Dever/Holland takeover reinvents the wheel once again

But this time, the Commissioner shows who’s boss

L ast fall, State Commissioner of Education Mitchell Chester announced that despite the best efforts of staff at both the Dever and the Holland, each school was headed to level 5 status, both to be taken over by an outside provider. The commissioner held the requisite community hearings, and after a four month deliberative process announced last month that the schools would be taken over by two outside vendors. Unlocking Potential would take control over the Holland, Blueprint over the Dever. Both of the chosen vendors are on the state’s approved vendor list, and each got a no-bid contract to run these schools for the foreseeable future. Both have other contracts to work in the BPS. Unlocking Potential runs what were formerly the Gren and the Marshall schools. Blueprint provides management expertise and tutoring services at the E- Greenwood and the English High School. These, too, are no-bid contracts. In the (corporate) Ed Reform world, no-bid — with no need to show evidence of prior success — contracts are acceptable. Actually, they are preferred. (The BTU has challenged the employment of Blueprint tutors at each of the aforementioned schools inasmuch as we feel that the so-called Blueprint tutor is a position that properly belongs to our bargaining unit, with full paraprofessional benefits and salary, in line with a previous arbitration decision regarding MIT tutors at one of our high schools in the late 1970’s. The Blueprint tutors at both schools earn significantly less than BPS paraprofessionals and have less benefits.)

The school takeovers are an insult and embarrassment to all of us — city, school district’s policies, agreements, working rules and any practices or policies, and are implemented pursuant to G.L. c. 69, § 1J,...

The Commissioner as Benign Ruler

“The Pursuant to G.L. c. 69, §1, the Commissioner must create a turnaround plan intended to maximize the rapid improvement of the academic achievement of students in the school. The Commissioner will take all appropriate steps necessary to support the goals of the turnaround plan...”

“...[The Commissioner may] limit, suspend, or change 1 or more provisions of any contract or collective bargaining agreement, as the contract or agreement applies to the school...”

“The Commissioner reserves the right to make additional changes to collective bargaining agreements as needed. Nothing contained in the turnaround plan or the collective bargaining agreements shall be construed to limit the rights of the Commissioner as they are provided for under G.L. c. 69, § 1J...”

that the schools would be taken over by two outside vendors. Unlocking Potential would take control over the Holland, Blueprint over the Dever. Both of the chosen vendors are on the state’s approved vendor list, and each got a no-bid contract to run these schools for the foreseeable future. Both have other contracts to work in the BPS. Unlocking Potential runs what were formerly the Gren and the Marshall schools. Blueprint provides management expertise and tutoring services at the E- Greenwood and the English High School. These, too, are no-bid contracts. In the (corporate) Ed Reform world, no-bid — with no need to show evidence of prior success — contracts are acceptable. Actually, they are preferred. (The BTU has challenged the employment of Blueprint tutors at each of the aforementioned schools inasmuch as we feel that the so-called Blueprint tutor is a position that properly belongs to our bargaining unit, with full paraprofessional benefits and salary, in line with a previous arbitration decision regarding MIT tutors at one of our high schools in the late 1970’s. The Blueprint tutors at both schools earn significantly less than BPS paraprofessionals and have less benefits.)

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The Commissioner as Czar

“These terms shall supersede any contrary provisions of the district’s collective bargaining agreements or any pre-existing practice or policy. The terms reflect mandatory changes to the district’s policies, agreements, working rules and any practices or policies, and are implemented pursuant to G.L. c. 69, § 1...”

• 25 days of PD, five during the school year and 20 in July, all @ 8 hours per day
• New staff
• Renewed commitment
• A 185-day school year @ 9 hours per day for staff

We all know the answer to question #1. It is straightforward. The staff will be up to speed on curriculum, instruction, and other school-related activities. Teachers and other professional staff shall devote whatever time is required to achieve and maintain high quality education in the Dever Elementary School. For example, unless formally excused, teachers and other professional staff shall participate in all regular school functions during or outside of the normal school day, including faculty meetings, parent conferences, department meetings, curriculum meetings, graduations and other similar activities. Teachers will also be afforded regular preparatory time during their work week. Such preparatory time may include common planning periods and professional development...”
Commentary by Garret Virchick

If only I had a brain

Making its way around the internet is a blog post by Valerie Strauss of the Washington Post. Embedded in the post is a video depicting a mindless “professional” development session in the Chicago Public Schools. Before reading any further…read the insanity in the box below.

