Those in our schools know firsthand the effect of the impending budgetary shortfall. Last week, I visited three elementary schools, all of which are losing positions integral to the operation of their respective schools. This week, I am visiting four more. The staff will say the same: “We cannot continue to do more with less.”

So where does this end? The city is strapped for revenue, and while the schools continue to do more with less.

Financially-strapped city, increased $ to charters, plus decreasing state aid, add up to dog-eat-dog school budget

It’s a zero-sum game. Most of our resources are essentially fixed. The school budget is relatively fixed, and is but one, albeit important, piece of the city’s financial pie. One school’s gain of a music teacher is another’s loss of an art teacher. It’s a zero-sum game. Most of our resources come from a strapped city. The city is, as all Massachusetts cities are, limited in the revenue it can raise. State aid is down, and unless there is a catastrophic change (Yes, we need to raise taxes for increased services!) at the state level, the city’s ability to raise revenue is limited. The city does not – happen. The real issue is, why is it such a fixed pot? Except for certain small discretionary revenue boosters (parking fees, meals tax) the city has no independent means to raise its own revenues. Our main revenue sources are essentially fixed. Property taxes account for approximately 67% of the city’s revenue, and they are at their maximum statutory level. Not only cannot they increase, but their base cannot expand. Under state law dating from 1830(!) the city and state we want. Do we want to live in a city/dog-eat-city/state where needed, fixed, resources are each year on the chopping block? Or do we want to live in a city/state where our needs are met even if it means increasing taxes in a fair manner. We cannot have it both ways.

Richard Stutman
BTU President

On PILOT Payments

The city under the Menino administration adopted a Payment-in-lieu-of-Taxes (PILOT) program whereby large tax exempt institutions (NU, Mass General, Harvard and so on were gently encouraged, not mandated, to contribute money they really didn’t have to contribute. The total raised through these voluntary payments is far short of what they would pay if they were not tax exempt. Consider Northeastern. In 2010-2011, NU contributed $30,571 to the city in cash for state property tax. By contrast, those in the BTU office contributed about the same. NU’s tax exempt property is worth $1.3 Billion, and if it were taxable, the tax would be $39.9 Million. The city suggested a voluntary payment of $3.3 Million but with a write-off for community services, the actual tab for NU was a voluntary contribution of $886,000, which, according to the city’s web page, has not yet been paid. It is after all voluntary. Incidentally, Showa Institute, located in Jamaica Plain and which few have heard of, was asked to pay $116,000. And it did. (All figures are from FY 2013).1

2 Source: http://www.cityofboston.gov/accessing/PILOT_Contributions.asp

Portion of BPS budget covered by state Chapter 70

courtesy of the Boston Public Schools

The school budget is relatively fixed, and is but one, albeit important, piece of the city’s financial pie. One school’s gain of a music teacher is another’s loss of an art teacher. It’s a zero-sum game. Most of our resources come from a strapped city. The city is, as all Massachusetts cities are, limited in the revenue it can raise. State aid is down, and unless there is a catastrophic change (Yes, we need to raise taxes for increased services!) at the state level, the city’s ability to raise revenue is limited. The city does not – happen. The real issue is, why is it such a fixed pot? Except for certain small discretionary revenue boosters (parking fees, meals tax) the city has no independent means to raise its own revenues. Our main revenue sources are essentially fixed. Property taxes account for approximately 67% of the city’s revenue, and they are at their maximum statutory level. Not only cannot they increase, but their base cannot expand. Under state law dating from 1830(!) much of our property in Boston (actually 50%) is tax-exempt, which further caps the city’s ability to raise revenue.1

‘That’s the financial straitjacket our state house, our city’s revenue is capped for the foreseeable future. And we haven’t even mentioned the loss of federal aid – Race to the Top. There isn’t a lot of wiggle room in any of this.

And we haven’t even mentioned the loss of $87.5 Million lost each year to charter schools.1 While there have been a few attempts to reclaim some of the dollars lost, the dollars reclaimed are slim to none, and the loss of resources to charter schools has been growing steadily with no end in sight.

Sure, there are some areas the BPS could save money. The BPS could cut down on testing, testing, companies, and outside contractors. That would save some millions – but not enough to make a substantial difference – although it would be good for morale. What’s needed to get our schools and our city out of the jam it’s in – and what’s the only way to right our financial ship – is to revamp the state tax code, and yes, to insist on an increased, and fair revenue stream. We’ll never get an increase without fairness. Anything short of either goal will not suffice. Neither will inaction.

