



**BTU Welcomes
New Teachers**

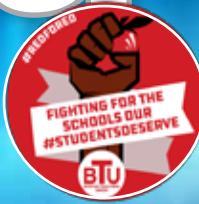
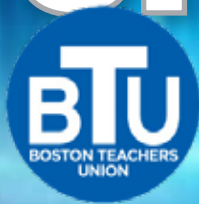
See pages 6 & 7.

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Boston Union Teacher



The Award-Winning Newspaper of the Boston Teachers Union, AFT Local 66, AFL-CIO • Volume 56, Number 2 • October, 2023

President's Report Jessica Tang

Building Our Movement for the Schools Our Students Deserve!

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 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



Jessica J. Tang
BTU President

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.

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Remember to VOTE in the Boston Final Election • Tuesday, November 7th • 8 am to 8 pm



Ruthzee Louijeune
At Large



Julia Mejia
At Large



Henry Santana
At Large



Ed Flynn
District 2



Joel Richards
District 3



Brian Worrell
District 4



Enrique Pepén
District 5



Tania Fernandes Anderson
District 7



Sharon Durkan
District 8



Liz Breadon
District 9



The **Boston Teachers Union** is proud to endorse these candidates for **Boston City Council**

Jessica Tang, President, BTU
Johnny McInnis, Political Director, BTU

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 Tritter**, 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 bit.ly/BTUcontract
- **Stay tuned for Community Forums and Organizing Updates!** 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



Cecil Carey
Boston Union Teacher
Co-Editor

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*.)

Commentary Anne Slater

A Pause for Reflection and a Happy New Year

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, marks the year 5,784. 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 and honey, bringing sweetness to the year. This is a time

of celebrating the new year and of reflecting on the past year and thinking about what we can do better. It is a time for introspection and growth. We ask, What has transpired last year and what adjustments can I make for the next year? This seems perfectly aligned with our new school year, a pause for reflection and looking forward to the new beginnings that a new school year offers.



Anne Slater
Boston Union Teacher
Co-Editor

For a Good Year (Leshone Toyve)

By Sh. Tseler, second verse
adapted by J Sidman

We send greetings loud and clear:
Leshone toyve, a good year!

We send greetings and we wish
All children, loud and clear:
Leshone toyve tikoseyvu,
A good year!

Parents, teachers, the whole generation,
Leshone toyve tikoseyvu,
A good year!

Good folks and beautiful siblings.
Relatives, friends, the whole generation,
Leshone toyve, everyone,
A good year!

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 one at a time,
It starts when you care to act,
It starts when you 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.

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 administrator 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 Now 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

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What is the Protocol for Conducting BTU Elections



Caren Carew
BTU Secondary
Field Representative

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 present, eligible* and voting.
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 dependent upon 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 allow for write in candidates. We want to encourage increased participation and capacity building within our Union. Voting is part of our by-laws

Type of vote

1. Waiver votes on contractual changes
 - 66% (2/3) majority
- a. School site council must formally vote in approval in advance of faculty vote.
 - 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 PandD 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% (2/3) vote.
- a. Elections for BTU members on School Site Council/Governing Board
 - Any *eligible BTU member can vote and run for office
 - *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
3. Proposed schedule too vague
Contact your respective BTU Field Rep for clarity if needed.

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

The School Site Council (SSC) Governing Board is the central governing body of the school under the school-based management/shared 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 change must 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 alternate to meet this goal.

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 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 in the BTU e-bulletin for additional sessions. To register or for more info contact ccarew@btu.org.

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

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

1. Interview and approve the hiring of BTU teachers’ bargaining unit staff, the in-transfer of BTU teachers’ bargaining unit staff from other schools in the system through the transfer as well as inside teachers and outside applicants to the Open Posting lists throughout the entire school year.

2. Approve the selection of Lead Teachers, [school-based] New Teacher Developers, and new athletic coaches; and
3. 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 [who are elected members of the SSC]. Decisions are urged to be made by consensus. Decisions need to be formalized by majority vote with the Principal/Head of School/Director voting with the majority. The decisions of the Personnel subcommittee are not subject to the approval of the School Site Council as a whole. **The Personnel Subcommittee is required to meet for all hires made from the beginning of one school year through the last day of the same school year.**

There is a way to involve others on the Personnel Subcommittee who possess more expertise in a particular position to be filled. Elected teacher and parent representatives on the SSC may designate temporary replacement representatives on the Personnel Subcommittee according to the positions being filled. These temporary replacements do not need to be members of the SSC. For example, a special education teacher may replace a teacher on the Personnel Subcommittee when a special education position is being filled, only if the elected SSC BTU members [or parents] choose to do so. The administrator 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 option on their own. They cannot be compelled to do so by the administration. The same is true of the parent members. SSC parents select their own member to serve on the Personnel Subcommittee as their representative

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

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 dashboard, 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 as 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 A details; *“Effective during the 2012-13 school year and through August 31,*

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

Boston Union Teacher

EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE!

