Mayor / Superintendent Release Proposed Legislation That Would Convert as Many as 48 Level 3 Schools to Turnaround Schools

Bill Also Levels Playing Field for Some Charters While Encouraging Segregation in Others

by Richard Stutman, BTU President

The mayor has recently filed legislation, supported by the superintendent, that will drastically alter school and teaching conditions at each of our Level 3 schools. The bill would also permit the establishment of charter schools that could select students by geographical area, a change that is likely to raise eyebrows among people who have failed charters for already being able to cherry pick their students. On the other hand, the proposed legislation does have a few long overdue components that would help level the playing field between charters and our public schools. The bill is sponsored by State Rep. Marty Wale (D-Bad Bay/Beacon Hill), and will take its place alongside other competing pieces of legislation that propose to do much of the same things as the mayor’s superintendent’s bill.

There is no specific timetable for discussion and determination of any of the above pieces of legislation. BTU Political Director Angela Cristiani (acristiani@btu.org) will keep us informed.

Below is the official summary of the legislation. (The italicized comments and explanation have been added and are mine. The comments are not meant to be all-inclusive.)

You may access the complete package at the following URL: http://btu.org/legislation-politics/ma-legislative-highlights

The summary below appears exactly as has been released.

An Act Promoting Public School Success

Education reform legislation offers greater autonomy to several types of district schools, including Turn-around schools, Innovation schools, and Horace Mann charter schools. These efforts have produced strong academic results, and should be extended to serve a greater number of students. We know what is working in our schools and this bill builds on these efforts to close the achievement gap by:

- Extending “turn-around” powers and support grants to Level 3 schools
- Boston has somewhere between 39 and 48 Level 3 schools. As we understand it, the number is in a bit of flux. This provision would essentially convert all in Turn-around Schools, and subject each school to new teaching and learning conditions approved by a three-person panel, akin to what we have today imposed on our 11 Turnaround Schools. The key, immediate issue is what would happen to the estimated 1,500-2,500 staff currently assigned the 39-48 new Turnaround Schools (NTS). No NTS would be required to retain any incumbent staff member or ‘accept’ anyone from another NTS.

This would be bad enough, but consider that there are an additional dozen or so Turnaround Schools, and dozens of other schools with similar staff assignment models (Innovation, In-District Charter, and pilot) and the problem is clear. There are or will shortly be too many schools with the autonomy to reject anyone the school wishes.

- Eliminating the cap on in-district charter schools and eliminating the requirement that renewal of these schools is based on union approval.

As to the first point, see the answer above. As to the second, the union has been supportive of all renewals without exception. This is a non issue and if it makes it easier for in-district charter schools to renew, then the BTU is all for it.

- Prioritizing enrollment for students with disabilities and ELLs in charter schools

This sounds good and it’s about time. But keep reading.

- Building and maintaining programs for charter students with disabilities and ELLs through partnerships and coordination with District resources

This will allow charters to ‘send back’ or contract out to the district the same students as above.

- Offering the same transportation services to both charter and district school students

Finally, charters have always gotten preference and have had access to charters transportation – which is a lot better deal than our public school students get. So for example, a student from East Boston can get transportation to the Renaissance Charter, located in Revere. That’s a good deal.

- Extending the school day (with compensation rates & schedule set outside of collective bargaining)

Self explanatory. The superintendent would have the right to extend the day at whatever rate and for whatever condition she might want to. What’s missing from the discussion? What about the quality of the time? And how much or how little is appropriate? Time for the sake of time should not be a change that is likely to raise eyebrows among people who have failed charters for already being able to cherry pick their students.

If we are to call any man his master, and no one could call him slave, he was in fact a slave to society, and could only be a hewer of wood and a dresser of tables; and the American people can afford to be known only as a nation containing a mixed race of people, which, in the Southern States, is perfectly proper and necessary to the support of the American people. It is honorable to do, it is, nevertheless, plain that no body of men, however numerous, however long respected who are confined exclusively to mere menial service for which but little intelligence or skill are required, and for which but the smallest wages are paid or received, especially if the laborer does not make an effort to rise above that condition. While the employment as waiters at hotels and on steamboats and railroads, is perfectly proper and entirely honorable, in the circumstances which now surround the colored people, no one variety of the American people can afford to be known only as waiters and domestic servants.

(continued on page 2)
Performance Evaluation 2013 and New Issues

By Patrick J. Connolly

BTV Executive Vice President

W hat will go on in the new calendar year is one of many of us make resolutions to help ourselves reach goals we may have missed in 2012. These goals may be physical, spiritual, intellectual, emotional or any mix of these. It is within this geographical and personal arena that we determine if we have one or two that fall into each category. One professional goal for each of our members should be to attain or maintain proficiency in the role of educator or to achieve a rating of Exemplary.

For educators on any one-year self-directed plan, a Performance Evaluation Formative Assessment should occur mid-cycle (mid to late January or early February) which will provide written feedback and ratings to the Educator about his/her progress towards attaining the goals set forth in the Educator’s Plan. Written notice of the Assessment is required and then a signed copy is given to the Educator. The Educator shall sign the report within five school days of receipt indicating receipt, not agreement or disagreement to the contents.

