Welcome to our annual conference, and thank you for taking your weekend time to be here. We appreciate your interest in making our union stronger. We depend on you for much, and our job is to make it easier for you to do your job. We learn as much or more from you at these events as you learn from us.

This weekend will be interactive, and has been planned with the help of many of you in the audience. So, up front, I need to thank all who participated in that activity and who will be leading the conference from this point.

In particular, thank you to the B Rep regional leaders and the staff.

After my remarks, we will hear from Barbara Nadeau, the newly-elected president of the MTA, who brings a breath of fresh air, a new style and substance of leadership, as well as new ideas to teachers in Massachusetts, not just in her organization, but in ours as well.

We welcome Barbara, and we look forward to working with her to join forces so that we can become a strong voice for children, our members, and our schools. We have lost much ground in the last decade -- both legislatively and in the public domain -- and we very much need a jump start in Massachusetts as we do throughout the country. So we will welcome Barbara shortly.

Let me add here that we fought unsuccessfully a few years ago for a merger with the MTA. We thought -- and we still do -- that the only way to combat the challenges we’re facing is by doing all we can to effect that merger and unify our teachers statewide. There are but a small, but growing, handful of states that have accomplished mergers, and Massachusetts ought to join them.

There are two state teacher organizations and one set of regulations and policy that govern our practice and dictate how we work. There is one Boston Globe. There is one Boston Foundation. There ought to be one voice and one set of issues to our mutual detriment.

There is one Boston Teachers Union, AFT Mass., and one set of regulations and policy that govern our practice and dictate how we work.

A few years ago the BTU leadership tried to get our own organization, the AFTMA, to explore -- just to explore -- the potential of a merger. We went to the convention and lost that exploration vote. We were undercut by some key members of the AFTMA who held long-standing grudges and they lobbied for defeat. We will be back, and we hope that under the new leadership at the MTA, the entrenched fears held by some on both sides can get over it.

You will also hear tomorrow from John McDonough, interim superintendent of schools. John -- although we disagree on a host of issues -- has been open, cooperative, and sincere. Our disagreements are to be expected but we have a good working relationship and have one goal: improving our schools.

Throughout the weekend, there will be interactive workshops on evaluation, political action, Ed Policy. Improving Professional learning, community organizing, school site councils, environmental health and teachers’ union labor history. Each will be repeated twice before lunch today. Each will give you an opportunity to learn and develop useful skills.

After lunch, there’ll be a quick COPE drive, a workshop on how to facilitate meetings and then a series of regional breakout sessions in small groups using case studies on grievances, conflict resolution, difficult problems that are not grievances, and political action.

Tonight there’s a wonderful reception and dinner, and a movie. Tomorrow there’ll be a session where people get together by interests, then John McDonough will speak and take questions.

You’ll be home for the Patriots game unless you stop at Costco. In what will be a first for me in 32 years, I cannot stay for the duration of the conference, as my daughter has parents’ weekend at college, and as she’s a senior, we’ll be there.

By the way, she is a graduate of the BPS, and our leadership team -- as you have heard from me many times -- has had 21 children and grandchildren in the BPS. Our own daughter went to four Boston Public Schools, and got an excellent education. She learned, she flourished, she became independent. Two of her schools were level 3 schools; three were traditional, one was pilot. Those distinctions are greatly overrated. The instruction at each was high, the social skills and interactions were wonderful.

Let me also here introduce my wife, Nancy, retired from the BPS as a Speech and Language teacher after 30+ years, at the HS and middle school level as an LD teacher and a SLP.

Tomorrow, Patrick Connolly will give my wrapup.

Let me start off with some good developments in public education everywhere.

There are signs of life, signs of pushback, here and elsewhere, including with Barbara’s election.

Parents in Boston pushed back against the charter movement last spring, and their persistence, by all accounts, contributed mightily to the defeat of the charter school legislation.

We joined with the parents, alongside teachers across the state. We beat back those who thought that the expansion of charters was a foregone conclusion.

Teachers across the country are pushing back, as we are in Boston, against increased testing and phony accountability standards. Karen Lewis, head of the Chicago teachers, had been gearing up for a mayoral run against Rahm Emanuel, the national poster child for teacher bashing and privatization. Many of you know that Karen is very ill, though recovering, and will not be able to take challenge Emanuel. But the conditions that would have

continued on page 4
For the Proposed Bylaw Change – Organize or Die!

First and foremost I would like to thank Garrett Viechick and the supporters of his amendment for proposing a bylaw change for their passion and dedication to improve our union. Additionally, for the record, I agree in part with the basic premise of the proposal as stated in WHERETEvers 5, 6 and 7... “there is a need for a union that can fight for schools that meet the needs of our members and the students and parents that are in our charge...”

Before today, not everyone works under the same contract. Upwards of 25% of our educators who understand that an injustice is doing the same thing the same way... they are working to organize their school to do this kind of organizing

The second bylaw change calls for our Field Representatives to work with the build of our union that can fight for schools that meet the needs of our members and the students and parents that are in our charge...”

Against the Proposed Bylaw Change – Organize or Die!

There is a tremendous urgency to organize a new generation of Boston educators into a union that recognizes an injustice at one school is an injustice at all schools. Any member of our union would be hard pressed to hear a dissenting voice directed toward those well intentioned assumptions. However, I must strongly and passionately disagree with the resolutions and challenge the bylaw changes as unacceptable in this proposed current form.

It is clear as we agree that there is a great need for additional organizing efforts. We currently have a full time staff director of organizing position. This is a fairly new position. We will need more time and effort to reap the benefits of this newly created position. A full time staff organizer on a five year contract will be joining the BTU in the months to come. There is no question that more help is needed. We have had a part time staff position and community liaison for several years. We need more time dedicated to all of our efforts within this area. Increasing this position to full time could help in our organizing efforts.

The resolution changing Article IV Section 1, paragraph 3 (three at-large Field Representatives) is a tremendous urgency to organize a new generation of Boston educators into a union that recognizes an injustice at one school is an injustice at all schools. Any member of our union would be hard pressed to hear a dissenting voice directed toward those well intentioned assumptions. However, I must strongly and passionately disagree with the resolutions and challenge the bylaw changes as unacceptable in this proposed current form.

There are unique issues germane to elementary teachers that are beyond our organizing efforts. For example, a high school will not be familiar with the nuances of an elementary school’s special education teachers or PD requirements and vice versa. They are unique issues germane to elementary, middle school and high school teachers.

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What is the Procedure for Teachers in Reporting Suspected or Actual Sexual Assault?

