

BEU *The Brookline Educator*

Newsletter of the Brookline Educators Union

May 2006

SUMMER CONFERENCE GRANTS

Please consider visiting Western Massachusetts in August! Why? There are several programs available in scenic Williamstown Monday through Thursday, August 7th through 10th thanks to the MTA Summer Conference 2006. Below is a sample of what is available, with funding grants from the BEU and MTA providing for room, meal plan and program costs:

1. New Teacher Program. This is a valuable opportunity to meet and work with other new teachers about the first few years of teaching life as well as a chance to learn about issues in other school districts. You also learned about the roles unions play in the education profession. The program is designed for teachers with 1 to 5 years of teaching experience. It starts Sunday, August 6th.

2. New Teacher Professional Development Program. This "track" is available to teachers in their first five years of teaching and will focus on classroom management, student assessment, working with parents, time management, differentiated instruction and classroom reading strategies. This program meets the DoE's "induction program" requirements.

3. Emerging Leaders Program. This program is designed for members who think that they might like to hold leadership positions in the union. This program also runs for a few days.

4. Professional Development Courses. These cover a range of issues such as technology, instruction, diversity and accountability. These courses vary in length, and you can choose to attend for one day or for a few days.

5. Union-Building Courses. These cover a range of issues such as negotiations, grievances, organizing, politics, health care, retirement issues, legal issues, health and safety, and public relations.

Grants are available to all members, and range from half reimbursement to full reimbursement. To apply for a grant, simply send an e-mail message to Phil Katz stating what days you plan to go to the conference and what program and/or workshops you plan on attending. You must apply by June 5 and you will be informed of the status of your grant on June 7. If you need more information, please contact Phil Katz. For more details about the entire conference, see the insert in the most recent MTA Today or click on http://massteacher.org/teaching/conferences/conf_summer.cfm. We can help arrange car pooling.

BEU AT THE MTA

Thirteen representatives from the BEU attended the MTA annual meeting at the Hynes convention center last weekend. Grace Kelly, an 8th grader from Driscoll played the Star Spangled Banner to open the meeting on Friday, May 5. Many topics were discussed and debated during the two days: the MTA budget, the role of retired members, statewide political concerns, grassroots organizing, teacher preparation and licensing reform. There was also an election of a new MTA president and vice president. Several of the delegates from Brookline contributed their comments to this article on a number of the events and their own point of view. Some of the delegates from Brookline were active in the Peace and Justice caucus, which proposed resolutions opposing the Iraq war, increasing member organizing and supporting immigrant rights.

Richard Goldberg came to the annual meeting primarily to be a voice for the MTA Peace and Justice Caucus, a group he works for and was invited to join by Phil Katz. Goldberg believes "unions ought to stand for more than gaining for their members' wages, benefits, and working conditions."

Karen Blackburn agrees with Rich about the role of unions and watched a resolution on the MTA taking a stand against our involvement in Iraq, voted down. "Those who voted it down did not believe politics is the MTA's business. Then Tim Sullivan, union president from Springfield, got up and discussed the woes of that city when our politicians get anti-public education and anti-union. It seemed obvious to many that unions should make a point to be involved in politics when it impacts education."

Lucille Koch was seriously disturbed by the information of the educational abuses that the teachers of Springfield, MA have been experiencing at the hands of the Romney appointed Financial Control Board under Chapter 656. "All salaries for veteran teachers have been frozen, all teacher health benefits have been unilaterally changed; class sizes have ballooned, all without the benefit of collective bargaining which has been suspended. The warning is: if it can happen in Springfield, it can happen HERE!!"

Deanna Wong was reminded, "it's about respect for our students and it's about the money. I am proud to belong to a union that is fighting the battle in Springfield. When the court ruled this wage freeze was illegal and awarded back pay plus interest to teachers and administrators, the Finance Control Board created by the state appealed the ruling. Springfield is a poor community and needs state aid. Unless we elect an education friendly governor those in need will continue to be ignored."

Deb Allen agrees that "politics directly affect what happens in the classroom every day. Whether it is the lack of funding for our daily lives in the classroom because the money is being spent elsewhere, or the suspension of collec-

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GENERAL MEETING/RALLY

MAY 22 3:00 PM

BHS AUDITORIUM

IMPORTANT MEETING ABOUT NEGOTIATIONS

HEAR FROM THE NEW ACTION TEAM!