Hopefully most educators will maintain or obtain a rating of Proficient. Some may reach Exemplary. There may, however, be some Educators who see their rating downgraded to Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory. This may result in a new Educator Plan, one with a shorter time span. It may also result in a change in the individual’s goals and action steps of the plan. These goals and action steps may be developed by the Educator. Consequences of these could be less scrutiny of the educator’s performance and more detailed prescriptions to improve performance. It may also prevent the educator from participating in the Post Transfer Placement Process. If you find yourself in this situation contact the Elementary Field Rep. (Michael McLaughlin) or the Secondary Field Rep. (Caren Carew) immediately. The length of a directed growth plan ranges from 30 calendar days to a school year. This is not a great deal of time to improve and demonstrate proficiency. Likewise the individual educator under great stress.

There will continue to be workshops offered to assist members in preparing for their Formative Assessments. These will be posted on My Learning Plan and noticed in the BTU E-Bulletin. Take advantage of these if you have concerns or questions about the evaluation process or what is expected of you in this process. Preparations for these workshops will enhance your success.

As this process unfolds there have already been several teachers who have received an “intent to dismiss” packet. This leads, usually, to a demand for a meeting with the evaluator and the start of a long, involved process. The grievance procedure in the new performance evaluation and contract language has also changed. If there is a change in your plan status (rating) contact the BTU Office. There may be an error or omission that may be grievable in the assessment or evaluation. The need for new goals and action steps in a new shortened time period will bring new demands on the educator. The BTU will attempt to provide as much assistance as possible to these educators.

Another issue that has become more pressing is the question of the new Sheltered English Immersion endorsement that will be required of educators in Massachusetts. Educators will be assigned to a cohort and will need to obtain the endorsement in order to obtain an initial license. Likewise “incumbent core teacher” (CT) or ELL license holders will need to be assigned to a cohort for SEI training during the period covering SY 2013 through SY 2016, must obtain the SEI endorsement in order to receive, or renew, the license subject, to a hardship exception” (Memo from Commissioner Mitchell D. Chester, 12/7/12). There is a significant amount of time involved in this process and there will be varied programs offered to meet the requirements. Some educators who have attended CT or ELL License workshops may be able to take an abridged version of the requirements to gain the endorsement. The training will provide no training cost to educators during the SY 2013 to SY 2016 transition period. If educators do not take the no cost opportunity, they will need to earn the endorsement at their own expense so they can renew, extend, or advance their license.

There will be discussion between the RPS and the BTU as to how this will be implemented. Very little is certain at this point. Having a valid license is a criteria for employment. Many educators will be renewing their license(s) in 2014, so this issue is very timely.

This was not brought about through contract negotiations. This resulted from a Department of Justice complaint against the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As soon as the BTU obtains further information it will be communicated to you. It may seem that professional resolutions are being dictated by others and to an extent that is true. State and federal policies and regulations are placing more demands and requirements on educators.

We are reacting to these events. This can lead to an increase in stress and anxiety. Individuals need to remember to maintain some time for themselves so they can continue to be healthy both physically and mentally. If any questions or concerns, please contact me at pconnolly@btu.org.

**Commentary: Michael J. Maguire**

*From Michigan to China, and Back Again*

Two months ago, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder reversed his own pledge not to sign the Right to Work legislation and signed such a bill into law. As unthinkable as it might be, the home of America’s strongest labor movement is the latest state to limit the power of workers.

The name Right To Work (RTW) is a great misnomer. Federal law already allows a new hire to refuse to join a union, and even to refuse to pay dues. However, that person would have to pay a lower “agency fee” which covers the cost of the union’s negotiation on behalf of all. Michigan laws also include a “ opting out” procedure which allows workers to pay nothing to the union.

So far from being a “right to work,” this legislation is intended to take money away from unions. Union dues are used by businesses and government to ride rough shot over its workers.

For American corporations to emerge from the Great Recession, it seems odd that corporations and governments need RTW language. After all, there are no better sources of people who are assigned to a job. Are new hires demanding so much from an employer that the employer needs to break the union? Today the answer is no, but the business world saw an opportunity in Michigan and hastily took it. Why? The answer is two world trends.

Michigan hopes to draw back a manufacturing base with RTW. Having been in Detroit last summer, I can attest to the need for more jobs in one of America’s largest cities. Large sections of this once great city are empty. Literally nothing stands for the brick and concrete buildings oncedominated. BOLT’s Vin Marco has achieved his goal? I don’t know; I doubt it. But I think it will achieve its unstyled goal: making Michigan workers look more like Asia and Latin America. Instead of sourcing and manufacturing production beyond the Pacific or Rio Grande, corpora- tions want to impart nonunion work- ing conditions here. Or put another way, corporations want to turntom the clock by a century or more.

For a company its roots are in 1891. New York City saw its worst industrial disaster to date. 146 garment workers died in a fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. On September 12, 2012, at least 280 people died in a fire ing a garment factory in Karachi, Pakistan. What have we learned in the intervening century? We have learned that when American workers banded together to win better and safer working conditions, the business left to other countries. Sadly, in this global economy, the US allows in products from foreign factories that, due to poor work place safety, would not be allowed to operate on our own soil.

