BTU Back to School Book Fair A Great Learning Experience

See pages 8-13

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President's Report Erik Berg

Defending Democracy is a Job For All of Us!



Erik Berg
BTU President

This summer, our nation celebrated our 250th birthday. 250 years of a government ***"of the people, by the people, and for the people."*** It is a landmark achievement of which we should all be proud. At the same time, our democratic experiment has never been perfect, and much remains to be done to strengthen it. That starts with voting, and expressing our voice on who should lead our community, our state, and our nation.

On November 3rd, (or before that, if you choose to vote by mail or early in-person voting), please make sure that you fulfill your duty as an American citizen, and exercise your right to vote for your preferred candidates. You will also have the opportunity to weigh in on nine (9) important ballot questions which will shape Massachusetts laws. Please take the time now to educate yourself about the candidates and ballot questions, which can be found below or on our BTU website at *www.btu.org*.

Please make a plan now to vote. If you will vote by mail, be sure to request your mail ballot now. If you will vote in person, be sure you make a plan so that you have time to exercise your right on election day or during early voting. And finally, please talk about the election with friends and family. Mid-term elections can often creep up on voters, and turnout is generally lighter than in a presidential election year. In Massachusetts, the dearth of contested elections can also limit turnout, so it is all the more important to let your colleagues and friends know about the important ballot questions that will be on the ballot this year.

But unfortunately, given the political landscape of our nation today, voting may be only the first step in the process this year. We have seen a federal administration which has made every effort to undermine the democratic process through intimidation, disinformation, attacks on voting lists and mail ballots, and which tried a violent insurrection in 2021 when an election did not go their way. It is up to us to ensure that the results of the 2026 election are honored.

The labor movement is leading the way in protecting American democracy, and the AFT is leading the way in labor with its Democracy Defenders program. Democracy Defenders are AFT members who commit to helping voters get the information, support and protection they need to cast their ballots and have them counted. We urge you to sign up as a democracy defender at *www.aft.org* and take part. Here in Boston, the BTU is working with a coalition of unions to be sure we are prepared to step up and defend our democracy if it is threatened, so be sure to stay abreast of BTU news through the weekly bulletin after the election so that you can take part in any action.

Solidarity, the watchword of the labor movement, is also essential to maintaining a democracy, and we know that when we are united, we are stronger, whether as workers or as citizens!

BTU ENDORSED CANDIDATES

The BTU has endorsed the following candidates for the November 3rd Election:

Incumbents:
Senator Edward Markey, U.S. Senate
Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley, 7th Congressional District
Senator Mike Brady, Plymouth and Norfolk District
Senator Lydia Edwards, 3rd Suffolk District
Senator Liz Miranda, 2nd Suffolk District
State Representative Michelle Badger, 1st Plymouth District
State Representative Mike Connolly, 26th Middlesex District
State Representative Marjorie Decker, 25th Middlesex District
State Representative Jim Hawkins, 2nd Bristol District
State Representative Russell Holmes, 6th Suffolk District
State Representative Bill MacGregor, 10th Suffolk District
State Representative Samantha Montano, 15th Suffolk District
State Representative Steve Ultrino, 33rd Middlesex District
State Representative Tommy Vitolo, 15th Norfolk District
State Representative Christopher Worrell, 5th Suffolk District

Non-Incumbents:
State Representative Erika Uyterhoeven
for 2nd Middlesex District State Senator
Persis Yu for Norfolk and Suffolk District State Senator
Ben Ewen-Campen for 27th Middlesex District State Representative

Remember to Vote ★ November 3rd
Early Voting ★ October 17th-30th

The BTU has endorsed th following Ballot Questions:

Ballot Questions:

Question 2: *Collective Bargaining for Committee for Public Council Services Employees (CPCSE)*
Vote YES to enable public defenders to collectively bargain.

Question 3: *State Primary Elections*
Vote NO to prevent private equity billionaires from rigging our elections in their favor.

Question 4: *Election Day Registration*
Vote YES to enable voters to register and update registration on Election Day.

Question 5: *State Revenue Limit & Rebate*
Vote NO to protect our state's ability to invest in health care, transportation, and public education.

Question 9: *Firearms Regulation*
Vote YES to uphold the legislation, An Act Modernizing Firearm Laws (H4885) This will protect our state's landmark gun safety laws.

Commentary Jennifer Roberts Keddy, Bates Elementary School

Tech Equity in the Boston Public Schools

This year BPS has a new policy regarding the 1:1 Chromebooks in our classrooms. They will no longer repair or replace Chromebooks when they break or inevitably break down. The devices we have now will have to get us through this school year at least. These devices are already at the end of their lifespans, and the district does not intend to replenish this inventory with the next generation of machines as they have done in the past. The district's message to our Tech Coordinators and school leaders is that 1:1 Chromebooks are a thing of the past, no matter the grade level or level of need.

This new policy proved particularly frustrating as we prepared to administer the beginning-of-year MAP assessments mandated by the district. These tests require 1:1 Chromebooks in Grade 3 and up. We *were* reassured in June that the devices we submitted for repair would be returned by the start of the school year. They were not returned in time for beginning-of-year testing, and our Tech Coordinator was told that "they don't know when we will have them back." Meanwhile, testing in my 5th Grade classes had to be administered with a shortage of devices. We made do, but the concern remains that as our Chromebook inventory dwindles, devices that are shared will likely break down even sooner than they would otherwise.

Under this plan, by the time we prepare to administer MCAS in the Spring, it is extremely unlikely that our classes will have enough Chromebooks without some impressive logistical gymnastics. And this effort will have to be performed by school leaders and the teachers themselves, not the officials behind this ill-conceived policy.

Furthermore, the skills the students must demonstrate on these mandated tests using a computer must also be practiced using a computer. To achieve mastery, these skills must be learned systematically and practiced frequently. Without 1:1 Chromebooks, teachers are unnecessarily limited in how they deliver the Tier 1 instruction that would lead students to develop these skills. Removing these tools for learning and practice while requiring them for testing is nothing less than setting our students up for failure. Later, our schools will be compared to others that do provide the necessary resources for success, and the blame will fall on us, the teachers, instead of on those who failed to provide us with resources needed to do our jobs.

Tech Inequity and Universal Design for Learning

While I am frustrated by the additional hoops I will have to jump through as a teacher to help my students feel ready for stressful standardized tests, I am more concerned with how this Chromebook policy affects my ability to implement Universal Design for Learning in my 5th grade classroom. Since my school began its roll-up to full Inclusion in 2014, my colleagues and I have attended district-required trainings in the basics of UDL no fewer than three times. In our teaching practice, most of us have explored what it means to fully embrace UDL in our classrooms much more deeply. Each year, we do more and more to establish our classrooms as spaces that offer Multiple Means of Engagement, Representation, and Expression in every lesson and routine we teach. Not all of these Multiple Means require computer technology, but some of them certainly do.

As an Inclusion teacher, each year I have several students with Individualized Learning Plans that detail certain accommodations and modifications designed to provide these students with access to the grade-level general curriculum. Some of these accommodations and modifications require the use of a computer. For example, text-to-speech or audiobooks allow students with reading disabilities to listen to a core text, and speech-to-text or audio recordings allow students to express what they have learned when writing fluency remains a challenge. At the same time, some students with and without disabilities have gaps in foundational skills that can be addressed by individualized skill-building applications, such as Lexia in ELA, that address these gaps and accelerate learning for those whose skills are on grade level. The "Universal" in Universal Design for Learning means that these tools must be made available to *all* students who could benefit from them, whether they have a diagnosed disability or not.

In fact, my biggest takeaway from several rounds of UDL training and my own independent study of its principles is the importance of student choice and agency in selecting among the tools, strategies, and supports that UDL provides, regardless of disability status. A scarcity of devices deprives students of their agency in the classroom.

Furthermore, in a UDL classroom, a Chromebook is so much more than a test-taking platform or a foundational skill-building interface. In a UDL classroom, a Chromebook is a key that unlocks a child's knowledge-building and creativity. My 5th and 6th grade students use their Chromebooks to write and revise essays and narratives, sometimes using speech-to-text while their encoding skills continue to develop. They also use them to create presentations explaining their research on topics such as the consequences of fossil fuel consumption or the impact of athletes on social justice activism. They create video or audio book reviews that document a year of reading and inspire others to read the books they are most likely to enjoy. Some students create animations or games that demonstrate their understanding of complex topics in formats that invite peers to engage in these topics as well. There is no limit to the means of expression students can discover when they open their Chromebooks. Denying this access limits their expression of what they have learned, and it limits their engagement in sharing what they've learned with the wider world.

