

BEU CALENDAR

**March 22 Deadline for
Absentee ballots for BEU
Offices to Reps**
March 23 Action Team
BHS Room 238 3:15pm
**March 27 Ratification vote /
BEU election
& Meet the SC candidates**
BHS Auditorium 3:15-4:00pm; 4:30-5
April 3 Executive Board
BHS Room 258 3:15pm
April 10 Reps Council
BHS Room 258 3:15pm

EARLY VOTING RULES FOR CONTRACT RATIFICATION & BEU ELECTION OF OFFICERS & MTA & NEA ANNUAL MEETINGS

The Unit A, B & Para tentative agreements, Agency Fee explanation and voting rules may be downloaded from brookline.massteacher.org. Find under "Resources"/"contracts". Also at BEU.groupsites.com under "Important Documents".

- 1) Get ballots from your Building Rep. A list of the Reps may be found at: brookline.massteacher.org
- 2) Ballots for each vote (ratification and officers/delegates) must be placed in a separate sealed envelope with your name on the outside of the envelope and the word "Ratification" or "Officers."
- 2) Return ballots to Building Reps no later than the end of the school day on Wed., March 22. *Responsibility lies with the BEU member to ensure that the Rep has received the envelope(s).*
- 4) All absentee ballots will be mixed with on-site voting ballots on Mar 27.

BEU Ratification Vote & BEU election: Mon. March 27 BHS auditorium, 3:15pm

All members of BEU bargaining units are entitled to vote on ratification of the tentative agreement for their unit. Only BEU members may elect BEU officers and delegates to MTA & NEA conventions. (See bottom left for absentee voting by March 22.)

(There are openings for MTA & NEA delegate for write-in candidates. For info: see MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates at massteacher.org & ra.nea.org)

PLEASE REVIEW TENTATIVE AGREEMENT(S), SUMMARIES & RULES POSTED AT beu.groupsites.com & brookline.massteacher.org

Ratification Meeting Agenda

- 3:15 Presentation of Tentative Agreement
- 3:30 Questions and Answers
- 3:45 Discussion/Debate
- 4:00 Vote
- 5:00 Count and Announce Results

Reclaiming our Public Schools: Attention turns to call for a more responsive School Committee

Close to 250 educators, parents, and other Brookline community members gathered March 15 for a discussion of our public schools and their future. The five Brookline groups that organized the event (BEU, Brookline PAX, Brookline Parents Organization (BPO), Brookline for Racial Justice and Equity (BRJE), and Citizens for Public Schools (CPS), are now directing their energy to a next step in defending and strengthening the best in Brookline public schools. The organizations are finishing interviews of candidates for the three seats up for election on May 2. The BEU is getting involved in the School Committee

election.

MONDAY, MARCH 27 AT 4:30 (AFTER THE RATIFICATION MEETING) MEET THE BEU-ENDORSED SLATE OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE CANDIDATES!

Recognizing the importance of working with educators, the candidates are coming to BHS for a listening session with BEU educators. The BEU is making a willingness to build a direct working relationship with BEU members as one condition of endorsement.

Interviews, which are being com-

continued on page 3

The Contract Corner:

FROM THE PARAPROFESSIONAL CONTRACT...



Dear Contract Corner:

I'm a Paraprofessional. I love my job but don't like it when my assignment gets changed in the middle of the year, sometimes more than once. Do I have any rights concerning my hours or assignment?

*Signed,
Seeking Stability*

Dear Seeking Stability:

It certainly is preferable to have a predictable work assignment and hours. While your assignment may be changed depending on the needs of your school, here is a quote from the Paraprofessional Contract. Notice that the last sentence guarantees that you cannot have your hours reduced after October 15th of any school year.

"The number of hours in an employee's work week may vary during the work year depending on the assignment or position. An employee's hours may be increased or decreased during the work year with or without a change in assignment or position; provided the number of hours assigned to an employee for any work year will not be reduced after October 15."

*Signed,
Contract Corner*

Dear Contract Corner:

I was hired as a Paraprofessional midway through this year. Next year I expect to take some classes while also working. When can I expect to find out the particulars of my assignment for next year?

*Signed,
Planning Ahead*

Dear Planning Ahead,

While you may find out your assignment earlier, the contract guarantees that you will be notified of the particulars before the first day of school. Here is the quote from the contract.

"Effective September 2012, employees will be provided with a written or email statement prior to the first day of school with the following information: assigned grade level(s), subject(s) or other assignment for the start of the school year, assigned school(s), salary schedule placement (step and lane), salary, and extra compensation where applicable and known."

