A Welcome Back Message from the BTU President

By Richard Stutman

Welcome back. We hope you’ve all had a restful and enjoyable summer. Today each school will set aside a 30-minute block of time to go over some of the material in the September edition of the Boston Union Teacher. We negotiated this block of time eight years ago because we felt it important that your building representative have time set aside at the start of each school year to disseminate important information concerning the role of the union, your salary and benefit package, and this year, the status of negotiations.

Much of the information we have provided in the newspaper explains your benefit package, work conditions, and how to take full advantage of both. Those of you who are new or relatively new to the BTU should find the information quite useful as you begin your career. The rest of you will find bits and pieces that interest you. We encourage each of you to review this newspaper thoroughly at your leisure. We cannot overstate the need for all staff, and in particular new staff, to understand our basic rights and benefits. Of course, there’s a lot to digest and you will not digest it all today, but please keep this guide handy as a reference. We have accumulated our rights and benefits over many years, and we will continue to work hard—with your help—to maintain them. As of today, we are working on an expired contract, and while the 2006-2010 contract remains in full force while we negotiate a new collective bargaining agreement, we have a lot at stake as we work to finish this bargaining.

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(continued on page 2)
The Boston Teachers Union is the exclusive collective bargaining agent for the school system’s 7,000 teachers, other nonadministrative, professional employees, paraprofessionals, and substitute teachers. We also represent 2,600 retirees.

What are the BTU’s primary responsibilities?

- Negotiate and enforce your contract. We provide the best education we can for the system’s 65,000 students.
- Work with the school community to ensure our schools are as good as they can be.
- Represent the membership in all matters related to their professional work.
- Answer job-related questions and assist in any job-related matter, i.e., help our members navigate through the Court Street bureaucracy.
- Promote public education.
- Promote the growth of our profession.
- Work politically through COPE to elect pro-public education, pro-union candidates.
- COPE or the Committee on Political Education is by federal and state law a separate entity within the BTU devoted to supporting candidates who support public education and who otherwise favor our positions on a variety of work-related issues.

The BTU is affiliated with:

- American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
- AFT-MA, Mass AFT-CIO
- AFT-Massachusetts (formerly called the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers)
- Greater Boston Labor Council (GBLC)

How to get in contact with the BTU:

- Visit office at 180 Mt. Vernon Street, Dorchester
- Business Hours: 8-5, all weekdays, except legal holidays
- Call 617-288-2000
- Log onto www.btu.org
- Email staff and officers; for an index, please see http://www.btu.org/boards/officercommitteeindex.html

How to join the BTU’s 8,700-member list serve:

- Go to http://www.btu.org, upper left (beige) is sign-up box.
- The list serve is used only for the dissemination of the weekly BTU e-Bulletin. The list is not used for any other purpose including, business, political or personal.
- The list is fully protected and will not be used for ANY other purpose.

What is the leadership structure of the BTU?

All policy is set by the membership at its regularly scheduled monthly membership meetings on the 2nd Wednesday* of each month at 4:00 at union headquarters. All members are welcome to attend. (Subject to change with notice because of scheduling problems.)

The BTU’s policy board is its Executive Board, served by 12 members elected at large every two years. Executive board members are listed below.

Serving as a direct link between the union office and the membership are elected BTU Building Representatives from every building and program in the city. BTU Building Rep.’s are elected each year to service the members at each school site and act as the liaisons between the union office and our membership in our schools.

Richard Stutman, President
btu@btu.org

The BTU’s job is to keep you informed, to answer your questions easily and quickly. You can always call the BTU or visit us online. If you need help quickly, call the Boston Teacher Hot Line at 617-288-2000. It is staffed by union members who can immediately find out information and answer your questions.

A Welcome Back Message from the BTU President…

(continued from page 1)

lar loss is expected to rise to $110 Million yearly by 2014.

Aside from the harmful financial implications, some charters provide a disservice to the students. They can cherry pick their students. Unfortunately, the state has only encouraged more of the same bad practice.

All two charter proposals that were easily approved last winter by the state (some will open this year, the rest next fall), though one, a second Edward Brooke Charter School, gathered some opposition because of the high numbers. Some will open this year, the rest next fall.

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(continued from page 1)
Data shows that the lower the class sizes the better when it comes to meeting students’ needs. As soon as class size maxima have been exceeded in your class, file the information immediately with the BTU directly on the btu.org website. Refer to the grade and type of class you teach (elementary, middle, high, regular ed, SPED, gym, SEL, etc.) in the BTU contract on pages 39 – 40 to determine the appropriate number for your respective class. You can turn the evaluation around by themself. It is often too easy to misread or misunderstand what the administrator is saying in the description of the problem or the prescription. For that reason, it is important to seek out someone to cooperate with the teacher in meeting the educational objectives set for the year. Parents who do not agree shall have copies mailed to them by the principal at School Department expense with a stamped return envelope to return the signed copy to the school.

I’ve always found it helpful to include on the syllabus the phrase, “Individual parent teacher conferences shall be held at a time that is mutually agreed upon by the parent and the teacher either in person or by phone.” This paraphrases language in the contract and communicates a willingness to meet by appointment with the consent of both parties. A syllabus is meant to be an outline, an overview – not a tomb. Some administrators are also requesting ‘curriculum maps’ and the like which an expansion of this outline. If they are requiring more than what has been detailed above as contractually negotiated, then the administration should provide additional administrative time to do so. If the administration is not willing to do so, perhaps they should reflect on their priorities. We need to focus on doing what we do well to best meet the children’s needs. That necessitates prioritizing our time effectively – collectively. Together we can!

Health Insurance – when do new teachers sign up, when can we change our plans, what if someone gets rehired or returns from an unpaid leave?...

City of Boston Employees join health plans by contacting the Health Benefits and Insurance Division (Group Insurance) located on the 8th Floor of Boston City Hall, telephone 617 635-4570. New hires have 60 calendar days from the time they are hired in order to sign up for health insurance. Provisional or permanent teachers, who were laid off and then recalled, must contact Group Insurance within 60 days of being rehired from lay off in order to reenroll. Some people assume that because they have their job back, the insurance is automatically reinstated – this is not the case. These deadlines are hard and fast. Open enrollment is the window of time when you can change your type of health insurance plan, or sign up for the first time if you’ve missed another deadline. This period is held annually for 5 weeks in April and the first week of May. Those wanting to partake in open enrollment must contact Group Health Insurance at City Hall. If a teacher takes a leave of absence and decides to let their insurance lapse during their leave, they must sign up to reinstate their health insurance during the spring open-enrollment period prior to their return in the fall. They will have to pay premiums out of pocket beginning on July 1 – September 1 after which time; deductions will be taken from their paychecks. Their insurance will take effect July 1 as a result. During the year if a teacher gets married/di- vorced, has a baby, or the spouse who carried the health insurance for the BFS teacher loses their job, then the BFS teacher has 30 calendar days to notify and submit proof to Group Insurance of this event in order to qualify for the change to be made in their health insurance coverage.

United we stand – divided we fall. Let’s stand together! BTUnionity!

Phone Numbers

Health & Welfare .............. 617-288-0500
Function Office ................. 617-288-3322
Lounge Office ................... 617-288-3322
Tremont Credit Union....... 781-843-5626

These deadlines are

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The opinions expressed in the

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Byline: The Boston Teachers Union

eral or school if not

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The Boston Teachers Union

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Boston Teachers Union

The next issue of the

is September 16th.
How Long (Days, Hours, PD) is the School Year?...And how the time is broken down and compensated?

By Richard Stutman, BTU President

Please review the below to understand the length of your school year, the conditions under which you must receive additional compensation for additional work, and so on. As always, call the union office if you have any questions.

Traditional Schools

School Year, 18 Hours, Extra Time, etc.
The school year is divided up into a few components:
The first two days of the school year are broken down as follows:

Day 1 – Tuesday, September 6th
- First half hour dedicated to administrative meeting
- Rest of day dedicated to teacher-directed organizing and preparation of classroom, i.e., the teacher ‘owns’ the time for room & class preparation

Day 2 – Wednesday, September 7th
- First half hour dedicated to BTU Building Rep.-union meeting
- Rest of day dedicated to administrative PD.

The 189 school days when class is in session

January 3rd – All day Professional Day
- Can be converted to six hours
- Each school has a majority vote (secret ballot, five days notice, run by the BTU Building Rep.) can convert January 3rd to 6 hours.

The above found under the Traditional School schedule.

How long is the length of the school day?
- Teachers in elementary schools have to be present in school for 6:30 each day. Teachers in secondary schools work 6:40 each day. We all know that teachers work well beyond those hours in all schools, not to mention daily time spent at home and on weekends. We are referring here specifically to the clock, 'bell-to-bell', mandated hours.

What if your administrator schedules a 40-hour math (etc.) workshop?
- Anything over either the 24 hours (with the conversion) or the 18 hours (without) as mentioned above is voluntary, no matter how worthy and valuable. If principals really need to require more hours, they have within their discretion to require and compensate (some or all) staff up to 10 additional hours of professional development. The compensation for the additional 10 hours is at the real hourly rate you earn.