Now WHAT Do I Do?



It's happened to many of us, perhaps to you, Your supervisor calls a meeting with you or writes you a note: "Several people have contacted me about your (class on Tuesday, talking about personal issues, using X materials with the students). I'd like to talk with you about it" What do you do?

First of all, take a deep breath, and calm your pounding heart. Then, schedule a meeting with your supervisor if it has not already been done. This is not something to be discussed in the hall as you rush by each other or via e-mail.

Then, feel free to ask someone to come with you to the meeting. You have that right to bring in union representation to any investigatory meeting that may result in discipline (these are called Weingarten Rights). Be sure to inform your supervisor that s/he is coming with you.

Once in the meeting, there are several things to keep in mind concerning the process of the meeting and the content. First, the process:

- Write things down: often the person with you can do this to help you out
- Listen carefully: it is much more important to listen than to speak.
- Try not to get defensive. This can often lead to over explaining and unnecessary anger or stress.
- Be very clear that you understand what the supervisor is asking you to do, if anything. Ask him/her to repeat, if necessary. Write it down.
- Don't agree to anything in a panicked haste. Stop and think before speaking.
- At the end of the meeting, if appropriate, thank the supervisor for the information and let him/her know that you will get back to them within 24 hours when you've had a chance to think about what was said.
- Always remember, if a supervisor orders you to do something, you must do it unless there is some real health or safety

reason not to. You can always contact one of the grievance team members with questions. Don't be insubordinate.

As to the content of the meeting, the Brookline Schools policy about this situation is that the supervisor, when contacted by someone (a parent, student, a colleague), should tell that person to speak directly to the teacher. That being said, we know it doesn't always happen. Here's what you should ask the supervisor (you have the right to know this information)

- Who contacted the supervisor?
- Did the supervisor ask this person to contact you?
- Is this the only call, or has it happened repeatedly. If repeatedly, why haven't I heard of this before?
- If necessary, and if it feels safe, remind the supervisor of the school system policy.

And, as a final note, nothing should ever appear in your personnel files from an anonymous source or if it has not been corroborated. Whatever your supervisor knows from this often-unknown person is hearsay. If you are concerned that something might have gone into your file, contact the grievance team right away.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call the BEU at 617-277-0251. One of the following grievance committee members will get back in touch with you.

Gretchen Albertini (Devotion)

Deb Allen (Devotion)

John Abramson (Unit B)

Gerri Belle (Runkle)

Jody Curran (BHS)

Chari Dalsheim (Heath)

Sandy Downes (Lawrence)

Barbara Hedges (Runkle)

Cathy Heller (Unit B)

Steve Lantos (BHS)

Susan Moreno (BHS)

David Weinstein (Pierce)

WHEN YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH A COLLEAGUE: WHAT TO DO.

The teacher in the next room speaks in loud tones to her students and it's disturbing your class: what do you do?

You notice a colleague reprimanding a student in a harsh manner: what do you do?

You have a problem with your co-teacher's instructional strategies for special needs students: what do you do?

Your classroom aide comes in just a bit late on most days and this causes difficulty with getting certain students on task: what do you do?

Many of us have had these or similar kinds of difficulties in our work lives. How do we handle these types of situations? As in almost all situations, it is best to approach your colleague directly, explaining your perceptions and offering help if appropriate. However, this can be very difficult at times. In a setting where we have employee advocates (union building reps, grievance reps and union officers/leaders), we encourage you to bring the matter to the employee advocate in your building for advice and assistance in dealing with the problem. While it may be tempting to take the matter to your supervisor and ask him or her to "do something about it" remember that you are involving yourself in someone's employment relationship and that the supervisor has the power to alter that relationship to the detriment of your co-worker. This is no trivial matter.

Very often the employee advocate, who has no power over the employment relationship, can help you speak with your co-worker or speak to him/her on your behalf in a non-threatening manner. The most effective approach may very well be to seek assistance in this way. After all, it is in the interest of the union to not only defend its members but also to educate them about what kinds of behavior could get them in trouble in the first place.

