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Other Unions, Four City Councilors Join in Support

By Richard Stutman

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n estimated 1,500 teachers and paraprofessionals proudly gathered at School department headquarters last month to protest stalled negotiations. A clear message was sent: Our BPS staff want and deserve a fair contract settlement. The district’s effort to portray this struggle as the district vs. the teachers is not doing a great job. It can be demoralizing.”

“Sometimes we get the message that teachers are not doing a great job. It can be demoralizing.”

“But teachers say they work much more than they are required and than the school district is letting on. We don’t work a 6-1/2 hour day,” said Joanne Delahanty, who spoke passionately about her union’s struggles over the zipped-up top of her puffy red coat. “People bring work home and come to school early.”

“She said many of her fellow teachers arrive at school at 7 a.m. to begin preparing for class and stay until 6 p.m. to help with after-school activities.”

What was clear to those in attendance is that this is everybody’s struggle. And it was just as obvious that the crowd of attendees was truly representative of our membership. The rally included a diverse crowd representing all segments of our membership. There were young members, members with children (and even a few in baby carriages), there were 20-year veterans, and more than a few retirees (thank you!) who came out, braved the cold and marched with us. To all of them we say thank you.

We also thank a number of other union officials and elected officials who came out to support us. The AFTMA, our paraprofessionals to help manage that time and work with the district to bring in outside providers to help manage that time and provide our children with a vast array of appropriate academic and enrichment purposes and for that we do expect to be compensated. We will also work with the district to expand the school day an additional three hours to better mirror the typical parent work day, and we will gladly work with the district to bring in outside providers to help manage that time and provide our children with a vast array of appropriate academic and enrichment (continued on page 2)
In the November, 2011 edition of this Boston Union Teacher, I touched upon the crushing debt! that many of our college graduates incur. I asked that we closely examine who enables our students to go so deeply into debt, namely the colleges themselves and the federal loan agencies. Today I ask that we also examine who encourages our students, and teachers, to go hopelessly into debt, namely employers.

A job is a good thing to offer a young person. They are hungry for money and opportunity. They tend to work longer hours than older employees who have family responsibilities. Being essentially unemployed while in college, they keenly observe what potential employers want in a candidate. More often than not, the employer wants to see the name of an elite college on the resume. Therefore, students go deeply into debt to afford the cost of an elite education. Sadly, it is often wasted money.

This year there will be 17 scholarships in the amount of $1,000 awarded to high school seniors who are dependent of BTU members. To apply, please obtain an application from Jeanne Turner in the Union office or download the form from the BTU website and return with: a transcript of the dependent's last two years of academic work; 2) evidence of acceptance by an accredited college, junior college, vocational school or equivalent institution; 3) member’s notarized federal tax return for the year 2011; and 4) a one-page statement of the dependent’s professional goals. The application and the four supporting documents must be received in the Union office no later than Wednesday, April 18, 2012. The recipients of the scholarships will be notified by May 18, 2012.

Retired Teachers Chapter Scholarships

Each year the Retired Teachers Chapter of the Boston Teachers Union awards three scholarships to deserving high school seniors who are children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, grandnieces, grandnephews of BTU members. One of these scholarships is earmarked for a student who might accumulate a master’s or two for a non-school-based degree. Most of my co-workers attended private colleges and have more red ink on their financial records than a failing student has on his term paper. A few at the lunch table called their debt the “mortgage” on their student loan debt. While most people would be happy to have debt forgiven, I am saddened that we are having people into teaching by letting people “work off” their debt via the non-violent offenders work of their debt-to-society via community service. 

The BPS’s Role

It seems evident that in order to be a teacher in the Boston Public Schools and attend the Harvard Graduate School of Education, perhaps crimson is a pretty color for your red ink, but one need not attend

Estimated 1,500 Union Members Gather

To Protest District’s Stalling Tactics…

Estimated 1,500 members of the Boston teachers union came to an impromptu rally on Wednesday night to protest the district’s stalled negotiations. The rally was held in front of the Boston School Department building.

The rally was organized by the BTU, which represents all Boston public school teachers. The union has been negotiating a contract with the district for several months, but talks have yet to make significant progress.

“Teachers work very hard, and we are deserving of our wages,” said Adeline Dajuste, a teacher at the Kenny Elemen
tary School in Charlestown. “We come to work early, stay late, work through our lunch, tutor children after school, and correct papers at home. We have gone above and beyond what we are asked to do. At least give us a cost of living increase.”

“I believe that we will accomplish all of the above! with your continued support,” said Dajuste. “We also understand that negotiating a contract is a two-way street. But we are adamant that at the conclusion of negotia
tions we must come together on a contract that is good for our students, affordable to the city and fair to our members. Thank you.”

