

**What is Bullying and Where/How is it Prohibited?**

2

**Life in a Special Education Classroom**

5

**School Site Council Training at BTU**

8

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

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Boston, MA 02109  
Permit No. 52088

# Boston Union Teacher

The Award-Winning Newspaper of the Boston Teachers Union

AFT Local 66, AFL-CIO • Democracy in Education • Volume XLIII, Number 4 • December, 2010

## Empowering Literacy for Our Students

In response to "Failure to Educate" by Junia Yearwood, published in The Boston Globe November 8, 2010

by Jennifer Leisner

I agree with Ms. Yearwood that it is our job to help our students achieve not just a functional level of literacy, but an empowering and emancipatory one. Literacy is more than sounding out words, but it is also more than passively evaluating text. Each of us needs to push our students to ask tough questions of both texts and the world in a way that inspires them to take charge of their lives.

No matter our intentions, however, we become part of the system the moment we step foot into a class-

room. If you believe that we are "churning out academically unprepared students," all of us need to examine our own role in reproducing mediocrity. Did we provide a challenging, relevant curriculum, or did we track students by denying them access to advanced classes? If we cannot justify our actions, then we are working in collusion with that system. The fact that students begged you to attend graduation proves that you are not just a victim of the system, but also a victor.

It is easy from the vantage point of AP/12th grade English to claim that others didn't do their jobs, that we never read their homework or taught them how to write a sentence. Over 4,000 Boston teachers wake up every morning and give students their best. We buy our own materials, sacrifice time with our families to tutor after school, and attend night classes to obtain advanced degrees, only to be maligned. It is simpler to place the

(continued on page 3)

## A Look at a Few Oft-Told Distortions and Half-Truths About Charters, Funding, and the City's Resources

By Richard Stutman  
BTU President

If you repeat something often enough, the saying goes, people may start to believe it. A corollary to that may be, if you don't know how to spell something, spell it loudly – people may think you really do know to spell it. We are beset by half truths and falsehoods in today's world, nowhere so much than in the public education sector. Here are a few, all the more notable because they are repeated quite often—and very loudly.

"Charter schools do a better job than public schools." Yes, we hear that all the time: Charters top traditional schools. Well, in some ways they do, most certainly. They definitely do a better job of promoting themselves. And they certainly do a better job of recruiting students. In fact, one small local charter school employs two and one half full time recruitment specialists. But when it comes to providing an education to all students...well, charters do a so-so job, no matter what their advocates say. The most significant nationwide study done to date, the CREDO study from Stanford ([http://credo.stanford.edu/reports/MULTIPLE\\_CHOICE\\_EXECUTIVE%20SUMMARY.pdf](http://credo.stanford.edu/reports/MULTIPLE_CHOICE_EXECUTIVE%20SUMMARY.pdf)), showed that across 16 states representing fully 70% of the U.S. students enrolled in charters, charters did a fair to poor job. About half of the students received no academic advantage by attending charter schools. 34% did worse, and 17% did better than average. The bottom line, students who attend charters lose ground rather than gain ground by a two to one ratio. If charters do a better job, we have yet to see the data.

Or how about this one? "Charters schools were created as incubators of reform, to spread best practices to traditional schools." The next 'best practice' replicated will be the first.

How about, "there is no money for public schools?" Of course, there's never any money. There wasn't any money four years ago when we settled the contract. Or seven years ago either. There really is less money, to be sure, this time around, but that's only half the equation. It isn't enough to say, 'there is no money.' Why is there no money? And when will there be sufficient funds for our schools? Let's take a quick look.

Why are there insufficient funds to run our schools? For one thing, in this current school year, approximately \$60 million in

state education aid will leave our school system and go straight to charter schools that accept students who live in Boston. That's a lot of money. Many people, by and large charter school proponents, feel that is quite acceptable for the funds to leave the city to educate any student who resides in Boston. After all, the theory goes, these students were formerly Boston public school students, they have now left the district and have chosen charter schools. The costs for educating these students in the BPS ought to be proportionately less, now that they've left our public schools. The city's schools ought to receive less education money from the state. In theory anyway this makes some sense. The problem is, many of the students who cost us \$60 million in tuitions that is taken from the BPS budget have never been Boston Public School stu-



Richard Stutman  
BTU President

dents. A good number of these students have gone from parochial or private schools directly to charter schools. So their attendance at charter schools has not saved the BPS any funds. Not one penny in costs has been saved. Why should the BPS lose funds each year to educate these charter school students, at least without knowing whether or not these students were formerly BPS students? Incidentally, under the new education reform law, the lost dollars will grow to \$110 Million annually beginning in 2013-2014.

One could argue that these students live in the city, so they are as much entitled to city funds as public school students. That's not a terrible argument, but it's a different argument. In fact, it'd be a much better argument if charter schools opened up their doors to all students,

(continued on page 2)

## The Superintendent Speaks

by Caren M. Carew  
BTU Secondary Field Representative

Superintendent Carol Johnson greeted a packed room at the annual BTU Building Representative Conference held at the Quincy Marriott on Sunday morning, October 17, 2010. BTU President Richard Stutman introduced Dr. Johnson, who then stated, "While I don't always agree with Richard Stutman and his team, I know they care deeply for the students, the educators and all of us as we work with the BTU leadership who've made a lifetime commitment to the children and staff of the Boston Public Schools. I appreciate being asked to the Conference as, I don't have as many opportunities to hear directly from teachers as I'd like to."

The Superintendent stated that many teachers recently gave feedback concern-



Superintendent Dr. Carol Johnson addresses the BTU Rep. Conference.

ing BPS professional development (PD) opportunities. She reported themes of the feedback included teachers wanting to be asked about the type of PD offered,

(continued on page 6)

Merry Christmas

Happy Hanukkah

HAPPY KWANZAA

from the Boston Teachers Union

# What is Bullying and Where/How is it Prohibited?

At this year's annual Building Representatives Conference, BTU attorney Matthew E. Dwyer addressed the union on the newly enacted anti-bullying legislation.

By Michael J. Maguire

Part two of a two part series

The new law prohibits 'bullying'

- > on school grounds; or
- > on property immediately adjacent to school grounds; or
- > at a school sponsored or school related activity (regardless of location); or

- > on a school bus or any other vehicle owned, leased or used by a school or school district; or
- > through the use of technology or an electronic device used by a school or school district.

The new also prohibits retaliation against reporters, those who furnish information in an investigation into bullying, or against anyone who witnesses or possesses reliable information about bullying.

Bullying not occurring at the above places or using school-owned technology or electronic devices is likewise prohib-

ited "if the bullying creates a hostile environment at the school for the victim, infringes of the rights of the victim at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school."

may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting produces any of the conditions enumerated in (i) - (v) above.

## Other Feathers of the Law

The law requires that the "principal or designee" promptly investigate any report of bullying "[u]pon receipt" and upon a determination that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the investigator is required to (i) notify local law enforcement agency if he/she believes that criminal charges may be pursued against a perpetrator [very vague]; (ii) take appropriate disciplinary action; (iii) notify the parents and guardians of both a perpetrator and victim and (iv) to the extent consistent with state or federal law, notify them of acts being taken to prevent further bullying or retaliation.

Where bullying or retaliation involves students from more than one covered entity, the first to receive a report of bullying must "promptly notify the administrator of the other school district or school." Bullying or retaliation on school grounds involving a former student under 21 no longer enrolled is to be referred to local law enforcement where criminal activity is suspected.

The law neither supersedes nor replaces existing legal rights or remedies "nor shall this section create a private right of action."