It is time for us to look beyond the no new taxes mantra and ask ourselves what type of city and state we want. Do we want to live in a dog-eat-dog city/state where needed, fixed, resources are each year on the chopping block? Or do we want to live in a city/state where our needs are met even if it means increasing taxes in a fair manner. We cannot have it both ways.
Commentary by Michael J. Maguire

A Follow-up on CommonWealth Magazine

This school year the BPS had about 30 new principals. Turning over one-fourth of its primary leaders in one year is troubling. The revolving door leading to the principals office means a lack of cohesion and/or direction at many schools.

Schools, like national economies, thrive on stability and predictability. How can the BPS, CommonWealth Magazine, or the public expect schools to sail smoothly if the skippers who will be given this miraculous autonomy of hiring their own crews are head- ing for the lifeboats en masse long before the ships reach shore?

Charging more, teaching less

U p at the Academy Dorchester tossed out the Marshall teachers, and, viola! all is well. Again, numbers are needed here to tell the whole story. In SY 12-13, the Marshall had 688 stu-

Heads or Tails

One, it keeps provisionals on a very short leash. After all, who would dare make waves if they knew it could cost them their jobs.

Two, the press repeats ads nauzoum the school department’s call for “reforms” in the hiring process. It is this second momentum that CommonWealth Magazine is regurgitating in its latest edition.

Dances with lemons

Michael J. Mohl certainly paints the excess pool in bold colors. Without any substantive data he tarnishes the reputation of hundreds of teachers who, most often through no fault of their own, find themselves seeking employment in another school. Instead of praising these teachers for their zest, he characterizes them as seamed old fogies who steal jobs from budding youngsters.

With descriptions and attitudes like Mohl’s, why would any intelligent person willingly seek employment in an underperforming school? Common sense should tell us that so-called troubled schools would need to attract skilled, experienced teachers. Yet, if such a school can “turn around” and fire half of the staff, why would anyone risk a career and a paycheck at such a school? Cruelly, these hardworking, self-sacrificing individu-

Commentary by Charles R. Johnson

Voc-Ed: A Boston enigma

Boston is one of the most progressive cities in the Northeast. Presently, we are being hampered by an education system that has lost sight of its goal. This system has been put under a national microscope and has been tinkered with and adjusted by all sorts of pedagogic types. The main problem with this approach is the lack of thought given to the national trend to go back to the classics and get much needed input from the field workers, the teachers.

If you talk to a good quantity of knowl-

edgeable teachers, you will find that they see the need for the classical approach to cor-

recting the educational woes of Boston. This approach to education gives the student the tools to pursue a life with a given skill in the trades’ area or the ability to go on to higher education.

What has happened in Boston is that we have a tunnel vision that tries to convince the public that every student is destined to go strictly to college, which defeats the purpose of public education. A student needs a clear choice of many elective avenues.

You must marvel at the ability of the school sys-

Commentary by Michael J. Maguire

Boston Union Teacher

Co-Editor

Education (i.e., preparation for the work of world). This specialized type of education is not for the student who has poor reading skills, having trouble in math, or who thinks science is fine but finds studying it useless.

Vocational education is for the clear-thinking youth who understands that they prefer to work with their hands than to go through the rigors of college for a desk job (which may not appeal to them).

Vocational students need to be sharp stu-

budding youngsters.

Hiring autonomy

C ommonWealth Magazine repeatedly used the phrase “hiring autonomy.” It sounds the same but is entirely misleading. Who else hires teachers but the BPS? The BPS has total autonomy when it comes to hiring teachers. What the article ought to discuss is placement.

This difference is more than semantics. Mr. McDonough’s purchase of 300-600 open postings veritably blocks the placement of already hired teachers. The BPS initially hired these teachers and as long as the BPS and the BPS is hiring these teachers, now the BPS is hindering the movement of these teachers. Why?

If the answer is to give principals more “autonomy” over who is in their schools, then logic dictates that two major factors in BPS employment must be addressed.

One, for whom do teachers work? When I was hired in 1994, I was told that even though I was hired in an office at Boston Latin Acad- emy and even though I would teach at Boston Latin Academy, I was in fact an employee of the Boston Public Schools. My paycheck had a BLS logo and it was signed by the BPS headmaster. So if I work for the BPS, why should I be blocked in working at a different BPS school?