Pilot Schools and Horace Mann Charters
Pilot schools create their own schedules subject to the below:
Pilot school teachers and paraprofessionals can be forced to work additional time, either in hours or days. But there is compensation for some of those additional hours. Here’s a short description of what constitutes extra time in a pilot school, how to calculate it, and how the additional compensation will look.

Additional Hours
Here’s an explanation of how to calculate additional hours in a pilot school: To understand this, we first have to look at the traditional school schedule. The school day is defined as 6:30 for elementary school teachers and 6:40 for secondary teachers. If you are given a 30-minute break in the middle of the day for lunch, or time-off for whatever, that time counts as part of the school day.

The length of the traditional school year is 180 school days as defined above. There are 3 (2 this year, 2011-2012) additional non-student days: the Tuesday and the Wednesday after Labor Day, and the day after the Winter/December break. These three non-student days, however, are 6-hour days, not 6:30-6:40.

In addition to the ‘180’ plus the ‘3’, there are hours of professional development, 18 hours, and 4 hours of parental contact time. This total is a 1210 hours for elementary teachers and 1240 hours for secondary teachers.

There are no other days or hours required, with the exception of the school year, in the summer, or whenever. All time required above and beyond what is defined in this paragraph is considered additional time and would contribute to the limits, which, if exceeded, require compensation. If you have questions on this calculation, please call the BTU office.

The compensation for time above and beyond the hours detailed above will be at the contractual hourly rate ($4,100 as of 9/1/11) and will be retirement-worthy.

The Boston Union Teacher is the award-winning newspaper of the Boston Teachers Union. Last year we won four awards from the National Federation of Teachers’ Communicators Network. Special thanks is due the Editorial Board and the members who submit articles and photographs. The editors are committed to maintaining the quality of our publication and with your help it will remain one of the best in the country.

The Boston Union Teacher strives to keep our members informed of important issues facing our members, their families, and the parents and teachers we serve on a daily basis. It is our goal to promote and preserve our union and the labor movement as a whole.

Our union is a diverse union. We have members just starting their professional life and members who have been serving the families and students of Boston for over 40 years. Our members come from all races and nationalities and reflect the diversity of the students we teach. It is important that all these voices are heard on the pages of the Boston Union Teacher.

There are many ways you can contribute to the Boston Union Teacher. Sharing best practices, commenting on current events or editorial, addressing issues affecting our community, addressing issues important to the labor movement, reviewing books or popular culture, writing a letter to the editor are just some of the ways you can add to the quality of our publication and our newspaper.

Submissions to the paper should be done electronically through email.

Write for the Boston Union Teacher

For the 2011-2012 school year, in addition to any of the above found under the Traditional School schedule, all teachers (nurses, etc.) in the following schools – Agassiz, Blackstone, Burke, Deerborn, Dever, E Greenwood, English HS Commonwealth Pilot, Harbor Pilot, Holland, Kennedy, Orchard Gardens Pilot, and the Trotter – will work an additional (compared to traditional schools) 190 hours of overtime, broken down as follows: 100 hours of PD, and 90 hours (30 plus school day for 180 hours for instruction). The 190 hours will be compensated at $4,100, will be annualized (paid over 26 paychecks) and will be retirement worthy. A few points about the $4,100 compensation: it’s short money, and the BTU will be challenging the city to pay the $4,100.

The BTU has no quarrel with the amount of hours, and we agree that the extension of the school day is generally a good idea. But we do want to be fairly compensated. The $4,100 does not meet the standard of fair compensation.

In addition to the $4,100, there is an additional pot of money per school that can be divided up amongst staff equally if certain achievement goals are met. More on this as the year develops.

Any questions on any of the above, please call the BTU office at 617-288-2000.
School Site Councils – Shared Decision Making  Use It!

by Caren Carew

BTU Secondary Field Representative

While all schools in Massachusetts have School Site Councils (SSC) composed of parents, teachers, and the principal – it is only an advisory council. In contrast, the Boston Public Schools (BPS) is a shared decision making body with actual authority and responsibility for their school’s operations. SBM-SDM (School Site Council/Shared Decision Making (SBM-SDM)) is the process that School Site Councils use to engage the school community in the planning and implementation of school improvement efforts.

The role of the SSC, as established in the Contract between the School Committee and the BTU, is to manage all matters that relate to the operation of the school, including: priority & objective setting; development of a WISP; design & scheduling of instructional program & curriculum; budgeting & fund raising along with maintaining and purchasing & disbursement of discretionary funds; space utilization; hiring of new staff & 2nd & 3rd year provisional’s; staff development & professional growth; parent teaching duties; parent-teacher relations & functions; solicitation & use of outside professionals & social service resources; school safety committees; any other matter relating to the operation of the school; on high school level review of SBM-SDM.

The SSC also can adopt waiver proposals which must then be brought to a vote & approved by a specified threshold of BTU staff as well as then be approved by the SSC Steering Committee. These waivers can include decisions which are considered extraneous to the contract for more info. The SSC has a very specific role with respect to the school’s budget process as well. SSCs must observe all federal & state laws, regulations and court orders as well.

Shared decision-making is a process in which all members of the school community at the school level collaborate in identifying problems, defining goals, formulating policy, implementing programs, and learning from experience. In the BTU, the SSC is an elected group of parents, teachers, and students at each school. In high school, the student principal – that has the authority to make most of the decisions about the school. There can also be Associate members who are non-voting and can participate fully in SSC meetings. Elections for new BTU members to the SSC should be held by each school’s BTU Reps for openings on the SSC prior to the Council’s first meeting which contractually must be held no later than October 31.

The parent members to represent the SSC are elected by each school’s parent council.

The operational procedures of each SSC are determined by the bylaws which must be crafted and adopted at each meeting. The principal and another elected member of the SSC chosen to be co-chair. The Education Reform Act specifically makes SSCs subject to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. As a result, the SSC is not allowed to go into Executive Session. A vote to conduct SSC business or to even hold a Council meeting must follow the procedures for and obtain a waiver through the SBM-SDM process. Regular meetings of the SSC must occur at least monthly and any recommendations made must be agreed upon by the parent & teacher elected members with a schedule publicized for the school year. The SSC sets the agenda for meetings and items can be submitted by any SSC member. The School Administrator and the other Co-Chair must solicit agenda items from other SSC members as well as from the greater school community prior to each meeting date. Minutes of each SSC meeting must be distributed within thirty days of the meeting according to BTU contract and in the interest of keeping the school community fully informed. It is expected that SSC will function by consensus or general agreement of members and that the SSC does not require that there be a supermajority agreement but rather makes sure each group has a voice in the decision.

The First-Ever BTU TOWN MEETING on Wednesday, September 21, 8:30 pm at BTU

An Inclusion Primer

by Michael V. McLaughlin

BTU Elementary Field Representative

Inclusion is moving a special needs student into a general or regular educational setting for an amount of time deemed appropriate for a child’s success. Inclusion programs are developed to maximize student learning and effective teaching. The BTU and BTU have agreed to the following provisions.

Teacher Input

A school based inclusion team must be formed before the program is implemented. Teacher members of the school’s inclusion planning teams are chosen to represent the specific needs of any inclusion plan to be implemented during next school year prior to February 15th. This date is important because teachers and paraprofessionals must have an opportunity to plan and prepare for inclusion.

SPECIAL EDUCATION PLACEMENT

A few steps must be taken before assigning a student to an inclusion class. At elementary schools, the ETF must convene a meeting of the Evaluation Team plus the SPED and/or regular education teachers who currently have the student and the regular education and/or SPED teacher who is to receive the student. At middle and high school levels, the ETF must convene a meeting of the evaluation team, including the SPED teacher. Whenever possible, the student shall be designated as the liaison teacher for the student in question. Teachers who volunteer to be liaison teachers shall receive professional development in techniques which can be used with in other educational teachers in bringing to that meeting. They may use a variety of administrative periods to perform this task. Whenever a student moves from an elementary school to a middle school, or from a middle school to a high school, whenever possible, Cluster offices from the receiving school will provide a transition team to meet with the sending school’s BTU Reps for pre-planning. Decisions about classroom placement shall be made in those meetings in accordance with the regulations which must be approved at the next BTU Meeting.

The BPS SPED Department must also put in writing for all personnel the policies concerning progress reports, 504 plans, service plans, and the goals addressing the new standards, and any other policies regarding the implementation of SPED and support programs.

APPEAL OF SPED PLACEMENT

When a teacher has concerns about the placement of a student, that teacher shall make a request to the Principal or Headmaster to reconvene the team to reconsider the placement in accordance with the regulations. The evaluation team shall be reconvened to respond to that request within two weeks. If, upon reconsideration, the team finds the placement inappropriate, it shall present an IEP which contains an appropriate placement option to the parent.

COMMON PLANNING TIME

Whenever possible, teachers in inclusion classrooms shall be scheduled for a minimum of joint planning time. They are entitled to at least two periods per week to plan activities in the inclusion setting.