DESE is obligated, after consultation with specified agencies, to (1) develop and publish a model plan for districts to consider when creating their own plans; (2) compile a list of bullying prevention and intervention resources and evidence-based curricula to be made available to schools. It is to be consistent with the behavioral health and public schools' framework developed under St.2008c.321 Section 19, updated biennially and posted on the agency's website.

## Bullying defined

Bullying is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination of the above which is directed at a "victim" and

- i. causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damages to the victim's property;
- ii. places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damages to his property;
- iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the victim;
- iv. infringes on the victim's rights at school; or
- v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

The term "victim" means a student target - not staff.

## Cyber-Bullying

Cyber-bullying is "bullying (see above) through the use of technology or electronic communication..."

Cyber-bullying also includes:

- > creation of a web page or blog on which the creator assumes another's identity,
- > knowing impersonation of another as the author of posted content or messages if the creation of impersonation produces any of the conditions in (i) - (v) above.

Cyber-bullying also includes the electronic distribution of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that

## BTU Speaks to the Community

On November 20<sup>th</sup>, Marjie Crosby, an OT in the BPS, delivered this speech to 90 women at the 6<sup>th</sup> annual breakfast of the North Shore Labor Council's Women Committee. She spoke to seniors, youth, community members, and union members from schools, health care, manufacturing and public service, to present our message.

★★★★★

Some mornings when I pick up the newspaper I wonder "how have all the problems in this state become the fault of teachers?"

The cities are in a budget crisis and who gets blamed - must be the fault of overpaid teachers who expect to keep our health insurance and even the pensions that we contribute to out of every pay check.

The teachers in Winthrop began this year with a large rally of staff from every school and supporters from other unions. Why - because they were starting their 3<sup>rd</sup> school year without a new contract. Teachers in Winthrop make from \$35 to \$69,000 a year. This month the teachers did win a contract with no raise for the past two years and 2.25% for this year. I don't think teachers are being paid too much for the challenging and important job of educating our children.

In Boston, the Mayor wants to take health care off the bargaining table and let the city make any reductions it wants. That would save the city money. But we need and deserve good health care benefits - and so does everyone. The city should be looking instead to raise money by taxing private Universities like Northeastern who use city services but make only voluntary contributions.

Under a federal law passed in 2001 known as No Child Left Behind, schools measure their progress through test scores. It is no surprise that scores in many schools do not show enough progress every year.

The problem: Must be all those bad teachers.

The states answer was to pass a new "Education Reform Bill" that gives more power to administrators and takes away the rights that union teachers have won through collective bargaining. This year 80% of the staff at the Blackstone Elementary School in Boston were kicked out by a brand new principal, who had never worked with these teachers or their students. No reasons were needed.

Is it a coincidence that most of the schools called **underperforming** are in cities like Boston and Lawrence where there are students without adequate nutrition, without health care as basic as glasses, and without permanent housing so they change schools frequently? Students whose parents have to work several jobs or don't speak enough English to help with homework?

Both the federal and state governments are pushing for new Charter or Innovation schools that are almost all non union. These schools attract informed families who can follow through with demanding expectations, and I applaud the students, parents and teachers. But it leaves behind students with severe behavior problems and special education needs, and a high percentage of English Language Learners. It leaves behind the students who are the most difficult and most ex-

(continued on page 7)

# Boston Union Teacher

Published by the Boston Teachers Union AFT Local 66, AFL-CIO

The Boston Union Teacher is published eleven times a year September - July, inclusive.

President

**RICHARD F. STUTMAN**

Vice President

**PATRICK CONNOLLY**

Secretary-Treasurer

**CHARLES R. JOHNSON**

Co-Editors

**MICHAEL J. MAGUIRE  
GARRET VIRCHICK**

Editorial Board

**Caren Carew  
Angela Cristiani  
Jenna Fitzgerald  
Robert Jango  
Michael McLaughlin  
Eileen Weir**

### EDITORIAL NOTE:

The opinions expressed in the *Boston Union Teacher* do not necessarily represent the views of the Boston Teachers Union, or those of its members.

### WHEN WRITING:

All correspondence to the *Boston Union Teacher* must be typewritten and include the author's name and school or department if not school-based.

All articles must be appropriate to the publication, and in good taste.

Letters to the Editor should be sent to [letters@btu.org](mailto:letters@btu.org).

### DEADLINE:

The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue of the *Boston Union Teacher* is December 17th.

All copy should be e-mailed to [garretvirchick@verizon.net](mailto:garretvirchick@verizon.net) and [mmaguire@btu.org](mailto:mmaguire@btu.org)

This deadline will be strictly adhered to.

180 Mount Vernon Street ♦ Boston, MA 02125  
617-288-2000 ♦ 617-288-2463 ♦ Fax 617-288-0024 ♦ [www.btu.org](http://www.btu.org)

## A Look at a Few Oft-Told Distortions and Half-Truths About Charters, Funding, and the City's Resources...

(continued from page 1)

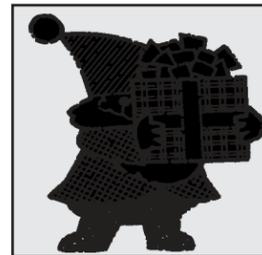
SPED and ELL alike. But as long as charters continue to exclude children who need these additional services, it is hard to argue that they are truly public schools and thus deserving of public funds.

And when will there be enough money? Let's acknowledge up front that no one wants to spend any more on taxes. But let's also acknowledge that fundamental to the issue of taxes is that the system of raising revenue ought to be fair. Translated, Bill Gates ought to pay more than John Q. Smith. And GE ought to pay more than the Harry's Market.

Boston is a wonderful and exciting city, and like many other cities it is blessed with a wealth of non-profit cultural, educa-

tional and medical institutions. In fact, one half of the city's geography is inhabited by the aforementioned institutions as well as the state (Massport in East Boston). These institutions do not have to pay property tax, which is the primary way our city raises revenue. The less the non-profits pay, the more John Q. Smith and Harry's Market pay. Because no one wants to pay more in property taxes (who can blame them?), and because of a law called Proposition 2-1/2, the city's ability to raise needed revenue is hamstrung. So every year there is a budget shortfall and a budget battle. Schools compete with the Fire Department and so on for scarce revenues, and both compete with the Parks Department. And so it goes, year after year.

The only way out of this, the only way for the city to be able to raise revenue, is for the legislature to change the 1830 law that exempts non-profits from having to pay their fair share of taxes. Then we won't have to ask the question, "when will there be enough money?" Until then, we are left to fighting over how much John Q. Smith and Harry's Market have to pay. There actually is enough money - if only our leaders had the political will to go after it.



Come to the  
*BTU Children's Holiday Party*  
Wednesday, December 29, 2010  
12:00 noon to 2:00 pm  
at BTU Hall

Phone Numbers	
Office	617-288-2000
Health & Welfare	617-288-0500
AFT Massachusetts	617-423-3342
Function Office	617-288-3322
Lounge Office	617-288-3322
Vision Center	617-288-5540
Tremont Credit Union	781-843-5626

## Empowering Literacy for Our Students...

(continued from page 1)

blame on those who choose to work with the most challenging students than it is to interrogate our own beliefs.

