Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk Raises Over $1,800,000!

Report on the BTU Building Reps Conference

 Leadership Interview with
BTU President Richard Stutman

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Report on the BTU Building Reps Conference

BTU Plans Visibility Action to Bring About Fair Contract Resolution

By Richard Stutman
BTU President

The Boston Teachers Union is planning to hold visibility rallies near each school site on Friday, November 18th. We ask our members to join in and stand with all of us in solidarity that morning as we strive to bring visibility to our cause of obtaining a fair contract settlement. We ask that you join in with your school’s staff and gather at a visible location near your school for 20 minutes prior to the opening bell. Your effort will be joined that morning by our 7,000 active members in sites across the city. A strong citywide showing will be a good first step in bringing about a contract settlement that is good for students, affordable to the city, and fair to our members.

I will be holding a sign that morning because Court St. never asks my colleagues or me what it would take to make our schools better: Talk to Teachers.

I will be walking on Friday, November 18th because we have been negotiating 18 months and still do not have a contract. I will be holding a sign that says Talk to Teachers that morning because the school district has refused to give the BTU a response to its proposals on ELL training, Professional Development hours, quality Professional Growth opportunities for our members, a salary package, extended time for staff, and a lot more.

I will be walking that morning because I love my job and love working with children. We want very much to see our schools improve, and my colleagues and I want all to know that we are part of the solution. Talk to Teachers.

I will be visible and proud that morning because I am a professional and I deserve to paid for any additional time I am required to work, just like a dentist, lawyer, accountant, plumber, or an electrician.

I will be walking that morning because I already work an additional 15 to 20 hours of the clock each week in the performance of my duties. I call parents at night, correct papers on Sunday, prepare my lessons daily, volunteer for school committees twice per week, and take a PD class on Saturday. Yes, I work many additional hours each week already. Talk to Teachers and you’ll know that.

I will be walking proud that morning and I deserve to be paid for any additional time you insist I work because I already subsidize our schools by purchasing $700 worth of supplies each year.

I will be marching that morning with my colleagues because we all work as a team to make our school better and many of the proposals from Court St. would put us against each other and make us unnatural competitors, to the detriment of our school. I will be there on Friday, November 18th because I do not want to work an additional 100 hours of professional development—even with compensation—until and unless the school district can affirm that the time spent will be worthwhile and productive. I am already very busy and do not have any time to waste, let alone 100 additional hours.

I will be holding a sign on Friday, November 18th because I believe that collaboration with teachers and their union is imperative to improving our schools. Talk to Teachers.

I will be there on Friday, November 18th because I am proud of what I do. I recognize its worth to society, I know what I deserve and I have no shame in seeking compensation for a job well done.

I will be marching that morning because I deserve a salary increase even though I am glad to be employed in this rough economy. The union’s initial wage proposal (2%, 4%, and 4% plus $1,000 yearly tuition reimbursement to provisional, permanent teachers not getting their first career award, and Paras with three years or more) is quite reasonable given the city’s financial health.

I will be holding a sign that morning because Court St. never asks my colleagues or me what it would take to make our schools better: Talk to Teachers. Yes, I know I repeated this — that’s because it’s so important.

I will be marching that morning because the school district asked me to take 83 hours of ELL category training and now the federal government informs us that the city’s training is deficient and it may order us to re-take the training. I will be holding a sign that morning that says “Talk to Teachers” because my union told the city seven years ago that we ought to plan the ELL training collaboratively. My union still hasn’t heard back.

I will be walking proudly that morning because the BTU has proposed a series of items in our collective bargaining package that are good, solid items — and they have yet to hear back from the school district. Our members have proposed that all students receive physical education or movement three times per week. We also want each school to develop a targeted reading program, and we want each school to provide a safety net of social services to our students. Those are only some of the items we need. Talk to Teachers and please give us a response.

I will be standing outside my school that morning because if I don’t take this action, if we don’t stand up for our students, no one else will. That’s why I will be outside my school for 20 minutes on Friday, November 18th. And I will be proud to stand with my colleagues. Talk to Teachers.
Can a School Site Council (SSC) Meeting be Called Anytime?

The School Site Council is the central governing body of the school under the school-based management/shared decision making model. See BTU contract. Full SSC manual is available electronically on the btu.org website as well. At the first meeting of the newly elected SSC, a monthly calendar should be agreed upon by the SSC members for the entire school year and be made public through distribution to all staff and parents. Any change to this calendar must be approved by the SSC with at least one week’s notice to all staff and parents. SSC Meetings should be at times convenient for all members. Times of the meetings may alternate to meet this goal.

