President's Report Jessica Tang

“Fall” into Election Season!

For many, the changing colors of the leaves and crisp cool weather signal our transition into fall. For many others, these same signs are reminder that fall is also election season!

One of our strategic priorities over the last couple of years has been to strengthen our electoral and political engagement. Voting in elected leaders who support public education and labor unions has never felt so high stakes. On the federal level, there is a candidate running for President who wants to dismantle the Department of Education and undo Title 1 funding. At the State Board of Education, members appointed by the former Governor Baker continue to threaten receivership of the Boston Public Schools. Locally, we count our City Councilors to approve funding for our schools and for our contract. Who we elect—from federal to local elections—absolutely impacts what happens in our schools and communities.

That is why we are asking all our members to remember to vote for our endorsed candidates each year. These candidates have filled out our questionnaire, interviewed with our Committee on Political Education (COPE) members, and have been approved, by 2/3’s vote by our Executive Board and hundreds of members who attend our monthly meetings. We know we can count on our endorsed candidates when it comes to advocating for our schools and students as well as for our members, whether it is increasing the COLA base for our retirees, or whether it is getting the THRIVE Act passed.

It also means contributing to our COPE fund so that we can help our endorsed candidates win. We ask that teachers consider donating $2 per pay period and that Paras contribute $1, but really, anything helps. Thanks to the Citizens United Supreme Court decision, elections have become increasingly expensive, and that is why we have to step in to help candidates who can’t fund their own elections because they are working people, not millionaires or billionaires. This is why for the first time, we are setting up our own IE PAC, starting small, to help with priority candidates who need a little extra help.

In addition, we need more of our members to give just one or two hours in a week to help candidates door knock and phone back. Earning name recognition, sharing values and platforms, but also reminding people to get out and vote is important as well! We hope that you will consider joining the new BTU Electoral Action Team (the BEAT!) to help ensure that we can elect leaders who will build power with our educators and communities and fight for the schools and communities our students and educators deserve.

Bottom line, fall may be the season for apple picking and pumpkins, but it is also the season for spicy elections, and we need you and your support to ensure our electoral and legislative programs are successful!

Please contact our new political organizer Lee Nave lnave@btu.org or Political Director Johnny McInnis jmcinnis@btu.org to get involved and remember, when you feel that cool autumn breeze, it’s time to take political action.

We had a GREAT turnout for our Paraprofessional Informational Meeting/Resource Fair on October 19th!

See more photos on page 5.
Commentary
Cecil Carey
Why You Should Join the Solidarity Committee
When workers are under attack, what do we do? Stand up and fight back!

When I think of the word “solidarity” my mind usually goes to this chant. I love showing up to rallies, I love chanting until my voice is gone in class the next morning, and I love when unionists in our community show up for the BTU when we take action. For me, one of the most important aspects of being in a union is the way it allows, encourages, even demands us to make connections with other workers. Particularly as educators, it is imperative that we stand in solidarity with workers who are in the midst of a contract fight or public campaign. Why is this so important?

First, because all of our struggles are connected. We may be in different unions, but we’re part of the same movement. And don’t think the bosses aren’t looking at what one union was able to win when they sit down to negotiate with the next. It’s commonly known that whatever contract gains we make in the BTU are gains that other city workers, such as fire fighters or bus drivers, can more readily demand when they come to the table. And vice versa! Similarly, we’ve seen educators in Brookline, Cambridge, and beyond use the BTU’s contract wins at the negotiation table, and seen our union leaders show up in support. Recently, Vice President Erik Berg spoke about the issue of caseload limits for inclusion specialists at a Cambridge Education Association contract rally.

