**Great Students Start With Great Teachers!**

President’s Corner

by Richard Stutman

A small handful of quick, but effective ideas

Having just read an article in the Boston Globe about the decision of the BPS to open post the majority of positions on the Transfer/Open Posting list, a couple of thoughts come to mind. One is that it has taken far too long to realize that the number of students being educated is more important than the number of teachers being educated. The other is that it has taken far too long to realize that there is a better way to teach.

The decision of the BPS to Open Post the majority of positions on the Transfer/Open Posting list impacts all teachers reassigned. This action opens most positions to any qualified educator inside and outside the BPS. By attaching a stipend of $1,250 to the position is open posted. This action opened most positions to any qualified educator inside and outside the BPS. This action opened most positions to any qualified educator inside and outside the BPS.

### Executive Vice President’s Comments

by Patrick J. Connolly

**Issues and Updates**

While the BPS may claim it has the contractual right to open post any position, this was not the intent of the language. The BTU has grieved the BPS actions and an arbitration is scheduled to begin on May 22, 2014 to resolve the issue. Hopely a favorable decision will be received before the end of the school year.

The BPS push to change and expand the Inclusion model and language contained in the current contract is also causing issues for some BTU members. Questions about certification requirements and the establishment of more inclusion classes will need to be resolved. This will likely not occur before the end of the school year, but may still impact closely tied to the issue of Open Posting in the issue of extra. While the BTU has filed for expedited arbitration on behalf of some of members who feel they have been wrongfully excessed. This arbitration is scheduled for May 15, 2014 and a decision from the arbitrator will be delivered within days of the end of the hearing as excessing issues are decided without written briefs being required of the attorneys.

Excessing and Open Posting are related as four schools (Dever, Holland, Winthrop, and Channing) became Turnaround Schools or were designated as Level 5 by DESE. The majority of faculty members at each of these schools will not return to their 2013 – 2014 assignments and now must compete for posts.

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**Great Students Start With Great Teachers!**

The Award-Winning Newspaper of the Boston Teachers Union, AFT Local 66, AFL-CIO

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**Climate Change Does Not Exist!**

**AFT-MA/BU Statewide Para Conference**

**Book Review: Confessions of a Bad Teacher**
It's only the most pressing environmental issue of this generation: climate change. But you wouldn’t know this by judging by the lack of questions produced for the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS).

An online search for past MCAS questions that pertain to climate change, the greenhouse effect, and global warming produces zero questions about climate change, zero questions about the greenhouse effect, and one question about global warming—and that global warming question is about its effect on ant populations in tropical regions.

For anyone who has followed the corporate takeover of public education, this should not be too much of a surprise. Testing companies profit when they can sell their products. This means having to satisfy more than simply liberal Massachusetts. In the past, textbook publishers offered to put down discussions of topics such as evolution and segregation to satisfy large and often conservative markets like Texas. Are testing companies now having to change their test in an effort to gain a larger market share?

Measured Progress, the company that writes the test questions, is involved in a highly competitive industry. According to the Huffington Post, it is in competition with other testing companies for the $1.7 billion that cities and states fork over to administer the myriad standardized tests that have found their way into public schools since No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top, the Bush/Obama education initiatives, were enacted. Are choices about what to test or not test being driven by the bottom line?

Although Measured Progress calls itself a non-profit, it is organized under 501-C tax-exempt status, it had revenues totaling $104 million in 2011. CEO Stuart Kahl made over $300,000 that year and the company’s top 10 executives all made over $200,000. Measured Progress has ties to two other corporations. McRel International also listed as private non-profit, reported operating revenues of nearly $70 million in the most recent educational research and development. E-Metric, a provider of K-12 web-based assessment and reporting solutions as well as learning management systems for schools districts has revenue totaling $5-10 million, according to various estimates online.

So what does this have to do with us, the teachers? The question facing us is, Should we take time to explore climate change in class?

