AFT-MA / MTA Merger: The Time Has Come

A fter much consideration the BTU Executive Board proposed to our membership last month that we ask our parent organization, the American Federation of Teachers-Massachusetts (AFT-MA), to seek a merger with the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA). Our membership approved this motion unanimously. Why did we do this? First a little background.

Nationally our colleagues are represented by two major teachers’ organizations, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA). The former has gained a foothold in the urban areas, the latter in the smaller urban, the suburbs, and rural areas. State by state, the same pattern tends to be replicated. Local state teacher federations, like our parent organization, the AFT-MA, affiliated with the AFT, tend to be of similar makeup. And local associations, such as the MTA, appear follow the path of the NEA. In some states (like Mass.), most of the teachers belong to the NEA state affiliate; in others, the AFT and its state affiliate, predominate. In today’s world both the AFT and the NEA and their offspring, while distinct, have more similarities than differences, and more reason to unite than fight.

Regardless of where we teach and work, teachers across the country face the same struggles. RTT, corporate re(e) form, the growth of standardized testing — too name just a few problems — are national, not local, in scope, and require a comprehensive solution. Five states have merged their state affiliates: New York (2006), Minnesota (1997), Montana (2003), Florida (2003), and North Dakota (Feb., 2013). Wisconsin is pointed to move in the NEA direction. A national effort to merge the AFT and the NEA regrettably fell through 12 years ago. We think it’s time to jump start the merger process in Massachusetts. Why?

First and last, there is strength in numbers. Currently there are two separate organizations in Mass., both of which offer similar services to similar locals while traveling on separate roads. We should be carpooling.

The AFT-MA represents locals as different as Lawrence, Medway, Boston, and Billerica. The MTA represents New Bedford, Dover, and Framingham, and Medfield. Are we so different? As one unified and stronger local, we will merge our teams and develop a common agenda to promote what works as we become a single, forceful advocate for our students and members wherever they reside.

Of course I am not Pollyannaish. A merged local, though stronger and more effective than two separate locals, doesn’t guarantee that we will be able to run the tide against the onslaught we have faced for the last decade. That’s going to take hard work and a willingness to do things differently. But a merged local will at least put us in the right direction.

I am also not Pollyannaish about the ‘old wars’ between the AFT and NEA. There are some veterans of this decades-old debate as to who better represents teachers who might prefer to hold out until the debate is settled. The Hatfields and the McCoy’s felt the same way. We have no time to wait. The only debate left today is how best to coalesce around a common platform and common strategy. That’s our task.

Two Ways to Vote in Union Election: In Person or Mail-In

The BTU Election Committee will be conducting our 2013 Biennial Election this spring with a new absentee ballot option which resulted from the passage of a by-law change voted by the membership. The rationale for this move is to hopefully increase election participation. We have hired the American Arbitration Association to work with us this year in order to ensure a smooth election.

The proposed timeline for this new election process is as follows:

Preliminary Election: May

- Week of 3/19 – BTU will mail out Absentee Ballot Request forms with a business reply envelope
- 4/10 – Deadline for Receipt of Absentee Ballot Request
- 4/16 – Deadline for Mailing of Absentee Ballot to voters
- 4/30 – Deadline for Receipt of Absentee Ballots
- 5/1 – In-person polling at BTU

Final Election: June

- Week of 5/6 – BTU will mail out Absentee Ballot Request forms with a business reply envelope
- 5/16 – Deadline for Receipt of Absentee Ballot Request
- 5/21 – Deadline for Mailing of Absentee Ballot to voters
- 6/4 – Deadline for Receipt of Absentee Ballots
- 6/5 – In-person polling at BTU

We urge everyone to update home addresses as soon as possible so that you will receive the mailing. Only absentee ballot requests on the official form will be accepted since there are several pieces of information that must be verified in order to certify qualified voters. Please note that Retirees must be signed up with the Retired Teachers’ Chapter by April 1, 2013 in order to vote in this year’s election.