¡TODOS SON BIENVENIDOS AQUÍ!

EVERYONE IS WELCOME HERE!

BLACK LIVES MATTER

EDITORIAL NOTE:

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

WHEN WRITING:

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

DEADLINE:

The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue of the *Boston Union Teacher* is October 18th. All copy should be e-mailed to ccarew@btu.org and aslater@btu.org. This deadline will be strictly adhered to.

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Promoting the Boston Teacher Union's Positive Impact on BPS and the Broader Community

**By Brendan Deady,
BTU Communication Assistant**

Happy October! I'd like to take this opportunity to briefly introduce myself to BTU members. My name is **Brendan Deady** and I began working for the BTU as a Communication Assistant at the end of this past July. I am a lifelong Boston resident who attended Boston Latin School and eventually graduated from Boston Latin Academy in 2012.

I was one of those students who struggled to focus and find a passion during my middle and early high school years. It wasn't until I took courses on 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 collection of fiction and non-fiction literature. Public education is the pathway to support the intellectual and emotional growth that encourages a collective stake in our society.

The foundation set by my teachers directed me to focus on journalism and political science in college. I then spent six years working at GBH News for Morning Edition, All Things Considered 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 ferocity exhibited by unions when holding powerful forces driven by profit challenged the cynicism that 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 union's 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.

Building Our Movement for the Schools Our Students Deserve!...

continued from page 1

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 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 administration's 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 hope for, but they are finally happening. However, with the climate crisis we are facing, the pace must accelerate and our Climate Justice Committee is spearheading efforts to utilize the federal Inflation Reduction Act to ensure that we 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 academics 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 ventilated cafeterias and auditoriums. They also often need access to before and after school programs, health care access and resources to support 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 rank-and-file educators, because our 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 is Building Blocks, Together, United. We are revisiting and re-strengthening the building blocks of our movement,

organizing and fighting together, united for the vision of schools and communities we believe in. Join us in Providence for this year's fall conference, at a BTU event, Faculty Senate Meeting, committee meeting or monthly membership meeting — there are so many ways to get involved!

BTU Organizing Committees

From fundraising hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarship funds for undocumented students to winning a full-time Ethnic Studies coach position to involving hundreds of educators and students in the Black Lives Matter at School week of action, our BTU 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.

List of active organizing committees:

Unafraid Educators

Co-chairs: Nora Paul-Schultz, Adriana Costache, Max Kennedy, Julia Nucci

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.

Black Lives Matter at School

Co-chairs: Amy Gebo, Casandra Samuel, Johnny McInnis

A planning committee to advance the Black Lives Matter at School movement in Boston. Black Lives Matter at School is a national coalition 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.

Haitian Educators

Co-chairs: Bianca Pierre, Josette Teneus

Haitian educators and allies working to support the needs of Haitian educators, students, and parents in our schools.

Ethnic Studies Now!

Co-chairs: Katie Li, Jeremy Aponte, Jasleen Anand

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.

New Educators

Co-chairs: Erica Kouka, Claude James, Michelle Carroll, Ally Little

Arranges social events and connects early-career educators with each other and with resources to help them survive and thrive through 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.

Climate Justice

Co-chairs: Betsy Drinan, Mira Brown

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.

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 by empowering families and providing access to resources, training, education, political advocacy, and networking.

Inclusion Done Right

Co-chairs: Kafunda Banks, Katie DeLaRosa

Fighting for fully supported and funded inclusion classrooms and for the services our students deserve.

Our City, Our Schools

Co-chairs: Matt Ruggiero, Ruby Reyes

We're a group of BTU members and allies with a goal to develop, implement, and win a campaign to address the root causes of state-imposed intervention in schools. We need resources and stability, not receivership!

Restorative Justice Organizing Committee (RJOC)

Co-chairs: Adina Davidson, Susan Lovett, Jess Madden-Fuoco

Works to expand, improve, and support Restorative Justice practices and policies in the district.

