

Boston Union Teachers



The Award-Winning Newspaper of the Boston Teachers Union

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Those honored at the BPS Educator of the Year Celebration include: Emily Bozeman, English and Special Education Teacher at Brighton High School (Brighton); Jayme Drzewinski, Grade 3 Teacher at Thomas Edison K-8 School (Brighton); Patricia Flakes, Biology and Special Education at Madison Park Technical Vocational High School (Roxbury); Amy Gailunas, Grade 2 inclusion Teacher at Dr. William W. Henderson Inclusion Elementary School (Dorchester); Harry "Chuck" Gilliam, Grade 8 English, Science, and Spanish Teacher at Richard J. Murphy K-8 School (Dorchester); Gregory

Holt, Director of Music at Boston Arts Academy (Fenway); Benadette Manning, Math Teacher at Fenway High School (Fenway); Jennifer Muhammad, Grade 4 Teacher at Joseph Hurley 2-way Bilingual K-8 School (South End); Clifford Tette, Music Teacher at Oliver Wendell Holmes Elementary School (Dorchester); Rosemary George White, Visual Arts Teacher at Henry Dearborn Middle School (Dorchester); Dora Yu, Math, Chinese, Sheltered English Instruction Teacher at Charlestown High School (Charlestown).

Remarks by BTU President Richard Stutman at the Educator of the Year Celebration on June 5, 2012

Welcome and good evening. Good evening, Mayor Menino, and thank you for your ongoing commitment to our public schools. Good evening Superintendent Johnson, and thank you for your work day in and day out to provide leadership to our district. Thank you, too, Reverend Groover, for your stewardship of the Boston School Committee. Each of us wants what is best for our schools, our students, and while we sometimes disagree on the best means of getting there, our common goals and aspirations for the children of Boston will overcome any temporary obstacles we may face.

On behalf of the 7,000 members of the Boston Teachers Union, I would also like to introduce members of the elected BTU staff here who are present.

This is a wonderful event, an event at which we honor our members—teachers, paraprofessionals, and others—who have

been chosen by their colleagues to receive an award that exemplifies excellence in our profession. We are honored to be here, and we all share in the joy of your proud achievement. It is terrific, too, to see all of your colleagues here to share in your achievement and award.

You each have much to be proud of, as recognition and nomination by your colleagues is the highest honor one can receive. We congratulate you, and we admire and respect your leadership and the positives you bring to our schools and our profession every day.

As rewarding as these ceremonies are, and as worthy are our recipients are, our profession is under attack, and we have to understand that those attacks harm the very essence of what we celebrate here tonight.

In Wisconsin, there is a well-known push to take away the rights and benefits of most public employees. And Wisconsin

is joined by many other states. Today's recall election of Governor Scott Walker in Wisconsin will set a tone, and provide either inspiration to us or a determination to fight back with even more resolve.

Here in Massachusetts there is a petition drive, headed by *Stand for Children*, a group whose name gives lie to its purpose and whose funders include the Walton Foundation and Bain Capital, that threatens to do in pieces with a carving knife what Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker has done with a meat cleaver. And in DC, we see an insensitive and misguided Dept of Education that pushes policies that distort the very essence of teaching



Richard Stutman
BTU President

and learning—bubble sheet answer by bubble sheet answer. Yes, even as we celebrate here tonight, we need to understand that there are forces beyond this room that are working against the accomplishments we recognize here today.

So we celebrate here tonight with two hands clapping, but we have one hand clapping for the greatness we are here to recognize and the other hand held out to ward off those who seek to destroy the creativity,

the passion, and the individual spirit we celebrate here tonight.

Thank you very much, and congratulations to our esteemed colleagues we celebrate here tonight.

Corporate Influence in Public Education

A Fact Sheet

School Vouchers

In 1990, Milwaukee instituted the first voucher program. Vouchers were brought in under the guise of school choice. Money got siphoned off of public schools as students chose to use their vouchers on private schools. One school that received millions of dollars through the nation's oldest and largest voucher program was founded by a convicted rapist. Another school reportedly entertained children with Monopoly while cashing \$330,000 in tuition checks for hundreds of no-show students. The Republican-controlled Congress in 2004 passed the first federally funded voucher program for the DC public schools. There is absolutely no evidence that says school vouchers have improved educational equity.

Charter Schools

Originally an idea of Raymond Budde of UMASS and Albert Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers who both envisioned schools that were run by teachers with autonomy of curriculum and participatory governance. Today's charters are far from that with the vast majority of them run by for-profit corporations or as non-profits with private boards of directors. The charter reflects the aims of the corporation, not of the teachers or parents. Charters have continuously fought oversight and regulation as well as any attempts to unionize the staff. Charters often limit enrollment of special needs students and English Language learners, 2 groups that are more expensive to educate. Charters also counsel out students that do not test well or who have challenges. The attrition rate at Boston charter schools are far higher than public schools with many of the students that are counseled out coming back to the public schools, often right around MCAS testing. In New York City a number of charter schools are run by hedge fund managers.

For-profit schools

Many charters are for profit. One of the pioneers of for-profit was Whittle Communication. Chris Whittle started Edison Schools (now Edison Learning). In the 80s Whittle bribed his way into public schools by giving cash strapped schools free VCRs and TVs. In exchange the students were required to watch a 10 minute teen news program (Channel One) that included three minutes of commercials for things like candy bars, chips, and sugary drinks. The company was taken private in a buyout in 2003 and was valued at \$180 million. In some Boston classrooms you can still see the old TVs mounted on the wall...broken.

The Foundations

As Republicans have lobbied for lower and lower taxes, cash strapped school districts have had to rely more and more on private foundations. Operating outside public oversight three major foundations – Bill and Melinda Gates (Microsoft), Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation (Sun Life Insurance), and the Walton Family Foundation (Walmart) have commanded the field. Their market-based goals for public education include choice, competition, deregulation, accountability, and data-based decision-making. To achieve these goals they fund charter schools, high-stakes standardized testing for students, merit pay for teachers whose students improve their test scores, firing teachers and closing schools when scores don't rise adequately,

and longitudinal data collection on the performance of every student and teacher.

The reach of these private foundations into public education is extensive. Broad has funded his Broad Superintendents Academy to train successful business-people to become school managers. Many of these new superintendents have never taught in a public school. In 2000 Gates started pouring money to the tune of \$2 billion into breaking up large urban high schools into smaller learning communities. There were never any studies that showed this would have a positive effect. By 2008 the foundation decided they weren't getting the results they wanted and stopped the funding. But school districts now had to cope with the much more expensive to run small schools. Walton worked hand in glove with Michelle Rhee and gave her the money she needed to raise DC public school teachers salaries in exchange for greater control over evaluating and firing teachers. The bottom line: All of these foundations are deciding public policy with their money, threatening the democratic institution of public schools.