SSC’s are public bodies, and as such must adhere to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. SSC’s are required to open all meetings to the public with any person being permitted to attend and to tape a meeting. Notice of SSC meetings must be posted in a public place at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. SSC’s must keep minutes of each meeting including date, time, location, members present and absent, action(s) taken and must adhere to quorum requirements. Under this provision of the law, there should be no reason for the SSC to go into executive session. SSC’s must have Co-Chairs comprised of two voting members of the SSC. SSC’s may establish alternating Co-Chairs. The Co-Chairs may be the Principal and one other voting member elected by the Council. A quorum of SSC members must be present to conduct SSC business, make decisions, and the like. Without a quorum, it is just another meeting as no decisions may be rendered; only discussed. A quorum is constituted by the presence of the Principal, at least two teachers and two parents for Councils with 9 – 12 voting members; at least three teachers and three parents for Councils with 13 or more voting members. Agendas for Meetings are set by the SSC members. Items for the agenda can be submitted by members of the SSC and school community at large to a SSC Co-Chair to be included on the agenda, as long as the items fall within the scope of SSC’s authority. Minutes of SSC Meetings should include the agenda, date, time, location, members present or absent, and actions taken (if quorum existed).

The BTU contract details, “A notice of actions taken by the SSC will be distributed to all BTU Building Representatives and the President of the Faculty Senate within five school days following a council meeting.” Minutes can be amended at the following SSC for corrections as a group if needed, not reviewed/approved by the administration prior to posting. Minutes should also be distributed/posted on the BTU bulletin board in each school. In order for SSC’s to work, there must be inclusion of all voices and communication to all members of the school community. The contract states, “All available information concerning the school budget and other matters over which the SSC has authority must be shared with members of the SSC at least five school days before they are expected to vote on these issues.” Administrators should not call a last minute meeting and expect members to sign off on these matters without this process taking place. Shared decision making is just that – shared.

What Are the Primary Responsibilities of the BTU and With Which Groups Are We Affiliated?

The BTU is the exclusive collective bargaining agent for the BTU’s approximately 7,000 teachers, other non-administrative/management related service providers, paraprofessionals and substitute teachers. The Union also represents over 2,600 retired BTU members. The BTU promotes public school education, its importance in a democracy and the continued improvement of its quality as well as the growth and quality of our profession. The Boston Teachers Union negotiates and enforces the BTU/BPS collective bargaining agreement [CBA/contract]. The Union assists in providing the best education we are able for the approximate 65,000 students in the BPS while working with the greater school community to help insure the same. The BTU represents our membership in issues related to their professional work, including unanswered questions-related questions and assisting in job-related matters. The Union works politically through the Committee on Political Education [COPE] to assist in electing pro-public education, pro-labor, pro-kid, pro-social justice candidates. Due to federal and state law, COPE is a separate entity within the BTU devoted to supporting candidates and initiatives that are pro-public education and pro-labor generally through a specific process set out in our bylaws.

The organizations with which the BTU is affiliated and pays dues to are: the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) – our national federation – as well as with the Massachusetts AFT [formerly the MFT] which is our state federation; the Greater Boston Labor Council [GBLC] – a group of state federations or ‘state’s fields’ of various labor unions within the greater Boston area that form an alliance primarily related to political and social justice issues. We are all connected working for working people, their families, community, and our collective futures! United we stand – divided we beg. Let’s stand together! BTU/united!!

Phone Numbers

1. Desk Office ........................................ 617-288-2000
2. Health & Welfare .................. 617-288-4596
3. grievance Office ................. 617-288-3522
4. Union Office .................. 617-288-0024
5. Union Center .......................... 617-827-0473

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor should be sent to letters@btu.org. All articles must be appropriate to the publication not school-based.

Editorial Note

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

What Is the Role of the School Site Council and How Do I Participate?

There will be School Site Council training jointly sponsored by the BTU & BPS to which all elected members of the SSC including BTU, parents, students and administrator are encouraged and welcome to attend. Please RSVP the week prior to the session you are attending to Caren Carew – ccarew@btu.org

November

Workshop: Location: Time:
Thursday – 10th SSC Basics 101 BTU 4-6 pm
Wednesday 16th: SSC Basics 101 Reggie Lewis Center 5:30-7:30 pm

December

Workshop: Location: Time:
Thursday – 1st School Team Training BTU 4-6 pm
Thursday – 8th School Team Training Reggie Lewis Center 5:30-7:30 pm
Tuesday – 20th: SSC Budget 102 BTU 4-6 pm

December

Workshop: Location: Time:
Thursday – 5th: SSC Budget 102 Reggie Lewis Center 5:30-7:30 pm

Locations:
BTU – Boston Teachers Union, 180 Mt. Vernon St., Dorchester
Reggie Lewis Track & Athletic Center, 1330 Tremont St. @ Malcolm X Blvd., Roxbury.