Two, if the answer to the previous question is that he BPS wants to give principals a say in whom they hire at their schools, then it begins the question: should a principal be able to flit/fire/remove all of the staff upon being hired? After all, the thought process would go, if a person is hired to run a school but hasn’t been shown the door, picked the staff, how can we possibly expect that principal to succeed? I guess we are seeking a return to the spoils system and are chucking out the window all civil service protections. How quaint.

Did CommonWealth Magazine bother to investigate the turnover rate of principals?

The type of education that responds to

Every person drives a car. This car takes

You drive a car to a person with a good mechanical apti-

All’s well.

One, it keeps provisionals on a very short

Two, the press repeats ads nauzoum the school department’s call for “reforms” in the hiring process.

This is the second momentum that CommonWealth Magazine is regurgitating in its latest edition.

Open posting

Far from being “a little used provision in the teachers’ union contract,” open posting has been used in many schools when the situation warrants it: like when a position is so exotic as not to be filled by transfers or the excess pool, or by attaching a $1,250 stipend to the job as compensation for additional activities. What’s not reported is the cost of Mr. McDonough’s “bold” move. Each open posting costs $1,250. Mr. McDonough admits “it’s a big jump, where there will be a significant cost up front in order to make this happen.”

Well, Mr. Mohl, did you ask how much of the taxpayers’ money Mr. McDonough is risking? Why not double that, $300 to $600? That is a good deal of money? From where does all this money do not exist in our contract. We have provision-

Mr. McDonough certainly paints the excess pool in bold colors. Without any substantive data he tarnishes the reputation of hundreds of teachers who, most often through no fault of their own, find themselves seeking employment in another school. Instead of praising these teachers for their zest, he characterizes them as seamed old fogies who steal jobs from budding youngsters.

With descriptions and attitudes like Mohl’s, why would any intelligent person willingly seek employment in an underperforming school? Common sense should tell us that so-called troubled schools would need to attract skilled, experienced teachers. Yet, if such a school can “turn around” and fire half of the staff, why would anyone risk a career and a paycheck at such a school? Cruelly, these hardworking, self-sacrificing individu-

...that we have people for the upcoming open-

...that we have people for the upcoming open-

As per the law (as dictated by state law) who can be let go for no reason at the end of their current school year, and we have per-

Moreover, the BPS can help keep prom-

...that we have people for the upcoming open-

...that we have people for the upcoming open-

Hiring autonomy

C ommonWealth Magazine repeatedly used the phrase “hiring autonomy.” It sounds the same but is entirely misleading. Who else hires teachers but the BPS? The BPS has total autonomy when it comes to hiring teachers. What the article ought to discuss is placement.

This difference is more than semantics. Mr. McDonough’s purchase of 300-600 open postings veritably blocks the placement of already hired teachers. The BPS initially hired these teachers and as long as the BPS and the BPS is hiring these teachers, now the BPS is hindering the movement of these teachers. Why?

If the answer is to give principals more “autonomy” over who is in their schools, then logic dictates that two major factors in BPS employment must be addressed.

One, for whom do teachers work? When I was hired in 1994, I was told that even though I was hired in an office at Boston Latin Acad- emy and even though I would teach at Boston Latin Academy, I was in fact an employee of the Boston Public Schools. My paycheck had a BLS logo and it was signed by the BPS headmaster. So if I work for the BPS, why should I be blocked in working at a different BPS school?

Two, if the answer to the previous question is that he BPS wants to give principals a say in whom they hire at their schools, then it begins the question: should a principal be able to flit/fire/remove all of the staff upon being hired? After all, the thought process would go, if a person is hired to run a school but hasn’t been shown the door, picked the staff, how can we possibly expect that principal to succeed? I guess we are seeking a return to the spoils system and are chucking out the window all civil service protections. How quaint.

Did CommonWealth Magazine bother to investigate the turnover rate of principals?

The type of education that responds to

Every person drives a car. This car takes

You drive a car to a person with a good mechanical apti-

All’s well.
The BPS has a Superintendent’s Circular "EQT-4: ‘Non-Discrimination and Zero Tolerance’ which outlines the commitment to “maintaining an educational environment and workplace where bigotry & intolerance, including discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, disability, or any other form of intimidation, threat, coercion and/or harassment that insults the dignity of others and interferes with their freedom to learn or work, is unacceptable.”

