### BTU Election Results

**June 5, 2013**

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<tr>
<th>Position</th>
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<td>President</td>
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<td>Exec VP</td>
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<td>Charles F. Johnson</td>
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<td>Adrianne Jordan</td>
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<td>Cassandra Samuel</td>
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### Reflections on the Year Past and the Year Upcoming

By Richard Stutman, BTU President

A s the school year comes to an end, it might be helpful to take a look back as well as a look forward to see where we are going.

We settled the contract after 2 1/2 long years, and many—not all—of the remaining outstanding issues have been resolved, we are glad to report. A few lingering issues (offering paraprofessionals four interviews for teaching positions and allowing staff to enroll their children in the school where they work) have now had formal procedures developed and are in operation. Both changes should help different segments of our membership in substantial and meaningful ways. (Note: Para's who are licensed and who are looking for teaching interviews should call the union office, and staff who wish to enroll their children in their school should look to a description of the new process for enrolling their children in order to take advantage.)

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The 2013 BPS Educators of the Year Award Winners pose for a picture at the recent celebration. Top row, L to R: Cynthia Hairston, Renée Borrero, Seamus Foy, Erik Berg, Amy Frisoli, Cynthia Sze Hoo, Seth Peterson, Carmen O’Hara, Janira Aracha, and Linda Cruz. Bottom row, L to R: Esther Louis Jeudi, Carmen Davis, Neema Avashia, and Marlayna McDuie. See President Stutman’s address to the Educators of the Year on page 8.
When I entered teaching I had high aspirations. I wanted to expose my students to the wonders of biology. I wanted them to learn to approach the world scientifically and hoped that all could find a way to use these skills to solve the problems they face every day.

These, I believe, are loftier goals than the one demanded of me by my evaluator: increase scores on the state’s biology MCAS test.

She was insinuating that failing more teachers would fix a broken school system. “If we can’t blame teachers,” she said, “shall we just blame the kids?”

The constant berating of educators, labeling of schools as “failing”, and attacks on teacher unions has created an atmosphere of fear and loathing among teachers that only retards any efforts to improve educational practices in our schools. What is happening is akin to the rant of a military officer – “The beatings will continue until morale improves.”

I know of many examples of exemplary teachers being disciplined for taking steps to improve our schools. One teacher leader, seeking to help teachers in a middle school struggling with student discipline, invites a behavior expert to speak to her cluster about innovative programs. The teachers love it. The expert agrees to stay after school and speak with others who might be interested in these best practices. When the teacher leader sends out an email to invite others, the principal takes offense that this was not cleared with her first and takes away the lead teacher’s right to send out future emails. Later, she is chastised by the young assistant principal, silenced, the leader leaves the school to become a learning coach elsewhere.

It should not be fear that motivates teachers. Fear will not improve our schools.

The full list of winners in each category are below:

4th and 5th Grade

Individual:
1st Giancarlo Erauzo (Bradley)
2nd David Choi (Curley)

Team:
– Joyce Kilmer
– Warren Prescott
– Eliot & Winship

6th, 7th and 8th Grade

Individual:
1st Crystal Sun (Warren Prescott) (tie) Thy Le (Richard J. Murphy)
2nd Zachary Bogey (Mary Lyon)

Team:
– Joyce Kilmer
– Warren Prescott
– Eliot & Winship
– Boston Latin Academy

9th and 10th Grade

Individual:
1st Jian Fumiagis (Boston Latin Academy)
2nd Ying Yang Liang (Boston Latin Academy)

Team:
1st – Boston Latin Academy
2nd – ACC
3rd – Brighton
4th – Boston Green Academy
5th – Burke

Congratulations to All Participants and Winners!
### When do we have to submit final grades and marks for the academic year?

The contract states: In Elementary Schools: No final records will be required to be submitted to the BTU for teachers who taught in grades K-5 and 6-12 for the 2013-14 academic year. Final records will be due to the BTU by June 30, 2014, if the teacher did not teach in grades K-5 and 6-12 for the 2013-14 academic year.

### Do itineraries get a place to secure files in schools they service?

There is a new item in the contract stating that all teachers shall be placed in the files of the school they are teaching in.

### When can a teacher collect Unemployment Compensation?

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

A terminated teacher is paid over the summer months due to being on a 28 paycheck schedule, they are still able to collect Unemployment. These ‘summer payments’ are based on a percentage of their paycheck that has been deducted from each paycheck through the summer months due to the 26 school year added together to pro-rate the summer with 'stretch' payments over the summer based on work already done between September and June of that academic year.