Boston's students face obstacles that their counterparts in other districts do not. Boston serves over 56,000 students: 38% do not speak English as their first language and 19.6% are enrolled in special education. Statewide the averages are 15.6% and 17% respectively. They also wage a daily war against poverty. In stark contrast with the statewide average of 27.4%, 65% of our students receive federally-funded free meals, a benefit for families earning at or below 130% of the poverty line (a paltry \$28,665 for a family of four). (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/AboutLunch/NSLPFactSheet.pdf>). (<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=00000000&orgtypecode=0&leftNavId=305&>). Because schools cannot be divorced from the surrounding community, we need to analyze the interconnectedness of poverty and low academic achievement. Merely denouncing students as illiterate does nothing to address the reality that is hidden when we equate test scores with success.

And yet our students persevere, showing resilience in the face of adversity. The English Language Learners (ELLs) at my school often arrive in 10th grade knowing little-to-no English, yet three years later are reading (and even enjoying!) Shakespeare. Would we be as successful in their shoes? Studies show that it takes ELLs an average of 5-7 years to reach grade-level academic proficiency. I gladly write recommendation letters even though they may still be behind their more-advantaged peers because I am amazed by their progress and inspired by their promise.

As much as we may dislike them, students are confronted with an alphabet soup of standardized tests (MCAS, SATs, TOEFL, AP exams). We should not just "teach to the test," but it is important that students learn strategies to pass tests that function as gatekeepers to higher education. Many things are beyond our control, but we are not powerless. We alter the future when we challenge students to question the validity of tests that label some learners "advanced" and others "failing."

In addition to ensuring the preparation of students that cross our graduation stages, we need to question why thousands never get there. A staggering 24.4% of freshmen who entered BPS in 2004 dropped out over the next five years: during school year 2008-2009 alone we lost over 1,200 students. (<http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/files/Final%20Dropout%202009.pdf>) True emancipatory literacy means that students have the confidence and ability to question why you and I graduated able to "negotiate the world of words" while so many of their classmates are left behind. It is time to stop blaming teachers, students, and families when society tacitly accepts and expects their failure. Silent protests are not enough.

I too was proud to go to graduation last year and hear the moving words of our valedictorian, a former English Language Learner and true scholar. I clapped as I watched the graduates walk across the stage because I believe that things can change. I'm not playing games.

(Jennifer Leisner is an ESL teacher at English High School.)

## Does someone you know work at a charter school?

AFT Massachusetts needs your help reaching out to employees of Massachusetts charter schools in order to share with them important information regarding:

- A voice in decision making
- Quality professional development opportunities
- Job security
- Competitive salaries and benefits
- Classroom resources

For more information, contact Dan Justice at [justice65@gmail.com](mailto:justice65@gmail.com) or call 802-324-5886.

Learn more about AFT's Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff by visiting: [www.aftacts.org](http://www.aftacts.org)



## In addition to a primary program area (PPA), don't I also have an active alternative program area (APA) in BPS if I have a current Massachusetts license on file at Court Street in case I want to transfer into a position using that certification?

No. In addition to having an active license in the subject area you are currently teaching in *aka* your primary program area (PPA), you must apply for your other current licenses on file at Court St. to become "active" in Boston. To do so, you must fill out an 'Qualifications for Additional Program Areas 2010-11' Superintendent's Circular of Human Resource (HR) HRS-HS-7.1 which must be submitted on or before December 22<sup>nd</sup> with a drop dead date of January 15<sup>th</sup>. In order for the active license to be considered an APA in Boston, one of the following criteria must be met, in addition to submitting the aforementioned application;

Your state cert must be five years old or less. This means you need to have obtained it for the *first* time, not just recertified it, within the last five years.

Submit 15 course credits [grad or undergrad] earned within the last five years, which are relevant to the cert area.

A mean score on the National Teachers Exam earned within the last ten years.

Two years of teaching experience within the last ten years where you've taught at least 50% of the week or more all year in that subject area. In order to verify this, you must obtain and submit with the application, a letter from your principal detailing the specific years you taught the subject area 50% of the week or more.

The contract reads, "Teachers may be considered for transfer in any subject area in which they recertify under the 1993 Massachusetts Educational Reform Act, even if they do not hold an active Boston Program Area; however; a schools Personnel Subcommittee shall not be required to select any such individual." Often, if a teacher applies to transfer in an area that they do not hold a BPS APA, HR will not forward the info to the school for consideration.

Why do we have to jump through these hoops if we have already recertified the license, isn't that redundant? In my opinion, yes it is. This process is a holdover from long ago and far away, when Mass. teachers were issued 'licenses for life'. A teacher could be certified in an area they hadn't taught in or taken course work for in decades, and still be eligible to transfer into teach that subject area. This APA process was negotiated in order for the BPS to ensure the teacher be 'current' in the subject area in question. The BTU attempted to negotiate elimination of this arguably antiquated process, but the BPS wanted too much in return for agreeing to do so which would have further limited teachers flexibility & rights. We couldn't settle for that!

## Will there be a BPS early retirement incentive this school year?

Yes, there will be a **one-time** incentive of \$1,500 for early notification of termination/retirement to teacher unit members of the BTU with an application deadline of January 5, 2011. Please see Superintendent's Circular HRS-PP8; "Incentive for Early Retirement of Termination for Boston Teachers Union - Teacher Unit". In order to be eligible the following criteria must be met: An individual must have a minimum of ten (10) years of continuous service in the BPS and meet the minimum age requirement of being 55 years old. BTU employees who meet said criteria on leave of absence can also apply.

Once the application is accepted by the BPS Office of Human Resources by execution of the Separation Agreement, **it is binding and irrevocable**. The termination of employment must be effective between June 30, 2011 and August 21, 2011. Applicants will not be eligible for unemployment compensation and acceptance of this incentive shall not affect any rights of a member under the Teacher Retirement Law. If accepted, a one-time payment of \$1,500 will be made by February 4, 2011. Individuals planning to retire must also file an "Intent to Retire" form with the City of Boston Retirement Board which cannot be filed more than 45 days before their retirement date. Those BTU/teachers unit employees, who want to apply for this incentive, must submit the application contained in HRS-PP8 to Human Resources by the close of business on Wednesday, January 5, 2011. If you have any further questions regarding same, please contact Wand Manzo in BPS HR at 617-635-9382, [wmanzo@boston.k12.ma.us](mailto:wmanzo@boston.k12.ma.us). This incentive is offered to allow the BPS to know earlier where there will be openings in order to be able to hire earlier for the upcoming new SY.

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

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

## Who's responsible for plowing school parking lots?

The contract states, "The School Committee shall guarantee that snow is plowed from school yards used for parking at no expense to bargaining unit [BTU] members."

## What happens when there is no heat in my classroom?

The contract is clear on this issue. "A classroom will be closed when the temperature falls below 60°F, or whenever the temperature or climate becomes too oppressive."

Report and record the actual temperature in writing to the Principal, keeping a copy yourself. The Principal must assign your class to an available space that is heated adequately as well as remedy the heating problem in your classroom. Keep a record or log of all of the days without heat and the temperature in the room at that time. The Principal should immediately report this in order to have the heat restored. Teachers should file a Step 1 grievance with the Principal as well.

If the entire school falls below the acceptable heat level, each building has an alternate plan in case of emergency. If the heating issue can't be fixed quickly, then the emergency plan for relocation should be employed. The BTU members at the affected school should file a Step 1 grievance at the school in addition. If the entire school is without heat and it has been reported to the School Department, please contact the BTU office as well.

**United we stand – divided we beg.  
Let's stand up together! BTUnity!**

# We're Learning Here

A project by Amika Kemmler Ernst, Ed.D.