What led me to the Department of Education’s list of MCAS questions in the first place was not simply to write an expose for the Boston Union Teacher. Our school-based goal, for which I have some responsibility, is to improve MCAS scores. Failure to do this could conceivably affect my evaluation. Worse, failure to improve test scores could also mean having to satisfy more than simply the academic skills of their students. In their words, they would refuse to give a test that made their students feel like failures.

Despite what the overseers of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System choose to include or exclude on the test, climate change does exist and cause an afterthought. We have seen it with the disappearance of the arts in curriculum. We are seeing it with the second-class status of history and civics. It is apparently true of climate change as well. Are these simply the unintended consequences of a bad system? Or is it part and parcel of corporate education reform that does not see the importance of educating the whole child or of educating children so that they might change the world?

Certainly pro-charter and pro-standardized testing organizations like the American Legislative Executive Council (ALEC) would not want that. They have written model legislation like the “Environmental Literacy Improvement Act”. This act would require teachers to teach global warming as a theory, as opposed to a fact. It would also considerably curtail any encouragement of students who engage in the political discourse around climate change as against the law. ALEC’s corporate board in recent times has included Exxon/Mobil as well as notorious anti-union Koch Industries. As a result Texas and Louisiana have introduced legislation that would require educators to teach climate change denial as a valid scientific theory. South Dakota and Utah have passed resolutions denying climate change. And Tennessee and Oklahoma have also introduced legislation to give climate change resistance a place in the curriculum.

The word “innovation” is thrown around by corporate reformers, but true innovation is harder to find on the margins. This is true of innovative or radical ideas like gravity (Galileo was thrown in jail for teaching it) or global warming. New ideas don’t emanate from the status quo. As long as what we teach is being influenced by what the status quo deems important, we are failing to deliver a truly great education to our students.

As teachers we don’t have to settle for the Hobson’s choice. But it won’t be easy. We often feel powerless, because, let’s face it, whatever reasons, do not seem to see climate change caused by the burning of fossil fuels as important.

As testing becomes the be all and end all of public education, everything that isn’t tested becomes an afterthought. We have seen it with the disappearance of the arts in curriculum. We are seeing it with the second-class status of history and civics. It is apparently true of climate change as well. Are these simply the unintended consequences of a bad system? Or is it part and parcel of corporate education reform that does not see the importance of educating the whole child or of educating children so that they might change the world?

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Know Your Rights
by Caren Carew

Do teachers receive PDP’s for the 18+ beyond the instructional school day PD hours and full day(s) of BPS professional development?

Time to be filled until late August, at which time teachers who are not matched against vacancies will be assigned in a seniority/Professional capacity by the Office of Human Capital. BPS Teachers with permanent status that are working in pilot, in district that not required, or innovation schools in good evaluation standard, have always been able to excess themselves by submitting Attachment #2 of HRS-HR-7 by February 1st. In the previous contract, permanent teachers in what I will call ‘traditional’ schools, could only voluntarily excess themselves if there was a reduction in their PPA (which can still be done as I outlined in paragraph 3 above). Now, this PTPP process allows teachers in ‘traditional’ schools to have more flexibility in leaving their schools. It also gives the schools’ personnel subcommittee of the School Site Councils more flexibility in hiring in whom they determine to be the best from all of the eligible applicants who applied rather than the principal being the sole determinant of who is selected from those who bid as was previously the case in the excess pool process. The new contract mandates that all positions filled during a given school year, September through the end of June, must be vetted and selected through the SSCO personnel subcommittee. Under the previous contract, only the teacher candidate was required to go through this process. All other positions could previously be filled through the Principal’s discretion only. This new mandate gives much more ownership and transparency to the whole school community in the process. School Site Councils are an important aspect of our schools and we should all be involved.

When do we have to submit final grades and marks for the academic year?

Contracts are an important aspect of our schools and we should all be involved.

What is the PTPP process for excess teacher bargaining unit members?

The relatively newly negotiated process is called the Post Transfer Placement Process (PTPP). It occurs after the resolution of the piggy-backing process. If the excess pools were previously held. The PTPP process replaced the excess pools and took place for the 0/16 spring semester.