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

To obtain more information, call the Massachusetts Division of Employment via the web at www.dta.mass.gov or by phone: Telemarketing at 877-626-6800 or 617-626-6800. Hours are Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. – 6:29 p.m.; Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

### What does COBRA mean?

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

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

Alex Roman discusses his charter schools speech with BTU President Richard Stutman.

Erik Berg poses with his former first grade student Alex Roman. Alex is now a junior at the Snowden High School.

Erik Berg congratulates Alex Roman on his great speech.

Commentary: Michael J. Maguire

District Leadership Willing to Pass the Buck Rather than Solve Problems

Twice last month in my dealings with Court Street I was giving the answer “that’s above my paygrade.” While each time the line was delivered with humor, it troubles me that our district’s leadership is more concerned with passing the buck than it is with solving problems.

More and more the educational system in American is morphing into a top-down business model. The worst example of this trend is some principals are calling themselves CEOs – Chief Education Officers. The bard tells us “a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” Unfortunately, in the business-model greenhouse, the plant of preference is cabbage.

Money is important. We all have bills to pay and retirements to fund. But pay is not the same as knowledge or importance. If it were, Bill Gates would be running American education. (See what I mean?) Gates and others like him use money to influence districts. These districts may either be so starving for funds that they’d prostitute themselves for outside cash or they may have been tricked into thinking that success in business translates into success in education. Either way, the problem is more with who runs our districts than with who is attempting to buy influence.

Many districts, and Boston is no exception, too often conflate pay and promotion with excellence. A kindergarten paraprofessional is more important to the education of children than is the Deputy Superintendent of Paperclips. Yet we pay such deputies up to five times more than a para. Why? Primarily for status.

Some would argue that managing a downtown office is important since it affects more than just one kindergarten class. Fair enough. But to the four-year-old who is learning how to read, no one is more important than the adult who sits down with her to help her sound out her letters.

As the dozen or so mayoral candidates crisscross our city, I’d urge them to talk to the teachers about what works and does not work in our educational system. The kindergarten teachers know more about the educational needs of our city than all the PhDs in Harvard and CEO on Wall Street. Hotshot reformers can talk all they want about poverty and its affect on children’s school-readiness. But unless they sit on the rug and assist these very needy children, they are not as important as our unsalaried paras.

And I’ll wager you’ve never heard a para brush off a child’s question with “that’s above my paygrade.”

District Leadership Willing to Pass the Buck Rather than Solve Problems

Twice last month in my dealings with Court Street...
President Stutman Speaks at the Charter School Rally at Massachusetts State House

By Richard Stutman, BTU President

Good afternoon –

My name is Richard Stutman, and I am the proud president of the Boston Teachers Union. I am equally proud here today to stand here as a representative of a movement that is for the educational benefit of the real representatives and actual users of the Boston School System.

We are constantly fed a steady diet of misinformation from charter supporters and others seeking privatization of our schools who pretend to speak for the BPS community. They don’t use our schools, but they tell that charters offer the only solution, and that charters ought to be expanded. We’re here to say that we are the real representatives – not only of those who use our schools but of those who insist that all children have a right to receive a good, quality education. And we’re here to say that good and equitable public policy demands that we keep the charter cap to stop the growth of a separate and unequal school system.

Charter schools do not educate all students. They do not provide equal access. They discriminate against Special Education students and Limited English Proficient students. They evict students at critical times during their career. They evict many students shortly before the the 10th grade MCAS. They evict others shortly before graduation. They propagate a dual system of schools, and those who need help need not apply. And if they do apply, they will not get services. They are not welcome. This is bad public policy. It’s bad social policy. It’s bad educational policy – and we should neither allow it, expand it, nor pay for it.

Our schools – we are proud to say – welcome all students. We educate all students. It’s our obligation. We want it no other way. Our schools have welcome mats in their front halls, not a revolving door.

There are insufficient resources to go around. Every dollar spent in expanding charters schools for the few, for those who are cherry picked is a dollar less for those who are enrolled in our public schools.

At a forum downstairs this morning, the Pioneer Institute offered a plan that would pave the way for multiple and independent authorities to review and approve new charter schools. In their new vision for profit-charter franchises would take hold. Those who hope to fully capitalize on the privatization of our public schools are salivating for any opportunities. They smell blood. Those of us who seek equal access and great schools for all students call on our policy makers to keep these opportunities at bay, keep the charter cap as is and work with us to improve our public school.