Presenter: The vocabulary matrix. What’s the strategy we are going to use today? (bored) (in unison) The vocabulary matrix.
Presenter: And we are also going to use application. What else are we going to use? Teachers: Application.
Presenter: So repeat after me. We will... Teachers: We will. Presenter: Use... Teachers: Use...
Presenter: accurately... Teachers: accurately.
Presenter: grade appropriate... Teachers: grade appropriate.
Presenter: general academic... Teachers: general academic...
Presenter: and domain specific words...
Teachers: and domain specific words...
Presenter: and phrases... Teachers: and phrases...
Presenter: when writing... Teachers: when writing...
Presenter: or speaking... Teachers: or speaking...
Presenter: by choosing... Teachers: by choosing... Presenter: flexibly... Teachers: flexibly.
Presenter: from a random strategy.

Teacher: from a random strategy.
Presenter: The strategies that we are using today...there are two strategies. How many strategies are we using today? Teachers: Two.
Presenter: The two strategies are application and vocabulary. What I want you to do is turn to your partner and tell them what the two strategies we are going to use today.

(See this outrageous example of “corporate professional development” at http://www.washingtortpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/02/28/a-video-that-shows-what-taught-in-the-box-below.

You can’t make this stuff up. In too many schools, whether it is Chicago or Boston or almost anywhere, teachers are being written out of the equation. The teacher’s role is now predetermined. Your job is to shut up and implement the agenda.

The corporate “education” agenda wants schools that produce good little acquiescent workers. Students are viewed as products, and teachers are cogs in the wheel. The curriculum being implemented values skills development to the detriment of critical and creative thinking.

An example of this can be found in the new Common Core and PARCC assessments that are being rolled out this year. The new Common Core emphasizes what is called “close reading” where students are asked to explore texts leaving out their own perspectives and biases. This is in contrast to “critical reading” where students are encouraged to read closely...but to also examine what is NOT written. To read what is in the text through the lens of what their real-world experience also tells them.

As the blogger Jese Wilson put it: “People who advocate for the Common Core (CCSS) miss the bigger picture that people on the ground don’t. The CCSS came as a package deal with the new teacher evaluations, higher stakes testing, and austerity measures, including mass school closings. Often, it seems like the leaders are talking out of both sides of their mouths when they say they want to improve education but need to defund our schools. ... it makes no sense for us to have high expectations of our students when we don’t have high expectations for our school system.

Good teachers have always deviated from the script to allow students to explore their passions and find their own voice. This is becoming harder and harder as the democratic control of schools is being ripped away from teachers and the community and replaced with standards written by assessment experts, many with ties to the testing industry, and underwritten by billionaires such as Bill Gates.

And it’s not just curriculum that requires us to march lock step with the corporate agenda. Teacher voice anywhere is disappearing. We see it at the schools that have been taken by the state. Experience and voice is seen as a liability as veteran teachers have been “excessed” to make way for a more pliable workforce. Question the logic of the “reforms” and you are labeled as not believing in students, the pavement only a few short years ago.

“Overtesting diverts time and resources from teaching and learning. It narrows curriculum and deprives our students of art and music. And, perhaps most important, it does not improve student achievement.”

AFT President Randi Weingarten.

Teachers join parent-led boycott of Chicago

Teachers at two Chicago schools – Maria Saucedo Elementary Scholastic Academy and Thomas Drummond Elementary School – have voted to join a parent-led boycott of the Illinois Standards Achievement Test.

The schools’ parents “are understandably frustrated by the fact that the Illinois Standards Achievement Test is unnecessary and irrelevant,” AFT President Randi Weingarten says. “The test is being administered only to fulfill a No Child Left Behind requirement, while more than half of states have sought waivers from such requirements. The test won’t inform instruction or assess student or teacher performance. It is not relevant to the current curriculum. It’s a meaningless hoop to jump through that benefits no one. So, why subject kids to it?”

“Courageous teachers have voted to join the parent-led boycott of this test, and the AFT stands with the parents, students and teachers at these schools and across Chicago. Our nation’s fixation on testing is harming students.