School Safety

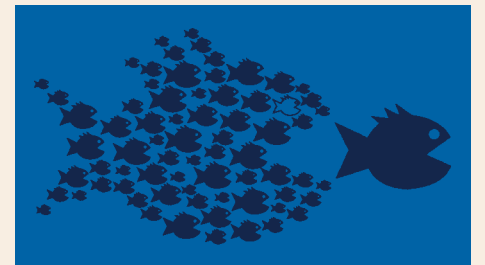
Co-chairs: Jukurious Davis (JD) and Catlin Gaffny

Focuses 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 contact: Judy Grant

Working to build relationships and organize educators beyond the BTU.



To get involved with any of these committees, please email Natalia Cuadra-Saez, BTU Organizing Director, at ncuadrasaez@btu.org

McKinley Renaming Honors Melvin H. King

By Kareema Scott, Mary Nee Loftus, Julie Cass and Kathleen O'Connor

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.



BTU's New Teacher Social



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!





BTU Rallies for Black Educators and Racial Justice...

continued from page 2

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!

Know Your Rights...

continued from page 3

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.



Cecil Carey tells audience that “We Will Not Go Back!” at the Black Educators Rally.

Amrita Dani speaks on Racial Equity at the Black Educators Rally.

BTU is active in pushing for Racial Justice at the rally.





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



Children enjoyed the face painting booth.



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



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 douse the enthusiasm and joy that flooded the BTU's 10th annual Back to School Fair book 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 1pm 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.

AFT Secretary-Treasurer Ingram commended the union for its continued community service. "The BTU has done an outstanding job delivering for your community, your stakeholders, the people who care about our kids and really trying to make sure that people understand that reading is fundamental. This event is absolutely a part of the solution to help us have better schools, a better profession, and better kids."

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: Isaac's 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.



2023-2024

Upcoming Dates and Events

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

E-Board meetings are held every 4th Wednesday of the month.

More important dates to come – please refer to the weekly EBulletin for further information.

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BTU Members Have Different Choices in Choosing a Suitable Tax-Deferred Savings Plan

Most Plans Costly and Inefficient; Some Better, Research Key

By Richard Stutman

Boston Public School employees are members of the State-Boston Retirement system, which provides a pension (with medical coverage) at retirement to all vested members based on their average salary, years of service, and age at time of retirement. The pension is predictable and secure — that's the good news. The bad news is that under the current law, a pension at retirement is essentially fixed and can be expected to increase just a few hundred dollars per year (3% of only the first \$15,000 of pension) leaving your pension's buying power increasingly vulnerable to inflation in your retirement years. You likely will not notice the decline in purchasing power right after retirement, but you will certainly notice the drop-off as you age.

Given inflation's modest rate history over the last 50 years, it's no surprise that inflation's grasp on decreasing buying power is until recently an often-overlooked challenge. But no more. The cost of goods and services recently has increased at a rate of 8% to 9% in 2022 and is headed towards 3% to 4% in 2023, bringing the hardship of inflation to everybody's doorstep.

This report will give some helpful hints and options as to what steps a working employee can take now to mitigate the hardships of inflation in retirement. Some of these steps, too, can be applied once retired as well.

In a nutshell, here are some key steps: Start saving early in your career, and research your options, seeking 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 savings plan, such as the **MassSmart Plan** (457b) of any one of a number of 403b (Tax-Sheltered Annuity or **TSA**) plans offered to BTU members 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 are withdrawn, untaxed, from one's paycheck and forwarded to either the MassSmart plan or any one of a number of the city's approved TSA companies, where the deposited funds are invested (in funds chosen by the member) and grow on a tax-deferred basis until you retire or sooner. Early, pre-age 59 withdrawals, may be subject to a financial penalty depending on the plan and your individual circumstances.

Using a tax-deferred plan is a much more efficient means of growing your savings than merely depositing periodically a portion of your take-home dollars into an after-tax account for a few reasons: 1) Tax-deferred plans require a commitment to 'pay yourself first' as the dollars saved go straight to the savings plan instead of your pocket each payday. 2) Federal and state laws grant *advantageous* tax incentives to those who participate in a tax-deferred plan as a way to encourage personal savings. The advantage to saving on a tax-deferred basis is significant.

On the one hand, you're sheltering some of your money from your currently

taxed income. For illustrative purposes, let's say one wants to save \$50 per paycheck in either of the plans. Assume the person grosses \$2,000 per paycheck for 26 checks, for an annual salary of \$52,000. Over 26 paychecks this person's contribution will amount to \$1,300. For federal and state tax purposes this person will show a taxable income of \$52,000 - \$1,300 or only \$50,700. (These figures are for illustrative purposes only.)