But with Michigan and other states changing their laws and unions can no longer work, America is making our soil more hospitable for businesses. And at least on major business has responded. Apple announced recently that it would begin manufacturing in the US. Details are still scarce, but it appears that the growing demand for wages in China is a contribut- ing factor in the move.

It’s a great irony that as the Chinese workers call for better wages and working conditions, it's the American workers who appear to be suffering.

(Michael J. Maguire teaches Latin at Boston Latin Academy)

**Phone Numbers**

Office — 617-288-2001
Health & Welfare — 617-288-0500
AFT Massachusetts — 617-423-3342
Post Transfer Placement Process
—— 317-288-4200

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What is the BPS Sick Leave Policy?

The BPS sick leave benefit for absences varies by illness or injury and when an employee is on an approved maternity leave, and the like. The following process is in addition to contacting the school or BPS sub-central when notifying the employer of one’s absence. The BPS monitors sick leave in order to detect what it perceives as ‘patterns’ of absences which it could constitute as abuse. If this occurs, the administration treats it as a disciplinary matter. If a pattern has been established, through the process following the guidelines as set forth in the Superintendent’s Circular on Employee Discipline Procedures [HRS-PP-10], then it can be required to furnish a doctor’s note for each and every absence. Doctoring pay is a form of discipline and if the BPS discipline process isn’t followed, the teacher should grievance it immediately.

The “Employee Sick Leave Policy” can be found in Superintendent’s Circular HRS-PP-12. It details that all absences for 6 or more consecutive days (absences interrupted by weekends and/or holidays are not counted as part of the consecutive absence) must be completely documented by a physician’s letter that follows the following protocol which is the same used for the letter required for a medical or educational leave as well. The physician’s letter must be on the doctor’s letterhead and must include: the full name of the employee identified as their patient; the general nature of the reason why they are absent and that due to this issue the patient is currently unable to perform their duties as a teacher. The anticipated date of the employee’s return to work [month/day/year] and if the return date is unknown the teacher must indicate the exact date when the person will need to be evaluated by the doctor to determine their ability to return to work; letter signed by a physician [not a nurse practitioner, social worker, psychologist, etc.]. If the latter is the case, the employee must obtain an updated physician’s letter at that appointment utilizing this protocol with a new date of return detailed. Failure to submit the required letter(s) in a timely basis can result in discipline.

It is the employee’s responsibility to submit said letters to BPS Human Resources, 3rd floor, 26 Court Street to the attention of Marsha Jabour. She can be reached at 617-288-2463 or letters@boston.k12.ma.us. Never assume letters have been received. It is best to confirm by email to m.jabour@boston.k12.ma.us at 617-635-9616 or paperwork received. It is the employee’s responsibility to submit said letters to BPS Human Resources, 3rd floor, 26 Court Street to the attention of Marsha Jabour. She can be reached at 617-288-2463 or letters@boston.k12.ma.us. Never assume letters have been received. It is best to confirm by email to m.jabour@boston.k12.ma.us at 617-635-9616 or in case of Marsha Jabour. She can be reached at 617-288-2463 or letters@boston.k12.ma.us. Never assume letters have been received. It is best to confirm by email to m.jabour@boston.k12.ma.us at 617-635-9616 or

When Do Programming Preference Sheets Come Out?
The contract states, “No later than May 15, preference sheets shall be distributed to all teachers.” For High and Middle School teachers it reads, “Programming preference will be honored to the extent consistent with the provisions of this Agreement. Preference sheets shall be returned by March 1.” This means that a ‘preference’ is just that, it does not mean that the teacher is guaranteed their choice as submitted.

The contract also details, “On or before February 1, a list of all non-teaching assignment periods for which administrative periods are given in a teacher’s program shall be posted in each school. These assignments may be applied for in the teacher’s program preference sheets or honor (within the contract provided).

An applicant for such a non-teaching assignment shall receive the assignment shall, upon his/her request, be given the reasons for not having been selected by the Principal or Headmaster.”

Do Specialty Teachers Receive Common Professional Development Time?

There is a new Article VII in the contract that states, “All specialty teachers such as a teacher美术, music, physical education, guidance, district-wide will meet as a group at least once annually during the contractual school year for a professional development day, on one of the city-wide all schools professional development days already scheduled on the academic calendar.”

What is Legally Acceptable as Gifts to Public School Teachers and Staff?

When posed this question from a colleague, I made an inquiry to the lawyers at the AFT, and they furnished me with the following information. In general, a public employee may not accept any gift worth less than $50 or more that is given because of the position he or she holds. Public employees may accept gifts that are worth less than $50, but they have to disclose in writing that they have done so if, based on the specific circumstances, a reasonable person would think that the teacher’s actions would be influenced by the gift. Example: A child who did not participate in the class gift gives a plate of homemade cookies to the teacher. The teacher may accept the cookies, and no disclosure is required, because a reasonable person would not think that the teacher would be influenced by a gift that has no retail value. Similarly, a teacher would not be required to disclose acceptance of other homemade food items, hand-picked (not purchased as a bouquet of flowers, and handmade gifts, candy, or other gift items worth less than $10, because a reasonable person would not think that the teacher might unduly show favor to the giver of such gifts or the giver’s child, or be influenced by the giver. Example: Parents of a child who did not contribute to a class gift and whose child is awaiting a college recommendation gives the teacher who is writing the recommendation a bottle of wine worth $40. The teacher must disclose the gift in writing to you to her appointing authority, because a reasonable person might think that such a gift might influence the teacher to write a better recommendation for the student.