Standardized Testing

Corporate "reformers" have championed the use of high stakes standardized testing. The testing industry is dominated by Harcourt, CTB/McGraw-Hill, Pearson, and Riverside (offspring of Houghton-Mifflin). It is a multi-billion dollar industry that has grown significantly since the testing mandates of No Child Left Behind and now Race to the Top. The over-reliance on testing as a measure of school effectiveness has led to a narrowing of the curriculum to subjects that are tested. As a result, many urban schools that are at risk of being closed for poor test performance have eliminated art, music, and many electives, overloading the students with extra math and English classes. Critical and creative thinking in the classroom are being forsaken for test prep classes.

Schools as Markets

Education is a \$2.5 trillion global market. Increasingly corporate lobbyists are pushing for the passages of laws that open up this market to corporations. Over the years we have seen public hospitals,

whose mission invariably was to serve low income families being shut down in favor of for profit hospitals that deny coverage. Public utilities being replaced with energy corporations, and the skyrocketing energy costs that come with them. Prisons being privatized, some with "occupancy guarantees" written into the contract. And now public education where superintendents are being replaced by CEOs, students are being replaced by data points, parents as customers, and teachers as just another cog in the factory.

Schools as markets or democratic spaces?

Acknowledgements to Joanne Barkan (Truthout and Dissent Magazine), Barbara Miner (Rethinking Schools), Susan Ohanian (susanohanian.org), and Diane Ravitch (Education Week).



Garret Virchick

The Membership Application Drive

By Charles R. Johnson,
BTU Secretary-Treasurer

On behalf of the Boston Teachers Union, I want to thank all of you who filled out membership cards during our membership card drive. This task needed to be completed at the end of a very tough year amidst testing and year-end classroom demands. We at the BTU realize this was an inconvenience, but we assure you that it was a necessary exercise.

During the upcoming weeks, we will tabulate the cards, scan them, store the information on a secure server, and keep the physical copies stored securely off site. We will notify members who have not returned a card; but if by chance you know that you have not completed a membership card, please contact us

(617-288-2000) and we will mail you an application.

We want the full membership to know that each and every city union was required to complete this demand. Again, thank you for taking the time to complete the card, and we especially appreciate the work the building representatives put forth getting this done. Our office is always proud of the work and commitment you give on a daily basis for the children of Boston! Enjoy your summer!



Charles R. Johnson
BTU Secretary-Treasurer

The Teaching Pulse: James Liou

Why BTU Votes and Mail-In Balloting are Good for our Union

Over the past few months, I've been happy to support the BTU Votes initiative, a grassroots movement of BTU members that has proposed to make voting more accessible – and to make the Boston Teachers Union more inclusive – by advocating for mail-in balloting.

By the time you read this column, it may also be likely that the most critical date of this initiative will have passed – the June 13th, BTU membership meeting. At that meeting, those present will decide whether or not to approve the by-law change to affirm this effort.

I very much hope that we will collectively decide to do so. And if you are reading this before June 13th, please do come to the membership meeting to help make it happen!

But in reflection, even in these last days of May – the busiest time of BTU Votes planning and organizing – some key benchmarks have already been met. More than 1,000 teachers, paraprofessionals, nurses, psychologists and support staff have signed a petition supporting the initiative – most within the span of three weeks. I think I can safely say that hundreds of hours have been collectively spent on the efforts to develop the initiative, in meetings at our homes and in strategic outreach. BTU Votes members have collectively donated hundreds of dollars of their own

money to pay for printing petition materials and flyers. We have come across both severe obstacles as well as strong supporters among the BTU Executive Board and the BTU leadership. Many of us have met from the first time, representing schools from across the city, and have organized around the common cause of strengthening our union.

I've also learned a lot from the experience so far. I've been part of inspiring conversations, attended many afterschool-into-early evening planning meetings and received and sent more emails than reasonable to count. I clumsily figured out the difference between a Facebook page and a Facebook group, and now know that I'm a stone's throw away from a pretty great union printing shop. Perhaps most importantly, I've gotten to know – or know better – a group of passionate, pro-union and dedicated fellow teachers.

And what is the central premise of this collective thoughtfulness, work and action? It's the idea that teacher voice matters. Teacher voices matter. And that we can, and must, do better in our own union to make our professional organization accessible to, and responsive to, ALL of us.

You might have already seen some of the shocking statistics. In our last election, only 13% of BTU members voted – which translates into nearly 90% of our membership

who did not or could not participate in this most basic, democratic action. You might have talked to our BTU elected leadership about the continued lack of engagement and representation of a great many of our membership, particularly among younger members or individuals who have recently joined the BTU. You might be attuned to the current political climate that has in many instances, blamed unions and teachers as the main obstacles towards the improvement of our public schools.

Something needs to be done about all of this; and from my perspective, BTU Votes is an initiative that does exactly that.

I'll plan on writing an addendum to this column after the June 13th meeting on The Teaching Pulse website. In the meanwhile though, in the spirit of highlighting the voices of teachers, I'd like to present a number of statements by a number of us that capture many thoughts and ideas about the issue.

"I support BTU Votes because it is the right thing to do. There is no reason why – even if he or she doesn't choose to vote – that the teacher who has childcare responsibilities or cares for a sick parent, one with medical issues or whose economic situation requires him or her to work a second job, the teacher who chooses to coach a spring sport, or one
(continued on page 6)

Is There Coverage for Elementary Individualized Benchmark Training?



Caren Carew

The contract states, "All elementary teachers for grades K2-3 will be provided with substitute teacher coverage while administering individualized benchmark testing. These teachers will receive substitute coverage for the equivalent of two days- the equivalent of one in September and the equivalent of one in June-per teacher per year. The substitute will be compensated at the rate of \$15.00 per hour. The union will facilitate the hiring of retired teachers and others for this purpose. But if a regular substitute is used, he/she will be paid in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement."

Is Summer School Treated Like the Regular School Year Contractually?