The BPS School Department has agreed that they will provide the time for individuals to complete ISSP’s out of administratively allocated time, such as during administrative periods not during your teacher-directed P&D’s. Secondary teachers receive a minimum of 5 teacher-directed P&D periods per week and Elementary teachers are contractually entitled to 4 teacher-directed P&D’s per week which cannot be used for ISSP completion. ISSP’s are also can’t be given with the expectation that they will be completed by the BTU member at home or on their own time. This is something that the administration of the District has agreed to. As a result, the administration at each building needs to adequately plan in order to honor this management/labor agreement. Please professionally ‘school’ them on this issue if necessary.

When are we supposed to complete ISSP’s?

The contract states, The ILT “shall prepare a report of the professional staff at the school. It shall be composed of administrators and teachers from the various grade levels, discipline, and programs of the school.” The ILT is “an advisory board to the principal on issues related to teaching, learning, assessment and professional development.” The principals of the school meet with the ILT to make decisions and to present proposals for implementation. The contract states, that the ILT must give a report on the ILT’s activities to the SSC each month. Any recommendation of the ILT that alters the Whole School Improvement Plan or may have a major effect on the school community and which is supported by the principal shall be subject to the approval of the School Site Council before being implemented.” This is the check and balance of the non-elected ILT as a subcommittee of the elected SSC.

Do Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT’s) have parents as members?

No. The contract states, The ILT “shall prepare a report of the professional staff at the school. It shall be composed of administrators and teachers from the various grade levels, discipline, and programs of the school.” The ILT is “an advisory board to the principal on issues related to teaching, learning, assessment and professional development.” The principals of the school meet with the ILT to make decisions and to present proposals for implementation. The contract states, that the ILT must give a report on the ILT’s activities to the SSC each month. Any recommendation of the ILT that alters the Whole School Improvement Plan or may have a major effect on the school community and which is supported by the principal shall be subject to the approval of the School Site Council before being implemented.” This is the check and balance of the non-elected ILT as a subcommittee of the elected SSC.

Is a School Site Council (SSC) Meeting be called anytime? What constitutes a quorum? Who sets the agenda and where are the minutes?

The School Site Council is the central governing body of the school under the school principal and management/shared decision making model. See BTU contract pages 9-16. Mass. State Law mandates that each public school have a SSC, thus pilot, innovation, in-district charters, and level 5 BPS schools must all comply with the state law and contract language. Engagement of these schools call their SSC a governing board, but the same SSC principles apply to them as well. At the first meeting of the newly elected SSC, a monthly calendar should be agreed upon by the SSC members for the entire school year and be made public through distribution in the school newsletter. In the event a quorum cannot be reached the SSC must 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 teachers and students and the meetings may alternate to meet this goal. SSC’s are public bodies, and as such must adhere to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. SSC’s are required to open all meetings to the public with any person being permitted to attend and to tape a meeting. Notice of meetings must be posted in a public place at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. SSC’s must keep minutes of each meeting including date, time, location, members present or absent, actions taken and minutes must be kept to quorum requirements. Under this provision of the law, there is no reason for the SSC to go into executive session. SSC’s must have Co-Chairs comprised of two voting members of the SSC. Co-Chairs may establish alternating Co-Chairs. The Co-Chairs in consultation with the President shall select another voting member elected by the Council. A quorum of SSC members must be present to conduct SSC business, make decisions, and the like. 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 President, 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 administrators. A Co-Chair shall be included on the agenda, as long as the items fall within the scope of SSC’s authority. Minutes of SSC Meetings should include the agenda, date, time, location, members present or absent, and actions taken (if quorum exists). The BTU contract details, “A notice of all actions taken by the SSC must 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 the administration prior to posting. Minutes should also be distributed/posted on the BTU bulletin board in each school. In order for SSC’s to work, there must be inclusion of all voices and communications to all members of the school community. The contract states, “All available information concerning school budget and other matters over which the SSC has authority must be shared with members of the SSC at least five school days before they are voted on in their meetings.” Administrators should not call a last minute meeting and expect members to sign off on these matters without this process taking place. Shared decision making is just that – shared.

Where do SSC members obtain training to become effective representatives in their school’s governance?

SSC trainings are being held scheduled from September to April of this school school year jointly run by the BTU and the BPS Office of Engagement. Enrollment for cert or for more info BTU members contact engagement@btu.org. These trainings will have dinner served at the BTU from 4:15-6:00 p.m. or the Chapter 1 Office (Warren Street side of BLA building) from 5:00-7:00 p.m. Saturday SSC Team trainings will be held at the BTU from 8:30 am-1:30 p.m. (breakfast and lunch served). There will be additional trainings through April. Workshops are open to all elected SSC members including parents, BTU members, high school students and school administrators, all of whom are encouraged to attend. The following dates are the workshops to be held in mid-November and December. On November 17, the training will be SSC 105: Engaging Students in Decision Making which will focus on learning how to engage high school students as active participants & decision-makers as well as deepen student’s understanding of their role & responsibility on SSC. On December 1st & 8th the training will be SSC 102: School Site Council & Budget which will focus on the important role of developing & approving the school’s budget. School teams will learn about weighted student funding budget process & obtain experience with consensus building. December 13, there will be Saturday training for SSC teams. December 15 the training will be SSC 103: Shared Decision-Making where participants will gain a deeper understanding of shared decision making principles & techniques as well as receive tools to promote success.

Call the BTU Office of Engagement before the start of the school year to receive the training schedule. Workshops are open to all elected, appointed, or appointed-ex officio SSC members, high school students, and school administrators. The workshops are free but registration is required and seats are limited. Registration can be done by calling the BTU Office of Engagement (617-288-2463) or email svirchick@btu.org. Workshops are open to all elected, appointed, or appointed-ex officio SSC members, high school students, and school administrators. The workshops are free but registration is required and seats are limited.

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How many personal days do teachers get and how do we take them?

Generally, teachers are entitled to four (4) personal days per school year. There are provisions for bereavement in addition to these days. Requests to take a personal day should be submitted to the building administrator as early as possible prior to the day requested. Except at the discretion of the building administrator (such as a school emergency, not more than 5% of teachers are eligible for a personal day at one time. No teacher may take a personal day on both the day before and the day after a school vacation, including the Thanksgiving recess. Personal days not used each year are rolled into your accumulated sick days in the following SY.

Can a School Site Council (SSC) Meeting be called anytime? What constitutes a quorum? Who sets the agenda and where are the minutes?

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allowed her to speak for us and to challenge arguably THE main symbol of the corporate culture that has enveloped us are still present and powerful. Key to what would have been Karen’s campaign is a collaboration with parents and community over issues of better schooling, pushing equality in public education, social justice and fairness. She was ahead in the polls.

Nationally there is a growing resurgence of activity, with anger turning to action, and folks are no longer accepting as gospel the target, embarrassment and pushback mentality promoted by these so-called educational reformers who are nothing more than corporate-funded frauds. Arne Duncan has even been a little on the defensive – not enough – but there are a few signs that he is paying attention to this pushback.

In Boston, our union looks a lot different than we did a few short years ago. We have two more people working with us – now in their second year – on professional learning and organizing, both internally and externally. We are talking with the AFT – and we expect we will accomplish – the hiring, in a joint undertaking, another full-time organizer, with a guaranteed five-year commitment. We have set up a network of building rep leaders who helped plan this event, and we are working to create a seamless, more efficient network between the office and our members through you that will help guide us. Our office, our communications, and our work is moving to be more in immediate sync with what you need. Our office staff is experienced and each will be more in immediate sync with what you need. Our office, our meeting, and facility your space.

What you need, and making the union office to be: heightened activity, a focus on you and what you need, and making the union office and facility your space.

On professional learning: Our ability to reach out and meet the needs of our members here – to provide a forum and a vehicle for change – is crucial. It involves and interests our membership in what they’re looking for, it provides a catalyst for change, and it helps promote better teaching and learning.

We will also shortly begin developing a collective bargaining package – yes, it’s that time again. We will go beyond the traditional means of soliciting items. We have forums and focus groups; we’ll have a far more interactive mechanism for receiving and vetting ideas. We will have a focus on improving the delivery of educational services to our students. This will be a priority, it’s where we will earn community support, it will improve our schools, and there’ll be no turning back on this.

We need to develop a better political network. We have made some headway with some of the new representatives. But some of our friends (I have to use air quotes) have been very unkind to us and teachers throughout the state. Gov. Deval Patrick was our “friend,” we wore the first local teachers union to endorse him, and he promised to work with us. Instead we got charter schools growing faster than Dunkin’ Donuts, 15 turnaround schools, 700 uncompensated hours at a few schools, a change in pension law, a change in the health insurance law, and so on. Sometimes people who promise to be our friend behave otherwise. Nonetheless, electoral politics can’t be avoided we have to work with these folks and do what we can.

We do have to vote and we do have to pay attention to the political process. Angela Cristiani has a list of endorsements that she will pass out. That list contains people who have been good to us and they believe strongly in supporting public education. Voting is one thing – just as important, however, is going forward we need to be more active. We do not have the option of being uninformed.

Angela holds regular meetings with elected officials. It’s a great time to get to know and to influence our elected representatives. These meetings gives them the knowledge and familiarity we want them to have. Our numbers at these meetings need to increase; they’re very low – so when you see the announcement, please take action.

The big issue has been the gubernatorial race. The best argument is that Martha Coakley will cause us less harm, than Charlie Baker. She said that last week verbatim to the AFTMA board. She didn’t retract her position on charters, and she gave lukewarm and ambiguous responses, all except when she said that Mitchell Chester would not be her commissioner. But he’s leaving anyway, so that it not as magnanimous a gesture as it seems. The AFTMA executive board endorsed her overwhelmingly, but the passion for her endorsement was, frankly, half-hearted.

We are caught in a cycle. Under the current political system we are often given a choice between two candidates, one slightly better than the other. Sure there are differences, but the differences are not always significant. In any case, we need to be part of the process and get out there and vote. This dynamic of voting for the lesser of two evils – who by the way generally takes our support for granted this dynamic isn’t going away without a change in approach – even a third political party – that will have to come from organized labor, working people, and those who seek economic and social justice. Karen Lewis might have been the start of that.

We are also part of a coalition endorsing ballot question 4; haven’t taken any positions on any other ballot questions: bottle bill, casino, gas, etc.

On educational policy, we need to focus some energy on the law that currently targets and punishes schools based on an arbitrary standard of measure. Boston, because it is in the lowest 10% of an arbitrary measure, is eligible for twice the charters of other districts. How so? Because the state board formula is currently set by 25% growth and 75% achievement. This formula isn’t scientific it’s, like Pi R2 equaling the area of a circle. This is an arbitrary formula. If the formula were composed at 26% growth or even 35%, different districts would go into the bottom 10% or leave it. The formula is killing us, it’s arbitrary, and although it changed this year, it needs to change again.

On our relationship with the mayor. We haven’t had a lot of test issues, but the relationship is good, open, and where we have had a few issues, the interactions have been positive. Importantly, the lines of communication are open. While on this point, let’s take a moment and send our thoughts and prayers to the Menino family. As you know, he is very ill and has stopped chemotherapy. He did call me out of the blue about a month ago, and we had a nice conversation.

On health insurance, the BTU and other city unions have reached a tentative agreement into providing excellent and affordable coverage for the next five years. The agreement will keep retirees within our plan. As soon as the document is signed, we will get it out to you. The BTU, with over 40% of the city’s work force, active and retirees, has been instrumental in bring the city coalition together, hiring the consultant, and contributing both financially and otherwise. Charles Johnson has been a steady participant as well as others, and we have bought ourselves five years of good coverage and good value.

Let me switch gears now to talk about a few difficult and complicated issues, issues where we have a strong possibility of division within our ranks: the issue of so-called surplus teachers.

This is an issue that affects hundreds of teachers, soon to be more. Twenty years ago we had virtually one type of school – traditional schools – and if you had the appropriate license or program area you could transfer into a position in any school, pretty much. There were exceptions, but they were rare and in the scheme of things, inconsequential. If you were an excessed history teacher, looking for work in July or August and a position opened up at English High School, you had the right of first refusal. You’d keep getting offered jobs until you got one.

Things have changed. Over the last 20 years we have seen the growth of pilot schools, innovation schools,
who are currently being paid their current positions elsewhere in the system. The affected people are excessed but guaranteed their current job if those positions are vacated. Under the rules that are in place the Agassiz, the Marshall, the Holland, the Dever, and Horace Mann Charters… remember that many of these schools were either taken over by the state, closed, given to charter schools, or a school's being taken over. Do not let the threat of charters, particularly those in schools taken by receivership, be exploited. They are our members, they pay dues, they elect union representatives, and they support us. We need to figure out some way to work with them to make better sense of the law that treats them as second-class citizens. And we need to work with them, even if our hands are mostly tied. By the way this last Monday we filed an appeal in superior court on the level 5 receivership imposed on the Holland and the Dever.

Finally, teachers' unions are facing a national challenge. Yes, things aren't great here. But they're not great in NYC, Detroit, Chicago, San Francisco, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Walk into a teachers' room, in any of the cities mentioned and people are talking of the threat of charters, concerned about the growth of standardized testing, wary of their democratic friends, concerned about their school funding, concerned about schools takeovers and schools being closed based on an arbitrary test score, and so on. In many places, by the way, teachers who are surplussed do not have the right to a position – hence my heads up earlier about the dangers that are lurking. Yet in these same teachers' rooms, they'll be aware of what looks like a turning tide on testing, hopeful of turning the corner on community relations and the gaining of allies, and finding common ground with friends.

Let me say a word here about the members we have in these new schools, the replacement teachers. They are good people, thrust in a situation not of their own making. In particular those in schools taken by receivership are being exploited. They are our members, they pay dues, they elect union representatives, and they support us. We need to figure out some way to work with them to make better sense of the law that treats them as second-class citizens. And we need to work with them, even if our hands are mostly tied. By the way this last Monday we filed an appeal in superior court on the level 5 receivership imposed on the Holland and the Dever.

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We have made some real progress. We have many positives in our union, and we have a lot of activity within our ranks. It is activity as president I am proud of. We have been diligently looking for more and better ways to get our members involved, provides outlets for their professional growth, and enhance our ability to fight for change. We want better schools, and we are tired of taking it on the chin, and being blamed for problems we cannot control. More than that, we’re tired of ill-intentioned people taking control over the direction they want our schools to head in. These are our schools and we, working with our stakeholders, know what’s best. We are determined to fix this dynamic, to push back, to become a force for change. Activities today and tomorrow will give you some of the tools we need to jump start our activity. Thank you, we have a good and productive two days.
Looking at the Big Picture
by Michael J. Maguire

Barbara Madeloni is the newly-elected President of the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA), the larger of the two statewide teacher unions. Mrs. Madeloni was the keynote speaker at the annual Boston Teachers Union’s Building Representatives Conference held last month.

Madeloni began her remarks by broadening the conversation from local educational issues to include national trends for working people. “We work without power,” she asserted. Madeloni explained that today’s neoliberalism focuses so much on the individual that makes each worker think that “It’s up to me” to do the best I can. “Boston can’t fight Arne Duncan alone,” Madeloni said. “We have to build alliances within our communities.”
The educational power brokers say all the time, ‘it’s for the children’ but when need to tell them that today’s education reform is hurting our children, she encouraged.

Hitting her stride, Madeloni reminded the audience, “Public education is foundational to democracy. It’s about a lot more than college and career readiness. They don’t talk about democracy.”

Madeloni then went on to the attack on the democratic principles of public education, Madeloni launched her campaign to be MTA president on a moral and progressive consciousness in the union.” She found that so many teachers are just trying to get by in their own classrooms and feel powerless to change things.

Make no mistake, Madeloni warned, there is a “broad-based, corporate assault on our profession in the name ofiane.” In the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. It lives in Teach for America and in Teach Plus.”

“The attack on economic injustice, not poverty,” she added. Poverty focuses on the poor, Madeloni said, we need to look at the system that makes them poor and keeps them poor.

This is why “they are the coming after us,” she continued. “No disrespect to the men in the panel,” she continued. “No disrespect to the men in the panel,” she continued. “No disrespect to the men in the panel,” she continued. “No disrespect to the men in the panel.”

Madeloni answered each question in terms of the larger philosophical context of neoliberalism. To her, the assault on public education in particular is part of a larger assault on collective action by citizens in general.

Melanie Allen asked the MTA president to “please give us your 40-second pep talk that we can take back to our schools.” Madeloni answered with words people can speak down in their personal and/or classroom struggles that it is important to acknowledge their concerns and to help people do what they can. She told us to “Create opportunities for (your colleagues) to engage in low-risk activities.” Then she would build upon that into bigger ideas.

Madeloni’s final words to us were “Just as students give you energy when you are feeling down, community engagement does too.”

For the Proposed Bylaw Change – Organize or Die! continued from page 2

Barbara Madeloni

Continued from page 2

Against the Proposed Bylaw Change – Organize and Thrive! continued from page 2

Two percent believe that local government should take a great deal or a fair amount of responsibility for dealing with hunger in the United States, and 71 percent believe the federal government should do the same. Sixty-one percent think government-sponsored food assistance should be supported and improved. This information should be especially useful for public officials involved in food policy, and for those about to be elected into office.

The survey also breaks these statistics down by political party, economic status, race and gender, with some interesting results. Generally, the survey shows that fewer Republicans than Democrats are comfortable with government subsidies — though not by much, in some cases. A larger number of those who have experienced hunger, or who have lower incomes, perceive hunger as a significant problem. Interest- ingly, more women are likely than men to believe that hunger and nutrition programs improve children’s lives, including their ability to learn in school and their health in the short and long term.

The report, “America’s View on Hunger,” was based on a national survey of 1,558 adults this summer.

[Virgina Myers, AFT TeacherNet, October 31, 2014.]

Striking Illinois Teachers Reach Tentative Agreement

As reported in page three of our paper, the Wea- kegan Teachers’ Council has reached a tentative three-year agreement with the Weakegan school district. The agreement was reached late on Oct. 29; the district’s schools are scheduled to reopen Nov. 3.

“The tentative agreement represents not only a compromise between the union and the board, but an end to what was a long, trying process for all parties involved,” Wea- kegan Teachers’ Council President Kathy Schwerz said as part of a joint statement. “We are grateful to the entire Weakegan community that struggled with us through these difficult times. We would also like to thank Gov. Pat Quinn and Illinois State Board of Education Chairman Gery Chico for their assistance during the conclusion of contract talks. After four years of instability, we are hopeful that this agreement will be the first step in giving our students the schools they deserve.”

“Last these four weeks have been difficult for everyone involved,” said Superintendent Donaldo Baitte. “Both the board of education and I have witnessed firsthand a great passion for education from parents, students and community members. We eagerly look forward to working together as a community for the betterment of our students.”

“Illinois Federation of Teachers President Dan Montgomery, who is an AFT vice president, said he was inspired by the Waukegan teachers and the community that united behind them. “Going on strike is never a deci- sion made lightly,” he said. “But for teachers in Waukegan, their fight for fairness, respect and a quality education for the students they serve has been worth it.”

“Congratulations to Wea- kegan Teachers’ Council President and AFT Vice President Kathy Schwartz, Lake County Federation of Teachers President Mike McGee, our hard-working staff, and all the members who stood together through 20 days of this difficult struggle.”

[Illinois Federation of Teachers, Dan Garsky, October 30, 2014.]
Pre-Tax Benefit for BTU Members

Flexible Spending Plan Allows Pre-Tax Income to be Used For Certain Medical, Dependent Care Expenses and Some Transportation and Parking Expenses

By Richard Stutman, BTU President

A benefit plan that allows eligible employees to shelter up to $2,500 in pre-tax income per calendar year to pay for certain medical expenses is now in effect. To be eligible for the plan, employees must work at least 20 hours per week (full-time or more) on a regular basis. For further information on eligibility, please call 1-800-544-2340 or 1-781-848-8484.

Under the city’s Flexible Spending Account (FSA) employees who opt for inclusion will be reimbursed for a variety of out-of-pocket medical expenses (such as doctor/dentist co-pays, prescriptions, and chiropractic, acupuncture, as examples) with pre-tax dollars which are exempt from federal, state and FICA taxation. A typical teacher who joins the plan can save up to 33% of $2,500 of out-of-pocket medical expenses per year. Retirement contributions are not affected.

Medical/Dental reimbursements can be completed at the point of sale via a debit card, which allows for real-time use of your funds without having to submit a form for reimbursement.

The plan essentially parallels the Dependent Care Plan (DCAP), which allows pre-tax dollars (up to $5,000 per year) to be used for dependent care, such as day care or elder care.

Close to one thousand city employees have joined one or both of the plans. The application deadline for setting up a deduction for 2014 is November 21, 2014. New employees may opt for inclusion with the plan as long as the participant is within 30 days of hire or during the Open Enrollment Period, subject to the eligibility requirement mentioned above. Eligible employees can also sign up within 30 days of some qualifying life events. As this latter provision is a complicated one, to fully understand its significance, you should call 1-800-544-2340 for full information.

All plans are relatively straightforward and provide a great tax benefit, but employees have to be cautious when participating in mass as much as moneys set aside for reimbursement must be used up by the end of the calendar year*, or those leftover moneys are forfeited. This regulation arises from Section 125 of the Internal Revenue Service Code, which governs these plans.

The city now offers a 75-day grace period to spend funds for both the Dependent Care and the Flexible Spending (Medical) plan, through March 15 of the following year. Unused transportation funds roll over into the next year.

Here’s an example of how the FSA (medical) works.

Teacher Jones estimates that he will spend $2000 this year in out-of-pocket medical expenses, and authorizes Cafeteria Plan Advisors, Inc. (CPA), the firm that manages the plan for the city, to take out $2000 divided by 20 (just for purpose of this example) or $100.00 over 20 pay periods to pay for these expenses. The money is taken out of Jones’s paycheck on a pre-tax basis, and is set aside in an account in Jones’s name at CPA.

CPA charges Jones $48 per year for this service. Continuing with Jones’s example:

Next year, in mid-January, Jones has oral surgery. Jones’s out-of-pocket dental expenses (expenses not covered under the Health and Welfare plan total $1500 and Jones submits receipted payment of the bill to CPA shortly thereafter. By the end of February he gets his $1500 rebate to him. The $1500 spent is not subject to federal (approx. 28%), state (approx. 6%), or the FICA (1.45%) for those who entered employee after 3/31/86 tax.

In all, Jones saves approximately 35% of the $1500 or $525. Jones receives the total reimbursement at the end of February although his 2015 contributions have essentially just started. Jones, incidentally, still has $500 of unused reimbursement money in his account to be used for expenses incurred prior to 12/31/15.

A few points about the Flexible Spending Account Medical Plan:

Out-of-Pocket Medical expenses are broadly defined, and include for example, deductibles for visits and prescriptions, out-of-pocket medical expenses, hearing devices, special footwear for the hearing impaired, doctor-prescribed weight loss programs, and contact lenses to mention just a few. Call CPA, Inc. at 1-800-544-2340 or go to their webpage for a more detailed listing.

Over the counter drugs such as antacids/ pain relievers/allergy and cold medicines are no longer allowable expenses. THIS IS A CHANGE.

Should you participate in the Dependent Care and the Flexible Spending (Medical) plan, through March 15 of the following year. Unused transportation funds roll over into the next year.

One can set up a Dependent Care Plan in addition to a Medical Flexible Spending Account and/or any of the other accounts. This is a different plan, and the same rules apply, except for the issue of the reimburse schedule noted above. The accounts, including the transportation accounts, cannot be co-mingled, i.e., you cannot transfer dollars between the various accounts.

The dollar limit of the Dependent Care Plan is $5,000. The same cautions apply.

You may keep in mind a few other points as well.

Eligible DCAP expenses include day care, elder care, pre-school tuition and before/after-school programs.

Should you participate in the DCAP, the tax-free reimbursement you receive reduces the amount of the income tax credits you are otherwise eligible for. CPA Inc. will help you determine whether using tax credits or setting aside tax dollars is the most advantageous method for you. You still may want to seek independent help from a tax adviser. You can call CPA Inc. at 1-800-544-2340.

Should you participate in the Dependent Care Plan you must provide the IRS on form 2441 with relevant information, including the name and social security number or taxpayer ID, regardless of the care-giver.

Transportation Accounts

Eligible expenses include daily or monthly parking expenses and mass transit expenses (including a T-Pass) related to your commute for work. As above, call the 800 number or see the webpage for more information.

How to Sign Up:

One can call CPA, Inc., at 1-800-544-2340 by the end of this year’s Open Enrollment and have an application initiated, mailed out to the employee, and then returned with a signature to CPA by the due date. If you haven’t gotten the authorization form by mid-November, please call Kim at CPA, Inc. and you will get a re-enrollment form in the mail.

Rerollment is not automatic. If you are not a current participant, you MUST call 1-800-544-2340, enroll online at cpa125.com or show up at an open house. (The house schedule for the BTU is past now, but there is one scheduled at City Hall on 11/13 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and at 1010 Massachusetts Ave. on the same date, from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.)

BOSTON UNION TEACHER November, 2014 7
Early 1800s: The schools that exist are either private schools or schools run by church groups. Generally, students had to pay tuition to these schools, which limited who could attend them.

Late 1830s: Horace Mann of Massachusetts, proposed a system of free, universal and non-denominational schooling, ensuring that all children (regardless of religion or social class) could receive an education. His proposal emphasized the teaching of both literacy and arithmetic skills, and a common political and social philosophy.

1857: The National Teachers Association (NTA) is formed in Chicago by 13 educators. It was the membership was restricted to men.

The new union focused on raising teacher salaries, establishing child labor laws, educating emancipated slaves and exposing how teachers who taught in Black schools worked under inadequate materials and funding. American science teacher in Charleston, NC, Viola Duvall Stewart, an African American woman was fighting for: wrap around services for America’s largest cities, as was demonstrated in Chicago Teachers Union strike in September 2012.

1897: The Chicago Teachers Federation is formed to raise teacher salaries and pensions. At this point, teacher compensation mainly consisted of room and board in the local community; married women were often barred from the classroom; and teachers were losing autonomy in their classroom. In addition, as waves of immigrants quickly swelled the ranks of students, classrooms became overcrowded, poorly resourced, and under-funded. African-American teachers especially suffered from inadequate materials and funding.

1904: J.R.E. Lee convened a group of Black educators in Nashville, Tennessee to found the National Association of Colored Teachers (NACT), a forerunner of the American Teachers Association (A-TA).

1937: Sixteen years after the landmark Brown v. Board of Education decision, the Supreme Court further clarified its Brown decision. In 1960, New York City teachers strike, carrying out three separate walkouts that closed the city’s schools for 36 days.

