End of the Year Check-In: Some Good News, Some Bad, Some Promise

By Richard Stutman

BTU President

Good day. By the time you get this most likely the school year will be in its last few days, and you will be ready to enjoy a few short days of vacation. Before long some of you will be back in school either teaching summer school or taking professional development or graduate courses. Others of you will be working in other jobs, often for a healthy diversion. Regardless of what you do in the summer, your thoughts will never be far away from your school and your students, and September will be here before you know it. That’s just the way it works: We take our work home with us, even in the summer. That’s why it’s important to take some sort of break and do something different when possible.

So where are we union-wise at the end of the 2010-2011 school year? We’ve been negotiating for a complete year and have made some limited progress. We’ve reached a tentative agreement on how teachers and paras will move from school to school. There’ll be a slightly different assignment process that will take the place of the excess pool; both the school department in the BTU are pleased with the outcome. We have made some progress in other areas of concern, however. The issues of compensation, performance evaluation, professional growth and development, and the extended day remain.

That said, the state is about to release new performance evaluation regulations that will dictate some – not all – of the evaluation language we will have to adopt, putting in the way for some movement in this area. We will continue to negotiate over the summer, and both sides have a goal of wrapping up negotiations as soon as possible.

On the matter of health insurance, while the “fix” are not all dotted on the impending state legislation as we go to press, it appears certain that the only members, along with other city employees, will have a very good health care package for the next four years. In July of 2015, our health insurance will have to match up with the new state legislation – a downgrade that will diminish the quality of our health care while making it more expensive. We’ll cross that bridge when we get to it, and in the meantime we will try our best legislative to get some needed changes in the law.

There are a host of other external problems facing us, as well as our colleagues around the country. The difficulties we face – charter schools, privatization, increase in high stakes testing, and continued inadequate funding – are found everywhere in cities across the country from Baltimore and New York to San Francisco and LA. No urban school system has been immune from these assaults. Although we have weathered these a little better than most, this is about to change. In particular, the expansion of charter schools under the new Ed Reform law will drain from our district an additional yearly cost of $40-$50 million, on top of the current loss of $55 million. Individual school budgets will face continued declines.

The city will attempt to close even more schools, in particular smaller schools, to cover the loss of funds and students. Truth is, even more schools would have closed this year were it not for the tremendous resistance offered by parents, teachers, and students in the affected schools.

Statewide, we will face increased standardized testing, as the state hastens to impose even more testing to meet the twice-yearly RTTT demands to establish beginning and after data-points of student benchmarks. Add to this the strong possibility that the state will mandate that
Housing Activists Confront Bank of America
Demand Fairness - Not Foreclosure

In the first united protest of the Bank Tenant Movement around 300 people gathered in Copley Square to decry Bank of America’s failure to provide relief to the victims of predatory lending practices. Practices of Bank of America helped to promote City Life/Vida Urbana, The Chelsea Collaborative, Springfield No One Leaves Coalition, Worcester Anti-Foreclosure Team, Direction Action for Rights and Equality - Providence (DARE), Lynn United For Change, The Merrimack Valley Project, and Mass Alliance Against Predatory Lending came together to demand that Bank of America halt all evictions, especially when the families being evicted can still pay rent. They also demanded that real modifications be made to existing mortgages including principal reductions. Much of the blame for the current economic crisis has been placed on Wall Street banks that first demanded and received changes in banking regulations and then encouraged predatory lending practices that targeted low income working families. At the same time they were writing these mortgages they were also betting against them with hedge funds and credit default swaps and other exotic financial instruments that were never regulated, thanks to paid lobbyists. The housing bubble grew, then burst, and American taxpayers paid hundreds of billions of dollars to bail them out.

As teachers we see the effects of homelessness every day. Many of our students have had to endure multiple moves over the past three years. Sometimes this happens when their homes are foreclosed. Other times they are evicted from apartments because they can’t even when the family is paying the rent. Why? Because the banks insist on empty apartments after foreclosure.

Individuals from the labor movement came out to support the rally. Rich Rogers from the Greater Boston Labor Council addressed the crowd, targeted the greed of Bank of America and other Wall Street banks. And Boston Union School teacher Riana Goode carried a banner for City Life/Vida Urbana.