Second, because as educators, we have a uniquely important connection to our community. Every good-paying job that we help workers in Boston fight for is another good-paying job for our students and their families. Back in 2019, I was lucky enough to get to stand in solidarity with one of my students, a 12th-grader, when he and his Stop & Shop colleagues went on strike. One of the strongest ways we can combat the housing crisis and low pay faced by too many BPS students is to provide all the support we can to them, union-to-union. In my opinion, a stable home and a stocked fridge does more for a student’s learning than any school can. That’s why the BTU Executive Board voted to form the Solidarity committee this summer. The goal of this committee is to help coordinate BTU turnout in solidarity actions in the Greater Boston area in consultation with BTU staff and elected leaders. So far, we’ve helped the BTU show up for contract actions:

• In Newton and Somerville with the Teamsters
• In Boston with striking writers and actors in SAG-AFTRA

Letter to the Editor
Teachers Turning the Page

During my thirty years as a school teacher in Roxbury, MA; a student and later professor of reading and culture at three graduate schools in the Boston area; as a BPS principal of K-6 schools; and as a lifelong student of teaching and learning I have gained some insights that I would like to share with you:

As teachers of young emerging readers we must:

• Observe their social and academic interactions in the classroom. How do they behave with one another? What books do they choose? What do they like to do? Precise reference and interpret those observations (Habits of mind. The teachers and the students are both learners.)

• Visit the student’s homes to create a connection between home and school (linking self, family and society). Try to understand their worlds from their own experiences.

• Use the interpretations (data) to teach children from what they know. The data that enriches learning is specific, one size doesn’t fit all. The data also shows that learning how to read or learn content, mainly rests on children’s cultural, historical, and biological factors. Reading/Writing depends on language. Language depends on social negotiation, it is innately collaborative. If a teacher spends more time talking with the students about a book, she or he will be building content knowledge that is crucial for learning, especially reading/writing and analyzing.

That was so clear to me that language becomes an insurmountable barrier which leads to failure. In a quest to find the magic solution to the literacy conundrum, districts change the curriculum very frequently, then, if the new curriculum is phonics based, those children who could use language to support their learning may learned some phonics but will lag on the language proficiency to support their acquisition of reading/writing skills.

This is where the stubborn achievement gap resides. It feeds itself from the read-of-Taught-Junk alternative of principals with new approaches, teachers pushed to change again without a clear understanding of the what and why, and a revolving door of literacy experts telling them how to do it.

This is what I observed in my 30 years in the district.

Olga Prechon
Retired teacher and principal

A Notice to Membership
At the November Membership Meeting, the membership will vote on a proposed bylaw change, which would revise the bylaws to add a new provision as follows:

“The Executive Board, by two thirds vote, may sanction any BTU member who is elected to a leadership position who is found after investigation to have violated the AFT/ BTU Code of Conduct or BTU Non Harassment policy. Sanctions may include but are not limited to removal from office, position or from the Executive Board.”

Health and Welfare Information
The Board of Trustees of your Health and Welfare Fund provides you with a generous and valuable package of benefits. Your health and well-being are important to us, and that’s why the Fund’s health and welfare benefits were designed to supplement your City of Boston medical coverage. These benefits are provided by the Boston Teachers Union Health and Welfare Fund and are funded by contributions from The Boston Public Schools.

Health & Welfare Fund Office Hours
Regular Hours:
Monday-Friday 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Summer Hours:
Monday-Friday 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM
EyeCare Center Hours
Regular Hours:
Monday-Thursday 9:00 AM – 8:00 PM
Friday-Saturday 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Summer Hours:
Monday-Thursday 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Phone Numbers:
617-288-0500 – Teachers
617-288-5540 – Eyecare Center
617-288-0522

Dental Benefit
Eye Care Benefits
Hospitalization
Income Supplement Benefit
Hearing Aid Benefit
Funeral Expense Benefit
Medic Alert Benefit
PrePaid Legal Services
Financial Wellness – Countrywide Financial

“Teachers Only”
The Fund Office also handles:
COBRA within 18-24 months
Online COBRA Payments Accepted

Health & Welfare Fund Fax:
617-288-0522

In Memoriam
Mary Jane Drinkwater

DRINKWATER, Mary Jane of Milton, MA, passed away on October 3, 2023 after a long and very courageous fight against Melanoma. She was born March 7, 1943 to parents, Leo Francis Drinkwater and Anne McCarthy Drinkwater. Mary Jane, or Jane as her family and friends called her, was a graduate of Emmanuel College, earned a master’s degree, and then later on, a Juris Prudence Doctorate from New England College of Law. Shortly after graduation from law school, Jane passed the Bar Exam and was admitted to the Massachusetts Bar. In the early days of her career, Jane was a highly regarded elementary school teacher in the Boston Public School System, primarily in the Roxbury area. She was a devoted teacher with high expectations for her pupils and one who earned their respect because as one young man said, “she was always fair.” Gradually, Jane moved on to become a school psychologist, focusing on students with special needs, in particular those with visual impairments. Jane brought both experience as a classroom teacher and her psychology background to manage these new challenges very successfully and in 1993 was awarded School Psychologist of the Year by the Boston Public School System.

