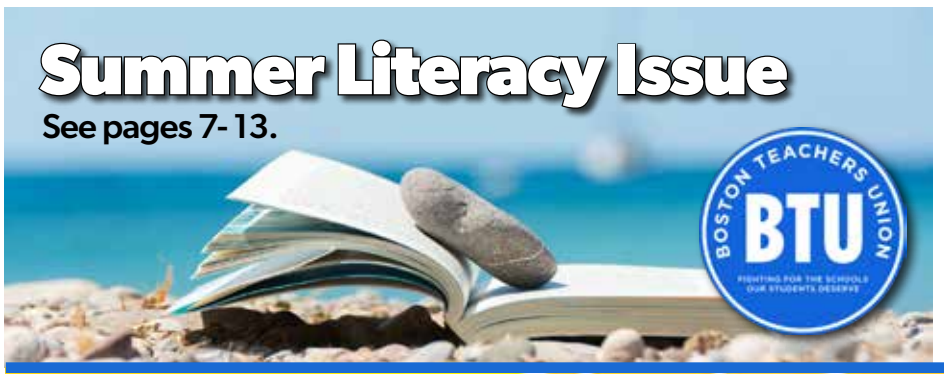


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BTU Takes to the Capitol for the 2026 AFT Convention



The Boston Teachers Union joined with our American Federation of Teachers (AFT) union siblings for our bi-annual convention this July, descending upon our nation's capital by plane, train, and *(maybe?)* sea. For your *Boston Union Teacher* co-editor, it was my first time attending and it was a fascinating experience that can be best described by the noun-form of the word "Spectacular." It was a spectacular, with a robust lineup of speakers, intense debate on resolutions over our political and organizational directions and priorities, and the best of what Washington, DC has to offer. To be eligible to attend and vote in the convention, you must run as a delegate in our BTU elections, which is a highly recommended experience for anyone looking to get more involved and learn more about our political work.

The Convention started with a celebration of AFT's tremendous growth: we are currently the fastest growing union in the United States, and are now up to 1,875 million members. At a time where low union density undermines the political power of the labor movement, it's amazing to be part of a union that is actively bucking the trend. That's true nationally as well as in our local: as readers should know, we recently settled first-time contracts at two Boston-area Charter Schools, Codman Academy and Neighborhood House, and welcomed representatives from those schools to the AFT convention!

Indeed, I am happy to report that Massachusetts was well-represented and well-honored throughout the week. Importantly, the BTU is not the only union from Massachusetts included, we are part of the AFT locals across the state that make up AFT Massachusetts (AFT-MA), whose president is former BTU President **Jessica Tang.** One of the best aspects of the convention was the opportunity to connect with AFT members from other corners of the Commonwealth – Chelsea, Lynn, New Bedford, UMass Faculty, and so many others! Speaking of President Tang – turns out her impact is visible beyond our state, as she was re-elected to the AFT Executive Board as the #1 vote recipient in the entire national union!

Massachusetts was well-represented in numbers (131 delegates) as well as in impact. Passing resolutions is a major part of the work of the convention, resolutions on a number of issues were debated and once passed, set the political direction for our union for the next two years. BTU Field Representative **Colleen Hart** spoke in favor of a crucially important resolution, ***Time to Show Up for PSRPs Like They Show Up for Our Schools, to ensure that Paraprofessionals and Related Service Providers are a priority for our union.*** The resolution on immigrant rights that we brought to the floor was adopted, ***AFT Stands in Solidarity with Immigrant Families, Demands Action to Get ICE Out of Communities.***

Finally, **Jessica Tang** spoke in favor of the resolution ***In Remembrance of Kent Wong,*** a fitting tribute to an icon for the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) and the entire entire labor movement. Indeed: as much as there was community-building, celebration, and a few opportunities to see the sights sights, this was not a vacation, particularly for our elected officers. This was a working week where important connections were made and business was accomplished for our union in a crucial year for public education and worker's rights.



Cecil Carey
Boston Union Teacher
Co-Editor

Perhaps most importantly, **FOUR** of our amazing retiree leaders here in the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) were recognized with ***Living the Legacy Awards,*** which are given out every two years to women who have demonstrated a deep commitment to their union through activism, mentorship, and leadership. **Alice Yong** was recognized

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Presenting the BTU 2026 Building Representatives of the Year

Presented by BTU Secondary Field Representative Caren Carew

Secondary Building Reps. of the Year

Shital Shah
Boston Latin Academy

The 2025-26 School Year's first Secondary BTU Building Representative of the year is **Ms. Shital Shah** from Boston Latin Academy. Shital started out at BLA as a student teacher and then was hired as an English Language Arts teacher in her own right in 1993 and has flourished there ever since for her entire BPS career to date! Elected by her colleagues in 2003 to become a BTU Building Rep., she has stepped up and served in that capacity ever since. It is positively impactful for the whole school community for someone so able with the level of skill both as a practitioner and a unionist to teach as well as have the historical perspective that such longevity and knowledge attainment affords her.

A spectator from another school could conjecture that teaching and being a Union Rep. at this particular exam school is a piece of cake. Perhaps a piece of cake strapped-on to a roller coaster may be a more apt description! Welcome to BLA where all the teachers are exemplary, the administration can be challenging, and all the students are above average. There have been a line-up of Heads of School over the last few decades that have made following the contract like an on-going session of paintball. A few of these Heads of School were encouraged to find a better fit elsewhere – a couple did and one didn't. Shital and her other able BTU Building Rep colleagues stood strong throughout, organized active faculty senates, walk-ins, walk-outs, rallies, votes of no confidence, continuous meetings with administrators to address issues and work collaboratively for the good of the school and it's students. Ever very able at performing standard BTU Building Rep functions such as representing colleagues in numerous Investigatory Meetings, running union votes, participating in disseminating info from membership meetings, organizing meetings with staff, administration, union officials and central office administration at the school, and the like. Over time, one might wear down, but not Shital. Understated, knowledgeable, outspoken, reliable and tenacious in her own way, Shital has been a dependable leader and part of a fearless ensemble of Reps who haven't waivered in striving for the best that BLA has to offer to become and remain a reality.

While always seeking to uphold and improve her academic instruction for the students she loves and respects, she also has served many additional roles such as long-time yearbook advisor and scholarship coordinator.

The following feedback from a couple of her fellow BLA BTU Reps captures and reflects aspects of the Union aspect of her professionalism.

"Shital has helped hold the Union line here at BLA. She regularly initiates meetings with our Head of School and is constantly trying to improve our working conditions here at BLA. She is always available to our staff, and BTU members at BLA rely on her even-keeled judgement in difficult situations. She makes sure to recruit strong candidates to run for Rep. She is one of the pillars of BTU representation and all of us rely on her."

Lauren O'Malley-Singh
Boston Adult Technical Academy (BATA)

The next Secondary BTU Building Representative of the 2025-26 School Year is **Lauren O'Malley-Singh,** a city-wide nurse BTU Rep. from Boston Adult Technical Academy (BATA). A nurse for a total of 15 years, Lauren has served as a school nurse in BPS for eight years in a number of high schools; New Mission High School, ACC, Brighton High School, and now BATA's East Boston Campus. Formerly elected to be a city-wide nurse BTU Representative two years ago, she's also been an active participant and advocate for BPS nurses and health related issues during the challenging pandemic time as well as a silent rep and nurse advocate during the last round of Union contract negotiations.

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Presented by BTU Paraprofessional/Substitute/ABA Field Representative Colleen Hart

Paraprofessional/Substitute/ABA Building Reps. of the Year

Steve Jalliet
Mattahunt Elementary School

Steve Jalliet has been a building rep at Mattahunt for five years. He has been a member of the CBC (collective bargaining committee) and a silent rep. He is one of the faculty senate chairs for the ABAs. Steve supported his fellow BTU members at Mattahunt, which went through new leadership and a challenging year. Any time I reach out of support or clarification on any ABA issue, he is ready to assist. I am grateful to have Steve as a fellow BTU brother.

Here are some words from his co-worker:

"This school year, Steven Jalliet actively supported ABAs and ABA paras in resolving workplace challenges. He communicated with them via phone calls and attended meetings with school leaders and other administrators."

Steve serves as the BTU Building Rep at Mattahunt Elementary School, where he has built strong, trusted relationships with staff over many years. Staff consistently view him as approachable, dependable, and responsive when concerns arise. Through his work within the ABA strand, he has demonstrated a deep commitment to providing high-quality support for both teachers and students.

This dedication carries over into his role as Building Rep, where he advocates for equity, ensures that staff voices are heard, and works to create a supportive environment in which all members feel valued and empowered to address challenges within the school community.

Thank you for your dedication to fellow Union sisters and brothers and your students.

Please join me in congratulating Steven Jalliet as one building reps of the year.

Zoraida Harrington
M.L. King K-6 School

Zoraida Harrington has been a building rep at the King for four years. The King has undergone difficult transitions over the last few years, including five new principals but Zoraida has stayed focused on supporting her fellow BTU members at the school. Anytime I reach out, she's ready to assist. I am grateful to have her as a fellow BTU sister.

Here are some words from her coworkers.

"Zoraida has been a dedicated member of the King School community for 15 years, supporting K1 students across a variety of settings, including ABA, center-based, and inclusion classrooms. She has weathered 5 different principals and the turnover of almost all of the original staff. She demonstrates remarkable patience and compassion, consistently meeting students and families where they are and providing individualized support to address their unique needs."

In addition to her work with students, Zoraida has served as a building representative for years, where she has played an important role in organizing members around contract and union issues and supporting staff through issues as intense as attendance and investigatory meetings and as simple as signing up for a union membership card. Her commitment to both students and colleagues has made her a valued asset within the

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Presented by BTU Elementary Field Representative Caitlin Gaffny

Elementary Building Reps. of the Year

Sylvaine Lestrade
Trotter Elementary School

This year's BTU Elementary Building Representative Award goes to **Sylvaine Lestrade** of the Trotter School who has been a mentor, cheerleader, and advocate. She has fought for our members as a building representative and member for over twenty years. Perhaps one of the most admirable qualities Sylvaine possesses is her positive attitude no matter the adversity faced. In all of the years I have known Sylvaine, she has always entered a space with a smile on her face and a witty quip. Sylvaine has been a consistent presence at the BTU, leaning into several initiatives, committees, and organizing efforts over the years. She has been a delegate, marshalled rallies, testified at school committee meetings, and more. She has co-led the Teacher Policy Program and served on the Racial Justice Committee, Black Caucus, as an APALA member, COPE, and a Health and Welfare Trustee. Throughout all of her contributions, Sylvaine has demonstrated selflessness and true care for her union siblings.

In 2023, Sylvaine was the recipient of the AFT Massachusetts Distinguished Service Award when a colleague shared that, *"Sylvaine has truly become a leader in our union, and a mentor for rising leaders. She has been a rock for our members of color – checking in on members throughout the district when she senses they are in need of community support, and encouraging members to find ways to plug into union work. She is constantly engaging members of her own school community and those beyond in BTU campaigns, big and small."*

"She works tirelessly for the school, her students, and the entire staff at the Trotter School. She is a hard worker and loves her students."

– Alice Yong

"To put into words what Sylvaine means to the Trotter is not possible. There can only be one Sylvaine Lestrade. I remember when I first got to the Trotter she was on the hiring team and they made her the mouth piece to deliver feedback on my lesson. Needless to say, I always remind her that she was the one that gave me the hardest time during my interview. We always laugh about that and since that day she has been nothing but kind and helpful to me. With Sylvaine retiring it is going to leave a huge gap in the Trotter Community. Sylvaine is one of the kindest and most caring people you will ever meet. She loves her job and the school from the staff straight back to the students. She hates seeing people not treated fairly and will go to bat for you no matter what. She is a fighter. She is respected and loved by her colleagues and students and I jokingly tell her all the time, there is no one in this school that scares me but you. I know that this is going to be a big loss for us as a school community as she retires because she has made such an impact with the friendships and relationships that she has built. Her presence, her strength, her persistence, her resilience, and most certainly her determination and that smile are going to certainly be missed. She has left me with ***IMPOSSIBLE*** *shoes to fill. We love you Lestrade.*

– Kenneth Pritchard

Sylvaine, thank you for everything that you have done and will continue to do in your role as a building representative and leader in the BTU. You have brought joy, laughter, and tenacity to every space you have been in. Congratulations on this well-deserved award!

Peter Mullin
Curley Elementary School

This year's BTU Elementary Building Representative Award goes to **Peter Mullin** of the Curley School who has been a fastidious upholder of the contract at the building level and a contributor to the union in a number of ways. A member since 2018, Peter has established positive, productive relationships with his co-reps, colleagues, and administration in efforts to problem solve in proactive ways. In instances where this has proven impossible, Peter has never shied away from filing several grievances to uphold

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Know Your Rights Caren Carew

Is Summer School Treated Like the Regular School Year Contractually?



Caren Carew
BTU Secondary
Field Representative

No, it is not. Summer School is not governed by the collective bargaining agreement in the same way the standard school year is. Some time ago the BTU took the issue of summer school salary not being retirement worthy to court to demand that this earned income be retirement worthy. Unfortunately, the court ruled against the case. The BTU/BPS contract reports, *"The School Department shall determine the summer program curriculum, all aspects of operation and administration of the program, including employment in the program, salary, hours, and conditions of employment. Employee participation in the summer program shall be voluntary. Selection of employees shall be as determined by the [school] Department."*

Where does a City of Boston Employee turn when things seem unbearable?