Speeches and chants enumerated the demands. Attempts to enter the bank and confront the officers of Bank of America were denied. But rally organizers were told that this was the beginning and they would be back.

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WHEN WRITING: All correspondence to the Boston Union Teacher must be signed and include the author’s name and school or department if not school-based. All correspondence is subject to editing and does not necessarily represent the views of the Boston Union Teacher.

DEADLINE: The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue of the Boston Union Teacher is Friday, the 15th of each month, unless otherwise noted. All correspondence should be sent by email to the editor or to the address listed below.

180 Mount Vernon Street • Boston, MA 02125
617-288-2000 • 617-288-2465 • Fax 617-288-0024 • www.btu.org
The BPS policy Superintendent’s Circular EQT-1, “Employees with Disabilities – Rights & Responsibilities” commits to nondiscrimination against qualified persons with disabilities to education programs and employment practices in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended and with the American Disabilities Act (ADA).

A person with disabilities is defined as a person who (1) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, (2) has a record of such impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such impairment, most of which require legal interpretations. Examples of the range of disabilities include: * Non-ambulatory disabilities – physical impairments requiring use of a wheelchair; * Semi-ambulatory disabilities – physical impairments causing a person to walk with difficulty (with or without aids); * Coordination disabilities – impairments of muscle control to limbs, resulting in faulty coordination; * Hearing disabilities; * Speech impairments; Learning disabilities; * Mental or psychological disorders – impairments effecting normal mental processes or emotional stability.

Section 504 defines a “Qualified Disabled Person” for employment purposes if they meet legitimate skill experience, education, or other requirements of an employment position, and who can perform the “essential functions” of the position with or without reasonable accommodation. If the individual is qualified by a disability, the employer must consider whether the individual could perform these functions with a reasonable accommodation. The ADA does not apply to individuals with minor, non-chronic conditions of short duration, such as a sprain, broken limb, and the like.

The circular provides a VOLUNTARY self-identification form of employees with disabilities. Even if an employee has a disability that is apparent to others, they are under no obligation to participate in this self-identification, and failure to do so will not result in any adverse action. The circular states that any information an employee chooses to provide will be held in strictest confidence and will be known only to BPS Equity and does not become part of their regular personnel records.

In addition to this policy, if you believe you have been subjected to discrimination or harassment, you may file a complaint with either of the following government agencies. Each agency has a short time period for filing a claim (EEOC-180 days can be extended under state/local laws; MCAD-300 days). * The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) JFR Federal Building Room 417, Boston (02203; 1-800-522-5272). * The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD); Boston Office, One Ashburton Place, RM601, Boston (02108; 617-594-6000).

**When can a teacher collect Unemployment Compensation?**

A teacher is eligible for unemployment compensation when they have been laid off or have not been rehired by the school system. If a teacher has been issued a letter of termination or has not been rehired as of the effective date of said termination, then they are eligible for unemployment benefits.

When a terminated teacher is paid over the summer months due to being on a 26 paycheck schedule, they are still able to collect Unemployment Compensation when applicable. To obtain more information, call the Massachusetts Division of Employment via the website www.detma.org/workers/howtofile.htm or by phone TeleClaims services at 1-877-626-6800 or 617-626-6800. Hours are Monday - Thursday 8:30 – 6:30, Friday 8:00 – 4:30.

**What does COBRA mean concerning health insurance?**

COBRA stands for the Consolidated Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1985. It is the law that requires employers who offer group health insurance plans to give their employees the opportunity to stay on their group health insurance plan if they are no longer employed by the employer and the former employee isn’t eligible for health insurance coverage through a spouse’s insurance. If a teacher is terminated from the BPS/City of Boston, they will be mailed information about COBRA benefits. For further inquiries concerning COBRA continuation of coverage, get in touch with the Health Benefits and Insurance Office, Room 807, City Hall. Give them a call at 617-635-4570.

**What is the severance pay policy in the BPS for teachers?**

The BPS Contract details, “Persons who retire, resign, or die after ten (10) years of teaching in the BPS shall be paid at the ratio of 40% of accumulated, unused sick days, without limitation. Payment shall be based on the annual rate of pay of the person at the time of death, retirement or resignation. In the event of death, payment shall be made to the estate.” Severance shall be paid in two installments. One half of the payment shall be made on or before December 31st of the year of retirement, and the other half shall be paid on or before December 31st of the year after retirement.” If a person has taught less than ten full years in the BPS, they lose their accumulated sick days if they leave the system.