Thank you.

Support Equity – Keep the Cap on Charter School Growth

There are 23 Commonwealth Charter schools housed in Boston. Each is funded on the average per pupil cost for each student enrolled. All told, the money sent from the BPS to charters is closing in on estimated $80 to $100 million (*) per year for charter students. The money lost in on estimated $80 to $100 million (*) per sent from the BPS to charters is closing funded on the average per pupil cost for charters. The money lost in on estimated $80 to $100 million (*) per sent from the BPS to charters is closing funded on the average per pupil cost for charters.

Charters get reimbursed for the average cost of educating a BPS student even though they teach them with special needs. The money should follow the student. So, if a charter student came in tied for first in Massachusetts in 10th grade MCAS, which is a test that can be fairly compared to the MCAS, which is a test that can be fairly compared to MCAS coaching are cuzed out. It’s not quite so easy to do well on the SAT, which is seen as harder to coach. Hence there’s a familiar pattern found in charters, great on MCAS, not-so-great on the SAT.

Here’s a telling example: MATCH came in 1st place in Massachusetts in the 10th grade MCAS in both Math and English, yet came in 26th place below the BPS – on the SAT in 2012. How did that happen? A similar pattern has emerged at Boston Collegiate and Boston Preparatory charter schools. Charters also suspend students at an unusually high rate. Students, once suspended, are more at risk for dropping out. Boston Prep has an out-of-school suspension of 33.1%, Pacific Rim, 12.4%, and Codman Academy, 23.5%. Boston has a 4% rate.

None of the above is good practice. Certainly, nothing to be proud of. We in the BPS are proud that we welcome and educate all students. We’d have it no other way. We don’t counsel out students who might hurt our statistics. We don’t evict students who are rising seniors because they need help and may not help our college acceptance rate. And we do not think the average rate is bad. We don’t think that adding students sight to have? The reason: these seats, given the ‘astronomical’ waiting lists charters claim to do? The reason: the reason: these seats, given the ‘astronomical’ waiting lists charters claim to have? The reason: these seats, given the ‘astronomical’ waiting lists charters claim to have? The reason:

Once enrolled in charter schools, students suffer an extraordinarily high attrition (or eviction rate) just prior to graduation. Students who may not appear to be college bound may therefore ‘hurt the percentages’ are most at risk. These are the students who should be most protected.

Three typical Boston charters – just to give a few examples – Pacific Rim, Codman Academy, and Collegiate Charter have 11th grade eviction rates of 31%, 32%, and 19% respectively this year. The state average is 2.4%. The BPS rate is 5.8%. (All data here from DOE webpage.)

Given the high eviction rates, the charters have many vacancies, esp. in upper grades. Do they fill those vacancies with students on their waiting lists? No – they don’t have to ‘backfill’ their vacant seats in the last half of any year or in grades 10, 11, and 12. Can they if they so desire. But they don’t. So the seats at these schools lie vacant. By senior year, Codman Academy drops from 46 students in the 9th grade to 24 students, leaving 22 vacant seats. City on a Hill Charter goes from 108 students to 47, leaving 61 empty seats. Why not backfill these seats, given the ‘astronomical’ waiting lists charters claim to have? The reason: adding students sight unseen at this late date might hurt their percentages.

To increase their MCAS scores, many charters show a high-than-expected eviction rate at the end of the 9th grade for those students deemed unlikely to do well on the 10th grade MCAS.

Three Boston charters – just as examples – Pacific Rim, Collegiate, and MATCH have 9th grade eviction rates of 8.1%, 10%, and 11.8%. The state average is 2.7%. The BPS rate is 6.5%.

Through targeted ‘counselling out’ practices, some charters do very well on the MCAS, which is an easy test that can be fairly easily taught with results that are often predictable. Students who don’t appear to be receptive to MCAS coaching are counseled out. It’s not quite so easy to do well on the SAT, which is seen as harder to coach. Hence there’s a familiar pattern found in charters, great on MCAS, not-so-great on the SAT.

Support Equity – Keep the Cap on Charter School Growth

A few points:

1. The dollar loss as stated is bad enough, but the theory behind its calculation, the city’s financial obligation to the charters, is terribly flawed, artificially inflating the dollars that leave the BPS.

2. The money should follow the student. So, if a charter student comes in tied for first in Massachusetts in 10th grade MCAS, which is a test that can be fairly compared to the MCAS, which is a test that can be fairly compared to the MCAS.