The Parkway Academy of Technology and Health (PATH) is a “small school” within the West Roxbury High School Complex. It’s hard to get a sense of the school community because classes and administrative offices are spread throughout three floors of this massive building. Lockers line hallways and a few small notices are tacked to doorways; I miss seeing the large colorful displays of student work evident in many schools – perhaps the fire marshals have visited recently?

When I look more closely, I notice a classroom door in a small “alley” near the principal’s office covered with samples of student writing. Inside, Ms. Eisenschmidt is using a projection from her laptop to focus a class discussion on what makes a “civil” society. Her ninth grade students are totally engaged in considering questions such as “How can one keep the ideas that inspired a society from being abused?” As they invent their own societies, they’re prompted to consider how they will educate their people, sustain the economy, develop and enforce laws. I’m fascinated!

There are many science classes going on: students are examining plants, learning about cell division, and making presentations to their classmates about infectious diseases. In humanities classes, it’s clear that literature and the study of history are well integrated. Talking with students a week later, including one young man with autism, I’m struck by how articulate and passionate they are about their learning. I doubt their MCAS scores could begin to capture this, however, and I feel privileged to be able to share their voices in this column.

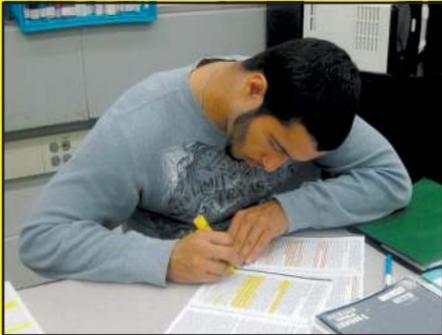
My friend and former colleague, PATH’s Curriculum Access Coordinator **Yvonne Watson**, welcomed me and facilitated my visit. Several students were working in her office to make up assignments during their lunch period, and in the cafeteria they consulted her on a variety of personal issues. I also observed teachers coaching individual students in between classes. As we consider closing small schools in Boston to save money, and knowing how critical relationships are to effective teaching, I wonder what will be lost in terms of this kind of attention to each student’s needs.

I am observing a plant with Ms. Saxena. We’ve been looking at the structures of plants in this class, AP Biology, and I’ve learned the difference between primary and secondary growth.

I was using the computer to research something about World War II and the Holocaust, which we’re studying in our Humanities class. I’ve learned that Hitler was a dictator who killed a lot of innocent people.

We were checking our poster board project grades in Dr. Merchant’s Anatomy & Physiology class. From our own research and from class presentations we learned about many types of infections, such as viral hepatitis, that can be spread by blood transfusions.

I was reviewing my work in Humanities. This year I’ve learned how to analyze a book or play like Macbeth.



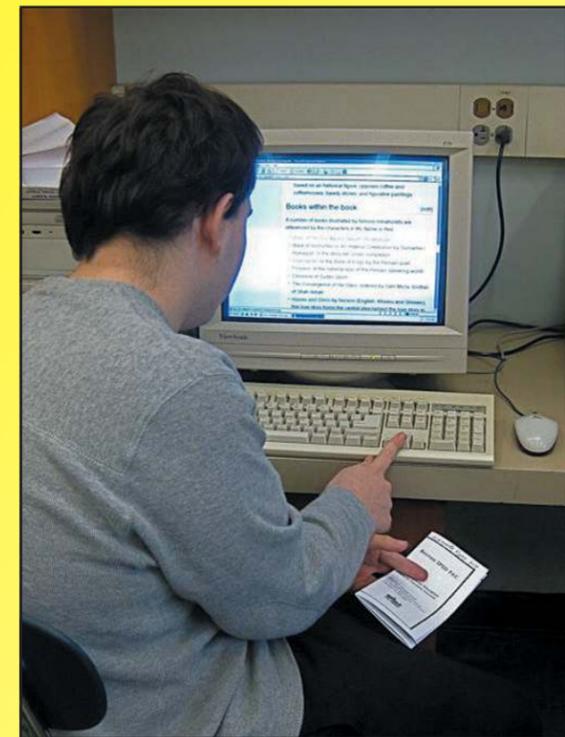
*I was doing annotations in Humanities class. We’ve been reading **A Tale of Two Cities**, by Charles Dickens. I’ve learned that evil can come from anywhere and can be influenced by anything.*

– George Woodman, Grade 12



*I am observing a plant with Ms. Saxena. We’ve been looking at the structures of plants in this class, AP Biology, and I’ve learned the difference between primary and secondary growth.*

– Adyemi Adeniyi, Grade 11



*I was using the computer to research something about World War II and the Holocaust, which we’re studying in our Humanities class. I’ve learned that Hitler was a dictator who killed a lot of innocent people.*

– Ryan Gromada, Grade 10

We were checking our poster board project grades in Dr. Merchant’s Anatomy & Physiology class. From our own research and from class presentations we learned about many types of infections, such as viral hepatitis, that can be spread by blood transfusions.

– Christopher Castillo and Silvi Topi, Grade 11

*I was taking notes in Biotech, answering questions to help me understand. In this class I’ve learned that hereditary genes can be dominant or recessive.*

– Ricardo Guerrero, Grade 10



*I was reviewing my work in Humanities. This year I’ve learned how to analyze a book or play like Macbeth.*

– Anastasia Kalambokis, Grade 12

(Amika Kemmler Ernst is a recently retired BPS New Teacher Developer with extensive experience as a classroom teacher, curriculum developer, and graphic artist. Her “We’re Learning Here” Project features images of everyday learning in our public schools, along with the words of the students pictured.)



*We were working on creating a brochure in French about the five most important people in our lives. We’ve learned how to say our names and to speak in sentences; we’re looking forward to someday going to Paris and being able to communicate with people there!*

– Jerrica Ortiz, Grade 11 & Sadida Maldonado, Grade 12



*Ms. Eisenschmidt was helping us review the characteristics of a society before we created our own. Reading the story of Harrison Bergeron, in which the government forces everyone to be “equal” but there’s no room for personal talents, taught us that there’s no such thing as a perfect society. We’ve also learned that you can’t let anyone else tell you who you are, and that people often fear those who are different than themselves.*

– Hiram Colon, Mariashly Moreta & Shara Nelson, Grade 9



# Life in a Special Education Classroom – An Inclusion Setting Done Right

**Jennifer Dines** was eager to interview with members of the Special Education Faculty Senate because she is proud of her teaching team, proud of her students and proud of her school. Jennifer is in her 4<sup>th</sup> year of teaching and her 1<sup>st</sup> year at the Lila G. Frederick Pilot Middle School.

Jennifer is an inclusion teacher working in a team with 42 sixth grade students, many of whom are English language learners. She has responsibility for implementing and updating Individual Education Plans for seven resource room students and two students with language based learning disabilities. Reading and math levels for her SPED students range from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade. These students spend most of their day in one of two regular classrooms where Jennifer co-teaches. Her teaching day is full and varied. It can include a pull-out session for her special education students, teaching a lesson in reading and writing strategies with a focus on vocabulary and non-fiction for 21 students, observing and monitoring the progress of students during a lesson taught by a co-teacher, providing assistance to regular education, gifted, and ESL students during a lesson, and meeting with the other teachers and staff on her team.

Jennifer is part of a teaching team that includes **Meghan McGoldrick**, math and science and **Jessica Lider**, humanities. They are joined several times a week by an ESL teacher, paraprofessional, itinerant service providers, and several interns.

We asked Jennifer what makes this inclusion model so successful. Her answer was long and provided great insight.