**Secretary of Education Arne Duncan Speaks at Harvard Commencement**

Supporters of Public Education Rally to Protest His Policies

Since Arne Duncan was appointed Secretary of Education under the Obama administration we have seen an increased in standardized testing, charter school openings, public school closings, and attacks on teachers. Although he has never been a teacher, his tenure has effectively taken this out of collective bargaining. A Harvard graduate himself, he was named Chief Marshall for the school’s graduation ceremony. A small but spirited group of teachers and public education advocates came out to protest his policies.

In the crowd that day were former Boston Public Schools principal Deborah Meir, Citizens for Public Schools (CPS) activist and former BPS Secondary Field Representative Larry Ward also spoke to the crowd urging them to keep fighting. He had this message for Duncan, “Arne, get out of our lives and get out of education.”

(Photos courtesy of Liz Womack.)
Performance Evaluations and Terminations

By Patrick J. Connolly
BTU Executive Vice President

This time of year can be a period of great stress for many teachers. There has been an increase in the number of teachers receiving an overall rating of “Does Not Meet Standards.” This end of year evaluation had to be received prior to May 15, 2011. After receiving this year end evaluation, the principal or headmaster may recommend to the Superintendent that the teacher be terminated.

Surviving May 15th is no easy task. Does Not Meet Standards evaluation does not insulate a teacher from possible dismissal. If a teacher receives at least four overall Does Not Meet Standards evaluation does not provide a way for veteran teachers to run debate clubs in public schools across the world. It empowers school students to run their own clubs and engage with the issues that affect their lives. It helps to develop the skills and confidence they need to succeed. The free program ran from late February until May 14, 2011 with the Harvard Debate Mate Competition.

Timilty Middle School Debate Team:

Jordan Bell, Quantasha Coakley, Marcus Dillahunty, Ta-Janee Edwards, Carla Velasquez, and Maxine Marseille

Debate Coaches: Ms. Beverly Williams
Ms. Madeline Zhu, Harvard School Debate Mate Mentor

Students had to win two rounds to make it to the finals.

Round 1:
Position: opposition
Argument: Should teachers and school personnel be able to search student bookbags?

Round 2:
Position: proponent
Argument: Should the voting age be lowered to 13 years of age?

Final Round:
Position: opposition
Argument: Should cyber-bullying be a crime?

Other Timilty Debaters who did not go to Harvard to debate but keep good attendance and helped to build a strong debate team:

Jason Durrant, Azaura Fernandez, Rosellen Felix, Malik McGance, Alexis Sanchez, Kyriece Wrice,

Competing Schools:
Orchard Gardens 1st place winners
Edwards
Froebel
Irving
Rogers

2nd Place Winners!
Harvard Debate Mate Cup
First Time Ever Middle School Debate

With the end of the school year approaching, what can someone do if they have evaluation issues? Making sense of some prescriptions is difficult. The teacher may feel the administrator is out to get them. This may or may not be accurate.

Teacher and evaluator may look at the same lesson and come to different conclusions. The prescriptions that are given may or may not be helpful. The administrator will probably not be around to explain what to do for the next evaluation cycle beginning in September. What can a teacher do to help himself or herself address these issues?

The BTU has thousands of members, teachers with great experience and resources. We have teachers who have developed ideas and strategies to address many classroom issues. It is time to take advantage of our own resources. At the May, 2011 membership meeting a motion was passed to attempt to address this evaluation issue. The BTU will offer a week long performance improvement institute in early August to address the concerns of individual teachers. There will be four hour sessions at the BTU Hall. These will run from 8:30 am – 12:30 pm, Monday – Friday either the first or second week of August. The idea is to look at each individual evaluation and to focus on ways to meet the prescriptions of the administrator.

To accomplish this goal the BTU is looking within its ranks for up to twenty teachers who feel they have the classroom skills and interpersonal skills to work with teachers who are having evaluation issues. We constantly say we can provide better Professional Development, now is our chance. All levels, program and content areas are needed. These teachers will be compensated at the contractual rate for their participation.

