’ve seen a dramatic uptick in school boards banning books, especially those focused on topics that reflect the experiences of our students, families and communities. We’re proud to stand up against these practices and provide our community with culturally relevant and important stories, as well as tips and tools to promote literacy,” Tang said.

The BTS fair was supported by more than 50 community partners, in addition to numerous local public officials who attended the event to show their support. President Tang joined AFT Secretary-Treasurer Fredrick Ingram, Mayor Michelle Wu, School Committee Chair Jeri Robinson and City Councilor Julia Mejia in addressing the press to emphasize the BTU’s commitment to equitable literacy and fighting against censorship.

“Across the country we’ve seen a dramatic uptick in school boards banning books, especially those focused on topics that reflect the experiences of our students, families and communities. We’re proud to stand up against these practices and provide our community with culturally relevant and important stories, as well as tips and tools to promote literacy,” Tang said.

The BTU’s event coincided with two other book giveaways supported by the AFT in Harlem, NY and Hartford, CT. Overall, the BTU contributed to the distribution of more than 150 thousand books to local communities on a single afternoon.

In addition to book giveaways, the BTS fair featured face painting, Bounce houses, obstacle courses and book readings Fourth Grader Leaih Atkins, the daughter of BTU administrative assistant Natasha Moore, read from her book “Sparkle in the Dark” which she conceived and began writing as a second grader. City Councilor Julia Mejia followed with a reading from “Different Kinds of Hurt,” her story, a book encouraging the discussion of mental health among children.

Overall, the collaboration of BTU staff members, current and retired educators and community volunteers resulted in an event that encouraged literacy, creative exploration and community building.

“All our families benefit when we can put resources where they are needed. We love our teachers, and we are just so grateful for what you do for our city,” Mayor Michelle Wu said.

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**Upcoming Dates and Events 2023-2024**

**OCTOBER 2023**
- Sunday, 1st: Breast Cancer Walk
- Wednesday, 11th: Membership Meeting
- Thursday, 12th: New Para / Sub / ABA Reception
- Wednesday, 18th: Para Informational Meeting
- Fri.-Sun., 20th-22nd: BTU Fall Leadership Conference

**NOVEMBER 2023**
- Saturday, 4th: AFT-MA Leadership Convention
- Tuesday, 7th: Election Day
- Wednesday, 8th: Membership Meeting

**DECEMBER 2023**
- Wednesday, 13th: Membership Meeting
- Thursday, 28th: Children’s Party

**JANUARY 2024**
- Wednesday, 10th: Membership Meeting
- Friday, 19th: Winter Party

**FEBRUARY 2024**
- Wednesday, 14th: Membership Meeting

**MARCH 2024**
- Saturday, 9th: Family-to-Family Conference
- Wednesday, 13th: Membership Meeting

**APRIL 2024**
- Saturday, 6th: Paraprofessional Regional Statewide Conference
- Wednesday, 10th: Membership Meeting

**MAY 2024**
- Wednesday, 8th: Membership Meeting
- Thursday, 16th: Para Informational Meeting

**JUNE 2024**
- Saturday, 8th: End of Year Party
- Wednesday, 12th: Membership Meeting

**JUNE 2024**
- Thursday, 14th: Membership Meeting

More important dates to come – please refer to the weekly EBulletin for further information.
the variety and the advantages of the
yourself. A good first step is to investigate
the time and willingness to do the research
independent, outside help unless you have
and research your options, seeking
steps: Start saving early in your career,
employee can take now to mitigate the
challenge. But no more. The cost of goods
inflation's grasp on decreasing buying
increase just a few hundred dollars per year
is essentially fixed and can be expected to
on their average salary, years of service,
retirement to all vested members based
in a plan (whether active or retired), ask
on a tax-deferred basis is significant.
Federal and state laws grant
advantageous
reasons: 1) Tax-deferred plans require a
dollars into an after-tax account for a few
periodically a portion of your take-home
is in the salesperson's best financial interest,
the city has no
cash salespeople to sell their product. The
state has no
products to maintain value. The state has no
expected to
improving the state's economy.
In effect, the above teacher has
6% state, the untaxed $1,300 contribution
Assuming a tax bracket of 22% federal and
6% state, the untaxed $1,300 contribution
to the savings/plan in effect costs the
employee only $936 in lost take-home pay,
a savings of $364. What's more, each year the
growth on the $1,300 — whether it's the
accrual of interest, stock fund growth, or
whatsoever — will accumulate tax-deferred
year after year until withdrawal.

In a nutshell, here are some key
steps: Start saving early in your career,
and research your options, if at all
independent, outside help unless you have
the time and willingness to do the research
yourself. A good first step is to investigate
the variety and the advantages of the
tax-deferred savings options available to
our members. If you are currently participating
in a plan (whether active or retired), ask
yourself if it's the right plan. Are you
taking the best advantage of your savings vehicle
or is it taking advantage of you?