No, it is not. Summer school is not governed by the collective bargaining agreement in the same way the standard school year is. Sometime ago the BTU took the issue of summer school salary not being retirement worthy to court to demand that this earned income be retirement worthy. Unfortunately, the court ruled against the case. The BTU/BPS contract reports, "The School Department shall determine the summer program curriculum, all aspects of operation and administration of the program, including employment in the program, salary, hours, and conditions of employment. Employee participation in the summer program shall be voluntary. Selection of employees shall be as determined by the [school] Department."

When Can a Teacher Collect Unemployment Compensation?

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

When a terminated teacher is paid over the summer months due to being on a 26 paycheck schedule, they are still able to collect Unemployment. These 'summer payments' are based on a percentage of their pay that has been deducted from each paycheck throughout the school year added together to provide said teacher with 'stretch' payments over the summer based on work already done between September and June of that academic year.

If a provisional teacher has been granted a letter of Reasonable Assurance (RA), they are NOT eligible to collect Unemployment because they have been reasonably assured of a job in the upcoming academic year. If a provisional teacher has not been granted an RA, and has received a termination letter from the BPS, they ARE eligible to collect Unemployment Compensation.

If a teacher has been terminated due to just cause and has done so via a settlement agreement drawn up with the BPS Labor Relations Department, then they must refer to the terms of said settlement in relation to filing for Unemployment Compensation when applicable.

To obtain more information, call the Massachusetts Division of Employment via the web www.detma.org/workers/howto-file.htm or by phone TeleClaims services at 1-877-626-6800 or 617-626-6800. Hours are Monday - Thursday 8:30 - 6:30; Friday 8:00 - 4:30.

What's the substitute class coverage policy when I'm out?

The BTU Collective Bargaining Agreement [contract] outlines: "It is the policy of the [School] Committee that substitutes shall be hired to cover classes of regularly assigned teachers when they are absent."

"In the event that the Committee after a good faith effort is unable to hire a substitute for a classroom teacher who regularly works with a paraprofessional, that paraprofessional may be requested to serve as a substitute teacher under the following conditions: (1) The paraprofessional has a teaching certificate or ten or more years of service. (2) The paraprofessional is requested to substitute only in those classes in which he or she normally works. (3) The paraprofessional is paid \$6.00 per hour in addition to his or her regular salary." This is not a list of either or. All three conditions must be met in order for a paraprofessional to be utilized as a substitute in their own class only. If these conditions have been met, the Para should check with the school secretary and administrator in charge of coverage to make sure the additional pay has been submitted to the BPS Payroll Department for their substitute work.

The contract continues; "The [School] Department will make a good faith effort to hire a substitute when a regularly assigned nurse is absent for more than one day. In any event, a substitute will be provided whenever a nurse is absent for three or more days." "When a qualified Vocational Education substitute is not available the shop is to be closed." "When a qualified Industrial Arts or Home Economics teacher is not available, the shop is to be closed." In the latter case, one would be hard pressed to find a Home Economics teacher in the BPS in order to substitute for.

What is the 'Contractual Hourly Rate' for Teachers?

The current contractual hourly rate for teachers is \$41.03. During the standard school day, individual teachers are paid at their own rate based on the amount of years teaching (step level) and the amount of educational degrees obtained and graduate credit earned (salary lanes) applied for, approved, and on file at BPS Human Resources.

What Does COBRA Mean Concerning Health Insurance?

COBRA stands for the Consolidated Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1985. It is the law that requires employers who offer group health insurance plans to give their employees the opportunity to stay on their group health insurance plan if they are no longer employed by the employer and the former employee isn't eligible for health insurance coverage through a spouse's insurance. If a teacher is terminated from the BPS/City of Boston, they

will be mailed information about COBRA benefits. For further inquiries concerning COBRA continuation of coverage, get in touch with the Health Benefits and Insurance Office, Room 807, City Hall. Give them a call at 617-635-4570.

The Boston Teachers Union Health & Welfare Fund which we negotiate to

provide you with dental, eye care/ glasses, prepaid legal, and the like also has a COBRA benefits which are separate from your health care benefits. Please contact BTU Health & Welfare at 617-288-0500 for more details.

Commentary: Michael J. Maguire Time to Evangelize

Then He said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field."

Matthew 9:37-38



Michael J. Maguire

Lately I've become a union evangelist on Facebook and in various blogs. I, like many of you, post a few thoughts and "share" various union-friendly memes. Recently my conservative friends have been more aggressive than usual in their rejoinders. Nothing hostile, mind you, but the volume of right wing rhetoric has increased dramatically since the recall election in Wisconsin and MTA's "compromise" with Stand For Children.

I rather enjoy the give-and-take, for it allows me to sharpen my thoughts. Occasionally I modify my views based upon these friendly challenges. My hope is to change other people's assumptions. It is this last part that inspires me to write.

Far too often, we (and I certainly include myself in the we) tell each other in the union hall or in the lunchroom the righteousness of our cause. What we need to do is convince others. We need to go out into the greater community to spread our message of unionism, of cooperation, of helping the less fortunate. But we should not merely have a pleasant conversation; we ought to build our union like an evangelist adding souls to a congregation.

For better or worse, charter schools are here to stay. Argue as we might about how unfair they are, about how they sap money from real public school; they still exist. Since we can't make them vanish, let us unionize them.

I propose that we - the BTU, the AFT-MA, and the AFT national - visit each school to preach the good news of collective bargaining. We need both field agents and volunteers so that we can conduct a proper canvassing. The ground appears to be fertile if Nancy Bloom's recent blog is any indication. (<http://colabradio.mit.edu/firing-day-at-the-charter-school/>)

Like the civil rights movement in the South, we must be non-confrontational. We cannot give the other side any excuse to say that we are trespassing or intimidating or agitating or whatever. We must always be polite, we must always listen to their concerns, and we must always guide and never dictate. Most often people just need

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DEADLINE:

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All copy should be e-mailed to gvirchick@btu.org and mmaguire@btu.org