There will be an information/practice session reviewing the PTPP process (once the date in June is set by OHC at the BTU). All of the teachers/bargaining unit members still will be excessed will be welcome. This session will be run jointly with the BTU and HPS Office of Human Capital in order to familiarize folks with the process prior to their participation in the actual PTPP process.

As has been previously the case, involuntary excessing from a school is first by voluntaries within a Primary Program Area then by reversal of a PPA in a Primary Program Area. In order to voluntarily apply to excess oneself when there is going to be a reduction in positions) in a given PPA at a school, the employee must review Attachment #2 by February 1st (Application for Reassignment) in Superintendent’s Circular 001 “PSD-HRC-7 - Human Resource Services Appointment and Hiring For School Year 2013-14.” This process is consistent with our previous contract.

To be eligible to participate in the Post Transfer Placement Process by voluntarily excessing oneself, teachers must be permanent in BPS (have Professional Teacher Status - PTS); have not received an overall evaluation rating of “Needs Improvement” or “Unsatisfactory” as of February 1st; have not voluntarily excessed oneself more than once in the prior two school years; and there are no more than 20% of the teachers in a school voluntarily excessing themselves in any one school year. This 20% does not include senior teachers who voluntarily excess themselves by February 1st; the ones with more seniority are able to voluntarily excess against the 20% cap is excessed and allowed to excess by February 1st. All permanent teachers who were involuntarily excessed and all who excess themselves who do not successfully obtain a position in the transfer process list participate in the Post Transfer Placement Process. Unlike the excess pools where excessed teachers went in person to a meeting or “pool” according to their Pre-primary Program Area (PPA) they did in position in seniority order, the PTPP is done on-line similar to the transfer process. All eligible vacancies will be posted online at BPS through the BPS Career Center during the PTPP. All excessed teachers must then apply to five vacancies if there five or more, and three vacancies in their Primary Program Area. If there are less than five vacancies in a given PPA, an excessed permanent teacher must apply to all listed vacancies in their PPA. All recommendations must be submitted by the 15th of February to the Career Center. The PTPP has concluded when all positions for which qualified teachers have submitted expressions of interest have been filled; no position shall be left unfilled if a qualified teacher has submitted an expression of interest in that position and was unsuccessful in obtaining other positions. Vacancies will continue to be filled until late August, at which time teachers who are not matched against vacancies will be assigned in a seniority/Professional capacity by the Office of Human Capital.

BPS Teachers with permanent status that are working in pilot, in district that not required, or innovation schools in good evaluation standard, have always been able to excess themselves by submitting Attachment #2 of HRS-HR-7 by February 1st. In the previous contract, permanent teachers in what I will call ‘traditional’ schools, could only voluntarily excess themselves if there was a reduction in their PPA (which can still be done as I outlined in paragraph 3 above). Now, this PTPP process allows teachers in ‘traditional’ schools to have more flexibility in leaving their schools. It also gives the schools’ personnel subcommittee of the School Site Councils more flexibility in hiring in whom they determine to be the best from all of the eligible applicants who applied rather than the principal being the sole determinant of who is selected from those who bid as was previously the case in the excess pool process. The new contract mandates that all positions filled during a given school year, September through the end of June, must be vetted and selected through the SSCO personnel subcommittee. Under the previous contract, only the teacher candidate was required to go through this process. All other positions could previously be filled through the Principal’s discretion only. This new mandate gives much more ownership and transparency to the whole school community in the process. School Site Councils are an important aspect of our schools and we should all be involved.

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 of teachers until May 1st for Grades 1, 5 and 15 days before the close of school for all other grades.” In Middle Schools, ‘Final marks shall not be required of any teacher before May 1st for Grades 6 and 7; and 15 days before the close of school for Grades 6 and 7.” In High Schools, ‘The number of marking periods for all schools shall not exceed five (5) in a school year. Final marks shall be required of any teacher before May 1st for Grades 9 and 10, and 15 days before the close of school for other students. Grades for all high school and Latin summer school students shall be recorded by the data processing method and no teacher shall be required to record numerical grades on duplicate records at the school.”