CLASS SIZE AND STAFFING

Teachers, in consultation with the Principal will decide how best to configure their inclusion classroom. However, in no instance shall an inclusion classroom exceed the ratio of 20 students to one teacher. The 20:1 ratio assumes a 20:1 ratio maximum of 6 SPED students. Teachers in consultation with the school. The SAX is the appropriate first step in the process. Principals, with input from the evaluation team, will decide how best to allocate paraprofessional support. In all inclusion classes, paraprofessionals can include decisions which are contractually permissible. There is some flexibility in the contract in the allocation of paraprofessional support and with inclusion model which can be used with in an inclusion program. When appropriate, paraprofessionals shall attend professional development training designed to support the inclusion process.

IMPORTANT STAFFING ISSUES TO REMEMBER

No teacher shall be excessed or laid off as a result of an inclusion plan. Teachers who choose not to teach in an inclusion classroom may exercise their voluntary contractual right to excess themselves or to transfer. Positions to be filled in inclusion classrooms shall be advertised first to teachers and paraprofessionals in the affected classrooms, then to others within the school according to the terms of the contract. Positions which are not filled by existing school staff shall be made open to and, if necessary, on the excess pool vacancies, and on subsequent postings.
Faculty Senates: A Union Membership Responsibility

By Michael W. McLaughlin

Faculty Senates first appeared in our 1971-72 contract, twenty-five years after the birth of the BTU. The 1971-72 contract was added to remain in our present contract. Another addition was made in the 1979-80 contract. Faculty Senate was included under Article I: Union Recognition, Jurisdiction and Responsibilities. A section titled Faculty Senate Guidelines was added in an additional appendix like section on page 98. Today Faculty Senate is listed in our contract under Article II, Developing and Maintaining Effective Working Relationships. The guidelines can be found in the appendix.

Our union leaders had it right in 1978. Faculty Senate is a responsibility. These days it may be the only safe place a faculty member has to express concerns about educational policy without getting the hairy eyeball from administrators. Considering the climate in some schools, you would be taking your life into your own hands if you were to publicly express a contrary opinion during an ILT meeting, SSC meeting or a CCL pre/post conference. Faculty Senates help to maintain an effective working relationship with the principal about educational policy with fear of being singled out for retribution. Faculty Senates are democracy in action. It’s a forum for the healthy exchange of ideas. Many schools hold their monthly FS meetings on the Thursday or Friday following the Union’s general membership meeting. In this way, teachers get the most up to date information from their elected building rep.

The school day goes by much like a hundred yard dash. Frequently the race gets longer as ILT, SSC, CCL, Professional Development and extended day activities are tacked on. We need to make time for the faculty senate. The first step is to elect a chair. Next, set the dates and let the entire faculty know. Be sure to give your principal a copy so that other committee meetings don’t conflict with other school related meetings. We need to do this for ourselves and for our profession. Try to make the meetings more appealing with coffee or other refreshments.

Rotating the location or combining them with a monthly morning coffee hour can also increase attendance. Whatever format your faculty decides; remember it’s a union member’s responsibility. Become an active member of the faculty senate.

Faculty Senates

Faculty Senates may be formed in each school building and shall meet once every month after the close of the normal school day with the Principal or Headmaster concerned. Faculty Senates will be recognized by the administration of that school as having an advisory voice in the operation of that school and having an advisory voice in the formation of educational policy.

Faculty Senates representing Music Teachers, Guidance Counselors, Nurses, School Psychologists, Evaluation Team Leaders, Kindergarten teachers, Bilingual teachers, and high school levels during days of regularly scheduled in-service meetings.

FACULTY SENATE GUIDELINES

Purpose
The Faculty Senate shall:
1) Plan and run in-service meetings, in cooperation with the administration and in accordance with the contract;
2) By the acting head, staff representatives that staff in matters concerning school policy;
3) Present the administration with faculty positions on building procedures and educational policy;
4) Cooperate with the building rep. in all contract matters and Union policy.

Membership
1) Only those eligible to vote shall be eligible for membership (see below);
2) The Faculty Senate will be composed of a minimum of five members, except in buildings where the number of teachers is less, in schools where the faculty numbers more than 50, membership should be on a 1 to 10 ratio. Members are generally elected at large, but in certain schools may be elected by departments, areas, pods, etc.
3) All Building Reps. are automatically members of the Faculty Senate, but should be elected as Building Reps. separately.

Eligibility for Voting
1) All teaching personnel assigned to the building except short term subs;
2) Nurses, permanent librarians, guidance personnel.
3) No one above Group II.

Elections
1) Held by the first week of October;
2) Outgoing Faculty Senate appoints election committee; if no Faculty Senate. then BTU Building Representative appoints election committee.
3) Submit names in writing. In a case where not enough names are submitted, the BTU Building Representative should run a primary, entering the name of every eligible person in the building.
4) Separate ballots for BTU Building Representative and Faculty Senate, members only vote for BTU Building Representative.
5) Ballots should be checked, one per voter.

Meetings
1) Faculty Senate elects own chairperson;
2) Faculty Senate meet at least biweekly;
3) The administration head of the Faculty Senate at least monthly present the administrative head with written positions of the faculty and demand a response. Meet with entire faculty at least monthly; Faculty Senate should submit items for agenda; Faculty Senate Chairperson determines agenda;
4) Faculty Senate elects own secretary;
5) In service meetings;
   a) Faculty and administration submit items for agenda
   b) Chairperson and administrative head determine time allotments
   c) Each (in b) chairs his section of meeting.

Communications
The Faculty Senate should;
1) Keep accurate attendance and minutes of all meetings;
2) Supply each member of the faculty with a written report once each month.
3) Present the faculty with the responses of the administrative head. If the faculty is dissatisfied with the response of the administrative head, it may be appealed to the Community District Superintendent.

By-Laws
Each Faculty Senate should formulate its own by-laws following these guidelines and in compliance with the contract and union membership policy.

Peer Assistance Program

As part of the 2006-2010 collective bargaining agreement, the BTU in collaboration with the BPS, developed a new system of support to enhance the teaching performance of permanent teachers. The goal of the program is to improve the teaching performance of permanent teachers who have received poor performance evaluation(s). The program is directed by the Peer Assistance Committee which is made up of three BTU members and two BPS management staff.

Each Peer Assistant (PA) provides support for permanent teachers who are experiencing difficulties in the classroom. In cooperation with the principal, the PA and the participating teacher identify areas needing improvement. The PA develops specific performance goals and is capable of giving on-site support while monitoring the progress of the teacher. Additionally, the PA and the classroom teacher co-develop a plan to improve performance. The PA helps the classroom teacher plan lesson planning, classroom management and instructional strategies. The PA may conference, model, coach, and/or observe as part of the support provided to the classroom teacher.

The Peer Assistant works with a maximum of 12 permanent teachers from across the district. An essential part of a PA’s role is to establish and maintain a trusting, confidential, non-evaluative and professional relationship with the participating teachers. The PA’s work year is 183 days + 18 hours + 2.5 additional hours per week during the school year. Compensation is the base BTU salary plus 5% and is retirement worthy.

This program is unlike any other teacher assistance program in that it helps only permanent teachers. Neither teachers union or school district has such a program. Potentially, this program can help our members and at the same time strengthen our union. Additionally, it’s an example of how the BTU and the BPS can work together to improve the teaching profession and the education of the children in the City of Boston.

Now in its fourth year of existence, the program has received favorable reviews. If you have questions about the Peer Assistance Program or would like to voluntarily enter the program please email me at mmclaughlin@btu.org.
In your school showing signs of disrepair? Do your allergy and flu like symptoms disappear during July and August? Are there visible sign of rodent or insect infestation in your classroom? Is your classroom water stained?

Does your asthma worsen during work hours? Is your classroom cluttered?

If you can answer yes to any one of these questions, your school may have indoor environmental problems. If you suspect your school has environmental problems, you should work with your elected officials to have your principal or BTU IPM coordinator update your principal about the BTU's concern. If the BTU is interested in conducting the BTU's Environmental Audit and you would like for your school to be added to the BTU Environment Audit list, please contact the BTU at 617-288-2000 or contact kristalhindle@btu.com to volunteer!

Host a House Party! What better way is there to know our elected officials and for them to know us by hosting a house party for our elected officials? If you can supply the location, we will make arrangements to coordinate a mutually agreeable time for you and the elected official, invite the guests and provide the refreshments. We’ll do most of the work and you will feel just like one of the guests! This is a great opportunity to help BTU members establish a better relationship with those who make the laws in the Commonwealth.

Volunteer for one of our elected officials’ of-election season! Working off-season for an elected official who supported collective bargaining rights, for example, is a great way to say “Thank you!” This is an opportunity to build a relationship with our elected officials when neither party is doing anything of the other. It’s a win-win!

Support legislation that is pro-public educators! Continue to check with the BTU weekly E-Bulletins for updates on pertinent bills that affect all our members.

Support legislation that benefits and future retirees! For example, inquir- ies have come in about H711 which was filed by Representative Nagle. The bill would provide a one-time retirement boost to BTU members who retired prior to 1990. Specifically, H711 would increase H701, and raise the retirement base for Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) calculation from $12K to $16K, which received a favorable report from the Public Service Committee on May 17th. This bill, was recently given a new number, HD457, HD457 was SSB bill and is now in the House Ways and Means committee for review and recommendation. Given that the Legislature is likely to do another round of pension reform this fall, it is a goal to have the COLA base improvement included. This benefits not only our current BTU retirees, but ultimately, our active members.