In my UDL classroom, we do not use Chromebooks all class every class. Not even close. We read paper books, we take notes on paper note-catchers, we engage in face-to-face discussions in groups of all sizes, and we each keep

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BTU BOSTON TEACHERS UNION
FIGHTING FOR THE SCHOOLS OUR STUDENTS DESERVE
AFT LOCAL 66 • AFL-CIO



RETIREMENT PLANNING SEMINAR

FOR TEACHERS & PARAPROFESSIONALS

OCTOBER 22, 2026
3:30PM-6:30PM

BOSTON TEACHERS UNION
180 MT VERNON ST
DORCHESTER MA 02125

KAREN CROSS
SECRETARY-TREASURER
PREPAID LEGAL TRUSTEE
CITY OF BOSTON RETIREMENT SYSTEM, TRUSTEE

COLLEEN HART
PARA/ABA/SUB FIELD REPRESENTATIVE, BTU

Retirement & Benefits Q&A — Agenda

3:30-5:00PM - Members set up future appointments with the Retirement System

5:00-5:30PM - General overview session with important updates

5:30-6:00PM - Health Insurance and Medicare Q&A

6:00-6:30PM - CHOOSE YOUR WORKSHOP:
WORKSHOP 1 - FOR ACTIVE TEACHERS: - Q&A AND UPDATES ON R+

WORKSHOP 2 - FOR ACTIVE PARAS, ABAS & SUBS - Q&A AND UPDATES

Workshop 3 - FOR ALREADY RETIRED -Join RTC and Understand DELTA DENTAL & OTHER UPDATES

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

Know Your Rights Caren Carew

When Are School Site Council Governing Board Elections and Meetings Held?



Caren Carew
BTU Secondary
Field Representative

The School Site Council (SSC) or 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 31****."* 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, high school students and school administrators all of whom are encouraged to attend.

SSC Training Schedule SY 2026-27 all held on Zoom:

SSC 101: School Site Council Basics: Monday, October 19 repeated Monday, October 26; 5:30-7:00 pm.

SSC 106: Personnel Subcommittee: Monday, November 16 repeated Monday, November 30 repeated Monday, February 1, 2027 repeated Monday, March 1 repeated Monday, March 6; 5:30-7:00 pm.

SSC 102: Budget Basics: Monday, December 7 repeated Mon., December 14; 5:30-7:00 pm.

To register or for more info contact ccarew@btu.org.

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

The contract language has the following language: *"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 can be tracked with your access to them rather than being submitted into the seemingly 'black hole' of non-response.

How many personal days do teachers get and how do we take them?

Generally, teachers are entitled to four (4) personal days per school year. There are specific provisions for bereavement in addition to these days. Requests to take a personal day should be submitted to the building administrator as early as possible prior to the day requested off. Each school may have developed a written/on-line form. Except at the discretion of the building administrator (such as a school emergency), not more than 5% of teachers are eligible for a personal day at one time. No teacher may take a personal day on both the day before and the day after a school break/ vacation, including the Thanksgiving recess. Personal days not used each year are rolled into your accumulated sick days in the following SY.

How much P and D time do Secondary- grades 6-12 teachers receive?

All Secondary teachers (contractually defined as teachers of grades 6-12) in "traditional schools" must be scheduled for a minimum of 240 minutes for planning and development (P and D) per week. The contract reads, [Secondary] "Teachers will have planning and development time each day and will be scheduled in blocks/ periods of continuous time that are no less than 40 minutes in duration." P and Ds cannot be chopped up or segmented into smaller aggregates of time. Some secondary teachers are scheduled for 40 minutes 5 days a week, which is 40 minutes a week less than the minimum amount mandated in the collective bargaining agreement/ contract. This violation should be immediately grieved.

If a teacher unavoidably loses a P and D period due to coverage issues and the like, the administration should make every effort to free them up on their administrative period or on another agreed upon time. If the teacher does not receive the time off, they must keep good records of when, date and duration of the missed P and D and submit this info to the school secretary for inclusion for compensation on the "Class Coverage" form. This form is to be submitted twice a year for the reporting times to BPS Payroll Department, Bolling Building, 2300 Washington St. 4floor. If you need a copy of said document, the BPS Payroll Department will fax it to you.

If you lose a P and D period due to being deprived of same through administrative directive, and are not given another period during that day in lieu of the originally scheduled P and D period or if a SPED teacher-SEIMS period(s), please keep very good notes of the date, and length of period your missed PandD was in order to submit accurate records on the afore mentioned form. Prior to the submission date listed on the form, please make a copy of your completed form and pass both forms in to your school secretary, having the secretary date and initial/sign one copy confirming receipt of said document which you will take back as reference if needed to keep in your personal/ home file. The secretary then would obtain the school administrator's signature and submit the other copy to the BPS Payroll Dept. This way, if, by chance, the form never is submitted by your school to the Payroll Dept., you have an exact copy with the proof (secretary's signature / date) that it was submitted and received at your school in a timely fashion. This will be important if a grievance has to be filed due to the potential lack of compliance of your school in following through with the process of submission of the form to the Payroll Department in order for you to receive your earned compensation These forms should be submitted and are paid out twice per SY in January and in June **PRIOR to the end of the SY.** Coverage is paid by the number of periods (not days or hours) that the teacher covered.

Do I have to accept an intern or student teacher?

No. The contract clearly states, *"Any teacher requested to accept a trainee shall have at least one week's advance notice, and may refuse." If a teacher does become a cooperating teacher, the contract outlines the following. "Each cooperating teacher shall be given two days of leave with pay, without loss of benefits. Such days shall be taken as mutually agreed upon by the teacher and the administrative head during the last two weeks of the student-teacher training period. In cases of conflict, seniority shall prevail in the selection of days."*

This coverage was designed to be given by having the student teacher cover for the days so that it is a no cost item for the BPS. If a cooperating teacher does not arrange for the coverage while the student teacher is still in the classroom, the cooperating teacher loses the benefit. It's a use it or lose it scenario.

As an itinerate teacher, do I get a desk?

Yes. The contract language mandates, *"All teachers shall have an exclusive working desk in one of the rooms that they use."* If you are a teacher who must travel between rooms, in at least one of the rooms you teach in, you must be provided with a desk that is yours alone in good repair for your exclusive use. If this is not the case, please grieve it immediately.

When is the syllabus due and what must it include?

The contract details, "*In September of each year all teachers shall prepare a brief outline or syllabus (one to three pages) which includes: the student learning objectives for the year, the curriculum materials they plan to cover, and any student learning projects which students are expected to produce during the school year. The outline may be supplemented with information about the amount of time students are expected to spend on homework; student attendance requirements; what students are expected to bring to class (or not bring to class); and any other information that the teacher deems appropriate to help parents understand what is expected of students. Teachers shall not be required to repeat any information which is distributed by the school to all parents, e.g. code of discipline, homework policy, and school handbook. Two copies of this outline or syllabus shall be given to parents at the first parent teacher meeting of the school year. One copy must be signed by the parent and returned to the teacher indicating the parents understanding of*

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Boston Union Teacher

Boston Teachers Union, AFT Local 66, AFL-CIO

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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.

All submissions should be sent to both aslater@btu.org and ccarey@btu.org for consideration.

If you have questions, complaints or compliments about our content or feel that there has been an error or misprint in the paper, our policy dictates that the member submit a message via email to aslater@btu.org and ccarey@btu.org.

Queries will receive a reply within ten (10) business days. **The editors reserve the right to approve or reject submissions.**

DEADLINE:
The deadline is the Monday following each month's BTU membership meeting.

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Literacy is the Law, Now, Let's Teach Teachers How to Swim

By Jillian Geraghty

The excitement of starting a new school year is something comparable to midnight on New Year's. A space full of hope, joy, and reflection. As we begin to launch this new school year, I can't help but think back to the summer of 2017. I had walked into a brand new school for the upcoming year. It was a new grade, new community, new everything. Upon entering my room, I was handed three texts and told, "these are the books we read, just connect them to the standards. You gotta sink or swim." Our school had provided educators with complete autonomy of instructional materials, and reported in the bottom fourth percentile in the state.

Early in the year, it became very obvious that I was sinking with Nico. I had been asked to report students' reading levels from a now debunked reading assessment, that supported students using best guesses when they became stuck on a word, among two other cueing systems that guided students to look around the word for answers. Nico began reading to me a book about a neighborhood getting a new carousel filled with ponies. He read:

"I hop the ponds" said Ben.

"I hop air wit ponds."

When it came time to recall what he had read, Nico simply looked at me and said, "what is with these ponds?"

This is a student who had been in our school for years, was close to 9 and could not read. I knew that students who were not reading at grade level by fourth grade were four times more likely to drop out of high school. Nico could not read a first grade text. Something was missing yet my grade-level standards didn't explain this.

Upon digging, I learned that Nico was not alone: just 4 out of 10 fourth graders in my state could read proficiently. I began researching theories and practice, participated in graduate courses focused on struggling readers, and collaborated with colleagues to analyze data and chart student success. I did all of this in vacuum, because the materials I had did not focus on building foundational reading skills for students like Nico. Fortunately, my principal saw my passion for this work and created a content-specific coaching position. To put it another way, we invested in the implementation of best practices when it came to literacy.

This spring, Massachusetts passed the Right to Read law which requires that districts implement an evidence-based curriculum that includes all five parts of the Science of Reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. In addition to these high-quality materials (known as HQIM), our department of education must provide support in training teachers, paraprofessionals, and reading specialists in the K-3 space. There is a parallel between this statewide law and what happened at my school. Nico was my moment of realizing that we were missing something in how we taught our students to read. Now is the time to create the conditions for teachers across the Commonwealth to begin to swim.