First is the motivated and cohesive team of professionals who have high expectations for themselves and for all their students. This group of staff is highly trained and experienced working with ELL's and SPED students. All understand the importance of accommodations based on individual student needs. There is an atmosphere of trust between the teach-

ers that results in honest feedback of what is working and what is not. 1-2 weekly whole team meetings allow for constant review of data showing students' progress and needs. Jennifer explained, "We honestly critique our own teaching methods and try new things". Jennifer also explains that administrators who provide ongoing support are important to the team. Early in the year Jennifer met with a teacher leader, **Deborah O'Shea**, who helped her anticipate and prepare for what would be covered in her performance evaluation. Having support and help to implement suggestions before her evaluation made the process feel safe and valuable.

Teachers follow state and core standards but have flexibility. Jennifer has found excellent teaching resources like *Best Practices in Reading*, (Options Publishers Inc.), [bookshare.org](http://bookshare.org), and [quizlet.com](http://quizlet.com). She can veer from a traditional pacing guide to provide more explicit instruction and repetition. Teacher team-created differentiated programs like Strive For 25 encourage students to read and write about 25 books per year independently and at their own level. At other times, teachers read class novels and text books out loud for content. Small needs-based groups meet twice per week for literacy instruction and content depth; there is an all-boys group, an all-girls group, a group for gifted students, and a group for students with language-based learning struggles.

Another important factor in success is the availability of needed resources. When Jennifer asked for writing textbooks for all her students, she got them from her teacher leader. When accommodations are recommended, the materials (i.e. easel, subscription-based websites such as Achieve 3000, BrainPop, and Discovery Education) are available. Every student in the school has their own lap top computer.

In this teaching environment students are thriving. A high student teacher ratio and a strong code of discipline result in



**Inclusion teacher Jennifer Dines, English with team members Jessica Lider, Humanities and Meghan McGoldrick, Math and Science.**

few serious behavior problems that disrupt learning. Last year students made significant improvement in both ELA and math. Special education students benefit from being part of a large group of peers with a wide range of interests.

When asked about what she might change if granted her wish Jennifer answered without hesitation. First, a full time reading specialist with training in rules based phonics instruction. Second, more district-offered professional development opportunities for special education teachers that are easy to find on line and have enough openings for all to enroll.

Many parents, students and teachers want to see more inclusion opportunities in the Boston Public Schools. The new special education director **John Veer** has also identified inclusion as a key goal. The SPED Faculty Senate would like to thank Jennifer and her team for providing inspiration and a model of inclusion that works.

(Submitted by the SPED Faculty Senate. The SPED Faculty Senate is open to all BPS staff. We welcome you to attend monthly



**Jennifer Dines sits in her Lila G. Frederick Pilot Middle School classroom.**

meetings - 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month at 3:45 p.m. at the BTU Hall - 180 Mt Vernon St., Dorchester. We also welcome comments on this article or ideas for future articles based on different SPED classrooms. You can email us at: [magrait@verizon.net](mailto:magrait@verizon.net)

## BTU-RTC Holds Annual Fall Retirees Luncheon



**New Teachers Townsend and Brown (right) with veteran Building Reps Regina Temple of English High School and Mary Griffin of the Irving Middle School.**



**New teacher Ann Marie Martinez (left) of McKay Elementary School with BTU Executive Board Member Allison Doherty-LaCasse.**



**One of the organizers of the Retiree Luncheon Mary Gaughan (left) with raffle winner Connie Callahan.**

**Former BTU President William O'Connell reminisces with former union activist Lola McGrail.**

– Photos by Mary F. Glynn



## The Superintendent Speaks...

(continued from page 1)

that the quality vs. the quantity of PD was important, and areas such as ELL & SPED PD have to be rethought. PD being offered in science, math, early childhood, using my learning plan, and for new teachers was received well. Identifying more ways to present info on line was also requested.

A power-point program sampled from the more comprehensive 'Redesign & Reinvest: Quality Choices & Stronger Accountability' presentation made to the BPS School Committee on October 6<sup>th</sup>, was then presented by Dr. Johnson to the BTU Reps. She started by saying, "There is nothing more important than teachers and the work they have to do. We want to support your work with diverse populations which often include 2-3 reading levels in any given class. I want to stress the importance of teachers. Teachers matter more than anything."

"We can educate all kids if given the opportunity when parents and students are engaged. Looking at BPS MCAS scores from 2009-10 in math we are still outperforming the state scores in every category in progress made. We start out with lower scores, but we are making more progress. Significant progress was made at the Eliot, USA, Haley, Roosevelt, M. Lyon, Lee Elementary, Perkins, and Gardner schools. We did not make significant progress in grade 10, it was flat. In the state in grade 10, scores went down. In math we outperformed all of the state in MCAS growth. On national Assessments using the NAPE, Boston is one of 20 cities that oversampled. Boston had the best math performance in the country on NAPE."

"The Council of Great City Schools contains the 60 largest cities in the country and they did a big study as to why Boston outperformed everyone else in math. They did a similar study in Atlanta where they outperformed everyone in ELA. Atlanta does not have as large an ELL population as Boston."

"While we are doing well overall, we still have a lot of work to do particularly in middle schools. We need to look more closely at what's happening in the 4th and 6th grades to see better what's happening with that program. Looking at the Gates Millennium Scholarship that grants their awardees undergraduate and graduate school tuition; 11 are in Massachusetts, six of who are from Boston - three of who are from BPS's New Mission High School. Eight BPS High Schools in the past two years have appeared in the *US News and World Report*."

The Superintendent reviewed the progress the District has made in closing the achievement gap citing over 12 years of 10th grade ELA scores which is the area the BPS has come closest to closing said gap.

Dr. Johnson continued, "Last summer working with the Private Industry Council (PIC) 700 kids who'd dropped out were contacted and 500 returned. We still have 350 enrolled - it's hard to hold onto them. Some of the kids were close enough to graduation that they did so through credit recovery. Some were so far behind they enrolled in GED or adult Ed programs. We were surprised that hundreds of kids came back to reengagement centers. It's tricky and requires a lot of hand holding. Many of the kids didn't know where they were as far as credits. In high schools we are creating a one page tracking sheet to make it easier for students to keep track of where they are in the trajectory on an ongoing basis that can be printed out. It will get kids to own their work and inform parents who don't know all the steps to graduate."

"There is good news about the graduation rate. In 2007 it was 57% and now it is 61%. It's going up. Using credit recovery about 200 kids who needed 1 to 2 credits graduated. They won't have come back to school in the fall for a couple of credits. For these kids to move on they need a high school diploma. It is essential. Girls are graduating much faster than boys in that 67% of them as opposed to 55% of boys graduate which is a differential that is true across all racial and ethnic groups except Asian where boys outperform girls. We still have work to do with black and Hispanic boys of color."

An area the Superintendent is excited about is a sign of improvement with ELL students in the district which she attributes to two things; the fact that BPS added 60 teachers in ELL and added a lot more training which many teachers have been engaged in. In every category across the board in the ELL program more students are passing. There have been significant gains in ELL student proficiency rates.

Dr. Johnson stated she is going to revamp the Principal Leadership program in that according to her, it is not getting the district where it needs to be. This pronouncement garnered spontaneous applause from the BTU Rep Conference participants.

In the area of contract negotiations the Superintendent reported, "Time is not the only variable for improvement. Quality evaluations have not been happening. Money is not the only incentive to reward improvement. Teams of teachers should get incentives to reward teacher performance results. We need to be making sure staffing and schools are flexible to get some of the best teachers to go to under performing schools. We need to work on how to recruit, retain and provide leadership opportunities for such teachers. Twelve schools have been designated by the state as under performing. Over the summer these school teams worked hard to get state grants and 10 have been funded. The Aggasiz and Burke were not successful in their applications. The other 10 will get \$22 million to help improve their schools. Boston has 12 Turnaround Schools, Springfield has 10, and most of the other districts have only 1-2 schools designated this way."

