

**BEU MEMBERS
& PARENTS:
SUPPORT THE BEU
NEGOTIATING TEAM!**

**PLEASE ATTEND THE NEXT
SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MEETING
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4**

- Members are encouraged to arrive outside of Town Hall by 5:15-5:30.
- Parents: Please arrive by 5:30.
- Gather outside with signs.
- We'll make our way to the 5th floor by 5:50.
- School Committee meeting begins at 6 on 5th floor of Town Hall.
- Public comment is at 6:35.
- Sign up to speak upon arrival, with comments preferably to be kept to 3 minutes.

BEU CALENDAR

Reps Council Meeting

Feb 8 BHS Room 214 3:15

February Break

Feb 13-21

Negotiations

Feb 22 6-8pm

Grievance Team Meeting

Feb 22 BHS Room 240 3:15

Negotiations

Mar 1 6-8pm

BEU Financial Seminar

Mar 10 BHS 3:00pm (see p. 4)

Executive Board Meeting

Mar 7 BHS Room 214 3:15

Deadline for March Articles

Mar 8

Negotiations Update: *Time to Act*

We had a bargaining session on February 1. The school committee, citing many excuses, was completely unprepared, and failed to give us long-promised counter-proposals on our many issues related to time to teach, workload, paperwork, and other proposals concerning our expanding jobs. We are sorry to report that they had nothing – telling us they would have something at our session on March 1.

The negotiators have concluded that the only way to get what we need is to engage in an escalating set of actions that demonstrate our commitment to fight for the schools our children deserve. (See next action to left.)

Brookline educators have been working without a contract since September 1. Why is this? you might ask. Good question. According to the School Committee, it's because of forces they can't control. School Committee members recently told Brookline's state legislators that "every year we discuss the growing pressure on our budget, our administrators, and our educators from federal and state mandates to implement new curriculum, programs or services." They "now have become issues for us in collective bargaining as teachers seek relief from the additional pressures on their time." The BEU is glad that the School Committee has grasped our point about time pressure. However, we strongly disagree that the lack of a contract is beyond the School Committee's control. We think the School Committee entirely should take responsibility for the lack of a contract.

Consider this: Teachers and other BEU educators made comprehensive presentations and submitted corresponding proposals to the School Committee concerning 1) the effects of worsening student-educator ratios (which calculation of average class size obscures); 2) the loss of still more personal attention for students due to increasing amounts of paperwork and data collection; 3) the need to do more to ensure the safety of children and staff; and 4) increasingly top-down management that is harming efforts to tap teacher expertise, to achieve equity, and to "foster interaction among diverse viewpoints" (PSB Strategic Plan).

The chair of the School Committee's bargaining team acknowledged to legislators that the current approach that imposes increasing numbers of top-down mandates is not working. "We have in fact in Brookline stalled on closing the achievement gap in the last few years," she said. Still, while district leaders stressed that an initiative that is good in principle can falter when it is imposed from above and combined with too many others. The School Committee seems to have turned a blind eye to how they are doing the same thing to teachers in the schools and at the bargaining table.

We designed bargaining proposals specifically to address what we thought were mutual concerns about possible erosion of the high quality education that BEU educators were delivering, and for which Brookline is known. Yet, in spite of the fact that we made these proposals over a year and a half

MY EVALUATION: WHAT SHOULD I WATCH FOR? PART 1



Dear Contract Corner,

I often find myself unsure about how to approach the evaluation process. Can you give me any guidance?

Signed,
Bea Dewing-Moore

Dear Bea,

The BEU just did a 6-hour training for a group of Reps and Grievance Team members. They will be available to help. We thought we'd give some highlights in this and the next issue of Brookline Educator. We'll start with what's coming up next.

OBSERVATIONS

Unannounced observations should generally be at least 10 minutes long. For a visit to your classroom to qualify as an observation, you must have written feedback and an in-person conference with your evaluator within 5 days of the observation (or, if rescheduled, "within 24 hours whenever possible"). To qualify as a record of the conference, a final write-up must summarize this conversation and be sent to you within 10 days of the post-observation conference. If as a result of observations the evaluator

finds grounds for a needs improvement or unsatisfactory rating on any Standard(s), the evaluator must attend a full class, or a complete lesson in elementary, within 30 days. They should let the teacher know what supports the teacher can expect and what they are expected to improve.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

These happen in the middle of the cycle. You should be given a minimum of two weeks notice to submit evidence. One piece for each of the 4 Standards should suffice. No ratings should be assigned. You are entitled to a face-to-face meeting upon request. As always, if you disagree with the contents, submit a statement and any evidence you wish.