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The Teaching Pulse: James Liou

Leadership Interview: President of BTU Richard Shuman

I'm happy to present the first of an ongoing series of interviews with educational leaders and our civic leaders in Boston. (Karen, I echo your interest from the September interview with the union and organizational leadership.) With this column, I think we've off to a great start. Thanks, Richard, for responding to our invitation to go this month.

What's the ultimate goal with these leadership interviews?

On one hand, it's an opportunity for the larger membership to learn more about key individuals' opinions and stances around topics that are important in the issues that are currently shaping the Boston Public Schools. And by learning more about these opinions, we as teachers in BPS can share our own thoughts and pose our own questions through ongoing, online discussion.

Perhaps more importantly though, once the conversation gets going, the hope is for district, union and other civic leaders to be responsive to these conversations. As you participate in these discussions, we teachers are saying in our classrooms across the city. They are our leaders, after all, and the responsibility falls on all of us to make sure that we represent us well.

Let's give it a go.

In this interview which took place on Friday October 14th, I asked a series of questions that were designed to get at three areas: 1) the current climate in public education from the perspective of our union president and the current state of the relationship between the teachers union and the school district. 2) The District's commitment and engagement from teachers in the BTU and 3) thoughts on what it would take to foster a more collaborative relationship between the teachers union and the school district.

By and large, it was a great conversation. As you read sections of the interview below and for online discussion, consider the following: How do the opinions of our union president match up with your own experiences in your classroom and school? How can the BTU reach out more effectively to its members and get more teachers to actively participate? Are there instances of strong, positive collaboration between teachers and administrators at your own building that you can share?

How would you describe the general climate in public education and the Boston Public School system as a whole? What is the perspective as the president of the Boston Teachers Union?

I would say that the current climate is not great. I think what I've witnessed is that there are a couple of things, including RTT (Race to the Top), the new Ed reform law, the shrinkage of the economy and the consolidation of school buildings… and the end result of all of that is they become contributing factors. The fact that we don't have a lot of new teachers is part of this. Regardless of what side people go to, the fact that we don't have a contract is a huge concern. It is a fact that there is turmoil over the student assignment plan, the school closing issue, [and the late busses [issue]. I think these issues are difficult and they do come out of thin air. It's not a climate that's conducive to taking a step back and trying to figure out which is real and which is not.

It sounds almost as if the climate is being dictated by the economic environment as much as specific policies that are being enacted within the school system. I think that's the overwhelming reason behind it. I think that's what much of the theory is being driven by in education circles in terms of what is really what doesn't work. [There's] no doubt in my mind that that's instrumental.

How would you describe the overall "health" of the teachers union and the engagement of the membership?

Well, every major union in the country is having what I would say are transition problems. That's a huge challenge in the work force. So I don't think that's unique to Boston. I think society has changed and teacher unions have changed.

What do you think we're transitioning from and what do you think we're transitioning to as BTU or for unions in general? Because I look at it like schools. I look at schools in my mind that that's in a critical transition. I'm in, I look at my own school experience and sometimes I wonder if, as you were saying, the nature of the teaching profession has changed, where there isn't an expectation that teachers stay as teachers for the length of their careers. Does the union need to respond to that shift?

I actually think that some of this is going to go backwards. We are going to see more problems in terms of things destabilize economically. There is nothing inherently wrong with staying in the career a little longer than anticipated. When I started teaching in 1979, the longevity I would do it for five years. Absolutely positive. I was going to be a mathematician. That was my field. And it turned out I liked teaching. I enjoyed it and it felt I was accomplishing something. So I stayed in it. But I think what has changed is that there is more of a mobility now. People are emboldened to do new things, try new things and can have a much wider experience than we ever did. Some of that is good.

I do think that when the economy improves, we're going to bring back some mobility quickly. I also think that it'll never be the way it was because of increased mobility.

Do you feel that the BTU is doing a good job engaging the membership right now?

Are we trying to engage people, yes. It seems to me that we've been successful, certainly not totally. It's hard in a way to catch a moving target with five hundred to six hundred new hires every year; it's very difficult. Similarly, the school department has difficulty catching up and hitting [this] moving target.

In order to do that, I'm not going to find an industry in the world, a professional industry, that has a turnover of 10% a year [like we have in public education]. I'm not going to find that with a law practice, a medical practice or an accounting firm. 10% of employee turnover in year and year out, that's too easy, too by economic necessity.

I do think that when the economy improves, we're going to bring back some mobility quickly. I also think that it'll never be the way it was because of increased mobility.

So you feel that the BTU is doing a good job engaging the membership right now?