Richard Stutman
BTU President

Richard Stutman, BTU President

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By Kristen Pinto, BTU Election Committee Chairperson

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The Award-Winning Newspaper of the Boston Teachers Union

AFT Local 66, AFT-CIO • Democracy in Education • Volume XLV, Number 8 • April, 2013
Commentary: Kelly Tynan

How Teaching Has Prepared Me for Motherhood

A dult Interaction – Your life revolves around children. Adult interaction is a luxury that many of us will not get to enjoy. This is not to say that I do not appreciate my colleagues in the classroom – the magical world of Disney – I can’t wait to tell you tomorrow – the Brigham... I beg, borrow and steal lessons from colleagues. Do the same with friends! The best teachers are often the ones that are the best at being creative. A birth plan is like a lesson plan and your plan on the EDFS for new observations needs to be revised. In the meantime as the process gets underway, I hope the new system, but for some educators the change has resulted in a change of activities in their learning goals. Continue to upload artifacts to support your work and progress.

There are, however, educators who have had a negative change in their rating. For these educators the BPS needs to provide more directed assistance to teachers who feel they are struggling. The BTU will offer workshops to assist members in the Spring and Summer.

The majority of educators in the BWS will maintain or improve that rating. Educators as Proficient or Exemplary the goal is to appreciate my colleagues in the classroom – the magical world of Disney – I can’t wait to tell you tomorrow – the Brigham... I beg, borrow and steal lessons from colleagues. Do the same with friends! The best teachers are often the ones that are the best at being creative. A birth plan is like a lesson plan and your plan on the EDFS for new observations needs to be revised. In the meantime as the process gets underway, I hope the new system, but for some educators the change has resulted in a change of activities in their learning goals. Continue to upload artifacts to support your work and progress.

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What is the BPS Student Cell Phone Policy?

The BPS Student Cell Phone Policy is a set of guidelines that regulate the use of cell phones by students in the Boston Public School (BPS) system. This policy addresses issues such as the appropriate use of cell phones in the school environment, the consequences of violating the policy, and the rights and responsibilities of students and school officials.

**Core Policies**

- **Prohibited Uses**: Students are prohibited from using their cell phones for certain activities, such as texting, during school hours or while on school property.
- **Confiscation**: Students who violate the policy may have their cell phones confiscated. The confinements are valid for at least one year.
- **Reconfinement**: If a student violates the policy after their phone has been confiscated, they may be subject to reconfinement.

**Discipline Measures**

Students who violate the policy may be subject to disciplinary measures, which can range from verbal warnings to suspension or expulsion. The severity of the measure depends on the nature and frequency of the violation.

**Policy Enforcement**

The policy is enforced by school administrators, who are responsible for ensuring that the policy is followed and that students adhere to the rules.

**Impact**

The policy aims to create a safe and productive school environment by reducing distractions, ensuring student focus, and maintaining a respectful learning atmosphere.

**Conclusion**

The BPS Student Cell Phone Policy is a comprehensive guideline designed to ensure that students use their cell phones appropriately and responsibly. The policy helps maintain a focus-aligned school environment and promotes student safety and well-being.
The 27th Annual AFT-MA/BTU Statewide Paraprofessional Conference
By Jenna Fitzgerald

The 27th Annual AFT-MA/BTU Statewide Paraprofessional Conference was not snowed out and was held at the BTU on Saturday, March 9, 2013, where over 140 paras and statewide guests gathered early for coffee and danish to fortify themselves for the anticipated workshops.

Richard Stutman, our president, gave the opening welcome to all the paraprofessionals, but was especially pleased with the paras from around the state, which included Amesbury, Billerica, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, Medway, New Bedford, Peabody, and Springfield.

He then acknowledged me, Jenna Fitzgerald, the Paraprofessional/Substitute Teacher Field Rep. with some very kind words of praise and told the audience of my plans to retire in June.

Next on the agenda was AFT-MA president Tom Gosnell, who also spoke of my retirement and even sported a new black derby hat in honor of my hats! The mood was light and everyone was enjoying the conference so far.

Now we get to the topic of the day, which was very sobering: "It's Your Future, Looking at Your Retirement Responsibilities," presented by Andrew Powell, Field Rep. from the AFT Massachusetts. Andrew gave a Power Point presentation of the recommendations of the OPEC Commission on the changes for your retirement. He presented a very precise outline of proposed changes, some of which upset the audience.

The Governor's Bill, House #59 was also discussed, starting with the new eligibility requirements. Public employees will be required to be of a certain age with a new minimum year of service to qualify for health insurance in retirement. One by one the paras stood and asked questions, which went on for over an hour. Andrew was very supportive, answering each and every question with a thoughtful, honest response. In the end the group was satisfied and knew what they themselves would have to do to ensure their own retirement issues would be met.

Everyone said how enlightening Andrew was and they felt better knowing what the retirement changes would be so they could look at their own situation and take the right steps.