The City of Boston provides a 'free and confidential' program for its employees and their immediate families called the Employees Assistance Program (EAP). This service is there to help said individuals with challenges they may be dealing with including substance abuse issues, job loss, depression, grief, being stressed out, and the like. To speak with an EAP clinician call 617-635-2200, Monday-Friday, 7:00 am-5:00 pm. If in crisis mode, call 617-635-4500 to page an EAP clinician who is on call. EAP will continue to work with affected individuals as long as necessary.

When and how can a teacher collect Unemployment Compensation?

A teacher is eligible for Unemployment Compensation when they have been laid off or have not been rehired by the school system. If a teacher has been issued a letter of termination and has not been rehired as of the effective date of said termination, then they are eligible for Unemployment benefits.

When a terminated teacher is paid over the summer months due to being on a 26 paycheck schedule, they are still able to collect Unemployment. These 'summer payments' are based on a percentage of their pay that has been deducted from each paycheck throughout the school year added together to provide said teacher with 'stretch' payments over the summer based on work already done between September and June of that academic year.

If a provisional teacher has been granted a letter of Reasonable Assurance (RA), they are **NOT** eligible to collect Unemployment because they have been reasonably assured of a job in the upcoming academic year. If a provisional teacher has not been granted an RA, and has received a termination letter from the BPS, they **ARE** eligible to collect Unemployment Compensation.

If a teacher has been terminated due to just cause and has done so via a settlement agreement drawn up with the BPS Labor Relations Department, then they must refer to the terms of said settlement in relation to filing for Unemployment Compensation when applicable.

To obtain more information, call the Massachusetts Division of Employment via the web *www.detma.org/workers/howtofile.htm* or by phone TeleClaims services at 1-877-626-6800 or 617-626-6800. Hours are Monday-Thursday 8:30 am-6:30 pm; Friday 8:00 am-4:30 pm.

According to MASSHIRE Department of Career Services, this is the process for opening an unemployment claim:

Ways to File a Claim:

- Online at *www.mass.gov/dus* (you must register and create a profile with MyMassGov)
- Monday through Thursday by Phone (TeleClaim) at 877-626-6800

Information Needed to File:

- Social Security Number/Alien Registration
- Individual Email Address (Required)
- Employment Start and End Dates
- Signed Copy of Service Waiver, if applicable
- Banking Information
- Dependent Social Security Number and Date of Birth, if applicable
- Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN)
- Reason for Separation – Lack of Work (Lay-off)
- You'll be asked if you work in a public service job-your answer is **NO** because you are laid off/non-renewed
- When asked if you belong to a union and reference is made to hiring – your answer is **NO** because unlike many trade unions, ours and most service employee unions do not run a hiring hall for jobs through their union

How Your Unemployment Insurance (UI) Benefits are Determined:

- Once your claim is established, a 'benefit credit' will be calculated
- Your 'benefit year' will be the 52-weeks following the effective date of your claim
- Be the amount of your weekly benefits. You will receive approximately 50% of your average gross weekly wage
- As of October 2025, the current maximum benefit rate is $1,105 per week
- You can receive regular UI benefits up to a maximum of 30 weeks

What does COBRA mean?

COBRA stands for the Consolidated Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1985. It is the law that requires employers who offer group health insurance plans to give their employees the opportunity to stay on their group health insurance plan if they are no longer employed by the employer and the former employee isn't eligible for health insurance coverage through a spouse's insurance.

If a teacher is terminated from the BPS/City of Boston, they will be mailed information about COBRA benefits. For further inquiries concerning COBRA continuation of coverage, get in touch with the Health Benefits and Insurance Office, Room 807, City Hall. Give them a call at 617-635-4570.

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BTU Takes to the Capitol for the AFT Convention…

continued from page 1

for 40 years of service while **Brenda Chaney, Marilyn Marion,** and **Mae Bishop** were each recognized for 50 years of service. I must say – between these four women, elected officials like **Jessica Tang, Amrita Dani, Bianca Pierre,** and **Lea Serena,** and delegates like **Amy Gebo, Natalia Cuadra-Saez, Katina McClain, Hannah Didehbani, A. Vanessa La Roque, Josette Teneus, Adrienne Jordan, Ramona Brown,** and many others I apologize for not naming – the convention really revealed the extent to which Women of Color are the backbone, trailblazers, and living legends of the BTU.

One personal highlight was an evening event that AFT coordinated with the Smithsonian for exclusive access to the African American History Museum. Seeing a coat worn by Rosa Parks, a letter written about Nat Turner, a trumpet played by Louis Armstrong, was both inspiring and emotional for me, as a biracial person and American history teacher. I will forever be grateful for that experience and am excited to incorporate what I saw there into my course at Charlestown High School.

A big theme and topic of conversation was that essential, fundamental, tricky, at times frustrating word: ***Democracy.*** The need to defend Democracy from the Trump administration's attempts to strip voting rights, question election results, and bully opponents was paramount. Our own **Jessica Tang** is at the forefront of AFT's efforts to ensure polling places are fair and accessible to all – stay tuned for more information on how to get involved. At the same time, many conversations over meals and between sessions centered on AFT's own internal democracy. As a first-time attendee, I definitely realized I have much to learn about the inner workings of our national organization, how decisions get made, where power lies, and yes, how to intervene effectively in meetings that are utilizing good ol' Roberts Rules of Order.

For a much more thorough recap of the convention and AFT-MA's role in it, I highly recommend checking out our Instagram account (*instagram.com/aftmassachusetts*). Our statewide Secretary-Treasurer **Brant Duncan** and the rest of the team work very hard to document our strong work across the Commonwealth.

Reflecting on the convention and what it means to be an AFT member, our National President **Randi Weingarten** put it best: ***"WE Get Sh*t Done!"*** Let's have a great rest of our summers and get back to that work because if anything was clear at the 2026 convention, it's that the work we do in the labor movement and at our worksites is more important and urgent than ever.

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Lounge Office	617-288-3322
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Tremont Credit Union	781-843-5626

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WHEN WRITING:
All correspondence to the ***Boston Union Teacher*** must be typewritten and include the author's name and school or department if not school-based.

All articles must be appropriate to the publication, and in good taste.

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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Caitlin Gaffny

Gearing Up For a Summer of Organizing



Caitlin Gaffny
BTU Elementary
Field Representative

As the school year draws to a close, there are a range of emotions as some schools close their doors forever and educators are forced to move on to new chapters in the face of devastating budget cuts. In speaking with members across the system, the narrative is the same – you love your students, you love your school, and you love your community. The pain of leaving it behind is palpable. The shifts at the school level will be acutely felt – not just the loss of support, but the loss of relationships that mean so much to the children and the adults that serve them.



Despite the heartache, members are working hard to make sure that students and staff end the month on a positive note while we gear up for a summer full of organizing.

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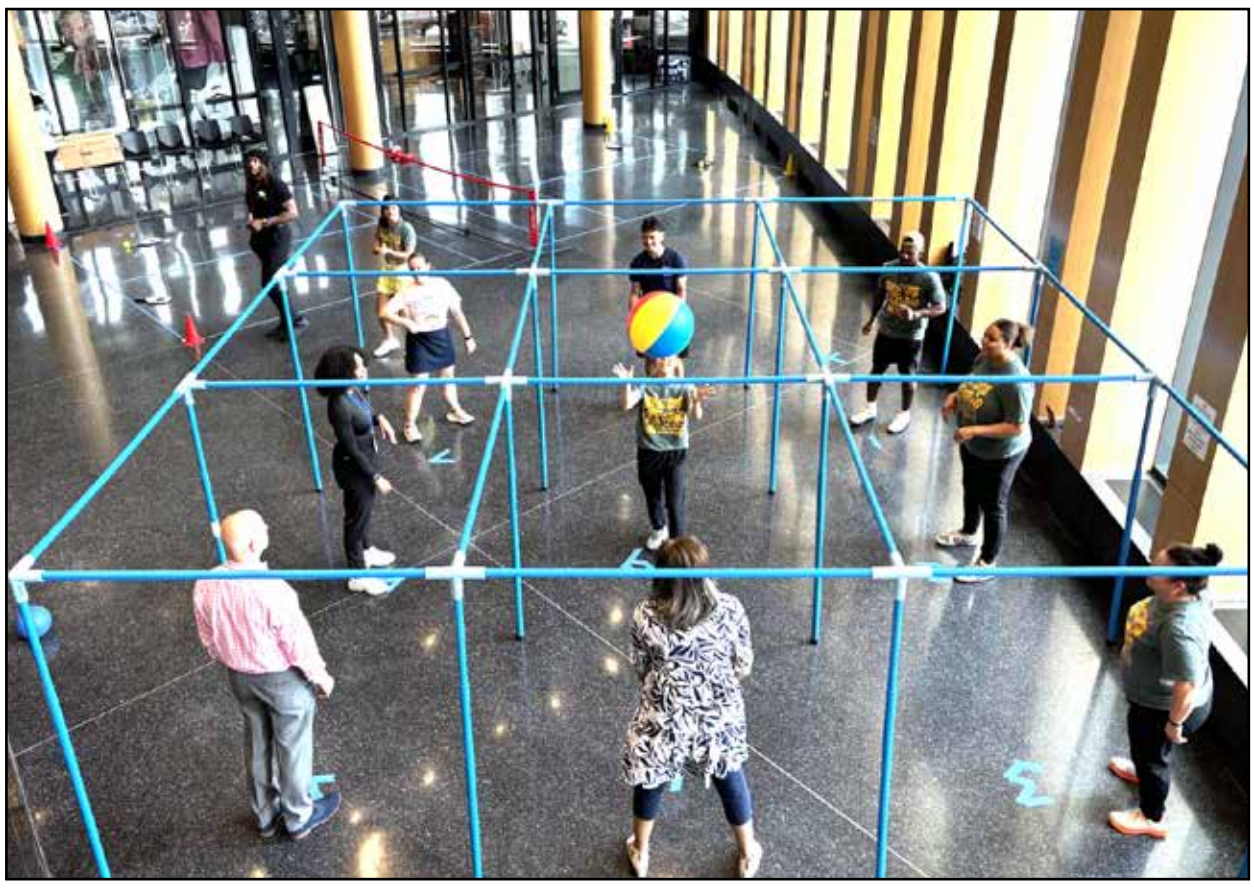
ELT Working Group learned more about the history of ELT from former President **Richard Stutman,** reviewed our current contract language, developed organizing priorities to elevate with our CBC, and closed out the year by creating and launching a survey for Schedule A school members to gather data on the effects of ELT on our students and staff. If you are at a Schedule A school (BTU contract, pg. 62), encourage your colleagues to have their voices heard through this survey, the CBC, or joining the ELT Working Group next year.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Pre-K Working Group continued their space to problem solve, hear what peers are working on, and get feedback from one another. They worked hard to determine goals and long term objectives to elevate as possible contract organizing items, like safety, staffing, and toileting, providing input as the district updates their circular. If you are a Pre-K teacher looking to connect with peers, consider joining this group.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

On June 6 and 13, there were two more beautiful **Educator Days at the ISGM**. Several educators in many different roles enjoyed a wonderful morning making art, participating in visual thinking lessons, mindfulness activities, and exploring the galleries. It was truly a needed respite, and educators were remarking on how the peaceful calm of the museum could not have come at a better time.



★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

If you are looking for practice changing professional development, consider **Thinking Through Art (TTA),** for Boston Public Schools teachers. The TTA program is proven to boost culturally responsive instruction, critical thinking, and social-emotional learning, and the summer sessions take place at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum – one of the most beautiful professional development venues in the city! You can join a community of educators to master student-centered strategies that expand learning horizons through a visual art curriculum and free guided museum visits – *including bus transportation.* This got a cheer from the crowd in attendance! I had the pleasure of spending time with old friends and meeting some new ones. It is open to all roles, active and retired members. Please consider joining us next year!

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

On June 11, **Crystal Rosa, Timothy West,** and other members of the Health and Wellness Department were engaging passersby at **Bolling in International Day of Play,** so that people of all ages can promote, prioritize, and participate in all of the benefits that physical literacy and engagement brings. They had so many fun games set up and were bringing smiles to people's faces as they had the chance to "be a kid again." Who doesn't love table tennis or cornhole?

President **Erik Berg** even got in on the action. If you would like to hear about dynamic ways to get your students moving, reach out to Crystal and Timothy to hear more about the work that they do and creative ways you can bring more play to your students.