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Myuw AWAR WITHEURIE as part of an ongoing stand-up strike at a Sallins factory.
In Newton with the Newton Education Association as they fight for a new contract.
We’re in the process of creating this new committee and improving the way the BTU goes about turn out. The work of this committee will be in helping spread the word, coordinating logistics, and most importantly, showing up! If you’re interested in getting involved, fill out the interest form available at this link: https://www.cruyvtu.org or reach out to the author (curry@btu.org) or Director of Organizing Natalia Cuadra-Saez (nycuadraaez@btu.org)
**Know Your Rights**

Caren Carew

**Where is the Training to Empower School Site Council Members**

Get empowered – knowledge is power! The Boston Union Teacher will be holding the following dates for SSC training that all elected (BTU, administration, parents and high school students) SSC members and BTU Reps as well as any BTU member are invited and encouraged to attend. This is a great opportunity that brings SSC members from attendees to active informed participants. Workshops will be virtual on Zoom from 5:30-7:00 pm. Please RSVP to register – ccarew@btu.org. The flyer link will be in the BTU e-bulletin. Each workshop is held twice. Stay tuned as additional sessions will be held later in the school year.

- **SSC 101 – SSC Intro overview:** November 2nd and repeated November 13th.
- **SSC 102 – Budget Basics:** December 11th and repeated December 18th.
- **SSC 106 – Personnel Subcommission:** November 20th and repeated January 22nd.

**What is considered ‘corporal punishment’ in BPS?**

Referring to Superintendent’s Circular LGL-20, ‘Corporal Punishment’.

Corporal punishment includes but is not limited to the following:

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

Staff may restrain only in order to protect students, other persons or themselves from an assault and may only use such force as is reasonably necessary to repel such an attack.

The circular states, “…the use of corporal punishment is strictly forbidden by BPS Committee policy as well as by Massachusetts State Law G.L.c. 71. 13C(G).”

**What should I do if a student makes suicidal statements, gestures, or actions?**

The BPS Superintendent’s Circular concerning ‘Suicide Prevention and Intervention,’ details a precise set of policy guidelines, prevention and intervention strategies which must be followed precisely by all staff members of the school. While the responsibility of the school administrator to ‘provide leadership in addressing the issues of suicide prevention and intervention,’ all staff must ‘knowledgable about the purpose, members and process for making referrals to the Department of Mental Health Support Team (DMHST).’ and be ‘familiar with suicide symptoms and procedures should be followed along with filing a 31A, and notify Superintendent’s Office. If parent can’t be contacted within 2 hours, DSS should be contacted and under no circumstances should a student in such a situation be allowed to go home. All students who express/suicide symptoms should be referred to external agencies with trained and experienced suicide prevention staff.

All students returning to school after a period of absence are required to bring notes signed by parents. Students returning after emergency suicide intervention treatment should bring documentation from medical/mental health provider indicating that student is able and safe to return to school. All returning students should first report to school nurse or Principal who will review medical letter and file it as part of students’ confidential mental health records. An accompaniment staff to homework is crucial. In a sensitive/confidential manner, inform Principal/guidance/SSC of students return, and bring case to SST for review and assignment by Principal of an internal liaison to monitor re-entry and serve as person staff reports re-occurring warning signs to If a student is unable to return to school due to being unable to receive documentation to do so to medical/mental health provider indicating that student is able and safe to return to school. If a student is unable to return to school due to being unable to receive documentation to do so to medical/mental health provider indicating that student is able and safe to return to school. If a student is unable to return to school due to being unable to receive documentation to do so to medical/mental health provider indicating that student is able and safe to return to school.

**What are the newly negotiated class sizes?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Column 1: Class size for schools with an overall student population as of 10/1 with 6.5% or fewer students on IEPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K1</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K2 Grade 1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3-5</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 6-8</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9-12</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Room</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What do I do if I’m injured on the job?**

Even if you feel as if your injury is relatively minor, one never knows if there may be complications later, so please immediately fill out a City of Boston – Workers’ Compensation accident report same to the building administrator in a timely fashion.