The circular emphasizes, “Therefore, any form of discrimination or harassment, as described [in the body of the circular], of any BPS student or employee shall be viewed as serious misconduct and shall result in discipline, up to and including termination of the responsible student.” Such days shall be taken as mutually agreed of the responsible student. "

It is suggested you review the circular in its entirety and if after doing so feel you have further questions as to how such days shall be taken as mutually agreed of the responsible student.” 

Do I get time off for having a student or parent in the classroom? If a teacher becomes a cooperating teacher, BTU may outline the following. Each cooperating teacher shall be given two days of leave with pay, without loss of benefits. Such days shall be taken as mutually agreed upon by the teacher and the administrative head during the last two weeks of the student-teacher training period. In cases of conflict, seniority shall prevail in the selection of the days.” This coverage was designed to be given by having the student teacher cover for the days so that it is a no cost item for the BPS. If a cooperating teacher does not arrange for the coverage while the student teacher is still in the classroom, the cooperating teacher loses the benefit. It is a use it or lose it scenario.

What approach should the SSC take toward decision making? It is expected that the SSC will function by consensus or general agreement of its members. Members of the SSC are expected to operate as a single decision making team. Their doing so will help student teachers find effective solutions to the school’s educational challenges. SSC have parents, BTU staff, student, and school or department if not school-based. Decisions reflect the viewpoints of everyone in the school community. Reaching consensus does not mean that all members must agree with decisions unanimously. Consensus can be achieved in any way of working together where some members may disagree with a final decision, but yet agree to support it. Consensus occurs most often, if not all, members agree on the matter to be decided. Consensus won’t necessarily result in endless discussions and no decisions, particularly if the following guidelines are followed:

- Prioritize the importance of the issue at hand;
- Make sure the SSC is more informed on the issue, the more time members should be willing to devote to reaching consensus decision.

Routine matters should be given much less valuable time and energy from fundamental issues. Provides opportunities for all views to be expressed. Members with differing views should have the opportunity to make sure other members have understood their views before ending the discussion. Although others may still not be persuaded, everyone must have a chance to state their views and to have others react.

The strength of feeling about an issue must be gauged. How strongly members feel should guide how much time should be devoted to an issue as well.

SSC meetings are not competitive, win-or-lose events. Making decisions solely on the basis of majority votes runs the unacceptable risk of dividing the Council. Successful School Based Management teams (ILT’s) have parents as a representative body of the professional staff at the school. The ILT is an advisory board to the principal on issues related to teaching, learning, assessment and professional development. The principal must communicate and to make official consensus decisions. Formal voting should be the last step in the decision-making process. If the vote results in a simple majority but does not reveal consensus on the issue debated, it should be viewed as a signal that the best option has not yet been developed and proposed. Unless all members are willing to support a majority decision, more discussion is needed. Votes which split parents and BTU members in particular can be a clear indication that consensus hasn’t been achieved. In such cases, the decision should be set aside and the issue be revisited.

The Principal may veto a majority decision of the SSC. The Principal must vote with the majority for a decision to be adopted and carried out. In the event of a veto, the Principal is required to give their reasons in writing to the Council. Successful School Based Management demands cooperation, trust, and mutual regard of every one!

Do Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT’s) have parents as members? No. The contract states, The ILT “shall be a representative body of the professional staff at the school. It shall be composed of administrators and teachers from the various grade levels, disciplines, and programs of the school.” The ILT is “an advisory board to the principal on issues related to teaching, learning, assessment and professional development.”

The principal must communicate and to make official consensus decisions. The ILT should be composed of principal, department heads, teachers, and which is supported by the principal shall be subject to the approval of the School Site Council before it can implement. This is the check and balance of the non-elected ILT as a subcommittee of the elected SSC.

What is the policy on scheduling individual parent/teacher conferences? According to the contract, “individual parent/teacher conferences shall be held at the school at a time that is mutually agreed upon by the parent and the teacher. If a parent is unable to come to a conference at the school, the teacher/parent conference regard- ing the child’s school performance shall be conducted by telephone. All K-5 elementary homeroom teachers will arrange for indi- vidual parent/teacher conferences in the fall. Follow-up individual conferences with all parents in the school shall be encouraged; however, teachers shall schedule a second individual conference with any parent whose child is in danger of not being promoted to the next grade.”