2 http://www.openmediaboston.org/node/2163
4 http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2012/01/18/teachers-work-hard-but-we-are-deserving-of-our-wages/
5 http://www.americaonline.com/home/2011/01/18/teachers-work-hard-but-we-are-deserving-of-our-wages/
7 http://www.openmediaboston.org/node/2163
11 http://www.openmediaboston.org/node/2163

2011 Tax Information

Union Dues for Teachers were $1,103.11
Dues for Paras / Subs were $551.50

2011 T

A job is a good thing to offer a young person. They are hungry for money and opportunity. They tend to work longer hours than older employees who have family responsibilities. Being essentially unemployed while in college, they keenly observe what potential employers want in a candidate. More often than not, the employer wants to see the name of an elite college on the resume. Therefore, students go deeply into debt to afford the cost of an elite education. Sadly, it is often wasted money.

We all know about the legions of college graduates who now work as baristas in order to make ends meet. But equally shocking is the horde of employees who accumulate a master’s or two for a job that requires a bachelor’s at best. Forget about being “very quick,” it’s simply a waste of time, talent, and money.

Therefore I am asking the HR managers, the small business owners, and even our own BPS to put a halt to the degree inflation that they are perpetuating. Usually a graduate of a $50,000/yr school is praised during an interview for completing such a rigorous course of study. Instead I say that the interviewer should ask, “Why was it a smart move to put yourself deeply in debt when you could have learned the same material at a public college for half the cost?”

Unfortunately, our very own career does the same too. Why is that is we have to have a master’s degree in order to teach? I hope your experience was better than mine, but I did not enjoy my M.Ed. classes. Sure, I learned a few things here and there. But I learned more in my two weeks on the job than I did in my two years of night school.

I understand that there has to be some measure of educational competency. But what we are currently doing is overkill, and it may in fact deter people from entering our field.

Like them or not, Teach for America can teach us a thing or two. TFA gives its teachers a five-week intense training before sending them off into “urban” classrooms. I think it’s too short! Maybe? But spending fifty weeks and fifty thousand dollars at grad school is definitely too much.

About a month ago at lunch a group of my colleagues was lamenting how much money they still owe in student debt. Most of my coworkers attended private colleges and have more red ink on their financial records than a failing student has on his term paper. A few at the lunch table called their debt the “mortgage” on their student loan debt. While most people would be happy to have debt forgiven, I am saddened that we are having people into teaching by letting people “work off” their debt via the non-violent offenders work of their debt-to-society via community service.

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Know Your Rights: Caren Carew, BTU Secondary Field Representative

What is the procedure for teachers in reporting suspected or actual sexual assault?

All employees must review the Superintendent’s Circular #LGL-13 Sexual Assault Policy to familiarize themselves with the procedures contained within. The Superinten-dent has established a section in this circular to assist in appropriately responding to a variety of circumstances. It is important that anyone who has been a victim of sexual assault reports the incident to the building administrator, the academic superintendent of the subject building, and the chief operating officer. The employee who has been an adult victim has the right to contact the Sexual Assault Unit of the Boston Police at 617-343-4400 as well as review the Sup. Cir. #EGF-2-Em-ployee Grievances of Discrimination. A student who has been a victim of sexual assault may report to any school official (nurse, teacher, Para, etc.). The person who receives said report must immediately notify the building administrator (best in writing & keep a copy for your own documentation). Those of us who work in schools are all mandatory reporters and are thus required to report to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) if it is known or merely d(when) there is reasonable cause to believe a child under the age of 18 is suffering physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse which causes harm or a substantial risk of harm to the child’s health or welfare. Refer to Sup. Cir. #SS82-17 Child Abuse & Neglect for further information. BTU members have been investigated & disciplined for not immediately reporting suspected or known inappropriate incidents of this nature. Please review these policies avail-able in your main office or on the BPS website.

How many BPS in-service credits can be used towards salary lane advancement?

Some workshops or courses offered by the Boston Public Schools grant in-service credit. Each in-service credit is earned after the participant has completed a minimum of 15 hours in a workshop/course which was pre-approved and ad-vertised as granting one or more in-ser-vice credits. Following a successful completion of said course. In-service credits can be used only in the Boston Public Schools toward salary lane advancement. A maxi-mum of 30 in-service credits can be submitted and used to advance salary lanes in a BTU members’ career.

In-service credits also may be used to recently, not towards salary lane advancement. If a person has exceeded the number of in-service credits able to be used toward salary lane advancement, they should still retain the certificate(s) to be used for recertification purposes. Who knows, perhaps in future contract negotiations the current allowable number able to be applied toward salary lane advancement must may be increased. (Keep hope alive!) This may or may not occur, but it is better to have retained the certificates if it does happen than to wish one had.