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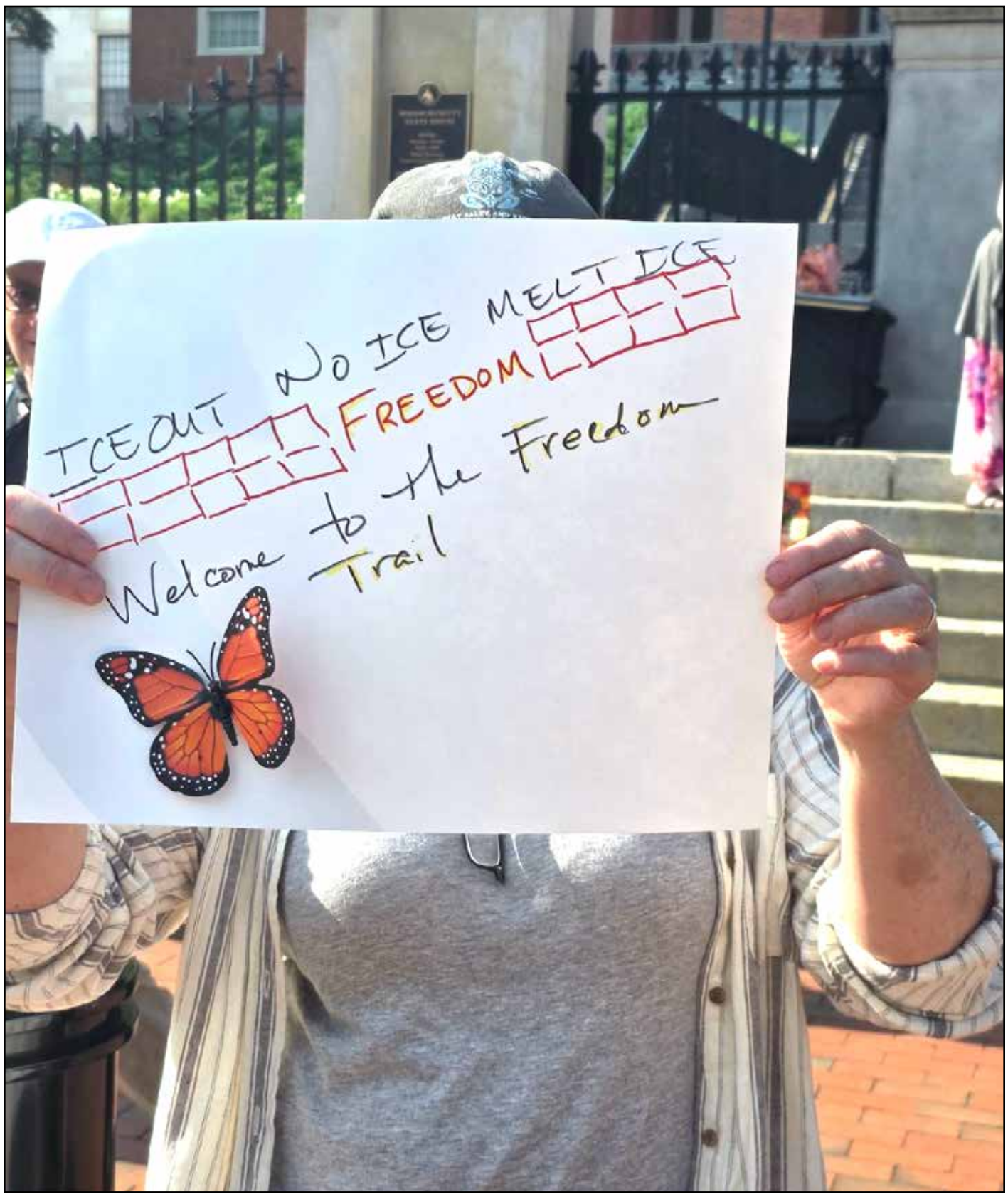
The best way to end the school year was in Louis Bello's K0/K1 classroom at the **Chittick Community Read Aloud Day** on June 17, organized by their awesome librarian, **Kadian Simmonds.** I was thrilled to see one of my former Tobin students, **Mohamed Diallo,** who is working with Councilor **Ruthzee Louijeune** this summer. Mohamed was always a leader, an integral part of our TLF grant work on attendance as an ambassador. He is about to head into his junior year at Morehouse, studying Business Finance and Sociology. It is beautiful to see our students continuing their journey and giving back to the city







BTU Joins LUCE Vigil



The Boston Teachers Union supported a 24-hour vigil outside the Massachusetts State House to respond to the "devastating killings and escalating ICE presence targeting our members" and "honor the lives of those who have been killed, support communities impacted by immigration enforcement, and affirm our collective power to grieve, organize, and demand justice." The vigil was organized by LUCE, the ICE verification network that the BTU has worked with formally for over a year.

Many BTU members and staff joined the 4-hour window to pay respects, pass out information about LUCE, and engage in reflective actions like restorative yoga and art-making. It was interesting holding a vigil at the State House, as it gave us the opportunity to interact with many tourists, both American and international, with the vast majority expressing their appreciation for our presence and their disgust with ICE and the Trump administration. One Australian visitor told AFT-MA Organizer and BPS Parent **Jeremy Shenk** "I've been traveling around America and it's heartwarming to see that you all aren't as brainwashed as we might think!"

We must remember that:

- No One is Illegal on Stolen Land
- ICE is younger than me and it can and must be abolished
- it is our responsibility to mourn the dead and fight like hell for the living

As someone who grew up in Maine, less than two hours from where **Johan Sebastien Guerrero** was murdered, I have been deeply affected and upset by his and every death at the hands of ICE. I even traveled back home to take part in protests. I'm proud to be part of a union that is united with our community on the demand **ICE OUT** and encourage every reader to get involved with our Unafraid Educator Committee next year.

Outdoor Learning at the Boston Teachers Union School

By Barbara McLaughlin

Sara Gardner and I visited **Alice McCabe's** fourth grade classroom at the BTU School last November. Ms. McCabe has been working with **Sal Burnette** from the Boston Nature Center (BNC) as part of a Science of Massachusetts partnership, a statewide program that helps teachers to enhance their science curriculum and incorporate outdoor learning. Sal also works with K1 students at the school. He explained that he and other BNC staff prepare and teach each lesson and bring all resources and supplies. Teachers follow up by having students do nature journaling. Ms. McCabe has built these visits into her weekly schedule.

As part of the unit ***"Energy on Earth,"*** Sal taught a lesson on using evidence to determine what owls eat. Although lessons usually occur outdoors, because of the windy conditions and the work students would be doing (dissecting owl pellets and organizing artifacts) the lesson took place in the classroom. Students were excited to see Sal. He began by asking them what an owl pellet is. Student responses included, *"Owl barf," "Like a cat's hair ball," "It's what they spit out."* Sal asked, *"What do owls eat? Where do they get their energy?"* Students' responses included voles, shrews, mice, small rodents, and small birds. Sal explained that owls can't digest hair and bones and they spit these out. By dissecting and studying these pellets scientists can learn what owls eat. He displayed a chart that showed the owl at the top of the food web in the area in which it lives.

The scientists then received the equipment they would need for their work and started to scrape away the pellets to see what they would find within. One student said, *"I know it's a bone because it's hard and I can't break it."* Another said, *"I think I found a skull. It has a horn thing at the top and teeth."* They placed each artifact under the appropriate animal and category (bone, teeth, hair, skull) on a chart. At the end of the class, Ms. McCabe had students take out their field journals. On the left-hand page, they drew a picture or taped a small artifact of one thing they had found and labeled what it was. Students talked within their groups about their artifacts and the evidence they had used to determine what each was. *"It's a shrew. It has a big round eye and matches the size on the chart." "It's a rodent jaw. It has a bunch of little teeth."* On the right-hand page, they responded to a writing prompt, *"What do owls eat and how do you know?"* The lesson concluded with students sharing their responses. Students were highly engaged throughout the lesson.



On May 29th, we visited the BTU School for their Green-Up Day. BNC's Green-Up Program helps schools to diversify the plant types in their outdoor spaces, in order to better manage higher temperatures, excess stormwater, and create a beautiful space to enjoy and learn in. **Sal Burnette, Emily Major,** and **Yoshie Vinton** from BNC worked with **Lesley Strang's** K1 class and **Alice McCabe's** fourth grade class to add plantings to the school's garden. Ms. Strang's kindergartners have been studying the habitats, adaptations, and life cycles of trees with Sal. Emily reviewed what they had learned and explained they were going to plant ferns that would become a habitat and food for birds, bees, and other insects and creatures. They worked in groups with Sal, Emily, and Yoshie to gently remove the plants from their containers and release the roots. They problem-solved how big a hole they needed to dig. Everyone weighed in on this: *"We need more space. We need a bigger hole." As they worked, they made exciting discoveries, "We found a worm!" "Another one!"* After patting the soil around the fern her group had planted, one student exclaimed, *"We're doing an amazing job!"* When their work was done, students shared what they had seen. They had noticed worms, flowers, ants, and rocks. When asked their favorite part of the lesson they responded, *"Shoveling,"* and, you guessed it, *"The worms."*

Next, we observed Ms. McCabe's fourth grade class. They have been studying animal adaptations with Sal. Emily began by asking students to define the terms *"habitat"* and *"drought."* She explained that our environment experiences periods of drought and that it's important to plant trees and plants that do well in this type of habitat, including trees with large root systems to help them absorb water. Students worked in three groups, planting ferns, hostas, and a redbud tree. Students approached each task with the attitude that "*We know how to do this. We've done this before."* Emily reminded students that roots need room to stretch out. The students planting the tree used a shovel to dig a hole wide and deep enough to provide room for the roots to open up. Students noticed lots of rocks, roots, and a few worms as they were digging. After hoisting the tree into the hole, they packed the dirt back in, being careful to keep the tree upright so it would grow straight. The ferns were planted in a shady area of the established garden. I asked a student why this area was chosen and she explained that ferns don't like a lot of sun and the trees would help them not to shrivel up. The third group planted the hostas in clusters going down a hill, an area that hadn't been cultivated yet. Students noticed a lot of rocks and sandy soil there. Sal called students' attention to how the soil there was different from soil in the area that had many trees and plants. The soil there was moister and less rocky and sandy. Students' efforts were reflected in the beautiful habitat they are creating in their schoolyard.

We had a chance to touch base with Ms. McCabe after the lesson. We asked her what she feels the impact of doing science outdoors has been over time for her students. She feels that working with Sal outdoors has

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Know Your Rights...

continued from page 3

What is the severance pay policy in the BPS for teachers?

The BTU Contract details, *"Persons who retire, resign, or die after ten (10) years of teaching in the BPS shall be paid at the ratio of 40% of accumulated, unused sick days, without limitation. Payment shall be based on the annual rate of pay of the person at the time of death, retirement or resignation. In the event of death, payment shall be made to the estate." …"severance shall be paid in two installments. One half of the payment shall be made on or before December 31st of the year of retirement, and the other half shall be paid on or before December 31st of the year after retirement."* If a person has taught less than ten full years in the BPS, they lose their accumulated sick days if they leave the district.

Is there any life insurance through the BPS for teachers?

The BTU/BPS labor management agreement details; "The employer [City of Boston] contribution to the life insurance portion of the group insurance plan ($5,000 policy) shall be 50% with a provision for teachers to purchase more life insurance at a low rate" If you are interested in looking into this option, contact the City of Boston's Group Health Insurance Office at 617 635-4570, located on the 8th floor of Boston City Hall.

What does 'buying back' time for retirement mean?

Buying back time for retirement credible service applies to people who were laid off or resigned from BPS and took money out of their retirement account to live on while laid off and now have to pay it back or must work the extra years in order to have it credited towards their retirement. It also applies to people who worked eligible jobs, subbed, and the like who may need to pay into the retirement system to have that time/money credited towards their retirement. You cannot pay for time not worked in this manner in order to accelerate your eligibility for retirement (alas)!

In order to determine what credible service time towards retirement you currently have and how much time you may be eligible to buy back, you must make a written request to the Boston Retirement Office, Room 816 in Boston City Hall. Get a time/date stamped copy of your request when you submit it for your records. You then will need to work out an individualized payment plan with the Retirement Office once your case has been reviewed and the amount of time and its corresponding dollar amount has been arrived at.

What are my protest rights?

When engaged in protests in the community, these are your rights according to the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union): **The BTU/AFT does not provide attorneys for members involved in protest activities.**

1. You don't need a permit to protest in response to breaking news and you don't need a permit to march in the street or along sidewalks as long as you're not obstructing traffic or access to buildings.
2. When you are lawfully present in any public space, you have the right to photograph anything in plain view, including federal buildings and the police.
3. If you believe your rights have been violated, when you can, write down everything you remember, get contact information for witnesses, and take photographs of any injuries.
4. If you get stopped by the police, ask if you're free to go. If they say yes, calmly walk away.
5. If you get arrested, you have a right to ask why. Otherwise, say you wish to remain silent and ask for a lawyer immediately. Don't sign, say or agree to anything without a lawyer present.
6. If you get stopped by a member of the military or any law enforcement officer at a protest, you have the right to remain silent or to tell them that you'll only answer questions in the presence of an attorney – no matter your citizenship or immigration status.

Ash and Bone

I measured the time by my daughter's age. In 2008 my mother, Marcy, was the picture of health. She wasn't on any medication. She did aerobics three times a week and hosted luncheons, cocktails, dinners and at our house so frequently that she would lie to me about it. No, she would say, it's just Teri, you like Teri. But then there would be more guests. The ladies from the library, the girls from exercise, her book group, the fundraising team. She had a yearly luncheon with two other Marcys that she met at the grocery store.

I didn't get married in my early thirties like everyone else. Then I finally met someone. We hadn't had time to get married, but everyone was so happy. It was my parents 50th anniversary and they threw a big bash. I was pregnant but nobody outside of the family knew. As soon as the party was over, when we were in the kitchen talking, my mother and I started to plan my wedding. We were always planning the next party. A few months later I was visiting and I noticed that the whites of her eyes looked yellow. She asked if I could drive her to my baby shower because she had instances of dizziness. She crashed her car but was unhurt. Apparently everyone knew something was wrong. I was eight months pregnant when the doctors told us that the cancer had spread. I cried so much in that bereavement room that there was concern I would go into labor. My wedding was cancelled. I gave birth. Two months later my mother died. I stayed on the Vineyard with the baby and my father because my prospective husband had started a new job and had already missed too much work with the illness, the funeral, the newborn. My baby spit up constantly. She only slept for a few hours at a time. I didn't know what to do and I hadn't slept in two months. I needed my mother but she was gone.