Dr. Johnson then presented a virtual lightning round which included the following issues to the convention. Parent University started by BPS is designed to inform parents what kids should know and what they will be working on in each grade. Over 200 parents came to all 10 Saturday sessions. In the Arts, 2,000 more students are now getting a weekly art experience which schools are doing in a variety of ways so the arts are not present at BLS and BAA only. John Fish of Suffolk Construction has donated \$5 million through the formation of the Red & Blue Foundation providing equipment and promoting scholar athletes in BPS emphasizing athletics through improved academics. Academic zones were established with BPS graduate facilitators who tutor, mentor and support the athletes.

She continued by stating, "Where there were no K-8 schools in some neighborhoods, we've heard from parents which is where we merged some schools into K-8 and moved Young Achievers pilot K-8 to the site of the former Lewenberg and expanded Tech Boston Academy down into a 6-12 with the 6-9 component housed in the former Wilson School."

"This fall I've introduced a plan for schools which has been controversial. The Lee Elementary and the Lee Pilot Schools are in the same building. The Lee

Elementary has outperformed the Lee Pilot. Parents protested these two schools being changed. The Early Learning Center has been located in the Central Kitchen facility. We are trying to get all ELCs NAEYC certified which they will not do if that school remains at that site. At that school we have surround care, a central drop off at 7 a.m. and pick up at 5 p.m. They have child care at both ends and parents don't want to give that up."

"UP Academy will become an in-district charter school at the Gavin Middle School, a school that has shown growth in math but has struggled in ELA the last few years. The Clapp Elementary is small with 160 students and has seen the students do less well in a pattern of persistent underperformance. The Emerson in Roxbury has 250 students with a large Cape Verdian population. There is space for that program to move to the King K-8 but we've heard from families they want to remain together as a cultural component as well. The Umana is now a 6-8 that will become a K-8. There will be renovations to the building. There are parents in the neighborhood that want a two way bilingual program. We are now busing Latino kids out of East Boston if parents don't choose the Umana. Half of Orchard Gardens' kids are from East Boston as are a significant amount of students in the South End's Blackstone School."

"The most controversial of my proposals was the proposal to close the Hyde Park Education Complex including three schools; CASH has shown the most progress, TES has more kids in the warning and failing category although they have a substantial amount of Sped students, SJA is making progress more slowly. In the other complexes I have to evaluate the high administrative overhead. At West Roxbury Complex there are 8 Headmasters and Assistant Headmasters which is a lot of administrative cost. USA outperformed every school at WREC on the MCAS. How do we take all of these schools work and parents choose them? Excel, Boston Community Leadership Academy, ACC & TBA are all small high schools that take kids from the lottery, are small and are working. Small schools can work. If small schools aren't working how should they do things differently?"

"In June & July we held 18 meetings which were small and specialized including Sped, different ethnic groups, etc. We asked community agencies to give suggestions as to variety of parents to send to these meetings and they did."

"Out of 45 charter school applicants, the state approved 25 to submit full planning grants. 14 out of the 25 will be located in Boston. Six are scheduled to open this fall. We don't know the grade and locations of the schools that will be approved. The state process is lengthy. We will know in February. We will lose kids to these charter schools. We have class sizes 1-22 preK-2; 25 grades 3-5; 28 grades 6-8; 31 grades 9-12. Very few of our classes are full. Instead of 22 we have classes of 14 & 15. Parents are not choosing some of our schools. We have many more seats than we have kids. The Boston Globe had an article stating the BPS was low balling the number of open seats. We say we have 5,000 to 5,500 empty seats. People don't understand that since 1974 Public Law 94142 IDEA added many more Sped programs and specifically autistic programs the last couple of years. We house more tech labs and outside groups. If people think of space the same way we used to use it, they don't realize we use schools very differently now than in the past. They aren't taking into account the different ways space is being used. There are

also schools such as the Dearborn which was sited in the article whose facilities are in very bad shape. Some space has to be closed off and those extra classes are not useable now as a result. Enrollment is flat. We had 300 more kids in last years' programs."

"Every time a new or private school opens the BPS has to transport the kids. The students who go to charter schools don't go by the same geocode we do. Charter schools are treated as if they have citywide status and we have to pay to transport the kids who go to them from all over the city by law. This year we have a \$62 million budget gap." Dr. Johnson then detailed the variety of cost areas in the district which are projected to contribute to this deficit, including aligning the common core standards, improving district wide data systems, capital improvements, repairs to school buildings, loss of stimulus money that as added to the budget of the current SY, and the like."

Superintendent Johnson then segued to the Q & A portion of her presentation by stating, "We need to do more to celebrate our work in the BPS. We need to hear more about what we are doing well and share it. That is one of our challenges."

**Allison Doherty-LaCasse** of Urban Science Academy (USA) led off the Q&A session by stating that as a teacher of autistic students she has found there is not sufficient PD offered by the district dealing with severe special education, nor is there an actual curriculum in place for this population. While she reported having received a smart board, there was little direction provided or assistance with her classes' challenging student behaviors and emphasized more support in this area would be very helpful. She observed that the district is being "lambasted by the press" and that the BTU and BPS should "get the word out to promote what we do. In this respect, we have common ground." Allison asked if there had been any decision concerning the fate of the West Roxbury Ed Complex (WREC) in that there had been 'buzz' that there were possibilities of redesigning its current configuration. She continued by suggesting if this was so, it would make sense for a team of teachers from WREC to be a part of that conversation.

Dr. Johnson reflected. "Last year during budget recommendations we looked at how much was spent on administration - Headmasters and Assistant Headmasters there but we didn't do anything with that. I asked folks to come up with creative solutions. There are all new Headmasters over the last two years there. We were looking for folks at the complexes to sit and talk to come up with some suggestions. It is interesting to hear that you haven't heard that as well. Last spring I asked what will work for them at the complexes. The year before, the schools at the Dorchester Complex (DEC) came up with the idea of merging the two schools into one. That suggestion came from the schools. Last year we were not trying to eliminate small schools. We were concerned with getting kids exposed to a high level curriculum. Parents won't commit to us. They will move without a rigorous set of offerings. Without that it looks as if their kids can't get into college. In the 4 complexes they were not offering enough opportunities for AP or the arts. If students went between all of them [small schools within a complex], the kids could take AP but it often was a scheduling problem. We want to invest in ways to continue the good work USA, Excel, & CASH are doing, we don't want to destroy that."

**Wanda Delga Ademous** from the Condon School said folks from the Emerson are being asked to go to the King and are being given no choice. She reported students will have to walk 30 minutes to school as there are no buses available. The school, in her opinion failed due to a poor previous principal. She stated the current principal has been there only one year, which is not enough time to judge.

"The folks at the Emerson may be feeling that they don't have a choice as to where to send their kids, but they always have a choice," Ms. Johnson explained. "The overall problem not only for this school, is asking how a community defines itself—race, income, or what? In the case of the Emerson's Cape Verdean population, even though the school being suggested that they go to is within a mile of its current location, is a K-8, is a building we've made a lot of capital investments in, they don't see that school as culturally specific to them. We have to pay attention to this. We need to take the time to figure it out. It is complex question."