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So do you think the lack of engagement from their own professional organization is mostly because of the fact that they're highly mobile and they haven't had the chance to really try out their own families? Because I also know a number of folks whose affect is what I'd described as frustrated. They're frustrated about not knowing who to go to, or who to talk to. (There's the feeling that) the BTU [leadership] is not listening to me or asking for my opinions and thoughts about things, or I can't go and speak here because I feel intimidated.

What are the things that you as a president can do to reach out and out and quest those fears? Because we want to welcome people, right?

Well I don't know if there's a fear [or not]. I think our membership meetings are reasonably welcoming. There's not a quick gavel and [we] try to plan different activities that interest a variety of people. I won't say we do a great job of that. I don't think we've ever done a great job of that. And from my conversations with other union leaders from around the country, everyone is grappling with the same issue.

I think one of the main issues is that people don't have a lot of time. At the same time, the union hasn't reached out. (It hasn't kept up with the times and I think we're playing a lot of catch up.

So what's the strategy to do that here in Boston?

Well in Boston, we've done a number of things, from the social to the political. We have a lot of younger leaders that we have tried to get involved in the BTU and we've tried to expand the scope [or our organizational goals] so we are more embracing. And the difficulty is in maintaining that and growing that. I mean I was in a meeting the other day of labor leaders and I was the youngest person there and I realized that that body, as bad as the BTU might be as far as reflecting all age groups, that body was a heck of a lot worse. Trust me [laughing], it's a common experience. Not a comforting one.

We have tried with the different committees [such as] the CCOPE committee and the Executive Board committee. I don't take any false credit for this. It's been an uphill struggle, and we are still working on it.

If there were a way to get more people to participate, it would make us a stronger union.

The Teaching Pulse is predicated on the idea that collaboration is something that's complex but a very possible way of going about our work in public education. And I don't pretend to think that it's easy or efforts haven't been made, but right now we have to have our leaders, leaders to speak for the best interest of teachers and the kids.

What's the action plan and vision for moving forward?

In the meantime, we have to continue what we're doing and do it smarter. I'm not going to give up trying to get more of your membership involved, both the students and to try and get more involved in the district work. And I think that's an essential. I think if the economic and political climate were better, I think we could sway the district to be a little more embracing.

Much food for thought, for certain. As usual, please consider visiting the online forum at www.theteachingpulse.org to continue this conversation and weigh in from your perspective. Have a great month and see you online!

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

BOSTON UNION TEACHER  November, 2011  3
Commentary: Michael J. Maguire

#OccupyEducation

Over Columbus Day weekend I typed into my Internet search engine “occupy wall street demands.” The first two items presented to me were contradictory: the International Business Tribune posted an article about how OWS is stronger without a leader and the Huffington Post put forth an article of how important it is for OWS to have a coherent agenda if it wishes to accomplish anything of substance. Then I found what I believe is the most quoted set of “demands” from Lloyd J. Hart. He posted thirteen demands on OccupyWallStreet.org. Demand four caught my attention: free college education.

Considering that a plurality, if not a majority, of the “occupiers” are recent college graduates, I can see how demand number four would be particularly relevant. With no job prospects and college loans to pay back, anger and frustration are natural responses. It seems that today’s young adults are not content with living in their parents’ basements, as many a columnist has sniffed, but want to be seen and heard.

Sooner or later the occupations will end, but the problems of our higher education system will remain and will cause more problems unless we educators act. We are both products of, and agents for, the higher ed system. We know its strengths and weaknesses. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to fix a system that steals the wealth and the futures of millions of young Americans.

Stealing the Wealth

The cost of a college degree is too high. We all know this but we all seek ways to help our own without addressing the failure of the system. $50,000 a year for a private college is unaffordable to even the upper 1% of Americans. We sorely need to lower the cost of education. Mr. Hart says it should be free. Maybe he’s right. But we all turn to loans, and we all seek ways to help our own without addressing the failure of the system. We know its strengths and weaknesses. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to fix a system.

Stealing the Future

Colleges know that they have a good thing going. They know that American high school students are told that college is their destination. With virtually no vocational programs left, college is the only choice left open, save joining the military. Anything else (rightly or wrongly) is deemed a failure. So with more and more students applying to the same colleges, simple economics states that the cost of private universities (rightly or wrongly) is deemed a failure.

Whichever way we go, we cannot just stay the course. The SS Education is laden with too much debt. She is not enough lifeboats for all her passengers. Michael J. Maguire teaches Latin at Boston Latin Academy.