*Signed,
Contract Corner*

Dear Contract Corner:

I have been a Paraprofessional in the Brookline Public Schools for three years. I was just told by my doctor that I have to take some time off for a serious medical condition. In addition to the sick days I have saved up, do I have any chance to use the Sick Leave Bank?

*Signed,
Need Answer Quickly*

Dear Need Answer Quickly:

I'm so sorry about your health concerns. I wish you all the best.

Paraprofessionals with two or more years of service have access to the Sick Leave Bank. That means you will be automatically enrolled in the Bank (unless you Opt Out) by giving up one of your earned sick days each year. But you need to apply for days when you need them. Sick Leave Bank days will be given to you for days beyond your own earned Sick Days for an extended illness. A doctor's note may be requested by the Town. You are eligible for up to 45 days per year of Sick Leave Bank days which you later pay back at a rate of 25% of the days you borrowed. (Please see section 4.1C of the Para Contract).

*Signed,
Contract Corner*

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.

Deb Allen (Devotion, retired)
Jody Curran (Driscoll)
Hillary Golden (Lincoln)
Mark Goldner (Heath)
Rich Gorman (BHS)
Anna MacIver (Runkle)
Shelley Mains (BHS)
Susan Moreno (BHS)
Jill Sifantus (BHS)
Susan Stark (BHS)
David Weinstein (Pierce, retired)
Jessica Wender-Shubow (District)
Sue Zobel (Lincoln)

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pleted this week, echo the themes that speakers raised at the community forum.

"Let us teach!"

BEU Vice President Bob Miller captured the spirit of the BEU members who attended: "I'm a career changer and spent 25 years in the private sector and I've learned that teachers are by nature nurturers and problem solvers. I have never seen a group of employees who work harder or complain less. I can tell you the one thing that is guaranteed to get a quality educator to complain about their conditions: When a teacher feels that they are being prevented from doing the best that they can for the children they teach. That's when you see the sleeping giant wake up."

The crowd responded enthusiastically to the words of Adam Weiner from Brookline Parents Organization:

"Is the endless collection of data a vision for the schools? Perhaps, but if so it's a dreary and anti-human vision. More a technocratic nightmare, really. And certainly not the vision that made Brookline public schools great in the first place.

"The School Committee tells us that without data collection you cannot close the racial achievement gap, yet we know exactly what creates achievement gaps: multigenerational income and opportunity gaps. But all the data in the world cannot bridge those gaps. Too much focus on the data can actually backfire and rob students of color of rich educational opportunities...."

At the BPO we don't pretend to have all the answers, but we do have a vision for our schools.

This vision puts the teacher and the student at the center of educa-

tion. The teacher is set free in the classroom so that he or she can be a living example of critical thinking, creativity and autonomy.

Our children need that kind of inspiration.

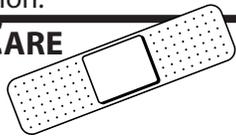
They also desperately need critical thinking so they can understand what's real, so they can solve problems, so they can explore the world, and so they can participate fully in our democracy....

Mandates! The School Committee will say that they are slaves to state and federal mandates, but they are often in fact the pushers of these mandates. We need an activist School Committee that will stand up to harmful mandates, that will push back against them, that will work together with legislators to undo the harm."

WATCH FOR NOTICE OF THE VIDEO POSTING OF THE FORUM!



YOUR HEALTH CARE



ANNUAL ENROLLMENT APRIL 5 - MAY 3

Soon we will be receiving our new Benefit Decision Guides from the GIC.

Here are some of the new changes for Employee/non-Medicare Plans effective 7/1/17 through 6/30/18.

- INCREASE the fiscal year deductible to: \$500 individual/ \$1,000 family (regardless of family size). For the Fallon Health Direct and Select plans, the deductible would increase to \$550 individual/ \$1,100 family.
- ADD a prescription drug deductible to all employee/non-Medicare plans (except Fallon Health Direct and Select): \$100 individual/ \$200 family.
- Harvard Pilgrim Independence and Primary Choice plans will change to a closed prescription formulary similar to the other plans. This means certain prescription drugs will be excluded from coverage, but will have alternatives available that are more cost effective.
- Harvard Pilgrim and Tufts Health Plan will implement group tiering of providers based on value.
- Harvard Pilgrim Independence and Tufts Navigator PCP copay tiers will be: \$10/\$20/\$40.
- FREEZE ENROLLMENT in Fallon Select, Harvard Independence, and Tufts Navigator.