When submitting in-service credits towards salary lane advancement, you should do in the same manner you submit other credit. Fill out the form (obtainable from your school secre-tary, on the BPS website, or at the BPS Human Resources Office), attach copies of your in-service certificates, hand de-liver along with an exact copy of your submission to the BPS Human Resources Dept., 3rd floor, 26 Court Street. Made sure, as with everything you submit to HR, that you get your copy time/date stamped at the counter where you hand in your forms. Retain this in a safe place for future reference. Each in-service credit is stamped from the BPS HR Dept. on your copy, there is no proof you ever actually submitted the forms to them. In a dispute, as in Vegas, “The House wins”. Never part with the original in-service credit certificate because it is exceedingly unlikely that the grantor of said credits is keeping them on file for you.

Are we entitled in time for cancer screening?

Yes, there is a Superintendent’s Cir-cular HRS-FP-14 “Paid Leave for Can-cer Screening and/or Living Organ Do-nation” which states that Mayor Menino signed an Executive Order allowing all city employees to use 4 (four) hours of leave per calendar year for various types of cancer screening including thyroid, breast, prostate, colon, skin, thyroid, oral cavity, lymph nodes, reproductive organs, and cancer screenings also states that employees are allowed one (1) four (4) hour period that cannot be broken into hourly units. It requires that they must submit their leave request through their responsible center manager [principal] and then provide them a signed copy of a medical document verifying the date that the employee was given a cancer screen- ing. For attendance reporting purposes, the time reporting code S1200 to report this taken under this provision must be used. This cancer screening leave time is not charged to any accumulated sick time. All questions concerning this circular should be made to the nurse in your school. Ms. Pullen in BPS Human Resources, at 617-653-9670.

How do BTU members who have a major conflict between them receive mediation?

The BTU has a BTU to BTU mediation program where trained BTU mediators have been selected to implement a mediation program with the goal of reaching a mutually agreed upon resolution to said conflict or issue. Mediation in this setting is a voluntary, confidential process which allows the two BTU members to explore options for resolution of an issue by reaching a mutually agreed upon solution to their issues. Anything said in mediation must be kept confidential and cannot be used in litigation, regardless of the outcome of the mediation. Essentially, “what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas”. The purpose of this type of mediation is to clarify and explore creative resolu-tions to issues which meet their needs. Through the CAB members hope to create a comfortable and honest forum for courageous discussion that will lead to creative, meaningful, inclusive, and proactive school improvement efforts that address the real needs of students.

Invitations to the first meeting are being sent to over 50 different groups identified by BTU members of the CAB. The first meeting with stakeholders will take place on February 27th at the BTU. If you are interested in getting involved with the newly-created CAB, please email CAB@btu.org.

Neely-Created Community Advisory Board

An Opportunity for Two-Way Dialogue

In the late fall, the BTU Executive Board voted to create a Community Advisory Board with a vision of beginning a two-way discussion among stakeholders to improve our public schools and support student success. A formal partnership with community stakeholders is perhaps long overdue, but many BTU members are excited about the opportunity to build relationships with community members, including students and parents, who are as invested in the success of our schools as BTU members are.

Participants in the two planning meetings have included a diverse group of community members including current teachers, retired teachers, BPS parents, and a school nurse. Two goals of the Community Advisory Board are to: 1) create a forum for authentic dialogue around the education issues that impact students in Boston; and 2) explore ways that our joint activity could better meet the needs of families and address related social justice issues in our greater community as well. Through the CAB members hope to create a comfortable and honest forum for practical and solutions-oriented conversations between BTU members and community activists with the goal of creating schools in which we could all be proud.

“How can we improve our schools?” is a matter that has all too often been left to “experts” who are not as knowledgeable about the day to day challenges as students, parents, teachers, and community members. Those of us who attend our schools are often left outside the decision-making process. CAB members would like to change that now by creating the space to begin a sincere and courageous discussion that will lead to creative, meaningful, and proactive school improvement efforts that address the real needs of students.

The cost of the plate is $40 (in addition to the registration fee)

The plate features an image of a raised clenched hand, a symbol of strength and unity. Along the bottom of the plate in blue is the word Solidarity. The letters C B in red stand for collective bargaining.

Solidarity: the integration, and degree and type of integration shown by a society or group with people and their neighbors. It refers to the ties in a society that binds people to one another. A union of interests or purposes or sympathies among members of a group.

Proceeds from this special plate fee goes towards the education and training of organized and unorganized labor individuals and groups to preserve their right to collectively bargain for fair wages, health care and retirement.