Permanent teachers who are having evaluation issues are strongly encouraged to consider this as a way to address their evaluation issues. Participants need to self-identify by contacting the BTU. Each teacher must send their DNMS evaluation(s) to the BTU. The program is designed at present, to work with up to twenty teachers. The idea is to work on one for twenty hours to review, discuss, and address the issues and prescriptions of the evaluation. The hope is to provide a way for veteran teachers to improve their performance and the performance of their students. The BTU is doing this to assist its members. Members have asked for help to address evaluation issues. If you are in this situation do not let pride or denial stop you from obtaining assistance from your BTU colleagues. The career you save may be your own.

For further information teachers who wish to assist in the program and teachers who desire assistance should contact pconnolly@btu.org.

Permanent teachers who are having evaluation issues should contact Patrick J. Connolly BTU Executive Vice President.

BOSTON UNION TEACHER  June 2011
April 8, 2011 at the monthly Boston School Committee meeting, eight newly National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) and one renewal received commendations from the school district for their exceptional accomplishment in achieving NBCT. At the 6pm start of the meeting Superintendent Carol Johnson outlined the rigor of the process to attain NBCT including a yearlong portfolio and a six-hour written assessment. She spoke in glowing terms of the impact NB status has for the BPS. Before a packed audience including proud NBCT family members, friends, colleagues, administrators and well-wishers at the 26 Court Street meeting quarters, Dr. Johnson and School Committee members recognized each teacher individually with a round of handshakes, a plaque and a group picture.

Angela DiPrizio Otis Elementary Grade 4, NBCT Middle Childhood Generalist

Cara Fenner Excel High School, History Grades 10-12, History: Adolescence and Young Adulthood

Kelly Garofalo Brighton High School, ELA, English Language Arts, Adolescence and Young Adulthood

Karen McCarthy Brighton High School ELA, English Language Arts, Adolescence and Young Adulthood

Robert Rametti Brighton High School ELA, English Language Arts, Adolescence and Young Adulthood

Carla McCormack Edwards Middle School Mathematics, Early Adolescence

Jeffrey A. Timberlake Boston Teachers Union School, Grade 3 Generalist, Middle Childhood

Adam Moore Formerly Perkins Elementary School, Generalist, Middle Childhood

Renewed NBCT Whitney Weeder East Boston Early Education Center, Generalist, Early Childhood

Boston NBCTs are entitled to the BTU contractual four-percent pay raise, along with a reimbursement of their application fees. They also have earned the opportunity to receive nine graduate credits at a locally accredited college with transcript fees only. The Center for Leadership Development in collaboration with the Boston Teachers Union is pleased with the increased number of teachers attempting National Certification and the high rate of success in the BPS. Compared to the national pass rate of 36%, Boston is passing at about 75%. The number is approaching 65 with Dr. Johnson’s goal of doubling Boston NBCTs over the next five years. The BPS CLD/BTU leadership salutes their accomplishment and looks forward to their leadership in the Boston Public Schools.

Teachers formed NBPTS in 1987 to advance the quality of teaching and learning by developing professional standards for accomplished teaching, creating a voluntary system to certify teachers who meet those standards and integrating certified teachers into educational reform efforts.

Follow in their steps to earn this prestigious recognition of accomplishments. If you would like more information on how to apply, contact Maggie Hoyt mhoyt@boston.k12.ma.us.

(Margaret Hoyt is a BPS Lead Teacher andNBCT Candidate Provider.)
DELEGATE TO ALL AFFILIATED BODIES (TBA)