Who are the people coming into my classroom? Our contract language states that, “All visitors to a classroom shall knock on the door and, if invited to do so, will intro- duce themselves.” This is significant in that it means that you, as the teacher in the class-

continued on page 7

What can be done if someone is being hassared in the BPS?
African Americans On Education

African Americans have always been at the forefront in the struggle for public education. The historical struggle for quality education in the African American community may have started with a subversive act by some unknown slave learning how to read in the antebellum South. The struggle continued after the Civil War with the separate but equal interpretation by the Supreme Court in Plessy vs. Ferguson. Perseverance and organizing brought victory against Jim Crow with Brown vs. Board of Education. But as we approach the 60th anniversary of this historic moment it is clear the struggle is not over. Urban schools continue to be short changed as legislative solutions of closure and privatization are no solutions at all.

To commemorate this ongoing struggle the *Boston Union Teacher* remembers those individuals whose words have inspired millions to fight back against injustice over the years in the hope that equal education will one day become a hallmark in our country.

A little learning, indeed, may be a dangerous thing, but the want of learning is a calamity to any people.

*Frederick Douglass, Address, Washington, D.C*

Any book that helps a child to form a habit of reading, to make reading one of his deep and continuing needs, is good for him.

*Maya Angelou*

Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom.

*George Washington Carver*

It is hard to apply oneself to study when there is no money to pay for food and lodging. I almost never explain these things when folks are asking me why I don’t do this or that.

*Zora Neale Hurston*

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain’t I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain’t I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain’t I a woman? I have borne five children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain’t I a woman?

*Sojourner Truth*
From the first, I made my learning, what little it was, useful every way I could.

Mary McLeod Bethune

The impulse to dream was slowly beaten out of me by experience. Now it surged up again and I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing.

Richard Wright

All men cannot go to college but some men must; every isolated group or nation must have its yeast, must have for the talented few centers of training where men are not so mystified and befuddled by the hard and necessary toil of earning a living, as to have no aims higher than their bellies, and no God greater than Gold.

W.E.B. DuBois

It is not who you attend school with but who controls the school you attend.

Nikki Giovanni

Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today.

Malcolm X
Hundreds gather for Save Our Services rally in Albany, NY

New York state public employees and their supporters packed the “well” of a state office building on Jan. 29 to call for an end to the downsizing and privatizing that threatens jobs as well as essential public services.

Organized by the New York State Public Employees Federation, the Save Our Services rally was attended by members of several public employee unions, including the Civil Service Employees Association and the New York State Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association.

Rally speakers included state legislators as well as AFT President Randi Weingarten, PEF President Susan Kent, United University Professions President Fred Kowal, New York State United Teachers Executive Vice President Andrew Pallotta and New York State AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento. Kent, Kowal and Pallotta are AFT vice presidents.

The message to New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo was loud and clear: Labor will fight to protect public employees and the professional and valuable services they provide to citizens and communities. “We all stand united—trade unions and public sector unions—speaking with one voice. And this is our message: Stop diminishing and dismantling and destroying services,” said Kent, who lashed out at the governor for not including the state Legislature and unions in his decisions.

Kent said the rally was just the first step in the fight to save state services.

Instead of privatizing and outsourcing services, the governor should give state employees “a place at the table and rely on their expertise and ideas,” Weingarten said.

People want the government to help them move up the ladder of opportunity, and “the people we represent are the ones who help create that ladder of opportunity,” said Weingarten, adding that it was a fight over priorities—between investing and austerity. “There are two roads [the state] can take,” the AFT president said. “You can take the road of cut, cut, cut, or you can invest and rebuild.”

After the rally, PEF delivered thousands of petitions to the governor, all in support of the union’s Save Our Services campaign.

Some of the crowd at the Save Our Services rally in Albany, New York.

Newark reform plan under fire from educators and public

Hundreds of educators, students, parents and community members turned out Jan. 28 for a raucous meeting of the Newark (N.J.) Public Schools Advisory Board, to protest Superintendent Cami Anderson’s One Newark plan, which would close or privatize many of the city’s neighborhood schools.

A new Rutgers University study shows that Anderson’s plan has serious flaws. The schools bearing the brunt of the consequences have a greater share of low-income and black and Latino students. The schools that are being kept open are not used more than the schools slated for closure. And the charter operators that would take over the closed neighborhood schools don’t have a record of achieving better outcomes.