-Dorine Levasseur, MTA Field Rep

BEU AT MTA

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tive bargaining rights for education staff in Springfield, the two cannot be separated. After all, public schools are supported by public funds, and our political officials control public funding.” Deb hopes that everyone calls or writes their state representative and state senator to ask them to strongly support binding arbitration for the Springfield educators.

“I’m a second-time delegate,” Tamisha Simpson said, “and I’m just so moved by the great number of passionate teachers present. It is a reminder of why I chose this profession- that I care about people, and the welfare of people. I am disheartened that so many of our members do not agree with the idea of the MTA taking a stance against the war in Iraq. The opponents state that teachers are required to teach a subject matter and are not supposed to impose his or her ideas upon the students they are teaching. I don’t think that I can refrain from taking a public stance on such controversial issues as the war in Iraq while being a teacher of color in this country. It would be the equivalent of asking me to refrain from engaging in a teachable moment with a student whose parent believes that Blacks are inferior.”

Nicole Disher was a first-time delegate and like Tamisha was moved by the experience. “All of the discussions and debates directly impact education, from the occupation of Iraq, to the unfortunate situation in Springfield, to the burden of new requirements that new teachers face. Being part of the annual meeting is empowering and enlightening. Having worked in other fields before becoming a teacher, I had never experienced a group of people who truly care and believe in what they do. It is for this reason I am a teacher and it is for this reason it is important to take a stand for the issues that impact our ability to do our job. The MTA is vital in bring our local unions together to take a stand to create real and necessary changes that will have a positive impact on our children.”

Phil Katz, long-time delegate, helped organize the Peace and Justice Caucus activity. In particular, he worked to eliminate the Public Relations Campaign in and replace it with a less-costly organizing campaign. “While the organizing motion failed, it did garner 41% of the votes - maybe next time! I’m glad that so many people bucked the MTA leadership and said that we need to reflect the stated priorities shown in surveys, mainly to organize for political action and to keep our dues increase reasonable.”

Johanna Roses attended The Annual Awards Banquet of the Human Relations Committee. The Louise Gaskins Civil Rights Award was presented to Sadiqa Basiri, who advocates for the needs of education for women in Afghanistan. All the speakers were eloquent and it is hoped that in the future, more BEU members will take part in this wonderful experience and become more involved in the work of the MTA

HEALTH AND SAFETY TIP

A quick fix for classroom sinks:

Foul smells emanating from the depths of your classroom sink? Sometimes, the problem can be cleared by pouring baking soda or salt down the drain, followed by boiling or very hot water. It is actually a good idea to do this as a preventive measure also: plain old water works for this, too.

-Sally Dean, Health and Safety Chair

Keeping In Touch With Your Health Insurance...

RATES UP



What’s new with our health insurance coverage? As of July 1, 2006, our coverage will remain the same. However, the rates charged will go up 14% to the following 26 bi-weekly deductions per year:

	Indiv	Family
Blue Choice	\$ 43.89	\$ 116.10
HMO Blue	\$ 40.55	\$ 108.66

The new rates represent an approximately 14% increase. That just doesn’t jibe with the salary increases being offered or the cost of living figures.

An update on Warrant Article 13: the Town decided to withdraw it because there is more movement for a statewide legislation, thanks to everyone who came to the necessary meetings to bring pressure to bear. You all made a difference!

The health advisory committee is considering going out to bid again, hoping for lower rates and similar coverages. This process takes a bit of time, so we shall continue with what we have till then. We are hoping that the bid process will bring a January 2007 implementation. Nothing will change unless it is negotiated with the BEU.

I will keep you informed of any changes.

- Elly Finkel, Health Care Chair

ELECTION RESULTS

Total ballots 67

MTA Delegate (all will attend)	Barry David	55
	Nicole Disher	55
Philip Katz 66	Amie Buchman	54
Deanna Wong 60	Lucille Koch	54
Sally Dean 60		
Rich Goldberg 59	NEA Delegate (all will attend)	
Johanna Roses 59	Rich Goldberg	61
Karen Blackburn 58	Sally Dean	61
Tamisha Simpson 58	Deborah Allen	59
Jody Curran 57	Amie Buchman	56
Deborah Allen 56		
Eowyn Daly 56		

*-Stacy Kissel,
Elections Chair*

RETIREMENT PARTY

MONDAY, JUNE 5

3:00 PM

Temple Emeth at Putterham Circle

Honor our Friend of Education, *The Children’s Book Store*, and our retiring colleagues.