Break time, and time to get ready to relax and be entertained. To lighten the atmosphere and get the paras off the retirement issues, we had comedian Tom Gilmore, who says, "Have Tux will Travel." To say he was funny doesn't do him justice. He had the paras in the aisles laughing. I insisted the comedian be a family-type with lots of good clean jokes that anyone could enjoy. Tom fit the bill to a T. His jokes about his kids and how they react to Mom and Dad everyone could relate to. It was a wonderful way to leave everyone happy.

Lunch was a turkey dinner with all the fixings, enjoyed by all. Then came the drawings for three large and wonderfully-filled baskets donated by the Para Council. Three lucky paras carried the heavy baskets away, knowing they had a great time at the 27th Annual AFT-MA/BTU Paraprofessional Conference, and yes, they will come again!

I had announced that I will not be running for the Paraprofessional/Substitute Teacher Field Representative position. After thirty-four years it is time to go. I did state that I was a contemporary of the Pope, so if he can retire, so can I!

One of the headmasters of a high school met me at Court Street and said that he heard my news and was very happy for me. He then added, "I also heard the Pope story, so I was going to call Richard and ask if he intended to install a chimney over there at the BTU so they could let the smoke billow out and everyone would know, 'Jenna has left the building.'"
Resistance and Civil Disobedience Grows Over Education “Deform”… (continued from page 1)

as part of teacher evaluations. Seattle
teachers have noted that many high school
students do not take it seriously. Citing
many other educational reasons for their
action the teachers at Garfield decided
that standing up for what is right is worth
putting yourself on the line.

In an effort to beat back this resistance
Seattle superintendent Jose Banda
threatened 10 day suspensions for the
Garfield teachers. In an act of solidarity
a 2nd Seattle school, Ballard High School,
joined the boycott. In February
over 300 parents at the school opted their
children out of the test. Then came let-
ters of support from scores of others in
Seattle and around the country who are
refusing to remain silent as our schools
are turned into testing factories. Banda
had to back down and rescinded the
suspension threat.

The struggle against the misuse of stan-
dardized testing is spreading to students.
In February members of the Providence
Student Union in Rhode Island staged a
dress rally as zombies to protest the
mindlessness of the testing that dominates
the corporate reform of high stakes testing.
Marching on the Department of Education
students chanted “No Vex, No Life” to protest the
decision to link standardized tests to
high school graduation. Students in Oregon
have organized an Opt Out Campaign to persuade other students not to take the standardized tests. Citing
the stresses they have experienced since
2nd grade and the negative impact these
tests have had on their educational life
the students felt they had no choice but
to organize.

In March, public outcry about school
closings and the lack of teacher and par-
ent input into the process in Philadelphia,
Pennsylvania led to 18 people being ar-
rested for blocking entry to a meeting of
the Philadelphia School Reform Com-
mission. Included in the 18 was American
Federation of Teachers president Randi
Weingarten.

According to AFT LeaderNet, AFT
president Randi Weingarten and 18 others
were arrested March 7th at the headquarters
of the School District of Philadelphia
for protesting city officials’ plans to close 29
public schools. The protestors were block-
ing the doors to prevent Philadelphia’s
School Reform Commission from voting on
the school-closing plan.

Before the arrests, Weingarten—along
with Philadelphia Federation of Teach-
ers president Jerry Jordan, a number of
Philadelphia City Council members,
and other community and religious
leaders—addressed a crowd of several
hundred protesters who had gathered
at the district headquarters before the
commission meeting. They demanded a
moratorium on harmful school closures,
which are an recklessness approach to education
that destabilizes communities. Parents,
teachers and community members have
drafted and united around an alternate
plan to invest in neighborhood schools, but
the plan has been ignored by the School
Reform Commission.

“Kids have suffered cut after cut,” We-
ingarten said. “Fix, don’t close, schools!”
The crowd joined along with its own chant
of “Don’t close schools!”

Three weeks later on March 27th over
100 teachers and parents were arrested
in Chicago for protesting the decision to
close 54 public schools, the largest school
closing in US history.

According to the Chicago Teachers
Union and AFT, thousands rallied and
marched on March 27 in opposition to a
Chicago Public Schools and mayor’s office
plan for mass school closings. Organized
by the Chicago Teachers Union, UNITE
HERE Local 1, SEIU Local 1 and the
Grassroots Education Movement, Chica-
goans called on the city and the board of
education to stop all school closings and
slow the expansion of charter schools to
focus on investment in public schools,
working-class families and the city’s strug-
gling neighborhoods.

