

BEU *The Brookline Educator*

Newsletter of the Brookline Educators Union

February 2007

WORKING PART-TIME

More than half of our members work part-time (172 out of 723 in Unit A, 1 out of 41 in Unit B, 272 out of 329 in the Para Unit). This includes people who may have a full-time job, but are on leave part-time.

When you work part-time, the following are pro-rated to your FTE (Full-Time Equivalent):

- your pay
- the expectations for meetings, duties, etc.
- the right to preparation periods
- your accumulation of creditable service for pension calculations (unless you've always been part-time since 1990)

If you are half-time or more, you:

- you are eligible for health insurance and life insurance benefits (20 hours or more for Paras)
- you move up the pay scale one step per year (if you work less than half-time, you move up one step every other year)

You have to be full-time to be eligible for the Town's golf benefit.

The most complicated part-time issue is in gaining seniority. Seniority is used only to determine who is laid off and who gets the longevity stipends (it is not used in transfers or to determine promotions). Anyone working less than 0.2 FTE does not gain seniority. Anyone working half-time or more gains a year of seniority for each year of (part-time) work. For those working 0.2 to 0.5 FTE, it depends on your hire date (the only two-tier situation in our contract): those hired prior to September 1, 1999, gain a year of seniority for each year worked; those hired on September 1, 1999, or after, gain seniority in proportion to their FTE.

Questions? Call the BEU office at 617-277-0251.

JOINING THE AFL-CIO

The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations ("AFL-CIO") and the National Education Association ("NEA") have entered into Labor Solidarity Partnership. This partnership allows local NEA affiliates (like the BEU) to become members of AFL-CIO local central labor councils and AFL-CIO state federations. This will give locals the choice to join the AFL-CIO and participate in the broader labor movement, affirming the importance of a unified voice on behalf of America's working families, our members, and the public that we serve.

"In this political climate, our organizations need to build on our common goals, and advocate together for our members and our children," said Reg Weaver, president of NEA. "Our unions, like our public schools, are fixtures of local communities. Through joint activities we can better strengthen our communities, strengthen our public schools, and strengthen our organizations."

"By giving NEA local members the opportunity to unite with our members, we'll be able to wage stronger campaigns to help working families fend off escalating assaults on family incomes, education, health care, pensions, and public services," said AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney. "And we'll be stronger in the fight for quality, affordable health care for all, retirement security, and a great education for our children."

At its January 22 meeting, the BEU Representative Council voted unanimously to bring this issue to the entire membership for a vote at the next BEU General Membership Meeting, scheduled for either March 26 or April 30. In addition, the Reps Council voted by majority to endorse such an affiliation. The dues for affiliation will be approximately \$1100 per year, an amount that can be absorbed at our current dues level.

To find out more, visit <http://www.nea.org/takenote/afcliopt-nrshp0607.html>.

SAVE THE DATE! GET READY TO LAUGH!!

SUNDAY, MARCH 25, 7:00 PM

THE BEU WILL BE SPONSORING A SPECIAL SHOW WITH JIMMY TINGLE, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL HUMORIST.

A LIMITED NUMBER OF TICKETS WILL GO ON SALE SOON FOR \$35 PER SEAT. THIS IS SURE TO BE A GREAT TIME FOR ALL.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR

THURSDAY, MAY 17TH:

WE WILL BE CELEBRATING, THANKING AND HONORING PHIL KATZ FOR HIS 12 YEARS OF EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE TO BROOKLINE EDUCATORS. DETAILS TO FOLLOW.





ELEGANT ACRONYM: BEUCCAS

Ok, folks, every month you've been faithfully reading this Contract Corner space (at least I hope you have). Let's see just how much you've retained. It's the first ever BEU Contract Corner Assessment System, shortened to the elegant acronym BEUCCAS.

Answers appear elsewhere in this newsletter.

1. You like your teaching job, but your three best friends are teaching at another school that would also be an easier commute. Your friends just told you there is an opening. What is the deadline to submit an application to transfer voluntarily to that other school?

- A. January 15
- B. March 1
- C. May 10
- D. Forget it: you can't request such a transfer

2. Your school or office will be undergoing renovations next year. You have to move to another building. What does the contract say about the odious task of moving your supplies?

- A. Employees must do their own packing, even if they aren't moving the boxes.
- B. The supervisor will tell the employee how many hours packing should take. It is up to the employee to do it in that time.
- C. Employees will be compensated for packing and unpacking at the workshop rate, as long as it is not done during regular work time.
- D. Packing, schmacking. Just load all that stuff in your car and move it!

3. For what working conditions do teachers contractually lose your 30 minute duty-free lunch period?

- A. You can't get your paperwork done any other time
- B. You need to meet with students, and they can't come any other time
- C. Your supervisor schedules a monthly team meeting then because it's the only time the whole team can meet
- D. None of the above! Take your lunch break, you earned it!