To order a plate, please visit www.prolaboralliance.org or e-mail Thynes@prolaboralliance.org
The Chicago Public Schools Grind on Teachers

Now imagine turning on your TV or flipping through the Tribune or Sun-Times to see yet another story loudly proclaiming that the problem with America’s schools is, well, you. “More teachers must be fired!” they scream. “Teachers are the ones failing the kids, we need to hold them accountable!” “Teachers are lazy and need to work longer, harder, for less pay!” “Teacher pensions are destroying our economy!” (Whoa, did I miss the part where newspapers wielded a sword who caused the financial crisis that is slashing education budgets around the country? Are the mortgage brokers, big banks and financial industries getting drenched every five seconds? How about the corporations not paying their fair share of taxes which help schools? And don’t forget the politicians and their horrible education policies. Surely. No one reading the newspaper is believing this baloney, are they?) And every time you hear the insults or name-calling you think to yourself, “Well what the heck are any of you doing to help these kids...” The unfaithfulness of all burns.

Now stretch that one terrible week into nine months. Welcome to CPS.

Of course, the great irony is that as the powers that be complain about “quality” teachers they create teaching environments where it becomes impossible to be great. Teachers at my old school started to look liked the walking dead as the stress and fear accumulated. The increased “accountability” robs us all of the very qualities which would make us great teachers: our passion, kindness, drive, energy, camaraderie and humaneness. And then there are people, like our lovely mayor, Rahm, who seem to enjoy kicking you while you’re down. Rahm would have us believe that something like extending the school day is so easy. Oh, that smirk on his face as he seems to say “How dare you expect to be paid for your extra time!” And “Sure, you’ve been working this whole year close to breakdown, barely scraping by, without any resources and with abnormally large class sizes, but I’m sure you can come up with 90 extra minutes of activities for your kids. Oh, and if you really cared, you’d do this willingly and for free. And stop asking for paper to make copies or books for them to read, greedy teachers. And no, we are not going to fix your school building, give you the resources you say you need, or try and help you. You think, if I don’t get it done, I am failing these kids. I have no choice but to keep pushing.

Now add onto that a vindictive, power-hungry boss who will look at you as soon as look at you, and colleagues at work who are themselves so tired, afraid and overwrought that they are one bad day from breakdown. And there are those who have problems. Some of them have problems they simply do not know how to fix. Or, even with the interventions you know to do through experience and training, you also know that if your methods fail at the end of work, you worry daily about your future and whether or not you will have a job next year or even next week, and the idea of running out of gas to work the next day is practically unbearable. You need a moment to catch your breath, a moment to clear the clutter of worry, failure and fear from your clouded mind. But you don’t get it. There is no criticizing, no judging, no all of that is assumed away, you think, if I don’t get it done, I am failing these kids. I have no choice but to keep pushing.

Now imagine turning on your TV or flipping through the Tribune or Sun-Times to see yet another story loudly proclaiming that the problem with America’s schools is, well, you. “More teachers must be fired!” they scream. “Teachers are the ones failing the kids, we need to hold them accountable!” “Teachers are lazy and need to work longer, harder, for less pay!” “Teacher pensions are destroying our economy!” (Whoa, did I miss the part where newspapers wielded a sword who caused the financial crisis that is slashing education budgets around the county? Are the mortgage brokers, big banks and financial industries getting drenched every five seconds? How about the corporations not paying their fair share of taxes which help schools? And don’t forget the politicians and their horrible education policies. Surely. No one reading the newspaper is believing this baloney, are they?) And every time you hear the insults or name-calling you think to yourself, “Well what the heck are any of you doing to help these kids...” The unfaithfulness of all burns.

No more I say.

This post is for all my teacher colleagues out there. It’s time for us to fight back. It’s time to take back our profession. Teachers, use your natural inclination to educate and start to reclaim your knowledge and families about the hard realities of our profession. And don’t be afraid to sing our praises. What we do is good work and it is clear to be protected and cherished.

And while you are at it, don’t forget to teach as many people as possible about the true nature of the education reform and how it’s left behind entire neighborhoods. Let them know about the ridiculous goals of No Child Left Behind and the evils behind high-stakes testing. Tell the truth about charters, that they are not, in fact, miracles, but just another form of Teach for America — how placing untrained novices in classrooms with the hardest to educate students is unjust and wrong. Make people start to at least question the hype!

More than anything, make the act of teacher-bashing unacceptable. We know that when we are overwhelmed, upset, fatigued, demoralized and stressed out beyond our limits, we will be no good for our students. Remem- ber, fighting for teachers is fighting for students. So fight for teachers who care for kids and also those who care about the students they teach and the community around them. Fight for workplaces where teachers do not feel, break down, or God forbid take their own lives. Fight for a steadier career environment where competent professionals who actually stick around long enough to bring the slow change that is needed in our schools. Fight for the respect we deserve. Fight for the autonomy to make decisions on curriculum, implementation, and assessment that help the kids sitting in front of us. Fight for equity in resources so we have the tools to actually do the difficult job of teaching. Fight for the mental health that we need to be the excellent educators kids deserve.