A crowd gathered in Daley Plaza and
swelled to 7,000 as they marched through
the streets of downtown Chicago. Through-
out the march, CTU president Karen Lewis (shown speaking at left) was flanked by two longtime civil
rights activists, the Rev. Jesse Jackson and

Lewis urged the students, teachers and
families in the crowd to stay strong
in the face of school closings and pledged
union support. She also sent a message
to the thousands of students that CPS is
attempting to displace: “On the first day of
school you show up at your real school.”
Lewis said, “Don’t let these people take
your school!”

In an act of civil disobedience, more
than 100 members of the organizing
unions were arrested during a sit-in in the south-
bound lane of LaSalle Street outside of City
Hall. Among the arrestees were CTU vice
president Jesse Sharkey and CTU record-
ing secretary Michael Brunson.

“It is an obscene travesty for them to
refer to what they’ve been doing as a civil
rights movement,” said Brumon of the
school board. “So now, we are going to
show them what a real civil rights move-
ment looks like, and what a real civil rights
movement feels like.”

As the demonstration unfolded, AFT
president Randi Weingarten released a
statement in support of the teachers, par-
ents and students in the streets.

“The AFT stands with teachers, parents,
students and other Chicagoans fighting
to guarantee every child in Chicago the
high-quality neighborhood public school he
or she deserves,” Weingarten said.

“Chicago’s reckless mass school closure
agenda will destabilize neighborhoods,
threaten our children’s safety, fail to
improve learning or save money, and create
a domain effect of destabilization in schools
cross the city. It is part of a disturbing trend
in cities across the country by the powers
that be to ignore what parents, students and
teachers demand and what our children
need in favor of failed policies.”

Standardization, underfunding, and
school closings are all part of the corpo-
ratization of American schools. It doesn’t
seem to matter that we work hard and make
many sacrifices so that our students have
the opportunity to achieve. The public is
being torn away from public education.
More and more teachers, parents, and
students are fighting back. What will
become of our schools? Although Jimi
Hendrix went to Garfield High School it
is the quote of another famous rock rebel,
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Statements from Candidates for BTU Paraprofessional/Substitute Teachers Field Representative

Adrianne Jordan

My name is Adrianne Jordan. I am a K-1 Paraprofessional at the Chit-lick Elementary School. I have worked in the Boston Public Schools for 14 years. I was also Community Field Coordinator for two years at the Boston Early Education Center (Ellison Park).

I have worked in multiple environments as a paraprofessional from Early Childhood, Middle School and High School level. (ex) Regular Ed, Title I, Lab Cluster, Special Ed, Chess Teams, Math Counts, etc. My background experience attributes from listening and understanding the needs of our students, Parents and the Community.

As a paraprofessional I have served on several different Committees. At present; Para Council, Building Rep, Delegate, Election Committee and Black Caucus. As a Para Council member I have had the opportunity and pleasure of traveling to the Paraprofessional and School Related Person (SPRP) Conferences in different States, learning and adapting techniques to help our Union become stronger while utilizing resources that will help better educate our students.

In the summer of 2009 me and college coworkers traveled on behalf of the AFT to Savannah Georgia to help the Union and their members. I’m running for Para/Sub field Rep because I believe in order to have a strong Union I need to be involved in my life to learning and teaching. I believe in order to increase a child’s level of success we have to actively involve our students and parents in the child’s life. (ex) field Rep. because I dedicate my life to learning and teaching, integrity and the energy to help us move forward in the coming years. The last 2 years I have been a Paraprofessional in the Boston Public Schools. I am confident that my experience in the classroom and as a field Rep. will make my best para(Sub)field Rep. I left the Holland I moved to the Martin Luther King Jr. as an paraprofessional in grades 3/4/5. I then moved to grades 4/5 SAR classroom. My last five years at the Holland I was a Build Representative for Math and Science. I also coordinate and teach “Tech Goes Home”, to students and their families on Saturdays. Once a month I volunteer at BSU Parent Association Executive Board.

I served on the Holland Faculty Senate for six years representing both teachers and paras. As treasurer of the Faculty Senate, I managed funding for staff events and planned budgeting for future endeavors. As a member of the Faculty Senate I met with administrators monthly to all dress concerns of staff members in order to resolve issues in a timely fashion. I have been a Build Representative for 1 year and received the Building Representative Award in 2012. I am an Alumna of Boston Tech High School and a Parent of Boston Latin Academy Alumna. I am currently serving as a volunteer of the Parent Association Executive Board. I have been a building rep for early elementary students at all levels and have a stronger voice in the Boston Public Schools. Your support is very much appreciated.