In my coaching role, my sole purpose is to support our teachers' learning and their implementation of effective HQIM. Curriculum is a powerful bridge between state standards and daily classroom instruction. With these intentional shifts, including a coaching position, teacher training and support, and HQIM, our school grew from the fourth to the 41st percentile in five years.

This growth was not by accident. It required budget, staffing, teacher voice, as well as intentionally building capacity for adult learning. Now that the Right to Read act is law, the state must step up and do what our school did, by ensuring all educators have access to professional development and ongoing feedback.

In my practice, I ensure that all literacy teachers have meaningful professional learning opportunities to internalize the HQIM they use with their students. We utilize a backwards-design approach: Identify where a student like Nico needs to go, determine how the curriculum can guide us there, and pinpoint what each of our students need for us to do to thrive as a reader.

We also make sure that support lasts beyond a one-time session and is content-specific and ongoing. I'm on the ground supporting teachers daily in their implementation of HQIM. As a team, we continue to reflect on our students' goals and make adjustments in real time.

Massachusetts has a unique opportunity to make literacy the reality for every child, but we need to

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Commentary Michael J. Maguire, Boston Latin Academy

Op-Ed on College Affordability



Michael J. Maguire
Boston Latin Academy

Having two children in college, I read with interest the governor's announcement last winter of a pilot program for a three-year bachelor's degree. Massachusetts Governor **Maura Healey** said the new program will make college "more affordable for students … and help them succeed through graduation and beyond."

The regulations of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education require 120 credits for a bachelor's degree. The Board has given approval to Merrimack College and to Suffolk University to waive the above requirement. Suffolk will offer a 96 credit degree in Healthcare Administration and Innovation. The plan is for students to study for six semesters and Suffolk's plan is to leverage its proximity to major hospitals in order for its students to get jobs.

Merrimack's website explaining its three-year degree programs boasts "a more focused curriculum with fewer elective requirements and a stronger emphasis on applied learning and career readiness." Merrimack envisions that people who will take the new, faster degree program are already employed and need the degree for career advancement.

However, our statewide union affiliate, AFT Massachusetts, stands in opposition.

AFT-MA president **Jessica Tang** took to the airwaves and to social media this summer saying "This is a misguided opportunity to address the root issue here, which is why college has become so unaffordable." A Facebook post from AFT-MA calls for more "investing in higher education and making it accessible to all, not stripping out the heart of the college experience while tuition rates climb even further out of reach."

President Tang also posted on social media that she gave an interview to WHDH-TV "on behalf of our higher ed members." This got me thinking that part of our state union's objection to the pilot three-year degree program is likely that if it were to be widely replicated, then some jobs at the colleges and universities might be in peril. Let's be mindful that one of the locals in AFT-MA is the Suffolk Affiliated Faculty, local 6758.

This presents an interesting conundrum. I cannot blame my colleagues in higher education for being suspicious of job cuts. After all, we in elementary and secondary education often face the same situation when art or foreign languages are on the chopping block.

The problem is that the cost of college is already out of reach for many of our BTU members. We in Local 66 spend our lives preparing students for college, only to have our own children face impossible financial choices. Many of us are *still* paying off college loans. And with "raises" not keeping up with inflation, saving one year's worth of college tuition is a godsend.

Moreover, we who teach in high school tell our students that if they do well on their AP exams, then they can save on college tuition. It is not unheard of for some of our BPS graduates to enter college with enough credits to skip freshman year, resulting in a three-year college experience.

So on the one hand, we have AFT-MA protecting the jobs of college professors and on the other hand, we have many AFT-MA high school AP teachers preparing their students to be able to skip a year of college. Frankly, our state union needs to have a long, internal debate on this situation.

President Tang is certainly not wrong in pointing out that college is too expensive and that the state and federal governments need to work to lower the cost. Good luck to all of us with the current administration in Washington, DC. Lowering the cost of college should be a bipartisan issue, but I am not holding my breath.

In Massachusetts, we have Democrats in firm control of the House, Senate, and the Corner Office. Even when we had Republican governors, the legislature held a veto proof majority. Yet the cost of public higher education remains high.

Since 1990, the cost of MA public college (tuition and fees) has increased by over 400% whereas the average teacher's pay has increased by well under 200%. This doubling of cost does not take into account living on campus where food and lodging rates have truly spiked, nor does it include the cost of computers and related supplies. Again, this is for Massachusetts public colleges and universities over which our legislature has authority.

So if the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts stands against the three-year bachelor's degree pilot program, then it – which includes we – must convince not only politicians (in the state and federal levels) but also colleges themselves to lower the cost of higher education. The revenue from the millionaire's tax, the Mass State Lottery proceeds, the P.I.L.O.T. (payment in lieu of taxes) program, and/or the marijuana tax could be used to lower the cost of education for residents of Massachusetts.

A litmus test is often a poor way to choose our elected leaders, but shouldn't lowering the cost of college be very high on our union's priority list? Or will we continue to endorse – and support – politicians who allow college to become more and more unaffordable?

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

(Michael J. Maguire teaches Latin and Ancient Greek at Boston Latin Academy.)

Know Your Rights…

continued from page 3

the curriculum and expectations and agreeing to cooperate with the teacher in meeting the educational objectives set for the year. Parents who do not attend the meeting shall have copies mailed to them by the principal at School Department expense with a stamped return envelope to return the signed copy to the school. The school will include along with the outline or syllabus given to parents each September a schedule of times that the teachers are available to meet with parents for an individual conference about their children."

What is the policy on scheduling individual parent/teacher conferences?

According to the collective bargaining agreement, better known as 'the contract'; *"Individual parent/teacher conferences shall be held at the school at a time that is mutually agreed upon by the parent and the teacher. If a parent is unable to come to a conference at the school, the teacher/parent conference regarding the child's school performance shall be conducted by telephone."*

I Found Treasure in St. John's College Summer Program

By David Barry

About eight years ago, I discovered a gem of a summer enrichment program at St. John's College in Santa Fe, New Mexico, called ***Summer Classics.*** It's been a treasure for me and I wanted to share it. I've been back every summer since (except COVID) and have found it to be life-changing. For a week at a time, the university's professors (tutors) lead discussion based seminars on everything from the humanities, to food, wine, film and this year a walking exploration of Santa Fe. That's two hours a day, and the rest of the time is free for hikes, exploring Santa Fe or just visiting with the great community on campus. It is tremendously rejuvenating and something that I've come to look forward to all year.

My first summer I went out for a seminar on western films. As a northeasterner, it felt surreal to be watching and discussing some of the great westerns, while looking out the window into a landscape where the movie could actually take place. Some deer did walk by the window once. The first week was such a powerful experience, I stayed impromptu for a second one.

I've met some great folks there from all over the county: Chip from Denver, Charlene from Santa Fe, David from Sacramento, and Mia from Santa Rosa, to name a few. As I'm from Massachusetts, it's been fun to develop these relationships with people from all over, just to find out, no surprise, that we are much more alike than different.



This is a view from Mount Atalaya, about a three-hour round trip hike from St. John's campus.

The price is reasonable and tuition is half-off for educators. I've stayed in the dorms most frequently and have found it a great way to go. The quiet is rich and the sunsets are beautiful. You can hike and walk right from campus, and the town of Santa Fe, with its vibrant ethnic mix, amazing southwestern cuisine and thriving art scene, is a short drive or Uber away. You can even see a movie at George R.R. Martin's movie theater.

If anyone has questions, I'm happy to be a resource about this (dmichaelbarry@aol.com). As the great artist Georgia O'Keeffe said, "If you ever visit New Mexico, it will itch you for the rest of your life." Summer at St. John's in Santa Fe will change your whole school year.

Union Organizer Miles Meth Delivers D'Var Speech at Boston Workers Circle Yom Kippur Service

Miles Meth, who is a Union organizer and activist, gave the D'var speech at this year's 2026-5787 Boston Workers Circle Center for Jewish Culture and Social Justice Yom Kippur Service. Yom Kippur is a time of reflection. In this speech, Miles reflects on being a new parent, making mistakes and the meaning of freedom and solidarity.

Tradition holds that on Rosh Hashonah, The Book of Life is opened, and on Yom Kippur, it is sealed. Tradition holds that our reflection on the year has concluded and our turning toward the year ahead during the past ten days has inscribed,or not, our names in the book of life.

Today we understand this inscription metaphorically, as a call to right action and justice, to love and humility, to staying awake to our lives and the hearts of those around us. (Boston Workers Circle Yom Kippur Service 2026-5787 page 5.)

★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Miles Meth, D'var, Year 5787

Gut yon tif. My name is **Miles Meth,** I am a union organizer, writer, and parent to one of the newest members of our community, Joni, who joined us four months ago. I myself have been a member of BWC since 2016 and in that time I have served as a Shule teacher, chair of the membership committee, and member of the board. It is a tremendous honor to be asked to share some words with you all today.