Do performing arts teachers get compensated for putting on productions?

We itemized in the contract does not provide for compensation if it meets the following parameters. "Effective September 1, 2005, performing arts teachers, including theater, music, dance, drama, and choral group teachers, who conduct regular after school rehearsals and practice culminating in final productions and/or festivals shall be compensated for such after school time with a stipend of $1,500.00 per year. This money comes from each individual school’s budget. Please discuss this with your administration and document rehearsals, etc. in order to qualify for the stipend.

Are we entitled to time for cancer screening?

Yes, there is a Superintendent’s Circular “HR’S-P-P11 - Leave for Cancer Screening and/or Living Organ Donation” which states that the BPS Management and the Executive Order allow all city employees to use four (4) hours of leave per calendar year for various types of cancer screening including breast, prostate, colon, skin, thyroid, oral cavity, lymph nodes, reproductive organs, and lungs. The procedure dictates that employees are allowed one (1) four (4) hour period that can’t be broken into hourly units. It requires that they must make their leave request through their respective center manager(s) principal(s) and then provide them a signed copy of a medical document verifying the date that the employee was given a cancer screening. For attendance reporting purposes, code S1200 to report time taken under this provision must be used. This cancer screening leave time is not charged to any accumulated sick time. All questions concerning this circular should be made to Deborah Pullen in BPS Office of Human Capital. At 617-635-9649.

Ongoing issues and questions regarding the inequitable implementation of the evaluation and elimination process, and the inclusion of educators rated Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory ranges from 300 – 400. This presents a great deal of pressure for these members. Inconsistency from school to school and sometimes within a school present a challenge for the BTU and its members. This year, those issues have gained more attention and consistency and will be scheduled for arbitration. No quick resolution to this issue is expected.

Boston Union Teacher is published eleven times a year September - July, inclusive.

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Editorial Note:
The opinions expressed in the Boston Union Teacher do not necessarily represent the views of the Boston Union Teacher, or those of its members.

When writing:
All correspondence to the Boston Union Teacher must be typed and include the author’s name and school or department if not school-based.
All articles must be appropriate to the publication, and school or department if not school-based.
Letters to the Editor should be sent to letters@btu.org.

Deadline:
The deadline for submitting articles for the September issue of the Boston Union Teacher is May 15th.
All copy should be e-mailed to mcLaughlin@mtpconnolly.com
This deadline will be strictly adhered to.

180 Mount Vernon Street | Boston, MA 02125
In her first conference as BTU Paraprofessional Field Rep, Josefina Lescano kept her remarks brief so as to spend more time on workshops. “People came here to learn from the workshops, not to listen to me talk,” Josefina said deferentially. But in her remarks she gave great thanks and praise to all those who made the conference possible, from the AFT-MA to the BTU leadership, from her own BTU para council to her office secretary, Patty O’Donnell.

The conference began with about 160 attendees splitting up into three workshops: Stress management, dual language, and navigating the BPS. All attendees rotated through the workshops in small groups which allowed for Q&A.

The unifying theme of this workshop was how to help paraprofessionals be successful at what they do. The workshop on the BPS helped paras navigate the HUB, MyLearningPlan and other aspects of the school system especially regarding PDPs. The stress workshop helped paras cope with the pressures of their jobs and lives. The dual language classroom workshop highlighted how paras can be an asset to a school’s success.

The conference ended with a Zumba class and then a luncheon.
A Stress-Free Para Conference
by Sharon O’Dwyer

On April 5, 2014 the 28th Annual State Para Conference was held at the Boston Teachers Union hall. Over 150 paras from across the state attended.

This year the theme was “Para Strong.” There were three different workshops offered to help paras implement and improve their daily lives.

1) Stress Management
2) The Role of Paraprofessionals in a Dual Language Classroom
3) Navigating through BPS (computer training)

This year the theme was “Para Strong.” There were three different workshops offered to help paras implement and improve their daily lives.