Sharon Abraham, Brighton HS ........................................ 112
Devra Garme, Whittier HS ............................................. 109
Manitza Agrael, Occupational Therapist .................. 163
John Allocca, Pilot School ............................................. 208
Patricia Armstrong, BTU Office .................................. 599
Ria Asarni, Umana HS ...................................................... 64
Sandra Brown, Springfield ............................................ 170
David Barry, O’Byrant HS ............................................. 94
Robert B. Brennan, Engineering School (HPS) .. 282
Erik Berg, Philbrick ES .................................................. 515
Anne Brooks, Dever ES ................................................. 114
Dawne Brown, Morgan ............................................... 282
Nia A. Burke, Agassiz ES .............................................. 145
Christine Boyington, Umana HS ............................... 165
Cornelia "Connie" Cullenhan, Retired ......................... 186
Caren Canow, King MS ............................................... 704
Robert F. Carroll, Lt. General ................................... 361
Ted Chambers, Edwards MS ....................................... 264
Brenda Cheung-Choo O’Byrant HS ................. 704
Christine Choukas, McKoy K-8 .............................. 62
Patrick Connolly, BTU Office ................................... 506
Matthew Cotton, Taylor ES ........................................... 232
Sarah C. Cooper, Blackstone ES .................................. 75
Michael Crenn, Career & Technical Ed ..................... 239
Angela Cristiani, Psychological Services ........... 794
Marie Cross, Occupational Therapy ...................... 183
Ed Doherty, AFT Massachusetts ........................... 611
Mary Gaughn, Retired ................................................... 228
Kareneeter Hines, Timilty ............................ 204
John Herald, Madison Park TVHS ....................... 92
Linda Holford, Retired ................................................. 114
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Keith Guettey, Dorchester Academy ...................... 199
Barry Lawton, East Boston HS ................................. 161
Marta Johnson Faldasz, Roosevelt K-8 .............. 162
Jenna Fitzgerald, BTU Office ................................... 526
Dorothy Jones, Retired ................................................. 114
Maria June, King MS .................................................... 704
Alice M. Yong, Murphy K-8 ..................................... 534
Kareen-San Hines, Timilty ......................................... 297
John Herald, Retired .................................................... 209
Michael Johnson, Sumner ES .................................. 89
Veronica Kerger, Sumner ES ................................. 35
Christine Gorman-Arnold, Sumner ES .......... 89
Patrick Connolly, BTU Office ................................... 506
Christine Buttiglieri, Umana HS .............................. 105
Mary Anne Urban, Retired ...................................... 133
Sara Donahue, Retired ............................................... 114
Keith Haley, Parkview EE ......................................... 89
Barbara Y. Kline, Retired .......................................... 114
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Sarah Donahue, Retired ............................................. 114

BTU Election Results

June 1, 2011

(continued from page 1)

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What’s more, federal funds are about to dry up even as the federal mandates set manda ...
25th Paraprofessional Conference


Josefina Lascano, Lynette Harrell and Lisa Osborn-Kelley

Carla Johnson and Josefina Lascano.

25th Paraprofessional Conference


Irma Hernandez from the Condon School.

Jenna Fitzgerald with Paras from New Bedford.

Paras from the Madison Park Vocational Technical High School.

Paras from the Condon School.

Paras from the Joseph Lee School.

Paras from the East Boston Early Education Center.

BOSTON UNION TEACHER  June, 2011  7
When the school year draws to a close it is an important time for reflection. In our school life we think about what worked for our students and what didn’t. Where were our successes and where were our failures? Were our assumptions correct, or will we need to reassess our beliefs about student learning? What might we want to do different next year?

As a Union we also need to be reflective. Successes, Failures, Assumptions, Reassessment. This should be true in good years as well as bad. But this year has been especially bad. It seemed like we were always on the defensive. Teacher Evaluations, Value Added, Standardized Tests, Charter Schools, Collective Bargaining. Every time you turned around there was some bad policy being touted as the panacea for public education. We can stand together as a Union to fight these battles, but if we are going to win the war that is being waged against public education we cannot simply be against these bad policies. To win the war we need to be united around a vision for a public education that works for students, parents, and teachers.

Of course it was easy we would have been there yesterday. Everybody and their cousin has an opinion about schools. And too often we divide ourselves based on one or a couple of ideas. Cliques get formed. Lunch rooms are divided. What ends up dividing the divide is oftentimes the ideas of those who don’t teach in our schools and would never send their children to our schools. The money of Broad, Gates, and Walton is determining the future of public education only because we have not figured out a way to unite ourselves, and unite with parents.

This short commentary cannot offer a vision that might ultimately be built into a movement. That vision can’t come from one person. What I can offer is a framework for discussion. The question to be discussed is: What way forward for our union?

A framework for this discussion has recently been offered by The Tom Mooney Institute for Teacher and Union Leadership. Tom Mooney was President of The Ohio Federation of Teachers, and a Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers. He was also one of the leading voices nationally for teachers on educational policy and school reform issues; he fought to make teachers real partners in determining educational programs and resource allocations at the district level. Unfortunately he passed away five years ago. But the institute that bears his name survives and has recently issued a working document called Constructing “Progressive Unionism” Out of Three Frames. (See box right.)