**Maureen Sutherland**, a paraprofessional from the Gavin Middle School for 26-1/2 years stated that there are eight special education programs there including 4 multi-handicapped, 1 autistic, & 3 other .4 classes. She reported that the school was told that the current Gavin grades 6 & 7 can stay there next year. Now, the incoming administration has told them that this will not automatically happen, that the kids have to fill out applications like other students in the district to remain there. She asked for clarification as to where these students will be going if their parent's don't fill out the applications. Further she asked if the current teachers and paras could go with these students if they are moved stating, "The SPED classes are up in the air with no one giving a straight answer."

The Superintendent responded by stating that the new BPSSPED Director, **John Vere**, is working on all special Ed issues. **Helen Irvin** stated that as an elementary teacher from the Tynan, she has spent years getting the special Ed students ready for middle school in the specialized Gavin program and she asked in an impassioned way where these students were going to be sent.

Dr. Johnson said, "Every student at the Gavin can stay in the building but the language as crafted in the law is slightly different than that. The question becomes how we maintain kids within an environment without paying attention to the legislation which calls for a lottery. Ms. Irvin followed by asking if UP Academy has to take all of the existing SPED students at the Gavin. The Superintendent answered, "Absolutely. In BPS almost all of the SPED students were put into the Middle Schools, not the K-8s. Was that

fair? It was inequitable. We have to deal with this situation according to the legislation. I will research it and get back to you."

**Bill Barfus**, teacher at Tech Boston Academy Upper (TBA@DEC) stated that he has been thwarted from sharing best practices he's developed relative to improved HSMATH MCAS scores due to a lack of responsiveness from BPS leadership. He's developed a data base and a process to examine MCAS problems which have had a great impact in improved testing results. He reported having attempted to share this info with the administrative team from Court Street for two years in a variety of ways and the only interest shown was from HM Wilson from New Mission HS. As a result of implementation of said program at NMH, the math MCAS scores have greatly improved. He wants to try to assist other schools through partnering with them but didn't see that the opportunity exists to implement this type of sharing in the district. Superintendent Johnson stated the only way to learn what teachers are teaching in class is to share best practices. Reportedly, HM Wilson from New Mission High credited Mr. Barfus' technique with assisting them to improve their MCAS scores significantly.

**Marta Johnson Faldas**, teacher at the Roosevelt K-8 asked what the new SPED process was and when that process would be communicated to teachers including SEIMS training. The Superintendent suggested that SPED Director, **John Vere**, should be invited to one of the BTU's membership meetings to explain the behavioral piece as well as the academic piece. "We are trying to look at our work centrally to see what we are doing to help with academics and behavior for special education students. We are looking at what do we do for everyone, what do we do for students with more needs, and to deal with really serious issues requires very different strategies. We need to look at not just for SPED; how we do we intervene to provide the support or help. We need to help a little more with autism through technology as many of them are tactile or stimulus tactile adverse. As far as the SPED PD, we found by asking teachers they found it disappointing in terms of quality and relevancy."

**Pamela Brodie** from the Holland, a Turnaround School, explained that due to the longer hours kids are not getting to school until 9 a.m. when they should be there at 7:20. They are missing 30 minutes of instruction in the morning. Recently BPS Operations Dept. sent a person out to the school stating the school staff was not doing their job because they were not dismissing the kids on time. She reported that teachers were upset at being told to dismiss the kids early to accommodate trans-  
(continued on page 8)

## RTC Executive Board Meeting – October 1, 2010

**Members present:** Anne Marie Adduci; Ann Broder, Treasurer; Marie Broderick; Mary Cahalane; Sandy Carle; Larry Connolly; Dave Donovan, Chairman; Phil Fasano; Eileen Ganley; Donna Cooley-Hilton; Ruthanne Kennedy; Linda McNamee; Marilyn Marion, Secretary; Leonard Miraglia, Vice Chairman; Mary Jo Murphy, and Paul Tenney.

**Excused:** Bonnie Mitten.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 10:15 a.m.

**Secretary:** Minutes read with revisions noted. Report Accepted.

**Treasurer:** Treasurer's report read and accepted.

**Vice Chairman:** There are 7 new DELTA members. Membership will be informed via mail regarding the DELTA one-year commitment needed. Suggestion was given to the chairman to consider an open-enrollment period. Report Accepted.

**Chairman:** Chairman enjoyed and was pleased with the business meeting and Sheriff Cabral's excellent presentation. Cabral's office will send us pictures taken at the business meeting.

Donations for the golf tournament continue to be received in Rose-Marie's name. Because of the holiday weekend, there is difficulty getting participants. However, the tournament will take place, as scheduled, on October 11 at 8:30 a.m.

Chairman noted that he met with BTU officers regarding RTC contributions vs. the expenses incurred by the RTC. Discussion in this regard took place. Chairman also mentioned that the approval for our benefits will be voted on at the next active teacher membership meeting.

Chairman mentioned that RTC delegates at QUEST conferences have become an issue with the BTU active teachers. Discussion about our involvement in QUEST will be taken up under New Business.

Question as to our receiving a report about our contribution to the BTU was raised. Further clarification in this regard is needed. Report Accepted.

**Benefits:** Chair presented a renewal analysis in which the membership will pay 2% for next year. Motion: To approve the 2% increase. Motion passed.

**Remembrance:** Remembrance list, which will include Charles Andrew and Rose-Marie Donovan, will not only appear in the November *BUT*, but it will also be available at the November luncheon.

**Scholarship:** No report.

**Social:** Returns for reservations for the fall luncheon continue to come in. Committee asked board if crafters will be at the luncheon and where. If so, how will crafters be selected; will they be in the lounge and how many? Discussion resulted in the following motion: **Motion:** To allow 12 crafters at the fall luncheon; to have crafters invited on a first-come-first-served basis; to be placed in the lounge and to charge crafters \$20. Motion approved. Report Accepted

**Travel:** Flyers about upcoming trips have been sent to the membership; will be on the RTC link on the BTU website and will be placed on the tables at the luncheon.

**Legislative:** Chairs reported that Jamie Frank spoke to the Governor at the AFL-CIO convention regarding letters sent to him by the membership. She reported that he was not aware of the letters. The Legislative Committee will draft a letter to the Governor about the letters that were sent to him and his not responding to them. Question was raised about our eligibility for COLA. Discussion followed, resulting in our needing more information.

**Membership:** We have 2654 members. Application pending letters will be sent.

**Data Processing:** Chair is urging members to use the new and friendly BTU website and our link on the website, which allows RTC members to sign up via their email addresses. The website and the RTC link will be monitored by the committee chairs. Committee will meet once a month with the IT Tech to review the website.

**Old Business:** There was a discussion regarding business meeting scheduling that would make it easier for members to attend. Dates for the spring business meeting will be set at the next RTC board meeting.

**New Business:** RTC delegates at QUEST conferences discussion continued. **Motion:** to invite Richard Stutman to attend our next meeting, November 1, to discuss the QUEST delegate issue. Motion approved.

Meeting adjourned at 1 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Marilyn Marion, Secretary

## BTU Speaks to the Community...

(continued from page 2)

pensive to educate. **Arne Duncan**, Obama's Secretary of Education, argues that we need schools with the flexibility to come up with great new ideas.