What’s good for teachers is good for our students and their families. Getting in- volved in political action is everyone’s responsibility!

All Welcome from the Special Education Faculty Senate

The Special Education Faculty Senate welcomes all staff back for the 2011 - 2012 school year. This year holds the promise of many changes, and we want to work with our fellow BTU members to see that as many changes as possible for all our students. An active Special Education Faculty Senate is a key way to speak up for positive change.

The BTU SpeF SpecEd Faculty Senate supports all teachers, paraprofessionals, nurses, and related service providers, and all are welcome to participate. As defined by the BTU Contract, Faculty Senates meet monthly and are recognized “as having an advisory voice in the formation of educational policy.”

At our monthly meeting everyone is welcome to share experiences, and raise questions or concerns. Meetings are problem solving and help provide practical support to fellow BTU members. We also reach out more broadly by sharing our articles to the BTU News on issues impacting special education. The SPEF Faculty Senate is also recognized within the community at large. We have reached out to parent groups, elected officials, and others in the community

Last year some of the concerns raised included:

• proposed elimination or changes in staffing and responsibilities (e.g. ETF positions), Lab Cluster Clinical Coordinator
• training (or lack of) for the new Easy IEP
• consistency in information provided for required special education documents
• the need for more specialized professionals

- the safety of students on busses and in the classroom
- the need for increased services such as Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)
- the integrity and implementation of the IEP (a legal document)
- that the election and knowledge of the staff who work directly with students be welcomed to guide the voters in making the best education, best practices in education and quality services for all students.

We look forward to continuing this dialogue and collaboration with John Verre and others within the Special education department.

Meetings are held at the BTU, 180 Mount Vernon Street, Dorchester (off Dudley Boulevard). Ample parking is available. The meetings are generally held on the first Thursday of each month in the BTU, 180 Mount Vernon Street. The tentative schedule is: October 20, November 17, December 15, January 19, February 16, March 15, April 12, May 17, and June 14 for the 2011-2012 school year. Meetings begin at 3:45 p.m. All BTU members are welcome.

Let’s make our voices count for all of us especially our students!
We have come a long way in 40+ years. Below you’ll see a long list of benefits accrued over the course of our collective bargaining history. We have done well. Years of accumulated collective bargaining gains have given us a benefit package we can be proud of. But these gains did not come overnight and they did not come without a lot of hard work — hard work done by our membership over years of bargaining and years of collective action.

Members entering our ranks today are the welcomed beneficiaries of the struggles of their predecessors. As we welcome our new members, we should also explain to them how our gains were accomplished. It has taken a lot of hard work by our membership, many of whom have long since retired: four strikes, dozens of rallies, many hours of picketing and countless demonstrations. All worth it. Here’s how we have improved our working conditions and benefit package:

### 46 Years of Contractual Gains

1965
- Teachers Elect BTU as Exclusive Bargaining Agent

1966
- Pilot Program for Duty-Free Lunch

1967
- One Personal Day Granted
- Duty-Free Lunch Extended to 30 Elementary Schools

1968
- Duty-Free Lunch Extended to 72 Elementary Schools

1970
- Duty-Free Lunch Extended to ALL Elementary Schools

1971
- Provisional Program on Group I Salary Schedule

1972
- BA+15, MA+15, MA+45 LANES Established

1974
- Binding Arbitration Established

1975
- Child Care Leave Established
- Nurses Move to Teacher Salary Lane
- Obtain Health and Welfare Coverage
- Get Improved Sick Leave

1976
- BTU Health and Welfare Fund Establishes Dental Plan

1977
- BTU Health and Welfare Fund Establishes Eye Care Plan

1981
- BTU Health and Welfare Fund Establishes Legal Plan

1983
- Class Size (K-3) Reduced from 33 to 28

1986
- Class Size (K) Reduced from 28 to 25
- Grades 4-5 from 33 to 28
- Grades 6-8 from 33 to 30
- Grades 9-12 from 36 to 33

1988
- Beginning 3 Salary Steps Dropped; new teachers enter at higher steps.

1987
- 14th Year Career Award Established
- Elementary teachers obtain two weekly P&D’s

1988
- 14th Year Career Award Increased
- Elementary teachers obtain 3 weekly P&D’s

1991
- Elementary teachers obtain 4 P&D’s

1992
- Job-Sharing Program Negotiated, w/full benefits for job-sharers

1994
- Lead Teacher Program established

1995
- Elementary teachers obtain 5 P&D’s, one of which is administratively directed, every other week; now every week

1997
- 14th Year Career Award Increased

1999
- MA-60 Established
- Class Size in Grade 1 reduced from 28 to 25
- Class Size in Grade 2 reduced from 28 to 25

2000
- Additional 9th year Salary Step added

2001
- Class Size Reduced – K-2 from 25 to 23; 4-5 from 28 to 27; 6-8 from 30 to 29; 9-12 from 32 to 31

2002
- Class Size Reduced – K-2 from 23 to 22; 4-5 from 27 to 25; 6-8 from 29 to 28; 9-12 from 31 to 30
- Master’s 60 Salary Lane & Doctorate Lane both pushed out to full lane at mid-year

2003
- Fourth personal day added Speech and Language, OT, PT; now get individual caseload maxima for the first time
- Individual Benchmark testing – on $2,335.

2004
- Tuition Reimbursement – as of September 2004, permanent teachers not yet getting their first career award are eligible for reimbursement. Step up to $500 in April 2005 for tuition expenses. Details will be forthcoming shortly. In the meantime, save receipts for tuition expenses incurred post-September 1, 2004.
- Individual Benchmark testing – on $2,335. will be provided with the equivalent of two days of substitute coverage to do benchmark testing. One day’s equivalency will be given in September, the other in June.

2005
- Career awards increase by another $250.
- Performing Arts Teachers get a stipend of $1,000 per year for rehearsals and practices leading to productions and/or festival appearances.

2006
- Pilot School negotiations concluded. Teachers and paraprofessionals who work above and beyond the school day and year will now be compensated for all hours above and beyond 105 per year in 2006-07, 100 per year in 2007-08, and 95 per year in 2008-09.
- New Collective Bargaining Agreement calls for a 2% raise on the base in year 1, a 3% plus another $600 on the base in year 2, a 3% and another 1% in year 3, and a 3% and another 1% in year 4. The salary roll-out amounts to an average 14.8% for all members over the life of the contract. All teachers, to, received a one-time bonus of $300 in May 2007.

2007
- Full-time NTD positions created to mentor new teachers at BTU plus 3%; part-time NTDs also created to do part-time mentoring.

2008
- Career Continuum for BTU members. Initial funding is pegged at $325,000 per year and will increase over the next two years, to $625,000, then $100,000.
- In-service credits increased from 20 to 30; these credits can be used interchangeably with graduate credit for salary lane advancement.