3. For the theory behind the formula: The money should follow the student. So, if a charter student comes in tied for first in Massachusetts in 10th grade MCAS, which is a test that can be fairly compared to the MCAS, which is a test that can be fairly compared to the MCAS.

4. An estimated one half of all students enrolling in charters do not arrive from the public schools. They enter directly from parochial or private schools seeking essentially the same type of education they were getting – but in a tuition-free setting. Why should these tuition dollars flow from the BPS as a result when the child entering the charter was not a BPS student originally?

5. Charters get reimbursed for the average cost of educating a BPS student even though they teach them with special needs. The money should follow the student. So, if a charter student comes in tied for first in Massachusetts in 10th grade MCAS, which is a test that can be fairly compared to the MCAS, which is a test that can be fairly compared to the MCAS.

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BOSTON UNION TEACHER ❖ June, 2013 ❖ 5
Hi, I’m Jessica Tang and I’m a BPS teacher-leader. I am here to testify about the mayor’s proposal and against the bill to lift the cap on charter schools. I speak on behalf of teachers and students who couldn’t be here today and ask that these hearings please happen later in the day so that more of us on the ground can be here and have a voice in the policies that impact us most.

First, I would like to acknowledge that perhaps these proposals come from the best of intentions. However, I must point out that good intentions do NOT always result in good consequences, and that is the situation we have here today.

Here are some problems with the Mayor’s proposal: First, it extends “turn around” powers and “support grants” to level 3 schools, yet the federal funding for such schools has run out. While it promises comparable total extra funding for the 48 or so schools it could affect, the current funding of turnaround schools is for only 11 schools! In other words, the so called “extra” funding for these schools would pale in comparison to the amount of funding current turnaround schools are getting.

Orchard Gardens is often touted as a success. But if every school was given the additional resources of BTR, T3 teacher leaders, BELL, CityYear, additional funding, functional facilities, and an effective school leader, than many more schools could be “turned around” too, without this proposal.

Teachers at ALL schools wish they had the resources and supports that Orchard Gardens and charter schools have. While teachers in traditional schools frequently run out of paper and buy their own paper to make copies, teachers at other schools are distributed iPads to help with their instruction. The inequity of resources and their distribution must be addressed if we are to hold all schools equally accountable, and this proposal does not sufficiently do so.

Second, extending the school day alone is not a silver bullet to student success. I work in an extended day school and know the toll that it takes on both students and teachers. If used wisely, it can expand student opportunities for arts, meaningful electives and interventions, but this cannot be done well without committed partnerships and a thoughtful roll out – which at this point there is no planning evidence of. It also cannot be done without fair compensation, just as it is done currently at schools like the Orchard Gardens and the Edwards. I am able to work in an extended day school because I do not have children. I am not taking care of elderly or sick parents, and I choose to. Teachers already spend an incredible amount of their own time after school and on the weekends doing what we need to do to prepare lessons, make phone calls, grade work, upload artistes for evaluations, attend professional development, and so forth. Even if teachers were paid double what we are paid now, I bet most teachers would choose not to work an extended day beyond another 30-40 minutes or hour, because it’s just not sustainable and doable. By then, we’re just too exhausted and overwhelmed by the amount of work we still need to do when we do get home.

Now there are some positives about the Mayor’s proposal. It prioritizes enrollment for under-enrolled students with disabilities and ELLs in charter schools. It makes sure that charters don’t build new schools in areas where new seats aren’t even needed. It offers the same transportation services to both charter and district school students (remember the new school realignment process did not mean less money because the district still pays for charter students to get bussed all around the city). It also incorporates a weighted formula for charter funding since currently charters get more money per student than they should considering that they don’t serve the students who need the most funding such as students with severe disabilities. These proposals address many of the reasons that the charter school cap should NOT be lifted. Bottom line, expanding charters creates more inequality and less resources for schools that DO serve the most vulnerable populations.

Please, do NOT be swayed by well-funded campaigns, manufactured surveys, and political pressure. Please DO consider the voices of those who are not here and remember that good intentions do not equal good outcomes. We need thoughtful plans that reflect the experience and knowledge of those who do this work on the ground every day.

(Jessica Tang is on the Executive Board of the Boston Teachers Union.)
President Stutman Addresses
Educator of the Year Celebration

By Richard Stutman
BTU President

Good evening and welcome to the Educator of the Year Celebration. This is an honor and a privilege for all of us, particularly those who have been chosen for this great honor.