Overtesting diverts time and resources from teaching and learning. It narrows curriculum and deprives our students of art and music. And, perhaps most important, it does not improve student achievement.”


Share My Lesson reaches five million resource downloads

It is just a year and a half, educators and parents have downloaded more than five million free teaching resources on Share My Lesson, making it the most sought-after online collection of lesson plans and other materials, its creators announced Feb. 27. “Our leaders repeatedly tell teachers how critical they are to our students’ education and their futures, but at the same time they have been hamstringed by austerity budgets that have drastically cut instructional resources and other tools and support teachers need. Teachers are hungry for these resources, particularly quality lesson plans aligned with the Common Core State Standards, and increasingly are turning to www.sharemylesson.com,” says AFT President Randi Weingarten.

Created by the AFT and TES Connect, Share My Lesson is the fastest-growing professional online community for educators in the United States.

Continued on page 3
What is the role of the School Site Council's Personnel Subcommittee in hiring?

The role of the Personnel Subcommittee is to coordinate the process of recruiting, interviewing, and hiring of personnel. The subcommittee is responsible for making recommendations to the SSC on the selection of personnel. The subcommittee is composed of representatives from the administration, teachers, and parents. The subcommittee is responsible for ensuring that the hiring process is fair and that the needs of the school are met.

How are bylaws/operational procedures for SSCs determined?

Each School-Site Council determines most of its own operating procedures through the adoption of SSC bylaws. Each school may establish bylaws that are different from the Bylaws of the Boston Teacher Union. These bylaws must be approved by the SSC and must be consistent with the Constitution of the BTSU.

Do Sped teachers who are on leave receive credit for the time they have already served?

Yes, Sped teachers are entitled to receive credit for the time they have already served. The number of years of service that are included in the calculation of credit is determined by the number of years that the teacher has been on leave.

What is MCAS – ALT and how is it administered?

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is a standardized test that is given to students in grades 3-10. The MCAS – ALT (Alternate) is an alternative version of the MCAS that is administered to students who are unable to take the regular version due to a disability.

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What is the new process for “Paraprofessional First Consideration” for teaching vacancies?

The current process for filling teaching vacancies is being reviewed and revised. The new process will prioritize the appointment of paraprofessionals who have been approved by the Boston School Committee. This will ensure that paraprofessionals are given the first consideration for teaching positions.

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NAACP President Michael Curry speaks to BTU membership

During the February membership meeting, Michael Curry, the President of the NAACP was invited to speak to our members. The Boston Branch of the NAACP was created in March of 1911 and is recognized as the first “chartered” branch of the NAACP. Mr. Curry reminded our members that the NAACP is not only for black members, but it belongs to all members of the community and that in fact both black and white Bostonians started the original chapter together with this stated purpose: “To uplift the colored men and women of this country by securing to them the full enjoyment of their rights as citizens, justice in all courts, and equality of opportunity everywhere.”

Mr. Curry was joined by BTU teacher Janelle Ridley and East Boston High School student Daniela Martinez. East Boston High students learned about the history of the NAACP in Ms. Ridley’s class and were inspired to create their own chapter. It is now the first chartered high school chapter in the state of Massachusetts. BTU members generously contributed funds to help support the new chapter’s trip to the annual NAACP convention in New York City.

The visit by Mr. Curry, Ms. Ridley, and Ms. Martinez was timely as it coincided with Black History Month, and was an appropriate reminder of the legacy of both the NAACP and the importance of our continued fight for social, economic, and educational justice for all of our students.

New Educator Underground off to a great start!

The New Educator Underground has met several times this year to support early educators from all of our schools. In early February, about forty members gathered at the Milky Way and participated in a short presentation from OIT about some of the online tools and resources that are available. They enjoyed pizza and appetizers and were also joined by President Stutman and a few other members of the staff and Executive Board for discussions about the concerns of early educators and how the BTU can best support new members.