As a new parent, I have been humbled by how many mistakes are possible for one human to commit in a day. Mostly they are low stakes, sleep-deprived slips and skids of the brain: forgetting to bring the diaper bag my very first time bringing Joni out of the house or, more recently, locking our whole family out of our hotel room as soon as we arrived at our hotel in Québec. There are of course, more significant blunders. After the first month, I didn't want to admit that I was suffering from severe sleep deprivation (everyone else does this, why should I complain? I told myself). Unfortunately, lack of sleep is not something you can run from or ignore (it always wins), and so I became poisonously irritable, directing most of my ire at my poor partner Ali. After accusing her of the crime of moving a coffee cup from the porch to the kitchen (and realizing it was in fact *I*, who had done said moving) a therapist ordered that I *must* get four nights of uninterrupted sleep in a row, and we made a plan for me to get the rest I desperately needed. I felt like a failure for having to admit my limitations, ask for help, and apologize. But it worked, and after the prescription for sleep was met, I was back to a less disgruntled, more helpful, better version of myself.

There are of course more ways that I have tripped up this year, some of which may not find an audience of my entire community. But, speaking for myself, there are times where my own wrongdoings can, frankly, feel quaint next to the monumental human evil that guides much of the global economy. While fossil fuel executives burn our planet for a buck and politicians order entire cities to rubble, I can feel bitter and defensive. What do my mistakes – my apologies – matter – in the midst of genocide and ecocide?

But what if mistakes and apologies in our tradition of Yom Kippur were less about absolution of sin, but instead about creating possibilities for connection?

One of our intellectual forefathers at Worker's Circle, 17th Century Jewish philosopher **Baruch Spinoza,** argued that ***freedom is not the ability to do whatever you want, but that freedom is the ability to do things with other people that you couldn't do alone. This version of freedom shows up most obviously for me in my work as a union organizer.***



Miles Meth

Part of my role is to make space for people to view their own lack of freedom clearly. To ask questions that draw out the daily miseries the working class endures at the hands of the ultrarich: The way a job underpays us, takes us away from our families, humiliates us with controlling, arbitrary rules – things can be too painful to look at alone. And that is why the rich and powerful are incentivized to keep us apart. They want us afraid and paranoid of anyone outside of our nuclear families. They tell us freedom is being able to listen to anything in an instant, order any product to our home within 24 hours at the touch of a button. They want us on our phones, asking computers for advice and spending as much of our waking lives as possible, alone.

That's why my favorite question I get to ask as an organizer is, "What would happen if the CEO didn't show up to work tomorrow?" Usually whomever I'm talking to scoffs. "Not much," they say, and they are right. Then, I get to ask, 'What if all of you and your co-workers didn't show up tomorrow?' "The place would shut down," they say, and the look of recognition and power that blooms in their eyes is one of the most satisfying things in life.

This is the basic principle, not just of unions, but of democracy and people power all told. The ruling class has more money, more lawyers, more political connections. But together, when we refuse to cooperate with the status quo, we are stronger and more powerful than we realize.

With this analysis, the inevitability of despair constructed by the billionaire class (just give up, submit to our AI overlords and a doomed future) is flipped on its head, and the inevitability of Spinoza's freedom (that together we can achieve so much more than we can alone) feels obvious.

So, can't we all just walk out tomorrow, one big, open-ended general strike, until we have unseated all dictators and our demands for justice are met? I get that it can sound a bit lofty. While we have a ways to go get there, people can and should support the picket lines of Encore

continued on page 7

Around the Elementary Schools Caitlin Gaffny

Protect Yourself by Checking Your Pay and Personnel Information



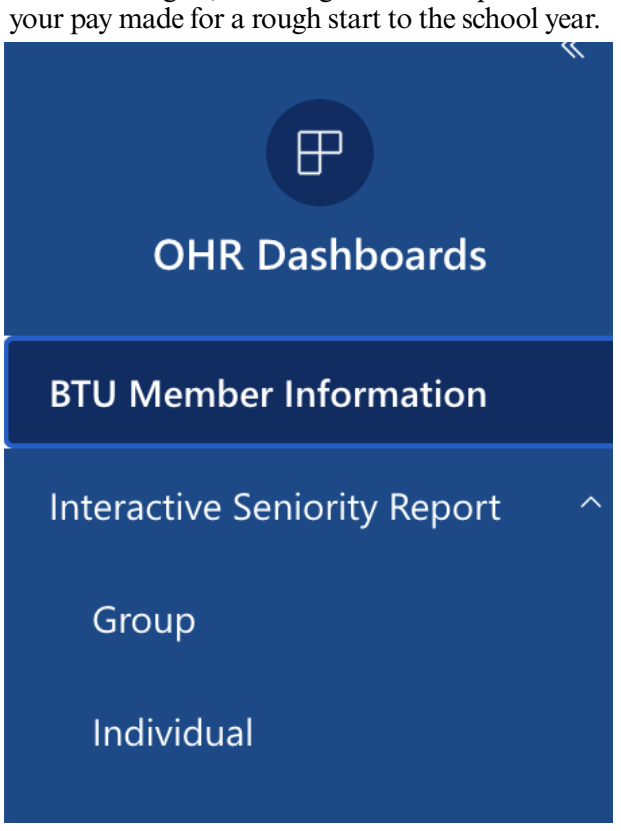
Caitlin Gaffny
BTU Elementary
Field Representative

Over the past year, I have personally spoken to more than 100 members who have had their pay bungled by BPS. The errors members endure range from underpayments to overpayments in the thousands of dollars. While we know it is good practice to check our paychecks regularly, some of the smallest errors can compound over a few years and amount to significant repayments the district recoups when they overpay. The reasons provided range from "system automation" to human error. While it can be difficult to digest in 2026 that "the system" does not recognize gross margins of error, this is the case. Even more painful is when a person makes a payment decision that is later retracted, and they usually don't even work for BPS anymore. Conversely, sometimes members are shorted career awards and pay that goes unnoticed. When members contact Payroll to better understand what has occurred, their experiences can vary. This treatment particularly smarts when members, not accountants or financiers themselves, are simply trying to better understand the error genesis.



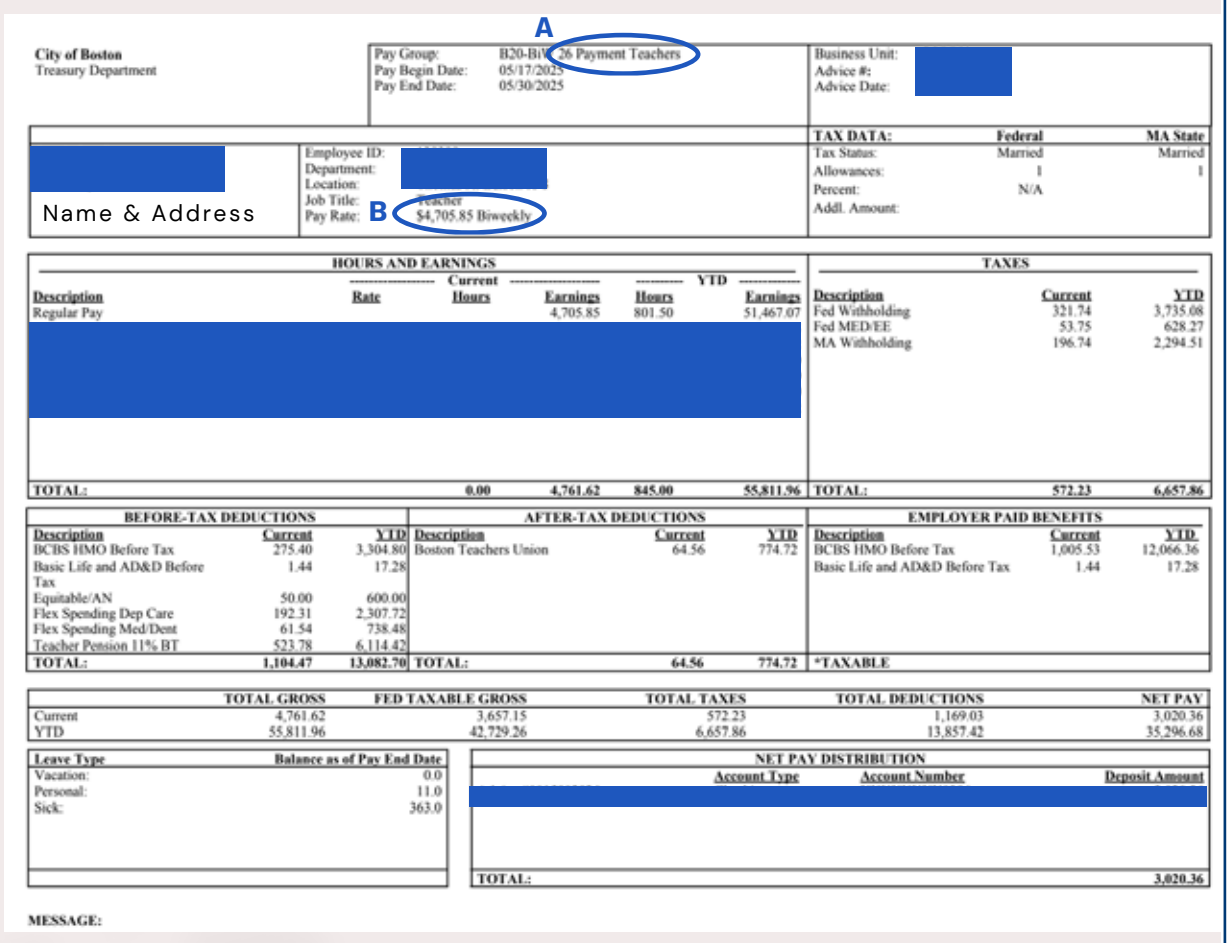
The best way to protect yourself is to utilize the extremely helpful district dashboard which can also be accessed through Aspen on the main page in the bottom right corner.

