The New CBA Brings Both Opportunity and Challenge

By Richard Stutman
BTU President

As this is written, the school committee and the Boston Teachers Union have each ratified the collective bargaining agreement. From here the matter goes to the mayor for approval and the city council for a vote. No speed bumps are anticipated, and we ought to get the green light in early November to begin our next four years with a contract that all parties are reasonably satisfied with, a contract that provides a career pathway for our members, and with the school department, the establishment of an alternative academic lane credit that will augment, not replace, the current in-service program. These new credits, called Alternative Lane Credits, can be used interchangeably with graduate credits and in-service credits for academic lane advancement.

Another good addition is the establishment of a Common Professional Day for all specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers. This joint activity has long been a request from our specialty and specialty teachers.
Teachers Speak Out about the New Teacher Evaluation Process

By Lillie Marshall

On Tuesday, October 23, 2012, Teach Plus and the Boston Teachers Union hosted the first in a series of “Share” events. These events bring together policymakers and teachers to discuss and take action on current education issues. During this first event, BTU president Richard Stutman and teacher president Garret Virchick met with the BTU leadership for the first time.

The program began at 5pm by using interactive clickers for all members to help teachers to feel more supported and be explicitly linked to student performance. The next teacher, Mr. Stutman, shared ways to meet the needs of teachers.

The event concluded with a conversation over light refreshments with President Stutman and several other BTU members.

The next “Share” event with BTU President Stutman will be December 4th, and registration and details will be available at www.teachplus.org on the “Events” tab shortly. Do come if you can, and spread the word.

Lillie Marshall teaches Humanities at Boston Latin Academy.

Our success as teachers is also dependent on the administrative support or lack of support around school culture. Is it a school where students feel heard, respected by their staff and students are encouraged? Or is it a school where fear and mandate are used as instruments of control.

Whether or not we succeed as teachers can be determined by the classroom we are given. Is it large enough for the number of students we are assigned? Can we be considered and maintained? Do we even get a classroom, or will we be a teacher on a cart carrying material from room to room to classroom in the few minutes between hills? Always just a disorganized when arriving to our next class at the students are already there.

Our success as teachers is also determined by so many factors that are out of the control of the teacher and even the school it is in.

But my success as a teacher is not simply determined by my individual practice. In 26 years of urban education I have never been provided the resources that a science teacher should. How can we consider this to be minimal? Some schools have provided more. Some schools have provided nothing.

Our success as teachers is also dependent on the administrative support. Our success as teachers is also dependent on the administrative support or lack of support around school culture.
When Can a School Site Council (SSC) Meeting be Called? What Constitutes a Quorum? Who Sets the Agenda, Where are the Minutes and Is There Any Training?

The School Site Council is the central governing body of the school under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education. Its decision-making model is contract-stipulated; “Elections for new SSC members shall be conducted as early in the school year as possible, and a first meeting of the SSC shall be held no later than October 31.” At the first meeting of the newly elected SSC, a monthly calendar shall be agreed upon by the SSC members and posted at each school location, and be made public through distribution to all staff and parents. Any change to this calendar must be approved by the SSC with at least one week’s notice to all staff and parents. SSC meetings should be at times convenient for all members. Times of the meetings may alternate to meet this goal.

The BTU & BPS have set the following dates for SSC training that all elected SSC members shall be held no later than October 31:

- **SSC 101 – SSC Intro overview; November 27 & repeated December 4:** 5-7; refreshments.
- **SSC 102 – Budget Basics; November 27 & repeated December 4:** 5-7; refreshments.
- **SSC 103 – Building Consensus; December 13:** 5-7; refreshments.

What is “Solution-Driven Unionism?”

A FT President Randi Weingarten launched her new initiative of “solution-driven unionism” at this July’s AFT national convention. It is a redefinition of unionism, according to Weingarten, that advances solutions focused on uniting union members, the people they serve and the communities they call home. “This is not about vocating this initiative, Weingarten stated, “We need to act in innovative, creative and new ways – simultaneously refitting our critics, advancing our values, connecting with community & proposing solutions. That’s solution-driven unionism.”