FEBRUARY LETTERS

Pre-Professional Status teachers and the BEU should receive one of these before February break if at that point, the administration sees grounds for non-appointment. The dates of all previous supervisory conferences must be listed along with "clear and specific" areas in need of improvement.

SUMMATIVE RATINGS

This rating must balance your performance on the 4 Standards and your 2 goals (20% each). However, you cannot be rated Proficient overall unless you receive that rating on Teaching & Curriculum and Teaches All Students. The Exemplary rating has not been collectively bargained so it cannot be used. You and the BEU must receive a letter by the end of March if you are at risk of not being rated Proficient overall. PTS teachers may request review with BEU representation of a Summative Rating.

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

Deb Allen (Devotion)
Dominique Gonyer (BHS)
Sarah Blalock (Lincoln)
Jody Curran (Devotion)
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)
Jessica Wender-Shubow (BHS)

Negotiations, continued from page 1

ago, to date we have received no significant counter proposals—none! Management instead has dug in their heels and refused to address our concerns with any contract language at all. "Trust us," they said, implying that say what we wish, we will ultimately be expected to do what they say.

BEU proposals include changes in scheduling and staffing that make possible serious commitments to inclusion and equity and a respect for diversity. Our proposals are practical approaches that defend against such commitments being reduced to formulaic exercises. They ensure that teachers' professional judgment will be honored, and that educators will have time to support each and every student in expressing themselves in creative and culturally sensitive ways, which fosters a love of learning.

We have negotiations scheduled for January 28, February 1, and February 22. New conditions make it easier to reach an agreement. Brookline voters, by a large margin, supported an increase in school funding, and Congress has loosened its grip on state and local education policy. However, in this promising climate that invites creative solutions, we are still waiting for the School Committee to engage constructively at the bargaining table with the BEU.

We ask that members of the community join us in calling on the School Committee to come to an agreement concerning the many important problems we have addressed. With the support of our membership and those in the community who are supportive of our goals, we hope to see the School Committee move toward an agreement in these upcoming bargaining sessions.

BROOKLINE EDUCATORS ARE *STILL* WORKING WITHOUT A CONTRACT!

What has the BEU proposed?

Prioritize individual attention for every child:

- Limit to 4 the number of class sections per teacher in grades 6-12 to open up time for meeting the targeted needs of specific children.
 - Support co-teaching with necessary prep time.
 - Limit non-instructional tasks such as data collection & paperwork.
 - Eliminate non-instructional duties for teachers.
 - Guarantee every educator sufficient and equitable time to prepare to teach every day.
- Require building aides who can step in.
 - Assign more than one educator to rooms with 65 or more children.
 - Increase classroom safety with appropriate staffing and equipment.

Respect the professionalism of our educators:

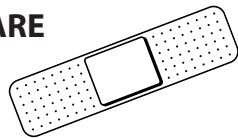
- Reserve time in staff meetings to discuss educators' individual or collective concerns.
- Strengthen the voice of teachers in the evaluation system.
- Agree to prep periods and paid lunch for paraprofessionals.
- Guarantee fair compensation for all, including a living wage & fair scheduling for paraprofessionals.

Enhance the safety of our students and staff:

- Assess specialists' caseloads according to the intensity of student needs.



YOUR HEALTH CARE



The GIC Annual Enrollment period for this year will be April 6th through May 4th, 2016. This is the time when you can change your health plan, make changes for family members and enroll in new benefits. If you plan to keep your existing plan and options, you do not have to re-enroll, it will stay the same automatically.

The new GIC premium rates will be voted on by the Insurance Commissioners on March 2nd.

Retirees can enroll in Met Life Dental if eligible.

The GIC Health Plan calendar year deductible is now transitioning to the fiscal year. All Employee/Non-Medicare plans are transitioning to make it easier to change health plan carriers at Open Enrollment.

* January to June 2016, there will be a half year deductible.

* Individual: has a \$150 deductible before benefits begin.