By fighting, we can beat back some of the hopeless- ness and exhaustion. We need to stop blaming our- selves, alone and guilty, and instead get angry at the forces that are hurting us and the important work we do. And all you non-educators out there need to get angry right alongside us. So sing along with me: We’re not gonna take it No, we ain’t gonna take it We’re not gonna take it anymore

By fighting, we can beat back some of the hopelessness and exhaustion. We need to stop blaming ourselves, alone and guilty, and instead get angry at the forces that are hurting us and the important work we do. And all you non-educators out there need to get angry right alongside us. So sing along with me:

We’re not gonna take it
No, we ain’t gonna take it
We’re not gonna take it anymore

(Katie Osgood is a special education teacher at a Psychiatric Hospital in Chicago. Before that, she taught in a Chicago Public School and in Japan. Lyrics from Twisted Sister.)
The Boston Teachers Union Salutes Black History Month

Excerpts from “A Talk to Teachers” by James Baldwin

Let’s begin by saying that we are living through a very dangerous time. Everyone in this room is in one way or another aware of that. We are in a revolutionary situation, no matter how unpopular that word has become in this country. To any citizen of this country who figures himself as responsible — and particularly those of you who deal with the minds and hearts of young people — must be prepared to “go for broke.” Or to put it another way, you must understand that in the attempt to correct so many generations of bad faith and cruelty, when it is operating not only in the classroom but in society, you will encounter the most barbaric, the most brutal, and the most determined resistance. There is no point in pretending this won’t happen.

Now the crucial paradox which confronts us here is that the whole process of education occurs within a social framework and is designed to perpetually set the aims of society. The paradox of education is precisely this — that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated. The purpose of education, finally, is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions, to say to himself this is black or this is white, to decide for himself whether there is a God in heaven or not. To ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with those questions, is the way he achieves his own identity. But no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around. What societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will obediently want to obey the rules of society.

Now, if what I have tried to sketch has any validity, it becomes thoroughly clear, at least to me, that any Negro who is born in this country and undergoes the American educational system runs the risk of becoming schizophrenic. On the one hand he is born in the shadow of the stars and stripes and he is assured it represents a nation which has never lost a war. He pledges allegiance to that flag which guarantees “liberty and justice for all.” He is part of a country in which any one can become president, and so forth. But on the other hand he is also assured by his country and his countrymen that he has never contributed anything to civilization — that his past is nothing more than a record of humiliations gladly endured...

All this enters the child’s consciousness much sooner than we as adults would like to think it does. As adults, we are easily fooled because we are so anxious to be fooled. But children are very different. Children, not yet aware that it is dangerous to look too deeply at anything, look at everything, look at each other, and draw their own conclusions. They don’t have the vocabulary to express what they see, and we, their elders, know how to intimidate them very easily and very soon. But a black child, looking at the world around him, though he cannot know quite what to make of it, is aware that there is a reason why his mother works so hard, why his father is always on edge. He is aware that there is some terrible weight on his parents’ shoulders which menaces him. And it isn’t long — in fact it begins when he is in school — before he discovers the shape of his oppression...

… I began by saying that one of the paradoxes of education was that presently when you begin to develop a conscience, you must find yourself at war with your society. It is your responsibility to change society if you think of yourself as an educated person. And on the basis of the evidence — the moral and political evidence — one is compelled to say that this is a backward society...

Now if I were a teacher in this school, or any Negro school, and I was dealing with Negro children, who were in my care only a few hours of every day and would then return to their homes and to the streets, children who have an apprehension of their future which with every hour grows grimmer and darker, I would try to teach them — I would try to make them know — that those streets, those houses, those dangers, those agenies by which they are surrounded, are criminal… I would teach them that there are currently very few standards in this country which are worth a man’s respect. That is it up to him to change these standards for the sake of the life and the health of the country. I would suggest to him that the popular culture — as represented, for example, on television and in comic books and in movies — is based on fantasies created by very ill people, and he must be aware that these are fantasies that have nothing to do with reality. I would teach him that the press he reads is not as free as it says it is — and that he can do something about that, too. I would try to make him know that just as American history is longer, larger, more various, more beautiful and more terrible than anything anyone has ever said about it, so is the world larger, more daring, more beautiful and more terrible, but principally larger — and that it belongs to him.

(Excerpts from “A Talk to Teachers” by James Baldwin. Excerpts from “A Talk to Teachers” by James Baldwin. Excerpts from “A Talk to Teachers” by James Baldwin.)
BTU and Other Unions Plead With City Officials to “TALK TO TEACHERS!!!”

Photos by Michael J. Maguire
Arts Faculty Revival
Dinner Party
Sponsored by the BTU
Thursday February 9, 2012
Snowdate February 15
beginning at 5:30 at the BTU Hall
Dinner will be served at 6:30

Live Jazz by
Different Shades Trio Plus One
Let’s Celebrate Our Work and Build Our Community
Let’s Have Some Fun!