The bylaws of the SSC are required to pass bylaws to govern the SSC. The bylaws may also include provisions that address the following: what subcommittees will be established in addition to the Personnel Subcommittee; if a portion of each meeting is set aside for public comment by individuals in attendance who come to a parent meeting for which they are not SSC members, then the SSC will inform the wider school community of its decisions and activities; where minutes will be posted and distributed; what the process is for amending the bylaws.

How are student members selected to serve on high school SSC’s?

Student members of School Site Councils at the high school level must be elected by the entire student body. The entire student body is to meet the quorum requirements. Under this provision of the law, there should be no reason for the SSC to go into executive session. A quorum is constituted by the presence of the Principal, at least two teachers and two parents for Councils with 9 – 12 voting members; at least three teachers and three parents for Councils with 13 or more voting members. The SSC bylaws must include the procedures for SSC’s determined? Chairs may be the Principal and one other voting member of the SSC. SSC’s may have Co-Chairs comprised of two voting members of the SSC. SSC’s may establish alternating Co-Chairs. The Co-Chair for the current year must be a voting member elected by the Council. A quorum of members must be present to conduct SSC business, make decisions, and take action. Without a quorum, it is just another meeting as no decisions may be rendered; only discussed. A quorum is constituted by the presence of the Principal, at least two teachers and two parents for Councils with 9 – 12 voting members; at least three teachers and three parents for Councils with 13 or more voting members.

Agendas for Meetings are set by the SSC members. Items for the agenda can be submitted by members of the SSC and school community at large to a SSC Co-Chair to be included on the agenda, as long as the items fall within the scope of SSC’s purpose. Minutes of SSC meetings should include the agenda, date, time, location, members present or absent, and actions taken (if quorum existed). The BTU contract details, “A notice of all actions taken by the SSC will be distributed to all BTU Building Representatives and the President of the Faculty Senate within five school days following a council meeting. Minutes can be amended at the following SSC for corrections as a group if needed, not reviewed/approved by all members of the SSC prior to posting. Minutes should also be distributed/ posted on the BTU bulletin board in each school. In order for SSC’s to work and function, it must be inclusionary and communicative to all members of the school community. The contract states, “All available information concerning the school budget and other matters will be distributed to all SSC members.” Any action by the SSC has authority must be shared with members of the SSC at least five school days before they are to act upon such actions. Administrators should not call a last minute meeting and expect members to sign off on these matters without this process through the SSC. The School Site Council determines most of its own operating procedures through the adoption of SSC bylaws. Each SSC is required to pass bylaws to govern its Representative(s). These bylaws are then approved by two-thirds of the BTU members in the school and by two-thirds of the parents who comes to a parent meeting for which there must be at least two weeks’ notice. The SSC bylaws are the tool that includes the following operational procedures for how elections will be organized and conducted; when meetings will be held; the notice procedures for the announcement of meetings; who is responsible for co-chairing the SSC with the Principal and for recording minutes; what the system is for selecting alternates who have the same racial identity as the members they would be representing; the terms of office and how they will be staggered; and what the salary is in regards to members who fail to regularly attend.

The bylaws may also include provisions that address the following: what subcommittees will be established in addition to the Personnel Subcommittee; if a portion of each meeting is set aside for public comment by individuals in attendance who come to a parent meeting for which they are not SSC members, then the SSC will inform the wider school community of its decisions and activities; where minutes will be posted and distributed; what the process is for amending the bylaws.

Who are the people coming into my classroom?

The contract states that, “All visitors to a classroom shall knock on the door and, if invited in, the teacher, will direct them.” This is significant in that it means that you, as the teacher in the classroom have the right and duty to request the person entering your class to identify who they are and what organization they represent. If they are an administrator in the BPS, an elected official, or a member of the Department of Education, we must let them enter. If, however, they are an intern with a University, a parent unannounced, or some other random individual, we do not have to allow them entrance. It is not just your right to ask who they are, but in this day and age it is a matter of safety for that we request their identification. If we do not request this, they are not obligated to tell us. If something unusual occurs, and we see who was the person who entered and our response is, that we don’t know, we just let them unimpeded, then we are allowing ourselves and more importantly, our children to be vulnerable to anyone who makes their way into the school. People who are not BPS employees, elected officials, or DOE employees, do not have a right into our classrooms without our expressed permission. Asking who they are as they enter gives them our tacit permission to do so.
Building Representatives Conference

By Michael J. Maguire

The 2012 Building Reps’ conference was held the weekend of October 19-21 at the Dedham Hilton. Although the conference is tailored to meet the needs of union reps in the schools, many non-reps attend the annual conference in order to better understand the function of the union and to better participate.