2010
- Negotiations commence for successor contract.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 6</td>
<td>Opening Day of school for staff. Adm. has 30 for mtg., teachers and paras have rest of 6 hour day for room preparation and set-up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 7</td>
<td>BTU Rep. has 30 for union news; adm. gets rest of 6-hour day for PD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 8</td>
<td>First Day of school for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 15</td>
<td>Members of a School Site Council are to be elected by this date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 31</td>
<td>A Festival of the newly-elected School Site Council shall be held by this date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1</td>
<td>On or before December 1, the (School) Committee will determine when a vacancy is expected to last for the duration of the school year and shall grant a prospective contract to a provisional teacher hired to fill such vacancy. If you are in a position that you believe worthy of a contract, call the union office at 617-288-2000. If you are unsure, call the union office anyway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 3</td>
<td>PD Day. No students. Day may be converted to PD hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 15</td>
<td>In pilot schools, the proposed work schedule for an upcoming school year will be given to staff by this date. The staff may override the schedule by a 2/3 vote. An override sends the work schedule back to the pilot’s Governing Board for possible adjustment and tweaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 15</td>
<td>Application deadline for leave of absence to commence at the beginning of the next teacher work year. Application deadline for extension of leave of absence scheduled to expire at the beginning of the next teacher work year. Application deadline to cut short a scheduled leave of absence and to return to work at the beginning of the next teacher work year. N.B. The January 15 deadline may be waived in extenuating circumstances. Please call the BTU for more information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 15</td>
<td>BTU Staff at 12 Turnaround Schools shall be given notice of any additional summer hours by this date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 15</td>
<td>BTU Staff at 12 Turnaround Schools shall be given their work-day and work-year schedule for the upcoming school year by this date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 15</td>
<td>BTU Staff at 12 Turnaround Schools shall be given notice of their individual staggered start and end time for the upcoming school year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 15</td>
<td>BTU Staff at 12 Turnaround Schools shall be given notice of a change in assignment for the upcoming school year by this date. When implementing an inclusion model, the Principal/Headmaster must also notify impacted teachers by this date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 15</td>
<td>Deadline for staff in traditional schools to file voluntary excessing document.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 15</td>
<td>Application deadline for filing of alternate program areas for permanent teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1</td>
<td>BTU Staff at 12 Turnaround Schools and Pilot Schools shall be given notice of excess by this date and they may voluntarily exceed themselves by this date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 15</td>
<td>Programming preference sheets shall be distributed to all teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 15</td>
<td>On or before February 15, a list of all non-teaching assignments for which administrative periods are given in a teachers’ program shall be posted in each school. These assignments may be applied for in the teacher’s program preference sheet as herein provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 15</td>
<td>Programming preference sheets to be distributed to all teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 15</td>
<td>A list of all non-teaching assignments for which administrative periods are given in a teachers’ program shall be posted in each school. These assignments may be applied for in the teacher’s program preference sheet as herein provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 15</td>
<td>Principals will be required to make recommendations as to which provisional teachers they want to make permanent teachers by February 1st of each year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1</td>
<td>No later than February 1st, programming preference sheets shall be distributed to all teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 15</td>
<td>Deadline for submission of an additional program application if results of NTE or Praxis exam are needed but unavailable on 1/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 15</td>
<td>Positions that receive “Open Posting” status on the job transfer circular must receive an affirmative 60% vote of school staff by this date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 15</td>
<td>Teacher members of the school-site inclusion planning teams in traditional schools shall be chosen by the school’s faculty. Each Principal/Headmaster shall notify teachers of any inclusion plan to be implemented in their school during next school year prior to February 15 of this year, so that teachers and paraprofessionals have an opportunity to prepare and prepare for its implementation, and teachers who wish to apply for the 30 day opt-out right may exercise their contractual right to excess themselves or transfer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 15</td>
<td>Principals will be notified by February 15th if their recommendations for making teachers permanent have been approved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 15</td>
<td>In pilot schools by this date of a given year, there must be an approved schedule in place – one that has not been overridden – or the current year’s pilot school schedule remains in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1</td>
<td>All preference sheets shall be returned by March 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 27</td>
<td>The Superintendent shall make permanent appointment of provisional teachers by this date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early April to Early May</td>
<td>OPEN ENROLLMENT for Group Insurance sign-up. Please note this is not a contractual deadline, but it is a city practice to begin the open enrollment period on the first Monday in April and to close it on the first Friday in May.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>New Posting deadline for all vacancies. Applications for vacant positions must be submitted no later than 10 school days after posting. This is the first in a series of transfer postings of the season and was formerly known as the March 1 posting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>All excessed teachers and nurses will be notified by April 15th or by the date of the April 15th transfer circular, whatever it is, if the circular is released earlier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 10 days of the 4/15 posting</td>
<td>The BTU may challenge the omission of a vacancy from the April 15 posting. The challenge must occur within 10 days of the posting. The challenge may be overridden by a 60% vote of the faculty of the school where the vacancy is challenged. Should the challenge not be overridden, the vacancy shall be posted on the 4/15 web page prior to the running of the excess pools for 5 school days. Permanent teachers only – are eligible to apply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>For those who respond by January 15th as to why they cannot make a decision at that time, they must send a response, postmarked no later than May 1st, as to whether or not they will return in September. If they fail to respond by May 1st, they shall forfeit their attachment rights, their excess pool rights, and shall be subject to reassignment by the Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>No final records will be required of teachers until May 1st for Grade 5, and 15 days before the close of school for all other grades.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>Final marks shall not be required of any teacher before May 1st for Grade 8, and 15 days before the close of school for Grades 6 and 7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>The number of marking periods for all schools shall not exceed five (5) in number. Final marks shall not be required of any teacher before May 1st for seniors, and 15 days before the close of school for other students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to May 15</td>
<td>All staff shall be formally evaluated using factors reasonably related to a teacher’s professional performance, with a mark for each factor and an overall rating. Overall ratings shall be Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory and shall be transmitted to teachers prior to May 15th.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1</td>
<td>An employee will be given written notice of layoff by June 1 of the professional work year preceding the professional work year in which the layoff is to take place. For example, an employee to be laid off effective in September must be given written notice on or before the date June 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 15</td>
<td>Provisional Employees must be given notice of non-renewal by this date or rehire is mandated under state law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 1</td>
<td>Excess pool rules: Rule of one will apply if pools not completed prior to July 1st. Rule of two will apply if excess pools are completed by July 1st. Rule of three will apply if excess pools are completed by the 4th work day of the end of school year. Rule of One: The selection of assignments is conducted by strict seniority. Rule of Two: The teacher will make two selections and will receive one. Rule of Three: The teacher will make three selections and will receive one.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compiled by Richard Stutman
Contractual Benefit Package for All Teachers*

By Richard Stutman, BTU President

All BPS Teachers (*) are eligible to take advantage of a range of contractual benefits and provisions that have resulted from years of collective bargaining between the School Department and the Boston Teachers Union. A summary of many of the more important benefits and provisions follows. Where mentioned, the BTU office can forward more detailed information. The BTU Field Reps., Careen Carew, Mike McLaughlin, and Jenna Fitzgerald can provide more information. Or please feel free to call or email me (rsteinbauer@btu.org). Also please note that each school has BTU Building Representatives, elected at each school, who can provide more detailed information.

(*) includes nurses, psychologists, SLPs, OTs, PTs, etc., and all other covered professional members.

Copies of the BTU Contract are available through BTU Building Representatives or by calling the BTU office. The contract is also available at http://www.btu.org/downloadcontract.html. For more detailed information on any of the below, please call the BTU office. All references to the BTU Contract are to the Blue Book. The new book will be distributed soon and will be repaginated, so the references (below) will not necessarily work. If you need a blue book, please call the BTU office. References to the school department’s web page are accurate as of mid-August, though they will change as the department updates its yearly circular offerings. A complete listing of department circulars can be found at http://bostonpublicschools.org/node/790 as of mid-August, 2010.

Many of these benefits are being renegotiated. So, for example, we are seeking a salary COLA, effective 9/1/10, for all teachers, paras, and substitute teachers. The applicable items below, of which there are many, are each subject to change, as we negotiate our new Collective Bargaining Agreement. Our current agreement expires on 8/31/10, though its features continue until a successor agreement is reached. We will of course keep you posted as to developments.