* Two person families: each person must satisfy a \$150 deductible.

* Three or more person family: the maximum each person must satisfy is \$150 until the family as a whole reaches the six-month \$450 maximum.

* Effective July 1, 2016: the deductible year will run July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017.

The PEC (Public Employees Committee) will begin very soon to negotiate healthcare with the Town since our present plans expire June 30, 2016. Maintaining our 83% (Town pays) and our 17 % (we pay) split is uppermost on our agenda.

Please feel free to contact Jessica or myself if you have my questions or concerns.

Take care....Sheila Leach 2sheilaleach@gmail.com

-Sheila Leach, PEC Rep

FINANCE FOR EDUCATORS

MUCH ADO ABOUT MONEY



Hear ye! Hear ye. It's time to celebrate the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death, "The Bard of All Time." It's the year of #Shakespeare400 on Twitter, a scheduled 2016 jazz mock-funeral for the Bard of Avon on the bayou of New Orleans and a whirlwind two-year Hamlet tour for The Royal Shakespeare Theater around the globe - and that includes Mongolia. It's also an opportune moment to talk about Bardonomics and the weighty matters of managing your pounds, pence and shillings not to mention how "to put money in thy purse."

What you may ask might England's national poet and a playwright be able to teach us about money, managing finances and investing? To borrow from Elizabeth Barrett Browning, let's count the ways with a few Bard inspired financial recommendations.

Borrowing: Let's begin with *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* and the memorable words of advice given by Polonius to his son Laertes in Act 1, Scene 3.

Neither a borrower nor a lender be;

For loan oft loses itself and friend,

And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.

The advice of Polonius will ring true for eternity. There are countless caveats to lending money to friends including compromising the friendship not to mention losing your money. As for borrowing, it continues to be a pervasive problem in America with the average U.S. family carrying a credit debt of over \$15,000. Hone thy husbandry and lessen thy debt

Investing, The Eighth Wonder of the World: In Shakespeare's love poem *Venus and Adonis*, he suggests that money, or gold in this case, loses its potential to generate wealth if it sits idly.

Foul-Cankering rust the hidden treasure frets.

But gold that's put to use more begets.

Perhaps no one put forth a more eloquent and compelling argument for investing your money so it can beget more money than Einstein: "Compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world. He who understands it, earns it.... he who doesn't ... pays it." In short, To be enrolled in a 403b should not be a question! And by the way!

Enrollment Workshop at BHS: March 10, at 3:00 PM

Bring your phone and a laptop.

Patience, the Cornerstone of Successful Investing:

While Iago in *Othello* may be viewed as one of Shakespeare's most unsavory and duplicitous characters, he certainly has his share of memorable lines.

How poor are they that have not patience!

What wound did ever heal by degrees?

In the words of the legendary Investor and the Oracle of Omaha, Warren Buffet, patience is one of the foundations for successful investing: "Successful investing takes time, discipline and patience. No matter how great the talent or effort, some things take time: You can't produce a baby in one month by getting nine women pregnant."

If the Bard were a financial advisor, it wouldn't surprise me to hear him say: Frailty thy name is investor. Individual investors tend to be slaves to their emotions and lack the required discipline and long-term vision. The path to successful investing can be a tortuous one but can also be successfully navigated with a combination of patience, prudence, a method (a plan) and, of course optimism.

-Robert Miller, Devotion

The President's Work

The BEU Negotiating Team is hard at work pursuing an agreement on the substance of the proposals we have submitted, but that is not the only arena in which efforts to improve working conditions are being addressed. We are waiting for the Central Administration to take further steps to resolve other issues that include the following:

1) The dramatic increase in work demands for the computer Help Desk and Educational Technology Specialists.

2) Ensuring that contractual prep time is not violated when teachers are called to IEP meetings (along with clarification of the roles and responsibilities).

3) Bargaining middle school Advisory and "Teacher-Leader" roles.

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

Published monthly by the Brookline Educators Union, affiliated with the Massachusetts Teachers Association and the National Education Association. Send letters, comments, inquiries, and articles to:

Brookline Educators Union

115 Greenough Street

Brookline, MA 02445

Tel: 617-277-0251

Email: BEU-MTA@hotmail.com

You may reproduce this newsletter if you give credit to the writer and the BEU. Please tell us when you do so.

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