If an act of self-abuse or destruction occurs, emergency medical treatment is the primary need. The accident should be reported by all staff persons to contact the Principal and school nurse, not leave the person alone, remove anything that may be used to harm themselves, and initiate first aid if possible. The Principal must follow Superintendent’s Circular on medical emergency procedures and contact the Principal’s office and parent, and complete reports. The nurse is required to initiate medical procedures. Accompany student to hospital, until school principal or as long as possible, inform principal of student’s condition as well as when the nurse is leaving the hospital.

**How do I report a student’s injury?**

- If you are with the student, fill out the accident form mentioned above for you
- If student is able and safe to return to school. All students returning to school after a period of absence are required to bring notes signed by parents. Students returning after emergency suicide intervention treatment should bring documentation from medical/mental health provider indicating that student is able and safe to return to school. All returning students should first report to school nurse or Principal who will review medical letter and file it as part of students’ confidential mental health records. An accompaniment staff to homework is crucial. In a sensitive/confidential manner, inform Principal/guidance/SSC of students return, and bring case to SST for review and assignment by Principal of an internal liaison to monitor re-entry and serve as person staff reports re-occurring warning signs to If a student is unable to return to school due to being unable to receive documentation to do so to medical/mental health provider indicating that student is able and safe to return to school. If a student is unable to return to school due to being unable to receive documentation to do so to medical/mental health provider indicating that student is able and safe to return to school. If a student is unable to return to school due to being unable to receive documentation to do so to medical/mental health provider indicating that student is able and safe to return to school.

**When writing: Boston Union Teacher does not necessarily represent the views of the Boston Teachers’ Union, or those of its members.”**

**Deadline:** The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue of the Boston Union Teacher is December 20th. All copy should be e-mailed to carol@btu.org and guidelines@btu.org. This is where the copy should be e-mailed to carol@btu.org and guidelines@btu.org.

**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.
By Brendan Deady, BTU Communication Assistant

Months of collaboration between the Boston Teachers Union, The Massachusetts Education Alliance, AFTMA, BPS, students, parents and educators from across the state coalesced into a powerful collective voice calling for improvement to the state education system at the statehouse last month.

During more than eight hours of testimony in support of the Thrive Act before the Joint Committee on Education, BTU members and community partners provided detailed first-person accounts of how the threat of state receivership and the MCAS graduation requirement has dismantled school communities, marginalized students and shackled teachers to a narrow test-focused curriculum.

The Thrive Act is a bill that the BTU and its education justice partners are making a legislative priority moving forward. The bill would replace the MCAS graduation requirement with an evaluation system created with local community input that focuses on a student’s grasp of coursework material. The bill would also end the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (DESE) ability to take over individual schools and entire school districts to implement failed reform policies.

At this time there are three school districts in receivership: Southbridge, Holyoke and Lawrence. All three districts, despite the state’s efforts, remain in the bottom 10 percent of school performance based on DESE’s current evaluation system which heavily weighs raw MCAS test scores. DESE has used receivership as a threat to pressure school districts to implement vague policies to overcome deeply entrenched challenges along condensed timelines—a tactic that led to an improvement plan agreement between the Wu administration and DESE last summer.

“School receivership has become a cudgel the state wields to push ill-defined policies along unrealistic timelines that don’t reflect the character or true needs or solutions of the communities they’re supposed to support. To be clear, our educators want accountability and want to know that they are having a successful impact on our students. However, the current system is not doing that,” President Jessica Tang testified.

Two Boston Public Schools are under state control: the Paul A. Dever Elementary School and the Up Holland Academy. Nikita DeBarros is an Occupational Therapist at the Up Holland Academy and testified before the Committee that the working conditions imposed within a school under receivership— which override many of the rights all educators experience under the BTU contract— have significantly damaged the school community.

“I work with all grade levels and interact with dozens of staff members on a weekly basis and, year after year, I have watched talented, dedicated educators make the difficult decision to leave our school community— not because they want to, but because they cannot sustain working 45-50 hour weeks while making significantly less money than what they would at a school down the street,” DeBarros testified.