The following is the link to the required disclosure: 130 Disclosure of Appearance of Undue Favor or Involvement Required under section 25b(1)(c).

How Does a Person With Disabilities Apply for Reasonable Accommodations at Work?

The BPS policy on Superintendent’s Circular HRS-PP-12, “Employees with Disabilities – Rights and Responsibilities” commits to non-discrimination against qualified persons with disabilities to education programs (continued on page 7).

BTU ELECTIONS
Are you interested in running for either union office or as a delegate to various educational conferences?
If so, please pick up nomination papers at the BTU office. Signed papers are due at the March membership meeting (3/13/13).

Published by the Boston Teachers Union AFT Local 66, AFL-CIO
Retirement Seminar with MICHAEL W. LAUGHLIN
BTU ELEMENTARY FIELD REPRESENTATIVE and Trustee, State-Boston Retirement Board Along with staff from the State-Boston Retirement System, Group Health, Social Security and the BTU Retired Teachers Chapter Thursday, March 21, 2013 4:00 PM – BTU HALL
email awashington@btu.org to reserve your seat

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EDITORIAL NOTE: The opinions expressed in the “Boston Union Teacher” do not necessarily represent the views of the Boston Teachers Union, or those of its members.

WHEN WRITING: A comment or query to the “Boston Union Teacher” must be typewritten and include the author’s name and school or department if not school-based.
All articles must be appropriate to the publication, and in good taste.
Letters to the editor should be sent to letters@bnu.org.

DEADLINE: The deadline for submitting articles for the “Boston Union Teacher” is February 15th.
All copy should be e-mailed to bnu.org. All copy should be e-mailed to marsha@bnu.org. This deadline will be strictly adhered to.

180 Mount Vernon Street Boston, MA 02125

BOSTON UNION TEACHER February, 2013 3
Day of Service for Young Achievers School –
Developing Leaders Through Community Service

Community service prompts us to think beyond ourselves, work together, and strengthen our community. It is a familiar term, particularly in a mid-winter month honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., with a National Service Day on a Saturday, and the MLK Day of Service on a federal Monday holiday.

On Friday, January 18, students and teachers from an urban school in Mattapan answered the call of Dr. King and grew as leaders in the process. The first Mattapan Day of Service at Young Achievers Science and Math Pilot School #8 sent 327 students and more than 100 teachers and staff throughout Mattapan to volunteer at community organizations. Participants raised the spirits of hospitalized children, initiated a town cleanup campaign, constructed animal enrichment toys at Franklin Park Zoo, made displays for the local library, visited seniors in elder care, beautified neighborhoods, and improved their school building.

“Martin Luther King gave his life to make the world a better place, and more for all of us,” Young Achievers Principal Virginia Chalmers told her students. “Part of honoring his legacy is giving service to our community.”

Today is a day that we commit all of our time and energy to make the world a better place close to our school.”

Volunteering for an average of four hours each for a school total of more than 2500 hours of service, Young Achievers students and teachers spent the day answering what Dr. King called life’s most persistent question: “What are you doing for others?”

Students had clear ideas about what they wanted to do, and community organizations opened their doors, including Boston Family Boat Building, Boston Nature Center, Boston Police Department B-3, Boston Public Library – Mattapan Campus, Boston Public Schools Science Department, City Councilor Charles Yancey’s Office, City Year Boston, Colorado Street Neighborhood Association, District Attorney Daniel Conley’s Office, Foley Senior Residences, Franklin Park Zoo, Haitian Adult Day Center, Heart at Olmstead Green, Margaret Sheu Day Health Program, Mattapan Community Health Center, Mattapan Food and Fitness, Mattapan PACE, Roxbury Cool Smiles, Mattapan Small Smiles, Perfect Family Dental, and the Suffolk County Sheriff Department.

At the Mattapan Community Health Center, second graders greeted visitors, served them hot chocolate and coffee, and read them stories. In the upstairs office area, students fashioned a small community room near the front door of the clinic, students babbled around tables, reading aloud to strangers from the pages of their favorite books. Other students stirred sweeteners or creamers into coffee and packets of cocoa into water as they prepared hot drinks for people coming and going on this frigid day.

Student Michael Collins showed a visitor his book about professional wrestling and actor John Cena. “Can I read it to you?” she asked. He nodded, and they sat on a cushioned bench along the wall as he sipped her coffee and listened to the story about his hero.

“People are leaving a lot happier,” said Elijah Rooks, security officer in the lobby at the center, noting the affect the students had on guests that morning. “I think seeing the kids makes people smile.”

Eighth grade students played leadership role throughout the day, helping teachers and students at each service site. Working with the second graders at the health center, eighth grader Dimitri Moore was impressed.

“They’re very energetic, but they like using their energy to help people,” he noted. “Most of them were not afraid to approach people. I think that’s what leaders of the future really need. It inspires me. These kids have so much confidence in themselves, and they have so much change in them – it shows me that I’m still young and I can still change the world as I am.”