Salary & Health Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>How it Takes Effect</th>
<th>When to Look for it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary Step Placement</td>
<td>Up to 3 years’ credit for both inside and outside the system, (b) total if service meets certain criteria. You must apply with app and documentation. Not necessarily retroactive, so do not delay in filing.</td>
<td>See <a href="http://www.btu.org">www.btu.org</a>, also contract pp. 131-133 or call the BTU office at 617-288-0500 and ask for a field representative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary Lane: In-Service Credits</td>
<td>Limit of in-service credits increased to $2000 from 20 this contract</td>
<td>Upon application to HR.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Insurance</td>
<td>6 different plans, PPO, POS, HMO</td>
<td>You must apply w/ 60 days of hire. Manage members upon enrollment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Welfare</td>
<td>Includes Dental, Eye Care, and Legal benefit. City pays premium, but some benefits have co-pays.</td>
<td>Apply at BTU H&amp;W office or at 617-288-0500. Benefit effective at start of prov. contract, but implementation can be delayed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary Item: Tuition Reimbursement</td>
<td>All permanent teachers on ‘steps’ 1-9 (9 for the 1st time) get up as reimbursement for tuition. Paras with full explanatory details. Last year but did not submit documentation.</td>
<td>This took effect 9/1/04, and is paid as reimbursement for tuition. Paras are added as of 9/1/07.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary Item: NBPTS Teachers</td>
<td>Members certified under the standards of the NBPTS now get a 4% raise. Members also get reimbursed for the cost of application fees upon successful attainment of certification.</td>
<td>This raise took effect 9/1/03.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Licensure Reimbursement for Itinerant Staff</td>
<td>Itinerant staff (such as nurse, OT, PT, SLPS, and the like) will now be reimbursed for their application and testing fees upon successful completion of the activity.</td>
<td>Reimbursements began to be made in June 2008. Another round of reimbursements will follow in 08/09.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing Arts Teachers</td>
<td>Perf. Arts, theater, music, drama, and choral group teachers can get $1600 stipend. If one of the aforementioned teachers conducts after school rehearsals and practices which culminate in final precautions and/or festivals.</td>
<td>BTU contract, pp. 75-76 item 18.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible Spending Program - Dependent Care</td>
<td>Use up to $5,000 in pre-tax dollars for dependent care. Excellent tax benefit. This is an IRS-approved program that is quite beneficial when used properly.</td>
<td>Apply within 30 days of hire, but in some cases due to Open Enrollment process, some time is needed. beg. mid-October; announcement will be made in BTU e-Bulletin. To sign up for e-Bulletin, see <a href="http://visitor.constantcontact.com/email.php?pm=1107S43534244Z">http://visitor.constantcontact.com/email.php?pm=1107S43534244Z</a> &amp;email=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible Spending Program - Medical</td>
<td>Use up to $5,000 in pre-tax dollars for out-of-pocket medical expenses, excellent tax benefit.</td>
<td>Same as dependent care (above), but with additional eligibility requirement of one year’s service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible Spending Program - Transportation and Parking</td>
<td>As with the above programs, though subject to different dollar limitations, this program allows the use of pre-tax dollars to be spent on mass transit and parking activities.</td>
<td>No eligibility requirement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*his computation is as of mid August, 2010
**Major (but Non-Inclusive) List of Contractual Working Conditions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>See Does the Benefit Work?</th>
<th>Summary Details</th>
<th>How to Learn More</th>
<th>What to Look Out For</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class Size Maxima; Caseloads</strong></td>
<td>Enforces class size maxima and caseloads. <strong>Important benefit.</strong></td>
<td>Too lengthy to list here. Ask building rep at school for class size fact sheet. See elsewhere in newspaper.</td>
<td>Contract pp. 39-42, 44-45, speak with BTU Building Rep, call BTU.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sick Days</strong></td>
<td>Grants paid leave when ill, up to time accumulated.</td>
<td>15 days granted per year; unused days accumulate &amp; have cash value at separation after 10 years of service.</td>
<td>Contract pp. 157-8; see building rep. at school, call BTU.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Leave</strong></td>
<td>Grants paid leave for personal reasons.</td>
<td>4 days per year; unused days accumulate; new item – used to be three.</td>
<td>Contract pp. 159-163; see building rep. at school, call BTU.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Leave</strong></td>
<td>Grants limited paid leave to attend educational conferences.</td>
<td>Limited system-wide allotment of 2,000 days distributed to individual staff on a pro-rata basis.</td>
<td>Contract p. 111; see building rep. at school, call BTU.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bereavement Leave</strong></td>
<td>Grants paid leave under limited circumstances.</td>
<td>Depends on family relationship to the decedent.</td>
<td>Contract pp. 160-1; see building rep. at school, call BTU.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maternity Leave</strong></td>
<td>Grants paid as well as unpaid leave.</td>
<td>Limited system-wide allotment of 2,000 days distributed to individual staff on a pro-rata basis.</td>
<td>Contract pp. 161-163.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leave for Adoption</strong></td>
<td>Grants paid as well as unpaid leave.</td>
<td>Limited to 40 days per school year if you have ‘accumulated’ days in your bank; used to be 30 days.</td>
<td>Contract p. 163, 158.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leave for Family Illness</strong></td>
<td>Grants paid leave for family member’s illness.</td>
<td>Limited to 30 days per school year if accumulated, though more can be granted.</td>
<td>Contract p. 158.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning and Development Time</strong></td>
<td>Grants staff unsanctioned time when one is not given a programmed duty or responsibility. P&amp;D periods are ‘teacher directed,’ i.e., teacher alone decides what he/she does during that period.</td>
<td>Middle and High Teachers – 5 full-length periods (45+ minutes per) per week. Elementary Teachers – 5 per week, with one per week ‘administratively’ directed.</td>
<td>Contract pp. 47-8; see building rep. at school, call BTU.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duty-Free Lunch</strong></td>
<td>Grants daily duty-free time to all for lunch, in addition to daily P&amp;D time.</td>
<td>Middle and High Teachers – no less than 25 minutes per day. Elementary Teachers no less than 40 minutes per day.</td>
<td>Contract pp. 48-9; see building rep. at school, call BTU.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job-Sharing</strong></td>
<td>1/2 salary, 1/2 position</td>
<td>Two people share one job; each gets 1/2 salary and full benefits.</td>
<td>See <a href="http://bostonpublicschools.org/Files/pdf/rp%20fyp%20pdfs/09%20FP%20Job-Sharing%20Web%20inf">http://bostonpublicschools.org/Files/pdf/rp%20fyp%20pdfs/09%20FP%20Job-Sharing%20Web%20inf</a> o.pdf or <a href="http://www.btu.org/pdf/09FYP_041.pdf">http://www.btu.org/pdf/09FYP_041.pdf</a> for more information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peer Assistance Program</strong></td>
<td>Experienced teachers in need of assistance can volunteer for a peer assistant.</td>
<td>Peer assistant can provide assistance to one who needs help.</td>
<td>Program is in its 4th year; call or email Mike McLaughlin at the BTU at <a href="mailto:mclaughlin@buntu.org">mclaughlin@buntu.org</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accepting a Student-Teacher</strong></td>
<td>If you accept a student teacher, you receive two days leave with pay.</td>
<td></td>
<td>See page 149, BTU Contract.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Retirement, Tax-Deferred Savings Plans**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How It Takes Effect</th>
<th>How to Learn More</th>
<th>What to Look Out For</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Pension</strong></td>
<td>Participation is mandatory under state law, vested employees obtain a pension at retirement.</td>
<td>Call the BTU for more information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation in a 403(b) or a Tax-Sheltered Annuity (TSA) plan</strong></td>
<td>See accompanying article.</td>
<td>Pre-tax salary contributions grow tax-deferred until withdrawn.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**BOSTON UNION TEACHER** September, 2011 **11**

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**More Benefit Package info on page 12.**
What is a Tax-Sheltered Annuity (TSA)/403.B Plan?

Deferred Compensation Plan (457 Plan), too, a Good, Generally Lower-Cost Alternative

By Richard Stutman, BTU President

The information below is offered because both TSA (403B) and the Deferred Compensation Plan (457) provide a great tax benefit to school employees. The information below touches on many of the benefits of having a TSA or a 457 Plan, but it is not meant to be all-inclusive. You may want to consult a Certified Financial Planner or other financial professional before making any decisions. Neither the BTU nor the school department endorses any TSA/403.B plan or product or the 457 Plan. A full listing can be obtained through the city treasurer’s office at 617-635-4151.

A Tax Sheltered Annuity (TSA) or 403.B Plan is a tax-saving/retirement planning device available to school employees that allows one to shelter income from federal taxation and state taxation. Your funds are invested in a financial vehicle (mutual fund, variable annuity, fixed annuity) of your choosing, and they are allowed to grow tax-deferred until withdrawal. At withdrawal, all funds are taxed as ordinary income.

Under most circumstances a 10% IRS penalty is imposed on withdrawals prior to age 59-1/2. (With some restrictions, loans are allowed in some TSA plans prior to age 59-1/2.)

Similar in many regards to a deductible IRA or a 401.k plan, a TSA is generally more advantageous.

Here’s how a TSA works:

Let’s say one wants to save $50 per paycheck. Assume the person grosses $2,000 per paycheck for 26 checks, at an annual salary of $52,000. For federal and state tax purposes this person will show an income of $52,000 minus $1,300 or $50,700.

In effect, the above teacher has “sheltered” the $1,300 from federal and state taxation and will be taxed on the $50,700. Assuming a tax bracket of 28% federal and 6% state, the $1,300 deduction in effect costs the teacher only $858. Not only that, the interest (or the dividends, depending on which savings vehicle (mutual fund, variable annuity, fixed annuity) of your choosing, and they are allowed to grow tax-deferred until withdrawal. At withdrawal, all funds are taxed as ordinary income.

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The BTU will run a seminar on this topic during the school year.

Contractual Benefits Package for All Teachers…

(continued from page 11)

Social Security

Mass. public employees do not pay into SS; employees can, however, SS pension with teacher (public) explanation or go to www.mass-smart.com. All 403B companies are not created equal. Some companies and the plans they offer are better than others. You are advised to investigate fully before you sign on the dotted line.

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Similar in many regards to a deductible IRA or a 401.k plan, a TSA is generally more advantageous.

Here’s how a TSA works:

Let’s say one wants to save $50 per paycheck using a TSA. (Incidentally, TSA’s must be done through payroll deductions.) Assume the person grosses $2,000 per paycheck for 26 checks, at an annual salary of $52,000. For federal and state tax purposes this person will show an income of $52,000 minus $1,300 or $50,700.

In effect, the above teacher has “sheltered” the $1,300 from federal and state taxation and will be taxed on the $50,700. Assuming a tax bracket of 28% federal and 6% state, the $1,300 deduction in effect costs the teacher only $858. Not only that, the interest (or the dividends, depending on which savings vehicle (mutual fund, variable annuity, fixed annuity) of your choosing, and they are allowed to grow tax-deferred until withdrawal. At withdrawal, all funds are taxed as ordinary income.

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Contractual Benefits Package for All Teachers…

(continued from page 11)

Social Security

Mass. public employees do not pay into SS; employees can, however, accept SS credits. The city’s contact person is Jesse Brown, Jesse.brown@qers.com.

In the state’s 457 plan all the homework has been done for you. The city has chosen the mutual funds for you. The funds chosen are both actively and passively managed (index) funds. You choose only how much you wish to set aside and where you wish to allocate your funds. The funds are low-cost and monitored by the state. Again, much of the homework has been done for you. Fees are reasonable. Contribution limits are as above (provided by the Boston Bowl)

Lots of Fun! Meet Old and New Friends! Good Exercise!

Time to Unwind and Relax!

Monday, September 12, 2011
4 pm at the Boston Bowl on Morrissey Boulevard

(If you are a Mass Retiree, please attend this important training event and bring a friend or colleague to enjoy the social exercise)

Come Bowl with Us!

The BTU will run a seminar on this topic during the school year.

Contractual Benefits Package for All Teachers…

(continued from page 11)

Social Security

Mass. public employees do not pay into SS; employees can, however, accept SS credits. Those with $5 credits can combine SS pension with teacher (public) pension, but some restrictions and offsets generally apply.

Call the BTU for detailed, written explanation or go to http://www.massemployees.com or http://www.massemployees.com/public/7007.html for a «Factsheet» on Social Security for news pertaining to public employees.