The next New Educator Underground event will be Friday, April 11 — Save the Date!
Extending the questions on an extended day

Every couple of months some columnist or editor mentions that the Boston Public School calendar is among the shortest school days in the nation. The nearly unanimous opinion of these writers is that if the BPS had a longer day, then the students would learn more. It seems logical, doesn’t it? If Johnny spends more time on math, then Johnny should know more math. If the students spend more time on math, then Johnny would learn more. How will a longer school day impact extra-curricular sports? Will the time of games simply be pushed back by an hour or will sporting activities be curtailed? Even before the kids head home, they will need to be fed. Speaking for myself, the first thing I do when I get home is have a snack... or two. My school, Boston Latin Academy, has an “early start.” I must sign in by 7:10 am; so, if I am to break my fast at home, it has to be before 0600. Lunch is anywhere from 10:45am to 12:00pm. Call me weak-willed, but I need a good snack before dinner. If the BPS were to lengthen the school day, I’d imagine that both the students and the staff would need more nourishment in the later hours. So, what’s the plan for snack time? Will the cafeteria workers need to work a longer day? Will the BPS’s food budget be increased? Will staff also get snack time?

Let us not overlook maintenance. If the schools are to be used for more hours each day, how will this impact custodial services? The BPS ready, willing or able to renegotiate a bus schedule with Veolia? How will a longer school day impact traffic? If the BPS lengthened every school’s day by an hour? Most buses make their runs before rush hour becomes a congested mess. How many buses would be in the thick of traffic? How long will children be on the bus- ride? Might some schools start earlier instead of going later? Again, how might these - or any changes - in BPS start and stop times impact traffic? How long will children be on the bus- ride? How much longer would the ride be in the winter when it snows? How long of a bus- ride might children and parents tolerate? Is the BPS ready, willing or able to renegotiate a bus schedule with Veolia?

Using Social Media to promote children’s mental health

By Angela Cristiani and Janey Frank

Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day is coming May 8, 2014. The BTU will again be promoting activities in conjunction with this important national effort to raise awareness about the importance of children’s mental health. Let’s not wait until May 8, though. We know that positive mental health is essential to a child’s healthy development and should be supporting the development of good mental health, year-round.

What can you do? Help students with challenges stand up to derogatory comments and behaviors associated with stigma. Support them by modeling a positive response and sending a message of tolerance. Tell your colleagues and encourage your students to participate in the Youth Lens Photo Project, a contest for young people across the US who can submit their original photographs, via twitter, that show how they view stigma or bullying. This is an opportunity for your students to share their thoughts and experiences using the power of photography, and using social media to post and vote for the winning entries.

For more info, contact youthlensproject.org or tweet photo @YLPContest.

(Angela Cristiani is the BTU Political Director and Janey Frank is the AFT representative/member of National Community of Practice of School Behavioral Health Youth Involvement and Leadership Practice Group.)

Youth Lens Photo Contest

Welcome to the Youth Lens Photo Contest! To enter, it is easy as 1-2-3!

Step 1. Take an original photo. Remember an original photo is a photo you personally took. The Youth Lens Photo Contest does not allow the submission of the following: A screen capture. A copy of another artist’s photo. A duplicated photo from the internet, or An altered photo from a secondary source.

Step 2. Tweet your original photo representing the contest theme. Upload your photo to Twitter and tweet @YLPContest with a brief photo description using hashtag #YLPL4Sigmas.

Step 3. Get retweets of your original photo. The more retweets your photo receives, the better! The youth lens photo contest will award $50 to the winner based on the number of retweets. This photo must be retweeted in order to be entered. Youth Lens Photo Contest will contact the winners at the end of the Contest to have the photographers sign a release form for their photo to be used to republish our artwork. We will also ask your permission to share the photos on our social media pages. We encourage you to share your entry. We will also use the photo in a contest designed to support future contests supported by Youth Lens Photo Contest.

Questions? Contact youthlensproject@gmail.com

An Evening of Celebration

Please save Monday, June 16, 2014 for a celebration with your colleagues in honor of 42 years of Holland achievements, memories and most importantly friendships that have been forged by the dragon’s breath.