“Our experience on Service Day is an important reminder of how significant an opportunity it can be for middle school students to be a mentor for younger ones,” noted Chalmers. Their “most mature and pro-social behavior can emerge in these contexts. It was moving to see each and every one of the eighth graders stepping up to the leadership opportunity afforded by the day. It is one of the opportunities that being a K-8 school ought to provide frequently, but somehow we are unable to fit it in too often.”

At the Haitian Adult Day Health Center on Frontenac Street in Dorchester, fifth grade students from teacher Caroline Alexis’ class worked side-by-side with Haitian elders to prepare health kits for students in Haiti. Many of the retirees have grandchildren back in their home country. At long tables in a packed meeting room with Haitian music playing, “The background, they made a hundred kits, filling each plastic bag with a coloring book, post-it note pad, a box of crayons, a paper and hand-made card written in both English in Haitian Creole, stating: ‘Dear Friend. Someday I would like to meet you. I live in the U.S. Your new friend...’”

Supplies for the kits were donated by the Boston Police Department District B-3, which also contributed time and resources to the overall success of Service Day. They provided two police vans to transport the students to various sites, suggested partner sites that could be included in the day, and participated at the school, with two officers arriving Friday morning to help with painting projects.

Third grade teacher Rina Wolok took her students to Heart at Olmstead Green to practice reading skills, “Keeping Mattapan Green” signs, and made lunch with the residents. After a morning of reading together, sharing stories, and eating, the conversations flowed between students and residents. “This was a very long time for the students to seem so happy and calm,” said Wolok. “They love the one-on-one attention. The older adults have a calming influence on them.”

The benefits were mutual. An elderly man with serious ailments said the students helped him feel that getting up was worth it, and made him thankful for another day.

At another senior residence, dance instructor and choreographer Gina Jones’ fourth grade students performed an Indian Bollywood dance infused with the latest gangnam-style moves. Approximately 20 residents of the Foley Senior Residences in Mattapan watched the performance in a sunny community room. “This shows the scholars how to give back in a way that isn’t materialistic,” said Jones. “We are sharing their spirit and their youth and engaging with the audience. Service can mean so many different things. This is live, traveling performance and shows you can do service through being artistic.”

Foley student Gerri Wooten danced from her chair during the performance, and reminisced about doing the cha-cha in her youth. “It’s beautiful. We see the joy in the students’ faces, and they see that they’re making us feel good,” she said.

“They’re redoing something important. They put a smile on all our faces today.”

At the Boston Nature Center, 6th grade students constructed wildlife habitats, painted furnishings for a new preschool, and painted flags representing the dozens of countries of origin for Young Achievers families. It was important to have all the flags represented, said teacher Jenna Hadley and her students, because Martin Luther King wanted everyone to be “everybody.” “Everyone could be equal,” said a student, “so we display the flags of all and everyone is united.”

Chalmers spent Service Day at the school participating in school-based projects. “The school was abuzz with positive energy,” she said. Seventh grade students stenciled leechers with the school’s “habits of mind” words – creativity, perseverance, equity, investigation, evidence, and connection. They constructed wood blocks for use in dramatic play, and worked with City Year Corps members to paint murals for the school building. Younger students made cards, necklaces, and blankets for patients at Children’s Hospital, painted vegetable signs, and made flowerpots for Mattapan Food and Fitness. Students initiated and managed a community garden, cleaned up the yard and cleared out a basement closet for a new school store.

“We work hard to teach students the idea of responsibility, so not only strengthening their learning but also strengthening their sense of community,” said Carol Murray, assistant principal at Young Achievers. “We develop projects so kids become and see themselves as leaders in their community. Then when there is a problem in the community – rather than internalize and feel poorly about it – they have a means for thinking about ways they can participate in changing it.”

Chalmers’ goal for Service Day was met. In one day, students felt the connection their classes made with community groups. “They experienced the difference that collective action can make in their communities,” she said.

“Our students brought such joy to the communities they visited, and what they gained individually and collectively can’t be measured on any standardized test,” said Murray. “One only had to watch to know that it impacted our students deeply.”

At the end of Service Day, José Ruiz, in the Sheltered English Immersion classroom for students whose first language is Spanish, had a question. Upon returning to class, he asked, “Mrs. M., what is the word for...pena?”

Wait; it is not pena...I know! It’s love,” said Ruiz.

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At the end of Service Day, José Ruiz, in the Sheltered English Immersion classroom for students whose first language is Spanish, had a question. Upon returning to class, he asked, “Mrs. M., what is the word for...pena?”

Wait; it is not pena...I know! It’s love,” he corrected. “They experienced the difference that collective action can make in their communities.”

“Our students brought such joy to the communities they visited, and what they gained individually and collectively can’t be measured on any standardized test,” said Murray. “One only had to watch to know that it impacted our students deeply.”
In Honor of Black History Month

A Talk to Teachers

James Baldwin

Historical Context: When James Baldwin gave his talk for teachers it was 100 years since the Emancipation Proclamation. Much of the civil rights legislation had yet to be passed, and George Wallace, governor of Alabama, was blocking black students from the state university. Martin Luther King had been jailed in Birmingham and 4 teenage girls had been murdered in the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham.