Most contractual disputes are resolved informally. However, in the event an issue cannot be resolved, you have a right to have the BTU proceed with a grievance on your behalf should the Contract support your claim.

Grievance Rights

As a covered member you have a right to an interpretation of any provision of the collective bargaining agreement. In the event of an uncertainty or dispute regarding any provision of the Contract cited above (or any other provision, for that matter), it is in your best interest to call the BTU at 617-288-2000 or speak with a building representative. Also, see www.btu.org.

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Welcome Substitutes

You are a member of the Boston Teachers Union with full voice and vote at all membership meetings. The Union’s monthly membership meeting is the second Wednesday of every month at 4:00 p.m. at the BTU. Please participate in your union. You have a Belonging Representative of the BTU in your school. Please make yourself known. A “Bi-Monthly Bulletin” from the BTU is mailed to your school with pertinent information for all. Look for it posted in the building and you can read it online at www.btu.org. You can also have it e-mailed to you automatically by signing up for it on our website.

Your BTU office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. every weekday except Wednesday and Wednesday of each month. The telephone number is 617-288-0500. Substitute teachers and nurses who work a minimum of three days per week are eligible for health insurance, and this should be obtained within the first 60 days of employment by calling Group Insurance at City Hall 617-635-4570. Cluster substitutes are also eligible for BTU Health & Welfare benefits, including dental insurance, eye care and legal services, and should call 617-288-0500 to sign up. I am looking forward to working with you in the future.

Jenna Fitzgerald
Substitute Field Representative
Salary & Health Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>See in (Note)</th>
<th>See in (Section)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary Step Placement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1 (first three years), Step 2 (after three years), Step 3 (after six years), Step 4 (after nine years).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step increase takes place automatically through payroll.</td>
<td>See contract, page 201.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary Lane Placement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Rate and then Rates with 30, 60, or 90 In-Service and/or College credits and Bachelor degree.</td>
<td></td>
<td>See contract, page 201.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide H.R. with a transcript of college credits or certificate for in-service credits.</td>
<td>See contract, page 201.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Awards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After completion of 9 years of service and increase every 5 years.</td>
<td></td>
<td>See contract, page 209.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide Payroll with P-5 form to receive salary increase.</td>
<td>See contract, page 209.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substituting for a Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay is $56.00 in addition to regular pay for substituting in his/her regular classroom.</td>
<td></td>
<td>See contract page 193.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para must be certified as a teacher or have 10 years’ service.</td>
<td>See contract page 193.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Insurance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 different plans, HMO and out-of-network individual and family plans.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You must apply within 60 days of date of hire. New beneficiaries must be added within 30 days.</td>
<td>See Call Group Insurance office at 617-635-4570 or via call206 or see <a href="http://www.cityofboston.gov">http://www.cityofboston.gov</a> or <a href="http://www.osfa.mass.edu">http://www.osfa.mass.edu</a> or see <a href="http://www.btu.hof.org">http://www.btu.hof.org</a>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anyone entering public employment after 3/31/86 must pay Medicare tax and is eligible @ age 65 provided he/she has 10 years’ service.</td>
<td></td>
<td>See contract, page 212.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees pay 1.45% of gross wages. Deductions are mandatory and continue with employment.</td>
<td>See contract, page 212.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Welfare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes Dental, Eye Care and Legal benefit.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City pays plan premium, but some benefits have co-pays.</td>
<td>See contract, page 212.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See Call Group Insurance office at 617-635-4570 or via call206 or see <a href="http://www.cityofboston.gov">http://www.cityofboston.gov</a> or <a href="http://www.btu.hof.org">http://www.btu.hof.org</a>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick Days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants paid leave when ill, up to time accumulated.</td>
<td></td>
<td>See contract, page 212.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 days granted per year; unused days accumulated and have cash value at separation after 10 years of service.</td>
<td>See contract, page 212.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants paid leave for personal reasons.</td>
<td></td>
<td>See contract, page 212.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 days per year; unused days accumulated. Also, graduation days allowed.</td>
<td>See contract, page 212.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bereavement Leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants paid leave under limited circumstances.</td>
<td></td>
<td>See contract, page 212.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends of family relationship.</td>
<td>See contract, page 212.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Holy Days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants paid leave under limited circumstances.</td>
<td></td>
<td>See contract, page 212.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends of holiday specifics.</td>
<td>See contract, page 212.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity Leave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants paid as well as unpaid leave &amp; city continues to pay its share of health coverage.</td>
<td></td>
<td>See contract, page 213.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid maternity leave limited by number of sick days accrued.</td>
<td>See contract, page 213.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave for Adoption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants paid as well as unpaid leave.</td>
<td></td>
<td>See contract, page 213.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited to 40 days per school year if you have accumulated days in your bank. (Used to be 30 days).</td>
<td>See contract, page 213.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave for Family Illness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants paid leave for family members’ illness.</td>
<td></td>
<td>See contract, page 213.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited to 30 days per school year if accumulated, though more can be granted.</td>
<td>See contract, page 213.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty-Free Lunch &amp; Break</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants 30 minutes for lunch plus a 10-minute break per day.</td>
<td></td>
<td>See contract, page 200.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty-free time.</td>
<td>See contract, page 200.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Care Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use pre-tax dollars for dependent care.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Apply within 30 days of hire or during open enrollment beginning mid-October.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same as dependent care above, but additional eligibility requirement of one year's service.</td>
<td>See contract, page 187.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same as Dependent Care.</td>
<td>See contract, page 187.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Insurance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City sponsors plan. First $5,000 of term coverage comes with purchase of health insurance. 1/2 of premium for first $5,000 coverage paid by the city, rest paid by employee.</td>
<td>Call 617-635-4570 for more info. You are strongly advised to shop around to private vendors for best cost before purchasing additional insurance beyond the standard $5,000.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Coverage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Pension Law grants limited coverage for total disability, none for short-term disability.</td>
<td>Public coverage is inadequate and eligibility is restrictive. If you desire adequate coverage, you’ll need to purchase it privately.</td>
<td>Call the BTU for more info.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Retirement, Tax Deferred Savings Plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
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<th>See in (Section)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>See contract, page 187.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in a 403b or a Tax Shielded Annuity (TSA) plan</td>
<td></td>
<td>See contract, page 187.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-tax salary contributed grows tax deferred until withdrawn.</td>
<td>See contract, page 187.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See City Treasurer’s Office @ 617-635-4151.</td>
<td>See contract, page 187.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-Sharing</td>
<td></td>
<td>E-mail: <a href="mailto:awashington@btu.org">awashington@btu.org</a>. See contract, page 195.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 salary; 1/2 position.</td>
<td>Full benefits.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition Reimbursement</td>
<td></td>
<td>See contract page 209. Call Clantha McCurdy, 617-727-1205 or via e-mail: <a href="mailto:cmccurdy@osfa.mass.edu">cmccurdy@osfa.mass.edu</a> or see <a href="http://www.osfa.mass.edu">http://www.osfa.mass.edu</a> or see <a href="http://www.btu.hof.org">http://www.btu.hof.org</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$500 per year. Also, Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant Program – Legislative benefit (not contractual).</td>
<td>For paras with 5 or more years of service. State provides financial assistance for a para to become a teacher by obtaining a B.S. degree at a Mass. Public College. Some restrictions apply.</td>
<td>See contract page 209. Call Clantha McCurdy, 617-727-1205 or via e-mail: <a href="mailto:cmccurdy@osfa.mass.edu">cmccurdy@osfa.mass.edu</a> or see <a href="http://www.osfa.mass.edu">http://www.osfa.mass.edu</a> or see <a href="http://www.btu.hof.org">http://www.btu.hof.org</a>.</td>
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Retirement Information

By Michael W. McLaughlin

Retirement is governed by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 32. Your contribution depends upon the date you were hired.

HIRE DATE

Prior to Jan. 1, 1979 ................................ 5% deducted
Jan. 1, 1979 – 12/31/85 ............................. 7% deducted
Jan. 1, 1986 ......................................... 8% deducted
July 1, 1996 ......................................... 9% deducted
1/1/79 – 7/30/01 ........ add'l 2% deducted for future date.

Retirement:

Jan. 1, 1975: 7% deducted
Jan. 1, 1984: 8% deducted
July 1, 1996: 9% deducted
1/1/79 – 7/30/01: add'l 2% deducted for future date.

In-Service and/or College credits and Bachelors degree. If you have cash value at separation after 10 years of service. These figures are of course all before taxes.

Retirement paperwork can be confusing. So too can be the bureaucracy at the retirement board's office. It's advisable to go into the retirement board 3-5 years before you're planning to retire to get a good faith estimate. Call and make an appointment with one of the customer service reps. This is also a good idea for members who have additional service outside of the school department as this time can be consolidated or added to your creditable years of service.

As a trustee of the State-Boston Retirement Board I want to extend a welcome to our newest members starting out this year in the BPS. I would also like to offer my time to all our members. Please do not hesitate to call or stop by the office for any retirement questions. Additionally, I am available to accompany you when you go to the Retirement Board Room in Building 816 at City Hall. I will be hosting two retirement seminars during the school year, one in October and one in March. Look for more information in the 'BTU e-Bulletin.
Commentary: Michael J. Maguire

Without ‘U’ and ‘I’, the Union is Non-Existant!