BOSTON UNION TEACHER March, 2014
Teacher leadership created by teachers

By Cathy O’Flaherty

When we put the creative and intellectual energy of our students to work, we can only get accomplished—and that’s exactly what is and has been happening at Boston Latin Academy over the past two years. We created a professional learning community in which National Board Certified Teachers at Boston Latin Academy mentored other teachers in our school to achieve National Board Certification. The Teacher Leaders who had already achieved National Board Certification established a support community designed to achieve National Board Certification. We implemented structured and instructed sessions, with the promise of support being ever-present, that would help transform our schools in which we shared a vision for ourselves as adult learners. We began the first year with twelve teacher candidates, and the second year we grew to twenty-three. There was no formal curriculum—simply a common commitment made by teachers who inspired others to join us.

The second year of those same teachers went on to work as a cohort toward national certification, with seven achieving National Board Certification in their respective content areas. We currently have two additional teachers working toward completion and one teacher working toward renewal with

emails encouraging teachers to become trained in moderate special needs (at their discretion—some emailed for another article—anyone want to write it?), hearst from teachers and itinerants in many buildings stated for the inclusion class. The letter from Eileen Henderson (also came up from the trenches and has tons of valuable experience). The letter explains that funding is essential that that's what I'm hoping is that long in universities. I'm also hoping that the models( the school system is adopting are based on research and proven practices. With that hope in mind I used February vacation to read Dr. Hehir and Katzman's book. I'm excited about some of the ideas that he brings forward.

"Parents and caregivers bring new perspectives to the school staff and integral members of the school community, and the teachers and students are their partners in the school’s mission. The involvement of parents was a driving force in the creation of the O’Hearn School, (p. 96), with some students placed in classrooms where they would carry over IEP’s or through the due process protections of laws governing special education. For me this is a powerful partnership and an example of what’s possible (and unexplored) in general education and in special education (what about the rest of the kids). But the lesson is that a strong voice and participation of parents is crucial; we need to be more careful in maintaining the high quality of education at all 3 inclusion schools.

"In addition to high academic standards, teachers embraced inclusive environment ," (p. 82). In the three BPS models, teachers played a major role in developing, implementing and improving inclusion classrooms that make us a district leader in such vital areas as sustainability. They are important in high quality of education at all 3 inclusion schools.

"To be a National Board Certified Teacher requires one to consider and demonstrate accountability for the decisions made that impact the education of our students. We must act appropriately. We must be accountable for our decisions and practice. The teachers at our school are our own path, our process, our own accountability. Our teachers are participating in professional development that is emerging organically—not simply being imposed by outside forces—and as a result, we're keeping ourselves accountable for effective teaching within the collaborative environment in which we work.

"Why do this? It matters because so many outside forces are trying to influence what happens in our classroom and sometimes, they win. The onslaught of negativity aimed at teachers in conjunction with the corporate imperialism that is growing... It's not uncommon for professionalism to be demonized. However, as professionals, we can rise above such attacks. The common thread in these conversations is that we're not going away... We can contribute to our educational system. And the discussion continues as if this is a new phenomenon or one that must be defined by people from outside our profession. When, indeed, it is a conversation we, as professionals, are capable of initiating and carrying on ourselves. And, while web sites, blogs, and journals are talking about changing the face of education, we as professionals know that excellent teaching continues. We're continuing to teach. Our students are learning. We can guide ourselves in that process and invent our own conversation. This doesn’t mean that we're not going to fail, and we’re willing to collaborate and guide our own collaboration. We must be willing to fail, and we must be willing to collaborate.

If we want kids to collaborate, we need to model collaboration. If we want our students to take risks, we too must take risks and share those choices and successes. When we move forward as professionals, we model for our students how to succeed in spite of the challenges that we face. When we model leadership is demonstrated when we initiate, create and guide ourselves as adult learners and collaborators.

In the teaching profession we’re always teachers who challenge themselves to work beyond the walls of our classroom and demonstrate collaboration in our instructional practice. When we’re new to a teacher, become informed about and influence policy, and create new curriculum... What matters most is that our teaching and students do in addition to teaching. We make lots of decisions as teachers, and among the different tools that we use to make decisions and in our professional lives, keeping our practice current and evolving our instructional practice is a conversation that isn’t foreign to career teachers—and it’s one that isn’t made even more than a classroom. It involves decisions we can and should make for ourselves.

As we move toward the Common Core, students who have more complicated needs, and could bring down school wide test scores. Our students must recommend an alternative placement (i.e., for a student whose parents felt that three hours of individual Applied Behavioral Analysis—ABA, which was a priority.

