Collective Bargaining Items Tentatively Agreed To*, Subject to Ratification

By Richard Stutman, BTU President

Below you will see a fair and full summary of the tentative contract settlement your negotiating team has reached with the Boston School Committee. It is a contract settlement that we believe is good for students, affordable to the city, and fair to our members.

The ratification meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 10, 2012, at the BTU Hall, at 4:00 PM.

Please call or email me at rstutman@btu.org if you have any questions.

Richard Stutman
BTU President

BOSTON TEACHERS UNION, LOCAL 66, AFT
180 Mount Vernon Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Social Workers – No later than the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, the district shall add and maintain a complement of 8 social workers.

A teacher hired after 9/1/13 shall not advance a lane beyond M15 unless he or she takes courses that have received prior approval from HR Dept.

A teacher hired after 9/1/13 shall not advance a step if his/her most recent evaluation reflects an overall rating of Unsatisfactory, and this stays in effect until he/she receives a higher overall rating on a summative evaluation, or summative evaluation.

COSESS shall be added as a program area.

• Each COSESS shall have a district-wide caseload average of 150
• COSESS shall have a net increase of 2 in 2013-14, 14-15, and 15-16, for a total of 6
• Effective this school year, each COSESS shall have a .7 FTE clerk assigned to him or her, and shall be allowed to participate in the new teacher PTPP (formerly excess pool) process
• Supplies shall be made available and the work year shall remain the same, but summer OT may be offered at the contractual hourly rate and shall be voluntary, with such scheduling to be completed by July 15.

There shall be a new Excess Pool Process for all classroom personnel (not Related Service Providers, School Psychologists, PACs, and the like). This new process, called the Post-Transfer Placement Process (PTPP), does not affect the Transfer process, the Open Posting Process or the Rolling Posting Process. It is a substitute for the excess pool process only.

The PTPP does not affect how teachers are involuntarily excessed from schools – that will still be done by reverse seniority. All voluntarily and involuntarily excessed teachers will follow this process to obtain a new assignment.

With a few exceptions teachers (and others) with professional status who have not been rated Unsatisfactory can voluntarily excess themselves from a building every two years.

General synopsis: Once in the PTPP, all participants make 5 choices in their Primary Program Area or an Alternate Program Area (continued on page 4)
Because It's Good Politics: Angela Cristiani, BTU Political Director

VOTE FOR YOUR FUTURE!!!

BTU Endorsements for the Election on Tuesday, November 6th

The Massachusetts 2012 election season is upon us! Election Day is Tuesday, November 6th! It’s especially important this election to vote for those candidates who vote, and who will vote, to support public education, teachers, retirees, and our students!

The BTU has endorsed, to date, the following candidates:
- Elizabeth Warren – U.S. Senate
- James McGovern, District 2 – U.S. Congress
- Niki Tsongas, District 3 – U.S. Congress
- John Tierney, District 6 – U.S. Congress
- Michael Capuano, District 7 – U.S. Congress
- William Keating, District 9 – U.S. Congress
- Katherine Clark, Middlesex and Essex District – State Senator
- Sal DiDomenico, Middlesex and Suffolk District – State Senator
- Marc Pacheco, 1st Plymouth and Bristol District – State Senator
- Pat Jehlum, 2nd Middlesex District – State Senator
- Tackey Chan, 3rd Norfolk District – State Representative
- Paul Donato, 35th Middlesex District – State Representative
- Sean Garballey, 20th Middlesex District – State Representative
- Christopher Welch, 10th Plymouth District – State Representative
- Marjorie Decker, 25th Middlesex District – State Representative
- Denise Provost, 27th Middlesex District – State Representative
- David Rogers, 24th Middlesex District – State Representative
- Carl Sciortino, 36th Middlesex District – State Representative
- Marilee Hunt, 8th Plymouth District – State Representative

The COPE Committee is meeting early October. There may be more candidates recommended for endorsement at the October membership meeting pending a 2/3 vote by the COPE Committee, 2/3 vote by the Executive Board, and 2/3 vote by the membership at the October 10th membership meeting.

Our endorsed candidates need help from our members now through Election Day. The volunteer opportunities are endless! Each candidate will welcome you with her/himself and your schedule so that your volunteer activities match your interests!

This is a member-to-member campaign. BTU members are knocking on doors, making phone calls to other BTU and union members, and more. More information will be forthcoming about the candidates by mail and can also be found via the BTU Ebulletin, the BTU Facebook page, and online. Remember that the voter registration deadline, according to the MA Secretary of State, is Wednesday, October 17, 2012. Details for voter registration can be found online at http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/edly/howreg.htm.

Please contact the BTU office at 617/388-3000 or contact angericiani@btu.org to volunteer and to get regular campaign activity updates!

Commentary: Michael J. Maguire

Let’s Give Greater Opportunities to Our Students

This year Massachusetts public school teachers will be evaluated differently than to a new state law, but our students will still be measured using the centuries’ old distribution requirement and not like today’s majoring in a single subject. Think of it more like satisfying a college’s general education requirements. We should allow students to pursue their true interests. We should allow students to focus on the subject over all others.

Those students with innate talents to explore them to their potential. In search of high MCAS scores we have doubled math and English class times while cutting art, drama, and music. Future Grammy and Oscar winners will not be the product of today’s schools.

I know of a student who constantly thumped his pencil on his desk during math class. His then teacher admonished him for his disruptions. His next year’s teacher suggested he join the band. He became an excellent drummer and more settled in math class.

He had merely needed an outlet. Similarly Michael Phelps took up swimming as an outlet for his ADHD. Too many schools give such a child medication instead of recreation.

In parting let me leave you with this: Bill Gates was allowed to skip math class as a teenager so that he could spend more time tinkering with computers. What would our world be like if he had not been allowed to do so?

(Michael J. Maguire teaches Latin at Boston Latin Academy.)

AFT and BTU Won’t Back Down!

Send in Letters and Photos that Detail Your Workday

As you know, there’s a crazy misperception out there, now being spread by Viola Davis’ character in the new movie Won’t Back Down, that teachers only work until 3 PM, and that it’s really a part time job. We know that’s not true, but not everyone in the public does. Because they often don’t see all the work you do, it’s easy to take that work for granted and keep demanding that you do more with less. They don’t see all the papers you grade, or the paperwork you fill out, or the lessons you plan or the materials you prep. If they did, they’d start to understand why class sizes matter, or why it’s so important that schools get the resources they need. And they’re certainly not likely to see how valuable you are, and how hard you work.

For them to understand, we need to teach them.

That’s why some of your fellow teachers and Sabrina Stevens at the American Federation of Teachers have started a “Letters to Viola” Tumblr page - http://letters2violam跺e.tumblr.com. Along with a #HerdPast2 campaign on Twitter. We’re asking you to contribute is simple: a photo with a little note that shows what you’re doing for your students, especially beyond the contracted day. If you feel moved to write a full letter, those are welcome as well. You can send them directly to Sabrina, at gevernsoft.org.

For instance, I know a lot of you have why shouldn’t you see in a black and white photo of Viola Davis, in middle of her classroom, with her hands on her hips and her eyes are wide open. A few of you have shared them with me and I’ve sent them to Sabrina. I think it’s an important part of our conversation.

Seth Peterson (Snowden HS) reads to his daughter Stella during the September membership meeting.

❖

Angela Cristiani
Know Your Rights: Caren Carew, BTU Secondary Field Representative

What is the Small Necessities Leave Act and Who is Eligible to Take it?

Under State law, eligible employees can take up to 24 hours for annual leave for family obligations. See Superintendent’s Circular F-7/16, “Family and Medical Leave Act and Small Necessities Act.” The purpose of the Small Necessities Leave Act (SNLA) is to allow employees to:

(1) Participate in school-based activities directly related to the advancement of employee’s child such as parent-teacher conferences or interview an employee’s child;

(2) To accompany a son/daughter to a routine medical/dental appointment such as a routine check-up or vaccination;

(3) To accompany an elderly relative (60 or more) to a routine medical appointment or to view at a nursing home.

The length of the leave is up to 24 hours during any fiscal year (July 1 – June 30). Leave may be taken in increments of at least one hour for up to 24 hours in a fiscal year. To be eligible, employees has had to have been employed by BPS for at least 12 months and have worked for BPS at least 1,250 hours in the prior 12 month period. This leave is not leave taken under the federal family and medical leave act, as it is for a different purpose.

If the leave is foreseeable, employees must give the BPS Office of Human Resources at least seven days prior notice. If need is not foreseeable, the employee must notify their building administrator as soon as practicable given the circumstances of the case. To the extent possible, employees must provide written notice of the need for leave. All employees must use a certification page (page 7 of the FFR-13 Superintendent’s Circular) to request a SNLA leave. This cannot be done on the Hub. The original copy must be submitted to the building administrator who will forward it to BPS HR. Make sure you keep a copy of exactly what you submitted, to whom and when you did so. Leave for family obligations is unpaid, unless an employee chooses to submit accrued personal time for the unpaid leave. There are specific definitions and stipulations to components of this leave which are further outlined in the afore mentioned circular.

When are School Site Council Elections and Meetings Held and is there training for SSC Members?

The School Site Council is the central governing body of the school under the federal management/shared decision making model. The contract stipulates: “Elections for new SSC members shall be conducted as early in the school year as possible, and a first meeting of the new council shall be held no later than October 31.” At the first meeting, a monthly calendar should be agreed upon by the SSC members for the entire school year and be published through distribution to all staff and parents. Any change 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 and times may alternate to meet this goal.

Get empowered – knowledge is power. The BTU and BPS have set the following dates for SSC training that all elected SSC members are invited and encouraged to attend. This is an interactive process that brings SSC members from attendees to active informed participants. These workshops will be held at the BTU, RSVP at least a week in advance to register for a workshop at connect@bte.org.

- **SSC TEAM training**: Saturday, November 9, 9:30-1:00pm; includes breakfast & lunch.
- **SSC 101 – SSC Intro overview**: November 8 and repeated November 15, 5:00-7:00 pm; refreshments.
- **SSC 102 – Budget Basics**: November 22 and repeated December 4, 5:00-7:00 pm; refreshments.
- **SSC 103 – Building Consensus**: December 13, 5:00-7:00 pm; refreshments.

Who Determines When Parent Open-Houses are Held?

The BTU contract states, “Teachers will be available to attend two evening parent-teacher meetings during the school year. Such meetings shall be planned by the building administrator in cooperation with the faculty senate and the parent council with one month’s advance notice. Such meetings shall not be scheduled to exceed two hours each. Adequate security will be provided by the School Department.” Each school is strongly encouraged to have an active faculty senate. However, that is not the case, the faculty still must have a month’s advance notice of the meetings. No teacher can be compelled to attend longer than two hours, twice a year.

What is the Syllabus Due and What Must it Include?

The contract details, “In September of each year all teachers shall prepare a brief outline or syllabus (one to three pages) which includes: the student learning objectives for the year, the curriculum materials they plan to cover, and any student learning projects which students are expected to produce during the school year.” The outline may be supplemented with information about the amount of time students are expected to spend on homework; student attendance requirements; what students are expected to bring to class (or not bring to class); and any other information that the teacher deems appropriate to help parents understand what is expected of students. Teachers shall not be required to report any information which is distributed by the school to all parents, e.g. code of discipline, homework policy, and school handbook.”

Two copies of this online or syllabus shall be given to parents at the first parent-teacher meeting of the school year. One copy must be signed by the parent and returned to the teacher indicating the parents understanding of the curriculum and expectations and agreeing to cooperate with the teacher in meeting the educational objectives set for the year. Parents who do not attend the meeting shall have copies mailed to them by the principal at School Department expense with a stamped return envelope to return the signed copy to the school. The school will include along with the outline or syllabus given to parents each September a schedule of times that the teachers are available to meet with parents for an individual conference about their children.”

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What is the Policy on Scheduling Individual Parent/Teacher Conferences?

According to the collective bargaining agreement, better known as ‘the contract’; “Individual parent/teacher conferences shall be held at the school at a time that is mutually agreed upon by the parent and the teacher. If a parent is unable to come to a conference at the school, the teacher/parent conference regarding the child’s school performance shall be conducted by telephone.”

As an Itinerate Teacher, Do I Get a Desk?

Yes, the contract language mandates, “All teachers shall have an exclusive working desk in one of the rooms that they use.” If you are a teacher who must travel between rooms, in at least one of the rooms you teach in, you must be provided with a desk that is yours alone in good repair for your exclusive use. If this is not the case, please grieve it immediately.

Do I Have to Accept an Intern or Student Teacher?

No. The contract clearly states, “Any teacher requested to accept a trainee shall have at least one week’s advance notice, and may refuse.” If a teacher does become a cooperating teacher, the contract outlines the following, “Each cooperating teacher shall be given two days of leave with pay, without loss of benefits. Such days shall be taken as mutually agreed upon by the teacher and the administrative head during the last two weeks of the student-teacher training period. In cases of conflict, seniority shall prevail in the selection process.”

This coverage was designed to be given by having the student teacher cover for the days so that it is no cost item for the BPS. If a cooperating teacher does not arrive for the coverage while the student teacher is still in the classroom, the cooperating teacher loses the benefit. It’s a use it or lose it scenario.
 Collective Bargaining Items Tentatively Agreed To*, Subject to Ratification…

(continued from page 1)

if there is no layoff or recall list in that field and/or there are insufficient vacancies in that field. Principals and their personnel subcommittees select from among the eligible candidates expressing interest. All eligible vacancies as well as all vacancies created by teachers who have voluntarily ex- ceeded the class size maxima shall be filled in this process. No position can be left unfilled if a qualified applicant submitted an expression of interest in the position and has been unsuccessful in obtaining other positions. This process continues until late August. All who participate in this process are paid 50% by the BTU and 50% by the School District by the end of the process. All will be done electronically. The current salary/ arbitration process will continue.

New Enhanced Tuition-Reimbursement Language

• Permanent teachers not yet getting a career award shall be eligible for up to $5000 in tuition reimbursement;

• Professional teachers who are permanently eligible for $500 in tuition reimburse- ment;

• All specialty teachers shall be able to meet at least one day annually as a PD Day or to show evidence of having done a PD Day;

• Itinerant staff shall have a locked file cabinet in each cabinet they serve for secure storage of student records;

• The 18-hour PD schedule will no longer fall under a faculty vote for approval, though there are some restrictions on the administration’s discretion.

SPED teachers who are required to submit MCAS-all assessments shall receive one day of substitute coverage to do so.

Lead Sign Language Interpreters to be included into Teachers’ Unit AND be eligible for 3% as of 11/1/13.

School-Based Management

• School-based Management will be included into Teachers’ Unit AND be used interchangeably with in-service training. Each eligible teacher will receive a specified number of hours of professional development which will be used for continuing education purposes.

• A copy of the signed final Summative Evaluation report shall be included in the Educator’s personnel file.

Educator Plans: Improvement Plan

An Educator Improvement Plan shall be assigned a Supervising Evaluator (see definitions). The Supervising Evaluator shall ensure that the Educator has guidance and assistance in accessing the resources and professional development necessary to implement the Improvement Plan.

• The Improvement Plan shall define the problem(s) of practice identified through the observations and evalua- tion process, the actions the Educator must take to meet these goals, and the evaluations and activities the Educator must do to improve and the assistance the BTU Professional Development Department will provide to the Educator.

• The Improvement Plan shall include:

  1. Within ten school days of notification that the Educator is being placed on an Improvement Plan, the Educator shall schedule a meeting with the Educator to discuss the Improvement Plan. The Educator development and the Improvement Plan, which will include the provision of assistance from the BTU PD Department.

  2. The Educator may request that a representative of the Employee Organization/Association attend the meeting(s).

• If the Educator consents, the Emp- loyee Organization/Association will be informed that an Educator has been placed on an Improvement Plan.

The Improvement Plan shall:

• Describe the assistance that the district will provide to the Educator;

• Identify the individuals assigned to as- sist the Educator which must include minimally the Supervising Evaluator;

• Include the signatures of the Educator and Supervising Evaluator.

Acquiescent Signed plans shall be provided to the Educator. The Educator’s signature indicates that the Educator received the Improvement Plan in a timely fashion. The signature does not indicate agreement or assent to the contents.

Rating Impact on Student Learning Growth

• ESE will provide model contract lan- guage and guidance on rating educators impact on student learning growth based on multiple measures of student learning. Upon receiving this model contract language and guidance, parties agree to bargain with respect to this matter.

Using Student Feedback in Educator Evaluation

• ESE will provide model contract language, direction and guidance on using student feedback in Educator Evaluation by June 30, 2013. Upon re- ceiving this model contract language, direction and guidance, the parties agree to bargain with respect to this matter.

Using Staff Feedback in Educator Evaluation

• ESE will provide model contract language, direction and guidance on using staff feedback in Administration Evaluation by June 30, 2013. Upon re- ceiving this model contract language, direction and guidance, the parties agree to bargain with respect to this matter.

General Provisions

• The parties agree to establish a joint labor-management committee on which shall review the evaluation processes and procedures annu- ally and make recommendations for implementation and recommend adjustments to the parties. (We thank the AFTMA for their help in developing Appendix A.)

Appendix A

Summary of Key Elements in State’s Model Contract Language That Were Missing in City’s Proposal

Each Educator will have one primary Evaluator at any one time responsible for determining performance ratings.

Evaluation Cycle: Observation of Practice and Evaluation of Artifacts — Educators with PTS

• The Educator whose overall rating is needs improvement must be observed according to the Directed Growth Plan, including a model of at least one unsatisfactory observation.

• The Educator whose overall rating is unsatisfactory must be observed according to the Improvement Plan which must include at least two unsatisfactory observations.

• The Educator whose overall rating is needs improvement must be observed according to the Directed Growth Plan, including at least one unsatisfactory observation; and

• The Educator whose overall rating is unsatisfactory must be observed according to the Improvement Plan which must include at least two unsatisfactory observations.

Unannounced Observations: The Educator will be provided with at least a brief written feedback from the Evaluator within 3-5 school days of the observation.

• Announced Observations: The Evaluator shall provide the Educator with written feedback within 5 school days of the post- observation conference. For any standard where the Educator’s practice was found to be unsatisfactory or needs improvement, the feedback must:

  • Describe the basis for the Evaluator’s judgment.

  • Describe actions the Educator should take to improve her/performance.

  • Identify support and/or resources the Educator may use in his/her improvement.

  • Specify that the Educator is responsible for addressing the need for improve- ment.

Evaluation Cycle: Formative Assessment

• Upon the request of either the Evalu- ator or the Educator, and the Evaluator will have the right to request an evaluation for after or after completion of the Formal Assessment Report.

Evaluation Cycle: Summative Evaluation

• Upon the request of either the Evalu- ator or the Educator, the Educator and the Evaluator will meet either before or after completion of the Formal Evaluation Report.

Evaluation Cycle: Improvment Evaluation

• The evaluation cycle concludes with a summative evaluation report. For Edu- cators evaluated as one or two year Educator Plan, the summative report must be written and provided to the educator by May 15th.

• The Evaluator shall meet with the Educator rated needs improvement or unsatisfactory to discuss the summative evalua- tion. The meeting shall occur by June 1st.

• The Educator shall meet with the Evaluator rated proficient or exemplary to discuss the summative evaluation, if informed by the Evaluator or the Educator requests such a meeting. The meeting shall occur by June 10th.

• The Evaluator shall provide the final Summative Evaluation report by June 15th.

• The signature indicates that the Edu- cator reviewed the summative evaluation report in a timely fashion. The signature does not indicate agreement or disagreement with its contents.

• The Educator shall have the right to respond in writing to the summative evaluation report. Any additions or changes shall become part of the final Summative Evaluation report.

• A copy of the signed final Summative Evaluation report shall be included in the Educator’s personnel file.
Chicago Strike Inspires a Nation: BTU Lends Support with Open Letter to Mayor Rahm Emanuel

The Chicago Teachers Union created this ad supporting the Chicago Teachers Union. It appeared in the Chicago Sun-Times.

Comments left on the BTU’s Facebook page in response to the BTU’s advertisement in the Chicago Sun-Times:

Claudia Huertas: Thank you BTU for this amazing supportive article in the Chicago Sun-Times. Your message was read to us on this day of the strike at just the right time. After walking through the neighborhoods and stopping to speak to people to explain our position, everyone returned to our meeting area tired. This uplift was just what we needed! Thank you from the CTU for setting Rahm straight in your Sun-Times.

Audrey Olson: thank you for your support! At our picket line yesterday your ad was the good news for the day - no the week!!! thanks!!!

Karen Kessler Kreinik: BTU thank you from the CTU for setting Rahm straight in your Sun-Times ad today! We appreciate your solidarity and support!

Alma Vera Martinez: Thank You! Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!!! Your full page letter in the Friday Chicago Sun Times was read to us on this special morning. Our picket line meeting was inspired by the events that unfolded in the city by the lake. On Friday, September 14th in Wisconsin, Dane County Judge Juan Colas struck down Scott Walker's law that took away collective bargaining for public employees in the state. And then late in the weekend a deal was struck that gave Chicago teachers most of what they had been demanding. After the ink on the fine print was finally dry the House of Delegates voted to accept the offer and by Wednesday September 19th, nine days after they had shut down the schools of Chicago, the teachers went back to the classroom with their heads held high, prepared for that teachable moment.

It was a whirlwind that inspired the nation’s teachers. There will be much discussion about the Chicago Teachers Strike of 2012. What did they do to unite over 95% of the membership, thoroughly confounding those who supported the Stand For Children ballot initiative that prohibited a strike without a 75% yes vote? How did they get such strong support from the parents? Is this a turning point in the fight to preserve and strengthen public schools? One thing is clear. For 9 days in September most of the 3.5 million public school teachers in this country joined in solidarity with their brothers and sisters in Chicago and pronounced as one, “I am a teacher. And I deserve respect.”

The Boston Teachers Union
The Rally on September 10th filled 8-10 city blocks. This aerial view shows half a block.

Chicago families stood strong with their teachers.

Lincoln Park High School teachers united in solidarity.

BTU people stood with Chicago Teachers Union president Karen Lewis when were all in Detroit for the AFT Convention in July, 2012.


BTU Supported the Chicago Teachers Union in Their Fight for a Fair Contract!

Teachers at the Lewis Elementary School.

Chicago families stood strong with their teachers.

Photos courtesy of Chicago teacher Elly Greenspahn, Mark Terrance Photography, and the Chicago Teachers Union.
Ted Chambers appeared live on Education Nation with Brian Williams on Sunday, September 23, 2012. He was a featured panelist on this national news show. His interview can be seen at the 8th minute at http://video.msnbc.msn.com/nbc-news/49140720#49140720 and Erik Berg speaks from the audience at the 33rd minute.

Here are some of Ted’s comments after this interview:

“I believe at some level people are tired of watching teachers get beat up. But the problem is that we haven’t had a message that demonstrates that we have a better idea to improve ALL schools and make education better for ALL kids and families. Of course, the privatizers are filling the vacuum. I am more convinced now then I was before that combining the Common Core with collaborative lesson planning and internet distribution is our chance to intersect great policy with great politics.”

“Most of what is advanced as ‘innovations’ actually are not new, not innovations and are not ‘game changers’. They are instead just schemes to hand money over to private entities and corporations. But the combination of the national standards with technology and best practices could revolutionize the delivery of high quality instruction.”

“Huge shout out to the other BTU folks who made the trip: Erik Berg and his wife Jill, Garret Virchick, Mike Maguire, Carla McCormack, Andrew Vega and Noah Patel. Hope I didn’t miss anyone.”

Live tweeting during Education Nation

@losangelista: 31 states now link teacher evals to standardized test scores. And the testing companies are laughing all the way to the bank.

@MichaelJMaguire: If you want “fair” evaluations, you must have evaluators who have real teaching experience, not business majors w clipboards.

@BTUGarret: I want a fair evaluation. But more importantly I want a conversation where my ideas and experiences are valued.

@mravega: Spend money on taking care of kids, not on testing.

@BTUGarret: When we talk about poverty it is not an excuse. Those who ignore it deny my students reality.

@thechalkface: It is folly to believe that an admirable goal is to teach the same thing at the same time.

@BTUGarret: I’m not afraid of the common core. What I am afraid of is the ZERO dollar budget I have to teach science.

@ceznilson: The problem has never been “the teachers” (as politicians would have us think). Teachers are the solution, NOT the problem.

@tommysantos14: No more excuses. If a parent can visit their Facebook page 20 times per day, they can check an online student progress report.

@nikhilgoya_l: Money is never the reason why people go into the teaching profession but it is the reason why some people do not.
Ensuring Equity on Our New Option for Voting

By Allison Doherty

Last April, a group named BTU Votes started a movement to make voting in BTU elections more equitable. The idea was changing the BTU procedure from in-person voting to exclusively mail-in ballot. BTU Votes gained the support of many members and gathered 2,000 signatures for a petition in support of this by-law change.

Through much debate and collaboration between members of the Executive Board, the Election Committee, and BTU Votes, a new by-law was created. The by-law which was passed by a 2/3 vote at the September membership meeting allows members in good standing to request an absentee ballot. Members may either go to the BTU in person on election day and vote, or request an absentee ballot if they know in advance that they cannot make it to the hall on election day.

The Election Committee will work in conjunction with the Secretary-Treasurer to choose a vendor who will oversee the mail in ballots. There will be safeguards in place, as there are for any mail-in election, to make sure no one can vote “early and often”.

After this by-law change was passed at the September membership meeting, there was concern that certain members were left out of the process to obtain an absentee ballot. This was NOT intentional. The intention of the by-law change was to make it easier for ALL members to have their voices be heard. Therefore, at the October membership meeting, I will be asking that the membership be noticed of an amendment to the by-law change by REPLACING language in order to make the voting process equitable to all.

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE lines 1-3 paragraph 5:
Absentee ballots are available to all BTU members in good standing. Absentee ballots must be ordered via e-mail or through their building representative with request form attached or in person at the BTU office, by filling out the request form.

REPLACING language for lines 1-3 paragraph 5:
Members in good standing may obtain an absentee ballot REQUEST FORM by calling BTU Votes, emailing the BTU, sending in a written request by regular mail or by any other manner, picking up at the BTU office or from their Building Representative. The form must be mailed back following the timeline given by the election committee or designees thereof.

Vaccinations That Nourish the Mind and the Soul

How did you spend your summer? Were you one of the many BPS teachers who travelled abroad with the blessings of the Fund for Teachers? Did you stay closer to home and partake of the hundreds of workshops which BPS offered? Did you attend a national conference or institute? Did you read? Did you write? Did you reflect on last year and how you might begin this year?

I am a strong believer that as educators we need to model lifelong learning and that the best professional development addresses both our hearts and our brains. With this in mind, I have spent my past thirty-three summers in a variety of reflection and growth, but this most recent summer has topped all of them. This summer I had the joy of being the Mudge Fellow at the Boston Athenaeum. This fellowship allows me access to their vast collection to study the topic of my choice. Can you imagine a child in a candy store? That’s how I felt! Each day I pinned myself, finding it hard to believe that I was actually being paid to go to a beautiful setting and read.

There was no way that I could take in all of the texts that I wanted to, but I tried. I marveled at original documents such as Attorneys Robert Morris and Charles Sumner’s 1840 case before the Boston School Committee, arguing in favor of Sarah Roberts to attend her neighborhood school. I also looked at School Committee member Joseph Lee’s papers from the 1960’s relegating Black parents back to a status below that of the Roberts family. I read original poetry by Boston slaves and free Blacks. I imagined hearing William Cooper Nell’s admonishments to the community and wondered what he would say about our current situation.

Daily I traveled back and forth in time. Physically, as I commuted downtown on the T, the underground subway felt like a time transporter as I passed the large black and white ancient maps of Boston, reminding me of our past history. On the other end of the journey, I climbed the 70 stairs of Park Street station, re-emerging into the present but also passing our history—the Park Street Church where William Lloyd Garrison shared “holy fire” in his first abolitionist speech and there on the streets of Beacon Hill where he was almost lynched for those same beliefs; past the Parker House, where at different times in history, both Ho Chi Minh and Malcolm X were waiters. (If only Malcolm had known of David Walker, who more than 100 years before him had the same “by whatever means necessary” philosophy!) I passed Tremont Temple Baptist Church, one of Boston’s first congregations to be integrated, and then Paul Revere’s plaque at the Granary Burial Grounds, to the beautiful stone building of the Athenaeum, where I read about these landmarks and their significance.

Don’t be fooled by the exterior of the Boston Athenaeum. It may look small, but hidden inside are really ten floors, all packed with a variety of literature and opportunities to read and grow. Desks are available for the studious researchers, as are velvet couches and chairs. There’s even a children’s section with books and creaky hinges to hide while becoming absorbed in the book. Daily, I wanted so badly to read all that I found interesting, (and that was nearly everything). Even as I stood by the elevator on each floor, I would find books of interest, some that would allow me an insight into a different angle toward my study and others that would simply feed my curiosity. There is certainly something for everyone, but mostly there is information waiting to be devoured. And so I read and digested.

One of my favorite books was Miss Crandall’s School for Young Ladies & Little Misses of Color by Marilyn Nelson and Elizabeth Alexander. From this text came my anthem, a poem entitled “Fire from the Gods”. The first few lines from this poem summarize well my experience:

Fire from the Gods
I didn’t know what I didn’t know,
Like beer Mosquito on beer Elephant,
I now know my capacity for awe
is infinite; this thint is permanent,
The well bottomless, my good fortune vast.

And so, I share this experience with you, hoping that next spring you consider applying for Boston Athenaeum’s Mudge Fellowship. (I’ll remind you in March). In the meantime, I hope that you had a great summer – one that nourished your heart and mind, and also hope this school year holds the same for you and your students.

(Submitted by Crystal C. Haynes, New Teacher Developer.)
Edison K-8 School

Welcome to a new year of celebrating the learning that goes on every day, in every Boston Public School... please invite me to visit yours!

Principal Mary Driscoll welcomed me to the Edison K-8 on Day 4 of the new school year, and gave me a quick orientation to the location of classrooms in their E-shaped building. There are almost 800 students in this unusually diverse school in Brighton. Originally a middle school, the Edison became a K-8 four years ago. One of the teachers told me that the population of the school continues to change, this year adding a large number of SEI classes for English Language Learners... almost 40% of the student body!

The Edison’s core values are called the “5 Rs” and are prominently displayed in hallways and cafeterias: Respect, Responsibility, Resourcefulness, Righteousness, and Rigor. In each classroom teachers engaged students in describing what these values look and sound like in their subject or grade level. Class meetings started the day in several rooms. Before closing their morning “Circle of Power & Respect,” the sixth graders in Meredith Busher’s class shook hands and greeted each another in one of the many languages spoken by their families.

Students throughout the school were participating in a variety of activities to build community at the beginning of the school year: making large “All About Me” posters, interviewing one another, reviewing expectations. I was impressed by the attention that the staff gave to respectful interactions between students. One example was the P.E. teacher insisting that students demonstrate good sportsmanship by shaking hands before running a race with a classmate.

The theater arts teacher, Emily Culver, was having students get to know one another with a “Class Bingo” activity, and I was delighted to receive a hug from one of her students! Originally trained in theater, she has obtained grants to support her program and to offer an after school class for younger students. In other classes students were reading, writing, exploring maps, setting up notebooks, and pursuing all the “traditional” core curriculum activities. The Edison is well on its way to creating a positive culture for learning; here’s hoping you’ve experienced some of the same promising beginnings!

I was writing about when I went to the beach with my dad and stayed in a hotel. I am learning to write better by using complete sentences and details.

– Anthony Morales, Grade 3

We were racing each other in gym class. We’ve learned that when we race we have to stay in our own lane and be careful not to go over the line. We’ve also learned to shake hands before the race to show we’re friends.

– Lawrence Davis & Richa Gongaju, Grade 1

Ms. Culver and I were interacting about a class bingo game in our theater arts class. I’ve learned that an ensemble is a group of actors coming together, which is important because unity is key to a successful performance.

– Randy Reyes, Grade 8

We were doing maths with clocks. We are learning how to tell and write the time, using hours and minutes.

– Jonathan Panameno-Cruz & Cerena Mehaya, Grade 4

We were in math class and Ms. Delaney was explaining how to do the assignment. We are beginning a study of geometry, measuring angles of many different shapes.

– Debora Games & Ilya Karpenko, Grade 7

We were in music class listening to Mr. Robinson read a story. We are learning to follow directions. This year in music we want to dance and sing!

– Ms. Jones’ K2 class

We were listening to Ms. McKoy giving directions in ELA. We’re practicing our grammar and learning how to respond to key questions about what we’ve been reading.

– Kasey Castillo & Annie Williams, Grade 6

In our daily “Circle of Power & Respect,” we greet one another in the many different languages spoken by our classmates. Here Ms. Busher is introducing a book by Patricia Polacco. We are learning to read, write, speak, and listen in English class.

– Ms. Busher’s 6th grade class
It was a beautiful late summer’s day when 500 mill workers, teachers, community activists, and others took to the streets of Lawrence, Massachusetts on Labor Day. Speakers from the Merrimack Valley Central Labor Council and the Lawrence Teachers Union addressed the crowd outside the Polartec factory. Speaking for the Lawrence Teachers Union was Frank McLaughlin. He decried the recent takeover of the city’s schools by the Massachusetts board of education. Rather than working with the teachers to craft solutions that improve schools and are fair to teachers he informed the crowd about former Boston administrator and current state receiver Jeff Riley’s go-it-alone attitude, opting to blame teachers, bring in charter schools, and gut collective bargaining.

Much of the blame for the problems in the Lawrence school system should rightfully be placed at the feet of former school superintendent Wilfredo Leboy who was found guilty of embezzlement last March. Current Mayor William Lantigua has also been under a federal corruption probe and a week after the Labor Day march a grand jury returned indictments on 2 of his close associates. So while politicians loot the city it seems that teachers will be paying the price.

One hundred years ago in 1912 other working people in Lawrence were the targets of the rich and powerful. After a state law reduced the work week of women and children from 56 to 54 hours the textile mill owners slashed the pay of the workers and sped up the line. Most of the workers already lived in abject poverty, in cold water tenements, and in slum-like conditions. As the average worker was barely surviving on wages of $8.76 per week the wage cut was the last straw. Over 20,000 mostly immigrant workers challenged the mill owners and city officials and struck for 9 weeks in the bitter cold of that New England winter.

The Bread and Roses strike of 1912 came about when poor working class immigrant populations overcame their differences and united to defeat the greed of the rich and powerful elite who owned the mills and controlled the city. Bread referred to the demand for decent pay, roses for humane conditions in which to live and work. The mill owners used everything in their power to defeat the struggle. During the strike Harvard students were recruited as militia to attack the demonstrators. But the workers fought back. The action received worldwide attention after women were beaten at the local railroad station while trying to get their children out of town to keep them safe. After 9 long weeks the owners backed down and met the demands of the textile workers.

Conditions have changed somewhat in Lawrence over the past 100 years, but there are remarkable similarities. Lawrence is still a city of immigrants. The elite are still corrupt and uncaring. Conditions in the school are not far from the tenement shams of 1912. The Lawrence Teachers Union report classrooms with leaky roofs, persistent mold, and rodent infestation. And while Harvard students are not bayoneting citizens they are now actively recruited through Teach for America to fill the jobs of fired teachers.

The Labor Day march ended with a Bread and Roses festival. The working people of Lawrence who marched for justice gathered at Lawrence Common and broke bread together. In 1912 the immigrant communities in Lawrence joined together for economic and social justice. It will take as great an effort today if the parents, students, and teachers are to achieve social justice in their schools.

A Lawrence teacher fighting for her community.

Charlestown High School Guidance Counselor Betsy Roter and her family attend the Bread and Roses Labor Day March and Rally in Lawrence.

A nurse demanding Bread and Roses in 2012.

Photos by Garret Virchick
Today's textile workers at the Bread and Roses Parade in Lawrence.

Children worked in the mills in 1912. Thanks to the union movement, today they are now volunteers.

Lawrence Teachers Union President Frank McLaughlin addresses the crowd gathering in front of the Polartec factory.

Occupational Therapist outside the AFT First Book tent.
Welcomes Back Teachers

Please join the BTU on the Hatch Shell on the morning of Sunday, October 14, 2012 as we MAKE STRIDES AGAINST BREAST CANCER!