AFT President Randi Weingarten joined the protestors and addressed the board. The nation is watching Newark,” she said. “The emotion is palpable here, and the AFT will be here with you to fight for the community until the community gets its schools back.” The AFT is asking the board to fix, not close, its public schools.

Weingarten also visited Newark in January, when she marched with members of the Newark Teachers Union and students as part of the AFT’s National Day of Action to Reclaim the Promise of Public Education. Anderson, who was appointed by Gov. Chris Christie to oversee the Newark schools, was also criticized for the recent suspension of five principals who spoke out against her reform plan. The principals have been reinstated, but two were reassigned, and they have filed a federal complaint that their freedom of speech was violated.

The AFT ran a full-page ad in the Star-Ledger the day of the board meeting. In addition, an online petition opposing Anderson’s One Newark plan and urging those opponents to “take back our schools and reclaim the promise of public education in Newark” has gathered more than 1,000 signatures.

News from the
American Federation of Teachers

Houstons Reform Plan Under Fire from Educators and Public

Hundreds gather for Save Our Services rally in Albany, NY

Newark reform plan under fire from educators and public

Public School

Privatization

AFT is asking the board to fix, not close, its public schools.

Weingarten also visited Newark in January, when she marched with members of the Newark Teachers Union and students as part of the AFT’s National Day of Action to Reclaim the Promise of Public Education.

Anderson, who was appointed by Gov. Chris Christie to oversee the Newark schools, was also criticized for the recent suspension of five principals who spoke out against her reform plan. The principals have been reinstated, but two were reassigned, and they have filed a federal complaint that their freedom of speech was violated.

The AFT ran a full-page ad in the Star-Ledger the day of the board meeting. In addition, an online petition opposing Anderson’s One Newark plan and urging those opponents to “take back our schools and reclaim the promise of public education in Newark” has gathered more than 1,000 signatures.

News from the
American Federation of Teachers

 Hundreds gather for Save Our Services rally in Albany, NY

Newark reform plan under fire from educators and public

Public School

Privatization

AFT is asking the board to fix, not close, its public schools.

Weingarten also visited Newark in January, when she marched with members of the Newark Teachers Union and students as part of the AFT’s National Day of Action to Reclaim the Promise of Public Education.

Anderson, who was appointed by Gov. Chris Christie to oversee the Newark schools, was also criticized for the recent suspension of five principals who spoke out against her reform plan. The principals have been reinstated, but two were reassigned, and they have filed a federal complaint that their freedom of speech was violated.

The AFT ran a full-page ad in the Star-Ledger the day of the board meeting. In addition, an online petition opposing Anderson’s One Newark plan and urging those opponents to “take back our schools and reclaim the promise of public education in Newark” has gathered more than 1,000 signatures.
News from the BTU Retired Teachers Chapter

COLA adjustment: They must mean a can of Coke

by Colum Whytre

Remember walking from East Second Street in South Boston with my grandfather, “Papa,” as I used to call him. Often times we would ride our bikes around Castle Island and then later head up to my favorite spot as a small child, Slocum’s T ovaland on East Broadway. Papa let me pick out a small toy (and sometimes a not so small toy) as he and Mr. Slocum shot the breeze. I have green and red memories of the small army men and firefighter figures, but my favorite were the Batman toys. Every once in a while I’d get the firefighter figures, but my favorite were the Batman toys. Every once in a while I’d get the firefighter figures, but my favorite were the 

Research Bureau), a conservative “sink tank” making a government “watchdog” think. This same group advocates for sweetheart tax breaks for big business friends and does not focus on overall education advocated PI, O, T, and (payment in lieu of taxes) program. Sam Tyler, the head “watchdog” since 1983, takes in a hefty salary, often creating a conflict of interest as this tax is paid for insurance, financial, utility, and law firm cor porations. If you think $32.50 a month is a sweatsuits giveaway, then go work for the BMBRR (which also tried to stop the increase of the base from $12.00 to $13.00) as a policy work.

Papa let me pick out a small toy (and sometimes a not so small toy) as he and Mr. Slocum shot the breeze. I have green and red memories of the small army men and firefighter figures, but my favorite were the Batman toys. Every once in a while I’d get the firefighter figures, but my favorite were the

Research Bureau), a conservative “sink tank” making a government “watchdog” think. This same group advocates for sweetheart tax breaks for big business friends and does not focus on overall education advocated PI, O, T, and (payment in lieu of taxes) program. Sam Tyler, the head “watchdog” since 1983, takes in a hefty salary, often creating a conflict of interest as this tax is paid for insurance, financial, utility, and law firm corporations. If you think $32.50 a month is a sweatsuits giveaway, then go work for the BMBRR (which also tried to stop the increase of the base from $12.00 to $13.00) as a policy work.