Bailey Morse, a first-year teacher at Dever Elementary, testified that receivership silences teachers who want to advocate for a better environment for students or who have experienced legitimate workplace abuses. Morse also added that because of the payscale in place at those schools, it deters teachers from continuing their own education.

“I repeat, the teachers at our school, responsible for educating future generations, will not be compensated for becoming more educated, more well-rounded teachers,” Morse testified.

The state has targeted high-poverty districts that have a large number of students of color for receivership, many of whom speak English as a second language and have complex learning needs. These students are evaluated with an MCAS test that they must take in English, resulting in skewed test scores that the state uses to justify disruptive policies that harm the students the state seeks to help. Multiple teachers at the hearing testified that under the current test-driven curriculum, children are being robbed of comprehensive curricula that reflects their lived experiences.

“[We need autonomy and the freedom to adapt our teaching methods to meet our students’ unique needs without the fear of administrative backlash],” Ibolya Toth, a BPS teacher, testified.

Under the Thrive Act, districts with low MCAS scores would be designated to receive increased financial and administrative support. The district would convene a committee of local stakeholders that would formulate an improvement plan informed by direct experience with the students in need. The plan must tackle the root causes of the school’s challenges, examine resource inequities, and include evidence-based programs, such as smaller classes, one-on-one tutoring, and community schools. Following a public hearing, the school committee would approve each plan before submitting it to DESE.

The State Education Committee will now vote on whether to report in favor of the bill, advancing towards a full consideration by the state House and Senate. Sixty-nine members of the House and 19 state senators have signed on as co-sponsors of the Thrive Act and if the Education Committee truly wants to pass legislation in the best interest of its constituents, it will advance this bill.
When I became a teacher, I learned an important rule by observing those around me: spend your sick days wisely, or not at all, and you’ll be able to take a year of paid time off when you have a baby.

I hoarded accordingly, went to work sometimes on days when I definitely should not have, and had over 300 sick days available to me when my partner and I found out that we were going to have a baby.

But when I went to investigate the parental leave policy, I realized that what I had understood to be a general rule did not, in fact, apply to me. That while birth-giving parents could access up to 18 months of leave using sick days, those parents who did not give birth were limited to the 12 weeks offered by the city. All of my hoarding, it would seem, had been for naught. Adding insult to injury, when communicating with HR about how to put in for leave, I was told that I needed to apply for “paternity” leave, since maternity and paternity were the only two options, and I was not the person giving birth. The policy, and its associated language, literally rendered my identity as a parent invisible.

Put simply, the previous parental leave created classes among parents. It assigned greatest value to parents giving birth, and communicated to everyone else—fathers in straight couples, queer and trans mothers and fathers, parents who came to parenting via adoption or surrogacy—that they mattered less. In straight, two parent families where both parents were BPS educators, the policy even went so far as to dictate which of those parents could be at home with their child during the first year of life—whether that is what the adults wanted, or not.

Which is why last year’s contract negotiations—which changed the policy to be one that clearly states that all parents are equal, regardless of how they come into parenting, and that they have access to the same 12 weeks of paid parental leave, and 12 months of leave that can be paid if you have the sick days to cover it—feels so radical to me. Through this new contract, my parenting, and the parenting of all of us who come to parenting without being the people to give birth, became visible and valued.

Because of the changed policy, I was able to be at home with my partner and our baby for the first five months of her life—from late November to late April—and again now, for the six weeks leading up to her first birthday. It meant that instead of running out the door to go to work every morning when she was just three months old, and consistent access to sleep was still out of reach, I got to return when we were sleeping better, when we were better at taking care of both ourselves and her, when we had all physically and emotionally recovered from the postpartum roller coaster.

It meant that, when you include summer break, I’ve been able to spend nearly nine of my daughter’s first 12 months of life strictly for the purposes of extending care—care to her, care to my partner, care to myself. I came into this new identity as mother.

It meant that my partner and I got to learn how to parent together, and make decisions together, instead of making independent decisions during the time we were caring for her, and then having to resolve discrepancies when together. We are stronger partners, and stronger parents, for having had this time.

It meant that we’ve been able to spend time with our families, and to help our baby build strong relationships with them, despite the fact that they don’t live in Boston.