In effect, the above teacher has "sheltered" (and then invested) the \$1,300 from federal and state taxation and they will be taxed on the \$50,700, not the \$52,000. Assuming a tax bracket of 22% federal and 6% state, the untaxed \$1,300 contribution to the savings' plan in effect costs the teacher 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 whatever — will accumulate tax-deferred year after year until withdrawal.

Although in both cases, you are merely postponing taxes, not avoiding them, the process of tax-deferral works to your financial advantage by allowing what monies would ordinarily be lost to *yearly* taxation to work for you by being reinvested year after year tax-free while generating income or growth themselves. The twin advantages of sheltering current income and allowing it to 'work' for you on a continuing tax-deferred basis, provides a significant boost in the accumulation of your savings.

What are the Different Plans Offered?

One is the Mass Deferred Compensation or 457b plan, commonly known as the **MassSmart Plan** (<http://www.mass.gov/smartplan/>). This statewide plan, open to all state employees, is overseen by the state's treasurer and by an oversight board of financial professionals who monitor the plan to ensure that it meets its fiduciary responsibility to employees by keeping costs low and continually examining products to maintain value. The state has no financial interest in selling you this product, and MassSmart salespeople do not receive a commission.

The second type of plan is an umbrella plan under the heading of IRS Code 403b, called a Tax-Sheltered Annuity or **TSA**. Under this offering, in Mass., companies who wish to set up shop merely file an application to do business in a municipality, and then they're free to conduct business. The plan is unmonitored and unsupervised, and the city has no responsibility for the plan's actions.

Twenty-three companies, mostly insurance, provide a 403b plan in Boston. Most plan vendors employ commission-based salespeople to sell their product. The problem with having a commissioned-based salesforce is they're often incentivized to suggest a plan or fund that is in the salesperson's best financial interest, not necessarily yours. The city's sole responsibility is to transmit your dollars to the plan vendor. Should any employee have a problem with a plan vendor or a salesperson, they're left on their own to

Fees Matter

Plan Structure	Stock Index Fund Annual Growth without Fees	Typical Fees Charged	Net Return	Monthly Deposit	Duration of Investment	Gross Paycheck Deposits	Total Plan Value After 30 Years
A MassSmart	9%	0.2%	8.98%	\$100.00	30 years	\$36,000.00	\$182,313.00
B Typical 403b	9%	1.52%	7.48%	\$100.00	30 years	\$36,000.00	\$134,206.00

(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>)

deal with it. Not good.

Both types of plans operate essentially the same way: The employee signs a contract with the plan, instructing the city (*) to withdraw a specified amount biweekly from the employee's paycheck and transmit it to the company. The employee instructs the plan operator (separate application form) where to deposit their contribution, and the contributions grow tax-deferred until retirement.

(*) (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NCunUirwqYWC7gZV-M36-7kQO5tqPd/view>)

Decisions, Decisions...

In signing up to participate in a tax-deferred savings plan, plan members have a number of decisions to make. You are strongly advised to seek advice from a financial professional who has no financial interest in your decision before signing up for any plan and/or making any investment choices. Your decisions to make:

- 1) How much should you invest from each paycheck?
- 2) What type of plan to participate in, a 403b or the 457?
- 3) Where to place your money within the plan itself?

How much you should invest is an individual decision. Advice is to start low and see how you manage your take home pay with your expenses given the new deduction. The MassSmart plan all ws a paycheck deduction of \$10 per pay period or 1% of your paycheck, whichever is lower. Individual TSAs set their own minimum contributions. Paycheck withdrawal amounts, which are voluntary, can always be changed.

Remember that if you are setting aside, say \$50, from your biweekly paycheck, it's taken out pre-tax, without being taxed at the state and federal levels, you'll notice a difference of approximately \$36 in your take-home pay. Another way to look at this, it's costing you only \$36 to purchase an investment that is worth \$50.

What Type of Plan to Participate in, a 403b or the 457?

Now comes the hard part: choosing which plan to join. Before you choose, again, you are strongly advised to contact a financial professional or to do your own research.

Both plans (MassSmart and 403b) offer the same wide array of savings vehicles: stock funds, bond funds, hybrid funds, fixed (CD-like) funds, and so on. That's where their similarities end.