On the positive side the March on Washington and King’s “I had a dream” speech had inspired a nation. President John F. Kennedy had called for an end to Jim Crow Laws. Malcolm X had brought together urban forces in protest. Martin was the conscience of the movement. Malcolm was the passion of the movement. And James Baldwin embodied the anger and the memory of an oppressed people. There was hope and there was possibility.

Let’s begin by saying that we are living through a very curious era. Everyone in this room is in one way or another aware of that. We are in a revolutionary situation. It is not to be denied that the word has become in this country. To any citizen of this country who figures himself as responsible—and particularly those of you that deal with the minds and hearts of young people—must be prepared to “go for broke.” Or to put it another way, you must understand that in the attempt to correct so many generations of bad faith and cruelty, when it is operating not only in the classroom but in society, you will meet the most fantastic, the most brutal, and the most determined resistance. There is no point in pretending that this won’t happen.

Now, if what I have tried to sketch has any validity, it becomes thoroughly clear, at least to me, that any Negro who is born in this country and undergoes the American educational system runs the risk of becoming schizophrenic. On the one hand he is born in the shadow of the stars and stripes and he is assured it represents a nation which has never lost a war. He pledges allegiance to that flag which guarantees “liberty and justice for all.” He is part of a country in which anyone can become president, and so forth. But on the other hand he is also assured by his country and his countrymen that he has never contributed anything to civilization—that his past is nothing more than a record of humiliations gladly endured.

All this enters the child’s consciousness much sooner than we as adults would like to think it does. As adults, we are easily fooled because we are so anxious to be fooled. But children are very different. Children, not yet aware that it is dangerous to look at the world around him, though he cannot know quite what to make of it, are aware that there is a reason why his mother works so hard, why his father is always on edge. He is aware that there is some reason why, if he sits down in the front of his bus, his father or mother slaps him and drugs him to the back of the bus. He is aware that there is some terrible weight on his parents’ shoulders which menaces him. And it isn’t long—in fact it begins when he is in school—before he discovers the shape of his oppression…

I began by saying that one of the paradoxes of education was that precisely at the point when you begin to develop a conscience, you must find yourself at war with your society. It is your responsibility to change society if you think of yourself as an educated person. And on the basis of the evidence—the moral and political evidence—one is compelled to say that this is a backward society…

Now I was a teacher in this school, or any Negro school, and I was dealing with Negro children, who were in my care only a few years ago. I would then return to their homes and to the streets, children who have an apprehension of their future which with every hour grows grimmer and darker, I would try to teach them—I would try to make them know—that those streets, those houses, those dangers, those agonies by which they are surrounded, are criminal… I would try to make them see that there are currently very few standards in this country which are worth a man’s respect. That is as up to it to change these standards for the sake of the life and the health of the country. I would suggest to him that the popular culture—as represented, for example, on television and in comic books and in movies—is based on fantasies created by very ill people, and he must be aware that these are fantasies that have nothing to do with reality. I would teach him that the press he reads is not a news as it says it is—and that he can do something about that. I would try to make him know that just as American history is longer, larger, more various, more beautiful and more terrible than anything anyone has ever said about it, so is the world larger, more daring, more beautiful and more terrible, but principally larger—and that it belongs to him.


Historical Context-from Tyler Pass to Work For Quality Schools.

Blessing of Liberty and Education…

(continued from page 1)

While I say this, I fully believe in the dignity of all needful labor. All honest effort to better human conditions is entitled to respect. I have met at Poland Springs, in the State of Maine, and at the White Mountains in New Hampshire, and at other places, as well as at the late World’s Columbian Exposition at Chicago, many young white ladies and gentlemen, who were truly such, students and teachers in high schools and seminaries, gladly serving as waiters during their vacation, or over a season, or in the off time, with no useful thing that a man can do that cannot be better done by an educated man than work, and thus to get the very best result of thought and work. There is in my opinion, and more as well as to think, and to think as well as to work. It is to teach them to join thought to work, and thus to get the very best result of thought and work. There is in my opinion,

Frederick Douglass

Is that not the labor that degrades, but the want of spirit to rise above it. Exclusive service, or exclusive mastery, is not good for the moral or mental health of any class. Poverty and insolence will certainly be developed in the one class, and weak-ness and servility in the other. The colored people, to be respected, must furnish their due proportion to each class. They must not be all masters, or all servants. They must command, as well as be commanded.

I do not wish to regret that it was my lot to have been a slave, I shall never regret that I was once a common laborer; a servant, if you please so to term it. But I felt myself as much a man then, as I feel myself a man now; for I had an ambition above my calling, and I was determined then, as I have been ever since, to use every hour of my life, in its tendency. It is not the labor that degrades, but the want of spirit to rise above it. Exclusive service, or exclusive mastery, is not good for the moral or mental health of any class. Poverty and insolence will certainly be developed in the one class, and weak-ness and servility in the other. The colored people, to be respected, must furnish their due proportion to each class. They must not be all masters, or all servants. They must command, as well as be commanded.