President Richard Stutman gave the opening remarks. A fair rendering of it can be found on page one of this newspaper. VP Patrick Connolly discussed the new state performance evaluation. His remarks are captured in his article on page 6.

Throughout most of the conference classroom teachers gave and participated in various workshops. Below is a summary of many of the sessions:

The Role of the Building Rep, presented by Caren Carew

The breakout session exploring the role of the BTU Building Rep was designed to meet participants at their level of expertise and to address issues, concerns, and provide information through having interactive discussion in order to best meet their expressed needs. Basics of the role were reviewed as well as techniques for representing colleagues in disciplinary meetings, conducting elections, dealing constructively with administration, filling grievances, organizing members, defining union issues, and the like. Redefining ourselves as colleagues in this role wearing different hats in the school community was also explored and discussed.

Building Reps are advocates and represent their colleagues, and also are responsible for fulfilling their role as teacher, para, nurse, etc in the school. Differentiating these roles is important to establish so that boundaries are in place and that the BTU Rep also has the support of their colleagues when working together as a community to assist in making the school community stronger.

Being a BTU Rep means having a key role in organizing, communicating, and educating. Being a bridge to various components of the whole, make us all more connected. Strategies for accomplishing this are an ongoing challenge that made for good conversation and great company. BTUnity!

The Paraprofessional Reps Roundtable, presented by Jenna Fitzgerald

The new reps were impressed with the information shared. We discussed how Paras were admitted to the BTU in 1972, and the Substitutes’ first contract was, May11,1983. Paras employed after March 31, 1986 pay into Medicare and are eligible to receive Medicare at age 65 but must first check in with their SS Office. All paras are encouraged to take the Retirement seminar offered by Michael McLaughlin here at the BTU before age 65 so they are fully informed of retirement benefits.

Substitute teachers are eligible for the Health and Welfare benefits that the paraprofessionals receive, which includes dental, eye care, and bereavement days.

School Site Council, presented by Caren Carew

The interactive organizing session focused on School Site Councils presented BTU Reps with opportunities to pose their own questions relative to SSCs and find the answers through exploring the SSC manual, conferring with other participants, and in participating in the overview provided through power point and discussion. The School Site Council is the central governing body of the school under the school-based management/shared decision making model.

As such it encompasses a variety of aspects including reviewing the WISP, approval of discretionary materials, reviewing & approving recommendations put forth by ILT and other committees that will have a major affect on the school community, to receive info about all outside programs or professionals that come into the school, to review & comment on the school budget, to form a personnel subcommittee to interview people applying to the school, to vote on waivers to the contract and the like. This is to be accomplished through the consensus model of decision making which will strengthen commitment & promote ownership of the general agreement because through this process, opinions are valued rather than ending up as decisions made through divisions of ‘winners’ and ‘losers’.

New contract language expanding the use of the personnel subcommittee, the role of parents & students were also highlighted as implementing components of solution-driven unionism. Participation in ongoing SSC training was encouraged.

Bridgebuilding: Intergenerational Dialogue, presented by Jessica Tang and Allison Doherty

This workshop was designed to facilitate a conversation between educators who are newer to the profession and veteran educators, to build relationships, align values of unionism and encourage solidarity within the Boston Teachers Union. Through this workshop, we discovered that the values of what educators want from our union and how we view activism is similar across the generations. We began to share stories and perspectives to better understand each others’ experiences and points of view and to unpack misconceptions. It was a great start to a very important conversation that we will continue to have.
Addressing the Corporate Reform Agenda, presented by Riana Good and Jessica Tang

While private sector corporations, banks, and charter schools are increasingly deregulated, individuals are increasingly regulated through test scores, surveillance, etc. This extends to public schools, where the adaptation of business models has used standardization, competition, and incentives to result in the expansion of charter schools, increase in testing, and school closures. As a result, unions have been weakened.