4. Are classroom teachers required to have office hours in addition to parent conferences?

- A. Office hours?!? We don't even have an office! No
- B. Yes, once a month after school
- C. Yes, once a week, either before or after school
- D. Only if told to by your supervisor.

5. Approximately how many meetings, called by school officials, is considered a reasonable number by contract?

- A. About 20, that's two a month
- B. About 38, that's one a week
- C. About 50, that's 5 a month
- D. About 75, that's two a week

6. I'm pregnant. What's my first step in telling everyone?

- A. You write a note saying you're pregnant and want to take the rest of the year off
- B. Apply to the sick leave bank
- C. Don't do anything until you make an appointment with the

BEU and we give you and review our "Adoption and Pregnancy Guide"

D. Don't tell anyone, they will fire you

7. When do I need to start dealing with maternity or paternity leave?

- A. You need to give 5 months notice for extended leaves
- B. You need to give 2 months notice for long periods of using sick time (like recovery from birth)
- C. You need to give 1 month notice for shorter leaves
- D. All of the above

8. What should administrative leave (A Days) be used for?

- A. Important personal reasons
- B. To go to the Super Bowl
- C. To do some work on the side
- D. What's an A Day?

9. For what reasons will a leave of absence without pay NOT be granted?

- A. Joining the Peace Corps for up to two years
- B. Enlisting in the Armed Forces for up to four years
- C. For furthering your own education
- D. To explore other career options

10. If you are a pre-professional status teacher, how many Staff Progress Reports should you have received from your supervisor by now?

- A. One
- B. Two
- C. Three
- D. What Staff Progress Report?

11. If you are a teacher with professional status, by when should you receive your Annual Report of Teacher Effectiveness?

- A. May 1
- B. May 15
- C. June 1
- D. The last day of the school year

12. Below are four things you might do. Which is grounds for dismissal?

- A. Ask students to provide their own school supplies, such as a reading book
- B. Break up a physical fight by restraining a student
- C. Not doing something your supervisor tells you to do when you are told you must do it, even if you don't want to (assuming it does not put you in danger)
- D. Sending home a note to parents with spelling mistakes

13. I'm looking to retire. When's the deadline?

- A. Before the school year starts
- B. February 1
- C. March 15
- D. There is no deadline for this (but the sooner you tell them, the better)

NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE



To keep you all in the loop of medical care negotiating, we are meeting with the Town about forging new ground in that all the unions (Fire, Police, DPW, school secretaries and others) may negotiate together regarding our health insurance if there is an agreement. This coalition bargaining invokes Section 19 of Chapter 32B, which protects retiree health insurance (and we will all get there-so it protects all of us).

Reminder: In order to receive the rebate that you are entitled to for 2006 membership in Fitness Clubs or Weight Loss Programs (Weight Watchers or hospital based program), the final date for Blue Cross to receive your form and paid receipts is March 31st. I keep reminding you (or is it nagging?) because I truly want each of you to receive what you are entitled too. I have the necessary form (e-mail me and I'll forward it to you), or you can download it from the Blue Cross web site, www.bcbsma.com. You must have a paid bill listing the dates of membership-at least 4 full months in 2006.

A short column for a short month. Hopefully, our committee will have good news as we continue to meet. Have a great February school vacation.

-Elly Finkel, Health Care Chair

TAXES FOR EDUCATORS

It's tax time! Yes, taxes, the price we pay for living in a civilized society (which, by my logic, means we should probably be paying more taxes). By now, you should have received all your tax information (W-2s, 1099s, etc.). So get all those receipts together and put together your taxes (by April 15). Do you need help? Get a 20% discount from one of the BEU's Discount Directory partners, Commonwealth Accounting, at 800-675-8293. (MTA had negotiated a 20% discount at TaxMan as well, but they were bought by H&R Block who refused to continue the discount.)

Remember that educators still can subtract up to \$250 of qualified expenses when figuring their adjusted gross income (AGI). They will not need to itemize deductions to get this benefit. For expenses above \$250, educators can deduct expenses as professional expenses under miscellaneous itemized deductions, which must go over 2 percent of their AGI. [Of course, I believe that ALL expenses should be deductible - under charitable contributions, but I'm not a tax lawyer.] For details on this, see <http://www.irs.gov/publications/p3991/ch01.html#d0e242>

One of the most frequent questions asked of the BEU this time of year is, "What were my dues for this past year?" We don't know - we don't keep track of it by calendar year - and everyone is different. But it's easy to find the answer: look at the YTD column for BEU dues line on your last paycheck of the year, Dec 21.

-Phil Katz, BEU President

INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW...

Am I, as a Special Education or Regular Education teacher, individually responsible for the IEP?

Yes and no.

Yes, in that you are responsible for doing your job to the best of your ability and to your supervisor's satisfaction (as expressed on your evaluation report or otherwise). If you feel your supervisor is being either unfair or unreasonable, please seek assistance from the BEU.