My maternity leave ended and my dad and I moved back to Somerville. My father was alone in the apartment my parents had rented near our place in Somerville where I had planned to drop off the baby on my way to work. My brother called from Baltimore and explained that it was my choice to help our father but that he had made his bed and that I didn't have to do it.

While I was away there had been a change in department heads. I had a new boss who had been told how great I was, but I wasn't that girl anymore. I hadn't slept much in eight months, I lost my mother and I was having difficulty doing what I was told. For ten years I had been working in the literacy department as a coach and program director. I launched writing workshops around the district. I modeled writing conferences. Our department was all about constructivism, time and ownership. But my new boss was in charge of *No Child Left Behind* and didn't want me going off script. She kept me in the office doing things like ripping the perforated spines from testing booklets or inventorying curriculum boxes. I could tell that she didn't like it when I pumped at my cubicle, the breast pump's bumping suction going hickety-hick.

People will tell you that only time will heal, but nothing that anyone can say will dull the pain of finding her lost library book, touching a grocery list in her handwriting found in a jacket pocket. But we had my little girl to distract us. Sasha grew, and started kindergarten, called my father Pop-Pop. She liked to build with big cardboard blocks at his apartment.

My father was a sailor, a captain. He was content on the water and moored his sloop in the little fishing town of Menemsha. Neither of his children liked to go out on the boat. He wanted to advise us about our careers. His expectations were high and he didn't want us to get behind the eight ball. We felt trapped and slightly nauseous and we didn't welcome all of the advice we would receive far from shore. We didn't like staying to hose off the boat and tidy everything in the slip. Eventually my father put an ad in the local paper looking for sailing buddies and formed a close crew of older fellows. The harbormaster called them the old men and the sea. They saw a different side of him. A side that was caring and interested. I was doing my best, but it was my mother who we all loved to be around. We were both broken without her and we didn't know how to talk to each other. I spent the summers on the Vineyard with my father. We threw parties with all the old friends, with new friends from Sasha's camp with their kids. We tried to fill the big emptiness.

We lost my father during the nor'easter of 2015. He told me he was dying, but the doctors disagreed. I had already called my brother to sound a false alarm more than once. I was sitting there in the hospital room and the team came in. They all took a few steps towards me as if they didn't know what I would do and that someone might have to grab me or something. Outside the storm had already started. The winds whipped the snow against the windows. Someone said that if I needed to go be with my daughter that I should leave or I wouldn't be able to get home. That year we had eight snow days. I tried to hold a shiva, but the universe wouldn't allow it. Finally a friend of the family suggested that I wait until the summer for the funeral.

My big brother Jim and I spent our childhood in the surf. We rode the waves until our lips turned blue. We got dunked in the washing machine, water in your nose, sand in your bathing suit, your top knocked off. As teens we drank beers at bonfires and went skinny dipping in the dark. I didn't ride the big waves anymore, but I still spent the summer swimming and paddling, teaching my daughter to dig for clams and sail a sunfish. My brother didn't visit much even before my parents were gone.

A person's ashes come in a large plastic bag. Ash and Bone. Most of the ashes were buried next to my mother, but my brother has set some aside. We went out to the Aquinnah side of the harbor where it was less crowded. The icy June water burned my legs. I concentrated on holding the bag of dad above my head. Jim lagged. I had to swim back to him. His face looked pale. He said his arms felt heavy and he was having difficulty breathing. I asked him if he wanted the boogie board that we had brought for Sasha, who was playing on the beach. He turned and swam towards the shore until it was shallow enough to walk the rest of the way. I stayed in the icy water treading with the bag above my head. Jim approached my daughter and motioned for the board. She shook her head. I yelled but they couldn't hear me. A few minutes of negotiation passed. Jim's laughter floated out to me. Sasha was little, but like everyone in our family, she didn't respond well to direction. Somehow Jim secured the board and kicked out to me, I held on to the side and we paddled out past the jetty and let the ashes drift out with the tide.

– Anne Slater

To breathe the joyous breath of summer! The time has come for our third literacy issue of the* Boston Union Teacher *Newspaper. We are delighted to provide a showcase for the immense artistic talent of our union. In this issue you will find poems, photographs, stories and slices of life contributed by our members and school community. Relax and enjoy!

Your Boston Union Teacher Editors, Anne, Cecil and Brendan



I Never Forget

a poem for home buyers

I am yours now, and you mine.
You, the new dwellers, of many who have lived inside me.
Will you fill me with your laughter and tears?
All I ask is for you to be gentle with me, with you.

I cannot control anything. I am at your mercy!
I only stand, or at least hope to keep standing, and contain.
Contain the river of life, boxes of childhood memorabilia,
tins of old keys one can't rid of, drawers of clothes people don't wear.
What will you ask me to hold?

Do you see that I was once a forest giant?
Animals roamed all over me, birds made their homes in me,
insects swarmed me.
Do you remember that all my metals were stolen from deep under your feet, formed into hardware and sold?
This house I am never forgets.

How long will you know and care for me?
Long enough for grandchildren to play here?
For your aging bodies to rest their bones here?
However long we belong to each other,
come to me with your peaceful hearts,
for me, for you.

– Cristie Reich

Broom and Mop

I sit in a room of the unknowable with a tree growing from my right palm.

I believe it is a maple tree because I like maple syrup on pancakes and climbed maples as a boy.

Would I be giving myself away if I acknowledge there is a palm tree at the end of the mind?

So, there it is, not an obvious clue to my reading habits, but a notion of leisure once the mind capsizes in beauty, a paper boat in the ocean deep.

There has to be a connection between my maple and that palm tree. What the hell, I whispered to my mom after I fell out of a maple tree and busted open my head.

Yes, my bones ache today.

What can I tell them is another clue to books read, as if I were playing identity fraud in a funhouse mirror.

Images just skip across the great lake of eyes.

I guess like stones.

Are my mine clear or turbulent now?

Why not peer into the reflecting pool of yours?

Has the sun risen or set in them?

Are there curveballs of hail
pitching a no hitter of perceptions?

Questions challenge sight.

What are we seeing, anyway, through these filters, societal and otherwise?

This might be the time to mention the phenomenology of raindrops on iris petals to an infant daughter, that I tried to read Edmund Husserl on Greyhound bus bound for the Pacific.

Is it?

I attempted to clean my room today, had reason to pick up my pills at the pharmacy.

But the tree in my hand became unmanageable.

First the squirrels, then the blue jays.

Luckily, there was a cardinal in its sky-tipped branches, singing, as I searched (really did) for broom and mop.

Because There's a Moon.

The moon asks for a glass of water and a sleeping pill. It wants to heist a conscious sky.

To a new location under the influence of a wolf, howling for its mate.

Be there with them.

Fall asleep.

The moon imagines it's a fish of waves and shorelines. It owns an invisible overcoat, skims across oceans with cormorants.

Once it built a small boat from seaweed and shells, bailed.

Night with buckets of clouds.

The moon is a piece of fruit in a lover's mouth.

It is an excited tongue of tales, skilled in writing romance novels about its lover, the earth.

It lives in a penthouse of visions, prefers cities without streetlights.

The moon is the third eye of the world.

It loves the cold imprint of time on its forehead.

It is a feast of silver and gold for trees and insects.

It knows how to wait for nothing in an empty mind.

– Richard Martin

Algorithm Hostages

I embedded quantum Post-its
Between the lines of this poem
Without regard to mythological
Statistics or space travel.

On days, the sky lowered a basket
Of wasted time, I impregnated
The wind with truth, not the carte
Blanche of historical lies.

Those in the cheap seats of regret
Demanded automaton ablutions,
The right to panic.

The laissez faire of emotion
Replicated a perfume with notes
Of a French kiss and Dear John Letter.
My mind was a fire hazard.
Then things changed.

A night of pink thunder
And blue lightning
Spiked the atmosphere
With divine conversation.

The prophecy of uncertainty
Hung in the air like a dirigible.

Bales of celestial clouds
Rolled across the sky, under
An umbrella of shooting stars.

On pedestals of mourning, cats
Cried, as dancers whirled
Across cosmic runes.

– Richard Martin

Richard Martin is a retired BPS principal (Harvard-Kent Elementary). His most recent book is Formula for Electromagnetic Candy/Selected Poems (Spuyten Duyvil, 2026). He is a past recipient of a National Endowment Fellowship for Poetry.



Fan Me With A Brick

By Janey Frank,
Retired Special Education Teacher

When I was four years old, I knew I wanted to teach. I don't know why, as I didn't know any teachers. Once I did attend school I paid close attention to each teacher and absorbed what I deemed good teaching vs bad.

When I was eight years old, I knew I wanted to teach children with disabilities. The reason, this time, was clear--Tommy, a neighborhood child who was well born and developed encephalitis in his first weeks. I was drawn to him and shortly realized that I could connect with children like Tommy.

Fast forward to my becoming certified as a teacher of general and special ed classes, and to the 35 subsequent years of my career in the BPS--years filled with ups, downs, struggles, victories, and, thankfully, a plethora of stories. Some of them not appropriate for the BUT!

That brings me to February, 1975 when I taught a substantially separate special needs classroom at the JFK School in Jamaica Plain. As most elementary teachers know, February is a short month chock full of content that needs to be covered at the elementary level – Ground Hog's Day, President's Day, Valentine's Day, and, as it so happened, BPS introduced a series of short stories to celebrate extraordinary Black people as part of Black History Month. As if that weren't enough, it was Friday before vacation, and it was our school's turn to erect a display at BPS Headquarters on 15 Beacon Street. I was in charge of visiting all of the other classrooms and gathering items for the display which I would assemble at Beacon Street after school.

As soon as the students arrived, that morning I explained our busy day and told them we had to complete our projects and clean the room if we wanted to have a party that afternoon. It was to be an award party, where children whose religions prevented them from celebrating Valentine's Day, would join us in celebrating their collective hard work in school. Everyone had a task to complete and I worked with a few to finish our dioramas featuring paper tissue dolls we had been making to depict certain historical events. Doing this reminded me of my mother who, when I was an undergraduate at Lesley College, was asked by a friend how I was enjoying college. She shook her head and replied, "We're paying $1800 in tuition (1965-1969), and all she does is make pop-up Valentines and paper dolls!"

Our classroom was buzzing when, much to my pleasant surprise, young Sandra called out, "But, Mrs. Frank, we didn't do Circle. Students with disabilities thrive on routine and consistency, so Sandra wouldn't hear of my pleas to forgo Circle, just this once. So, I asked her if she would like to be my helper and write on the blackboard for me. She was honored, and, as I did every day of the year, I asked, "What day is today?" They answered, in unison, "Friday."

"Right." I replied.

"What month is it?"

"FebRUary," was the group response, with emphasis on, 'RU,' just as we practiced each dayl

"And what is the date," I prodded.

"Sixteen," answered the very well-trained flock.

"Whose birthday is it?" I asked of the eager children who had heard stories about presidents, scientists, musicians, civil rights heroes, orators, etc., every day, for at least 2 weeks straight. Much to my disbelief, they answered, "Abraham Lincoln's?" I was stunned and, quite honestly, very impressed with myself.

"Riiiight!' I shouted, gleefully. You'd think, by now, I would have known better, take my win and glory in being such a super teacher, and let it go. Nope, not I. Instead, I followed up, in a very sing-song tone, "But is he going to have a birthday party?"

"Noooooo, they answered, on cue.

"Why not? I asked, enthusiastically.

There it was. Dead silence. Pregnant pause.

"Come on, think. Why isn't Abe having a party?"

Then, who but little Alice, a child whose mother believed in corporal punishment, blurted out, "Because he ain't help cleanin' the room!"

Talk about deflating my ego. . .Finally, after careful reteaching, I explained that Abe had met his maker, so to speak. We finished that day partying and getting ready for vacation.

A week later, we returned from vacation. During the week, the custodian had shined our vinyl floors, cleaned the chairs and desks, and even refinished the blackboards. The room was pristine. Everyone was excited and ready to learn. Back to normal, back to Circle.

At the end of discussing the date, and sharing what we had done over the vacation, I asked the children who had had a birthday over the past week. They all replied, "George Washington."

Aha! Redemption. "But did he have a birthday party?" I ventured in the usual sing-song tone.

Again, a unanimous, "Noooooooo!"

"Why not? asked this teacher who had learned nothing from the past episode.

Deafening silence. "Come on, think, why didn't George have a party?"

Nothing but blank faces stared at me. Then came Alice's little voice, as she surveyed the classroom with her eyes, shrugged her shoulders and murmured, "The room's clean!"

I immediately thought back to my 6th grade teacher, who would often use a saying I never understood until moments like these.

"Fan me with a brick!"