Colleen Hart

My name is CasSandra Sam-muel of the Young Achievers School. As a candidate for the Paraprofessional/Substitute Field Representative, I will do my best to represent our interests honestly and with integrity and the energy to help us move forward in the coming years. The last two years I have been a Paraprofessional in the Boston Public Schools. I am confident that my experience in the classroom and as a paraprofessional in grades 3/4/5, then moved to grades 4/5 SAR classroom. My last five years at the Holland I moved to the Martin Luther King Jr. as a paraprofessional in the Young Achievers School of Math and Science. I also coordinate and teach “Tech Goes Home”, to students and their families on Saturdays. Once a month I volunteer at BSU Parent Association Executive Board.

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Josefina Lascano

My name is Josefina Lascano and I am running for the office of Paraprofessional/Substit-ute Teacher Field Repre-sentative. I take great pride on my involvement with the Boston Teachers Union very strongly because it inspired me. And when members deserve to be well represented. Let me be the one to continue with that recognition and respect and I will be well earned by all of our Paraprofessionals and Substitute Teachers for the work they do in the school.

My experience in union business over the years has been serving on the Negotiating Team for the last two contracts, Paraprofessional Council, Trustee for the Paraprofessional Health and Welfare Fund, Collective Bargaining Commit-tee, Election Committee, Delegate to Local and National Conventions and Building Representatives.

As chair of the WRC Sherrie Cristiani, Big Sister volunteer Amanda Martinez, Tom Gosnell, Dana Buefort, Laurel Lascano, y VOTO ES IMPORTANT. Come and vote! Your vote is important.

Carla M. Johnson

My name is Carla M. Johnson and I would like the opportunity to run for the position of PARAPROFESSIONAL and SUBSTITUTE TEACHER Field Representative. I was born into a family of BPS educators. My father and grandfather were both teachers and my mother a paras and substitutesin the Boston Public Schools. As a student I was taught me to use my voice to advocate for children and those who work on their behalf. I look forward to meeting and working with many of you and humbly ask for your support and vote in the primary and final elections.

Thank You, Carla M. Johnson

Debra Brown

My name is Debra Brown. I am running for the position of Paraprofessional/Substitute Teacher Field Representative. I would like to present my history with the State of Massachusetts as well as the Boston Public Schools. I have worked as a paraprofessional in the Boston Public Schools for 24 years.

• Paraprofessional for 24 years
• Worked in the classroom in a variety of settings
• Currently the librarian at the Charles Sumner Elementary School
• Building Representative for the Charles Sumner Elementary School for 18 years
• Trustee of the Health and Welfare Fund
• Member of the Collective Bargaining Unit
• Delegate for all bodies of the Union

At the Second Annual Women’s Rights Breakfast on March 30th, the 2nd Annual Women’s Rights Breakfast was held at the historic Melrose Memorial Hall in Cambridge.

Among my accomplishments, I have received the AFTMA Distinguish Service award, Paraprofessional of the Year and the AFT Everyday Unsung Hero. I am a Para Mentor and a Member of the AFT E-RAD MNESSI (Mainstreaming and Para) Council after the membership meeting on April 10th.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

VEN Y VOTA! TU VOTO ES IMPORTANTE. Come and vote! Your vote is important.

Thank you for your consideration.

Josefina Lascano

MEET & GREET the candidates for PARA/3UB FIELD REPRESENTATIVE and PARA COUNCIL after the membership meeting on April 10th. Light refreshments will be served.

BTU Women’s Committee Holds Second Annual Women’s Rights Breakfast

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

VEN Y VOTO ES IMPORTANTE. Come and vote! Your vote is important.
Evacuation Day: Birth of a Nation
by John Glynn

Parents, when asked what their children were as mothers and fathers started, usually give the date when their eldest child was born.

The issuance of a signed document giving "Declaration" of the blessed event usually follows some time later. This document certifies that a birth took place recently.

On or around July 4, 1776, a group signed a document in Philadelphia attesting to the birth of a new nation of United States in the Americas.

The nation, known simply as America, was truly born on March 17th of 1776 in Boston.

On that day people of action, character, and resolve from New England would see those same qualities in a southern planter from Virginia, and would adopt him as their own.