Once you click on the Interactive Seniority Report, look in the left margin for BTU Member Information, where you can view your grade, step, pay, and any differentials. This information should now be updated for this school year, so check and make certain that yours is correct. If you have changed roles or schools, this is particularly important, as some of our members did not get their first check or received a partial check. As you can well imagine, receiving none or a pittance of your pay made for a rough start to the school year.



While you are at it, if you go down a bit further and click on Individual, you will be able to see your Primary Program Area (PPA) and any licenses you hold. Protect yourself by setting a calendar reminder and review your information on a semi-annual basis to ensure that you are being compensated properly for all of your hard work and that your personnel information is current and accurate.

HOW TO READ YOUR PAYSTUB



City of Boston
Treasury Department

Pay Group: B20-Bi 26 Payment Teachers (A)
Pay Begin Date: 05/17/2025
Pay End Date: 05/30/2025

Business Unit:
Advice #:
Advice Date:

[redacted]
Name & Address

Employee ID:
Department:
Location:
Job Title: Teacher
Pay Rate: B $4,705.85 Biweekly

TAX DATA:	Federal	MA State
Tax Status:	Married	Married
Allowances:	1	1
Percent:	N/A	
Addl. Amount:		

HOURS AND EARNINGS

Description	Rate	Current Hours	Current Earnings	YTD Hours	YTD Earnings
Regular Pay			4,705.85	801.50	51,467.07
[redacted]					
TOTAL:		0.00	4,761.62	845.00	55,811.96

TAXES

Description	Current	YTD
Fed Withholding	321.74	3,735.08
Fed MED/EE	53.75	628.27
MA Withholding	196.74	2,294.51
TOTAL:	572.23	6,657.86

BEFORE-TAX DEDUCTIONS

Description	Current	YTD
BCBS HMO Before Tax	275.40	3,304.80
Basic Life and AD&D Before Tax	1.44	17.28
Equitable/AN	50.00	600.00
Flex Spending Dep Care	192.31	2,307.72
Flex Spending Med/Dent	61.54	738.48
Teacher Pension 11% BT	523.78	6,114.42
TOTAL:	1,104.47	13,082.70

AFTER-TAX DEDUCTIONS

Description	Current	YTD
Boston Teachers Union	64.56	774.72
TOTAL:	64.56	774.72

EMPLOYER PAID BENEFITS

Description	Current	YTD
BCBS HMO Before Tax	1,005.53	12,066.36
Basic Life and AD&D Before Tax	1.44	17.28
*TAXABLE		

	TOTAL GROSS	FED TAXABLE GROSS	TOTAL TAXES	TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	NET PAY
Current	4,761.62	3,657.15	572.23	1,169.03	3,020.36
YTD	55,811.96	42,729.26	6,657.86	13,857.42	35,296.68

Leave Type	Balance as of Pay End Date
Vacation:	0.0
Personal:	11.0
Sick:	363.0

NET PAY DISTRIBUTION

Account Type	Account Number	Deposit Amount
[redacted]		
TOTAL:		3,020.36

MESSAGE:

Year 1 SY 2024-25 Schedule A

	Bachelors	B +15	Masters	M +15	M +30	M +45	M +60	M+75	Doctorate
Step 1	$72,313	$74,592	$76,858	$79,140	$81,416	$83,690	$86,291	$88,549	$89,836
Step 2	$80,433	$83,107	$85,790	$88,477	$91,156	$93,823	$96,836	$99,158	$100,483
Step 3	$84,900	$87,583	$90,259	$92,948	$95,612	$98,303	$101,316	$103,643	$104,967
Step 4	$89,382	$92,065	$94,736	$97,420	$100,095	$102,765	$105,797	$108,119	$109,441
Step 5	$93,849	$96,871	$99,875	$102,891	$105,913	$108,925	$112,270	$114,598	$115,922
Step 6	$99,085	$102,088	$105,105	$108,116	$111,132	$114,139	$117,702	$120,026	$121,351
Step 7	$105,049	$108,059	$111,078	$114,089	$117,107	$120,123	$123,476	$125,802	$127,126
Step 8	$111,086	$114,091	$117,111	$120,123	$123,139	$126,164	$129,510	$131,838	$133,164
Step 9	$116,327	$119,355	$122,352	$125,367	$128,380	$131,406	$134,756	$137,083	$138,406

C

(A)26*(B)$4705.85= (C)122,352.10

Ask yourself questions like:

Am I Schedule A? Do I qualify for Pilot School Pay?

Do I receive 26 or 22 checks?

How many years have I been teaching?

What degree(s) do I hold? Have I submitted other credits?

Should I be receiving career awards?

If you do not believe you are receiving the correct pay – contact your field rep.

Literacy is the Law, Now, Let's Teach Teachers How to Swim…

continued from page 4

ensure that educators are empowered to implement new practices effectively and sustainably so that they can, ultimately, drive improved student outcomes. Our students deserve nothing but the most effective and relative instruction, and educators nothing but the opportunities to continue to develop their craft through supportive learning experiences.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★

(*Jillian Geraghty is a literacy instructional facilitator at the John F. Kennedy School in Boston and a 2026-27 Teach Plus Massachusetts Senior Policy Fellow. This article is reprinted from the* Dorchester Reporter, *September 23, 2026.)*

Update on A Fair Fix For RetirementPlus

BTU member Ted Chambers posted this update on A Fair Fix for R + Facebook Page. Join the Facebook group to find updates and FAQ.

Update from Friday, September 18th, 2026

Both the House and the Senate have exchanged proposals. Things are moving. Committee is expected to meet within a few weeks. The Committee is negotiating if interest is owed for teachers and school nurses who were left out of the program to buy into R+. The House has voted for zero interest which would cost a teacher approximately 11K to buy back the owed 2% interest. The Senate has voted for 7% interest (approximately 44K). The Committee has been formed to come to a compromise. Reports from the Hill are all positive.

This is a summary of the issues:

Reopening the Enrollment Window: The primary goal is creating a **one-time, retroactive opt-in window** (proposed through mid-2027) for an estimated **6,500 to 8,500 veteran public school teachers**. These educators missed the original 2001 sign-up deadline due to confusing paperwork, maternity leaves, or poor communication from the state, forcing them to work an extra 3 to 5 years longer than their peers to reach maximum pension benefits.

Reconciling Legislative Vehicles: Lawmakers are deciding whether to pass this measure as a **standalone bill** or package it directly within the broader state budget framework.

The "Make-Up" Contribution Framework: Negotiators must finalize the exact rules for how teachers will "buy back" into the program. Under current proposals, teachers must pay the difference between their historical retirement contribution rate and the **11% RetirementPlus rate** since 2001.

Interest Rates and Repayment Terms: A major point of discussion is the inclusion of **actuarial assumed interest** on those make-up contributions. Lawmakers are establishing whether these payments must be paid upfront in a lump sum or if teachers can utilize structured repayment plans prior to retirement.



Ted Chambers

Fiscal Impact vs. Local Savings: Opponents and fiscal analysts weigh the modest increase required for state pension funding against the projected savings for local cities and towns. Proponents, like the Massachusetts Teachers Association and Boston Teachers Union, argue that allowing veteran teachers to retire will ultimately save school districts money by allowing them to hire newer educators at lower starting salaries.

The conference committee has a strict deadline of **January 5, 2027**, to reconcile the House and Senate differences and send a final version to the governor.

Editor's Note: Get involved with the R+ movement on facebook or by contacting **Ted Chambers,** *tedchambers1969@gmail.com*

Tech Equity in the BPS…

continued from page 4

a paper Writer's Notebook to develop our thinking by writing by hand. But we live in the 21st century, so when the time comes to share our thinking and learning with others beyond our classroom, and when the time comes to preserve that learning in a form that will last, we need our computers. And in a UDL writing workshop, we need them all at once.

Tech Inequity at Home

During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, Boston Public Schools, like many other districts, reached its peak commitment to technological equity at home. Brand new Chromebooks and internet hotspots were handed out immediately and efficiently. Now, students whose families can't afford reliable internet and devices such as laptops and tablets are once again at a disadvantage when it comes to learning at home. Of course this disadvantage disproportionately affects our low-income students and students of color, and is downright unacceptable when it comes to our students with disabilities.