The three frames include Industrial Unionism: Collective power to meet bread and butter needs and ensure fairness from management; Professional Unionism: Control of the profession to ensure quality; and Social Justice Unionism: Equity for our students through active engagement in the community. These three frames are not mutually exclusive. And no frame is “better” than the others. If a union resides in only one frame it would be impossible to build a united union. Rather the framework serves as a guide to tackle the big questions that are before us. And the objective is to come up with creative solutions to the problems and challenges we face without sacrificing the goals of each frame.

To build a united Union we must start to have these challenging discussions about the way forward. Our future will be determined by the solutions we agree upon to meet these challenges. And worst case, the lack of agreement. These discussions need to happen in schools and lunch rooms, not just in union halls. What way forward for our Union? It’s up to you. It’s up to all of us.
We’re Learning Here

FARRAGUT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Farragut Elementary will no longer exist next year, although the building may be leased to a charter school. What irony! When I asked students what they would miss most, each one responded without hesitation, “The teachers!”

One teacher in particular, Helen Andrews, has been teaching in BPS for 50 years! I talked with her briefly about retiring vs. looking for a new “home” next year, recognizing a kindred spirit who is as committed to her profession as ever despite the challenges and changes she’s experienced. Several other teachers at the Farragut spoke about the sense of “family” created by this small school tucked in a corner near the bustling medical area off Huntington Avenue in Mission Hill.

Despite looming MCAS math tests, classes were fully engaged in a variety of learning experiences. A group of three girls were singing along with a storybook in the kindergarten class. Second graders were making colorful “fraction flags,” while older students were reading and discussing a novel. Large posters in the hallway showed fourth grade observations of fiddler crab behavior; they were just beginning to study African dwarf frogs on the day I visited.

I always enjoy “reading the walls” of a school. At the Farragut, I particularly liked reading about young children’s exploration of the similarities and differences between the “old” paper they’d recycled to create “new” paper. Activities like this are so much more engaging than the worksheets that increasingly dominate early childhood education.

As the school year comes to a close, I hope you take satisfaction in knowing that each of you has indeed made a difference in the lives of your students. I wish you a summer full of whatever gives you the energy to begin anew in September! Please invite me to visit your school next year!

We were organizing fractions from least to greatest. This year in math we’ve learned percents for fractions like 7/8 and 2/3. We’ve also learned to round fractions to the nearest whole number.

- Kiarra Adkins & Esteban Gutierrez, Grade 4

I was making a flag with four equal parts. I learned that 4 fourths makes one whole. We’ve also learned about thirds and halves.

- Brianna Cruz, Grade 2

This was in science class, where we’re learning about different landforms. I’ve learned that the Grand Canyon was formed by erosion caused by the Colorado River.

- Winnie Zhang, Grade 5

I was drawing and writing about giving flowers to my mom for Mother’s Day. This year I’ve learned not to make my letters too big and how to write longer stories.

- Kaylee Tran, Grade 1

Ms. Grinley was helping me draw a flower. My favorite thing is learning about letters and sounds in phonics.

- Danika Duverguy, Grade 1

We were feeding our African dwarf frogs. We’ve learned that their backs can be dark or light, with black dots, but their bellies are all the same color. Their bodies are camouflaged for hiding under rocks in African streams. We’ve also learned they have lungs and gills.

- Nasir DaCruz, Jasmany Medina & Shalandra Small, Grade 4

I was doing my ABC job with my teacher Mrs. M. I learned the alphabet this year and I made a lot of new friends.

- Derling Bonilla Sierra, Kindergarten

We’re Learning Here

A project by Amika Kemmler Ernst, Ed.D.
"When the Luck of the Irish Ran Out" by David Lynch

This is a well-written and well-documented account of the Irish banking collapse of 2008-2009 that ended the short-lived Celtic Tiger boom with a sickening crash. It also plunged Ireland into its greatest economic crisis in its short history as a modern nation and endangered its sovereignty as an independent entity. If that is not enough, this crisis calls into question the viability of The European Union of which Ireland is a charter member.

This crisis which involved shaky bank deals and excessive borrowing was worse than the American one because U.S. banks faced some regulation whereas in Ireland it was a cozy system of no regulation and insider deals. Mr. Lynch weaves into his narrative a witty social history of Ireland in the modern period (post-independence 1945) and introduces us to a motley gang of politicians who best can be described as rogues and "cute hoolies." This latter appellation does not mean physically attractive but cute in this sense means devious, opportunist and scoundrel like.