History books record George Washington's action on Dorchester Heights as a military victory. How many of the British ships from Boston was cutting the umbilical cord of a premature nation to its Mother Country. The "preemie" nation would have to be given a reason to practice marching in nice weather could be expected to do near impossible tasks in freezing weather.

Yet these New Englanders who resisted the routine responded to the impossible. They were ingenious in solving problems when they had to do so on their own. They did not suffer fools gladly. They had a "Type A" personality and expected tough tasks to be completed. They had to wonder how troops who had to be given a reason to practice marching in nice weather could be expected to do near impossible tasks in freezing weather.

Revenue drives public education. MA schools, teachers, students, as well as all MA residents deserve the investment. Revenue drives public education. MA schools, teachers, students, as well as all MA residents deserve the investment. Thank you Patrick Alexis, John Alloca, Maria Arias, Pedro Arias, Sandra Baler-Segal, Marie Broderick, Caren Carew, Sandra Carle, Anna Cananotan, Larry Connolly, Jean Cristiani, Marjie Crosby, Joan Devlin, Bill Duckownorma, Norma Eason, Brian Fleming, Janey Frank, Eileen Ganley, and nicholas Gicocibbe, Milton Hagins, William Han, Jenny Han, James Martin, Johnny Melms, Peter Meyer, John Molloy, Sherry Pedone, Marian Peters, Seth Peterson, Timo Philip, David Russell, Joanne Shimick, Elaine Sutherland, Paul Tonney, Connie Thibaut, Mary Ann Urban, Garret Vichrick, Adele Williams, Walter Woods, and Judy Ziegafus.

If you attended the Lobby Day and your name is inadvertently missing, please contact Angela Cristiani at the BTU office.

O n March 12th, BTU members headed in to the State House in support of An Act to Invest in Our Communities (HB 2887/ SB 1313), sponsored by Rep. Jim O’Day and Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz, to speak to their elected officials about the need for additional revenue to strengthen the Commonwealth’s economy. With this revenue package, the Commonwealth will raise $2 billion dollars by raising new revenues, while making our tax system simpler and fairer for every Massachusetts resident, with an exemption for low and middle income seniors. Central to the bill is a provision that increases the state income tax from 5.25% to 5.35% while simultaneously raising the personal exemption. This has the effect of raising significant new revenue, but doing so in a fair way. It is the belief that such a provision must be included in any successful revenue proposal.

The message is simple… invest in our communities and invest in a strategic way.
Google Maps sent me over the Charles, Mystic, and Chelsea Rivers to East Boston High School (EBHS). It sits high on a hill and is one of the largest schools in Boston, serving nearly 1400 students! I was greeted and escorted through the school by Nina Gaeta Coletta, the Family Center Coordinator. We met many years ago when she worked for the Citywide Education Coalition (CWEC) – a group that began giving annual “Golden Apple” awards to 15 BPS teachers every year.

Nina’s cheery welcome made me feel right at home, although it’s easy to get disoriented walking along the corridors of this huge sprawling building! I noticed a large anti-bullying display created by the EBHS Gay-Straight Alliance, an after school club led by science teacher Jamaica O’Brien. Student-signed promises covered an expansive “Wall of Allies” nearby. Signs on doors and hallway walls advertised PiDay (3.14) – and I thought that was a clever idea! I wondered what math teachers were planning to do in their classrooms to celebrate.

I watched history teacher Barry Lawton explain the word “conduit” to his students in the context of a lesson on the Reformation. Large posters of similarly meaty vocabulary words decorated the rear wall of his classroom. Nina took me to see the ROTC program, which she credited with the development of social/emotional literacy and leadership skills. Sergeant Rigoberto Velez and his colleagues had students participate in a giant 4-way tug of war, which looked like a lot of fun and clearly took teamwork!

When I returned a week later to interview students, I met with them in the second floor office. At a small table in the corner I chatted with Carlos and Tony, two student interns available to help with errands during one period/day – a reward for seniors who have completed most of their graduation requirements. When I asked them what they liked best about EBHS, the boys said, “The teachers!” in unison and without hesitation, explaining that they were mostly “cool” and understanding.

Many staff members (and/or their parents and/or their children) attended East Boston High, as did Nina. She exuded “Eastie Pride” as she introduced me to teachers throughout the building. Although it’s always hard to get a full picture of a school in one short visit, I was impressed by the warmth of my welcome and by the focus on learning wherever I went.