Papa let me pick out a small toy (and sometimes a not so small toy) as he and Mr. Slocum shot the breeze. I have green and red memories of the small army men and firefighter figures, but my favorite were the Batman toys. Every once in a while I’d get the firefighter figures, but my favorite were the

Mohl goes on to call Mr. McDonough “the perfect guy to hold the fort.” Mr. McDonough is a fine man who possesses an important but overlooked aspect of quality leadership: care for the ranks. No nationwide search can match 40 years of experience in the BPS. When Boston educators come back to the front line of schools, let us insist that experience gained from having actually worked in the field be a prerequisite for the job. Otherwise, we may end up with someone who believes what he or she is told without bothering to investigate.

Voc-Ed: A Boston enigma…

to 2014.

by BTU

continued from page 2

valuable possession or in many instances, it may be your first.

Let’s not forget another tradesperson who is fingerprinted until he or she is needed… the electrician. His ability to apply math skills could be the difference of your house being wired properly and causing a life threatening fire. Vocational education means that good, well-trained electricians are going to college must make some early vocational education had been dissected. Students that are going to college must make some early decisions. In an academic course and presently is “formed to school to work, school to career, and presently is “technical education.”

TERMINED RETIREES CHAPTER SCHOLARSHIPS

Each year the Retired Teachers Chapter of the Boston Union Teachers awards three scholarships to deserving high school students who are children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, grandnieces, grandnephews of RTC members. One of these scholarships is earmarked for a student who might know the right to work. We enjoy many retiree activists. The retirees’ fight is our fight days. Make sure you carefully scrutinize your pay stub to determine if that has occurred.

If you are summoned to court by someone not related to school business, or if you are appearing at court for an appeal of a movement violation, and the like, that is not covered under your sick/personal leave and will be deducted from your sick/personal

Know Your Rights…

continued from page 3

Do I get time off to go to court?

The contract states, “The Boston School Department will provide release time without loss of pay or court appearances on school business, including cases involving job-related teacher assaults.”

If you are being brought to court by or are brought to court by a student if you get released time. If you have jury duty, you must give a copy of the jury duty letter to your school’s secretary. Once you have successfully completed jury duty, you will receive a copy of your service fee equal to fourteen percent (14%) of the net monetary payments made or allocated by the BPS. Presently this “fee” is projected to be just north of $500 per year. And this is just at

Experience needed

Mmh, Mohil pleads Mr. McDonough for having “no teaching experience.” Mr. McDonough plans to call Mr. Little, who was a perfect guy to hold the fort!” Mr. McDonough is a fine man who possesses an important but overlooked aspect of quality leadership: care for the ranks. No nationwide search can match 40 years of experience in the BPS. When Boston educators come back to the front line of schools, let us insist that experience gained from having actually worked in the field be a prerequisite for the job. Otherwise, we may end up with someone who believes what he or she is told without bothering to investigate.

Who’s responsible for plowing school parking lots?

The contract states, “The School Committee shall guarantee that snow is plowed from school yards used for parking at no expense to bargaining unit [BTU] members.”

BTU DEPENDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

This year there will be 16 scholarships in the amount of $1,000 awarded to high school seniors who are dependents of BTU members. To apply, please obtain an application from Jeannine 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) member’s notarized federal tax return for the year 2013; and 4) a one-page statement of the dependent’s professional goals. The application and the four supporting documents must be received in the Union office no later than April 19, 2014. The recipients of the scholarships will be notified by May 19, 2014.

by BTU

continued from page 2

A follow-up on CommonWealth Magazine…

continued from page 2

On the other hand, due to the Cola increase, the BTU retirees receive 90% of their last year’s salary. On top of that retirees receive COLA at 3% of $13,000, or $3900 per year, or $1.07 a day. Certainly this is not a realistic “cost of living” increase.