Guest Speaker James Haywood Rollins, Jr.
James Haywood Rollins, Jr. earned his Ed.D. in an education at Teachers College, Columbia University, and his MFA in studio arts research from Syracuse University. His research interests include arts-based research, urban education & narrative inquiry. Dr. Rollins is associate professor and chair of art education at Syracuse University. His approach to teaching art is to allow students the opportunity to grow from their own ideas through a variety of materials. His goal is to inform other people’s viewpoints on leisure and topics close to heart, and to transform personal uncertainties into new possibilities and hosts of mind.

Old and Main $25 deposit to BTU, 180 Mt. Vernon Street, Boston, MA. 02128
Arts Revival Dinner
Name ____________________________ Art Specialty ____________________________
School ____________________________
Dinner is free for BPS Arts Teachers but you must send in a deposit to reserve your seat. Your deposit will be refunded if you attend the dinner. All others are $25.
I'm taking notes in my AP Calculus class. I'm learning about integrals, the area between the x-axis and the function (curve) on a graph.

– John Nguyen, Grade 12

We were taking notes in our Forensic Science class. We've learned about four different blood types. We've also learned that the pattern of blood spatter can tell a lot about what happened such as the angle, distance, and velocity of an attack.

– Shamalia Barrett, Sindy Urbina, & Chanele Mackey, Grade 12

We are in Martial Arts class, learning Tung Soo Do to fight and protect ourselves. In this picture we're practicing front and side kicks.

– Shanae Barrett, Cathy Phan, & Khalee Adkin, Grade 9, and Marc Sanchez, Grade 11

We're working on our Science Fair project, figuring out how to make a mini-launcher work. We've learned that you need a particular ration of fuel to air to create a spark. We've also learned that it takes teamwork to do anything well.

– Erjohn Milo & Robert Phan, Grade 11

Jerone was putting bags of ice on Ismael's shoulders in Biology class with Mr. Pereira. We used thermometers to test changes in body temperature. We learned that we are endothermic, which means that our internal temperatures are not affected by heat or cold.

– Ismael Hernandez & Jerone Elliott, Grade 10

I was taking an online exam in my World Literature class with Mr. Korzeniowski. I've learned to analyze different works of literature and compare them to films based on the same theme. This semester we're studying the Holocaust, reading books like Night, by Elie Wiesel, and Maus: A Survivor's Tale, by Art Spiegelman, and watching films like "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas." This is my favorite class! It deals with real life issues and I apply the lessons learned to everything I read or watch – it even inspired me to join the debate club!

– Fartun Mohamed, Grade 11

We are working on a science fair project during their lunch period.

– Arianna Bagalue & Nagid Craig, Grade 12

I am teaching my ESL class what I learned about the monk seal. It's an endangered animal because of sewage from the Hawaiian Islands. I came from Vietnam a year ago and in this class I am learning to read, write, and (most challenging) speak in English.

– Loc Tran, Grade 10

Working with special education teacher Vicki Friedman, Andy Martinez is matching a vocabulary card to a voice-output device to identify distance as one component of the equation for speed.

– Arianna Bagalue & Nagid Craig, Grade 12
Brad Jupp, Education Sector Senior Program Advisor
March 2006

Interview in April 2006

Brad is a very laid back guy. And that’s definitely not the image they have of him in Denver by how many teachers I represented there. He is most known for his role in the development of Denver’s ProComp teacher compensation system—which ties teacher incentives to both school and student performance and growth.

I met Brad through the Teaching Ambassador Program, a teaching fellowship designed to orient and involve teachers in national, state and local education policy. A total of about 100 teachers have been a part of, or currently participate, in this program, including Steven Berbeco from Charlestown High School, Shakeria Walker from Young Achievers Science and Math School and Robert Baroz from the Curley School. Applications for the 2012-2013 cohort have recently opened so definitely take a look and pass on the word.

He was generous enough to spend nearly three hours with me this past November while attending the Council of the Great City Schools conference in Boston. I thoroughly enjoyed the conversation, especially after we had gone through questions of The Teaching Pulse: What local, statewide and national policy initiatives should we be aware of and where, and what are practical ways and avenues to influence and implement those policies?

Thanks, Brad, for taking the time to meet and talk with me this morning. It’s an incredible privilege. One key goal of this interview is to emphasize the idea that [education] policy is important, policy affects us and at times, we can actually shape it.

How would you best describe your role in the U.S. Department of Education and what do you do?

In a way, I think it’s like the trend taking its breathing scale. I was always overwhelmed in Denver by how many teachers I represented when I was a union leader and how many teachers worked for us when I was in the superintendent’s office. [And] I knew most of them.