"Unusually Designed Instruction is presented as a key to meeting the needs of our students. In many cases, students reach a wide array of students by providing access to the curriculum and to the myth that will continue to be used to manipulate the public, we might as well be dealing with a school that the best of students... We can guide ourselves in that process and invent our own conversation. This doesn’t mean that we’re not going to fail, and we’re willing to collaborate and guide our own collaboration. We must be willing to fail, and we must be willing to collaborate.

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In the teaching profession we’re always teachers who challenge themselves to work beyond the walls of our classroom and demonstrate collaboration in our instructional practice. When we’re new to a teacher, become informed about and influence policy, and create new curriculum... What matters most is that our teaching and students do in addition to teaching. We make lots of decisions as teachers, and among the different tools that we use to make decisions and in our professional lives, keeping our practice current and evolving our instructional practice is a conversation that isn’t foreign to career teachers—and it’s one that isn’t made even more than a classroom. It involves decisions we can and should make for ourselves. As we move toward the Common Core.
by Heidi Winston and Riana Good

Veolia, an international, billion-dollar inclusion-based business in Illinois, holds 130 contracts in the US and Canada and is part of Veolia Transdev, which operates public transportation for hundreds of cities in 27 countries. In April 2013 the city of Boston contracted Veolia for a 5 year contract to manage operations and maintain the school bus fleet. The City of Boston and BPS said they hired Veolia because they underbid other companies by 6 million dollars. According to Veolia, all school bus drivers will become Veolia employees, and all collective bargaining agreements will be honored. (www.schoolbusstrike.net, 4/10/2013)

Although Veolia Boston – Oct 8th, But a Lock-Out Not a Strike – Veolia’s standard tactics are to low bid city management contracts, then force concessions and cutbacks in clear violation of existing union contracts. When the workers and unions resist, they threaten, harass, discipline and fire the union leaders and activists.

Veolia Boston – Oct 8th, Not a Strike – But a Lock-Out

In Boston, Veolia fired four union leaders for standing up to them. On October 8th, 2013, Boston and Veolia officials were at the bus yard at 4:30am for a meeting, but instead of holding a meeting, Veolia officials called the police, and locked the drivers out of the bus yard. The drivers wanted to meet because on October 7th Veolia requested that the bus drivers return to the bus yard and re-apply for the job. This is not only unfair and discriminatory but against the contract that Veolia agreed to honor. Veolia has refused to address more than 50 grievances, many filed with the federal government, including: drivers and bus monitors receiving short paychecks, and illegally cut hours. Drivers and bus monitors are regularly treated rudely and spend hours weekly attempting to retrieve their full salaries and benefits. Only about 30% of buses have bus monitors.

Embracing Inclusion – Let’s make it great for every student!

The book. It is actually not long and generally written in an easy to read style. Let’s use it by asking a question or two?

Will the new inclusion classrooms opening in September 2014 provide Justin and all the other K2 students a program whose quality is supported by the research presented by Drs. Hehir and Katzman?

To help answer this I pose these follow up questions:

Have parents had a strong role in developing and being a driving force in creating this new inclusion program?

Were schools selected for inclusion classroom opening after thorough discussion by all staff resulting in embracing an inclusion environment?

Were they selected on the demonstrated ability of principals to obtain funds beyond those provided by the district and with a passion for inclusion?

Does research support having both a traditional special education inclusion program side by side in one school?

Will there be mainly staff with expertise teaching a special education level students, needed to provide quality instruction and support those teachers newly certified in moderate special needs?

Will there be adequate staffing to allow co-teaching, collaboration, visits between classrooms? Will teachers in the regular education classes be involved?

Boston Public School officials, the former city administration at two years in office, the media were complicit in not supporting our bus drivers, and in taking the side of Veolia in the school bus drivers’ struggle for fairness. After all, BPS officials were at the bus yard when Veolia refused to meet with the drivers, and obviously had full knowledge that a situation existed in which many school children would not be brought to school that morning. They were obviously aware of the lock-out and clearly did not stop it. A media blitz then ensued, blaming the drivers.