Throughout this edition of the Boston Union Teacher, there will be charts, lists, and stories from the officers of our union informing you of the good work and advancements of our union. It is good practice to read and well worth your time each day! Think of this newspaper as the SparkNotes version of the BSC/BTU contract; the bear bones and important facts you need to know.

And while this newspaper is informative and the weekly e-Bulletins are timely, they are not as personal. A union is a collection of people sharing their thoughts and collectively deciding how best to move forward. If we do not attend our monthly meetings then we are like the student who, upon returning from an absence, asks, “What did I miss?” The simple truth is, we miss a lot when we are not involved.

In the membership meetings we debate, most of the time politely, sometimes a little more loudly. But we discuss what is on our minds, in our hearts, and in our futures. It is important for all of us to participate in the monthly membership meetings. Think of it this way, can a teacher have a lively discussion on a topic when most of the members are absent?

Most importantly, we discuss our future. Our future wages and our future terms of employment are but some to the topics regularly covered. We also bring to light our present problems and how best to fix them. To make yet another comparison to the classroom: How could a teacher possibly know if all the students are benefiting from the lesson if the vast majority remain silent?

And while we do of course “have the right to remain silent,” it’s not arrest ourselves. We teach our students the importance of good citizenship. We ought to set the example. Otherwise we become like the educated man Mark Twain spoke of who was no better than an illiterate because he refused to read.

And when you come to (at least one of) the membership meetings, please pick up a lawn sign. The lawn sign states that we are proud to be teachers in Boston. We want our neighbors to know that we work hard every day for our students who are their children. I look forward to seeing whose presence of who we are and what we do, we can neutralize the bombast and rhetoric in the Boston Herald and Boston Globe, and then the next day, not as “union” teachers but as neighbors helping their kids, then we can pave the road for smoother negotiations.

I look forward to see you every second Wednesday of the month.

Michael J. Maguire

In Solidarity We Have Strength, Without It We Are Victims!

Allison Doherty-LaCasse made the following remarks on August 4, 2011 at a public rally in Boston in support of the IBEW and CWA strikers against Verizon.

“...In this current anti-worker climate, both public and private sector workers are being blamed for today’s economic disaster, and I, quite frankly, am sick of it. The corporate teachers, the opulent custodians, the affluent Verizon workers are bankrupting the system. Meanwhile, poor Verizon made $244.4 billion the last year and paid a whopping $0 in income taxes. The CEO of Verizon makes $55k per day – however, the company can’t afford to give their workers a fair and equitable contract!

The Verizon, are reaping the benefits of their workers while telling them they don’t matter. Verizon has 112 concessions on the table - freezing pay, cutting Veterans’ Day and Martin Luther King Day, killing their employees’ future by eliminating pension and making health care affordable are to name just a few. They are killing the American dream. They are killing their employees’ future by eliminating pension and making health care unaffordable are to name just a few. They are killing the American dream. They are killing the American dream. They are killing the American dream. They are killing the American dream. They are killing the American dream. They are killing the American dream. They are killing the American dream.

The rich corporations, such as Verizon, are reaping the benefits of their employees while telling them they don’t matter. Verizon has 112 concessions on the table - freezing pay, cutting Veterans’ Day and Martin Luther King Day, killing their employees’ future by eliminating pension and making health care unaffordable are to name just a few. They are killing the American dream.

We (teachers) are a public sector union. We don’t generate the capital that private sector unions can neutralize the bombast and rhetoric in the Boston Herald and Boston Globe, and then the next day, not as “union” teachers but as neighbors helping their kids, then we can pave the road for smoother negotiations.

I look forward to see you every second Wednesday of the month.

Michael J. Maguire

We have all been there. For many of us, we have been there multiple times and for others, you are now in your formative, first whirlwind of an experience. And the best among us might say that the feeling never changes – that heady mix of anticipation, anxiety and straight horse wrapped into the First Days of School with your new students in your new classes. For what do the first day breakdowns, rampant schedules, tardy announcements, paperwork and orientation, if not Possibility with a capital P? These days are the opportunity to lay the groundwork resulting from that in-person presentation, if not Possibility with a capital P?

This column is about increasing the capacity in the Boston Public Schools and the Boston Teachers Union for teacher collaboration and professional growth through a focus on teacher leadership, education policy and classroom practice. Its core premise is a simple one: if we collectively organize as professional educators, and work to meaningfully involve veteran and younger teachers in school improvement efforts, our students will benefit.

I do not believe that we teachers have all of the solutions but I firmly believe that we have some of them. The Teaching Pulse is an opportunity to collectively educate ourselves and build a movement towards making small but important changes in the shifting landscape of educational reform and change in our schools and our city.

In short, this column is intended to be a mechanism to invite and involve, as well as to develop and share responsibility, toward common goals, based on anticipating, regarding education reform and continued improvement of our classrooms and schools.

It is a space for us to connect with each other and with others in the larger community, to connect with our students, to connect with our classrooms, to connect with our city.

Here are the guiding questions that will drive the content and conversation in this time period:

• How can teachers in the Boston Public Schools model, facilitate and practice “voice” as a mechanism to invite and involve, as well as to develop and share responsibility, toward common goals, based on anticipating, regarding education reform and continued improvement of our classrooms and schools?

• How can they partner with parents, concerned parents, and our representatives in the larger community, to connect with our students, to connect with our classrooms, to connect with our city.

• How can teachers in the Boston Public Schools model, facilitate and practice “voice” as a mechanism to invite and involve, as well as to develop and share responsibility, toward common goals, based on anticipating, regarding education reform and continued improvement of our classrooms and schools?

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Political Activism in the BTU

Save Our Schools March and Rally in Washington, DC

By Garret Virchick

Last school year, the membership of the Boston Teachers Union voted to endorse the Save Our Schools March and Rally on July 30th. As a result 30 members of the Boston Teachers Union took time off from summer vacation to come to DC. We were veteran teachers and provisional teachers, Substitutes and retirees. Marching behind our banner were other teachers from Massachusetts schools as well as graduate students from local colleges and other supporters of public education from the Commonwealth. Joining with protesters from around the country energized us and deepened the commitment we all have for the struggle to save public education.

To reach out to the membership we employed weekly announcements in the e-bulletin and utilized social networking on Facebook. We put signs up in the schools and used word of mouth. At a May conference of social justice educators organized by the Teacher Activist Group-Boston we handed out fliers and also made a pitch at a mid-July showing of The Inconvenient Truth About Waiting For Superman that TAG-Boston organized. This organizing meant that the Boston Teachers Union contingent was probably the second largest Union contingent at the rally, after the Milwaukee/Wisconsin contingent who had been organizing against the largest attack on working people since January.

The support of the Executive Board helped our organizing. The E-Board voted to reimburse members up to $200 for travel expenses to the event. Because of this support some members were able to fly down for the march and fly back that evening, avoiding the 16-hour round trip bus ride to DC.

To help organize the contingent we also held a sign making pizza party at the union hall. Our creative juices were flowing that day with signs that said “Save Our Schools from Arne Duncan: The Education Deformer”, “Public Sector = Public Good”, “Those Who Can Teach - Those Who Cannot Pass Bad Laws About Education”, and about 25 others. As we marched through the streets of Washington these signs, all with the heading Boston Teachers Union at the top, gave out contingent a very visible presence.

Many speakers at the rally lashed out against the relentless attacks on public schools and public school teachers. Taylor Mall, slam poet and veteran of 9 years teaching history in the classroom, entertained the crowd with his biting satire. Jonathan Kozol and Diane Ravitch gave us an historical perspective of these current attacks on public education. Former BPS principal Debbie Meier spoke out against the deleterious effects of testing on children. A delegation of Wisconsin teachers shared information on their efforts to beat back the attacks on the public sector. An impassioned plea by a Texas superintendent, John Kuhn, electrified the crowd.

The last speaker was Massachusetts own Matt Damon, a product of the Cambridge Public Schools. Introduced by his mother, Lesley University Professor Nancy Carlsson-Paige, Damon spoke out for a quality public education for all children. He told us that he had incredible public school teachers growing up that were empowered to teach him, free from the mindless testing that has come to dominate schools. “This has been a horrible decade for teachers. I can’t imagine how demoralized you guys must feel. As I get older I appreciate more and more the teachers I had growing up. The next time you are feeling down, or exhausted, or unappreciated, or at the end of your rope. The next time you turn on your TV and see yourself being called overpaid. The next time you encounter some simple-minded punitive policy that has been driven into your life by some corporate reformer who has literally never taught anyone anything. Please, please, please know that there are millions of us behind you. We love you, we thank you, and we will ALWAYS have your back.”

Save Our Schools is not the end of this fight. It is the beginning. (Garret Virchick is a member of the Executive Board of the Boston Teachers Union.)

Retired teacher Paul Tenney at the Save Our Schools Rally in the Nation’s Capital.

Jessica Tang and Garret Virchick sporting the latest summer fashion at the Save Our Schools Rally.

Thirty members of the Boston Teachers Union marched to the Save Our Schools Rally on July 30th in Washington, DC. – Photos by Debra Price, Sharon Abraham and Seth Petersen.