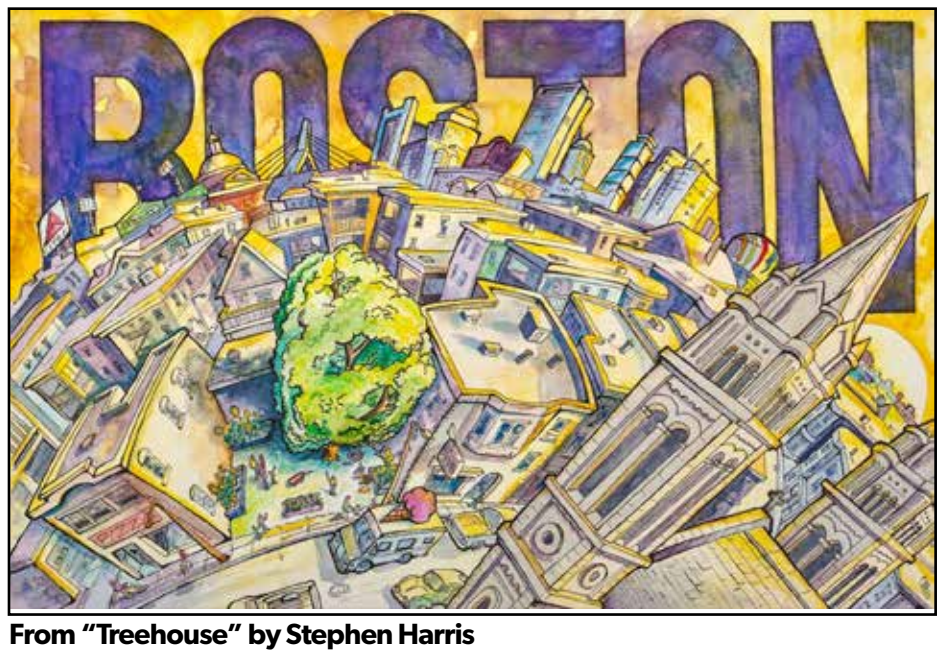
On Meetings

I.
Tomorrow, there will be a meeting,
After the faculty's general session
And union time,
To discuss plans
To form a committee
That will schedule sessions
To develop a plan
For a new school-within-our-old-school.
This meeting must happen ASAP
So that the proposal
Will be ready
For the School Committee's
Mid-month deadline
To approve
"New and sustainable structures for schools."
However, the person in charge
Of scheduling for the sub-committee
On small learning communities
Is on vacation this week,
But the tag-line below her
Out-of-office automated reply
Had a link to a website that
Indicated the whole board
Is currently under review
By the joint committee
On hard ways and inadequate means.

II.
There is a meeting over yonder…
Gonna get there someday, Lord,
I'm gonna get there.
There's a meeting of minds
Somewhere beyond the blue-gray yonder
And I'll know when I arrive
Because there'll be no more talking.
There's a meeting
I must first attend,
A meeting of dark grounds
And hot, hot water –
That daily meeting,
The magic merger that triggers
A chemical reaction…
"The burning ahhhh"
That makes all other meetings
Possible…
The meeting of pen and paper,
Of time and purpose,
Of love and fury,
Of right, wrong,
And the vast, daunting desert in between…
The meeting of needs and expectations,
Hopes and reality,
With patience and passion,
And, in the end…
The maker.

– Seth Peterson

Writing for Children: Notes on the Creative Process



From "Treehouse" by Stephen Harris



Anne Slater
Boston Union Teacher
Co-Editor

For this month's literary issue I spoke with two of our BTU members, **Itonya Dismond,** who is an elementary teacher, and **Stephen Harris,** visual arts teacher from Boston Latin School about their creative process and the publication of their children's books. In Ralph Fletcher's helpful little book, ***'A Writers Notebook'*** he shares a collection of exercises that writers can use to fill their writers notebook. In the introduction he talks about how the quality that makes a writer is the ability to notice things around you.

"Writers are just like everyone else – except for one big difference. Most people go through life experiencing daily thoughts and feelings, noticing and observing the world around them. But writers record these thoughts and observations. They react. And they need a special place to record those reactions."

In a workshop that I once attended, the instructor talked about how writers have one deck of cards that contain the people and places and memories of their lives and these cards can be reshuffled in different ways. Truths and memories are the foundation of a strong story. As a young writer I would always travel with a notebook – and would constantly be noting ideas, overheard conversations and scenes.

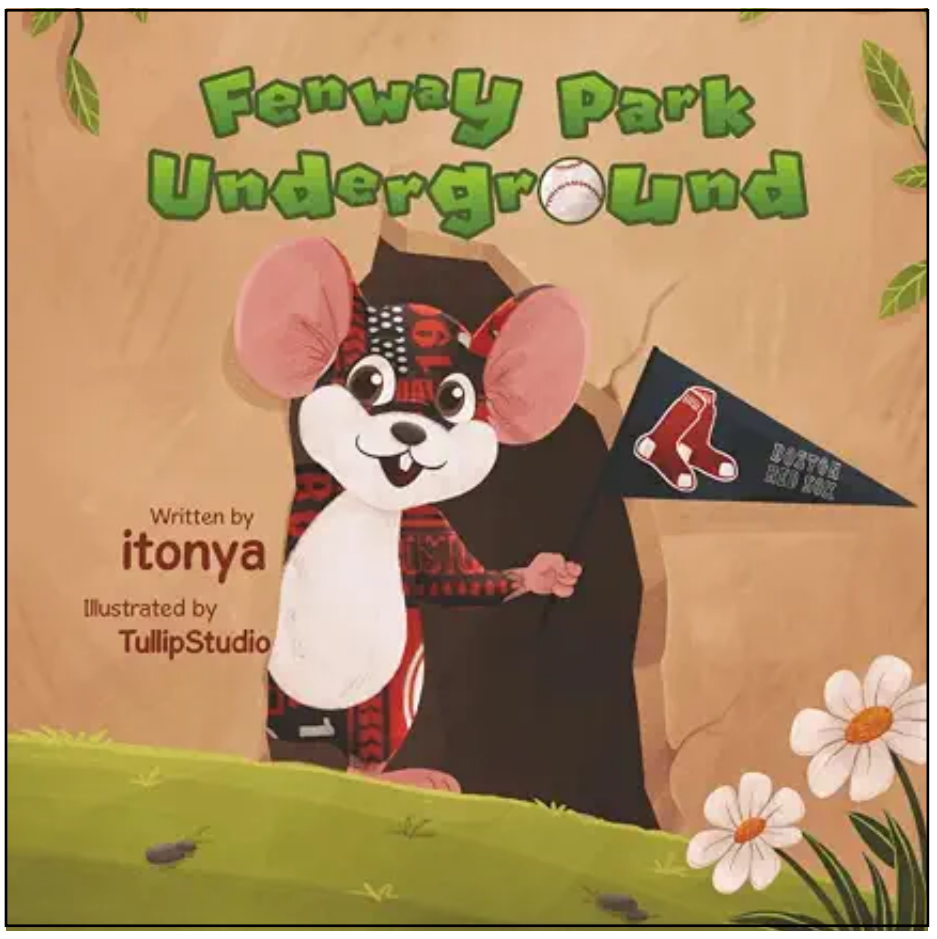
Both Stephen and Itonya talked about the importance of the artist's notebook. For both of these writers telling family stories and using the idea of the artist's notebook were key to their creative process. They both talked about living as an artist and noticing things around them and shared their ideas about publication.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Itonya Dismond has published several books including; ***'One Hundred Penny Yo-Yo', 'A Butterfly's Journey'*** (a chapter book), a series of books related to the Boston sports teams starting with **'Fenway Park Underground'.** The second one is in its final stages – ***'The Garden Underground'*** – a combined rhyming story about the Bruins and the Celtics. ***'Gillette Underground'*** will be about soccer and football.



Artwork by Itonya Dismond



Artwork by Itonya Dismond

She is also a visual artist who works with multi media and paint. "I come from a big family! I am the youngest of ten siblings and I was always the one who was told to listen, watch and learn, so I started writing down my ideas, and drawing based on my experiences and inspirations.

And that's what got me involved in writing. I always loved writing. My writing tool became my voice. I was one of those students who said, "When I grow up, I want to be a teacher!" I wanted to make sure all students had various ways to express themselves. The arts are so very important! When I graduated with my teaching degree, I went back to the school where I went to elementary school, and was hired at the John Marshall Elementary School in Dorchester. If I had to make a literary connection with the John Marshall School, it would be the book, ***'It Takes A Village'*** by **Jane Cowen Fletcher.** It was sixteen years of memorable moments with an extended family!

I always had great teachers throughout my BPS schooling. My teachers recognized my interest in teaching and becoming a writer.

I never stopped writing. Getting rejection letters and reviewing my poems and manuscripts, I continued to explore different sites to see who was interested in publishing my books, attending classes and workshops to learn ways to improve my craft, and then someone finally said yes! I refused to settle for no. Whenever I met someone who had published a book, it felt as if the process was a secret. If you are passionate about writing and publishing, keep going! I was sitting on all these manuscripts and I thought which one should I promote? I began with the book, ***'One Hundred Penny Yo-Yo',*** because it was a dedication to one of my brothers who took care of me, and guided me.

I was involved in a writing workshop as a teacher. I learned there are pros and cons for the use of technology in the writing process, but I think there should be dedicated writing classes for students to increase retaining information. My choice is to keep writing journals. As an artist, I keep somany journals! I have dream journals, art journals, and journals that reflect my learning and teaching styles while working with BPS. I have had students write in their journals once or twice a week in the form of a letter to me.

I chose poetry because as a student, I used rhythm or a beat to help me remember information throughout my schooling. I would always make up rhymes for myself to study for a test. My first book, ***A Butterfly's Journey',*** was written in rhyme. I was challenged to rewrite it without rhyming and I did. It's now being revised for re-edition, and publication. I'm always pushing myself to do better as a student and teacher. I am always writing.

Every day at work, I share my writing with students and I ask them what they think. I enjoy their feedback the most. Although I write because it is a passion for me, I write because of them. I want them to develop a love for reading, writing and learning!

Many of Itonya's ideas, as good writers know, come from family experiences and memories. Itonya grew up in urban areas of Boston. Using rhyming to study throughout her early years she fell in love with poetry anddeveloped a passion for teaching elementary school. She continues to teach and learn with her students within the walls of BPS. For her book ***'One Hundred Penny Yo-Yo',*** she drew from a childhood memory.

"My brother had a glow in the dark yo-yo and I wanted to use it, but he said, 'Don't touch my stuff'. So I said to myself, 'I'll get my own'.

We lived near a little corner drug store in the South End of Boston. Everytime I gained more pennies, I would go to the drug store and the pharmacist would help me count out the pennies until I had 100 pennies saved up to buy one."

"I am currently working on completing a series of poetry and sports-related books about Boston. I am working on ***'Gillette Underground'*** that includes football and soccer facts, and ***'Boston Legacy FC Underground'*** (Football Club) – the professional women's soccer team."

For her series, ***'Fenway Park Underground'*** and ***'The Garden Underground'***: "These started with me listening to my Black elders growing up in the South End, and overhearing their conversations about sports, and about how they couldn't go to Fenway Park because of the color of their skin. I thought about who could get into Fenway Park? The historical Fenway Park and the architecture in Boston makes it easy for mice and unfortunately rats, to gain access to any place. And they could get in the park! And that's how these stories started. To expand on the sports teams and historical facts on African-American history, I have included information about African-American history in each book.

Itonya continues to draw from her childhood memories to create more stories including:

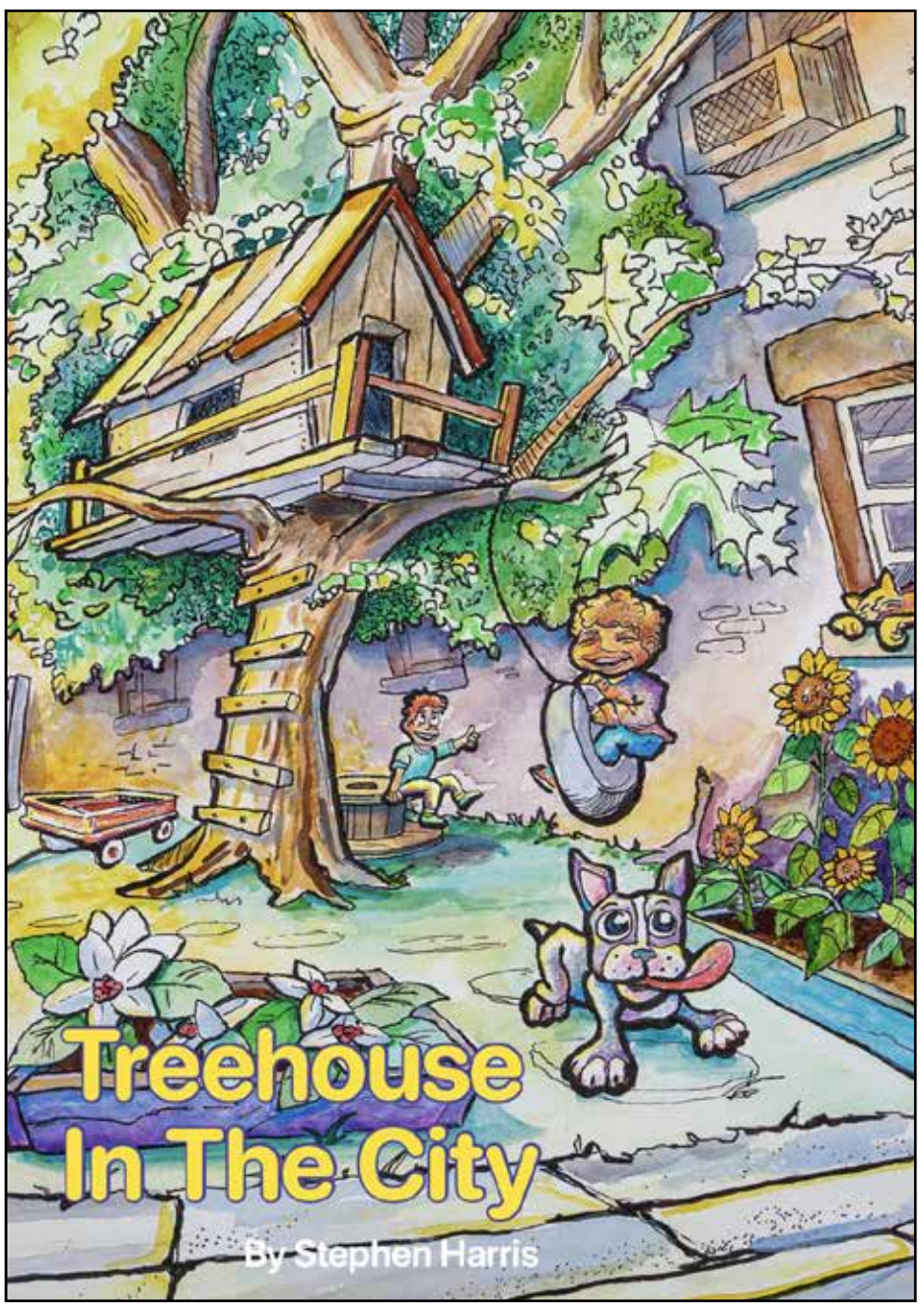
- ***Vivi's Walken Shoes,*** that explores the many jobs and journeys around Boston made by my mother,
- ***Nana's Hats,*** which is a brief insight to some of the places my sister in-law traveled in Philadelphia,
- ***Good Day Tamale, Good Day*** – is another rhyming and counting book that explores a town in northern Ghana, West Africa, called Tamale.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Stephen Harris is a visual artist and visual arts teacher at Boston Latin School. Stephen was raised in the Mission Hill neighborhood of Roxbury, Boston, Massachusetts. From an early age, he developed a passion for creating and building, spending countless hours designing and constructing clubhouses and other projects. He created ***Treehouse in the City*** after participating in class