In Washington, DC, Veolia owns the “Super Shuttle” Van Company at Baltimore Washington International and Dulles airports. Their drivers earn less than minimum wage. These mostly West African drivers are forced into “indenterd servitude” by paying a $35,000 franchise fee and fees of at least $1200 per week. Veolia is not paying unemployment, payroll taxes, or benefits. They are the only drivers not only allowed to use the bathrooms in the airport and hotels. Veolia also owns the Super Shuttle at Denver International Airport, where Veolia is attempting to cut driver’s wages 30%. At both airports, several drivers have been fired for organizing against these conditions.

Veolia – West Bank

In the West Bank, Veolia operates the Jerusalem Light Rail, which services Jewish-only settlements, and the Tovlan landfill, where they dump Israeli trash on occupied Palestinian land. They practice discriminatory hiring practices, favoring Jewish workers. Until recently, they regularly segregated bus lines, with Jews and Palestinians on separate buses. Veolia’s complicity in Israeli occupation, along with many other labor and human rights violations, has made it an international pariah, and it has lost billions of dollars in contracts due to protest.

Support the Bus Drivers – Support our School Children

U SWA bus drivers and monitors are our fellow workers. Supporting each other’s struggles is in our interest as educators as well as the interests of the children. Management needs to hear our resistance. We must foster unity among teachers, support staff, bus drivers, parents, and students to succeed in the struggle. Through actions of solidarity, we must redefine ourselves as integral parts of one working class. The more we can successfully demonstrate our solidarity with the bus drivers union and fight for Veolia to reinstate the fired union leaders and respect their contract with the union.

Update in Boston

At the February BTU membership meeting held on October 8th, 2012, Heidi Winston made a motion in support of the bus drivers, but the motion did not pass. Although many teachers were supportive of the motion when we spoke to them, they had questions about what happened on the day of October 8th, and are interested in helping the bus driver’s come to our meeting to tell their story.

Many unions, and others including MA AFL-CIO President Steven Tolman, and Charles Yancey have come out in support of the bus drivers and their union. The fired drivers are now getting unemployment and their firings are in arbitration. They continue to fight hard for improved conditions which includes improved health and safety on the buses, monitors and bus routes. However, these dedicated union leaders have been with us for a job for almost 5 months.

We must remember that the oppressive conditions that exist for the bus drivers affect our students. We can assist our school children by supporting the drivers, and working more closely with them.

If you want to get more information, and want to support our bus drivers, please contact the bus drivers’ union, and let Veolia know that you believe that Veolia should respect BPS bus drivers, their union USWA Local 8751 and our school children!

(Heidi Winston is a nurse at the BTU Pilot School and Rania Good teaches Spanish at Boston Latin Academy.)

Support BPS School Bus Drivers and Bus Monitors

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We were measuring with kid steps. We learned the right way to measure is to start at the front of the ruler.

We were doing a vocabulary packet in science class about the circulatory system. We've learned that arteries and veins carry blood all around the body. We've also learned how to take our pulse, which tells you how fast your heart is beating.

We were singing and dancing to “Dem Bones” in music class with Mr. Noble. We're learning different songs and dance moves and how to play the drum.

We were playing our trumpets and looking at the music which tells us which notes to play. In third grade we got to try four different instruments with Making Music Matters; this year we chose one. We've learned the scale and harmonic finger patterns.

I was looking in the mirror with Ms. Clark. I was seeing what my chin looks like so I could make my portrait better. In art class this year we're learning how to use watercolors and we're working on drawing a portrait so people can recognize us!

I was going over my math homework with Ms. Brown about multiplying mixed fractions. Now we are learning how to add and subtract decimals.

I was reading what I needed to do for our ELA class [English Language Arts]. This year I've learned a lot about the parts of a story and how the author makes a story more interesting.

We were playing our trumpets and looking at the music which tells us which notes to play. In third grade we got to try four different instruments with Making Music Matters; this year we chose one. We've learned the scale and harmonic finger patterns.

We were figuring out what it means to be a "ray of sunshine". Ms. Paid was explaining the difference between similes and metaphors -- both are ways of comparing something to something else. We're starting to learn about poetry. Earlier this year we learned about how captions and headings can help you understand what you're reading.

Cheeks Victor & Chioma Udeh, Grade 6

Sireena Schenck, Jazelyn Soto, Niko Photis & Summer Bachelder, Grade 4

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