Advantages of Saving in a
Tax-Deferred Account

Many of our members opt to save in a
tax-deferred account, such as the MassSmart
Plan (457B) of any one of a number of 403b (Tax-Sheltered Annuity
or TSA) plans available to teachers and employees
through the city. Both plans operate essentially along the same lines as the
better known 401k plan, found commonly in the
private sector.

In either plan offered to our members, employee-elected (voluntary)
contributions in either of the plans. Assume the
tax base is $52,000 over
6% tax rate, and wish to
have $1,300 contribution and the contributions grow
tax-deferred until retirement.

In the MassSmart plan, fees are
minimal. The fees are negotiated by the
state and set in place on a variable of independent financial watchdogs. The fees
are very low. Plan fees from MassSmart
do not work on commission and have
no financial incentive to upsell. Up-to-
date plan or fund information is readily
available and plan choice is broad.

One minor disadvantage is it is
too difficult to obtain a loan from your account.
TAs generally offer loans, but it varies by
company.

In a TSA or a 403b fee includes the same
management expenses as in the MassSmart
plan. The TAs may cost more than the
MassSmart because they offer
a wider range of significant insurance costs (mortality
and expense fees, riders, and more) that
can drain an additional 1.25% to 1.75% or
more per year on average from your
account balance.

What's more, most TSA companies
charge for a 'surrender fee' should you wish
to withdraw some or all of your savings.
(Surrender fees can be anywhere up to 15 years,
though most run 6 to 10 years.)

Finally, on the issue of transparency
and fees, it is too difficult to compare
huge differences between the MassSmart
Plan and most TAs. Most TAs
offer more choices, but it is easy to get objective information from
a salesperson who stands to lose a
commission if, for example, you want
your funds to move out of an inferior company
before it's too late. That's why
most TAs attract a surrender charge to
your account, which deducts a healthy fee
(1% to 7%, depending on when the
funds were deposited) if you want to move
your funds from one TSA to another.
The salesperson's commission generally comes
out of the surrender charge — which is
why return phone calls from salespeople
on this issue often are slow to come.

Even Small Fees Add Up

Consider two people, "A" and "C"
who have a savings plan, one with
MassSmart and the other with a standard
403B that has additional fees that drain
significantly more from your account.
Both A and B start investing $50
for 30 years and use the same
stock index fund which has grown
an average of 9% per year after fees,
during the difference in expected returns.
By investing in the low-cost MassSmart
"A" will accumulate $48,000 more than if
they had invested in the 403B. An
average of 5% per year may not seem
much, but 30 years of compounding, it
adds up. Google "Einstein, compound interest"
and see what's going on here.

The message: Make sure to get
good information about fees. If you're not sure as
to the fee structure in the company, don't
sign. It's no different than buying a house
without knowing the mortgage rate.

Tracking Down Fee Structure
Can Be Difficult
It is difficult to track down the cost of fees
in some of the city's 403B offerings. Check
the company, don't
sign. It's no different than buying a house
without knowing the mortgage rate.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan Structure</th>
<th>Stock Index Fund Annual Growth with Fees</th>
<th>Typical Fees</th>
<th>Net Monthly Deposit</th>
<th>Duration of Investment</th>
<th>Gross Paycheck Deposits</th>
<th>Total Plan Value After 30 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A MassSmart 9%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
<td>30 years</td>
<td>$63,000.00</td>
<td>$182,313.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Typical 403b 9%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
<td>30 years</td>
<td>$63,000.00</td>
<td>$134,206.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The above example is for illustrative purposes only, and it shows the difference in fund value over 30 years in two competing identical investments — one in the TSA with its typical fee structure, and one in the MassSmart plan, also with its typical fee structure.)

https://investor.vanguard.com/index-funds/what-is-an-index-fund
Equitable Financial being fined listed a few below from Equitable (AXA) obligation to help you uncover their fees, throughout the country, including Boston.

A finding from the SEC last year resulted in Equitable Financial being fined $50 million for misleading investors. “The Securities and Exchange Commission announced fraud charges late Monday against Equitable Financial Life Insurance Co. for providing account statements to about 1.4 million variable annuity investors that included materially misleading statements and omissions concerning investor fees. Equitable agreed to pay $50 million to harmed investors, most of whom are public school teachers and staff members, to settle the lawsuit.”

The First Question to Ask the Salesperson Trying to Sell You a TSA: What is Your Mortality Expense Fee? That fee alone decreases your accumulated account balance roughly 1.25% to 1.5% per year.

First question to ask anyone trying to sell you a TSA: “What is your mortality and expense fee?” That fee alone decreases your accumulated account balance roughly 1.25% to 1.5% per year.

One popular Boston TSA offering, Fidelity (1-800-343-0860), is not primarily an insurance company and has a 403b plan that doesn’t require you suffering any unnecessary insurance costs. Other TSAs may offer similar products as well, though they’re difficult to uncover.