Before I begin, let me give our best wishes to Superintendent Carol Johnson, as she enters the next phase of her life. I won’t use the word ‘retirement’ because I suspect she’ll be quite busy. We wish her well, and thank her for her service to the children of Boston.

Watching the superintendent interact with children has been a wonderful, enriching and learning experience for all of us. We congratulate soon-to-be acting superintendent, John McDonough.

We wish the mayor the best, and we hope for his speedy recovery. We thank him for helping put Boston on the map of educational excellence in urban America and appreciate his long-standing support for our public school system, which by many national measures is at the top of national rankings. We owe the mayor and the superintendent a great deal of thanks for their leadership.

I also want to thank and congratulate this evening’s award recipients for taking over the chairmanship of the Boston School Committee. He certainly will provide a guiding hand in these difficult times.

I want to acknowledge the BTU officials in the audience.

We wish to celebrate the awarding of individual honors to 14 exemplary school teachers and support personnel who show us every day what each of us strives to be: leaders by example. Our awardees are people who are role models for excellence, men and women who are never satisfied unless and until each student reaches his or her potential, leaders who show us the way every day, and strive to give their best to, and get the best from, their students. You make us all proud, and represent in what we all want to be. You have been nominated and singled out by your peers – there is no higher honor – and you are to be congratulated. You exemplify the reason we all entered our profession, and we thank you.

This is a proud moment for all of us, and we want to celebrate the good for only one night. We spend the remaining 364 days defending ourselves and attempting to justify what we do, year in and year out, because they have chosen to focus the blame – not accolades – on teachers. We spend the 364 days per year fighting to keep our students well taught, our probe on honorable, and our voices heard.

We spend the other 364 days fighting against the encroaching privatization of our public schools; excessive standardized testing; new and cumbersome mandates like the ever-increasing and tiresome – not to mention, pointless – collection of artifacts of our work.

We spend the other 364 days fighting against charter schools, which drain our resources and disenfranchise many children; and the growing narrowing of our curriculum to satisfy excessive standardized testing — just to mention a few battles we fight daily.

Yes, that’s what we do the other 364 days: we try to survive as we work to improve our schools; and we try to bring hope to one and all, and we can’t do that without you.

We wish her well, and thank her for her leadership.

We also have hired, in conjunction with the University of Massachusetts, Jessica Tang, who serves the BTU as our community liaison. She starts on July 1 at the BTU office. Her responsibilities also include working with our members to request a mail-in ballot. The BTU committee of 11 reviewed 18 applicants for this post, and while many of the candidates were excellent, Paul stood out, and we are certain that he will be able to do great things. We recognize that we’re all starting from scratch – no office, no budget, no money, no… anything – but an idea alone. We are committed to making this work.

Finally, we have just had our biennial election under a new system that allows members to request a mail-in ballot. The wealth of new ideas, energy, and enthusiasm of our newly adopted group of Applied Behavioral Analysts (ABAs).

We have a few serious external issues brewing as well, beyond the ever-present school department issues. On Beacon Hill we have two significant issues confronting us: the expansion of commonwealth charter schools, and the ever-present privatizing our schools. But for today, let’s celebrate our esteemed colleagues and pay them the respect they deserve.

Let’s honor them for the work they do, the joy and energy they bring, and the accolades they deserve. We congratulate you. We thank you. We are proud that you represent us. Thank you, and have a good evening.

Activists Make Changes at Walmart

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Another day, another round of victories for workers. The average wage at Walmart is $8.81/hr or $15,500/yr. The basic deal on health care is that most Walmart associates can’t afford their health insurance. Also, they no longer offer health care to part time associates (that started last year).

What we want to do is to give our employees a voice, a new way of doing things, to show their solidarity with striking workers. Ac-

tions took place at 36 stores total and the movement for justice for Walmart workers continues to grow in the Commonwealth. For more information go to The Making Change At Walmart website, http://makingchangeatwalmart.org/factsheet/

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We wish her well, and thank her for her leadership.

We also have hired, in conjunction with the University of Massachusetts, Jessica Tang, who serves the BTU as our community liaison. She starts on July 1 at the BTU office. Her responsibilities also include working with our members to request a mail-in ballot. The BTU committee of 11 reviewed 18 applicants for this post, and while many of the candidates were excellent, Paul stood out, and we are certain that he will be able to do great things. We recognize that we’re all starting from scratch – no office, no budget, no money, no… anything – but an idea alone. We are committed to making this work.