* Existing members can stay in or leave these plans and can change their coverage (e.g., individual to family) within 60 days of a qualifying event: however,

* New groups or new employees joining the GIC cannot enroll in these plans;

* Individuals who are picking up GIC health insurance coverage during Annual Enrollment or within 60 days of a qualifying event cannot enroll in these plans; and

* Existing GIC members currently enrolled in other health plans cannot switch to these plans.

Changes for Medicare Plans effective 7/1/17 through 6/30/18

- Harvard Medicare Enhance, Health New England Med-Plus and Tufts Medicare Complement: Prescription drug coverage will be moved to the GIC's SilverScript EGWP program
- All Medicare plans: office visit copay of \$20 per visit
- UniCare Indemnity Plan Medicare Extension (OME): Eliminate \$35 calendar year deductible and increase Emergency Room copay to \$50.

There will be statewide **Health Fairs** during the enrollment period so your questions can be answered by representatives of the different healthcare providers. A schedule of these dates will be sent out soon.

[These changes may increase your out of pocket expenses so consider making changes to your Cafeteria Plan Flexible spending Healthcare account.]

Take care...Sheila and Jess
(2sheilaleach@gmail.com)

-Sheila Leach, PEC Rep

FINANCE FOR EDUCATORS

MUCH ADO ABOUT INVESTING



Making Money with “Good” Investments –

Yes, it is possible to follow your moral compass, invest in socially responsible firms and make money in the stock market. Social Responsible Investing (SRI) has become a viable investment strategy thanks to the economy of scale provided by Vanguard. (VFSTX) or the Vanguard FTSE Social Index Fund Investor Shares offers a low-cost investment option that applies an ESG screen to its investments to ensure that they adhere to strict standards of environmental sustainability, social responsibility and corporate governance. In short, this fund is prohibited from investing in companies that sell guns, tobacco, nuclear weapons – like a GE - or fail to protect the environment - like an Exxon. At the same time, this fund strives to make a positive impact on society by promoting shareholder investing and community activism. (VFSTX) charges a rock-bottom .22% and has returned an average of 14.82% over the past five years.

Diversification; A Case for Adding A Small-Cap Fund – One of the most common investor mistakes is to overlook the importance of maintaining a diverse portfolio. A case in point is the investor who chooses to direct all his 403b investments into the one of the better balanced funds of all time, the Vanguard Wellington Fund, or VWELX – a fund I’ve regularly recommended. While this fund provides diversity by investing in both stocks and bonds, and proudly lays claim to an exemplary investment track record, it offers minimal exposure to one of the best performing sectors in the market, Small Cap Stocks. Based on a study from Dimensional Fund Advisors, Small Cap Stocks outperformed Large Cap Stocks – a major focus of VWELX - by almost 3% between 1930 -2013. One fund you might consider adding to your investment mix to increase diversity and improve long term performance is Vanguard’s Strategic Small-Cap Investor Fund (VSTCX). Over the past five years, the fund, which charges .29%, has returned approximately 15% per annum, outpacing both the market and VWELX by 5 percentage points.

403b/Roth Contribution Limits for 2017 – The status quo remains in effect for contribution limits to both your 403b and Roth in 2017. In the case of the 403b, the limit is \$18,000 for teachers under 50 with an additional \$6,000 for those over 50, a maximum of \$24,000. If you established a Roth IRA, you can contribute \$5,500 this year and an additional \$1,000 if you are over 50 for a maximum of \$6,500.

How much do I love the Roth IRA? Let me count the ways for you in my April article. Let’s begin, however, with how I love its flexibility that includes the ability to withdraw money in a crisis without incurring any penalty.

Baker 403b Enrollment Workshop on Thursday, March 30 at 3:10 pm – All you need is a laptop, a smartphone and 1 hour to put yourself on the path to financial prosperity. Meet me in the Baker faculty room, and I promise to make investing a simple an painless process!

-Robert Miller, Devotion

The President’s Work

Negotiations: Evaluations

With all of the attention to the main contracts, it’s been easy to miss that the Educator Evaluation system has also been renegotiated. Here are some important highlights of the this part of the Unit A tentative agreement:

- Disciplinary matters can not be part of the evaluation process.
- Notice must be given of an observation at the outset.
- Student performance outcomes cannot be used in the design of goals or in rating an educator.
- Educators can not be expected to work beyond the contract to be proficient in “Professional Culture.”
- An extra year is added if an evaluator does not do his or her part.

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, billed late spring or summer.

THE BROOKLINE EDUCATOR

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BEU members discuss issues and find additional news at the website:

BEU.groupsites.com All members are encouraged to join using a personal email address.

Amie Buchman, Communications Chair

Jessica Wender-Shubow, President