My philosophy of work is, that a man is worked upon by what upon which he works. Some work requires mere muscle than it does mind. That work which requires the most thought, skill and ingenuity, will receive the highest commendation, and will otherwise do most for the worker. Things which can be done simply with the exertion of muscle, and with little or no exertion of the intellect, will develop the muscle, but dwarf the mind.

Long ago it was asked, “How can we get wisdom, who holdeth the plow and whose talk is of oxen?” The school which we are about to establish here, is, if I understand its object, intended to teach the colored youth, who shall avow themselves of its privileges, the use of both mind and body. It is to educate the hand as well as the brain; to teach men to work as well as to think, and to think as well as to work. It is to teach them to join thought to work, and thus to get the very best result of thought and work. This is the sign of a work, no useful thing that a man can do, that cannot be better done by an educated man than by an uneducated one.

BTU DEPENDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

This year there will be 16 scholarships in the amount of $1,000 awarded to students who are dependent on BTU members. To apply, please obtain an application from Jeanne Turner in the Union office or download the form from the BTU website and return with: a transcript of the dependent’s last two years of academic work; 2) evidence of acceptance by an accredited college, junior college, vocational school or equivalent institution; 3) 2 letters of recommendation; 4) 1 page of the dependent’s personal achievements and goals. The application and the four supporting documents must be received in the Union office no later than Monday, April 22, 2013. The recipients of the scholarships will be notified by May 20, 2012.

RETIRED TEACHERS CHAPTER SCHOLARSHIPS

Each year the Retired Teachers Chapter of the Boston Teachers Union awards three scholarships to deserving high school seniors who are dependent on BTU members. To apply, please obtain an application from Jeanne Turner in the Union office or download the form from the BTU website and return with: a transcript of the dependent’s last two years of academic work; 2) evidence of acceptance by an accredited college, junior college, vocational school or equivalent institution; 3) 2 letters of recommendation; 4) 1 page of the dependent’s personal achievements and goals. The application and the four supporting documents must be received in the Union office no later than Monday, April 22, 2013. The recipients of the scholarships will be notified by May 20, 2012.

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At the campaign kickoff in Philadelphia, Mississippi...a town where 3 civil rights activists were murdered in 1964...Reagan claimed the crowd that he believed in that era, advancements apparently made by racist Southern politicians during the Civil Rights struggle. In Southern strategy worked and increased the risk for African American since Republican or Democrat, has been found to have a soft chance of appearing soft on crime. While in office Reagan declared the War on Drugs...even though an overwhelming majority of Americans at the time did not think drugs was a big criminal issue, with many seeing addiction as a public health problem. But with the emergence of crack cocaine...sanctifying of racist based preemptsory strikes by allowing "silky" and "superstitious" reasons for striking black jurors this often allowed black defendants in shackles facing all-white juries. Not much different from Jim Crow times. Alexander exposes as lies the claims that his policies is identified in the black community. The shame of being labeled a criminal haunts the "felon" and their families. The stigma follows the felon for the rest of their lives. Knowing that checking the box on job applications means almost no chance of employment. Because felons are barred from housing assistance and relief many end up returnig to a life of drugs and then eventually are returned to prison.

The old Jim Crow was easy to expose to most people not blinded by racial prejudice. As a result a huge movement was built to dismantle it. The New Jim Crow on the other hand is less easy to expose. After all, aren't these people simply making the wrong choices? Alexander reminds us of the destructive effects of deindustrialization of America has had on inner city communities. Whereas good union jobs in manufacturing factories were once available, and in fact fueled an exodus of African-Americans out of the low wage and segregated south into northern cities, most of the service jobs available today are non-union and wages offered are insufficient. The new high tech manufacturing jobs are often filled by individuals looking for some extra cash and rarely turns in the inner city, communities it may be the only way for some to survive. Most unemployment for black and brown youth is a result of segregation same 50%.

Hey BTU Members!

Did you know that you can apply to attend the AFT’s Professional Development Conference (AFT TEACH) in Washington, D.C. this summer? A new BTU policy offers an opportunity for BTU members to be funded for attending the AFT TEACH Conference. You can find out more about your national policy and attend high-quality Professional Development! July 22-24, 2013 Washington, D.C.

Be on the lookout for an application in March. The BTU will pay the costs of travel, registration and a shared hotel room.

For information about the last conference, see http://www.aft.org/teach2011
Reflections on MKL, Jr. and Charter School Suspension Rates

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

One of the most important things we need to celebrate is the life and the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Today, as a nation we celebrate two remarkable men: one who challenged the status quo, and one who was killed for doing so.

King’s words ring true today as ever: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” We must stand together against injustices of all kinds, and work towards a more equitable society. We also celebrate the second inauguration of our first African American President – an inauguration that our nation has made great strides in fulfilling Dr. King’s legacy, something I believe we should all be very proud of.

But as we honor Dr. King today, we must remember that he would never stand for this type of vision or rhetoric, and neither should we. Instead we should work together to identify those strategies and reforms that actually work - the ones that are good for kids and communities, and then we should fight like hell to find the resources and political will to create a system of public education that offers hope, opportunity, and prosperity to all.

(Ted Chambers teaches history at the Edwards Middle School.)

In the Coverage for a Special Ed Professional When They Are Absent?