The Irish voters tolerated this situation because they were "our lads" and not the hated Brits who controlled the Irish state and its finances for so long. Indeed most of the politicians were members of the Fianna Fail ruling party which ran Ireland for most of the 60 years of independence. They were ignominiously ousted in the most recent election thus bringing back to the heady days of Independence.

The election of February 2011 ended Fianna Fail's long reign as the party of the Celtic Tiger boom with a sickening collapse of 2008-2009 that ended the short-lived miracle.

Mr. Lynch dismisses Sinn Fein with a wave of his hand. He acknowledges Sinn Fein's role in the bloody "Troubles" of the North circa 1969-1995 when they along with John Hume's moderate Social Democratic party forged a peace process. In a final irony the North as part of the United Kingdom's economic entity does not suffer for the lot of the South with its massive indebtedness and still weak economy. There is, however, a revival of sectarian violence that is worrisome. In the South the average citizen viewed Sinn Fein as too radical and dangerously socialist before the economic collapse. In the 2011 election Sinn Fein picked up several seats in the Dail making it a significant player.

Mr. Lynch has written an important book that will, I hope, provoke many people Irish or Irish American to think anew about what constitutes modernity, as well as the lasting prosperity in the 21st century. It is a good read by the fireplace and has the virtue of being entertaining as well. I recommend it highly.
BTU Retired Teachers Chapter News

RTC Executive Board Minutes, April 4, 2011

Members present: Anne Marie Adduci; Anne Broder, Treasurer; Mary Cahalane; Dave Donovan, Chairman; Eileen Ganley; Donna Cooley-Hilton; Ruthanne Kennedy; Marilyn Marion, Secretary and Paul Tenney.

Excused: Bonnie Mitten, Phil Fasano, Larry Connolly, Linda McNamie, Leonard Miraglia, Marie Broderick, Sandy Carle and Mary Jo Murphy.

The chairman called the meeting to order at 10:45.
Secretary: The February and March minutes were read and accepted.

Chairman: Chairman reported that all representatives from the insurance companies are booked and ready to go for the April 7th business meeting. The membership was informed of the meeting via US Mail and electronically. He was pleased that many have responded electronically.

Treasurer: The treasurer’s reports were read and accepted.

Benefits: No Report.

Remembrance: No Report.

Scholarship: Two applicants thus far. The dates on the application were confusing because of a date error. This will be corrected as soon as possible. Report Accepted.

Travel: Trip plans with Yankee have been completed. Tours-at-a-Glance and flyers through June were given to Elaine for mailing on Friday, March 18th. The Casino trip is a question unless we can pick up enough people at the spring meeting, where we would like to have a table inside the hall. The 3-day trip to Long Island will be cancelled this afternoon, since we cannot commit to a minimum, at this point. We will be meeting the Collette representative the week of April 11th. Report Accepted.

Legislative: No Report.

Data Processing: Met with Jonathan, the IT person, and the chairman to make the site membership friendly. The travel information will be on the website. Report Accepted.

Membership: We have 2,777 members. Report Accepted.

Election: None of the RTC officers have oppositions. We will have electronic voting for the June 1st election. Report Accepted.

Old Business: None

New Business: Committee will be formed to accept names for the Phil Pirrone Service Award.

Next meeting is May 2nd, 2011. Meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

‒ Marilyn F. Marion, Secretary

INFORMATION FOR NEW RETIREEs

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 ($5 for teachers, $2.50 for paras). The RTC also has 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.

Complete the information below and we will send you the application form.

(Eileen Ganley is RTC Membership Chairperson.)

Send this form to: BTU-RTC, 180 Mount Vernon Street, Dorchester, MA 02125

Boston Teachers Union Sponsors Charitable Golf Tournament

The BTU is happy to sponsor THE ROSEMARIE DONOVAN MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT to be held at the Robert T. Lynch Municipal Course at Putterham in Brookline on June 17th, 2011.

All participants, donors are cordially invited to participate. Information and applications may be found on the BTU website or picked up at the BTU office.

Proceeds will benefit cancer research and disabled citizens.

We ask your help in making this a successful event.