FINANCE FOR EDUCATORS IN THE NAME OF ROTH



In 1998 when Eminem was singing the hit “My Name Is,” William Roth, a Senator from Delaware, was penning his Name to a retirement account homerun, the Roth IRA. As part of the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, Roth created a savings’ vehicle that began with duplicating most of the advantages of the Traditional IRA. To further entice reluctant, American savers, the plan added several important features: absolutely tax-free earnings, flexible and forgiving withdrawal rules and a financial map to the land of millionaires for generation X and Y savers.

In a Traditional IRA all earnings are only tax deferred! That means there is an inevitable day of tax reckoning when Uncle Sam demands payment. The earliest date you can withdraw from a Traditional IRA begins at age 59.5 and the latest, when you are mandated by the IRS to take a MRD (Minimum Required Distribution), 70.5. A retired teacher, most likely in the 25% tax bracket, will be required to pay \$250.00 for every \$1,000 withdrawn from a Traditional IRA

In striking contrast to the Traditional IRA, Roth IRA withdrawals are tax-free ad infinitum after the age of 59.5! There are no MRDs for the Roth IRA. You never pay a penny to the IRS You can allow the money to compound until the after the cows come home and return to the field again. There are no tax implications at the time of withdrawal whether you’re a pauper living solely on Social Security or a CEO making millions. In either case, if you withdraw \$1,000, you keep \$1,000.

The Roth IRA is the Gumby of Retirement Accounts. In addition to compounding tax-free forever, it also provides the flexibility of making withdrawals before age 59.5. If you’re in a financial pinch, you can withdraw the sum of all the original contributions without triggering a tax bill. In the case of the 31 year old teacher who contributes \$2,000 for five successive years, the entire \$10,000 can be withdrawn without penalty. The earnings on the original investment, however, must stay invested until after age 59.5. The Roth IRA provides additional flexibility for a first-time home purchase. As long as the Roth IRA has been invested for at least five years, the entire amount, including the earnings, can be withdrawn without penalty.

Uncle Sam loves Generation X and Y. Take, for example, my 25 year old friend and colleague, Joel. If he faithfully contributes \$2,000 a year-the maximum for 2006 is \$4,000- between now and retirement at age 60, he will amass close to \$500,000 assuming a 9% rate of return. If he leaves this sum intact and allows it to compound for another eight years, assuming that same 9% rate of return, he will be a millionaire at age 68!

Alas, Eminem isn’t eligible for a Roth IRA with earnings that exceed the individual threshold of \$95,000 and \$150,000 for joint filers. Most generation X and Y teachers, however, earn well below the income threshold and should give serious consideration to adding a Roth IRA to their retirement plan repertoire.

-Robert Miller, Devotion

The President’s Hours for April

Negotiations - 77 hours
 Grievances/Complaints - 53
 Organizing Members - 15
 Community Relations - 15
 Internal communications - 8
 Other Meetings with Management - 8
 Doing paperwork, staying organized - 7.5
 Internal Meetings - 7.5
 Health & Safety - 4
 Work with MTA & NEA - 3
 Membership Work/Finances - 3
 Professional Development - 1.5
 Benefits - 1
 This totals 205 hours for the 4 weeks starting April 3



BEU CALENDAR

General Meeting

May 22 BHS Auditorium 3:00pm

Memorial Day- No School

May 29

BEU Retirement Party

June 5 Temple Emeth 3:00pm

Deadline for October Articles

June 6

Executive Board Meeting

June 12 BHS Room 250 2:45pm

June Brookline Educator

June 15

Last Day of School

June 23 Noon

First Day Back for Teachers

September 5

First Day Back for Students

September 7

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and find it informative. If you are represented by the BEU but are not a member, we ask you to join us.

Please note: Non-members represented in Units A and B and non-members employed more than 3 years in the Para Unit are responsible for paying an agency service fee, about 75% of the dues and billed late spring or summer.

THE BROOKLINE EDUCATOR

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Brookline Educators Union
 115 Greenough Street
 Brookline, MA 02445
 Tel: 617-277-0251
 Fax: 617-232-9413

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Amie Buchman, Communications Chair
 Philip Katz, President

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