Artwork by Itonya Dismond



on illustration."The book came about growing up in Boston. The dream was to have a tree house and a place to build one. I don't consider myself a writer – I am more of a visual artist– and I wanted to take those memories and put them into a format that was more visually appealing."

"This story is dedicated to the neighborhood of Mission Hill in Roxbury, Massachusetts."

Growing up in the city during the mid-70s and 80s, it was always my dream to have a treehouse. Our neighborhood, despite being in the city, was quite unique. We had open spaces and abandoned lots that nature had reclaimed. As children, these places were treasure troves of discarded materials, just waiting to be repurposed. With our imaginations, group effort, and occasional adult assistance, these spaces came alive with creativity and exploration.

I wish I had photographs of all the clubhouses and hideouts we constructed over the years. The illustrations in this book are created from my memories of our adventures. The locations and scenery depicted are actual places we played within our neighborhood block. Here's to the old gang of neighborhood friends, and family – Robert, Timothy, Michael, Brian, Brendon, Elton, Leon, Zen, Ariam, Abner, Elizabeth, John, Nivi, Omar – and the many others who showed up to lend a hand."

"Many years back I took an illustration class with **Ilsa Plume.** In the class people would share ideas and it was very memorable and fun. First I came up with the story. I knew that I wanted to write about childhood experiences. I sketched everything rough and then I refined it. I created a story board. *(For a children's book)* it has to be 32 pages. The character and the clothing have to be drawn consistently. It took me years to finish, but I wasn't in a rush."

Steve continues to use an artist's notebook for his creative process.

"I have a notebook where I jot down my ideas. I always use my notes

continued on page 10

Pro Tips for Aspiring Writers

1. Write from your life! Good stories, even fantasy stories, are rooted in truth and memory.
2. Use a writer's notebook to gather ideas.
3. Don't give up! Be tenacious. Get those rejections and keep trying different avenues.
4. Explore avenues such as self-publishing / publishing houses that will work with you to match with illustrators.

Writing for Children: Notes on the Creative Process…

continued from page 9

app on my phone, but a notebook I can look at it. They are random doodles or ideas and some will turn into art pieces."

While attending grades 6–8 at the Tobin School in Roxbury, Stephen credits **Linda Nathanson** and **Gerry Milgrim** with fostering an inspiring environment that deepened his interest in the artistry and magic of theatrical prop and set design. He went on to earn a degree in Sculpture from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design in 1994.

"I went to the Tobin School in Roxbury and it was an Arts Academy. **Linda Nathanson** was the first principal of Boston Arts Academy. The theater teacher, **Gerry Milgrim** would put on plays and Linda would have students from Emerson College come and make the sets with us. To me that was really fun to be able to make things at school and you would transform the stage and people would come to see the plays."

"I think what helps young artists the most is having an environment where they can feel relaxed and make mistakes. I see 150 kids a day and I keep the pace up with new projects every two weeks keeping the work exciting and new.

You figure out pretty fast that everybody and their grandma wants to write a book. I tried the traditional route and I sent out all these queries – once in a while I'd get a letter. Then my cousin used Kindle direct publishing. It's an easy way to get it out into the world. Kindle direct is available on Amazon.

It was the only way that I could figure out how to do it. I have a former student, **Owen Casey,** who is a graphic designer and he helped me with formatting." The book is available from Kindle Direct on Amazon.

In 1998, Stephen founded Harris Custom Design, a small business specializing in-mold making and casting. Since 2001, he has also served as a Visual Arts teacher in the Boston Public Schools, sharing his passion for creativity, craftsmanship, and artistic expression with future generations.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

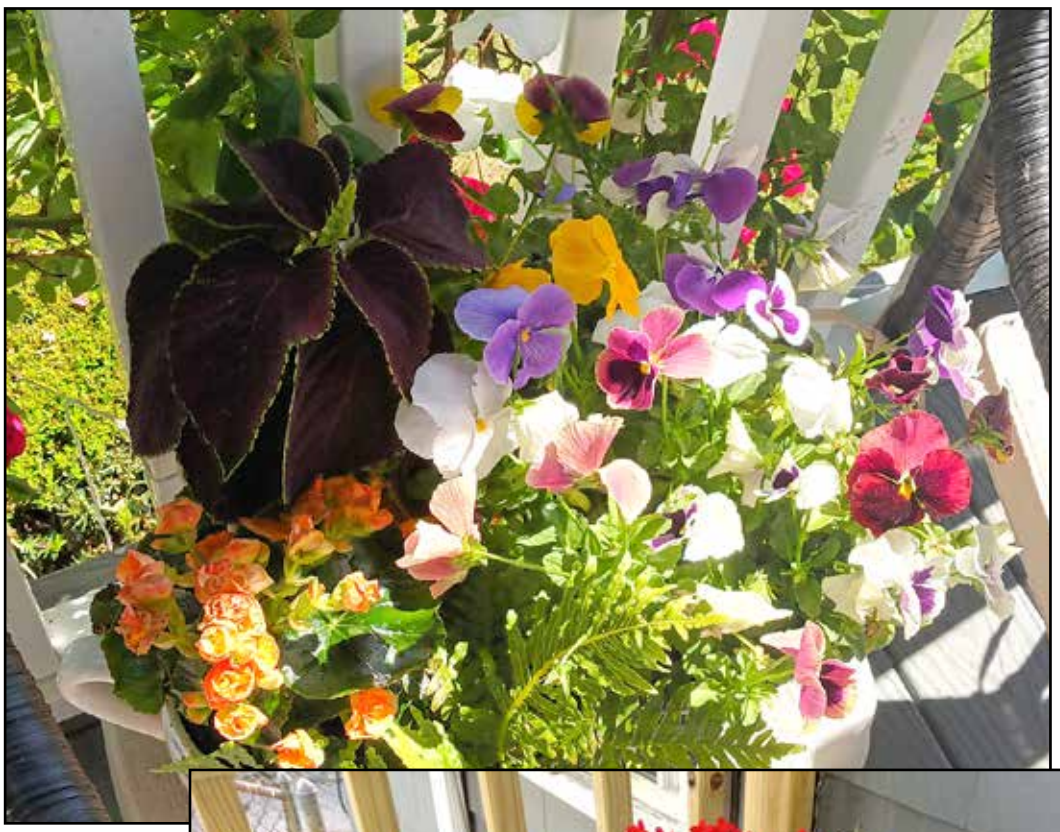
Have you written a book? We would love to interview you! Contact Anne Slater at aslater@btu.org.



Artwork by Itonya Dismond



From "Treehouse" by Stephen Harris









Photos by Stacey Isles-Brako



Because There's a Moon

The moon asks for a glass of water

And a sleeping pill.

It wants to heist a conscious sky

To a new location under the influence

Of a wolf, howling for its mate.

Be there with them.

Fall asleep.

The moon imagines it's a fish

Of waves and shorelines.

It owns an invisible overcoat, skims

Across oceans with cormorants.

Once it built a small boat

From seaweed and shells, bailed

Night with buckets of clouds.

The moon is a piece of fruit

In a lover's mouth.

It is an excited tongue of tales,

Skilled in writing romance novels

About its lover, the earth.

It lives in a penthouse of visions,

Prefers cities without streetlights.

The moon is the third eye of the world.

It loves the cold imprint of time

On its forehead.

It is a feast of silver and gold

For trees and insects.

It knows how to wait for nothing

In an empty mind.

– Richard Martin

June 2026

Trivia Night EVENT SUMMARY

Session Overview

The Telescope Network and the Boston Teachers Union co- hosted a trivia social event for BPS educators on **Friday, June 5** at Long Live Brewery in Roxbury. We had **33 participants** from **18 different schools or departments** attend this event.

What is Telescope Trivia?

Telescope Trivia is a virtual or in-person event for educators to connect, unwind, and have fun with colleagues in a highly collaborative and lightly competitive setting. .

Credits
None

Trivia Rounds

Sing with Pride: identify the song title and artist given the sample lyrics

Eight Season TV: identify the TV show given the photo.

Children's Book Covers: Identify the essential children's book given the image.

Land Grant Universities: Identify the college given the logo.

Mass Celebrities: Identify the entertainer and hometown given the photo.

It's a Cakewalk: Identify the types of cake.

Please share these with friends/students/colleagues. More at tinyurl.com/telescopetrivia.

Winners

- Congratulations to **Best Point Scorers** (from Manning, Mason, Russell, Murphy, and Winthrop Elementary Schools) for winning 1st place.

- And congratulations to the **Reading Reign Beaus** (from Boston Latin Academy & Haley Elementary) for winning 2nd place.



Participant Feedback

- *Glad to get out of the classroom and socialize, let out some steam at the end of a long school year.*
- *Great music! Good topics & questions. Good food, especially the salads.*
- *Nice people, unorthodox categories. I had a good time.*
- *So much fun!*
- *Love! Thank you! Do more of these! Our team has been together since the VERY beginning on Zoom.*
- *Good to get together with other BPS teachers! Thanks!*
- *I had so much fun. It was awesome.*
- *Next time more Gen Z topics please*

Next Steps

- Telescope Events Calendar for future PD sessions and social events.

Additional Resources

Event facilitated by Catherine Stoddard, Mark Lonergan, Annie Shah-Solle and Kadian Simmonds. More information about the Telescope Network can be found at bostonpublicschools.org/telescope. Email us at telescope@bostonpublicschools.org.

Long Live Brewery (152 Hampden St, Boston, MA) is offering ongoing perks for BPS educators. More info here: Long Live Boston Public Schools.pdf













TELESCOPE NETWORK

Winners



Trivia Answers:

- **Tele Trivia Sing with Pride ANSWER KEY**: 1) Normal Girl, SZA; 2) Back to December, Taylor Swift; 3) Rehab, Amy Winehouse; 4) Crazy in Love, Beyonce; 5) On Bended Knee, Boyz II Men; 6) Angel, Aerosmith; 7) Greatest Love of All, Whitney Houston; 8) When Doves Cry, Prince; 9) Lay All Your Love on Me, ABBA; 10)Ain't Too Proud to Beg, Temptations
- **Tele Trivia Eight Seasons TV ANSWER KEY**: 1) Andy Griffith Show; 2) Bewitched; 3) Diff'rent Strokes; 4) Magnum P.I.; 5) Full House; 6) Charmed; 7) That '70s Show; 8) Girlfriends; 9) Dora the Explorer; 10) Vampire Diaries; 11) Game of Thrones; 12) Brooklyn Nine-Nine; 13) Black-ish; 14) S.W.A.T.; 15) The Neighborhood
- **Tele Trivia Children's Book Covers ANSWER KEY**: 1) The Story of Ferdinand; 2) Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day; 3) Caps for Sale; 4) Harold and the Purple Crayon; 5) Madeline; 6) Frog and Toad are Friends; 7) Goodnight Moon; 8) The Snowy Day; 9) The Mitten; 10) Julian Is A Mermaid; 11) Last Stop on Market Street; 12) Where the Wild Things Are; 13) Tuesday; 14) The Day the Crayons Quit; 15) Stellaluna; 16) Dreamers
- **Tele Trivia Land Grant Universities ANSWER KEY**: 1) University of Georgia; 2) University of Alaska (Fairbanks); 3) Louisiana State University (LSU); 4) University of California (Berkeley)/Cal Berkeley); 5) MIT; 6) University of Wisconsin; 7) University of Illinois; 8) North Dakota State University; 9) Penn State University ;10) Texas A&M; 11) University of Maryland; 12) University of Idaho; 13) Purdue University; 14) University of Connecticut (UConn); 15) Rutgers University; 16) Cornell University; 17) University of Delaware ; 18) University of Maine; 19) Kansas State University: 20) Utah State University.
- **Tele Trivia Mass Celebrities ANSWER KEY**: 1) Ayo Edibiri/Dorchester; 2) Jay Leno/Andover; 3) Meghan Trainor/Nantucket; 4) Conan O'Brien/Brookline; 5) Donna Summer; Mission Hill; 6) Rachel Dratch/Lexington; 7) Jennifer Coolidge/Norwell; 8) John Krasinski/Newton; 9) Amy Poehler/Burlington; 10) Steven Wright/Burlington; 11) Bobby Brown/ Roxbury; 12) Mindy Kaling/Cambridge
- **Tele Trivia Cakewalk ANSWER KEY:**: 1) Red Velvet Cake; 2) Tres Leches Cake; 3) Carrot Cake; 4) Angel Food Cake; 5) Black Cake; 6) Black Forest Cake; 7) German Chocolate, 8) Brooklyn Blackout; 9) Mooncake; 10) Opera Cake; 11) King Cake; 12) Princess Cake; 13) Hummingbird Cake; 14) Coffee Cake; 15) Pandan Cake; 16) Chantilly Cake

Who Am I?