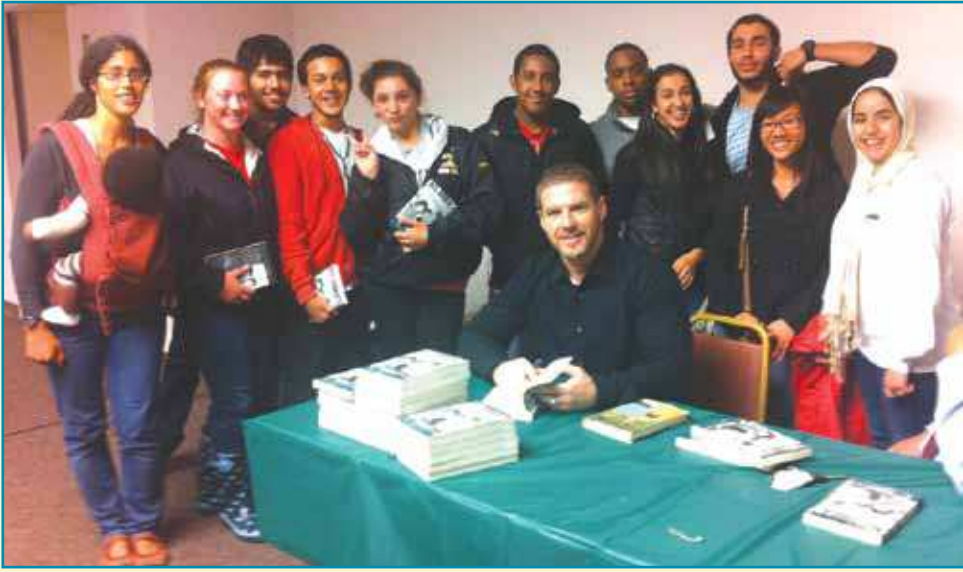
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Mary Dibinga (l) of Boston Latin Academy with her son and ten of her students at the book signing with All Souls author Michael Patrick MacDonald.



Pata Dibinga (l) of Another Course to College with some of his students with All Souls author Michael Patrick MacDonald.

All Souls Author Michael Patrick MacDonald Speaks at BTU Hall

By Lillie Marshall

On Tuesday, May 22, 2012, famed *All Souls* author Michael Patrick MacDonald spoke to a crowd of one hundred teachers and students at the Boston Teachers Union Hall.

Many in the audience had read or taught *All Souls* at least once, and there was an excited, expectant feeling in the air.

Mr. MacDonald was introduced by a moving speech from Boston teacher, Pata Dibinga, whose sister is mentioned in *All Souls*. Mr. Dibinga currently teaches at Another Course to College, and many of his students were in the audience.

"As someone who grew up in the shadow of forced busing and now teaches in the Boston Public School system," Mr. Dibinga declared in his speech. "I honestly think *All Souls* by Michael Patrick MacDonald should be required reading for all teachers in the system. It has all the classic themes of literature, but also teaches a great deal about Boston's history of racial strife, which still affects our city today. I've been using the book in my classes for a decade now, and always find it pleasantly ironic that a book that talks about so much racial division can bring students of various backgrounds together. We all have so much in common with the characters, regardless of our race. It's a favorite with the students because it's culturally relevant to all of them. We all share Boston."

After Mr. Dibinga's rousing introduction, Mr. MacDonald took the podium to much applause. He delivered a powerful speech which was anchored in two readings from his memoir, *Easter Rising*. Both readings emphasized the impact trauma has on students' academic progress and mental health.

MacDonald's second reading focused on his teen years after he had dropped out of Boston Latin School, following the death of several of his siblings and his sister's coma from falling off a roof. Given the tragedy around him, the teen MacDonald became convinced that he had a dire illness, and that he would die at any minute. He diagnosed himself with "Heavy Head" and took himself to a psychologist.

"Tell me about your family background," the psychologist said. The young Michael launched into the tales of death and pain in his family, and then explained, "But don't worry – it was a long time ago! Several months!" When he looked up, the psychologist was crying.

This was a turning point in MacDonald's life. Because of the psychologist's empathy, Michael realized that all the trauma in his life wasn't normal. It wasn't what most kids experienced. All of a sudden it didn't seem so strange that his head hurt.

After this reading from *Easter Rising*, MacDonald urged educators in the audience to remember how problems in students' lives affect school performance. He explained that after he dropped out of school, he got much of his learning from swapping books and ideas in the surprisingly intellectual Boston punk scene. "Now, I do NOT advocate children dropping out of school," MacDonald told the audience, "but I do wish that classrooms could create some of the same excitement about learning that I experienced in the Boston punk scene."

MacDonald continued this theme of out-of-the-box learning. As a teen, Michael traveled to Ireland, begrudgingly, to see family after he ran out of money while backpacking through Europe. To his surprise, he loved the kin he met there, and gained a totally new understanding of history.

Given his experience in South Boston, MacDonald associated Irish people with racism; but in Ireland, he learned that the Irish drew great inspiration from the African American Civil Rights movement, as Ireland was struggling against oppressive British power.

At this point, MacDonald began studying colonial history in earnest. As he read up on Apartheid in South Africa, it occurred to him that Boston could use a similar Truth and Reconciliation Committee to begin healing the ongoing wounds left from forced racial busing in our schools.

After his speech, Mr. MacDonald graciously stayed at the podium to respond to questions from educators and students. The whole crowd laughed (and gasped in shock) as one student asked MacDonald to help with an essay question about *All Souls* which was due the next day.

The crowd felt happier than Oprah audience members when everyone was given a free copy of *All Souls* to take home. Michael Patrick MacDonald kindly stayed until he had autographed and written a message to every single person who asked for it. The line for autographs was long, but everyone left happy.

(Lillie Marshall teaches Eighth Grade Humanities at Boston Latin Academy.)

Time to Evangelize...

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to vent their preconceived notions before they are willing to listen to a different opinion. Instead of telling them what we think, we ought to be like Socrates and ask them to explain why they believe what they believe. Sooner or later, a flaw will develop in their argument. If we let them ruminate on it, they will slowly modify their thinking.

Hoping, however, is not enough. We ought to walk a mile in their shoes, literally. I propose we send in union friendly teachers to apply for jobs at the charter schools. Once employed, these teachers could begin signing up their co-workers for union membership.

Should there be any illegal obstruction on the part of the charter school administrators, our guys could document the abuses and take the offenders to court. All we would need is one good win in court to show the world how hostile the charter school movement is.

To entice teachers to undertake such a task, the aforementioned trio of unions should supplement the salaries of the teachers I propose to send into the charter schools. Imagine if a teacher from a real public school makes \$68,000 per annum. If he agrees to work at the charter school, and that school pays only \$55,000; then the union would pay the \$13,000 difference (provided he works to unionize the school).

In conjunction with the AFL-CIO we should do the same at Wal-Mart. By having employees lobby from the inside and by having protests on the outside, we ought to be able to either unionize America's largest employer or expose them for the hostile bosses they are.

Carl von Clausewitz said "The best defense is a good offense." Therefore let us engage the enemy on his soil. Feel good speeches and letters of self-congratulations have done nothing to grow union membership. Perhaps a new tact is needed. Let us send out workers into the harvest.