If reading at home is assigned or recommended, students who use text-to-speech or audiobooks could be out of luck without reliable internet or an appropriate device. Even if most assignments are designed to be completed in class somehow, with the scarcity of in-class devices, privileged students could choose to spend additional time on projects at home, while those without access would not have that option. Terminating the Access4All program demonstrates the disintegration of the district's commitment to technological equity that reached its zenith during the pandemic, but proved short-lived.

Tech Inequity and Generative AI

This summer, Boston Public Schools launched a program to train 25 secondary-school "AI Educator Ambassadors". The goal of the program, according to Mayor **Michelle Wu,** is to "[equip] teachers to use AI responsibly in the classroom and [prepare] students to navigate this technology with confidence, creativity and care." The use of Generative AI in schools rightly remains a controversial topic of conversation, and preparing teachers to lead those discussions is a crucial step. However, when the findings and recommendations of these ambassadors ultimately reach the classroom, teachers will be hard-pressed to offer students the opportunity "to navigate this technology with confidence, creativity, and care" without devices on which to learn and practice. This scarcity makes it more likely that students will, for example, lose patience and use a Generative AI app on their phones to complete their schoolwork, leading to more cognitive offloading than there would be in an environment fully equipped for teaching and learning the pros, cons, and ethics of using AI.

The irony is poignant. Boston is a city at the forefront of scientific and technological advancement, yet our school district refuses to provide even the most basic tools to prepare students for the world they will enter as adults. As a Union, we must continue to advocate for the reversal of this policy and for technological equity and access for all.

Note: This article was written without the use of any artificial intelligence tools.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★

(*Jennifer Roberts Keddy teaches at the Bates Elementary School and is a member of the BTU Executive Board.)*

Union Organizer Miles Meth Delivers D'Var Speech at Boston Workers Circle Yom Kippur Service…

continued from page 5

Casino workers who are on strike 24/7 right now and nurses at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Boston Medical Center, who are set to authorize strikes in the coming weeks!

But back to why we are not yet where we could be with our power – I would argue that a significant part of what hinders social movements is endless infighting, fueled by self-righteousness and an inability to give and accept grace. How many of us have been part of a movement, a community, or maybe just a meeting, that was unable to move forward with its goals, not because of outside forces, but because of conflict from within? Perhaps the cynicism, suspicion, and bitterness created by living under the stresses of Capitalism gets directed at those closest to us, counter-intuitively making us not want to show up and participate in the movements, like *Boston Worker's Circle,* that we so desperately need to build a better world.

And what if strengthening our muscles of apology and forgiveness could be part of the solution to cycles of endless internal conflict?

How many of us have hurt someone, without realizing it? And on the contrary, how many of us have been deeply wounded by someone who meant us no harm?

It is hard to open ourselves up to apology and forgiveness. Our world forces us to construct emotional fortresses. How else are we supposed to make it through a day that bombards us with suffering via Nytimes push notifications and endless algorithmic horror on Instagram?

I am inspired by the idea that through forgiveness – whether it is with a spouse, a friend, or an acquaintance here at *Worker's Circle* – there is opportunity for building new bonds that, like a broken bone, heal back stronger than they were before.

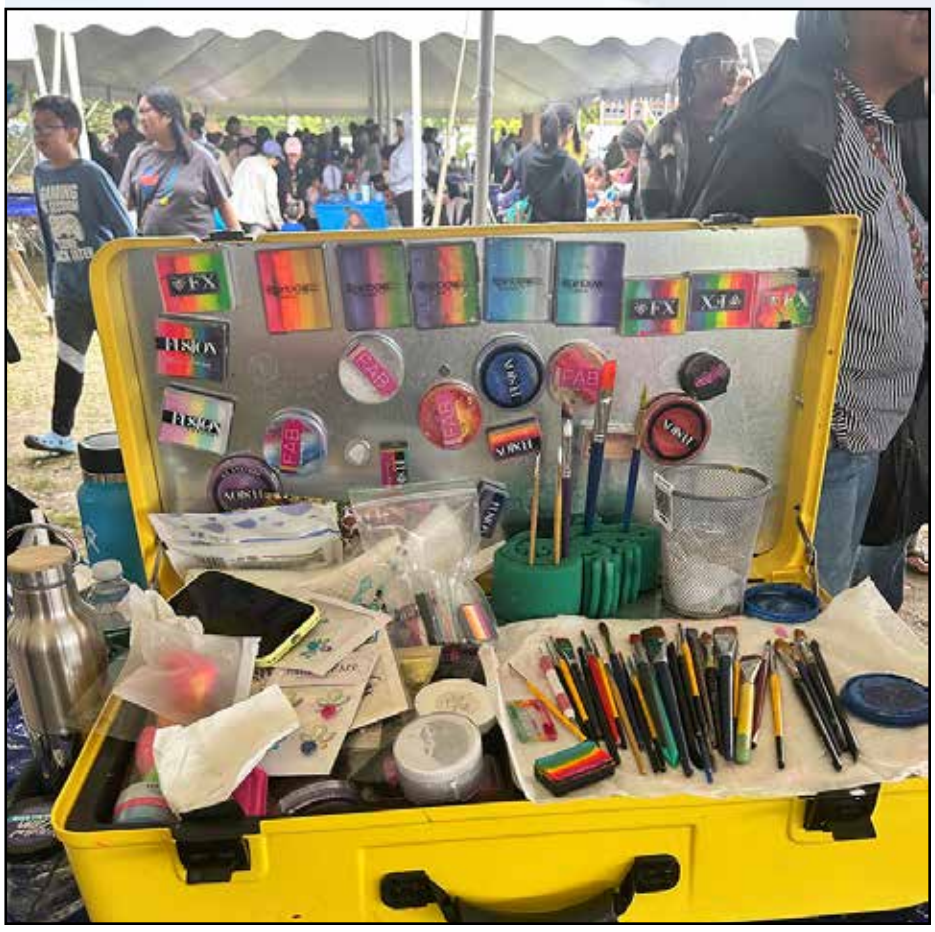
My hope is that each of us can leave today, not reflecting on our missteps of the last year in a framework of comparison (we will always feel self-righteous when comparing ourselves to billionaires), nor in hope of purity (we will all continue to hurt, and be hurt, again and again for the rest of our lives.) My hope instead is that we can reflect on places of giving and receiving apology as possibilities for stepping towards one another, of rediscovering our shared humanity. Because our ability to connect, to build solidarity that can survive conflict, is the one thing that leaves the powerful shaking in their boots.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★

(Miles Meth is a board member at Boston Worker's Circle. *For the last decade they have worked as a labor organizer, supporting thousands of workers across industries to form unions. They recently graduated with an MFA in creative writing and their work appears in* The Boston Globe, Bellevue Literary Review, Massachusetts Review, *and more.)*

Boston Workers Circle: *https://circleboston.org*

BTU Back to School Book Fair Chases the Clouds Away!



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

The 13th annual **Boston Teachers Union (BTU) Back to School Fair** took place on Sunday, September 20, 2026, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the Boston Teachers Union Hall.

The dreary weather did not deter families and teachers from enjoying the BTU Back to School Fair! For the past 13 years the BTU has hosted a fall fair. This year's fair was a vibrant and informative event featuring fantastic face painting, painted tattoos, informative booths and delicious food. Inside the BTU were an array of free books. Teachers were able to take 30 books back to their classrooms. I got some elementary sets of biographies of *Who is Taylor Swift?* and a set of *Who is Bad Bunny* in Spanish. When I dropped them off at **Ms. Brianna Sullivan's** grade three at the JFK school in Jamaica Plain the students cheered with glee.

Booths at the Fair included information about Parent Special Education Survival Guide, Tax Support, Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence, Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance, The Compass Project, St. Stephen's Youth Programs and more!

Event Details & Highlights

- **Free Books:** The event featured over **40,000 FREE books** distributed to students, families, and educators to kick off the new school year.
- **Family Activities:** Attendees enjoyed a day of live music, face-painting, snacks, and story time sessions hosted by local authors.
- **Community Resources:** Dozens of representatives from local community organizations were on site to share information about educational programs and opportunities for Boston Public Schools (BPS) families.
- **For Educators:** Teachers were encouraged to sign up through First Book to access free and reduced-price books for their classrooms.