No, in that you are not individually legally responsible for the implementation of the IEP under the special education laws. In fact, it is the school district that is legally responsible and it is only against the school district as an entity that any legal action can be taken by a parent or any agency. However, to the extent that you individually have in some way failed to follow the IEP's requirements, you could face disciplinary action by the employer against you. In that case, as well, please seek assistance from the BEU.

At any time, if you are presented with requirements (like IEP accommodations) that you feel you need to better understand or you need training on, you should ask for that from your supervisor, IEP team, or any others as may be appropriate.

Can my supervisor force me to change a student's grade?

Yes, possibly. If your supervisor tells you to change a student grade, it's best to first try to work with the supervisor to address his/her concerns. If that does not work, ask if changing the grade is a direct order. If your supervisor's answer is "yes" and you refuse to do so, you could be considered insubordinate and, therefore, possibly face disciplinary action. Change the grade, then seek advice from the BEU.

-Dorine Levasseur, MTA Field Rep

ELECTIONS ARE OPEN

PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO VOTE FOR THE BEU OFFICERS. YOUR VOTE SHOWS SUPPORT FOR THOSE RUNNING. PAPER BALLOTS HAVE BEEN DISTRIBUTED TO ALL SCHOOLS, OR YOU CAN VOTE ON-LINE THROUGH THE BEU CONFERENCE ON FIRST CLASS.





COPERNICUS AND INVESTING: PART I

In the year 1530, an epoch moment in scientific history, the Polish astronomer, Nicolaus Copernicus, published an earth shattering, astronomical theory. The revolutionary doctrine systematically refuted the universally accepted Ptolemaic view with the earth as the center of the universe. In its place Copernicus promoted a “heretical” heliocentric view of the cosmos with man no longer assigned a premier position in the universe. As we move inexorably forward into the 21st century world of global investing, it may be time to apply the Copernicus doctrine to the Amerocentric approach to investing.

Two of the most recognizable proxies for the American stock market are the S&P 500 and the Wilshire 5000. The Wilshire 5000, the most representative and inclusive proxy for the total U.S. stock market, contains over 6,500 stocks and tracks the overall stock market. For the past five years it delivered a meager, yearly average of approximately 7%. Another more widely known index for the U.S. market performance is the S&P 500. This index consists of 500 companies and yielded a yearly average of 6.5% for the past five years.

What were the financial consequences of this shortsighted, Amerocentric approach to mutual fund investing for the past five years? If, in 2001, your 403b had been invested in a fund similar to the Wilshire 5000, the 7% yearly return would have added \$40,000 to a \$100,000 portfolio. An identical \$100,000 invested in a S&P type fund would have produced a \$37,000 return over five years.

In the meantime, while our U.S. stock market shuffled along over the past five years, a new phalanx of roaring, economic engines emerged from places like Russia, China, Eastern Europe, Latin America, India and Egypt. An investor who placed that same \$100,000 in many Asian mutual funds would have amassed over \$250,000 in the past five years assuming the historical average 20% per annum return. An owner of an Emerging Market fund would have amassed over \$375,000 factoring in the historical average of 30% per year. Even an investor who placed their money in an old guard market like the German DAX would have seen their portfolio grow at 14% per annum leaving the investor with a \$192,000 portfolio, an increase of \$92,000 over five years.

In De Revolutionionibus Copernicus states “To be sure, heretofore there has been virtually unanimous acceptance of the belief that the middle of the universe is the earth.” ‘Heretofore’ the U.S. market had been considered the middle of the investment universe. Call it blasphemy, but it’s time to embrace a more practical and realistic theory of investing that adequately reflects a rapidly changing global economy.

-Robert Miller, Devotion

Answers to Contract Corner Quiz:

1. B, 2. C, 3. D, 4. C, 5. B, 6. C, 7. D, 8. A, 9. D, 10. C, 11. A, 12. C, 13. D

The President’s Hours for January

- Grievances/Complaints – 104 hours
- Negotiations - 51
- Internal Meetings - 16
- Work with MTA & NEA - 15
- Internal communications - 13
- Other Meetings with Management - 8.5
- Doing paperwork, staying organized - 7
- Membership Work/Finances - 6.5
- Organizing Members - 5.5
- Community Relations - 4.5
- Health & Safety - 3.5
- Benefits -2.5
- Professional Development - 2.5



This totals 239.5 hours for the 4 weeks starting January 1

BEU CALENDAR

February Break (No School)

Feb 19 thru Feb 23

BEU Committee Meetings

Feb 26 various locales 3:00pm

Educator for a Day

Mar 2 your classroom all day

Executive Board Meeting

Mar 5 BHS Room 250 2:45pm

Deadline for March Articles

Mar 6

Reps Council Meeting

Mar 12 BHS MLK Room 2:45pm

March Brookline Educator

Mar 15

BEU Committee Meetings

Mar 19 various locales 3:00pm

BEU Goes To Jimmy Tingle

Mar 25 Somerville 7:00pm

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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