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

The Mozart School Shows Its BTUnity!



Front row (L to R): Shelley McConoghy, Katty Gonzalez, Jeanette Lake-Jackson, Deanna Kelliher, Clare Giacoppo.
Middle Row (L to R): Dave Matthews, Kim Haynes, Beatrice Brown, Maria Ryan, Andrea Simmons.
Back row (L to R): Josee Oge, Nancy McGann, Nancy Gross, Lauren Shannon, Julie Pouloupoulos.

We're Learning Here A project by Amika Kemmler Ernst, Ed.D.

Boston Day & Evening Academy

Boston Day & Evening Academy (BDEA) is an alternative high school near Dudley Square that serves over-age students who are at risk of dropping out or have already dropped out. What an amazing place! In last spring's student newsletter, Lakiya Furtado-Betts wrote movingly about her experience: "I walked through BDEA's doors with a closed mind and a broken heart, but now I'm leaving here with a smile on my face and so much to give."

The school is open 12 hours/day and students are enrolled in a Day, Evening, or Distance Learning Program. BDEA is competency based, which means that classes are ungraded and students move at their own pace. Every three months new students enter and spend their first trimester in an intensive "Seminar" which introduces them to the culture and expectations of the school, assesses their academic strengths and needs, and helps place them in appropriate classes. Regular "Advisory" periods are built into the schedule to address students' personal challenges.

I was invited to visit BDEA by Head of School Beatriz Zapater, and welcomed by everyone I met. School secretary Tanairy Alvarado, a graduate of BDEA and current Quincy College nursing student, was especially helpful. My guide through the school was Arkeem Samuel, an articulate and enthusiastic young man who is working on his "Capstone" project prior to graduation. Capstone students do independent research, often related to a career they're interested in pursuing.

We started in a science class, where Aaron Stone was leading a discussion of the ways fast food companies load up on addictive substances such as fat, salt, and sugar. In another class, students had examined a sheep's brain and were learning about the human nervous system. One student handed me his "creative writing" piece about the journey a breath of air takes after it enters the body!

BDEA's administrators, teachers, students, former students, and a host of support staff working together make for a remarkable learning community. Math teacher Chris Johnson and his colleagues all commented on the sense of "family" at BDEA. Arkeem expressed it this way: "I owe this school my whole life."

Amika (ü)

amika45@comcast.net



We are studying the human body in science. Here we were sharing our comments and questions about the relationship between obesity and high fructose syrup. We've learned that one reason people are overweight is because many foods are loaded with addictive substances like salt, sugar, and fat.

Mr. Stone's Seminar Class



I was working on Systems of Equations (combining or comparing two sets of data) in math class. I've learned how to create a system of equations from a word problem, pulling out equations that can be used to solve it.

Stephany Natal



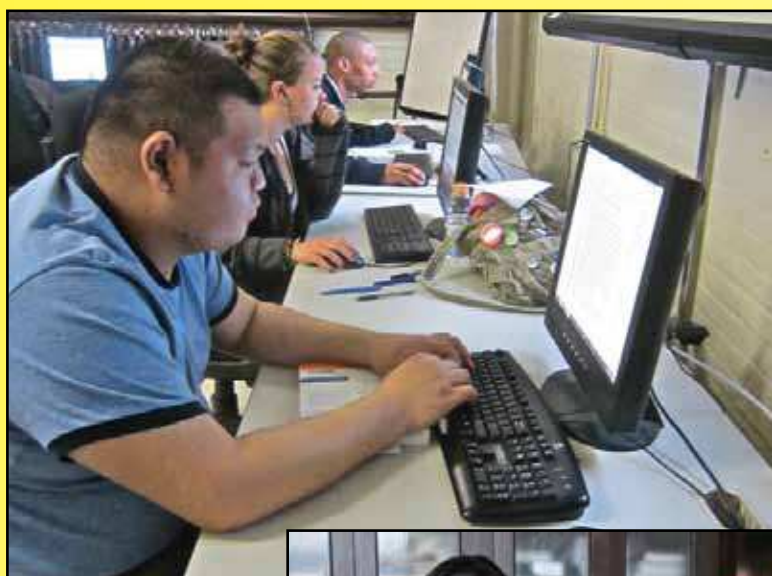
This is in Humanities class. We were reading an excerpt from Thieves' Paradise, by Eric Jerome Dickey. We're learning about the elements of fiction and how to look at situations from different perspectives.

Ms. Jean Marie's Humanities class



I am writing a persuasive essay about how women are perceived in hip hop culture. This is in my genre writing class, where I've been learning how to research and express myself in different writing styles.

Andre Devereaux



This is during our Capstone class, where we prepare for graduation and work on a research project related to our interests or occupational goals. We've learned that it's much easier to do research when you choose something you care about: our topics are Novel Writing and the Occupy Movement.

Li Yu & Josey Smith

Ms. Kuan is helping me format my resume in our "Beyond BDEA" class. I'm learning that a professional resume helps you be more organized and prepared for any job.

William Leamey



(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.)



I was trying to figure out what scene to use in my paper on Shakespeare. Ms. Pastrana is always there to help me; she pushes me to do my best and explains everything until I understand. She makes sure I'm always on point and never gives up on me. She's a great teacher!

Panofsky Dieujuste ("Junior" to all)

The Lessons of TEACH

On Monday, April 16, 2012, at the AMC Loews Theatre at Boston Common I viewed the film **"TEACH, Teachers Are Talking, Is the Nation Listening"** by Boston teacher and filmmaker **Robert Lamothe**.

It has since won the Indie Spec Best Cinematography Award from the Boston International Film Festival. It is a fast-paced film that shows rather than tells, through interviews, the story of what being a teacher means in today's testing and data-driven climate.

Images and sounds come at the audience, rapidly changing from text to live footage of groups at meeting and at rallies. Sometimes the focus is on a speaker at a rally, other times the focus shifts back to classroom teachers who tell us what they do, what they believe, and what they want the public to know. We witness a crucial school committee

meeting at which each member voted to close schools even as the crowd of parents and teachers roared their disbelief.

A segment on Newton North High School brings audible gasps from the audience as we see a picture montage of its beautiful campus facilities. Then an extensive listing fills the screen of class offerings for all the visual and performing arts, science, and physical education. Due to budget constraints most of these courses are not offered in so many public school districts, including Boston.