There are key differences between plans: transparency, ease of access, costs, choice, penalties for withdrawal (*surrender* fees) from one plan to another, and annual charges. **Before signing up for any plan**, know what you're signing up for. Fees, costs, and surrender penalties matter greatly as they eat into the return from your investment.

This is important enough to repeat: Before signing up for any plan, know what you're signing up for. Fees et al matter greatly. Fees are often hidden. See below sections on how fees add up and how they can be hidden.

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

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

In a **TSA or a 403b** fees include the same management costs as in the MassSmart plan but are padded by a number 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 tack on a 'surrender fee' should you wish to withdraw funds or move funds over to another savings vehicle. (Surrender fees can run anywhere up to 15 years, though most run 6-10 years.)

Finally, on the issue of transparency and access to information, there are huge differences between the MassSmart Plan and most TSAs. Most TSAs are commission-based, and it's not always easy to get objective information from a salesperson who stands to lose a commission if, for example, you want to move your funds out of an inferior company to a better opportunity. That's why most TSAs attach 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 "B," who have a savings plan, one with MassSmart and the other with a standard 403b that has additional fees that drain typically 1.5% annually from your account. Both A and B start investing \$50 per paycheck for 30 years and use the same stock index fund which has grown an average of 9% (before fee deductions), over the duration. The difference between A's growth and B's growth is on the chart below.

By investing in the low-cost MassSmart "A" will accumulate \$48,000 more than if they had invested in the 403b plan. 1.5% per year may not seem like much, but after 30 years of compounding, it adds up. Google "Einstein, compound interest."

The message: Make sure to get 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. Consider AXA, for example, one of the

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BTU Members Have Different Choices in Choosing a Suitable Tax-Deferred Savings Plan...

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more popular offered in the city:

Equitable (AXA) has a number of variable annuity families it markets throughout the country, including Boston. Its fees are high. And since the city has no obligation to help you uncover their fees, and they're not easy to obtain, we have listed a few below from Equitable (AXA) to show the wide range of charges.

ons and certainly don't want to pay for them. But before you make that decision, you have to understand the company's fee structure.

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.

Equitable (AXA) Plan Subgroups (as of 2/2021)	Series	Annual Cost to Manage Funds
Investor Edge	Series A	Annual fee ranges from 1.68% to 4.99% (of total fund value)
Retirement Cornerstone	Series B	From 1.88% to 3.67%
Structured Capital	Series C	From 2.23% to 2.36%

(<https://smartasset.com/retirement/axa-annuities-review>)

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 charges."

See: <https://www.thinkadvisor.com/2022/07/18/equitable-to-pay-50m-for-misleading-teachers-on-annuity-fees/>

Read more: <https://403bwise.org/blog/entry/blog-educators-to-equitable-drop-dead-8.2.22>

The First Question to Ask the Salesperson Trying to Sell You a TSA: What is Your Mortality and Expense Fee?

All 403B companies are not created equal. Some companies (**) offered in Boston are better than others. Some are worse. Many of the companies are primarily insurance companies, and their plan offering includes mandatory and costly insurance-added products or riders that contain excessive fees. Most people don't need the expensive insurance add-

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.

(**See a complete list here of city-allowed TSA companies as well as the application to start withdrawals here:

(<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NCunUiwqYWCB7gzV-M36-7kQQ5tqdPd/view>)

Be Wary of TSA Salespeople Soliciting Business in Our Schools

For years, our members complained about TSA insurance vendors roaming our hallways, visiting our teachers' rooms, and coming (unsolicited) into our classrooms. They were seen by and large as an unwelcome interruption in our place of work, so the BTU negotiated language with the school district to set some ground rules prohibiting their unregulated access to our school buildings.

The district policy is very explicit: Insurance vendors, TSA representatives and the like are allowed to stay in the building's main school office ONLY. Here's the citywide policy:

"Any vendors seeking to solicit business from teachers or sell products to teachers shall remain in the main office

and shall be prohibited from entering teacher's rooms or teacher lounges."

MassSmart is an approved statewide plan, not a TSA insurance company; its representatives are not commission-based and are allowed in our buildings. To contact MassSmart for general information, write here, smart@empower.com. The Boston representative, **Michael Geraghty**, Michael.Geraghty@empower.com.

To sign up for a TSA, see the list here (***) and find the application there as well. (***) <http://bostonpublicschools.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=3178>

One overarching point to make about TSA plan representatives and their companies: Neither they nor their company has any special imprimatur from the city, i.e., they're approved to do business, but the city is not endorsing their product.