Who am I? "This is an investment," my teacher told me as he purchased tickets for my friends and I to see the Asian-American wing of the Museum of Modern Art. Those words continue to resonate with me, "I am an investment."

I am an investment of two people who took risks – calculated and uncalculated for the future of having more for themselves, their family, the next generation. Growing up, my dad experienced dire poverty and hunger. Like my mother, he had at most a fifth grade education. Fifth graders, clever – ever curious, minds that are thirsty for knowledge. How do I know? I'm a fifth grade teacher at present. Despite ending his schooling experience early, my dad was always observant and unfettered. Experiencing hunger, he used to steal tomatoes from his neighbor's yard, he'd joyfully recount to me. These skills of observation and am

My dad hatched a plan of escape through a social gathering. His plan for escaping Vietnam as a boat refugee was a clever one. He decided to "nhậu" with a few police officers, waiting until the dark night hours so that they would fall asleep. Indeed, it worked. My dad snuck out and stole their boat, calling for others in the shadows to join aboard. I still do not know the others who were aboard with him, but I do wonder who they were. This shared courage to flee suffering. The boat was adrift for several weeks. My dad recalled seeing dolphins in the water. Like a sign from mysterious Providence, this signified hope for him. Be optimistic, better is on the horizon. His boat eventually reached Hong Kong. My dad lived in a Hong Kong refugee camp before meeting my mom who was also from the same Hamlet in Vietnam (Thôn 11, Huế).

My mother's story of escaping as a boat refugee is one I've yet to uncover and fully grasp. My mother holds a lot of sorrow and strength. The Vietnam war has affected her in ways she is unable to share openly as my father can.

Our family's story begins here. My oldest brother, **Thanh,** was born at the Hong Kong refugee camp. Not long after, my mother and father received news that an American couple were willing to sponsor them. I always knew this to be our beginning to America since I was young. Only now at 34 years old did I learn of their names: **Maureen and John Scott.** I look at their photos, they are warm and kind. Flipping behind the photos of my parents' foster parents, I noticed that Maureen had written notes in Vietnamese. *"For memory, Love, Mom"*. The sweetest, kindest gesture communicated in her cursive handwriting. I look at one photo of Maureen at a Buddhist Temple. She writes, "The weather is very hot in Hong Kong!" Perhaps she had an instinct that my mom was pregnant with her next child. The year was 1991 – the year I would be born in Los Angeles, California.



My parents and brother in the Hong Kong refugee camp.



Maureen at a Buddhist Temple.

Our family lived in California for 5 years. I remember going to Phước Lộc Thọ Mall in Garden Grove. I remember being surrounded by a tight-knit Vietnamese immigrant community. Our days were filled with aunties cooking together, families enjoying large dinner parties, humble birthday celebrations that we dressed up in our best clothing. Each occasion felt warm and special. We did not have much, our growing family of five slept in one room. Hearing that there were better economic opportunities in Massachusetts, my dad made the decision to move us towards Boston – a city of change, innovation, and history.

In grade school, my parents enrolled me in Van Lang School to learn Vietnamese on Saturdays. My parents spent a lot of time working and now that I reflect on this, this was one way to teach their culture and language to me. Van Lang was built through a connected community of volunteers. Individuals who valued community building, sharing Vietnamese language, culture, and stories to the growing Vietnamese-American youth. These were the days when I was first introduced to other Vietnamese adults who were not involved in the nail salon business. These individuals nurtured my soul; I fell in love with the Vietnamese culture and history there. This opened up more possibilities for me.



My parents with their foster parents John and Maureen.

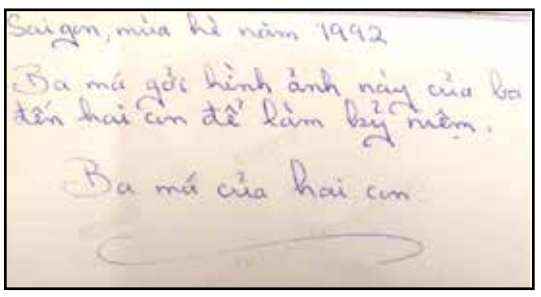
There grew a voice of despair and fear in my head. What if language and culture are lost one day? What about these critical stories of sacrifice? For me, I felt weight and purpose.

I dedicated my college application essay to the mythical love story of Lạc Long Quân and Âu Cơ and how I could perceive it through the Vietnamese lifestyle – my family's humble beginnings of surviving by the sea and farmland. The story held meaning to me and I wanted to be able to translate and reach the audience in the same way. In 2009, I applied to college as an English Literature major to be able to communicate the beauty of Vietnamese culture and share it with others. I wanted to use English as a way to advocate for Vietnamese American identity.



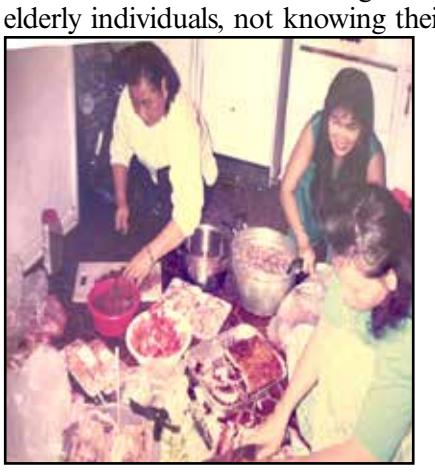
Maureen and John in front of Independence Palace.

Throughout my college years and afterwards, I continued volunteering for the Vietnamese American Community of Massachusetts located in Dorchester, MA. I would volunteer for Tết in Boston, Trưng Empresses and Vietnamese Women's Day, Hùng Vương Day, and April 30 to absorb culture and continue to build community. I was the community outreach co-director of the Networking Organization for Vietnamese Americans. While serving in the organization, I helped write the proposal naming part of Dorchester 'Boston Little Saigon', acknowledging the rich Vietnamese cultural capital that is worth highlighting in the region. I used my skills in the English language as a way to bridge others to my Vietnamese heritage – to help see its beauty and value as I did.



Maureen wrote notes in Vietnamese behind each photograph.

Now in the community, I still volunteer when I can. I see an older generation that is aging and a younger generation that is growing distant. When I talk to my cousins, they do want to continue our parents' traditions, but feel intimidated about where to start. For others, they feel the pull of pursuing their own interests and holding onto history can feel burdensome. Speaking to elderly individuals, not knowing their entire story, I can sense disenfranchised grief without putting words to it. I pray they find healing and solace in time.



My mom and aunties prepare food.

Even today, as I continue to volunteer in the community, oftentimes I am one of the younger faces there. The older generation looks at me with eyes that see hope. I remember the lyrics of the South Vietnamese Anthem, ***"Này công dân ơi, Đứng lên đáp lời sông núi. Đồng lòng cùng đi hy sinh tiếc gì thân sống." Đồng lòng cùng đi...*** United in heart, I stand and sing it for them. I honor their collective cause and sacrifice.

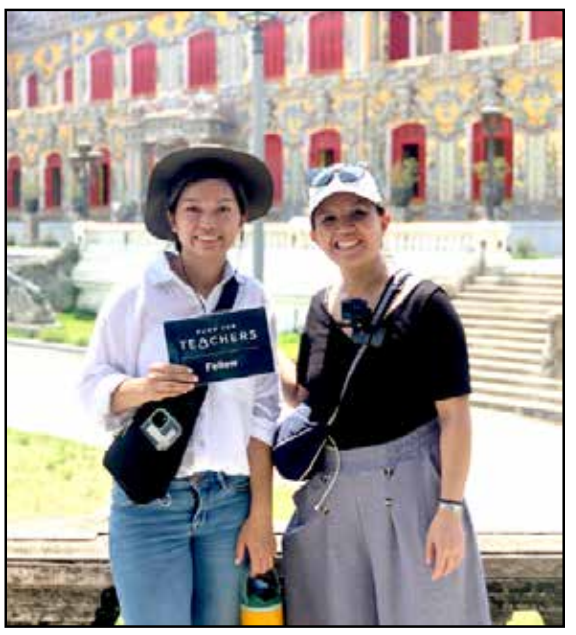
For me, 50 years later, I write with fervor and angst. In an age where history and news can be artificially manipulated, how will these stories be preserved? If the youth become detached from the stories of generational sacrifice, what will be the consequence? Who will be the victors, victims, fools, enemies, or *"puppets?"* What are the throughlines for connection for healing? There are many complexities to the Vietnam war – its motivations, aftermath, and everything in between.



My first birthday celebration.

What I do believe is that if I do not speak, write, put myself out there – I leave others to determine the next course. We can still ask questions to inform why we came here. Our families had to move in silence and risked persecution for speaking up. History should not be suppressed. History necessitates more people to speak up and step up – just like earlier generations for a dream of proclaiming selfhood.

An investment. What was the cost? Was it worth it?



Last summer, my colleague Thu Hang and I won a Fund for Teachers Grant to tour Vietnam 50 years after the Fall of Saigon.
How to teach for the future?



Phước Lộc Thọ Mall





My Van Lang Teachers: Thầy Nam, Thầy Hiếu, Cô Kim Ngân, and Cô Nhật.



Vietnamese Women's Day and Trung Empresses Commemoration.



At an AAPI Race with NOVA and Boston Little Saigon advocates.



Greeting the New Year with Community Leaders

Commentary Seth Peterson

De-Grading: "Your Grades Have To Get Done"

I went to bed at 2 am. I'm coming off a 16-hour work day. I'm exhausted. I might be a poor model of efficiency. I am a high school English teacher. Grades were due last night.

Yes, it took me more than 18 hours to do my grades. No, that doesn't mean I need 18 hours to fill in a few bubbles or even to add up totals and divide to get percentages. I'm no math teacher, but *that* -- what the outside world considers "grading" -- is my home stretch, the point at which I tell my wife I'm almost done, the point at which I tell the frowning registrar I am done (and just double checking). It is not even the actual evaluation, determining and assigning value to the written work my students have done, that eats up all my time. It is the painstakingly slow, seemingly important task of explaining as clearly, thoroughly, and respectfully as possible to young writers on the verge of discovering themselves and/or giving it all up, **WHY** I assigned the values I did. It is the act – the art – of communicating in our shared currency of written words, what I noticed, wondered, and stumbled over in their starkly human attempts to capture reality. That takes me longer than I've got. Case in point:

June 2001...

We had reached an impasse. I was hunched over a little desk-chair combo in an empty, nearly-summer-time classroom. First the registrar and her nudging disappointment arrived. Then the assistant headmaster was hovering over my splayed and partially gutted mark book.

"Your grades have to be done… now."

"I know." I said, in apparent agony. *(It was apparent to me.)*

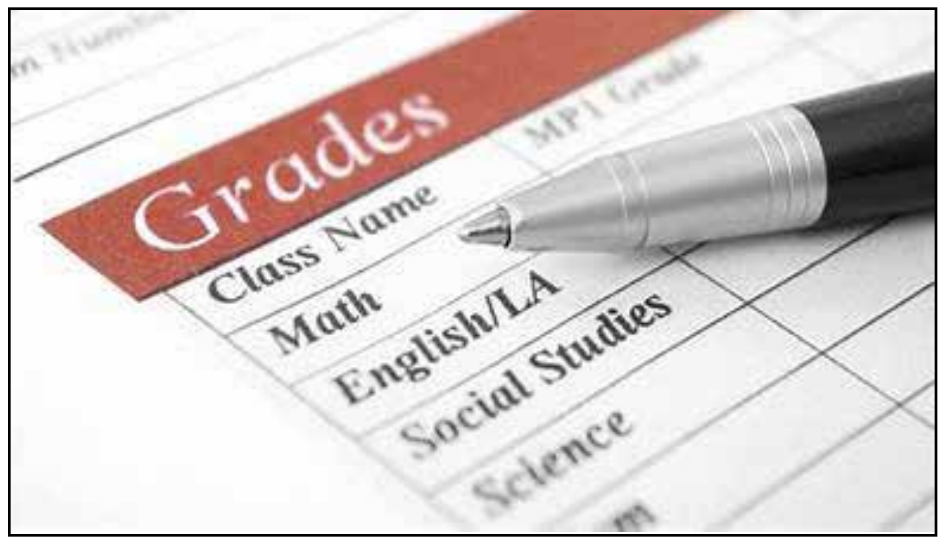
"You've used up all the extra time. There's none left. Your grades *have* to be done." The assistant headmaster repeated.