Can we save the public schools? It is very disheartening to be told by the media and by those who should know better that only charter schools are educating children properly and that our public school teachers' efforts are, at best, misguided or inadequate. If only we would pay just attention to the data-takers, politicians, and corporate people,



then we could succeed too!

Both teachers and parents are joining the movement against the MCAS' usage as the single indicator of student progress. In **TEACH**, one parent's testimony described how her learning-disabled daughter, thought smart, hard working and with good grades, was unable to get her high school diploma because she could not to pass the math portion of the MCAS. Teachers know what is and is not measured on the MCAS. In one happy segment, **Matt Damon**, whose mother is a teacher, states that not only did he have "incredible teachers", but he also went on to state that "none of his best qualities could be tested."

What is happening in education is part of what is happening in this country. There is a popular practice now of reducing people to ciphers. The bottom line in **TEACH** is that businessmen and politicians want to make all the decisions in education instead of us who are actually qualified to teach. Such a strategy is also being used in the corporate war against unions.

TEACH does, however, make it clear that enthusiasm for teaching and learning is not dead. The voices of teachers and their collective energy and dedication are noteworthy. I urge everyone to see this film.

(Ellen Demers is a retired teacher.)

Why BTUVotes and Mail-In Balloting are Good for our Union...

(continued from page 2)

who works far from the union hall or who doesn't have the luxury of owning a car and so on should not have the same ability and ease to vote as any another member. This is a moral issue. Voter equity is good for our union. Permanently removing impediments to voting is a good first step in helping more members become involved, invested, and feeling positive toward our union."

Karen McCarthy, Brighton High School

"I also am strongly for a mail in ballot... and would love to hear folks' rationale for opposing it... I'm unclear how this could be anything but positive. Voting is from 9-6... which means that everyone except retirees are already at work teaching, given our students' start times of 7:30, 8:20, and 9:25... and even if we are lucky enough for all busses to dismiss on time... an "early" schoolteacher, para, or nurse would be out at 2pm at the earliest... then to drive over to the Union and potentially disrupt a family/child pick up schedule... never mind those of us who work at late schools, where the earliest we could leave would be 3:40-3:45... that puts BTU members in the throng of rush-hour traffic. I honestly see this as a respect issue to the members... the BTU works so hard during negotiations to protect our work rights and time to collaborate and focus on students... shouldn't they also support our rights to be a more active participant in selecting our representatives while also supporting our rights and needs to take care of our personal and family lives outside of the job?"

Jennifer Henderson DiSarcina, Elementary and K-8 Math Coach

"I support BTU Votes because it's a step in the right direction. Many of the teachers in my school support the union, but don't feel they really have a say in union activities and leadership. This is a fantastic opportunity to include their voices."

Sarah Liou, Boston Community Leadership Academy

"I support BTU Votes because our union will be stronger with greater participation from its membership. Removing barriers to participation and facilitating democracy must be a priority! Mail in balloting is the logical next step to strengthening our collective voice and ensuring that all educator voices are heard."

Jessica Tang, Young Achievers K-8 and BTU Executive Board member

"I support BTU Votes as I believe creating greater access to voting is simply the right thing to do. This seems like a logical method of allowing more of the membership to give voice to the Union and its decisions. I honestly cannot fathom why anyone would think this is not a positive and, frankly practical step."

Sharon Abraham, Brighton High School

"I support BTU Votes because when I was a first-year teacher, I didn't have time to go to the union hall to vote. That set a bad precedent that could have never been set if I had been allowed to vote by mail. How many other new teachers have also set a precedent of not voting simply because they don't have the time to go?"

Abe Lateiner, Tobin K-8

"I support BTU Votes because I want our union to move into the future as a strong and inclusive organization that recognizes that we must keep pace with changing times if we are to remain relevant."

Erik Berg, Philbrick Elementary and BTU Executive Board member

"As co-lead teacher of the Boston Teachers Union School I know well the importance and power of teacher voice in decision making. The shared leadership model at our school provides a unique opportunity for teachers to fully participate in the work of creating excellent educational opportunities for the children and families we serve. Likewise, BTU Votes would provide our union with the opportunity for a fuller, more inclusive participation from a broader cross section of our membership. I fully support BTU Votes and ask you to do the same."

Betsy Drinan, Co-Lead Teacher, Boston Teachers Union School

"Voting in BTU elections needs to be more inclusive. Our union has the responsibility to remove impediments to voting. It's what a democratic union should do. A mail-in ballot is the way to go."

Garret Virchick, Brighton High School and BTU Executive Board

As usual, please visit the online forum at <http://www.theteachingpulse.org/> for more content and further conversation. And have a wonderful summer!

(James Liou is a Peer Assistant in the Boston Public Schools.)

RTC Executive Board Minutes April 2, 2012

Members present: Anne-Marie Ad- duci; Larry Connolly; Mary Cahalane; David Donovan, Chairman; Phil Fasano; Eileen Ganley; Donna Cooley-Hilton; Marilyn Marion, Secretary; Linda McNamee; Mary Jo Murphy; Leonard Miraglia, Vice Chairman; and Paul Tenney.

Excused: Anne Broder, Marie Broder- ick, Ruthanne Kennedy, Sandy Carle.

Reports

Secretary: Minutes read and accepted.

Treasurer: Absent.

Chairman: The agenda for the busi- ness meeting is set. Report Accepted.

Vice Chairman: There are 16 new members. Report Accepted.

Committees

Benefits: Received the utilization report from last year. Report Accepted.

Remembrance: Condolence cards were sent out to the families of Mary Cooney, Anna Cussen, Ralph D'Angelo, Phillip Hatton, Edward Histen, Mildred Hominsky, Ellen Lynch and Allan Maulton. Report Accepted.

Scholarship: No applications sub- mitted. April 17th is the deadline. Report Accepted.

Social: Letters are ready to go out an- nouncing the May 22 luncheon. Report Accepted.

Travel: Reservations are coming in for all the trips advertised. Space is available on all trips. Report Accepted.

Legislative: Tom Gosnell spoke to the Legislative Committee. He informed us

that one focus in the Legislature in coming years will be the cost of health insurance - especially the cost of retiree benefits. No proposals are on the table yet but the Governor is forming a commission to study the benefits. We all know that when something is "studied" it usually means a cut in benefits. Stay posted.

The Legislative Committee plans to attend meetings of the Retirement Board on April 11, May 9, and June 13 at 10 AM in City Hall. These meetings are open meetings and all are welcome to attend. We are collecting petitions from retirees and active teachers to present to the board as well as to the Mayor and City Councilors. Report Accepted.