Here’s Another Item to Ponder From Another European Country

Finland, the number one educational nation in the world, provides K to PhD public education for all its citizens. Perhaps it’s time to emulate the world’s educational leader. Whichever way we go, we cannot just stay the course. The SS Education is laden with too much debt. She is listing. And if anyone cares to notice, there are not enough lifeboats for all her passengers.

Michael J. Maguire
Commentary: Garret Virchick

The High Price of “Efficiencies”

It's something they tell us when budgets get crunched. “We just have to do more with less.” As a science teacher I can say unequivocally that when one side of the equation is reduced, the other side also goes down. When less is put in, less comes out on the other side. If you hear the word “efficiencies” it’s time to look closely at what is about to come down. This year is no exception. Schools are closed in the name of efficiency. And what at what is about to come down.

The “efficiencies” of the Boston Public Schools are an example of the systemic racism that continues to plague our country 57 years after Brown v. Board of Education and 37 years after court-ordered desegregation in Boston.

On Sunday, October 16th, travelers coming back to Boston, after enjoying a weekend away from their jobs, saw what teachers do on their weekends – grade papers and plan. The Teacher Activist Group - Boston, the Boston arm of a network that includes organizations in San Diego, Oakland, San Francisco, St. Louis, Chicago, Milwau-kee, New York, and Philadelphia, held a Flash Grade-In. Forty teachers took their Sunday work to the public, and amidst the hustle and bustle of weekend travelers coming through South Station graded papers, planned, and collaborated with each other for two hours.

Modeled after the Flash Mob phenomena that activists have utilized recently to educate the public on a host of issues ranging from fair housing to bank misconduct, the action was received by the public with interest and curiosity. The teachers wore red to stand out in the crowd and hung hand-painted signs on the backs of their chairs with messages such as, “I am a public school teacher working on the weekend,” and “I work in a public school... ask me about it.” A few teachers who had been traveling came over and thanked the group for its efforts. Others stopped by with messages of support.

After two hours the teachers got up in unison and, holding their signs up for the whole of the afternoon.

Students who schooled Kaufman on the long hours teachers put in every week, sometimes working in excess of 70 hours, asked to Mr. Kaufman for writing the truth. But alas, the Globe must have heard from the privatizers of public education because Friday’s editorial called the action a gimmick, and further called for us to work two hours late to school. Why the bus driver... er... limousine driver would be fired!

Education is supposed to be the great equalizer. But UNEQUAL education all ways gives the have’s the advantage over the have-nots. The CEOs of corporate America would stand for this if it was THEIR child’s school? Not in a heartbeat. The budgeting of the Boston School Department cannot find a way to fit less than 31 students in every teacher’s classroom. But the schools for the children of the corporate rich will rarely find classrooms with more than 20 students, and often-closer to 15 students. Do you think THEIR children would be taking science in classroom without sufficient budgets, or even working sinkies? Do you think THEY would settle for THEIR children arriving two hours late to school? Why the bus driver... er... limousine driver would be fired!

Education is supposed to be the great equalizer. But UNEQUAL education all ways gives the have’s the advantage over the have-nots. The CEOs of corporate America would stand for this if it was THEIR child’s school?

The teachers and supporters of TAG-Boston were exhilarated after this success. They have vowed to continue the struggle to bring out the truth about what is happening in our schools despite the obstruction of the Boston Globe and others who seek to privatize and then profit from public education.

~ Garret Virchick

Garret Virchick

Teachers hard at work in the food court at South Station during Flash Grade-In.

Teachers graded papers, planned lessons, and collaborated with each other for two hours in South Station.

(continued on page 9)
Report on the 2011 BTU Building Reps Conference

By Bill Barfus

The annual BTU Building Reps conference covered a variety of topics. Here is a brief summary of the main points.

#1) The new Performance Evaluation tool that is already being implemented at BPS turnaround schools and will be implemented in all BPS schools by September 2012. You can see the entire powerpoint slide show on aftma.net.

#2) The status of contract negotiations. As you know, we are working under the same agreement which was intended to expire at the end of the 2009-2010 school year. This means we are now into our 2nd year without a new contract. All of us should be informed and up-to-date with the current status and how this affects our jobs, our profession, and our incomes.

Of particular note is the strong push by BPS for extra work, extra hours, and no compensation. They try in various forms, as they always have, to add time to the workday, to take away discretionary time, and to force PD on our own time. We need to be aware.

#3) Our health insurance. As you know, we had a modest increase in health insurance premiums combined with a modest increase in deductibles and co-pays. Although we kept our quality health insurance, albeit at greater expense, we only have that for 4 more years. After which point the current agreement will expire and the current political winds are pushing us in the direction of the state’s GIC plan – a plan which is mediocre and more expensive.