"I know." I tried again, weakly.

"So..." She said expectantly.

"The thing is, they're not quite done."

We were talking as if grades did themselves, at the push of a button. Goddamn, if I could will them to be done, would I be sitting here, sweating under the glare of this administrative hydra? Grades don't get done in some fanciful, passive world. They are figured out by a human being, an agent of action, and, sometimes, in slow-motion. Sometimes, by someone who foolishly thought that slow-motion was reserved for the important, crucial moments of the story. Thinking I was making decisions that mattered, I was, in fact, seen by the dealers of deadlines as a fool touching up celluloid frames that had already dropped onto the cutting room floor. I take my students' work – their words – very seriously, too seriously it seems. If the comments are never read, then it has been a very long fool's errand, an odyssey of obsolescence. Still, to continue in this career, I must believe that this exchange of ideas will matter, that the comments will be read. I must remember the times a student wrote back with questions, or gratitude, or that endangered species — curiosity. I must remember the words my teachers scrawled on my own papers, the marginal comments that gave me wings to change my own trajectory. I must remember all of this, because whatever I do, grades are due.



"Hot Labor Summer" The BTU Joins Striking Nurses During Recent Labor Action



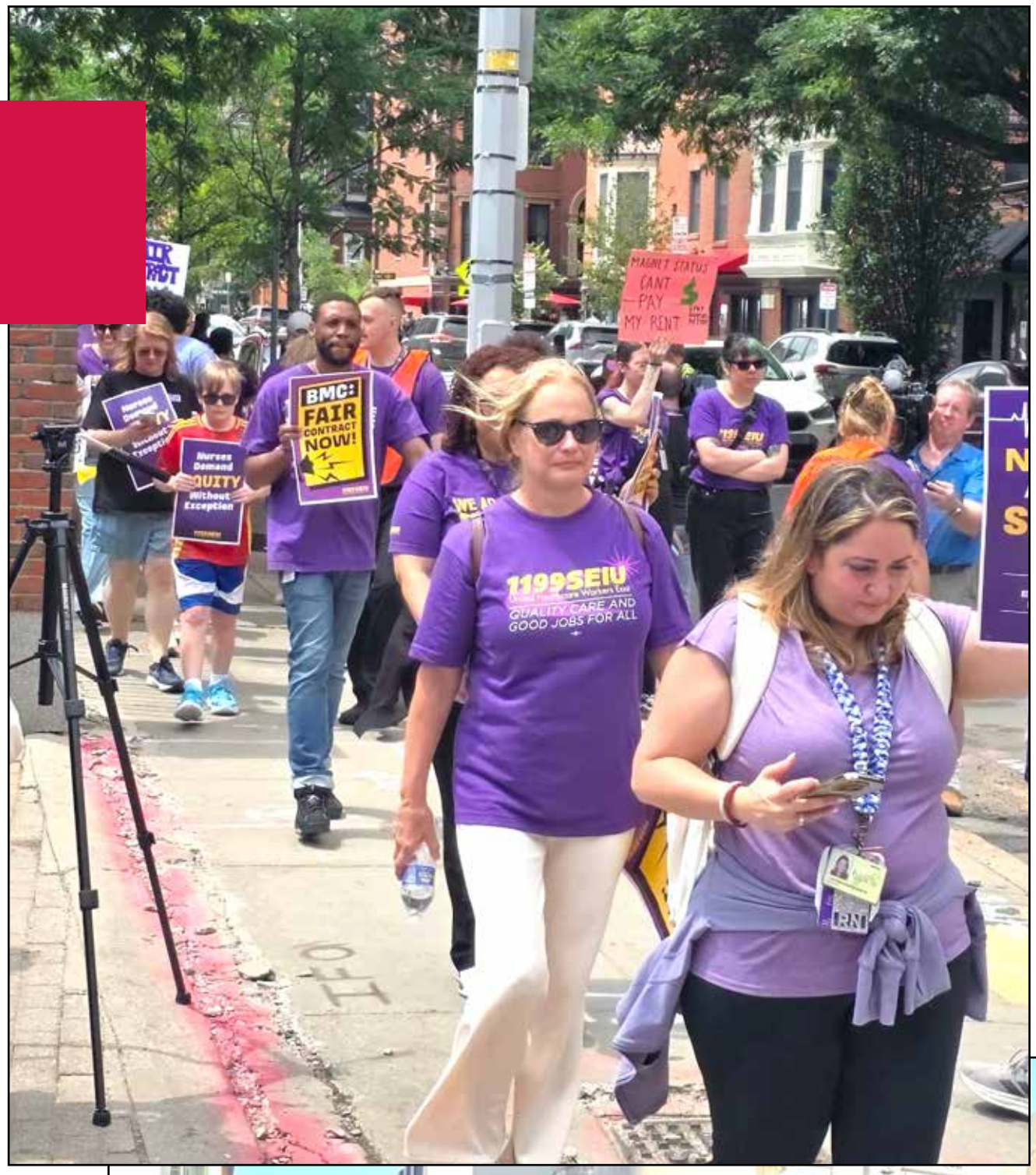
While organizing in the BTU typically slows down over the summer, our brothers and sisters in the labor movement continue organizing and mobilizing through the heat. For the past few years, unions like the United Auto Workers, Teamsters, and most locally hotel and Fenway Park workers with UNITE HERE Local 26 have led militant labor actions that add up to recurring ***"Hot Labor Summers"*** – a very positive development for working people!

This year, it's been the healthcare workers' turn, with a multi-day strike of the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) at Brigham Women Hospital and informational pickets led by Service International Employees Union (SEIU) members at Boston Medical Center.

Each time, the BTU has lended solidarity to these causes. We wrote a statement of support and encouraged members to show up on the picket line. I was able to do so, and it's always so powerful to see workers engaged in militant action and heartwarming to see how grateful they are for our presence.

Two things struck me while reading signs, talking to workers, and listen to speeches on the picket line:





First, the issues we face are more similar than you might think. Outside of pay, the biggest issues I heard from the nurses I talked to were safety and staffing ratios. Like educators, healthcare workers are seeing how the lack of mental health supports, political division, and other community issues combine to create unsafe working environments. No worker should have to accept violence on the job or be encouraged to minimize the reality of what they're experiencing. Like educators, healthcare workers are also being asked to take on bigger and bigger caseloads without additional support or pay. As they described mountains of paperwork, a sense of guilt for not being able to meet their patient's needs, and burnout I couldn't help but think of our ongoing fight for Inclusion Done Right. I had to take a picture of this sign which is the clearest example of the similarities between our struggles:

Second, something that struck me was that these healthcare workers did a great job of using intentional outreach and relationship-building support to push back against the corporate media's efforts to turn the community against their cause. As we know well, outlets like the *Globe* or Fox News love to paint union struggles as selfish or harmful. This is particularly true for service and care workers like educators and nurses. The most powerful speech I heard on the picket line was from the father of a patient, a baby born premature who was in the NICU center. He spoke about how impressed and grateful he was with the nurses assigned to his son, how much worse his son was doing with replacement nurses, and how all of that showed him that he **HAD** to stand with these life-savers because life-savers deserve a living wage and humane working conditions! We know how important it is to get students and family voices on our side pro-actively and we all can play a role in making that happen in our social networks and school communities.

As we gear up for our own contract campaign this year, we should learn lessons from these healthcare workers' militancy and reach out to them to return the favor of solidarity! **GET UP, GET DOWN, BOSTON IS A UNION TOWN!**

While organizing in the BTU typically slows down over the summer, our brothers and sisters in the labor movement continue organizing and mobilizing through the heat. For the past few years, unions like the United Auto Workers, Teamsters, and most locally hotel and Fenway Park workers with UNITE HERE Local 26 have led militant labor actions that add up to recurring "Hot Labor Summers" – a very positive development for working people!

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Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk • October 3rd, 2026



Almost everyone has been touched by breast cancer in some way, so we've decided to make a difference by walking and raising money in our local **American Cancer Society Making Strides Against Breast Cancer** event.

Today 1 of every 2 women newly-diagnosed with breast cancer reaches out to the American Cancer Society for help and support. The donations our team raises will enable investment in groundbreaking breast cancer research, free information and services for women diagnosed with the disease, and access to mammograms for women who need them. Our donations will help more than 2.9 million breast cancer survivors celebrate another birthday this year!

Saving lives from breast cancer starts one team, one walker, and one dollar at a time. We know that the American Cancer Society is the leader in the fight to end breast cancer. We know that supporting them will ensure that if you need someone to talk to anytime of the day or night, they'll be there. If your friend is losing her hair from chemo, your mother needs a ride to treatment, or a loved one needs a place to stay when treatment is far from home, they will be there to help. Join us and together we will walk for a world without breast cancer.

Every step taken and every dollar raised will help finish the fight against breast cancer, so please consider either walking with the BTU Walkers Team or donating.

Look for either BTU Walkers Team or Brenda Chaney (bchaney@btu.org) to donate or walk.

Thank you so much for your support!

Visit our TEAM's page:
http://main.acsevents.org/site/TR?team_id=1876898&pg=team&fr_id=70168&s_locale=en_US&et=sySmVVVfKGzCL4_FXwwaHg&s_tafId=1627798

Outdoor Learning at the Boston Teachers Union School…

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created an excitement and interest in nature that's different from when the learning is all indoors. She also likes the nature journaling that students do where they write detailed observations and drawings of what they see and learn. She has noticed this extending into other subject areas as students learn to slow down and notice more. In Math, students are using diagrams to solve more complex problems. In ELA, it helps them to break down complex texts and express the big ideas. Social Studies and Science were integrated when students learned about Hurricane Katrina and how the impact of pollution and other changes over time contributed to the devastating flooding in the areas affected by this disaster.

Ms. McCabe explained that the BTU School is committed to promoting a culture of joyous outdoor learning. She stressed the importance of partnerships, including the BNC and other groups. It was inspiring to witness the joy and engagement of BTU students as they learned about the natural world they live in.

Presenting the BTU 2026 Building Representatives of the Year…

BTU Secondary Building Representative of the Year Award

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Lauren is proud of being a Boston resident; wife of **Ravi Singh,** BPS math teacher and previously a BTU Rep at NMHS; being a parent of three children – an 8 and 11 year old as well as a 22 year old BPS and UMass grad who she met as a BPS student when Lauren was the school nurse and then adopted her into her family. Committed to health equity in the BPS Schools she's worked in, Lauren has collaborated with the Boston Health Commission to assist in better delivery of health education to students; has partnered with Planned Parenthood of MA to deliver sexual health curriculum to BPS student; has advocated for increased access to catch-up vaccinations for newcomer BPS students; as well as to ensure access to students of on-site vision and dental exams as well as some treatment without respect to ability of students families to pay.

A strong and outspoken advocate for nurses to be able to improve their work conditions and their ability to best serve their vulnerable students, Lauren never misses a beat in communicating and organizing with and for her fellow school nurses through city-wide nurse faculty senate; representing colleagues during investigatory meetings; facilitating meetings with administration; active participation in larger BTU related meetings, functions and actions; as well as recently becoming a member of the BTU Collective Bargaining Committee (CBC) to represent nurses concerns for the upcoming union contract (yes, it's that time again)! Lauren loves school nursing so much that she's currently pursuing her Ph.D. in nursing at UMass Amherst. Her area of research is focused on dismantling structural racism and advancing health equity for marginalized Boston youth through community-based research and systems change.

BTU Paraprofessional/Substitute/ABA Building Representative of the Year Award

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school community. As a building representative, she is deeply invested in ensuring that school practices align with contract language and that staff members understand and are able to exercise their contractual rights, and is especially supportive of her fellow paraprofessionals, and guiding them through different union or contract related concerns.

Thank you for your dedication to fellow Union sisters and brothers and students at King.

Please join me in congratulating Zoraida Harrington as one of the building reps of the year.

BTU Secondary Building Representative of the Year Award

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the contract and ensure that members' rights are protected. You can frequently see Peter out and about supporting at union events, rallies, school committee, city council meetings, in the media, and more. Peter is a contributing member of the Multilingual Learner Committee, the Election Committee, and the ABA Working Group. Throughout all of his avenues of participation, Peter approaches the work with a can-do attitude, sense of humor, energetic stance, and isn't afraid to lean in to get things done. Peter listens authentically and cares deeply about the work and the people.

His colleagues shared the following sentiments:

"Pete works hard to support our newcomer students and families, advocates for better working conditions, and is a strong ally for our LGBTQ+ community. His commitment to the Curley extends well beyond the classroom. Whether he's coaching basketball or baseball, facilitating LATF, coordinating our Unified Sports program for students in our ABA classrooms, or one of the other roles he takes on at the Curley, Pete is committed to building a welcoming and inclusive school.

What makes Pete especially good at being a BTU Rep is how approachable he is. He's someone people naturally feel comfortable talking to. If he doesn't know the answer, he'll find it – and he'll always get back to you. During our meetings, Pete is also known for a perfectly timed one-liner that reminds us not to take ourselves too seriously.

We are grateful to call Pete our colleague, our co-rep, and our friend. This recognition is well deserved. Thank you for representing Pete – for our members, our students, and our school community!"

– Peter Pizzi