Data Processing: Payroll needs to match City payroll each month. When a person dies, benefits should be cancelled and then if spouse has survivor benefits, spouse can reapply. A discussion was brought forth on how to handle the widow/widowers who do not have survivor checks. Are they eligible for Delta? This discussion was tabled until next meeting after a legal opinion is sought. Report Accepted.

Membership: There are 2,920 mem- bers. Report Accepted.

Old Business: Dave is sending out a letter via USPS and electronically to the membership announcing the business meeting.

New Business: None. Meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn F. Marion, Secretary

Next Meeting: May 7.

Pension COLA Update

By Sandra M. Carle and
Lawrence J. Connolly,

RTC Legislative Committee Co-Chairs

Over the past several weeks the Legislative Committee has been busy attempting to bring pressure on the Retirement Board to increase our COLA from the \$12,000 base (\$360/year) to the \$16,000 base (\$480/year), allowed under legislation passed in 2010. Last year, Boston turned it down but many retirement boards

accepted the higher base.

We decided to attend the monthly Board meetings held in City Hall on the second Wednesday of each month from 10 AM to 2 PM. At the April meeting, thanks to **Sean Kelly**, the Board chairperson, we were given a chance to testify and make a strong case for an increase. We plan to go again in May – despite the fact the date was changed from the usual Wednesday to the same date as our

spring luncheon – as we feel it is harder to turn us down when we are sitting in the same room.

Additionally, we have been collecting signatures on a petition at union meetings and insurance workshops to send to public officials and board members. We have collected 1,357 signatures on 78 petition sheets from active and retired teachers as well as 255 signatures from firefighters on 16 sheets for a total of 1,612 signatures on 94 sheets.

On April 30, we sent individual letters to Mayor Menino, the 13 city councilors, and all five members of the Retirement Board along with a fact sheet outlining the short comings of the Massachusetts retirement system in comparison to other systems, and a four-page spread sheet of other Massachusetts systems that have already

increased the COLA base. (A copy of the letter and fact sheet is reproduced here. Space limitations preclude reproducing the spread sheet.) We hope that after the May meeting, Boston will be added to the list of systems raising the COLA to the fully allowed \$16,000 base.

We thank all the teachers and paraprofessionals, active and retired, who signed or circulated the petitions, **Sean Kelly** and **Mike McLaughlin** who voted for the COLA last year and will do so this year, the retirees who attended the Retirement Board Meetings, **Ralph White** and **Shawn Duhamel** of Mass. Retirees and City Council President **Stephen Murphy** who testified in favor of raising the COLA, as well as **Richard Stutman** and **Angela Cristiani** who have been so supportive in this effort.

Areas Where Massachusetts Pensions Fall Short A Fact Sheet

- Thirty-seven systems offer Social Security to all employees. six more provide it to all except teachers. Only seven – Massachusetts included – offer it to none. This lowers a retiree's income by up to \$27,000/year (single), \$40,000 (married)

- Massachusetts was only one of seven systems with the highest "normal" retirement age (65) at the time. For new employees it will be 67.

- Massachusetts was one of only 11 states with an "ad hoc" COLA provision (requires legislative/board approval each year). Thirty-three states provide automatic COLAs with up to 5% on the pension grant. One state gives an unlimited percentage and two give "purchasing power guarantee" COLAs – one for 80% and other for 75%. Three other states review COLAs regularly and substantially adjust pensions upward to compensate for the consumer price index.

- Massachusetts assesses its employees some of the highest pension contribution rates in the nation. For teachers at 11% it is the highest. As a result, Massachusetts employees fund all but a little over 2% of their pension benefits.

- Massachusetts is one of only two states that do not make mandated matching contributions to the pension system. New Jersey does, however, contribute to Social Security.

(Review based on information contained in NEA document, *Characteristics of 100 Large Public Pension Plans*, January, 2004.)



Larry Connolly, Marilyn Marion and Dave Donovan.

Letter to the Boston Retirement Board Discussing the Changing Pension COLA Rates

April 30, 2012

Mr. Sean Kelly
Retirement Board
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Mr. Kelly,

Several years ago, our Legislative Committee completed a review of the 100 largest public retirement systems in the U.S. Contrary to public perception of how lucrative public employees benefits are in the Commonwealth, we were shocked at how poorly our benefits actually compare to those in other cities and states, as well as at the federal level. Even with recent "cutbacks" implemented in other states, those plans are still much more generous than both the Massachusetts plans in force prior to and after the most recent cutbacks, effective April, 2012.

As a result of these findings, our committee began to lobby our elected officials on Beacon Hill to correct the inadequacies of the retirement benefits. Legislation worked its way out of the Public Service Committee and what started out as a full COLA became a COLA on the maximum Social Security grant, then on \$22,000, and, in its final version, Chapter 188 of the Acts of 2010, on \$16,000. This amounts to an increase of only \$10 per month. With the average pension being around \$26,000 per year (and many older and lower paid workers getting much less), this will allow one to buy a gallon of milk and a loaf of bread each month!

Retirees have a vested interest in the full funding of the pension system. We assert that the cause of the unfunded liability was the fiscal irresponsibility of past elected officials who, instead of matching employee contributions, chose to pay retirees with current employee contributions. It is unfair to now try to

aggressively fund this unfunded liability by using the investment returns on the contributions of these same employees. Full funding by 2025 is an ideal, but not if it necessitates an inadequate COLA which impoverishes retirees.

Many other municipal retirement systems have already tried to balance their fiscal obligation of full funding with their social obligation to temper devastating effects of inflation on public employee retirees by accepting the \$16,000 base allowed under Chapter 188 of the Acts of 2010. Please see attached Local Option Legislation Information chart.

To illustrate the inadequacy of our COLA, consider a teacher retiring in 2001 at full pension, who has received COLAs increasing the pension by a total of 7.2% over 10 years. If that teacher receives a small Social Security check for private sector employment, that check has increased by over 31.2% in that same 10-year period, despite no Social Security COLA for two of these years! 7.2% vs. 31.2% – pretty clear!!

Attached please find copies of petitions that we have collected at a couple of our meetings. We appreciate your fiscal prudence but also hope you do not let it cloud your social obligation to provide minimal relief to those employees who taught your children, fought your fires, policed your streets, answered your sick calls, swept and plowed your streets and parks, prepared your paycheck, and maybe even put an orange greeting under your windshield wiper. They and their successors are the reason Boston works.