Finally, we have just had our biennial election under a new system that allows members to request a mail-in ballot. The wealth of new ideas, energy, and enthusiasm of our newly adopted group of Applied Behavioral Analysts (ABAs).

We have a few serious external issues brewing as well, beyond the ever-present school department issues. On Beacon Hill we have two significant issues confronting us: the expansion of commonwealth charter schools, and the ever-present privatizing our schools. But for today, let’s celebrate our esteemed colleagues and pay them the respect they deserve.

Let’s honor them for the work they do, the joy and energy they bring, and the accolades they deserve. We congratulate you. We thank you. We are proud that you represent us. Thank you, and have a good evening.

Activists Make Changes at Walmart

Over the past year, workers at Walmart have come together to form the Organization United for Respect at Walmart (OUR Walmart), a national organization of workers speaking for a strategic voice and economy and demanding that the country’s largest employer create better jobs.

But Walmart continues to refuse to listen to its employees. Workers who are brave enough to speak up in protest pay even more of a price: Reduced shifts. Bad schedules. No raises. Pink slips.

The average wage at Walmart is $8.81/hr or $15,500/yr. The basic deal on health care is that most Walmart associates can’t afford their health insurance. Also, they may lose their jobs for the longest strike yet in Walmart history in protest of illegal retaliation at work. This included two workers from Massachusetts stores, David Coombes and Aubrie Edick. These brave workers then took part in a caravan to Bentonville, AK, where the Walmart shareholders’ meeting took place on June 7th. At the shareholders’ meeting, striking workers took action to make sure their stories were heard by those “investing” in Walmart.

In Massachusetts, community, faith, and labor allies across the state took action on local Walmart stores June 1st to show their solidarity with striking workers. Actions took place at 36 stores total and the movement for justice for Walmart workers continues to grow in the Commonwealth. For more information go to The Making Change At Walmart website, http://makingchangeatwalmart.org/factsheet/

(Submitted by Marjie Crosby, Occupational Therapist.)
West Zone Early Learning Center

With only 94 students in grades K-1, tucked into a corner of the Hennigan Elementary School in Jamaica Plain, the West Zone Early Learning Center is perhaps the smallest school in Boston! I was enthusiastically welcomed by new principal Jean Larrabee, a teacher at the Sumner for many years and an old friend from the days when Boston’s Center for Leadership Development supported school-based, teacher-led Inquiry Groups.

It was a beautiful spring day and K1 students were outside with their science teacher, Molly Rovenko. One group told me they were “looking for bugs” in the grass, while another was hoping to tempt them with a sugary syrup.

Inside Susan Sweeney’s K1 class, children were placing animals they had made of clay into a long cardboard “swamp” habitat and working at a variety of activity centers. Watching young children at play – building block towers, putting jigsaw puzzles together, painting flowers at an easel, going on a “trip” with their family in 2-chair make-believe cars, etc. – always makes me smile. In our rush to make sure students become efficient test takers, we often forget the value of these opportunities for developing language and social skills.

Stephanie Kudriashova had brought her dog to school on the day I visited, and a group of youngsters gathered around to pet him during recess. Meanwhile, first graders were listening to their teacher read a book by Patricia Polacco, and later writing stories of their own. In one class I noticed a girl with thick glasses using a Braille typewriter!

There were 2-3 adults in each classroom to provide individual and small group instruction as needed. This academic support, as well as an extended day, is made possible at “ELC West” with two sets of paraprofessionals: a morning group that comes in from 7AM-1PM and an afternoon group that is at the school from 11AM-5PM. I wish BPS could find a way to provide this kind of “surround care” for all of our students!

We were learning here...
It is an honor to speak to you tonight. I want to start by thanking my fellow educators, administrators, students, and parents for their words of encouragement and congratulating them for this deserving recognition of their talent and effort. Let me also join in thanking Mayor Menino and Superintendent Johnson for their many years of service to the students and schools of our city. Tonight means so much to me since this award comes from my colleagues, my students, my community—the ones who, along with my family, are my world. This evening is a validation of the difficult, soul-searching work we have been engaged in for years: building a vision of internationalism; inquiring together into the art of writing; dragging ourselves, and our students, into the intellectual rigor of the International Baccalaureate. I am indebted to so many thinkers, writers, and great teachers who taught me, in the course of a lifetime, to love the intellectual rigor of the International Baccalaureate. I am indebted to so many who value learning. They remind me that education attains its greatest value those who value learning. They remind me that education attains its greatest value.