#4) Stand For Children Initiative. Sounds great, after all, we all stand for children. Their website makes you want to open your checkbook. They appear so supportive of children and teachers. Read and explore some of the details and you will get very discouraged. One of many intricacies of their initiative is student evaluations of teachers as a significant source of “data” for teacher evaluations. Moreover, some very intelligent people who have very deep pockets back this initiative. They are also master salesmen so we shall need to stay focused in order to defeat this initiative.

#5) Dr. Carol Johnson was present on the second day of the conference to speak to the building reps and membership. She spoke highly of the teaching and professional staff, however she clearly has been advocating for more in-district charters, and for more work at the same pay, without having “defined” what the extra work is.

Just more work with no additional pay. The superintendent took the position that we are well paid and that all professionals who earn what we earn put in extra time. This has been a recurring theme in the interactions between BPS and the BTU. The BPS thinks “more” work is better. The BTU only asks that teachers be paid for their extra time.

Here’s an historical example: When the pilot school initiative began in Boston in 1994, some headmasters added hundreds of extra hours (300 in one case), none with compensation, thinking that they can “get more” from the staff. This was the impetus behind the agreement that pilot school employees would work the 1st 95 hours without compensation, and the next 50 hours with compensation paid for by BPS (not the individual school). Anything over the (95+50) 145 would be paid for by the school out of its own budget. As of now, not a single pilot school in Boston has their staff working that 146th hour because they’d have to pay for it. Econ 101: when inputs of production are charged at market prices, those inputs are used efficiently.

We need to be vigilant that we aren’t mandated to work longer hours without compensation, especially when no plan exists to demonstrate that the efforts will be beneficial to student outcomes.

This is but a quick overview; more information will follow in the weekly e-bulletins. Stay informed and stay involved.

(Bill Barfus teaches at TechBoston.)
Extended Learning Time Works If Done Well

Extending the school day is one of many reforms to boost student learning, but for it to be successful, the additional time must be used well and teachers compensated for it, AFT president Randi Weingarten says.

Weingarten appeared on an October 25th panel on expanding learning time, sponsored by the National Center on Time and Learning and the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The issue is timely in Boston, where the Boston Teachers Union and city officials have agreed in contract negotiations to add 30 minutes to the school day — though the union had recommended more time — but the city is refusing to pay teachers for the extended learning time.

“Boston students, especially disadvantaged children, would be well-served if the city made the investment in an extended learning time program that’s designed and implemented well and that compensates teachers for the added time,” Weingarten says. “Doing both is good for kids and fair to teachers.”

“Boston is asking teachers to subsidize it.”

Weingarten cited Clarence Edwards Middle School in Boston, one of several Massachusetts pilots using extended learning time program that’s designed and implemented well and that compensates teachers for the added time.

“Clarence Edwards is really quite a compelling example of what can be done when teachers and district officials work things out collaboratively,” she says. Edwards’ extended time model was designed by the school’s teachers. The achievement gap between Edwards and the state as a whole has narrowed by 80 percent in English language arts and by two-thirds in science, and 8th graders now exceed the state proficiency rate by eight points in math.

She also cited New York City’s Chancellor’s District, in which the lowest-performing schools had a longer school day for enrichment and remediation programs as well as professional development for teachers. Students in the district, which no longer exists, performed significantly better than comparable district schools on state reading tests.

And at Ethel Taylor Academy in Cincinnati, after-school programs include enrichment activities, tutoring and mentoring, a hot dinner, parent and family engagement, and health and wellness activities. The program is integrated into the regular school day. It has produced a 42.4 percent increase in the number of students scoring proficient or higher on the state standardized test; behavioral incidents have dropped and parental engagement has soared.

Massachusetts 2020, which has been leading the expanded learning time initiative in the state, cites five primary benefits of adding time to the traditional school day: more time on task, greater depth and breadth of learning, more time for planning and professional development, more time for enrichment and experiential learning, and stronger relationships between teachers and students. The Harvard Family Research Project identified a range of benefits associated with well-designed and well-run after-school and summer programs, including positive outcomes for academics, social-emotional health, risky behavior prevention, and health and wellness.

“Extended learning time,” Weingarten says, “isn’t a magic bullet. It can be one of many tools to improve student achievement, but it has to be done well, with teacher voice and buy-in. And it is important for the district to pay for it, not ask the teachers to subsidize it.”

[AFT press release, October 25, 2011]

BPS Schools Participate in the Roslindale Day Parade

The 36th Annual Roslindale Day Parade took place on Sunday, October 2, 2011. Politicians, pets, and passers-by all had fun on a gloriously sunny day. Many of the participants were from the local BPS schools. These are the traditions that strengthen our community and make us proud to be Bostonians.
The annual Massachusetts AFL-CIO conference was held October 5-7, 2011 at the Boston Marriott Quincy in Quincy, Massachusetts. This conference was particularly important because we said goodbye to the outgoing President Bobby Haynes who retired after more than 20 years at the helm of the AFL-CIO, and the election of its new president, Steve Tolman.