After a presentation, we discussed the following questions: Why have unions moved from resistance to compromise to collaboration with the corporate reform agenda? How can we ensure that charter schools are more regulated? What messages and information do we need to disseminate to put the ‘public’ back in public education?

Taking Action, presented by Angela Cristiani and Michael J. Maguire

This workshop focused on how to take the union’s message to the people via social media. Michael demonstrated how participating in the comment sections of the online newspapers can shape the public debate. Teachers are the foremost experts on education yet are nearly invisible from new stories and articles dealing with education reform. Michael explained how simply click “approve” or “disapprove” to a story can influence future publications. “There are six thousand of us (in the BTU), we should have six thousand comments a day on articles that discuss our jobs,” Maguire said.

Angela not only discussed how Twitter works, she even signed up teachers with their own Twitter accounts. Angela explained the dos and don'ts of tweeting, including “social” etiquette. “Twitter is a powerful tool,” Angela said. “The (newspaper) reports follow twitter closely for leads.” Angela encouraged all to start off by following select, established accounts, and then to branch out from there at one’s comfort level.

Boston Green Academy Historically Black College and University Tour

In October of 2012, Boston Green Academy facilitated its first annual Historically Black College and University tour, which enabled thirty students to visit five universities in the southeastern region of the United States of America. Students attended information sessions, toured campuses, observed classes, spoke with professors, and ate in dining halls.

Approximately, 83% of participants are first-generation college students. Faculty members, community members, and students raised over $10,000 to fund this trip.

– Julian A. McNeil, Mathematics Team Facilitator, Boston Green Academy
were told by the administrator in the room not to worry. It would not be used against us in evaluation. We were incredulous because we thought we were doing this as part of the evaluation process.

“My personal goal of building a learning community in my classroom was rejected. I was told to focus on assessment. After I went back to my classroom, I discussed with the school's co-teachers that multiple forms of assessment to improve student learning was rejected again because I did not put a hard number on how much improvement on the test I would be making. The administrator (who is not a science teacher) suggested I aim for 70% mastery on test. My co-teacher co-reported that the average score on the district test was 45% and that the support person assigned to our school thought that given the lack of administrative support (no supply budget) that we would be hard pressed to improve scores by 10%. It's been five days and I still haven't written a new plan.

The fear and loathing around how this has been rolled out in too many places is evident. From a young teacher, “It's a way to drive veteran teachers out of the system. It's the only way they can attack and eventually eliminate tenure... From others, “It's a joke...all they want is %'s in your report...”

“Garret—I'm loving the new evaluation system, and I think it is a big change that administrators and teacher-leaders should be supporting staff with. We have tried to provide a lot of support to this effort (at our school). I'm also excited about the provisions that we have been given to often one-way (evaluator giving feedback to), but in this case, the evaluator has voice from the start in the self-assessment and goal-setting process.”

“If you want to discuss, I would love to highlight stories of staff getting support with the process because I feel sad and angry when I hear about schools where administrators just send an email saying, “Remember the deadline” and don’t provide any support or guidance. I know I shouldn't blame them though because some of them probably don't have ideas for how to provide the support...”

All members of New Teacher Evaluation...
We’re Learning Here
A project by Amika Kemmler Ernst, Ed.D.

Charlestown High School
(Charlestown High School (CHS) is a sprawling complex, serving nearly 1,000 students. Assistant Headmaster “TC” gave me a quick orientation to the building and a handy list of staff with room numbers. I was happy to see “Welcome back” greetings posted at the entrance and in the main stairways. Large buildings can be intimidating and impersonal without such friendly messages. I was also pleased to see attention given to social-emotional dynamics within the academic subjects.

CHS has two programs for recent immigrants, native speakers of Spanish and Chinese. Intensive ESL classes were in session, with students practicing greetings, finding the names of classroom objects, and learning a sentence pattern for comparing and contrasting human characteristics.