It is the achievement gap! And if the captains of our land put half the energy into fighting anti-teacher, anti-union catch phrases, I cannot think of anything worse. Our future is not encircled by our apathy to the violence and destitution of our communities. The Secretary of Education keeps saying "poverty is not an excuse." He's right in a way. Poverty is not an excuse for the achievement gap, it is the achievement gap. And if the captains of our commerce and the legislators of our land put half the energy into fighting poverty that they put into attacking teachers and unions and collective bargaining, we could make some real reforms, maybe finally close that gap...which is really an equity gap, an access gap.

Next time any of you hear a neighbor or local pundit denigrate teachers or cast aspersions on the quality of public education, please remember this night, remember these dedicated educators standing beside me...and remember this: We stand up here, not as exceptions, but as representatives of our diligent, determined, and talented staffs. Before we detractors echo those anti-teacher, anti-union catch phrases, I hope they will come visit me at Snowden and watch how hard my colleagues work. We will welcome them. It's just what we do in the Boston Public Schools.

Learning is always a voluntary act and teaching is always a political act. In these times, that second principle is increasingly true...Pearson and Harcourt might be making a killing these days, but we cannot test our way to a better tomorrow. Nor can we close the achievement gap with schools that refuse to serve the neediest children. I am proud to work in a district school that welcomes, retains— and graduates—all sorts of learners. The public schools are still our nation's greatest resource. We must preserve and defend them, and we must question ourselves when we start bestowing the title of 'public' on schools that only welcome certain kinds of students. The children of Boston are our children and we must educate all our children, for they will all be the architects of our future and the custodians of our legacy. That future must not be marred by the violence and destitution of our communities. The Secretary of Education keeps saying "poverty is not an excuse." He's right in a way. Poverty is not an excuse for the achievement gap, it is the achievement gap. And if the captains of our commerce and the legislators of our land put half the energy into fighting poverty that they put into attacking teachers and unions and collective bargaining, we could make some real reforms, maybe finally close that gap...which is really an equity gap, an access gap.

With all the talk about accountability and teacher quality and closing the achievement gap and all the other rhetoric that often obscures many of the fundamental problems facing urban public schools we should not forget the many simple things that the district could fix that would increase student learning.

In that spirit we urge members to submit pictures with a short explanation for a new column called "Our Working Conditions Are the Students' Learning Conditions". We will not publish the school or the teacher's name. If the school committee or school department wishes to fix the problem we urge them to contact the Boston Union Teacher and we will gladly include their cooperation in future columns.

This window has been shadeless since September, 2012. It faces east. The morning's sun comes pouring in virtually blinding the students who sit in the first row of the classroom. Despite repeat requests to get a new shade installed, the teacher has had to use duct tape to secure what remains of the old shade. The teacher has added old student projects to the window from time to time in an effort to block the sun.
Executive Board Minutes
April 1, 2013

Members present: Anne-Marie Adlack, Anne Broder, Marie Broderick, Sandy Carle, Janey Frank, Lynn Ginney, Raymond Cotton, David Donovan, Chairman, Donna Cooley-Hilton, Elsson Ganley, Ruthanne Kennedy, Marilyn Marion, Secretary, Linda McNamara, Leonard Miraglia, Vice Chairman, Mary Jo Murphy, and Paul Tenney.

Excused: Phil Fassano.

Reports
Secretary: Report read and accepted.
Treasurer: Report read and accepted.
Chairman: The chairman spoke to Andy Powell who will give update on retirees' health care bill. The open enrollment for health care benefit begins April 30 and the Retirement Board must have the health insurance applications due at the end of the month.

Election: Elections Committee co-chair prepared a report regarding the election results.

Travel: Reservations are coming in slowly for trips being offered until September. Report accepted.

The following current reservations are:

• Gloucester & Rockport ......... 14
• Villa Roma ........ 8
• Beaches of Ogunquit .......... 4
• Viva Las Vegas .............. 3
• Winnipesaukee & Castle .... 6
• Mackinac Island .............. 7

Legislative: The website has been updated. Bill for Option C was filed and co-sponsored with NAGT.

On March 12, approximately 40 RTC members attended the Campaign for Communities at the State House. Marie Broderick, Elsson Ganley and Paul Tenney from the RTC Executive Board and members of the Legislative Committee supported this effort.

The Boston Retirement Board for contributes to the COLA base. A vote in June will take place. The Committee plans to meet on May 16 before the membership meeting to plan their next steps. The Committee will alert the Rapid Response members to attend the June meeting. Thank you notes were sent to the Rapid Response members.

The committee is fixing the names of new members to City Hall. There were only three new applications for the RTC Executive Board this month.

Membership: No report.
Election: There were 289 members who voted in the primary election. Report Accepted.

New Business: Discussion on AFT convention in Newton.
On motion of Janey Frank, carried and an article for the Boston Union Teacher has been done.

Data Processing: The committee is preparing to meet on May 6, 2013

The Blame Game in Our Public Schools…

By Brigid Byrne-Rawlings

The day trip to Gloucester and Rockport was a success with 42 members and 42 guests. Reservations for other trips are coming in slowly.

The trips are posted on the website which might encourage people to join us. The Committee would like a table ready set up at the May 10 business meeting. The committee expects to have all flyers for the remaining trips for 2013 at that time. Brochures will be set out at the business meeting. Report Accepted.

Toy Update:

• 12 ........ Block Island (open)
• 15 ........ Viva Las Vegas (open)
• 9 ........ Lake Winnipesaukee Cruise
• 7 ........ Mackinac Island (open)
• 11 ........ National Parks (open)
• 42 ........ Gloucester & Rockport

Legislative: On April 10, the RTC Legislative Committee members, along with Paul Tenney from the RTC Executive Board and Angela Cristiani Political Director, attended the Retirement Board meeting. Janey Frank and Larry Connolly testified on increasing the COLA base. A vote in June will take place.

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High School Rep of the Year Seth Peterson of Snowden International High School, is an exceptional teacher, a crusader for social justice on all levels, an articulate spokesperson on our issues who has also organized rallies and participated in press conferences to save our schools. His integrity and empathy shine through all he is and does. He is never about himself, he is always about what’s the right thing to do. When there is an injustice, large or small at the school or in the community – he is on it and he vigorously endeavors to remedy it.

BTU Secondary Field Rep. Caren Carew would like to thank Political Director Angela Cristiani for stepping in to present the awards as Caren recovers from her recent accident.

Middle School/K-8 Rep of the Year Caroline Alexis of Young Achievers Pilot K-8 School possesses a true heart, a great sense of humor, an inquisitive mind, wonderful organization and a fearless spirit. A relatively new Rep, she jumped in to her role with both feet, becoming informed, making an action plan and following through. She reliably sought out remedies to seemingly never ending issues presenting at her school. Her reality could have been daunting, but instead she sought out collaborative and cooperative ways to work things out.

BTU Honors Building Reps of the Year

Elementary Rep of the Year Alicia Silva of the Conley Elementary School has been a compassionate colleague while completing her duties as the BTU Building Rep at the Conley. She frequently calls, emails and texts the BTU to ask for advice. Those calls and questions are not always about the contract. Many times she is seeking advice to help colleagues having a difficult time. Alicia is a conscientious Building Rep too. She’s always at the monthly meetings, stays until the end and distributes the meeting notes and agenda to the staff at the Conley. Alicia herself has been through a lot. She has persevered and is well-respected by the staff and administration at the Conley E.S.

Elementary Field Rep of the Year Margaret Salemme of the Russell Elementary School has been a long-standing, well-respected BTU Building Rep. I am surprised she has not been given this award previously. Marg has worked with five principals during her career at the Russell E.S. All five have learned to work collaboratively with Marg. Some more than others. As a BTU Building Rep, Margaret was frequently called on the carpet for various ludicrous things. Each time Marg prevailed and she continues to prevail. Marg has always been willing to fight the good fight for the good of the union and has never backed down from an issue. Marg has what it takes to be a good BTU Building Rep, a great practitioner of her craft and strong union member capable of standing up for her rights and those of her colleagues.

The other Paraprofessional of the Year Award went to Mary McKunes from the Condon DDC Program. Mary has been in the system for 12 years. Mary’s daughter-in-law received the same award “the bowl” last year, so we’re happy that it remains in the family!

“One of the Paraprofessional Building Representatives of the Year is Lauren Norton of the Guild School. All paras should take a page out of her book. She has completed her studies and has her BACH and now her Masters and just did her MTELs and is ready to teach. I think she is a role model for the younger set. I am proud to say she happens to be my granddaughter.”

- Jenna Fitzgerald

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