Among the highlights of the three workshops were:

1. Stress Management: All sessions ended with a brief relaxation exercise.
2. The Role of Paraprofessionals in a Dual Language Classroom: The presentation highlighted the Dual Language program that exists at the Sara Greenwood School where she has worked for the past 16 years focusing on the para role in a Dual Language setting. The Sara Greenwood’s focus is to get all students to be bi-lingual, bi-literate, and bi-cultural. Topics such as creating a classroom team, para guided reading groups, Writers’ Workshops in Spanish, Conferencing, training and the important role of a para in the Dual Language program. After an interesting question and answer session paras moved onto their next workshop.
3. Navigating through BPS was held in the Conference Room and was led by Christine Buttiglieri and Cachuta Samuel, both of whom are on the Para Council at the ITU.

Jenna (sp) in an open mind that attended this workshop before we broke for lunch was “ZUMBA - Dancing your Stress Away” led by Kathleen Dortch. Kathleen has been a 2nd to 4th grade K-1 teacher at the Marie Umana Academy for two years. She is certified to teach ZUMBA and was certified in ZUMBA Kids last February. She teaches ZUMBA to her students to get them moving and to build their self-esteem. Teaching ZUMBA is her way of spreading joy and positivity to adult and kids as well as helping them get in shape while they party.

This fun-filled activity was attended by all paras as a group in Hall A. It was a great way to relieve stress, exercise and a great Para Conference. Once again the paras were treated to a delicious turkey dinner, dessert and refreshments. It was an interesting, informative, stress-free conference.

Thank you to all who attended and led the workshops.

Jenna O’Dwyer is a paraprofessional at the Condon School and serves on the Para Council.

An Evening of Celebration

John P. Holland Elementary

SAVE THE DATE

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.

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: screen captures, a copy of another artist’s photos, a replicated 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 use @YLPContest adding a brief description containing the hashtag YLPC-Theme.

Step 3. Get retweets of your original photo.
Youth Lens Photo Contest will contact the winners at the end of the Contest to have the photographer’s photo in a contest concert form allowing us to display your photo.

Winners will be announced via @YLPContest.

Questions?
Contact youthlensproject@gmail.com

BOSTON UNION TEACHER May, 2014
Mr. Owens went to school nights in order to obtain his teaching degree before giving up a high-paying publishing job. He traded a Manhattan skyscraper for a dilapidated school building in the South Bronx. Mr. Owens worked for one year at a school he calls Latinate (not the real name of the school). Latinate is a school often praised by education reformers for improving education.

Highly recognized, good teachers are receiving poor evaluations because of a grossly flawed value-added algorithm that should be changed, seven Houston teachers and the Houston Federation of Teachers said May 2. The lawsuit is an unprecedented lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas.

The lawsuit details numerous problems with the Houston Independent School District’s Education Value-Added Assessment System, or EV AAS. Its statistical methodology is considered proprietary and yet it is a “black box” system in which the numbers game,” says AFT President Randi Weingarten. “Testing isn’t aligned with the methodology for decisions about the student to the teacher.

News from the American Federation of Teachers

Houston teachers, union file suit over evaluation system

The responsibility for each student's learning [has] now shifted from the student to the teacher.

"The testing obsession has turned kids into a child’s ability to answer questions on a test, instead of teaching or learning at all, " explains Van Dulmen. "It is the best and who needs to go. Weingarten says the real culprit is school districts’ fixation on testing, noting none of the teachers could lose.

In the war for control of public dollars, the reformers’ stratagem is to drive a wedge (i.e. school and/or teacher ratings) between teachers and parents. After all, what parent doesn’t want “the best teacher” for their child? Today’s reformers tell us only that one can judge who is the best and who needs to go.

Confessions of a Bad Teacher peppers anecdotes with recent and relevant statistical data complete with sources to support his arguments.

"EV AAS is driving out great Houston teachers because they’d rather work in a place that respects teachers. Everybody can do better, “ says Santos.