As in every school I’ve visited over the past three years, there was a lot of learning going on throughout the building. In a class that was analyzing text, I wondered what “rhetorical triangles” were – check out the photos for an explanation in the students’ world! A humanities teacher showed a short video to spark discussion of stereotypes about Muslims, while a class of students learning Arabic read the beautiful script and worked on their pronunciation.

In one small math class, students were manipulating negative numbers, explaining their problem-solving process to classmates. Art students were learning how to use a rubric to self-assess their work. When I first stopped by Rich Fox’s forensic science class, there was a sign on the door saying that they were outside investigating a (simulated) crime scene. Hands-on learning is not dead!

I was intrigued by the “Fences” project in one class, inspired by August Wilson’s play about the African American experience of the 1950s. Students were responding to the following prompt: “If you were to build a fence around your life, what would you put inside of it and what would you want outside?” Using cut paper, many had created 3-dimensional fences. This could have been an art, history, theater or language class, and I appreciated the teacher’s interdisciplinary approach. The lesson clearly engaged students’ interest, fostered complex thinking, and involved their spatial intelligence in developing symbols to represent the things they value.

Charlestown High offers a wide range of programs, from Advanced Placement to support for those in danger of dropping out; amid ongoing construction, teachers and students remained fully focused on learning. Since most of my own teaching experience has been with K-8 students, I am always impressed by the variety and depth of high school coursework – and by how articulate most students are at explaining their work. Invite me to visit YOUR school this year!

We were in English class with Mr. Halfhide, looking at song lyrics with a “rhetorical triangle.” We’re learning how to pick out main points, purpose, audience, and tone in many forms of writing. – Tyneriah Smith & Tykihya Greene

We were in Advanced Algebra class with Mr. Sanders. We were figuring out slopes and learning how to solve for the y intercept. – Freddy Oliveira, Israel Vasquez & Tyler Williams

We were looking for vocabulary words around the room. Our ESL teacher, Mr. Day, is helping us. In this class we are learning to understand, read, write, and speak in English. – Yi hu Li, Yong Yu Tan, & Xiua Li

This was in U.S. History with Mr. Mahegan. We were working together as a team, doing an activity about slavery. We’ve learned that not everyone had equal rights in the 1800s. We’ve also learned that the President and Congress each had different plans for reconstruction after the Civil War, when all the southern states had to write new constitutions. – Dhana Cantwove Ferosa Lawrence & Tevin Herman

I am making a collage about my favorite things (cars!) with pictures cut out of a magazine. In class we are learning about the flags of countries for Hispanic Heritage month. – Jose Teixeira

Performance Evaluation: Implementation and Issues…
(continued from page 6)

The student work. Evidence must be provided for all standards and goals. Progress on goals and ratings on the four standards will determine the educator’s overall rating. The four ratings are Exemplary, Proficient, Needs Improvement, and Unsatisfactory. Each educator should take advantage of workshops offered by the BPS on My Learning Plan and workshops offered by the BTU in the E-Bulletin to assist in working their way through the new evaluation system. The BTU has provided a copy of the state contract language that has been adopted in the new Collective Bargaining Agreement to Building Representatives. It is also available by going to the E-Bulletin. Members should become familiar with this new language so as to be better able to meet the goals of their plans. If any questions or concerns please contact Terriemoly@bteu.org.
On October 14, 2012 the Boston Teachers Union participated in the 20th annual Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walk on the Esplanade. Many teachers meet at the BTU Hall to ride the union sponsored bus, other teachers formed teams at their schools, still others walked on their own or with family and friends.

Many people have many reasons for walking in this event. The union is involved because unlike some other organizations that support only one time of research, Making Strides also funds research to find cures for all types or cancer because “discoveries in one area can often help find answers in another.”

It is difficult to estimate how much money BTU teachers raised. The union asks that those who participated and/or contributed to please contact Brenda Chaney (bchaney863@aol.com) to report how much money they raised. For whether under the BTU umbrella or not, the union would like the community to know, in dollar amounts at least, how involved we are in the welfare of our city.

If you haven’t yet donated, you still can. Either contact Brenda Chaney as noted above or log onto http://main.acsevents.org/site/TR/id-47450&pg=team&team_id=1227835

End note: