The Heart, Mind and Muscle of Education

Visual Arts Teacher Presents Students Work at Exhibition

Appreciation of the Union’s Educational Efforts

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BTU Helps Honor Educators of the Year

Not Enough to Honor Teachers: Equally Important to Honor Teaching

By Richard Stutman

BTU President

(The following remarks were given by BTU President Richard Stutman on the night of June 28th at the Educator of the Year Celebration.)

Good evening, and on behalf of the Boston Teachers Union and its 10,000 members, I am honored to help welcome you as we congratulate our outstanding educators.

Mayor Menino, thank you for your commitment to our public schools. Dr. Johnson, thank you for your leadership. Reverend Groover, Thank you for your service.

This is a wonderful event. We honor and congratulate those who are at the top of our profession. We thank you for your service. The accolades you receive are richly deserved. You work hard every day, being the best you can. You teach, you nurture, you comfort, you challenge, you do it all—and you do it well, you do it selflessly and you do it without receiving accolades on a daily basis. You do it because you have chosen to become true educators. We are here tonight to honor you, and you deserve our praise.

You have received the highest honor: recognition from your peers. There can be no higher honor than one received from those who know you best, who know your work best.

To truly honor great teachers, we must also honor great teaching. That is a distinction often lost in today’s highly-charged debate about what education is truly about. It is also to our detriment that teaching is more than quantifying topics, as if all learning can be quantified by marking off “a” through “e” on a bubble sheet. It’s about generating a discussion. It’s about promoting thinking and challenging ideas. The best teachers I had when I went to the Boston Public Schools were teachers who encouraged me to think, who encouraged me to challenge, who encouraged me to question.

The skills they taught me were neither measurable nor quantifiable. They were lifelong skills that could not be evaluated by marking off “a” through “e” on a bubble sheet. So let’s acknowledge tonight the importance and distinction of great teaching as we honor the teachers here tonight. Those honored here fall into both categories: they are great teachers and they practice great teaching. We congratulate you, we are proud of you, and thank you for being the best we can be.
BTU Honors 2011 Educators of the Year Award Winners

Ruth Allukian, TechBoston Academy, School Nurse
19 years of BPS service
“To say that I adore, admire, am in awe of, aspire to be just like Nurse Allukian would be an understatement. She encompasses all the characteristics and qualities of not just an amazing nurse, but also a teacher, social worker, mother and beyond…”
— Colleague

Christopher Burdman, Mildred Ave. K-8 School, Grade 6 – Math & Science
10 years of BPS service
“My sixth grade with Mr. Burdman was awesome and if I could rewind time I would.”
— Student

“Mr. Burdman asks to see a parent it’s always a two-way conversation – he listens and never judges.”
— Parent

Fernandina Chan, Boston Arts Academy, Artistic Dean/Dance Teacher
33 years of BPS service
“She is a great analyzer.”
— Student (who has gone from 104 absences last year to near perfect attendance and no grade lower than an A this year)

Isilda Colonette, Beethoven-Ohrenberger School, Grade 2
20 years of BPS service
“Ms. Colonette is adored by her students, my son being one of her biggest fans…she discovers who her students are, where their strengths lie, and their opportunities for learning. Then she puts effort into building those opportunities – guiding, encouraging, and (boosting) the child’s confidence and self-esteem…”
— Parent

Kati Delahanty, Charlestown High School, English Teacher
5 years of BPS service
“Any student can detect a ‘real’ teacher and Ms. Delahanty is the true definition of reality. She connects with her students. Her style of teaching has definitely helped us to make progress (and) she has transformed good writers into great writers and great analyzers.”
— Student

Jennifer Doyle, Mary Lyon K-8 School, Grade 7 inclusion Math and Science
6 years of BPS service
“I have witnessed Jen lift not only her students, but also her colleagues. Her classroom is always open and she is always willing to lend an ear. She is a dynamic force…”
— Colleague

Alison Galanter, Kennedy Academy for Health Careers, Grade 9-12 History, ELL, SPED, 4 years of BPS service
“Ms. Galanter has made me a better person. If there is something about my (work) that concerns her, Ms. Galanter does not hesitate to pull me aside and discuss it with me…She makes sure that all her students are on the same level without embarrassing the ones who might be behind.”
— Student

Caitlin Hollister, Richard J. Murphy K-8 School, Grade 3
6 years of BPS service
“Ms. Hollister stands out because of how she plans for ALL her children…(In her class), she has children with autism, some with reading comprehension disabilities, some with speech delays. Ms. Hollister doesn’t look at that student who may learn differently and judge them. She judges her methods of teaching and come up with multiple ways to teach…”
— Colleague

Sheila Johnson, Oliver Wendell Holmes Elementary School, Grade 2 inclusion
9 years of BPS service
“Ms. Johnson is my favorite teacher in the entire world. She taught me how to write and to do place value… I feel so confident about the things (she) taught me. Ms. Johnson should be proud of herself and maybe one day, (she will be) a famous teacher.”
— Student

Sabine Pierre-Jules, Mather Elementary School, Grade 2
23 years of service
“When I walk into her classroom, I feel inspired – just like her children.”
— Former colleague

Ingrid Roche, Boston Latin Academy, Spanish
9 years of BPS service
“Ms. Roche is one of the most involved and deeply concerned teachers I have encountered… She regularly keeps her students as well as parents informed of assignments/projects due, grades, and most of all, extracurricular programs and activities.”
— Parent

Yolande Thomas-Easterling, McKay K-8 School, Grade 1
25 years of BPS service
“Each year, every child who enters her first grade has the good fortune to experience a master teacher: the focused passionate fervor of a new teacher in combination with the efficiencies and savvy of a well-seasoned veteran.”
— Colleague

Debra Vinci, Lee Academy/Lee Elementary School, School Nurse
10 years of BPS service
“Deb gives our complex a unifying force and draws both schools together.”
— Colleague

“Ms. Hollister stands out because of how she plans for the ones who might be behind.”
— Colleague
New Site Exposes Secret Efforts to Kill Workers’ Rights

A non-profit investigative reporting group called the Center for Media and Democracy has unveiled a trove of more than 800 “model” bills and resolutions secretly voted on by corporations and politicians through the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). The bills and resolutions on ALEC Exposed include model legislation supporting cycles and political shifts, and must outlast changes in school, district and union leaders.

There have been countless efforts to change education from on-high, and we all know how likely that is to succeed. We’re working with administrators and with community partners to make sure that, this time, it’s done right.

We’ve taken major steps toward strengthening the teaching profession from within. For example, we’ve developed a comprehensive development and evaluation system for teachers, one that is about supporting, not just sorting — providing a means of continuous improvement that will ensure all kids are taught by the skilled and knowledgeable teachers they deserve.

But we need to do more than write standards. Now those standards need to be put into effect, not sit on a shelf. Again, we’re leading the way.

This past May, the AFT introduced 38 recommendations to improve the standards rollout, with rich and meaningful curriculum as the centerpiece of these recommendations. And we’re already working with national organizations, foundations, parent groups — even the people who design the assessments — to advance these connections—that is the heart.

The content underlying that connection, the understanding we bring to it — that’s the mind.

While our quality agenda has some very specific proposals, everything we have proposed is guided by four fundamental principles:

Evidence — because evidence about what works, and not ideology about what should work, must always be our guide;

Equity — because all children deserve a great education;

Scalability — because we are not satisfied to provide that great education to only some children in only some schools; we must provide a quality educational opportunity to every child in every school; and

Sustainability — because school improvement needs to withstand budget

The Heart, Mind and Muscle of Education

These are the remarks of AFT President Randi Weingarten at the TEACH Conference on July 11, 2011.

Our work is born in the heart. We do this work because we care, deeply, about children. In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The greatest gift is a portion of thyself.” That is who we are and what we do.

What begins with the heart is given shape by the mind — to make sure that we give our students the best knowledge, the most useful tools and a clear trajectory for success. Mind is what allows our union to learn from experience and evidence, to develop a true quality agenda for providing all children with access to an excellent education.

This work of the mind is buttressed by the muscle — to fight for what is right for the children we serve and the profession we love. And we do so with the strength that comes from solidarity, by summoning the heart to advance good ideas and to fight bad ones, and by reaching out to community and growing stronger through those bonds.

Beyond our own hearts, our schools are at the heart of the community. They’re not just the bricks-and-mortar structures where communities come together to vote, or meet, or seek shelter when tragedy strikes. It’s the way that educators make the school a hub, bringing community members into the school and moving students out into the community.

The bond between teacher and student forms the foundation for so many other bonds: parent to teacher, teacher to school, school to community, and community back to school. The strength and primacy of all of these relationships underpins our work.

The House Education and the Workforce Committee on July 13 marked up H.R. 2445, the State and Local Funding Flexibility Act, an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) by dismantling 45 years of legislative policy committed to ensuring that disadvantaged children are provided a high-quality education that allows them to compete on the same level playing field as their more advantaged peers,” says AFT president Randi Weingarten. “That is why Title I, the cornerstone program of ESEA, always has targeted resources to districts serving high concentrations of needy students and included safeguards to ensure that those funds are spent on the children.

H.R. 2445 would end these safeguards and allow states and school districts to redirect funds away from the students who need them most. For example, fundings intended to help English language learners or low-income students could be redirected to schools serving less-needy students.

This open-ended expansion of flexibility, as proposed under H.R. 2445, could lead to districts and states changing their focus from closing achievement gaps to other purposes not related to improving the academic achievement of disadvantaged students. Helping needy students gain access to high-quality public education is a commitment and responsibility that must be sustained, and cannot be interrupted by arbitrary changes in focus and funding.

“We do not believe the overly broad flexibility authorized under this bill would serve the interests of the children ESEA was designed to assist. We urge Congress to consider the potentially harmful consequences of this bill, and to stand instead with students who need ESEA’s targeted assistance.”

(Submitted by Priscilla Nemeth, the Center for Media and Democracy.)
By Angela Cristiani
BTU Political Director

July 2011. Educators come together from across the country. Union members, AFT union members in Washington, DC. Acronym, Meaningful acronyms. AFT= American Federation of Teachers, QuEST - Quality Educational Standards in Teaching. TEACH - Togetheter Educating America’s Children. Once AFT QuEST is now AFT TEACH. TEACH Theme? “Making A Difference Everyday.” Make a difference? We do. We know we do.

Acronym yes, buzz words resound as well. They’re recognizable to all. The two tones are education reform and quality teaching. Energy level is high and somehow all attending delegates are eager to share, learn, and move in a direction that better educates, supports teachers, and benefits children. Randi Weingarten said it best in her keynote speech, that “It takes a community to educate all of our children.”

Weingarten’s metaphor of the heart, mind, and muscle underscored a message best reflected in three days of TEACH workshops/activities. An entire conference geared to building a solid educational and grassroots infrastructure. No matter your teaching choice... Best Practices for English Language Learners, Common Core State Standards, Early Childhood Education, Engaging the Youth, The New Normal, Gender Equity in Education, Researching and Supporting Middle and High School Students. Healthy Students, Healthy Schools. High School and Ado- lescence...Challenges and Opportunities, Supporting Special Education Students...each delegate was afforded as much information each could use in her or his respective classroom. Notable edu- cational innovations were exemplified by several of our presenting BTU members.

Once a BTU High School Teacher Ted Chambers and Ondrea Johnston pre- sented about extended learning time and Boston Teachers Union School Co-Lead Teacher Besty Drinnan and Kindergarten Teacher Jerry Fissanti presented a ses- sion on Teacher-Led Schools as an Im- provement Strategy. Sessions were infor- mative and drew participants from around the country.

In addition to educational workshops, delegates were keenly aware of a build- ing grassroots movement. A “blueprint” from previous conventions. The use of social media as a communication tool was more evident than ever. De- legates of all ages were using Facebook, Twitter (tweeting using the hashtag #Tch11), blogging, and texting on smartphones and iPads. The conference could be seen on the internets live stream. Plenary sessions and workshops felt more like conversations. Delegate input seemed more valued than ever.

Most impressive was the introduction of the 2012 Elections Matter website http://www.aft.org/election2012/. The website offers BTU members the opportunity to find out what’s new, the legislative impact of the 2010 elections, what’s at stake in 2012, the Presidential Candidate Biogra- phies, voter registration information, etc.

Telling Our Rights: Careen Carew, BTU Secondary Field Representative

What is considered ‘corporal punishment’ in BPS?

The BTU contract states, “Teachers will be available to attend 2 evening par- ent-teacher meetings during the school year. Such meetings shall be planned by the building administrator in conjunction with the faculty senate and the parent council with one month’s advance notice. Such meetings shall not be scheduled to exceed 2 hours each. Adequate security will be pro- vided by the School Department.”

Each school is strongly encouraged to have an active faculty senate. However, if that is not the case, the faculty still must be included in parent-teacher meetings. No teacher can be compelled to attend longer than 2 hours, twice a year.

Most elections be held for BTU Build- ing Reps and/or School Site Council Members if the # of candidates running is equal to/less than that allocated.

As an itinerate teacher, do I get a desk?

Yes, the contract language mandates, “All teachers shall have an exclusive work- ing 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.

Health insurance—when do new teach- ers sign up, when can we change our plans, what if someone gets rehired or returns from an unpaid leave?... City of Boston and BPS have created health plans by contacting the Health Benefits and Insurance Division (Group In- surance) located on the 8th Floor of Boston City Hall, telephone 617-635-4570. New hires have 30 calendar days from the time they are hired in order to sign up for health insurance. Provisional or permanent teachers, who were laid off and then recalled/rehired, must contact Group Insurance within 60 days of being rehired from lay off in order to reenroll. Some people as- sume that because they are rehired from their job back, the insurance is automatically reinstated—their job back. This is the win.

Health Benefits

Question: Can someone change your type of health insurance plan, or sign up for the first time if you’ve missed another deadline. This period is held annually for 5 Weeks in April and the first week of May. Those wanting to partake in open reenrollment must contact Group Health Insurance at City Hall. If a teacher takes a leave of absence and decides to let their insurance lapse during their leave, they must sign up to reinstate their health insurance during the spring open-enroll- ment period prior to return in the fall. They will have to pay premiums out of pocket beginning on July 1- September 1 for a period of time which time/deductions will be taken from their paychecks. Their insurance will take effect July 1 as a result. During the year if a teacher gets married/div- orced, has a baby, or the spouse who carried the health insurance for the BPS teacher loses their job, then the BPS teacher has 30 calendar days to notify and submit proof to Group Insurance of this event in order to qualify for the change to be made in their health insurance coverage.

United we stand — divided we beg. Let’s stand together! BTU Unity!

AFT National Representative Glenn Scott came to Boston to help organize charter schools.

D. Boston Teacher UnionΕ July-August, 2011
Another Course to College (ACC) is a small pilot school in Brighton with approximately 200 students in grades 9-12. It has a rigorous college preparatory focus with few electives and “more reading and writing assigned than any other high school” in BPS. Almost a quarter of its students have special needs, but ACC’s 1:13 staff to student ratio and 3 hrs/day of after school homework support helps these young people succeed academically. The school’s low drop out rate (7.4% in SY 2008-09) is also significant.

The language arts curriculum certainly includes impressive traditional literature; I enjoyed listening in on discussions of Candide, The Odyssey, and The Great Gatsby during my visit. After each student shared his or her perspective, others responded with their own ideas. Math teacher Jerry Howland says that what he likes best about his school is the “level of thinking” demanded of students, showing me an ambitious syllabus posted outside the AP English classroom.

When I asked about a class full of only girls, Headmaster Lisa Gilbert-Smith explained that they had been experimenting with same-sex classrooms for their ninth (now tenth) grade students – with mixed results. We know there are no “easy answers” to closing the achievement gap, but clearly a combination of high expectations and substantial personal support can make a difference. Kudos to ACC for their efforts in this direction!
I taught at the Josiah Quincy Elementary School this school year. The school’s population is 60% Asian and 40% a mixture of Caucasian, African-American, Caribbean and African. I taught 338 students, in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade.

Students in my class learn the fundamentals of art, and this exhibition is a testament to their hard work. To facilitate my teaching, I collaborated with classroom teachers in projects related to math, science, and history. Most of my students were ESL and SEI students. Their art is a testament to how much their visual and verbal expression improved from the beginning of the school year.

Since the visual arts are essential to improving students’ aptitude in reading, writing, and math, I will continue to advocate for a student’s right to learn the visual arts as a part of their core curriculum.

Submitted by Gilda Sharpe-Etteh
The Perry K-8 School's Eighth grade class spent the year as graduating classmates prior to have done, conducting fundraisers in order to be able to go on an end of the year class trip to Thompson's Island or an amusement park - the last hurrah at their school as a group prior to disbanding to attend different high schools in the fall. The Perry is a K1-8 school with approximately 240 students in South Boston with a strong focus on science. By the time they graduate, kids know each other very well - like family. The Oliver Hazard Perry School’s eighth grade class of 2011 wanted to do something different – they just didn’t know what. During the year, the class of 22 eighth graders kept meeting but couldn’t quite decide what event they wanted to do as a culminating event of the year activity. To raise money, they held 3 fundraisers including raffling off “Patriots gear”, Yankee Candles, and a pie sale. Teachers Richard Squillante, Michelle Woods and Doreen McCarthy assisted the students in carrying out these endeavors.

Just prior to the 2011 graduation, Justin Roman, asked if the class could give the money to charity instead of going on a class trip. The kids were excited about that idea and then discussed what charity to donate to.

In the fall of 2010, about 25 folks at the Perry made up of students and staff, decided to participate in the “Making Strides” walk against breast cancer just prior to the event because their K2 teacher, Catherine Flores was diagnosed with breast cancer that September. It didn’t take very long for the school community to notice she was missing every Monday due to her treatments and then had to go on a medical leave of absence. The school team’s logo is the Perry Sharks and they walked in “Making Strides” march wearing their bright green shirts with purple lettering which stated, “Perry Sharks Taking a Bite Out Of Cancer.”

The only people who knew prior to graduation were teachers Richard Squillante and Michelle Woods. Richie called me the night prior to graduation to ask if I could attend graduation as a representative of the BTU to accept the check for $500 for the “Making Strides” charity and I was delighted to do so. Representatives from the “Jimmy Fund” visited the school the week following graduation to accept their $500 donation from the graduates.

Graduation day was a warm and sunny one. The Perry’s auditorium and balcony were full of proud parents, family members, friends, students and teachers. The Bruins were in the playoffs and there was a black and gold presence in the hall as a result with folks sporting support for the B’s as well as their best duds for their graduates. Smiles, video and cell phone cameras shot as the 8th graders filed in and up the steps to be seated on the stage dressed in royal blue caps and gowns. The school Principal did not know what the surprise was that the students had in mind as the ceremonial events unfolded.

Once students received their diplomas, two students made the announcement that they were donating the $1,000 they’d raised as a class to charity. Any student who wanted to present the check was allowed to step forward while on stage to do so. The ‘checks’ were represented by large cardboard replica’s made and signed by the graduating seniors.

It was a very proud moment for me to accept the ‘check’ from the students on behalf of the BTU. To see students who could have easily spent the money they raised on a fun filled activity benefiting themselves, donating it to a charity benefiting others was heart-warming. Students who have seen the aftermath of Katrina and other enormous catastrophic events as well as personal catastrophic events occurring to people they know and love in their school, family, or community and have decided to pay it forward, is an example we all can learn from and hopefully replicate in our own personal and school communities. Social justice is not just a concept, it is a way of life exemplified by acts such as those modeled by the students at the Perry. Small individuals step up within each and every one of us, shaking us up out of inertia and analysis paralysis into action. Hope follows and is a very powerful lesson on which to scaffold.

The Perry Sharks team is planning to participate in the upcoming “Making Strides Against Breast Cancer” walk with “Perry Sharks Take a Bite Out of Cancer” class of 2011 Perry School 8th grade graduates donating checks for $500 each to the Jimmy Fund and to the BTU for the “Making Strides Against Breast Cancer” walk with Perry teacher class advisors Michelle Woods & Richard Squillante and BTU Rep Caren Carew.

Class of 2011 Perry School 8th grade graduates donating checks for $500 each to the Jimmy Fund and to the BTU for the “Making Strides Against Breast Cancer” walk with Perry teacher class advisors Michelle Woods & Richard Squillante and BTU Rep Caren Carew.
Widening the Curriculum: Students at the BTU School Learn Research Skills and Present Demands to Nutritional Services

Seventh graders have a lot to say about school lunch, and considerably more after their Youth Participatory Action Research Project on school food. On Monday, June 20th, students in Riana Good’s Spanish class at the Boston Teachers Union School (BTU School) presented their findings and recommendations for change in school food based on their surveys, interviews and research. Attendees included Interim Director of BPS Food and Nutrition Services Shamill Mohammed, City Councilor Felix Arroyo, Aliza Wasserman of the Boston Public Health Commission, Kim Szeto of Farm to School, Daren Graves of Simmons College and cafeteria worker Raquel DeJesus. Berta Berriz, Betsy Drinan, Melanie Allen, and David Weinstein, all of the BTU School, as well as Sonia Caus Gleason of the BTU School Governing Board, were also in attendance.

After identifying the problems that “school food is not good” and “Blacks and Latinos are more affected by health problems,” students developed questions including, “why are the portions the size they are?” “who decides what is served?” and “is school food actually healthy?” To answer these questions, their methods included interviews with cafeteria workers, interviews with members of food services, Internet research, viewing the film “What’s On Our Plates,” surveys of other students, and visits from Laura Zientek of Haley House, Tatianna Montanez of Sociedad Latina, Charlie Radosovich of Truck-Farm, and Jahliisa Rawles of UMass Boston. Students Brittany Harrison and Ray Crespo attended a school food-tasting event at Madison Park High School to weigh-in on which food-service-management company would be selected during the current bidding process.

Because the BTU School has a satellite kitchen without a sink or stove or ovens, prepackaged food is shipped from Pennsylvania and reheated. “No wonder it’s always cold in the middle or really mushy,” said student Deidra Eyma upon learning that it wasn’t possible to prepare meals on-site. With this obstacle in mind, some of their questions and research had to be reworked.

Students compiled their findings and demands into a bilingual PowerPoint presentation, predominantly in Spanish, and this bilingual video, predominately in English, with the support of Michael Cermak of Environmental Justice Media. The project addressed different skill-levels and interests throughout. Students who are fluent and near-fluent in Spanish still see school food as decent at best, and are aware of the problems. “We did it! They actually listened to us,” said student Zacary Rivera.

At the presentation’s conclusion, students questioned the uniform portion size at K-8 schools and proposed changes to the cafeteria décor. Shamill Mohammed, Interim Director of Food and Nutrition Services for BPS, acknowledged that elementary and middle school students are supposed to get different portion sizes, but that this doesn’t happen in K-8 schools. As a result of the students’ requests, he committed to institute a change in portion sizes. Betsy Drinan, Co-Teacher Leader of the BTU School’s Upper School, said that purchasing furnishings and decorating the walls of the cafeteria was an issue the Student Council could take on in the fall.

“We did it!” They actually listened to us,” said student Zacary Rivera.

While students still see school food as decent at best, and are aware of health disparities beyond the scope of their project, both of their primary demands were agreed to, and will improve their school dining experience.

(Submitted by Spanish Teacher Riana Good of the BTU School.)
Summer Musings on the Train

The Heart, Mind and Muscle of Education…

(continued from page 3)

these recommendations.

Through the AFT Innovation Fund, our members are doing some of the most groundbreaking things, breaking the standards. For example, at the Clarence R. Edwards Middle School in Boston, Ted Chambers and his colleagues have set a standard where students are aligned with the Common Core standards and are available online, free, for all to use.

And as we focus on quality, we’re learning from the success of others. Many people talk about American exceptionalism. America is an exceptional country. But American exceptionalism doesn’t justify American exemption from what works elsewhere. Why would we deny our children the best ideas the world has to offer?

Take Finland. Teacher training is demanding, rigorous, and extensive, with ample clinical experience. Teachers are esteemed and are compensated fairly, and their training is fully paid for by the state. They are required to live up, supported and sustained them.

The Heart, Mind and Muscle of Education…

In many ways, the passers-through are just the opposite. Americans work harder, put in more hours, but many of us work harder, feel less satisfied with our lives.

One of the comments I heard at AFT TEACH was that public education is a waste of time, a waste of money, a waste of effort. As the train rumbles down the track I thought, “What would he think of all our efforts? What would he think of all the work we do?”

Look, I’m not advocating for a bygone era, when most people took a job and kept it for life. But how many of you are better off now than you were a year ago? Better off than you were a year ago? Better in your third year than you were in your first? Beyond the representational sample that I’ve just surveyed, a whole lot of other evidence backs this up.

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The Heart, Mind and Muscle of Education…

In many ways, the passers-through are just the opposite. Americans work harder, put in more hours, but many of us work harder, feel less satisfied with our lives.

One of the comments I heard at AFT TEACH was that public education is a waste of time, a waste of money, a waste of effort. As the train rumbles down the track I thought, “What would he think of all our efforts? What would he think of all the work we do?”

Look, I’m not advocating for a bygone era, when most people took a job and kept it for life. But how many of you are better off now than you were a year ago? Better off than you were a year ago? Better in your third year than you were in your first? Beyond the representational sample that I’ve just surveyed, a whole lot of other evidence backs this up.

And as we focus on quality, we’re learning from the success of others. Many people talk about American exceptionalism. America is an exceptional country. But American exceptionalism doesn’t justify American exemption from what works elsewhere. Why would we deny our children the best ideas the world has to offer?