1969: The Supreme Court stated that all schools must desegregate “with all deliberate speed,” not just a longer school day; shortening the school day, not just a longer school day; shortening the school day often 30 minutes for White students; and the specific demands that the union was fighting for: wrap around services for students if schools were closed.


1996: After ATA and NEA affiliates in all but one state had merged, the two national organizations officially merged. Two years later, Elizabeth Duncan Koonce of Salisbury, North Carolina was elected as the first Black president of the NEA.

2000s: Laws restricting collective bargaining rights and the different contracts and salaries between districts has affected their education. Teachers are being paid more than women; non-minority men are paid more than women; and discrimination against female teachers.

The New York City teachers strike sparked many more across the country with the Swanns, an African-American family in Charlotte, North Carolina, brought suit when their children were not allowed to attend the city’s white schools. In its ruling, the Supreme Court stated that all schools must desegregate “with all deliberate speed,” not just a longer school day; shortening the school day, not just a longer school day; shortening the school day often 30 minutes for White students; and the specific demands that the union was fighting for: wrap around services for students if schools were closed.

1943: NACT and the NEA formed a joint committee to advocate for equal school funding and fair treatment of Blacks in textbooks, among other things. In 1937, NACT changed its name to the American Teachers Association (A-TA).

1980s-90s: At the time, a 1970 strike by Madison, Wis. teachers over low salaries prompts the state to enact the Minnesota Public Employees Labor Relations Act, which protects the right to strike. Strikes also take place in Philadelphia, Wisconsin, Michigan, Massachusetts, and Chicago, over pay, medical benefits and conditions.

1980s: “A Nation at Risk” depicted teachers who were both under-qualified and under-paid, working under rushed conditions, and achieving poor results. “A Nation Prepared” proposed improving teacher education, restructuring the teaching force, and giving teachers more say in how to meet new requirements for student achievement.

1990s: Strikes: Teacher strikes focus on improving the quality of student achievement and the introduction of merit pay, and still have the power to impact reform efforts. Impact on union solidarity; and stopping the spread of strike activity to other schools.


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Boston Adult Technical Academy (BATA)

Boston Adult Technical Academy’s mission is to meet the needs of students aged 19-22 who have recently entered the US or returned after dropping out of school. 60% are English Language Learners and I talked with several who had recently come from Haiti, Algeria, or the Dominican Republic. In recognition of their success with meeting the needs of an extremely diverse ELL population, BATA received the 2014 Office of English Language Learners Acquisition Award from the Newcomers Assessment and Counseling Center.

Biology teacher Sheila Holland invited me to visit, saying her school provides a “warm, supportive environment, where students can really feel how much staff members care about them.” BATA moved this year from Mattapan to Bay Village, around the corner from the Mass Pike and the Quincy School. I walked along brick sidewalks past cobblestone streets, flowing window boxes, and gas lamps… a neighborhood more reminiscent of the North End than the nearby theater district!

The first person I met was Hakim Johnson, a former student of mine and currently BATA’s Community Field Coordinator, who was leading an orientation for several new students. Imagine my delight when he told me he still has the journals he wrote in fourth and fifth grade!

Classes at BATA are small and teachers offer a lot of individualized instruction and support. I watched as math teacher Kevin Liu moved from table to table, offering help and encouragement to his students. ELA teacher Gage Norris was leading a lively discussion of Othello, asking students to consider whether the main character had choice or was a victim of prophecy. Nathan Eckstrom was teaching correct English grammar and sentence structure, while Susana Stringer helped her students learn how to paraphrase what they had read.

Students can take online courses as well as attend traditional classes. Thanks to the expansion of a credit recovery program developed by Maggie Reis, Director of Operations/Educational Options. She talked passionately about how important it is to make students feel welcome and described principal Sheila A. Azeves as a “rock solid leader” who practices shared leadership.

The focus is clearly on academics here; there is no gym, there are no art or music classes. Omar Gomez, a student who is determined to be a positive role model for his daughter, told me: “BATA is a great school for learning… you just have to put yourself into what you’ve got to do. Everyone is cool with each other, everybody’s there for one thing only, with the same motivation.” In a society where many young people take their education for granted, Boston Technical Adult Academy is indeed special.

Mr. Eckstrom, my ESL teacher, is explaining how to write in complete sentences. We saw the play, “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner” and now we are reading it in class. I am learning to read and write better in English. I am also learning about racism in the United States.

I was doing a math problem in this picture, I am learning how to find the mode, the median, and the mean of a list of numbers. I am also learning to solve equations. I have one more year until I graduate, then I hope to go to college to study nursing.

I was taking a quiz in my online geometry class. Ms. Wigfall was explaining something to me. I have learned so many things in this course, such as how to calculate the perimeter and the surface area of triangles. Resinette Jeanry

Mr. Liu was helping me with a problem in math class. I’ve learned that there are 180 degrees in a triangle and now we’re learning how to measure angles.

We were listening to Paolo’s opinion of the play, “These Shoes Are Mine.” We were smiling because we agreed with him and because his comment was funny! We’ve learned a lot of things in ELA class with Ms. Stringer this year. We’ve learned how to write a good paragraph, how to paraphrase, and how to annotate text as we read. We’ve also learned not to plagiarize when we write.

We’re Learning Here Project features images of everyday learning in our public schools, along with the words of the students pictured.

I was taking notes in history class and Mr. Berard was checking to see if they were correct. I am learning about the Declaration of Independence, which was written by Thomas Jefferson. Jesse Fontes
Some Bright Spots for Education in Election Results

It’s clear that many believe this country is on the wrong track and voted for change. Republicans successfully made this a referendum on President Obama’s record and won resoundingly, but where the election was about everyday concerns — education, minimum wage, paid sick leave — working families prevailed, AFT President Randi Weingarten says.

“Take the races where public education was at the forefront,” she says. “In Pennsylvania, where Gov. Tom Corbett starved the state’s public schools, particularly in Philadelphia, voters elected Tom Wolf, who has pledged to fully and fairly fund schools and respect teachers. In California, where millions were poured in for a candidate who ran on wiping out teachers’ due process, voters rejected that. In re-electing Tom Torlakson as state superintendent, voters understood that helping kids means working with teachers with a laser focus on our kids with the most needs. Likewise, in Missouri, voters rejected an initiative that would have abolished due process. In New York, voters supported a school bond initiative to enhance technology in the classrooms. And throughout the country, school levies were passed and even candidates like Florida’s Gov. Rick Scott, who won in a tight election, ran on finding schools, not on his record.”

“For workers everywhere, the question today — as we saw with the exit polls that said many believe their kids will be worse off than generations before — is still the same as it was yesterday: What is the path to opportunity for my family and especially my kids? For educators in schools across the country, the question today is: Do I have the tools, conditions and support I need to help all kids thrive?”