Andy Dewey, another plaintiff, is a history teacher at Carnegie Vanguard High School who developed the curriculum for two history texts that have been adopted state-wide by his administrators. “Houston’s evaluation system is sold as a system to support and strengthen teaching, but it’s actually a bait and switch sham that’s weakening instruction and not helping teaching or learning at all,” Dewey says. “Teachers are told their scores are low but are not given information about what they did right or did not cause to their stu-"
RTC Executive Board Minutes: March 3, 2014

NATIONAL WEEK OF ACTION

Fulfilling the Promise of Brown v. Board: Organizing for Racial, Educational & Economic Justice For All

SATURDAY, MAY 17

To mark the 50th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education, parents, students, educators, and labor and community organizations are organizing actions across the country to continue the struggle for racial and educational justice and win the public schools all our children deserve.

10 AM Rally and Speeches
11 AM Community Canvas
WHERE Salvation Army Kroc Ctr.
650 Dudley St.
Boston

We demand:

- Full funding & support for quality community schools in every neighborhood; Don’t close or privatize them
- More teaching, less testing
- Positive discipline policies & an end to zero tolerance
- Quality affordable education from early childhood through college, including for undocumented students
- Raise the minimum wage and index it to inflation

www.reclaimpublicednow.org

Co-Sponsoring Organizations

- Boston Youth Organizing Project
- AFT Massachusetts
- Boston Teachers Union
- Lawrence Teachers Union
- Massachusetts AFL-CIO
- Greater Boston Central Labor Council
- Massachusetts Jobs with Justice
- Massachusetts Interfaith Worker Justice
- Boston Student Advisory Council
- Lynn Teachers Union
- United Teachers of Lowell
- Community Labor United
- Fair Test
- Citizens for Public Schools
- Massachusetts Communities Action Network
- Mass Unitig
- Union of Minority Neighborhood's Boston Busing Desegregation Project
- ACLU Massachusetts
- Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice
- Better Future Project
- Merrimack Valley Central Labor Council

For more information, contact info@reclaimpublicednow.org

Members present: Annie-Marie Adduci, Anne Broder, Marie Broderick, Sandy Carle, Marcie Cabrall, L.J. Connolly, Martha Cotton, David Donovan, Chairman, Donna Cosley-Hilton, Ruthanne Kennedy, Marilyn Marion, Secretary, Leonard Miraglia, Vice Chairman, Mary Jo Murphy, and Paul Temney.

Excused: Linda McNamara

Chairman opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Lanny Connolly requested a special order of business prior to the meeting. This order was to review COLA with the Retirement Board representative from the BTU, Michael McLaughlin.

The request was granted and the meeting was suspended.

Issues and discussion raised with regard to COLA were:

- Other systems have a higher COLA rate than Boston — for example Lowell at $15,000 vs. Boston at $13,000
- How can we get other unions to join us?
- What alliances can be made?
- Should we speak to City Councillors?
- The Mayor?
- The meeting with the Retirement Board representative ended at 10:20 a.m.

The RTC meeting was opened at 10:20 a.m.

Chairman: Annie-Marie Adduci, Members present: Members: Larry Connolly, Mary Jo Murphy, Paul Tenney, Mary Cahalane, Larry Connolly, Martha Cotton, David Donovan, Chairman, Donna Cosley-Hilton, Ruthanne Kennedy, Marilyn Marion, Secretary, Leonard Miraglia, Vice Chairman, Mary Jo Murphy, and Paul Temney.

Remembrance: The Chairman reported that the members were deceased. Report Accepted.

Scholarship: Chairman had questions about the method of sending out scholarship packets. Report Accepted.

Travel: Travel plans are in play for another successful year. Plans were developed on January 28th for 2014. We will e-mail or Tours at a Glance (February) March Trips will encompass day and overnight journeys as in the past. We will be looking forward to another great year.

Legislative: Committee sent letters by hand delivery to the City Councillors regarding the COLA increase. No one has responded. The Chairs of the Legislative Committee noted that the increase in the dental has not been deducted from the members' checks for the past two months. They proposed the following motion:

A letter from the Chairman should be sent to the City Benefits Department to remind them that the dental increase has not been deducted. It was also noted that the letter should be sent via USPS with signature receipt requested. Report Accepted

Data Processing: All is going well as they continue to work with the City to make sure their members are consistent with ours. Report Accepted.