Take Finland. Teacher training is demanding, rigorous, and extensive, with ample clinical experience. Teachers are esteemed and are compensated fairly, and their training is fully paid for by the state. They are required to live up, supported and sustained them.
Appreciation of the Union's Educational Efforts

Presenting at the AFT TEACH 2011 this June was an eye-opening experience. It was my first time attending an educational conference. While there were many people at the various workshops, there is one experience that will stay with me throughout my career. In her opening remarks at the conference, AFT President Randi Weingarten spoke about “the heart, the mind and the muscle” that it takes to establish a great education for every student.

We spent three days diving into school-wide issues, tackling classroom challenges and finding ways to strengthen our communities. As a first time delegate to the conference I also had the unique opportunity to be a presenter. The American Federation Teachers reached out to the Boston Teachers Union School to lead a talk that focused on teacher-leadmer in Newark, NJ. At the heart of everything, leaders with from the BRICK Avon Academy.

During the three days at TEACH, the message being sent was that the union stands for far more than contract negotiations and benefits packages. I was treated to an environment of peers from around the country sharing experiences, offering solutions and providing feedback. From the perspective of a participant, there were stories and experiences to share, common goals and challenges and great ideas to learn from. From the perspective of a presenter I really believed I was being heard and appreciated. This is what the Union does for us every day. They listen, support and help us grow.

If you’ve never participated in an even like this, I suggest you do as soon as you got the chance. I have a newfound appreciation for the team that supports me.

As teachers it’s easy to slip into the world of our classrooms. We may not individually know how many ways the Union is working in our favor, but when we get together the heart, the mind and muscle only grow stronger.

(Jerry Pisani teaches at the Boston Teachers Union School.)

 Commentary: Jerry Pisani

BTU Retired Teachers Chapter News

RTC Executive Board Minutes, May 2, 2011

Members present: Anne-Marie Adduci; Anne Broder, Treasurer; Sandy Carl; Mary Calabane; Larry Cornohl; Dave Donovan, Chairman; Phil Fasano; Eileen Ganley; Donna Cooley-Hilton; Ruthanne Kennedy; Marilyn Marion; Secre.

Executive Session was closed at 11:00 am.

Report Accepted.

Election:

Chairman: Jerry Pisani; Chairman: Joan Miller; Vice Chairman: Stephen Schenkel; Secretary: Marilyn Marion; Treasurer: Sandy Carl.

Meeting adjourned at 12:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn F. Marion, Secretary

INFORMATION FOR NEW RETIRES

When you retire, you are no longer a member of the Union because you no longer pay dues. And, you are no longer a member of the Health and Welfare Fund, which means you no longer have dental coverage and eyeglass coverage.

If you wish to continue your connection to the Union, you can join the Retired Teachers Chapter (RTC). The dues will be taken from your retirement check each month ($5 for teachers, $2.50 for paras). The RTC offers a dental insurance benefit to its members for a fee each month. Our Dental Plan covers members only and their spouse. You can also avail yourself of COBRA coverage through Health and Welfare for 18 months after retiring. For info on COBRA, call 1-617-288-0500.

FILL IN THE COUPON AND RETURN TO THE RTC TO RECEIVE A PACKET OF INFORMATION ON THE RTC, Hopefully, after reading the info, you will fill in the blue card and return it to us.

(Eileen Ganley is RTC Membership Chairperson.)
Scenes from around Washington, D.C.

Photos by Michael J. Maguire
Happy conventioneers.

Betsy Drinan and Jerry Pisani, both of the BTU Pilot School.

Garret Virchick of Brighton HS with Occupational Therapists Maritza Agrait and Marjorie Crosby.

Homework knows no vacation.

Betsy Drinan and Jerry Pisani, both of the BTU Pilot School.

Sherry Pedone and Gayle Marrow, both of Mildred Avenue MS.

Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-Washington, D.C.), whose mother was a teacher spoke to the AFT Convention delegates.

Michael Crain, Career & Technical Education and John Enright of Madison Park TVHS.

BTU at the AFT Convention in Washington, D.C.

Photos by Michael J. Maguire

Q – Who’s thrilled to attend summer workshops?

Sherry Pedone and Gayle Marrow, both of Mildred Avenue MS.

Jill Duckowney and Sandra Baler-Segal, both retired.