Photos by ***Caren Carew*** and ***Anne Slater***











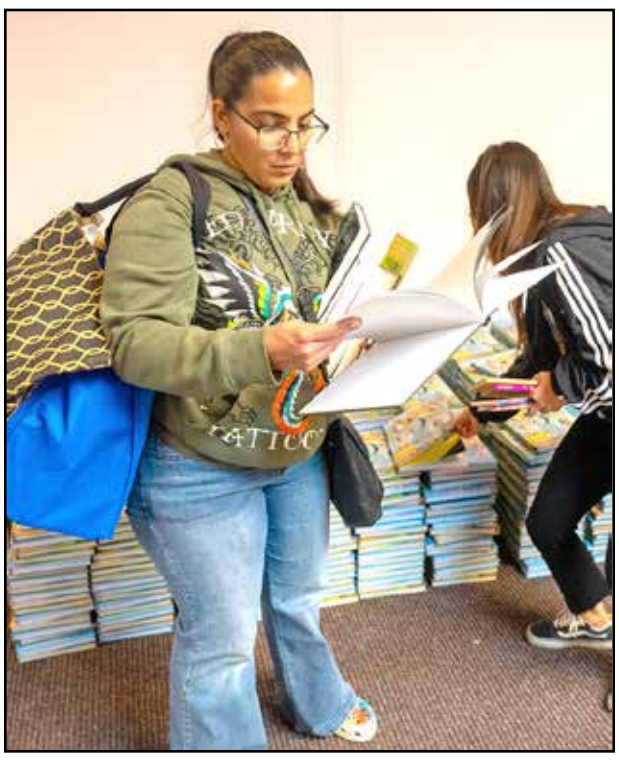
Educators, Students, Parents Enjoy the BTU Back to School Book Fair






















Chapter Books






READING OPENS THE WORLD
Storybook Collections


BOSTON TEACHERS UNION
FIGHTING FOR THE SCHOOLS OUR STUDENTS DESERVE



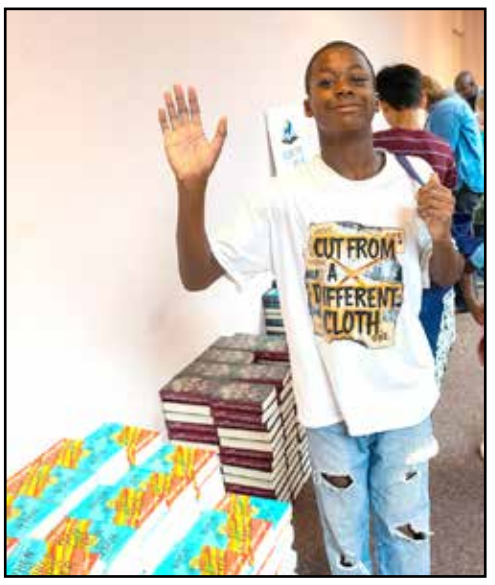
More fun from the BTU Back to School Book Fair



























TELESCOPE NETWORK

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Fall 2026

Reimagining Professional Development

The Boston Public Schools (BPS) and Boston Teachers Union (BTU) Telescope Network is back this year to continue its mission to transform the landscape of professional learning within BPS. Since 2018, the Telescope Network has engaged over 4,000 educators by moving away from traditional models and towards a more responsive, collaborative approach to professional development.

The Telescope Network's mission to **improve our collective practice** is centered on four key pillars: **responding** to educator needs and interests to create differentiated learning experiences; **amplifying** what works by leveraging in-house expertise; **connecting** peers to help break down silos; and ensuring learning **continues** through individualized, student-centered goal setting and follow-up.

"The Telescope Network asks educators what they want and need to learn next to best support their students, we then magnify those who are already doing that well, and intentionally connect those educators together in educator-led professional learning experiences showcasing real-live practice in action," said networker **Alison Mosher.** "Our professional learning models strive to meet the felt needs of those in the classroom and provide on-going support through virtual follow-up coaching where educators test out small changes to their practice with feedback from their peers to drive real change and improve real student outcomes," she added.

"Our team of networkers has decades of experience teaching, coaching, and leading professional development for Boston educators. In our PD sessions, we create opportunities for BPS educators to learn from and with our peers," said networker **Mark Lonergan.** This year's team includes **Alison Mosher, Mark Lonergan, Garceline Champagne, Amanda Hathaway, Kara Kelley, & Oluwanifemi (Nifemi) Kolayemi.**

The impact

The impact of this approach is evident in participant feedback from 25-26 school year, with 98% of educators stating they would recommend Telescope PD to their colleagues and 94% reporting increased confidence in meeting student needs. Across 53 different Telescope Network PD courses last year, we had 1193 educators from 102 different BPS schools attend. These educators earned a total of more than 10,000 PD hours. Through these sessions, the Telescope Network also created leadership opportunities for 178 peer leaders from 51 different BPS schools to help host/facilitate PD for their colleagues.

For more information on the Telescope Network, visit *bostonpublicschools.org/telescope*.

Key Telescope Network Programs

- **Learning Site:** Extended peer observations in live classrooms followed by virtual follow-up.
- **Planning Cohort:** Collaborative unit planning and curriculum unpacking with peer experts.
- **Improvement Lab:** An individualized, self-paced course to develop and document effective artifacts.
- **Connect & Share:** Panel discussions highlighting effective classroom practices from local educators.
- **Edcamp:** Innovative, participant-driven training based on real-time questions and expertise.
- **Peer Observation:** Individualized visits to recommended colleagues to debrief and set classroom goals.
- **Needs Assessment Survey:** District-wide data collection to identify and report on educator learning needs.
- Visit bostonpublicschools.org/telescope to see upcoming sessions.

NEXT STEPS

EVENTS MENU
View Telescope PD & events menu

COLLEAGUE SPOTLIGHT
Tell us who's doing good work across BPS

Fall 2026

FRIENDS OF THE BOSTON SCHOOLYARDS

Outdoor Learning Highlights





Lee Pilot Academy

As we welcome students, families and teachers back to our schools and outdoor classrooms, we are reminded of the fragility of our maintenance systems and funding options for these important spaces. We continue to be inspired by the thoughtfulness of the lessons we see, the teachers' commitment to creating these outdoor learning experiences for students, and the engagement and curiosity of the students. We also see the challenges that teachers face, giving of their time, expertise, and often personal resources to ensure the outdoor learning spaces are welcoming for all.. Real financial support is needed for these efforts and for the development and maintenance of these vital spaces. If you live and/or teach in Boston, please contact your city councilors and union representatives, and let them know how important you feel outdoor learning spaces are for the development of our children's mental and physical health, as well as their curiosity, wisdom, and knowledge.

"It is such an added delight to our school community to have an outdoor space-/garden to unwind and an open classroom to learn and be yourself in nature."
Carol Perez, Martin Luther King K-8

Joy Of Learning Grants





Friends of the Boston Schoolyards is in our 6th season of distributing Joy of Learning grants to Boston teachers. This year we gave out 11 grants of up to $600. From chemistry to gardening, Boston teachers find creative ways to incorporate outdoor learning and joyful engagement into their curriculums.

Outdoor Classroom Spotlight

Outdoor Learning at the Lee Academy Pilot School
by Barbara McLaughlin

On June 9th, Sara Gardner and I visited Lee Academy Pilot School and science teacher Marc Abelson. It was a lovely, sunny day, a perfect day to visit the beautiful outdoor spaces and observe students learning about plants. With the help of Michelle Martinat from BPS Facilities and outside partners, the school has created three discrete outside areas for learning and playing. In front of the building on the left there is a fenced-in play area for Pre-K and Kindergarten students. There are water tables, blocks, easels, magnetic boards, and other materials students use to explore and learn through play with others. Roses climb the fence at the entrance to the garden in the front of the school on the right.





An apple tree and other trees and shrubs line the walkway that winds through this space, providing beauty and shade. At the end is a learning space with boulders and tree stumps grouped in a circle for seating. The stumps were donated by the Boston Nature Center from trees they had chopped down on their grounds.



This garden leads to a large outside classroom area along the side of the building. There are raised planters containing flowers, herbs, and vegetables as well as tables and benches for lessons. Mr. Abelson teaches his science classes outdoors whenever possible.



We observed pre-K science classes. Students worked in small groups and rotated through different activities. Mr. Abelson worked with students at a raised garden plot where they planted lemon balm, rosemary, and peppermint. Students had experience planting and they already knew how to shake the roots free before planting and how deep to make each hole. Mr. Abelson had them rub a leaf in their hands to release its smell. One student thought rosemary smelled like broccoli. Another thought peppermint smelled like bubble gum. They finished by placing a label next to each plant and gave the garden a good soaking.





Farmer Leila and Farmer Avery from Green City Growers guided groups of students on a sensory walk through the garden looking at and naming the different flowers and herbs. Each student had a garden bracelet with sticky tape on their wrists. Farmer Leila and Farmer Avery attached a leaf or a flower to their bracelets. Students described their artifacts, the shapes, colors, smells, and how they felt. Groups worked with another teacher digging holes in the dirt to find worms and roly-polys and other creatures. They had learned how important insects, arthropods, and worms were to a healthy garden.



What We Offer Teachers
MAC's programs are designed to make agricultural learning accessible and practical for educators, whether they're working with a sprawling rural campus or a single raised bed tucked into a city schoolyard. Our core offerings include:

- Mini-grants that help teachers fund garden beds, farm visits, incubators, compost systems, and other hands-on projects. This program has been running since 1994 and has supported hundreds of classroom initiatives statewide.
- Workshops, conferences, and farm-based training days, where teachers spend time on working farms learning techniques and lessons they can bring directly back to their students.
- Free, standards-aligned lesson plans and resources, available through our website, connecting agriculture to Massachusetts curriculum frameworks across subjects, such as science, math, history, health, and more.
- The annual Massachusetts Agriculture Calendar, produced with the Department of Agricultural Resources, featuring classroom-ready "fun facts" and teaching tips for every month of the year.
- We're also an approved Professional Development Provider through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, so participating in MAC programming can count toward educators' licensure requirements.