A Notice Regarding Delta Dental Changes from the BTU Health and Welfare Fund

Dear BTU members,

This notice regarding dental benefits comes in response to a high volume of calls we received this month.

Each year on 9/1, your dental benefits reset and are in a holding pattern until the Fund Office receives notification of eligibility from the city.

Once we receive the eligibility list (in the past, it has typically been mid-October, sometimes sooner, sometimes later), and it is uploaded to our system, we must wait 24 hours (overnight processing) for the system to update accordingly.

Delta Dental “hold” all claims for up to 3 months until they are advised the list has been received and the files are current. All claims are retroactive back to 9/1, or the participant’s start date if after 9/1.

Many dental offices are aware of the “hold” and have been communicating as such. However, others aren’t familiar with the process and may require a payment from the patient or to have the patient reschedule the appointment.

If the patient pays in advance, they should also know that we will not refund the patient. Once Delta Dental processes the claim, they will pay the dental office directly, and the patient should request a refund from the office.

During this time many people also call Delta Dental, unfortunately, they are not able to assist them during this timeframe since they rely on us for the information.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and hope this clarification is helpful.

Best,

BTU Health and Welfare Fund

Our Photo Was Used in Touting of Bill We Oppose

(The photo in question was originally published as a Letter to the Editor in the Boston Globe, it is reprinted here.)

O n Tuesday morning, we were shocked to open the Boston Globe and see a photo of us that may have given the false impression that we support the op-ed with which it was published. Nothing could be further from the truth (Seniority policies are holding back teacher diversity efforts, Opinion, Sept. 12).

The piece from the Boston Chapter of Educators for Excellence touts a bill that purportedly seeks to enhance educator diversity but in reality would thwart that goal. The legislation in question frames an effort to boost educator diversity in Massachusetts, threatens to dismantle the due process system that safeguards the rights and job security of educators. Without these protections, educators of color would be even more vulnerable to the whims and sometimes not-so-subtle bias of administrators. Passage of the bill would undermine our recruitment pipeline while claiming to advance something we all believe in.

Furthermore, the use of our photo to illustrate the op-ed, which suggested that we endorse this wrongheaded bill, is misleading. Photos of the photo were removed from the online version in response to this letter.) We stand firmly against any legislation that exploits the cause of diversity to erode the rights and protections of educators, particularly educators of color. The forum given to Educators for Excellence also underscores an alternative bill to the Diversity Act — that offers real solutions to advance diversity in education and has support from a coalition that includes Latinos for Education, ALANA (African, Latino, Asian, and Native American) Educators, Journey Into Education and Teaching, Mass Insight, and the Boston Teachers Union.

As Boston educators we, and our union, have many solutions to increase educator diversity, in addition to the Educator Diversity Act. Although educators in Boston Public Schools represent 7 percent of the Massachusetts teaching force, we currently comprise 30 percent of the state’s educators of color. Through our advocacy and initiatives, we have worked to build and push for a successful pipeline of educators who better reflect the communities of our students. While there is more work to be done, we are as relentless in the pursuit of the real solutions.

We respectfully remind the media that we are people, not props.

Shanti Calazoo
Joel De Hall
Kendra Martin
Taharry Turner
(The writers are educators at the Lilla G. Frederick Pilot Middle School in Dorchester.)
Community Academy High School

Community Academy (CA) is a very small alternative school in Jamaica Plain, enrolling fewer than 50 students in grades 9-12 as the school year begins. Designed as a setting for students who have struggled in traditional settings, it offers personalized support – social/emotional as well as academic – for each student. Spanish/ELL teacher Carmen Álvarez appreciates the opportunity for "authentic conversations" with her students.

In the first class I visit, PE and Wellness teacher Michael Massey sits on the floor with his students, surrounded by weights and other exercise equipment, engaging them in a conversation about the importance of breathing. One of his students tells me, "Mostly, we're learning to respect and pay attention to our bodies." Michael and his students are available to lead Wellness Seminars for staff retreats, should your school be interested!

Across the hall students in Chris McLaughlin’s math class use a computer program to work on graphing equations. Chris has been at CA for 20 years and says he sees himself in a lot of his students. Due to a high rate of absenteeism, he and his colleagues often individualize instruction to meet their students’ needs. He also recommends “Mindful Moment” spaces in classrooms for students to take a break as needed.

Jorge García’s humanities class is reading and learning to analyze poetry, many working independently while he helps those who need extra support. Head of School Sonie Felix greets a student arriving mid-morning with a warm welcome, a question about his well-being, and a reminder to stay focused. Junior Nailah Fils gives me a tour of the lush school garden, created by students during summers and after school with financial support from a “Communities of Care” grant.

The Community Academy family comes together every Friday to recommit to core values, share announcements and acknowledgements - even a weekly “Rock Star” award for a staff member. How does your school build community?

Amika Kemmler Ernst, Ed.D.
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