Individual TSA companies are not screened, representatives may or may not have a financial background, and representatives are under no fiduciary obligation to act in the employee's best interest. Nationally, there is a movement to revamp the law to mandate that municipalities take some responsibility for overseeing TSAs sold in their jurisdiction, in much the same way private companies that offer a 401k must take responsibility for their plan.

Where to place your money within the plan itself?

This is arguably the most difficult part of the planning process, and we are not allowed to make any investment recommendations along these lines.

All of the plans offer an array of investment vehicles: stock funds, bond funds, stable value funds. Before making any decisions when investing, the reader is advised to consult a financial professional who doesn't have any monetary stake in

the decision you make. If you have this expertise, fine. If you don't, find someone who does. Any investment choices you make can have a lifetime consequence, so please research your options carefully.

A couple of places to start to get a general understanding of investing in either a TSA or the MassSmart Plan.

1. Check out Vanguard's webpage: <https://ownyourfuture.vanguard.com/content/en/learn/library.html>
2. 403b wise website is very useful and independent: <https://403bwise.org/>
3. The MassSmart webpage (<https://mass-smart.empower-retirement.com/participant/#/login?accu=Massachusetts>) has good information.

The information above is offered because both TSAs and the MassSmart Deferred Compensation Plan (457b) provide a great tax benefit to our members. The information touches on many of the benefits of having a 403b or a 457b Plan, but it is not meant to be all-inclusive. Much of the remaining information can be found easily, and I'd suggest first going here, <https://403bwise.org/education>, to get an overview.

Although we cannot give investment advice, we have an opinion as to where to begin. Two plans, either the MassSmart or the Fidelity 403b, have advantages that most of the other plans do not: Investment options are good, costs are low, fees are much lower, independent information is easily accessible, and most independent financial advisors will be aware of their benefits. Other plan choices, many of them with exorbitant fees, have features that will put your savings accrual at a disadvantage.

Feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

(Richard Stutman is a past president of the BTU, 2003-2017 and the secondary field rep, 1983-2003. He can be reached at rstutman@btu.org)

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

Dear BTU members,

This is a notice regarding dental benefits based on 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 "holds" all claims for this timeframe 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 accommodating as a result. 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

(Editor's Note: This article was originally published as a Letter to the Editor in the Boston Globe, it is reprinted here.)

On 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 paired. 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 touted a bill that purportedly seeks to enhance educator diversity but in reality would thwart that goal. The legislation, though framed as a means to foster 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 troubling. (Editor's note: The photo was 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 undermines an alternative bill – the Educator 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 as educators in the classroom have the real solutions. We respectfully remind the media that we are people, not props.

Shanti Caiazzo
JoDee Hall
Kendra Martin
Taharri Turner

(The writers are educators at the Lilla G. Frederick Pilot Middle School in Dorchester.)

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.)

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 Alvarez** 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 Garcia’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 (ü)

Amika Kemmler Ernst, Ed. D.
Amika45@gmail.com



I was in math class working on an “input/output” program. I am learning how to plot equations on a graph.

Kayden B, Grade 12

I’m talking with Ms. Felix in the hallway. My most interesting class this year is Spanish, and I’m getting it! I’m looking forward to being able to talk with and understand more people by the end of the year. The most important thing I’ve learned here is that having a hard background doesn’t have to stop me from achieving my goals.

Anderson Withers, Grade 12



We are in Wellness class and Mr. Massey is talking about how important breathing is. We’ve learned that deep breathing calms you when you’re panicked or stressed. Mostly, we’re learning to respect and pay attention to our bodies. For example, when you’re stretching, you need to listen to your body to know how far you should go.

David Castillo & Mason Withers, Grade 12



I was reading a poem about the Civil War in Humanities class. We are learning to analyze poetry for its message and background. I’ve learned to use evidence from the text and reasoning to support my understanding.

Kiara Montalvo, Grade 10

I was looking at one of the plants that has been growing in our school garden for two years. I’ve learned that gardens need to be maintained, not just planted. I’ve also learned to stay focused and assume responsibility; seeing things grow calms me and has helped me grow, too!

Nailah Fils, Grade 11



We were solving problems in our Integrated Math class with Ms. Jackson. We’re learning how to solve equations with exponents: which part of the equation to tackle first and how to combine like terms to simplify the process. It’s not always what it seems at first!

Kobe Watson & Colin Hickson, Grade 12