Sincerely,
Sandra M. Carle, Co-chair
Lawrence J. Connolly, Co-chair
Legislative Committee
Retired Teachers Chapter/
Boston Teachers Union



Sandy Carle, Marilyn Marion and Dave Donovan.

INFORMATION FOR NEW RETIREES

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

If you wish to continue your connection to the union, you can join the Retired Teachers Chapter (RTC). The dues will be taken from your retirement check each month (\$5 for teachers, \$2.50 for paras).

The RTC offers a dental insurance benefit to its members for a fee each month. Our Dental Plan covers members only and their spouse. You can also avail yourself of COBRA coverage through Health and Welfare for 18 months after retiring. For info on COBRA call 1-617-288-0500.

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

(Eileen Ganley is RTC Membership Chairperson.)

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

Name _____

Address _____

City/Town/State/Zip _____

Email _____

Telephone _____

Circle your previous position: Teacher Paraprofessional

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



Performance Evaluation 2012-2013

By Patrick J. Connolly,
BTU Executive Vice President

There has been much talk, anticipation, consternation and frustration about the new teacher performance evaluation system that will go into effect in all Boston Public Schools for the 2012 – 2013 school year. The Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education passed regulations that required the Turnaround Schools to implement a new plan this year (11 – 12) and each district across the Commonwealth that has Turnaround Schools to implement it district – wide in the 2012 – 2013 school year. Additionally all districts across the state must implement these new regulations in 2013 – 2014. So what are the changes that are coming? The following is an attempt to describe in broadstrokes the new performance evaluation system.



Patrick Connolly
BTU Executive Vice President

The first change is that the current Meets Standards / Does Not Meet Standards rating is replaced with a four category rating system. The categories are Exemplary, Proficient, Needs Improvement, and Unsatisfactory. Gone also are Interim and Year End Evaluations. Timelines and specific dates are generally abolished. For example, the year end evaluation prior to May 15th is gone. Likewise the twenty to fifty day period between evaluations no longer applies. The requirement for written notice within five days of an informal visit in which a need for improvement is noted has been replaced with an electronic notification system.

Educators must complete a self assessment and develop goals that align with the goals of their school and the BPS. Each teacher must develop a plan that needs to be approved by the school administrator. If not approved the plan would go back to the educator for revision. This will require time and thought on the part of the educator to ensure that the goals are realistic and attainable.

There is also a great focus on the collection of evidence, both on the part of the evaluator and the teacher. Evidence to support, supplement, and/or possibly to refute some statements may be entered on the educator's electronic evidence log. Each educator will have their own site where information about their plan and status and progress towards standards and goals will be stored.

The type and length of the plan will vary according to the category of the teacher's performance rating. For example an educator with a rating of Needs Improvement could have a Directed Growth Plan with a duration "No shorter than 60 days." Many variables will influence the type of plan an educator may have. All teachers are scheduled to receive some type of evaluation during the 2012 – 2013 school year, though some teachers may be on a two year Self – Directed Growth Plan.

A major question and concern is what type of plan will each educator have at the start of the cycle. Nearby is a chart which attempts to explain the process for the placement of teachers in various categories as the system transitions to the new evaluation system. There will be many questions. Please email comments to pconnolly@btu.org.

There is at present no contractual language to deal with issues that may arise from the implementation of this new system. The BPS and the BTU spent many hours during and outside the negotiating sessions to develop and design the rubrics,

Current Performance Evaluation Rating SY 2011-2012	Performance Evaluation Rating SY 2012-2013	Plan
Overall "Meets Standards"	Proficient	Self-Directed Growth Plan • 1- or 2- years
One overall "Does not Meet Standards"	Needs Improvement	Directed Growth Plan • No shorter than 60 days
Two or more overall "Does not Meet Standards"	Unsatisfactory	Improvement Plan • No shorter than 30 days
Exceptions: If placed on a Self-Directed Growth Plan for 2012-13 and:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educator receives formative assessment rated "Needs Improvement" during school year. (Educator received all "Meets Standards" ratings on dimensions of effective teaching in SY 2011-2012). 	Needs Improvement	Directed Growth Plan • No shorter than 90 days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educator received at least one dimension of effective teaching rated "Does not Meet Standards" in SY 2011-2012, and educator receives a formative assessment rated "Needs Improvement" in SY 2012-2013. 	Needs Improvement	Directed Growth Plan • No shorter than 60 days
BTU - BPS Joint Committee on Teacher Evaluation (JCTE) will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor overall effectiveness and fairness of the performance evaluation system Facilitate discussions on the incorporation of multiple measures, student feedback and staff feedback, as a means to promote best practices among teachers, and schools. Make recommendations to the district in terms of revisions and changes to the evaluation instruments and processes. 		
Composition: 3 BTU members selected by BTU President and 3 administrators selected by Superintendent.		
Self-Assessment Educators will submit an analysis of a past record of student learning, growth, and achievement and an assessment of practice against Performance Standards by October 1 st .		Evidence Logs Each educator will have an electronic evidence log tracking progress towards standards and goals. Educators will be able to submit evidence to this electronic system.

SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE TEACHING

2012-2013: Training for Educators

To achieve the academic targets of the Acceleration Agenda, the Boston Public Schools will focus on four key areas in 2012-2013: teacher effectiveness, implementation of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, data inquiry, and differentiation of instruction. Each school will dedicate a total of at least 10 hours of school-based professional development to these four areas. Schools will determine the allocation of these hours from an analysis of their levels of proficiency in these areas. Central office departments will offer training, resource materials, and additional supports for teacher leaders to facilitate professional learning sessions in each of the core areas at the school level.

Office of Educator Effectiveness | <http://connect.mybps.org/groups/effectiveteaching> | bpsevaluation@boston.k12.ma.us

instruments, and processes that would guide the evaluation system. The plan for the transitional year contains some of the elements both side wanted. It is not a final product and further negotiations may alter some of the components of the evaluation system. The intent here is to ensure that Boston educators have clarity on the plans for next school year and to provide an understanding of what the BTU and the BPS have developed so far.



BTU members at the meeting in May. The top issues of the day were a proposed change in by-laws on voting and an appearance by Senatorial Candidate Elizabeth Warren.

Brighton High Shows Its Support to the Boston Teachers Union and Congratulates Educator of the Year Emily Bozeman



The photo was taken at Brighton High School's announcement of their newly selected "Educator of the Year", the red sweatered Emily Bozeman.



Senatorial Candidate Elizabeth Warren addresses the membership at the May BTU Membership Meeting.