In the Department of Education, what I think is amazing is [to consider] this huge river of 3.3 million people. The teaching workforce is enormous. And it works under incredibly decentralized circumstances. You can’t say that the teacher who works in New Jersey works under the same circumstances as the one who teaches in California. But you also can’t say that the teacher who works in Los Angeles has the same circumstances as the teacher who works in San Ramon. And so it’s not just a problem of complexity that makes for enormous and complex policy. It’s been a very significant challenge to learn the best directions that the people who make up this river of people flow in. There’s a current in this river, for instance where 30% of the teachers have only been hired have left the job within two or three years after they were hired. You should ask: ‘What’s causing that current?’ Then you should ask, ‘What can be done to alter that current?’ And in something that’s enormous and something that’s complicated, it’s not going to be a simple, single gesture.

So I think the short end of this long introduction is that learning how to make the right precise moves to change the course of what the teaching profession has been the greatest challenge of the job that I’ve been in for the past two and a half years. It’s not been easy. It’s been a tremendous role and responsibility, to not only identify and understand what the currents are, but to also try and establish policies, policies or even [think them through]…

Very often what people do wrong is [when] they come in with a political orientation to solving some policy problems and they impose them. I think the case that I was making is that you actually have to learn how these currents move before you can impose your ideas, before you can alter them effectively.

I’m making the case for knowing how the system works, for understanding, or trying to understand, the right sets of policy interventions.

So you’re thinking of yourself more as a gatherer of information, understanding how it works…

Maybe the right word for it, James, and I know it might not be good interview technique because it’s too abstract… I’m a pragmatist. I work with the materials and conditions that I got. I’m not an idealist. I don’t work backwards from a set of perfect ideals that I think need to be imposed on this incredibly complex and decentralized workforce.

So one of the goals of this column is to emphasize that education policy is something that is important for teachers to understand. And making the personal, perspective and position in the Department of Education, what are the most important policy initiatives that teachers should be aware of right now? In particular, which ones directly impact us in our classrooms?

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chooses to own it as thoroughly as I just described it, will actually just swamp all of the little squeaky arguments of this measure of that's where the rewards outweighed the minimal capital management decision to give somebody a raise or to advance someone to a new rung on a career ladder.

So the Common Core is a more significant policy issue than even the Flexibility Act because states are currently applying for as related to No Child Left Behind? Yes, because I don’t think you can actually distill the benefits or costs of accountability systems that are anticipated by the [Elementary and Secondary Education Act] Flexibility, without the Common Core to animate them.

Can you think of some practical ways to suggest for teachers to understand, influence and implement policies like these in our school districts at the local level? To me, it’s more like one less abstract and how do we understand it, and implement it at?

Be a building rep for your union, be on your building faculty senate or building committee, partner with people in the central office to be a kind of peer consultant (figuring out) the difficult problems of execution with administrators, because just like teachers don’t want reform to be done to them, administrators want policy implementation to be done to them, not policy implementation arguments done to them. And we should assume that no one wants to be part of that kind of loud argument.

And don’t hesitate to use those opportunities to be building reps and union leaders and district leaders as vehicles for career advancement. The ambitions of teachers to be successful and efficacious are the things that actually animate the best things about their career. And we should always be encouraging teachers to act on those aspirations.

So even in those particular roles, if those conversations aren’t happening, if they’re not happening, then that's a problem. Begin them, encourage them to come, by us and by those interested individuals pausing for a minute and asking, ‘How do we get behind a system or a particular policy reform matters using the same skills.

Any final advice on how to best reach out to each other as teachers to build a system or a particular professional approach where ‘the rewards outweigh the risks? I don’t think that there’s a big difference between the two. In our profession, versus being a consultant. That’s a different kind of talk and frame the conversation in that way. Because sometimes a lot of the rhetoric out there is very negative, very polarized, in that sense... how do we break through that?

I think that the most important thing that teacher leaders can do is to say, ‘But wait. There are some benefits here. But wait. What are the right, prudent ways to protect against the fair things that are being raised by the people who are afraid against worst hopes?’

We didn’t say, when we negotiated ProComp, ‘let’s embrace the arbitrary and capricious.’ We said instead, ‘let’s embrace the reasonable, the consistent, the credible...’ and then we said, ‘let’s embrace the judgment against the arbitrary and capricious by embracing the reasonable and consistent and credible.’ We never said anything about getting all right. We always said, though, that we want to keep our antennae up and avoid treating people badly. And what’s more, we made a commitment to use data as a way to inform our future decisions so that we were not being arbitrary and capricious.

And when you say, ‘we... as teachers or as the collaborative team...’

Labor and management, the collaborative team. Absolutely.

What was the structure of that team?

There were a number of different shared decision-making bodies. One, the Denver Classroom Teachers Association (James Liou is a Peer Assistant in the Denver Classroom Teachers Association [NEA] did not agree to institute ProComp until a $25 million tax increase was passed by the voters, enough for an average of $8,000 per teacher. Ancillary information also suggests that teachers in Denver and Baltimore, another school district that instituted an alternative compensation system, have been dissatisfied with these programs.