“That’s why we’re asking all governors — whether Democrat or Republican — to work with us to fully fund public education and lift up all workers. We’re asking members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate — whether Democrat or Republican — to break the endless logjam on Capitol Hill. If you work hard and play by the rules, you should be able to get ahead, and each generation will do better than the one before. That’s the promise of America. Now more than ever, we must work to reclaim that promise.”

More than 100,000 Petition Signatures Delivered to Time

AFT President Randi Weingarten joined parents and teachers at the Time-Life Building in New York City on Oct. 30 to deliver more than 100,000 petition signatures to Time magazine. The petition asked Time’s editors to apologize for its recent misleading cover, which casts teachers as “rotten apples” needing to be smashed by Silicon Valley millionaires with no experience in education.

“Obviously, we can debate a lot of things about public education,” Weingarten said at the event. “We can debate if there’s enough money. We can debate how to attract, retain and support teachers. We can debate the kind of parental engagement we need. We can debate whether we need more art and music. We can debate the role of testing. What shouldn’t be debatable is whether a cover that suggests that teachers need to be smashed is dead wrong. And that’s why more than 100,000 people have signed petitions this week asking Time to apologize for its cover.”

Weingarten was joined by United Federation of Teachers President (and AFT vice president) Michael Mulgrew, New York City teacher Sara Berger, New York City parent Natasha Capers and North Bergen, N.J., teacher Laurie Troiano.

Since the petition delivery, more than 10,000 additional petition signatures have been collected, bringing the total to 110,634.

Stronger Ebola Guidance Will Protect Healthcare Workers

ew guidance from the Centers for Disease Control on protective equipment for healthcare workers dealing with Ebola is in line with what the AFT and its healthcare members have been calling for, AFT President Randi Weingarten says.

“At hospitals throughout our nation, nurses and healthcare professionals are doing everything they can to be ready to care for whoever comes through their doors,” she says. “The CDC’s new guidance for healthcare workers, and the positive actions taken by the Obama administration, fall directly in line with what our members called for last week: infection-control protocols and worker-preparedness plans; dedicated, specially trained teams of willing staff; and the proper equipment for nurses and healthcare professionals working in America’s hospitals.”

“As the second-largest nurses union in the United States, the AFT is working to keep our communities safe and healthy: That is why we are calling on the CDC to issue additional Ebola guidance for non-hospital healthcare settings and expanded guidance to guarantee wages and benefits for quarantined healthcare workers — so workers won’t have to choose between safety and living expenses. And we renew our call for hospitals to incorporate the voices of nurses and healthcare workers in the development and implementation of Ebola protocols.”

“We look forward to being a partner with the CDC to expand and improve guidance on Ebola or any other health issues facing America.”
PAH? No, it’s PAR! Peer Assistance and Review

Here is recent conversation I had with a colleague:

“PAH? What is PAH?”

“It’s not PAH, it’s PAR!”

“So, you said what is PAH?”

“Well, let me explain.”

Peer Assistance and Review, or PAR, has finally arrived in Boston! This program has already been in place for many years in many different districts across the country, including Toledo, OH; Rochester, NY; St. Paul, MN and Montgomery County, MD. It was originally the brainchild of Dal Lawrence of Ohio, who in 1981, was able to include it into the Toledo teacher contract, where the city offered it to both novice and tenured teachers at risk for failing.

Here in Boston, PAR is designed to support teachers who have not yet received a proficient status on the EDFS rubric. Specifically, PAR is available to permanent teachers who are on a Directed Growth or Improvement Plan that is at least 6 months long. PAR is also available to 3rd year provisional teachers who plan that is at least 6 months long. PAR is also available to those who have received a rating of Needs Improvement on their previous evaluation.

PAR is built on the idea that teachers can play a role in the support and evaluation of other teachers. It is a joint labor-management collaboration. In Boston, PAR will be a voluntary alternative evaluation process. Instead of being evaluated by a principal or a building administrator, teachers participating in PAR will have an expert teacher (called a Consultant Teacher) working in their classroom, improving performance by helping the participating teacher identify areas requiring improvement, developing specific performance goals, supporting and monitoring this work. Support is geared around the pre-scriptive plan set by the administrator yet the prescriptive plan may be adjusted by collaboration between the PT, CT and administrator.

The CT strives to provide a “fair, transparent and humane process” in supporting the PT. The CTs are veteran teachers that help teachers develop and constructive feedback to improve teacher performance and student learning. The CTs also usem participation in implementation of prescriptive plans or recommendations made as a result of a Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory rating on the teacher evaluation. Both programs are designed to support teachers who want to improve their practice. What makes PAR different is that the CT will also become the primary evaluator for participating teachers. The CT then brings their recommendations to the PAR panel, which reviews it and makes recommendations to the Superintendent. The Superintendent makes the final decision regarding retention, ongoing evaluation or dismissal of the educator. [More information about the Peer Assistance program is available on the BTU website.]

Why include PAR?

Both IHS and the BTU view benefits in this process. For struggling teachers, PAR offers a more intensive support model and an experienced teacher as an evaluator. In other districts, PAR has increased teacher retention and reduced teacher turnover. In other PAR districts, the program has reduced the costs of litigation, improved labor-management relations, and increased opportunities for teacher leadership within the district. Educators will have the benefits of a trained teacher as the primary evaluator.

“Sounds interesting. If I want to participate, who do I contact?”

If you think you might be eligible for PAR or have more questions about the program, then contact us! Contact the committee by email at par@bostonpublicschools.org. The PAR invite can be accessed on-line here http://tinyurl.com/boston-par-invite.

“Wow! I’ll pass the information on to my colleagues in school. Thanks!”

(Submitted by Martiza Agrait, Valerie Hughes-Imani, Mark Loweryan and the PAR Panel)

RTC Executive Board Minutes September 8, 2014

Members Present: Anne Marie Adduci; Anne Broder; Treasurer; Marie Broderick; Mary Cahalane; Sandy Carle; Donna Cooley; Vice President; Larry Conn; Nedy, Michal Cotton; David Donovan, Chairman; Ruthanne Kennedy; Linda McNamara; Marilyn Marion; Secretary; Leonard Miranda; Vice Chairman; Jack Murphy, Paul Tenney and Walter Wood.

Secretary’s Report:

Chairman spoke to the president on the $13,000 approved. He and the membership are working together to keep errors at bay. Chairman also mentioned that he will be working with the benefits chairman. Report accepted.

Vice Chairman’s Report:

Chairs will be working together to keep errors at bay. Chairman also mentioned that he will be working with the benefits chairman. Report accepted.

Rapid Response Team:

Chairman spoke to the president and secretary-treasurer, and they have agreed to have the attorney negotiate the new Delta Dental. He and the membership and data processing chairs will be working together to keep errors at bay.

Chairman also mentioned that he will be working with the benefits chairman. Report accepted.