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (paraphrase here): the most important question in all of public policy today comes down to whether or not we are going to remake institutions to meet the needs of individuals, or whether we are going to remake individuals to meet the needs of institutions?

That is and always has been the central debate for those who expend energy on ourselves, and I am proud to be on the side of the individual. The truth is that there are many challenges facing American public education – particularly in urban communities. But as educators (and as the guardians and caretakers of children’s lives and futures), we should work to build institutions that serve the needs of every child. We should not set kids up to fail so that our schools can maintain reputations for their test scores and dump students into ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ with systems of high stakes exams. We should not use billions of dollars to create a system of public education that is explicitly designed to set children up for failure. We should not use billions of dollars to create a system of public education that wastes money on small enclaves of kids at the expense of millions of other (mostly poor) children.

We should never demonize those who don’t believe in our causes or with whom we disagree, and we should never, ever cynically dismiss efforts to end or mitigate the horrors of poverty as “insulted notions of equity.” (As I’ve said before, I do not claim to be fighting for civil rights ever use such a phrase!).

The purpose of this type of mediation is to clarify and express creative resolutions in a non-judgmental setting. Mediation is not a trial; rather, the mediator’s goal is to help the participants focus and mutually develop prompt, effective resolutions to issues which meet their needs. If an agreement cannot be reached, the binding which means it will not proceed any further. Mediation is an agreement reaching process in which the mediator helps the parties to understand and resolve their conflict in a collaborative, consensual informed manner. Any party may terminate the process at any time, and the signing of a final resolution. In the event the BTU members come to a satisfactory resolution, that agreement once signed will be binding. This process does engage the course of the mediation may be disclosed to any BPS administrator without the consent of the party who initially disclosed the info. If an agreement cannot be reached, the binding which means it will not proceed any further. Mediation is an agreement reaching process in which the mediator helps the parties to understand and resolve their conflict in a collaborative, consensual informed manner. Any party may terminate the process at any time, and the signing of a final resolution. In the event the BTU members come to a satisfactory resolution, that agreement once signed will be binding.

Some of the most remarkable quotes come from the late, great Clarence Darrow – an early 20th century investigator, who once famously said, “There is no...
Channing Elementary School

The Channing Elementary School is tucked away on a quiet residential street in Hyde Park. I was pleasantly surprised by how many of the teachers were African American, as are the majority of students at the school.

In the lower grades students were busy with morning meetings, activity centers, literacy and math lessons. Kindergartners were building with blocks, playing with puppets, and putting jigsaw puzzles together. A second grade class was exploring place value with math manipulatives. While her students worked on their reading assignments, Flo Charles gave me a big hug of welcome; she’d taken a class with me many years ago!

I love these unexpected connections!

Our current national obsession with test scores and prescribed curriculum has sadly limited creative, interdisciplinary classroom practices, so I am especially delighted to see students engaged in any kind of kinesthetic learning. Wendy Vitarisi’s first graders showed me how they use aerobics to practice spelling vocabulary words.

I also enjoyed watching the music teacher, Wayne Jones, work his magic – leading a K1 class in rapping their ABCs with expressive hand/body movements. It was a beautiful fall day and the gym class was held outside, where children did warm-up exercises before practicing throwing and catching a ball.

Third, fourth and fifth graders were taking the Terra Nova exam all morning. Its sole purpose is to select students for AWC classes, regardless of substantial research showing that tracking serves nobody well. I think this is a huge waste of valuable learning time, considering that as many as a third of our students have special needs or are English Language Learners. Luckily, I was able to photograph a few upper elementary students doing something other than filling in circles on an answer sheet. A fourth grader in a substantially separate class for students with learning disabilities was enthusiastically responding to the story they had just read, and I was able to sit in on part of a Japanese lesson in the fifth grade AWC class.

The Channing feels like a calm and happy place, where students are learning something new every day. Fifth grade teacher Ezi Nwankwo, originally from Nigeria, mentioned that the entire school comes together monthly for a “Town Hall” meeting where students share what they’re learning. Now that’s an idea I’d like to see in more of our schools!

We were singing a rap song about the alphabet in Mr. Jones’ music class. We are learning to sing and dance. We are also learning the sounds of all the letters with rock and roll music.

– Mrs. Kelly’s K1 class

I was answering a question from Ms. Gittens about what we were reading, a story called Grandfather’s Journey. I’m becoming a better reader and writer by learning new vocabulary, and lots more.

– Shameek Roc, Grade 4

I was reading about Cahokia, an ancient city of the Midwest, in my social studies textbook. I’ve learned that archeologists are scientists who study artifacts to figure out how people lived in the past.

– Ervic Martinez, Grade 4

I am doing math with tiles to show tens and ones. I am learning how to take away numbers and do plus numbers.

– Cynya Jackson, Grade 2

We are finding letters and lining them up in ABC order. We are learning the whole alphabet. We’re also learning how to read and write words, and how to count up to 100.

– Priscille Hogu, Joalaline Francois, & Michael Quintanilla, K2

I was in Japanese class with Nagaoaka Sensei, our teacher. We were looking at maps of Asia and learning where the language came from. Last year I learned how to greet people and introduce myself in Japanese. This year I’m hoping to learn how to write in Japanese.

– Angelina Plunkett, Grade 5