Last year, the BTU, led by a very active retiree membership, advocated for an increase of the COLA base to $16,000 per year. Not only was this measure defeated, but no increase was made. The most notorious adversary to “blocking” this increase was Sam Tyler’s BMBRR (Boston Municipal
Mission Hill has come to Jamaica Plain—the pilot school founded by Deborah Meier in 1997 is now located in the former Agassiz Elementary School building. Classes are project-based, multi-grade (except for math), and served by a lead teacher plus one or more assistants, including parent/community volunteers. All 200+ students gather for a weekly community meeting on Friday mornings. Graduating students must show their readiness for high school by presenting and defending their work in five areas: Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Theme Studies, and Art. This is a school with a focus on habits of mind, practicing democratic processes rather than test-taking skills.

I met K1/K2 teacher Kathy D’Andrea and Principal Ayla Gavins last fall at a Progressive Educators Network conference, and they invited me to visit. Kathy was especially enthusiastic about their school’s professional development program, which is led by teachers and brings everyone together on Tuesday afternoons. Topics this year have included meeting the needs of students with special needs, conflict resolution, and inquiry science. This month teachers who participated in a Fund for Teachers trip to Puerto Rico shared a series of photo/story books they’ve produced about the Taino, now available for colleagues to use with students.

One way that Mission Hill builds a strong, cohesive community is through whole-school thematic studies. Each year (in a 4-year rotation) they focus on a Science, an Ancient Civilization, and a Social Justice topic. When I visited at the beginning of January, they had just completed Life Science studies and a few of the students’ projects were still on display; I especially enjoyed reading about a Kindergarten investigation into where caterpillars come from! All classes were beginning their study of the Taino, the ancestors of many of our Latino students. Third and fourth graders in Josh Kraus’ class were making maps of the Caribbean, while primary children were painting Taino symbols with art teacher, Jeanne Rachko.

Kathy’s kindergarteners worked on a variety of activities while she made scrambled eggs and cheese for snack! They had built a giant, sprawling “city” of blocks in the middle of the room that stays up all week for constructive play. Sarah DeCruz was teaching math to stellar graders, who were struggling to make sense of word problems that required them to divide a small number by a larger number—resulting in a decimal, of course, but confusing to many. Later I visited when they were selecting personal “smart” goals. This is a school that keeps an archive of student work over time and encourages children to participate actively in the process: first and second graders in Emma Fialka-Feldman’s class were looking through their work to select a piece of writing to be included in their portfolios on the day I visited.

Although BPS teachers give much of themselves every day to their students, very few have any input into the curriculum, assessment, or general policies they are expected to implement. At Mission Hill, they do. I am impressed by the way this school lives its values, and I wish there were more opportunities for conversations among teachers across the district about how and why we do this most important work. “We’re Learning Here” is one way to share what’s happening in our schools; please invite me to visit yours!

I was wrapping up the baby to put her in our boat. I learned how to swaddle up a baby from my mom. In school I’m learning to be nice and not break toys and how to build things.

Ava Rocha, K0

We were reading A Bad Case of Stripes with Josh. In math we’re learning how to multiply and divide.

Lily Harper Coughlin & Kesler Ruiz, Grades 3/4

I’m going over my smart goals (we have school, social, and home goals) with Sarah. This year we’re learning about the Tainos, a tribe of people that lived in Puerto Rico. We just finished studying the human body and I learned that cells have lots of things floating around in them, like something called cytoplasm.

Phoebe Normandia, Grade 6

We’re waiting to talk with Nakia about our stories. We are working on personal narratives and free writing. We’re learning how to tie up a story by making our endings better.

Yamilette Diaz, Ronnie Wilkey, & Evelyn Reyes, Grade 6

We were painting Taino pictures in art class with Jeanne. We’re learning how to use watercolor paints.

Juel DePina, Lila Krotic, Natalia Neverson, Eamon Golding, Madison Babbitt-Jennings, & Adam McGarr, K1/K2

We’re doing pushups with Mr. Warner in our wellness class. We’ve learned how to get stronger muscles. In Kung Fu, the horse stance gets your feet rooted to the ground so you won’t get knoced down easily. We’ve also learned to make healthy foods like salads and drinks.

Abdul Teslim, Melissa Clinken Beard, Aíon Owens, and Jonathan Arias, Grades 7/8

I was painting a design. I like to paint. I’ve learned that yellow and blue make green when you put them together.

Jasper Elligani, K1

I’m talking to my teacher Emma [about a piece of writing I’m proud of]. This year I’m learning to read and write. I like Arthur books and I can write my name!

Luis Marcelo, Grade 1

We were a Bad Case of Stripes with Josh.

Lily Harper Coughlin & Kesler Ruiz, Grades 3/4