Why This Matters in Boston
Urban students often have the least direct contact with the sources of their food which makes agricultural literacy especially valuable in city classrooms. A single garden bed or even a lesson on where an apple comes from can spark curiosity that carries into science, nutrition, and environmental stewardship. Partnering with Friends of the Boston Schoolyards has been a natural fit: they have spent years transforming Boston schoolyards into vibrant outdoor learning spaces, and we'd love to help teachers put those to work as living agricultural classrooms.

How Boston Teachers Can Get Involved
Boston educators are warmly invited to:

- Apply for a MAC mini-grant to launch or expand a garden, composting, or farm-connection project
- Attend an upcoming farm workshop or teacher training
- Browse and download free lesson plans at www.aginclassroom.org

We can't wait to continue growing with Boston's teachers and students. Check out our website for more resources and information about upcoming events.

BOSTON Public Schools

Office of Human Resources

Pathway Programs for Licensure & Professional Practice

Applications are now open for the Fall/ Winter 2026 Pathway Programs for professional development and licensure in three fields:

- **ESL Pathway**
- **Severe Disabilities**
- **Moderate Disabilities**

Application Deadline Monday, October 26, 2026

pathwayprograms@bostonpublicschools.org

617-635-9036

For program details and application, scan QR code:

October Is Here – February is Coming!

By Dana Royster-Buefort

Welcome back, Boston teachers, paraprofessionals, and school staff, to the 2026–2027 school year! By October, classrooms are buzzing, routines are taking shape, and everyone is settling into the rhythm of a new year. October also brings its own challenges – from lesson planning and parent meetings to fall celebrations, and other spooky activities. As busy as this season may be, it is not too early to begin thinking about your next opportunity to rest, recharge, and explore.

Memories of your summer getaways may already be fading, but other school vacations are just around the corner. February break is only four months away, and now is the perfect time to start planning for February, April and a summer. This year, we are offering exciting travel opportunities to Bali, Kenya and Tanzania, Ghana, and other remarkable destinations. Each journey offers a chance to experience new cultures, connect with fellow educators, and return home with fresh energy and stories to share.

As an educator you dedicate countless hours to supporting students, families, and your school community, so making time for yourself is essential. Imagine spending your February break discovering breathtaking landscapes, tasting new foods, learning about different traditions, and creating lifelong memories. A fun, educational, and rejuvenating international adventure is waiting for you – so do not let your time away from the school routine sneak up on you. Start planning today!

Contact **Dana Royster-Buefort,** 617-838-9742 for more information.

NEWS for EVERYONE from the BTU RETIRED TEACHERS CHAPTER



Tom Gosnell
BTU Retired Teachers Chapter Secretary

Public Employee Committee (PEC) Negotiations For Health Insurance

PEC, which negotiates health insurance for active and retired school department and city employees, has started negotiations with the city for a successor agreement. The current agreement expires on June 30, 2027. These negotiations are completely separate from negotiations for the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) contract with the Boston School Department.

In a letter to the editor in the *Washington Post* on June 8, 2026 BTU President **Erik Berg** wisely stated that "the real conversation should be about why cities are being forced to shoulder exploding health care costs while insurance companies post massive profits and working people are told to accept cuts." Indeed.

I suggest that in negotiations the city should be seeking ways to unite with unions to avoid insurance cuts for workers by reducing the massive profits of insurance companies. Comprehensive and affordable health insurance coverage is a right, not a privilege.

Cost Of Living Allowance (COLA) Increase For The Retirement Base

This issue affects all retirees and all those working who contribute to the retirement system. The current retirement base is $15,000. This means that whenever the retirement amount is raised, normally about 3% per year, it is raised only on $15,000. Consequently, most of those presently retired receive no increase on most of their pension. Those currently working who wish to retire someday fall into the same situation when they retire. Given the recent spikes in the cost of so much, affordability is a major issue.

The Retired Teachers Chapter of the Boston Teachers Union is relentless in its support of an increase in the base.

2026 Elections

Federal and state elections will occur on Tuesday, November 3rd. To vote one must be a registered voter. In Massachusetts early voting and absentee voting are permitted. A number of BTU members live in other states which means that rules for early voting and absentee voting may differ. Wherever one lives, voting by BTU members is essential because elections have consequences.

For those in Massachusetts the BTU web site includes a list of membership endorsements for elected positions and ballot questions.

Boston Retirement Board Election

As of the date this article was written (September 21, 2026) voting was still open. Consequently, we still await the results. Of course, we want a victory for the BTU endorsed candidates **KAREN CROSS**, BTU Secretary-Treasurer, and **SEAN KELLY**, the firefighters' union.

Fall Business Meeting

On **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8th AT 11:00 AM,** the fall business meeting of the Retired Teachers Chapter of the Boston Teachers Union will be at the BTU. Doors open at 10:30 A.M. The topic is wills, trusts, estate planning, and related issues. A mailing has already been sent. We appreciate the work that the RTC's chair, **Mae Bishop,** has done to arrange this event.

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.)

Haley Pilot School

The Haley Pilot School is on American Legion Highway in Roslindale. It currently serves 380 students in grades K0-6. Visiting the first full week of this new school year, I noticed routines and expectations were being clearly taught and reinforced daily.

Kindergarten students start the day in specialist classes. K0-K1 children are sitting in a circle with Health teacher Angel Scott, learning to share as well as gaining skill in rolling and catching a beach ball between their legs. Next door, Dance teacher **Djenaba Reynolds** is leading her K2 students in basic merengue steps. A little later I get to watch **Dan DeHart** do his musical magic with first graders.

Emma Bullock in K1 offers to take me outside to visit the raised garden beds along the side of the building and invites a few children to join us. They collect small ripe cherry tomatoes and find two large cucumbers ready to pick – such excitement and pride!

Students in grades 1-3 are focused on a variety of literacy activities. **Sara Stuart's t**hird graders are learning about how their classroom library is set up before selecting independent reading books. I was particularly interested in the ways fourth graders were using a matrix (I'd call it a rubric) and playing a whole-class game to learn about specific behaviors, aligned with the Haley's core values, expected in various parts of the school.

At the end of the day fifth and sixth grade students are in math classes. **Sue Young** is working with a fifth grader on finding the volume of a cube, while **Jon-Mychal Bowman** is helping one of his sixth graders with a question about "decomposing" complex two-dimensional shapes to find their areas.

Throughout the building, despite a long morning of MAP testing in grades 3-6, students seem full of enthusiasm for the year ahead. In addition to diving into content, many classes are also working on ways to share their individual and collective identities with colorful posters, quickly appearing on hallway bulletin boards. How does **YOUR** school start the new year?

Warmest regards & appreciation for what you do every day,

Amika

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



Mr. DeHart is playing the guitar and we are singing. We are learning patterns in music by clapping and using rhythm sticks. We are learning how to sing the whole "Hot Cross Buns" song! We want to learn how to play all kinds of instruments!

Students in Dan DeHart's Grade 1 music class



I am working with Ms. Nemeth on my English, because my first language is Spanish. I'm learning to read, write, and speak better English this year. I just learned the names of animals! I like baby monkeys especially, because they're cute and do funny things!

Arabellys Santana, Grade 3

I was looking for and picking little red tomatoes in the school garden. Ms. Bullock was helping me. I like being in the garden! This year we are learning to count, listening to stories, and making new friends.

Ruxton Patterson, K1

We are practicing rolling and catching a ball. We are learning to listen, to share, and to sit "crisscross applesauce". We are also learning about feelings and getting to know one another.

K1 students in Angel Scott's health class





We are in dance class with Ms. Djenaba. We learned we have to warm up before dancing, and we're learning to dance the merengue! We sing and spin around and take two small steps. We want to learn more dances this year, like ballet and hip hop.

Students in Erika Barros' K2 class

This is in math class with Ms. Young, who was helping me with my assignment. We are learning how to figure out the volume of a 3-dimenstional shape using cubes. I'm also learning to be more persistent when facing a new subject.

Jade Duvert, Grade 5





I'm doing an assignment in math class, and I asked Mr. Bowman for help with it. We're learning how to figure out the area of complex shapes by decomposing, breaking each shape into its parts. In Social Studies we're learning about early human development, which I think is interesting.

Jean Charles, Grade 6





We are playing a game about what we do in this school to build community, using our PEACE values: Positivity, Expectations, Acceptance, Community, and Engagement. We used a matrix to see how they apply in different places, like the hallways or cafeteria, as well as the classroom. We're also reading and writing rhyming and free verse poetry, learning about topics (what it's about) and themes (the moral or lesson) of poems.

Alice Rowles & Dayna Jones, Grade 4