One of the first of many invited guest speakers was our Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Tim Murray. He wasted no time thanking outgoing President Bobby Haynes for all the hard work, sacrifice and accomplishments he has made on behalf of the labor movement. Murray mentioned some of the important projects that had occurred under Haynes' leadership, in particular the AFL-CIO Walk For Cancer. The AFL-CIO walk has become the largest single one-day event in Massachusetts raising almost $38 million to date for the cure for cancer.

Murray said he shared a common goal with Bobby Haynes of improving the quality of life of working families. He also said he looks forward to a new partnership with the newly-elected AFL-CIO President Steve Tolman.

Murray mentioned the upcoming one billion dollar downtown Quincy development, which is slated to begin soon. This project is 100% Union. Murray also talked about the current state of the economy, as well as lack of jobs here in the Commonwealth.

“We need to forge stronger partnerships with other labor unions to ensure quality public education in all regions of the state,” he said.

Murray went on to say that the history of organized labor movement here in Massachusetts has brought us a 40-hour work week, unemployment insurance and better health care coverage.

The AFL-CIO has continued to be a voice for all working families. In closing, Murray outlined a few goals for the labor movement.

We need to be more proactive in all issues that affect the quality of life for people. We need to be able to provide a “social safety net” for struggling families. We need to make the voices of division and actively pursue programs and policies that will bring back jobs, offer more security for working families and close the disparity that exists between the rich and the poor.

(Robert P. Carroll teaches special education at the Charles Summer School.)

RTC Executive Board Minutes • September 12, 2011

Members present: Anne Broder, Treasurer; Marie Broderick; Sandy Carley; Mary Cahalane; Larry Connolly; Phil Fanso; Eileen Galney; Donna Cooley-Hilton; Ruthanne Kennedy; Linda MacNair; Marilyn Marion; Secretary; Leonard Miranda; Vice Chairman; Mary Jo Murphy and Paul Tenney.

Excused: David Donovan, Chairman; Bonnie Mitten and Anne-Marie Adduci.

Officers

Secretary: Report read and accepted.

Treasurer: Report submitted and accepted.

Chairman: None – Chairman was excused.

Vice Chairman: There was a discussion regarding the scheduled business meeting. It was moved and seconded to postpone the business meeting to a later date pending insurance information from the city.

Committees

Benefits: The chair has proposed a possible increase in eye-care benefits – perhaps by upgrading the benefits to offer designer frames. He will try to negotiate for this increase in eye care benefits. Report Accepted.

Data Processing: Cards were sent to eight members. Report Accepted.

Scholarship: No report.

Social: Committee is preparing letter for the November 1st bancheon. Report Accepted.

Travel: Reservations for the next three trips - Turley Train, Crooners & Higgins Armory – are coming in slowly. The Committee would like a table for travel at the September business meeting. Collette Travelogues for 3 trips in 2012 will be in Rooms A & B at the BTU/RTC at 1600 am on Thursday, October 13th Pan Strand, the Colette District Manager, will present the information. Report Accepted.

Legislative: Committee chairs submitted a letter from the MTA President Paul Toner and Vice President Tim Sullivan regarding an action needed on the Senate Pension Bill.

The Legislative Committee continues to monitor State House activities that affect our pensions and health care. We are not aware of the MTA-MAU, and of course the BTU for updates. We will be in contact with other retiree groups as well. There are pending bills on maternity buy back, changes in the pension for those that selected options B and C, and pension reform. There is nothing definitive to report as of this date. We meet at the end of the month to formulate our plans for the year. Report Accepted.

Angela Cristiani, Political Director and Michael McGlaughlin, Retirement Board were invited to the Executive Board meeting by the Legislative Committee. Each of them spoke to the RTC Board regarding their duties and their commitment to keep the RTC up-to-date on issues regarding retirees. Angela reported that Tom O’Connell had submitted a report regarding the Health Care Bill. Michael reported that there is a new software system to calculate retirement benefits. He also mentioned that there will be a Trivia night on November 18 from 8-12. Details will be forthcoming. Report Accepted.

Data Processing: Bonnie is ill, and Paul Tenney will take over her duties entering the data.

Membership: As of Friday, September 9, there were 2700 members. In addition, 45 retirees have submitted a card. These retirees are waiting for a retirement number. Report Accepted.

Old Business: None.

New Business: Proposed Driver’s Education review course for November.