Membership:

Benefits: Chairman spoke to the president and secretary-treasurer, and they have agreed to have the attorney negotiate the new Delta Dental contract. Report accepted.

Rapid Response:

Chairman noted that all leaves were reported over the summer; however, three more were just received. Report accepted.

Scholarship:

Chairman will be asking for a meeting with the President and the members of the scholarship committee to work clarity regarding scholarship. Report accepted.

Social: The following is the schedule for upcoming business meetings and luncheons:

Business meetings: Thursday, October 2 and Thursday, April 30, 2015.

Lunches: November 20 and Tuesday, June 9, 2015. The membership will be notified of these meetings through a mailing scheduled to be sent out after the September 8th meeting. Report accepted.

Travel: The chairs have completed two successful trips to New York in September. Seats are available on the fall trips to Winnipesaukee Scenic Railroad on October 20th, Boston’s Historic Freedom Trail and Wine Tasting at Venezia Waterfront Restaurant on November 18th and Mt. Washington Hotel and Resort on December 9th. Collette will be presenting a travelogue for Canyon Country 2015 on October 2nd in Conference Rooms A & B. Report accepted.

Legislative:

In June the committee attended the Retirement Board’s meeting on raising the COLA base. It was approved. The 3% raise on the $13,000 was approved. They will continue to work with other organizations to attempt to raise the COLA base in 2016.

John Molye has resigned from the committee citing other obligations. At this time the committee would like to add Corinne Thibeault to the committee. Connie has been a great supporter and a member of the Rapid Response Team. She has attended State House events as well as attending Retirement Board Meetings. She will be a great addition to the committee. Report accepted.

Data Processing: We welcomed back Paul Tenney who was ill over the summer.

Membership: Membership and Data Processing will be meeting to streamline the data processing of new and existing members. The committee’s chairs stress that new retirees must have their retirement numbers before filling out a membership application. Report accepted.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn F. Marion, Secretary

Next Meeting, October 6, 2014.

RTC Executive Board

No, it’s PAR! Peer Assistance and Review

The PAR panel include: Maritza Agrait, Michele Davis, Meredith Elton, Angela Franti, Valencia Hughes-Imani, Alexandra Montes McNeil, Marie Mullen and Patrick Tutwiler.

“Who are the Consulting Teachers?”

To are veteran teachers that help the PT work to strengthen student learning in their classroom, improve performance by helping the participating teacher identify areas requiring improvement, developing specific performance goals, supporting and monitoring this support. Support is geared around the pre-scriptive plan set by the administrator yet the prescriptive plan may be adjusted by collaboration between the PT, CT and administrator.

The CT strives to provide a “fair, transparent and humane process” in supporting the PT. Active engagement on the part of the PT is paramount and inherent to the process. At this time, there is one CT in place that can take a caseload of up to 12 educators.

The PAR panel is actively recruiting to fill an additional CT position. Interested? Then email par@bostonpublicschools.org.

“Who are the PAR Panel members?”

Four members: four administrators (appointed by the Superintendent), four educators (appointed by the BTU) and one person selected by both. The PAR panel establishes procedures and documentation, selects and supervises, the Consulting Teachers (CT). CT selects Participating Teachers (PT); meets monthly to review reports; makes personnel decisions to the Superintendent for educator retention or dismissal.

The members of the PAR panel include: Maritza Agrait, Michele Davis, Meredith Elton, Angela Franti, Valencia Hughes-Imani, Alexandra Montes McNeil, Marie Mullen and Patrick Tutwiler.

“Why include PAR?”

Both IHS and the BTU view benefits in this process. For struggling teachers, PAR offers a more intensive support model and an experienced teacher as an evaluator. In other districts, PAR has increased teacher retention and reduced teacher turnover. In other PAR districts, the program has reduced the costs of litigation, improved labor-management relations, and increased opportunities for teacher leadership within the district. Educators will have the benefits of a trained teacher as the primary evaluator.

“Sounds interesting. If I want to participate, who do I contact?”

If you think you might be eligible for PAR or have more questions about the program, then contact us! Contact the committee by email at par@bostonpublicschools.org. The PAR invite can be accessed on-line here http://tinyurl.com/boston-par-invite.

“Wow! I’ll pass the information on to my colleagues in school. Thanks!”

(Submitted by Martiza Agrait, Valerie Hughes-Imani, Mark Loweryan and the PAR Panel)

RTC Notes

1. BTU Luncheon is on November 20th, but you must be registered and a member in good standing to reserve a spot at the luncheon. Your $45 check to BTU-RTC will be refunded once you show up at the luncheon. Have your handy retirement number in case you need it. Make sure your information is up-to-date in the RTC. Check for other events coming up during the year on the website or on our Facebook.

2. Make sure you are paid up for benefits for dental and eyeglass care, COBRA needs to be paid each month or you can pay in advance for up to a year. When to take social security? Benefits on your insurance at City Hall, Health Insurance Division.

3. Make your address changes make sure you notify the satisfaction of these meetings through a mailing schedule to be sent out after the September 8th meeting.

4. Email par@bostonpublicschools.org

5. Chairman is the new Benefits Chairperson for Canyon Country 2015 on October 2nd in Conference Rooms A & B. Report accepted.

6. The following is the schedule for upcoming business meetings and luncheons:

Business meetings: Thursday, October 2 and

Thursday, April 30, 2015.

Lunches: November 20 and Tuesday, June 9, 2015. The membership will be notified of these meetings through a mailing scheduled to be sent out after the September 8th meeting.

Travel: The chairs have completed two successful trips to New York in September. Seats are available on the fall trips to Winnipesaukee Scenic Railroad on October 20th, Boston’s Historic Freedom Trail and Wine Tasting at Venezia Waterfront Restaurant on November 18th and Mt. Washington Hotel and Resort on December 9th. Collette will be presenting a travelogue for Canyon Country 2015 on October 2nd in Conference Rooms A & B. Report accepted.

Legislative:

In June the committee attended the Retirement Board’s meeting on raising the COLA base. It was approved. The 3% raise on the $13,000 was approved. They will continue to work with other organizations to attempt to raise the COLA base in 2016.

John Molye has resigned from the committee citing other obligations. At this time the committee would like to add Corinne Thibeault to the committee. Connie has been a great supporter and a member of the Rapid Response Team. She has attended State House events as well as attending Retirement Board Meetings. She will be a great addition to the committee. Report accepted.

Data Processing: We welcomed back Paul Tenney who was ill over the summer.

Membership: Membership and Data Processing will be meeting to streamline the data processing of new and existing members. The committee’s chairs stress that new retirees must have their retirement numbers before filling out a membership application. Report accepted.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn F. Marion, Secretary

Next Meeting, October 6, 2014.

BOSTON UNION TEACHER

November, 2014

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Photos by Christina Choukas, Viet Luong, Michael Maguire and Marianne McCann