INFORMATION FOR NEW RETIREES

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.

Complete the information below and we will send you the application form.

Name __________________________
Address _______________________
City/Town/State/Zip _____________
Email __________________________
Telephone _______________________

Circle your previous position: Teacher Paraprofessional

Send this form to: BTU-RTC, 180 Mount Vernon Street, Dorchester, MA 02125
BTU Presents Awards to Building Representatives of the Year

This year’s middle and high school BTU Reps of the Year have continuously been outstanding advocates for their BTU colleagues on day-to-day concerns and have effectively upheld the BTU contract to remedy ongoing issues as they have arisen. Both work in an understated, collaborative, effective manner at their respective schools. Neither would anticipate being presented with this award. They do what they do for their colleagues so well because of the quality of their character, not for external acknowledgement.

South Boston Ed Complex BTU Rep, Mike Sheehan, a teacher at Odyssey High School is the 2011 High School BTU Rep of the Year. A couple of years ago, when Odyssey was slated to be closed, Mike assisted his colleagues in successfully advocating for the school’s viability and as a result of their efforts, the School Committee voted for it to remain open. This year under the Superintendent’s new reorganization plan, Odyssey was identified to be closed and reopened as an innovation charter and the other two schools at SBEC were slated to merge into one school for the upcoming school year. During this process, Mike has been very proactive, working collaboratively with other SBEC BTU Reps in seeking out and communicating info for BTU members at the Complex in order to make sure these changes were as smooth and folks as well informed as possible.

The Middle School BTU Rep of the Year was presented to Christine Choukas, a teacher and BTU Rep from the McKay School. She has been a very effective BTU Rep dealing with two challenging principals over several years at the Dearborn Middle School and she hit the ground running as a BTU Rep as she entered the McKay School this academic year. Christine, a strong advocate for her colleagues and students, can always be counted on to go the extra mile and then some in obtaining info, assisting with due process rights in disciplinary matters, filing grievances, making sure votes are conducted properly, and schedules conform to contractual work conditions. She is passionate about her job as a teacher and as a BTU Rep.

I salute Mike and Christine, they can always be counted on to do the right thing – and when in doubt, they check it out! Congratulations to you both.

BTU Secondary Field Representative

Debra Irby of the Lee Academy (right), presents her silver bowl for being the 2011 BTU Elementary Building Representative of the Year award to Mary Moran and Patrick Alexis.

Mary Moran is a hard-working rep at the Clap Elementary School. She is a tireless advocate for the staff at the Clap School this year. Of special note was the challenging year the Clap School staff had as they close and reopen next year as an Innovation School. Mary was always willing to call the BTU with information, schedule meetings with the staff and attend meetings with the Clap community.

Patrick Alexis, rep at the Winthrop Elementary School, is a tenacious advocate for the staff at the Winthrop. Mr. Alexis showed concern and consideration for his colleagues as they were subjected to building renovations and challenging staffing issues. He kept in close contact with the BTU office and never hesitated to call with questions or invite us to the Winthrop.

Debra Irby has been in the system for nine years and is currently a Building Rep at the Lee Academy. This has been a very unsettled year for all the paras at the Lee Academy. Debra has done double duty to keep them informed and trying to keep a calm setting. Debra did a wonderful job on getting her paras to attend the Statewide Conference by filling two tables with paras who took the time to enjoy their day. And even apologized for the paras who could not make it.

Secondly, I would like to say that this presentation of the next Para Building Representative of the Year is quite a tradition in the Hart family.

You see I had the pleasure of presenting the 1985 Para Bowl to her mother-in-law, Mary Hart. That was over 25 years ago. And then again in 1997, eleven years later I presented the Para Bowl to Debbie Hart, Mary’s daughter. Now the honor belongs to Colleen’s sister-in-law so you see it has become a family tradition. Congratulations to Colleen Hart from the Murphy School as Paraprofessional Building Rep of the Year.

Congratulations to Debra and Colleen for their well-deserved honor.

– Caren Carew,
BTU Secondary Field Representative

BTU Elementary Field Rep. Michael McLaughlin presents an Elementary Building Representative of the Year award to Patrick Alexis of the Winthrop Elementary School.

Congratulations to both recipients! We thank them both for the work they did this year on behalf of our members.

– Michael McLaughlin,
BTU Elementary Field Representative

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