Membership: We have 3,000 members. Report Accepted.

Old Business: An agenda was created for the April 10th business meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn F. Marion, Secretary
The McKinley South End Academy is an alternative school for 178 middle and high school students with severe behavioral challenges. BTU representative David Russell invited me to visit, gave up his planning period to be my guide through the school, and met with his colleagues to select photos for publication. I felt truly welcomed by everyone and appreciated the opportunity to showcase the learning that goes on in a school that many know only as a “dumping ground” for some of our neediest children.

We watched math teacher John Brenner move around his classroom, checking in with each of his tenth graders as they tackled the day’s assignment. We listened to a young woman talk about what she had learned about Angela Davis in Michael Scott’s English class, where seniors had just completed research projects and were sharing their reports with classmates. In another ELA class, Laura Battaglia was reading 12 Years a Slave aloud while students read along, later discussing this powerful narrative.

In art classes student work was individualized... one person working with clay, another doing a portrait, and still another decorating a sneaker. As we watched a young man wielding a power drill as he worked on constructing a table, teacher Steve Lane told me he has the only woodworking shop left in the Boston Public Schools outside of Madison Park’s vocational program. At a Career Fair set up in the gym, students immediately gravitated to the DJ and his equipment; then slowly fanned out to talk with representatives from a variety of other possible occupations.

Lining a hallway wall were “Favorite Passages” from the inaugural speeches given by people such as Nelson Mandela and Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, with students’ reasons for their selections. In one class I noticed a list of “Quotes of the Week” posted on the wall, including Lady Gaga’s comment: “Trust is like a mirror that’s broken; you can fix it, but you’ll always see the cracks in the reflection.” I could only imagine the conversation that one inspired!

I especially enjoyed spending a bit of time outside on this beautiful spring day with David’s fifth and sixth graders, who were working in their garden area with science teacher Callia Baraheh and Carmine Leighton from the nearby Haley House. Students eagerly clustered around to hold an earthworm or to look more closely at one wigging on a classmate’s palm; they were planting strawberries when I returned the following week.

A full range of academic courses, small classes, lots of adults, and a highly structured behavior management system enable the McKinley staff to address the severe emotional, behavioral and learning needs of their students. It was a pleasure to visit and I hope you’ll invite me to share what’s happening at YOUR school next year!

Jeffrey Sosa, Grade 10

I was solving a math problem on the white board for the class to see. I’ve learned a lot of things in this class, and right now I’m learning more about proportions.

I am looking at the worms in my friend Alex (Monteiro-Griffin)’s hand. This is during life science class. We’ve learned how energy is used in different life forms and what certain creatures eat. We’re also learning how plants grow and we’re about to plant strawberries in our garden.

I am reading a book that I really enjoy because it connects to my life. I’m learning how to figure out percents, fractions and decimals. I like it here a lot because the teachers help me focus and not let things block me from reaching my goals.

This is in English class with Mr. Scott, who was standing with me for support. I was explaining the rights that Angela Davis had that a lot of Black people back in the ‘90s didn’t have. She was a member of the Black Panther movement, I chose to study her life because I am interested in the history of Black women – and I like her Afro! I’ve also learned about how people fought against and survived slavery in this country.

Zane Hamilton, Grade 5

Mr. Brenner is helping me with my math. We just started learning how to factor quadratic equations. In this picture I’m finding the x-intercepts, where the parabola crosses the x-axis.

Alex Dossantos, Grade 10

We were talking with the DJ at the Career Fair. We learned that he goes to a lot of concerts and has met all our favorite rappers. We also learned about the tools used by carpenters and that the clothing designer creates logos, too.

Students in Ms. Brokaw, Mr. Harvey & Mr. Carnathan’s class, Grades 7/8

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<tr>
<th>Amika Kemmler Ernst, Ed. D.</th>
<th><a href="mailto:Amika45@comcast.net">Amika45@comcast.net</a></th>
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