Pro-business education “reformers” such as Eli Broad have made the case for these, through a thoughtless and unwillingness to address difficult issues. It should be noted however that differentiated compensation systems in general, and pay-for-performance systems in particular, have been considered as part of alternative compensation programs in Denver, ProComp, is one of these systems. The Denver Classroom Teachers Association (NEA) did not agree to institute ProComp, and then it is more often a small part of their overall pay. Expansion of pay-for-performance systems is considered to be the largely, non-union managers and professionals in finance, insurance, and real estate. At last glance these sectors have been the economic collapse of 2008 that has plagued our country into the Great Recession.

Editor’s Note: The Teaching Pulse is a column that was initiated by James Liou. The Boston Union Teacher thanks him for his thoughtful writing and willingness to offer your reactions, thoughts and ideas. (James Liou is a Peer Assistant in the Boston Public Schools.)
**Eight Boston Teachers Newly-Recognized as National Board Certified**

By Karene-Sean Hines

On Wednesday, January 18th, after joining more than a thousand teachers who voiced their support for the Boston Public Schools and the BTU to settle a new contract, eight outstanding teachers were officially recognized during the School Committee meeting as the Boston Public Schools’ newest National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs).

The eight recognized teachers were Gregory Banks, Erik Berg, Patricia Dervan, Caitlin Hollister, Matthew Kazlauskas, Kristi Lucas, Ellen Latham and Noah Patel. Caitlin Hollister was not present, due to the recent birth of her son, Jacob.

The new NBCTs were accompanied to the ceremony by spouses, parents, friends, fellow NBCTs, and other colleagues. The audience clapped and cheered their accomplishment as they received citations from Dr. Groover, and National Board pins form Dr. Johnson. Gregory Banks stated, “This is wonderful, and the best professional development I ever had.”

Teachers seeking National Board Certification are supported by the BPS, BTU and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Candidate Support Program. This is a unique program because it is facilitated by BPS’s own National Board Certified Teachers. Candidates who have participated in this program have stated that it was their best professional development, because of the positive impact it had on their ability to teach effectively, and positively impact student achievement.

**Benefits to National Board Certified Teachers**

National Board Certification lasts for ten years, and can be renewed during years eight and nine. In Massachusetts, achieving NB Certification counts for the 120 of the 150 PDPs necessary for one certification, or recertification, in your primary content area. In addition, successful candidates receive a 4% salary increase (over their base salary) and this amount is retirement worthy. BPS also reimburses successful candidates for the out-of-pocket fees they paid in applying for NBPTS Certification and recertification. In addition, candidates can apply for a federal subsidy administered through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to cover part of the application fee.

If you are interested in learning more about this program and the opportunities it offers teachers and administrators, please contact Lead Candidate Support Provider Karene-Sean Hines, NBCT. Karene can be reached at khris@boston.k12.ma.us or by phone at 617-446-3764. You can also reach our Program Director, Mrs. Ryan-Miller at rryan2@boston.k12.ma.us.

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**RTC Executive Board Minutes • December 5, 2011**

**Members present:** Anne-Marie Atchicci; Anne Broder, Treasurer; Larry Connolly; Sandy Carle; Martha Cotton; David Donovar, Chairman; Mary Cahalane; Eileen Ganley; Donna Cooley-Hilton; Linda McMahon; Marilyn Marion, Secretary; Mary Jo Murphy; Leonard Miraglia, Vice Chairman; and Paul Tenney.

**Excused:** Phil Fasano and Ruthanne Kennedy.

**Officers**

- **Secretary:** Minutes read and accepted.
- **Treasurer:** Report read and accepted.
- **Chairman:** Received calls regarding Medicare and insurance issues. He announced that there will be meetings at the BTU regarding Medicare on January 12 and 24 from 10 am-1 pm. Report Accepted.

**Committees**

- **Vice Chairman:** Three are 1948 Delta members. Effective January 2012, the cost for the Delta plan will be $46 for single and $92 for double. Report Accepted.

**Motion:** 

- **Vice Chairman:** Three are 1948 Delta members. Effective January 2012, the cost for the Delta plan will be $46 for single and $92 for double. Report Accepted.

**Travel:**

- The travel season is over for the new Board. The travel budget is $500 for single and $500 for double. Report Accepted.

**Legislative:**

- The Pension Reform Bill was signed into law by the Governor on November 18. The major changes affect new hires (after April, 2012). Changes that affect us now: minimum pension is increased from $10,000 to $15,000; maturity buy back is available for pre-2004 eligible retirees. The increase in the COLA does not pertain to us. Over 100 retirees have responded to our “Rapid Response Team.” We will be working on this for future actions. Report Accepted.
BTU and Other Unions Rally at Boston School Committee Headquarters

Photos by Michael J. Maguire