It meant that we’ve all been present for her “first” – first solid foods, first words, first steps. Precious milestones that you only pass once in parenting a child.

We have a confident, secure, hilarious baby. People in our neighborhood know her by name because she says hi with such enthusiasm whenever we pass them on the street. When we go to the music class, or to the library, or to visit friends, and we set her down on the floor, she speeds away and doesn’t look back. Because she is fully attached. Because she has learned, during this year, that we are consistently here for her, and that if she goes away, we will still be here when she comes back.

And that consistent presence, in no small part, is thanks to the revised parental leave policy.
The Early Morning Zoom Meeting I Never Want to Miss: BPS/BU Dyslexia Working Group

By Katelyn DeLaRosa

Boston has a deep history of educational segregation. The busing crisis in 1974, which was almost 50 years ago now, drew national attention and is known as a major part of our history. However, segregation has been part of this system since its inception. But, are these moments behind us?

We may have been thinking about inclusive education backwards until recently. Previously, we have started with the WHAT. We have asked ourselves, "What are we trying to do in BPS? What is the goal of inclusive education?" The answer was very clear. Today, we are refocusing to include all students who have IEPs and who are multilingual learners into classes with their peers because the research says this approach works and all students (including those without disabilities and those who aren't multilingual learners) achieve at higher levels when the classroom is inclusive.

Answer awesome – this is a worthy and noble goal to work towards!

Then we started thinking about the HOW. Our new strategy is to zoom in on the HOW. We've been stuck on the HOW ever since.

The HOW needs to take into account staffing, space, transportation, IEPs, and so much else. We need to get it right and we need it done as soon as possible.

We can't pretend to not see the data that clearly shows that we continue to segregate students in BPS. Racial and language minority students are 3.13 times more likely to be identified with a communication disability and be placed in a substantially separate setting than their peers, and multilingual learners are 2.5 times more likely to be identified with a communication disability and be placed in a substantially separate setting.

There are no excuses for this. We can't operate like this anymore. Whether you fully experience the oppressive structures built long ago, consciously or otherwise, or you are just starting to pay attention, it is not just an initiative but instead is a purpose, a mission.

The train has left the station. Now it's up to us to make sure it stays on track. The disparities in programming, facilities, and resources between schools in White neighborhoods compared to schools in Black neighborhoods are stark. They are already fought against by prominent community leaders in the 1960s and 1970s leading up to the busing riots. However, today we are still seeing disparities in programming, facilities, and resources when we examine the demographics of students in schools by neighborhood and in the secondary school options we offer in Boston.

We also still see prominent leaders fighting against those disparities with little change. We can't operate like this anymore. How will we know when we are done?

We need to see the data that clearly shows that we continue to segregate students in BPS. Racial and language minority students are 3.13 times more likely to be identified with an emotional impairment and placed in a substantially separate setting than their peers, and multilingual learners are 2.5 times more likely to be identified with a communication disability and be placed in a substantially separate setting. There are no excuses for this.

Although we all have areas to improve and always will, I believe in Boston educators. We have seen the exodus from teaching that has taken place across the country in the past few years and yet, you are still here. It's awful that people were driven to leave a profession they prepared for and likely enjoyed very much at one time, but you are still here for a reason, a purpose, a mission – departments, schools, unions, classrooms, homes – together for the same WHY. A WHY that is for all of our students, especially the Black and Brown children and Multilingual Learners in Boston who deserve much more than what they have been given thus far, and to be included!

I know I am an optimist but I have also been around long enough to also be a realist. The timeline is ambitious, but this is not an all or nothing initiative. We will need to focus on progress, not perfection and continue to grow and learn. It will take all of us, school by school, class by class, student by student, we will get to a place better than where we started and will never give up on the goal.

This is the time and the opportunity to get it done and get it done right. We can get to a place where inclusive education is not an all or nothing initiative, but instead is the standard. Imagine the feeling of knowing your effort, your influence, and your contributions will always be considered as part of the history of education in Boston. That's what it gets to be, so let's do it right.
They marched, they protested, and they gathered detailed proof that the Boston Public Schools were racially separate and unequal. When a stubborn school committee failed to acknowledge the problem and provide remedies, parents and activists organized one-day boycotts, carpooling, and raised money for student transportation to more adequate schools. They even opened their own "Freedom School" to separate from the racial barriers to learning.