But let's look at some ideas we already have. In September I met Milvia when she began a new job in the lunch room next door to me. Milvia's children attend a traditional public school in East Boston. At the Otis School there is a program called Family School, funded through the Department of Education. Participating students stay after school and get extra help and supervised play time outdoors. Parents attend classes to improve their English while their younger children attend preschool. Together students and parents talk about healthy eating, play board games, read books, and go on field trips to the aquarium, local library and playgrounds. A bilingual coordinator reaches out to all the families and you can see the results. Last month the school cafeteria was **packed** with parents learning how to better help their children with school work. Milvia did improve her English and now she runs a school kitchen and works afternoons at the Otis Family preschool. By all measures - student attendance and test scores, parent education and involvement - The Family

School is a success. So has the Department of Education taken this great idea and spread it? Exactly the **opposite**. Initially there were 24 Family Schools in Massachusetts. But federal funds were cut. Now the Otis is one of only 4 Family Schools left.

The state calls schools in our cities underperforming. I agree there is a lot we can and **must** do to improve our schools. But let's stop blaming teachers, most who work extra hours, spend their own money for classroom supplies, and care deeply about our students. A better description for our schools is underfunded. We need public funding that does not depend on grants that come and go or on bake sales. We need more schools with full time nurses, counselors and parent coordinators, with nutrition and fitness programs, health care centers in the large high schools, extra help for disruptive students, as well as great text books and curriculum, a fair evaluation process to support or weed out ineffective teachers, teacher training, and parent involvement. Together students, parents and school staff with adequate resources make a powerful team with many answers. Thank you.

(Marjie Crosby is an occupational therapist in East Boston schools. She is also a member of the North Shore Labor Council's Women's Committee.)

## School Site Council Training Held at the BTU

An all-day School Site Council training was held at the BTU on Saturday, November 20th for teams of SSC members including the principal of each school. Over 50 participants and a dozen schools sent teams to learn about budget basics from John McDonough, BPS CFO (photo at right); as well as the history, purpose, role, authority, & responsibilities of SSCs. Further trainings will be held as a joint BTU-BPS endeavor in conjunction with BPS Office of Parent & Student Engagement. For more information please contact Caren Carew [ccarew@btu.org](mailto:ccarew@btu.org).



## The Superintendent Speaks...

(continued from page 7)

portation when due to buses being late in the morning; they were losing time on teaching and learning. Parents have reportedly been calling and complaining.

The Superintendent explained, "We had been doing a manual route looking to save resources in transpiration. To keep spending \$100 million on transportation is unacceptable when we need money for materials, etc. in the classrooms. We put enough money into automated routing but we didn't spend enough time to drive the routes. Some schools went from the first tier to the second tier [start times] and then there is a third tier. Now we are making many major changes in routing. It reduced the number of buses which made the drivers hours change making many of them upset."

**Betsy Drinan**, teacher leader at the Boston Teachers Union Pilot K-8 School stated she appreciated the statement of increased focus of the district on social emotional issues while adding that if we believe that is important, we have to staff that. Elaborating she implored that if we really mean that it takes time and people to address the needs of our students more effectively, we can't put it all on the teachers, on top of everything else. The conventioners applauded her statement.

**Kevin Fagan**, teacher at the Trotter stated that charter schools are doing a better job of marketing their good news and if BPS wants to keep students it needs to do a better job of getting parents involved.

The Superintendent responded, "Taxpayers don't want to hear we are spending their money on marketing and not on instruction. We are trying to raise money to do so. Beyond marketing, many charters are open longer. Particularly in our schools that get out at 1:30, it works against us selling that school to single parent families. Even if the competing charter school isn't as good as ours, more

families go to schools that get out later. We need to extend the day at schools that end at 1:30. We tend to think of our work as academic but there are a lot of families who need custodial care as well."

**Barbara Nowak**, a Spanish teacher at O'Bryant bemoaned the fact that while the class size maximum in high schools is 31 students, some Spanish classes have been at 41, 53, & 48 students. She stated the teachers filed class size grievances right away due to the overloading but subs have been covering since the first week of school and their students are receiving only pass or fail grades. These exam school high school students are worried about their GPA's. Dr. Johnson replied, "I am so sorry. Most of the time the staffing adjustments are made by the end of September."

**Geralyn Fagan**, a special education paraprofessional from the East Zone ELC, observed that the larger challenge facing us is the attack on teachers and unions which is a real struggle in that the vast majority of the charter schools are doing the same or less well as public schools. **Diane Ravitch** sometimes presents her point of view locally which she hoped the Superintendent would round up the BPS School Committee and other policy makers to go to hear the next time Ravitch was in town. She stated that we are battling for public education and that the opposition wants to destroy same through creating a dual system.

Dr. Johnson rejoined, "I bought the book for myself & ordered more for my executive team. I will also do so for the School Committee. We have to be willing to self correct. People out there don't believe we can self correct and we have great teachers working in our classrooms every day - sometimes against significant odds. We are always asking what we can do to improve teaching and learning. Many teachers felt the PD is being done

to, not with them. It is a trust issue."

**Iris Coronel**, a teacher from the Mattahunt in K-2 reported that in order to close the achievement gap there need to be sufficient paraprofessionals in our classrooms. She stated that we are missing this vital person in many classes because they are being taken out of their classes to substitute and perform clerical duties around the school. She also emphasized that sharing best practices is key; it can create a strong base of knowledge. Dr. Johnson answered, "We are reviewing all recommendations. The ELC that has been listed as closing was not being considered for this due to performance, just for the facility it is in."

**Anne Minichino**, a nurse from The English High School stated that as a nurse, she ID's kids who are at risk who had not passed middle school. There were 250 kids in the 9th grade, 71 who had not passed, who are now placed in EHS, a Turnaround school. The Headmaster offered them summer school and 31 showed up, the rest were as she stated, 'behind the eight ball' in September as they were coming to English High unprepared, which, she reported, has been going on for a number of years at EHS.

The Superintendent responded, "The index of these students has multi-factors. In eighth grade less than 80% of the students failed one or more of their core courses, gaining a low GPA making them a high risk for dropping out. We give this list of students to the headmasters and without major interventions, they will drop out. When they didn't go and invest in themselves in middle school, they are then missing their core content. This is a challenge. In Chicago, they held these students back for multiple years. At Young Achievers I have 16 & 17 year olds in middle school who are too old and are not an appropriate mix match. We have to figure out what to do without holding

them back."

**Bruce Collotta**, teacher at CASH in Hyde Park Ed Complex, acknowledged that the Superintendent 'toughed it out' at HPEC community meeting where the audience weighed in on her proposal for closing what she'd termed under-performing schools by having said students be able to attend higher performing schools. HPEC lacks resources and he observed the 1100 students moved out of HPEC if it is closed won't be attending "better schools". He recounted the disruption her proposal would mean to the students and their families during this difficult economic time when stability is needed more than ever. He then recounted the positive accomplishments and atmosphere of rigorous teaching and learning that occurs at the Complex. Collotta asserted that small schools do work in that the MCAS scores in all three schools in the Complex scores went up. He emphasized that the kids feel safe there and that they are now filled with anxiety not knowing if their schools will close. He asked that the Superintendent & School Committee reconsider and give the school another chance." The Superintendent asked for a copy of the testimony Mr. Collotta read.

Superintendent Johnson concluded her Q&A session by stating, "I'm grateful to **Richard Stutman** for reaching out and allowing me to obtain information directly from you and to learn more to improve the district." Dr. Johnson then stayed to answer individuals' questions and to hear their concerns.

**Bethany Wood**, a former English teacher at ACC accompanied Dr. Johnson and was introduced as a person now working at Court Street in order to provide assistance to teachers about international opportunities for educators and their students. If you would like further info concerning same, contact her at [bwood@boston.k12.ma.us](mailto:bwood@boston.k12.ma.us).