Motion to adjourn: 11:45 am. Respectfully submitted, Marilyn F. Marion, Secretary.

Massachusetts AFL-CIO 54th Constitutional Convention

September 12, 2011

The High Price of “Efficiencies”

(continued from page 4)

America send their children to the best schools. Ninety-six out of 100 CEOs are white. Eighty-five out of 100 Boston Public Schools are children of color. The “efficiencies” of the Boston Public Schools are an example of the systemic racism that continues to plague our country 57 years after Brown v. Board of Education and 18 years after court-ordered desegregation in Boston.

As thousands occupied Wall Street, Boston, Chicago, LA, and hundreds of cities across the country demanding justice for the 99%, it is important for us to understand how this system of inequity has been constructed in our country. It is important to remember who is bearing the burden of policies that allow corporations like Exxon/Mobil, Bank of America, and General Electric to pay ZERO dollars in taxes while receiving a $156 million refund (Exxon), $1.9 billion refund (BofA), and a tax credit of $3 billion (General Electric)! Our tax dollars fund the private educations for the children of white billionaires while poor children get the “efficiencies” of the Boston Public Schools.

So the next time you hear the word “efficiency” at a school committee meeting or from your school leader remind the purveyor of that word that the only efficiency that is being obtained is the efficient discrimination of thousands of children. Bigotry may not be in their heart. But racism is at the core of the efficient system we are being asked to accept.

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 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.

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

Name__________________________ Address__________________________

City/State/Zip__________________________ Email__________________________

Telephone__________________________

(circle your previous position) Teacher, Paraprofessional, etc.

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Eileen Galney is RTC Membership Chairperson

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

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Madison Park Technical Vocational High School

We walked first into a dentist’s office, where students were setting up for an examination of one of their classmates. Carpentry students were in the midst of several different activities: making doorstops, setting up equipment, coaching one another, and getting help from their teacher. I was told they’d even made the entrance counter in the school’s main office! Students studying electricity were hooking up electrical boxes or learning how to bend and cut long metal tubes to particular specifications. Sheet metal workers were putting away their materials, but the auto body shop was in full swing. A couple of students were testing the ignition of a car under the watchful eye of their instructor, while others worked independently on sanding or spray painting car parts. The bakery chef apologized that his students had just left the culinary arts kitchen and wanted to show me pictures of some of their creations. MPHHS teachers’ pride in their students’ accomplishments was heart-warming!

These classes are relatively small for safety reasons, and I found myself wondering where in this sprawling complex I’d find more of Madison Park’s 1,300 students! All MPHHS students take academic classes as well as their vocational studies, and most of those with whom I spoke were planning to attend college. I visited language, math, history, and science classrooms tucked behind common areas and not so easy to find. In one of the liveliest classes, students had just completed a month-long investigation of the life cycle of painted lady butterflies and were preparing to set them free. One young man carefully held a butterfly by its wings while his classmate looked at it through a large magnifier. Their teacher, Margaret Brooks, was guiding her students through the production of a video of this engaging interdisciplinary study.

I have watched too many students with special needs struggle with concepts and vocabulary they simply cannot retain. In these days of high-stakes testing and the expectation that all students should pursue a college degree, it’s easy to forget how important it is to offer alternatives to a traditional academic program. Having completed both academic and vocational courses, Madison Park High School graduates are ready to pursue their dreams wherever they might lead.
I’m screwing a switch box into the wall. Right now we’re learning to make circuits with pipes. I’ve learned that wiring is simple, but bending and cutting pipes takes a long time. If I can master this, I’ll have a good chance of being accepted into the electricians’ union.

– Dennis Fernandes

I was working on a floor plan for my senior project in Hospitality, Travel & Tourism Management Program. I’m designing a luxury hotel. The most important things I’ve learned are to pay attention to detail and to be more organized.

– Cassandra Thomson

We were unscrewing the hard drive of a computer to remove a virus on it. Even after three years in ISSN (Internet Service Support Networking), we learn something new every day! We’ve learned programming, networking, and how to take apart and put together the insides of any computer. This is great preparation for a college major in computer engineering.

– Shawn Delaney & Ernesto Martinez

I was forming a piece of metal to make a lantern. I’ve learned that metal is everywhere, not just in common items. I’ve also learned that you need precise measurements to work with metals.

– Klevel Arias

I was taking a painted lady butterfly out of its habitat. I learned that its life cycle takes about three weeks. When it first comes out of its chrysalis, the butterfly’s wings are wet and need to dry before it can fly. Under a microscope you can see that the wings have scales.

– Chayanne Almeida

(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.)
BTU Activists Get Involved at Occupy Boston

Photos by Marjie Crosby, Occupational Therapist