The Boston Teacher Union, BOSTON UNION TEACHER | November-December, 2023

They saw an excerpt from the recent PBS documentary, "The Boston Desegregation and Busing Initiative". They highlighted the narrative of "Before Busing." This is a much different narrative from the one that has dominated over the last fifty years, "said panelist Zeb Miletsky, a veteran reporter who formerly served as a Boston School Committee member and executive director of METCO.

One of their ventures, The New School for Children, was established when parents took their children out of the Gibson School in Dorchester, where a year-long substitute teacher, Jonathan Kozol, had been fired for teaching a poem by Langston Hughes. In his book "Death at an Early Age," Kozol said the firing had been triggered by a complaint from a single white parent.

 gluoria Lee, a panelist who had worked for METCO, had taken part in a "Freedom Day Stay Out" in 1964. At the forum, she spotlighted her place in history by displaying a class photo from The New School for Children.

When Janey saw the photo, she asked for a closer look – and saw a piece of her own history near the upper right corner: a little girl, crowned with an upright, voluminous Afro. She then showed the photo to the audience – as a documentation, a discovery, and a trophy.

Boston Desegregation and Busing Initiative will also be holding future forums on efforts to desegregate the schools. Dates will be announced in the BTU weekly bulletin.

To learn more about desegregation in the Boston Public Schools.

Check out this PBS documentary The Busing Battleground:

"On September 12, 1974, a police station was outside schools across Boston as Black and white students were bused for the first time between neighborhoods to comply with a federal court desegregation order. The cross-town busing was met with shocking violence, much of it directed at children: angry white protesters threw rocks at school buses carrying Black children and hurled racial epithets at the students as they walked into their new schools. The chaos and racist unrest would escalate and continue for years. Using eyewitness accounts, oral histories and news footage that hasn't been seen in decades, The Busing Battleground pulls back the curtain on the volatile effort to end school segregation, detailing the decades-long struggle for educational equity that preceded the crisis. It illustrates how civil rights battles had to be fought across the North as well as the South and reveals the class dimensions of the desegregation saga, exploring how the neighborhoods most impacted by the court's order were the poorest in the city..."

Read: Common Ground, a Pulitzer Prize winning report of Desegregation in BPS as seen through the lives of three families, by J. Anthony Lukas, W. Amstrong.

This article was first published by the Dorchester Reporter. It is re-printed here with the permission of The Reporter and the author, Chris Lovett.
Roger Clap Elementary School

Surrounded by two-family houses, the Roger Clap Elementary School is located in a northeast corner of Dorchester called the “Polish Triangle.” Built in 1896, it is one of the oldest schools in the city and serves 130 students in grades K-6 this year.

On either side of the arched entrance to the school are raised beds of vegetables planted by students in Dean Martin’s science classes. Potted plants, a display of student artwork and a colorful welcome banner overhead greet visitors in the front hallway. In the K2 classroom, Ulana Ainsworth is helping students become familiar with the lined lapboards that will be used for writing letters and words.

The Clap is a “single-strand” school and was in the first cohort of full-inclusion schools. Four years ago principal Emma Fialka-Feldman used Eser funds to help make sure that each classroom had the support of 2-3 educators. In the first grade classroom, for example, children are learning to tap out letters and put them together to make words, working in three small groups led by teacher Peyton Costa, paraprofessional Gabby Boyd, and learning specialist Farah Wong.

When fifth graders come into their classroom from specialists with a recurring interpersonal issue, Jennifer Texeira checks in with her colleagues before directing everyone to join her on the rug for an “RJ” circle to process the conflict. Using a stuffed “wild thing” as a talking piece, each student has an opportunity to share their feelings and what they thought would “repair the harm” done.

Art teacher (and school historian) Connie Cummings introduces her third graders to “organic” and “inorganic” shapes before having them create collages inspired by Henri Matisse. When asked what others might learn from the Clap, she said community partnerships provide exceptional support and told me about a Parent Mentor Program offered by St. Stephen’s Church, which trains and pays parents to work 1:1 or in small groups with students in several classrooms. What resources are available in YOUR school’s community?

By Amika Kemmler Ernst, Ed.D.