

Important Reminders...

Vote on Ratification of the tentative agreement for this school year. Mon, Jan. 26 at 3:15 in the MLK room. [Proxy ballots are available]

Come & Speak at the public hearing on the Selectmen's override proposal. Thu, Jan. 22 at 7:30 on the 6th floor of Town Hall.

BEU CALENDAR

**Public Hearing on the
Override**

Jan 22 Town Hall 6th fl. 7:30pm

**BEU Ratification Vote &
Discussion of Negotiation
Proposals**

*Jan 26 BHS MLK Room
3:15pm*

Executive Board Meeting

*Feb 2 BHS Room 240
3:15pm*

MTA Bargaining Summit

Feb 7 Needham, 9:00am-4:00pm

**BEU & AFSCME present
PRIDE**

*Feb 9 BHS MLK Room, Pizza at 5:30,
Movie at 6:00*

Reps Council Meeting

Feb 9 BHS MLK Room 3:15pm

Grievance Team Meeting

Feb 23 Room 240 3:15pm

Tweet with Jessica:

Jess (@BEUJessWS)



BEU Succeeds in Strengthening Workplace Rights

I. TEACHER VOICE PROTECTED

Have you ever had concerns about contract violations or any other issue that touches on your rights on the job? Well, your legal right to raise such concerns in a department or faculty meeting has just been reaffirmed by the BEU and the School Committee in an agreement that was mediated by the Massachusetts Department of Labor Relations. Grievance co-chair, Susan Moreno, has given the *Brookline Educator* permission to tell her story.

Over a year ago, Susan was instructed by a supervisor not to share her "union perspective" in department meetings. But Susan knew that this violated employees' legal right to join together without interference, not only to bargain collectively but also to engage in "mutual aid or protection." If such a directive were allowed to stand, the BEU recognized, not only would explicit comments about the union be at risk, but also, any supervisor could claim that any comment you made reflected a union perspective and then forbid you from saying it.

Facing this basic threat to teacher input, especially the kind where educators look out for one another (because, after all, that's what a union's all about), the BEU knew it had to act. The union filed what is called a "Prohibited Practice Charge" against the school district at the Department of Labor Relations. The agreement says that, at any point during a meeting, you may raise issues germane to the agenda that touch on union concerns. The administrator may then decide if the issue is better explored later.

II. DUE PROCESS DEFENDED

STUFF OF DAILY LIFE



Dear Contract Corner,

Help! I am so stressed out by some family issues, the December break was not a break for me at all! Where can I get some help?

*Sincerely,
Stressed Out*

Dear Stressed,

At this time of year, stress can be a major factor impacting our lives, and sometimes it can get out of hand. Do you know that you have help if you find yourself really needing it? It's called the Employee Assistance Plan, or EAP.

One of the benefits that the town provides is an Employee Assistance Program. Town employees, their spouses, and dependent children are eligible for a confidential counseling and referral service. The EAP focuses on the employee's whole life, and advice and referral is available for a variety of issues, including legal, budgetary and new baby transitions.

The Wellness Corporation is the Town's Employee Assistance Provider. Their toll-free number is 1-800-828-6025. Simply identify yourself as a Brookline municipal employee, and you can discuss what sort of referral might be appropriate.

The service is confidential, which means that The Wellness Corporation and the practitioners that it may refer you to do not report your issues back to the town.

Dear Contract Corner,

I care a lot about communicating regularly with the families of my students. I write a regular newsletter and post information weekly on my web page. It's the phone calls and emails with individual families which are taking up more and more of my time! What are some reasonable ways to respond to parents contacting me at school?

*Sincerely,
Phoned Out*

Dear Phoned,

Telephone Use: Now that more of us are getting outside phones in our room, many questions about phone policy have surfaced. In general, it is certainly reasonable to expect a teacher to check messages regularly, and to get back to parents within a reasonable time period. It is not reasonable to be told to check for messages several times a day and to insist that calls be returned immediately. As for student use of the phone, that is dependent on both school policy (do you know yours?) and good old common sense. Your use of the phone during class should be kept to emergencies.

E-mail Use: Remember that the Brookline First Class system is provided by our employer, and can be read by select supervisors. Nothing you write should be considered private. As to using it with parents, the same general rule of thumb applies to e-mail as to phones. A once a day check is reasonable, as is a 24 hour turn around time to parents.

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

- Deb Allen
- Dominique Aumiller (BHS)
- Sarah Blalock (Lincoln)
- Jody Curran (Devotion and Driscoll)
- Hillary Golden (Lincoln)
- Mark Goldner (Heath)
- Rich Gorman (BHS)
- Jane Leo (Heath)
- Shelley Mains (BHS)
- Susan Moreno (BHS)
- Jill Sifantus (BHS)
- Susan Stark (BHS)
- David Weinstein (Pierce)
- Jessica Wender-Shubow (BHS)

The Brookline Educators Union & AFSCME Local 1358
present:

Monday, February 9

MLK room at BHS

Pizza at 5:30 (donated by the food service workers of AFSCME); Movie at 6:00

Students under 17 must have a permission slip from a parent or guardian

FOR TICKETS / PERMISSION SLIP: <http://tinyurl.com/Feb9PrideTickets>

PRIDE

CHICAGO TEACHERS SHOW HOW PAPERWORK CAN BE LIMITED

Have you noticed a bunch of new “initiatives” lately that require data collection and submission? Along with the paperwork and computer data entry you’ve done for a long time, there is additional work to be done. There are new progress reports and literacy ratings, logs, pieces of evidence for your evaluation, and a seemingly ever-growing number of emails from administrators instructing you to do a required training online or prepare for one there. Course websites seem to be expected, as is time spent on “Teachpoint” or online platforms linked to curriculum.

You also may be contributing to the writing of IEPs, or redesigning lessons to make them align with Common Core, or creating common rubrics, or writing assessments as teams. You might not know that common assessments have something to do with the coming mandate requiring the use of student assessment “outcomes” in your evaluation. Some educators in Brookline have already been doing work directly related to this new layer of assessments called “District-Determined Measures.”

(Note: there has to be collective bargaining about the “DDMs.” Furthermore, the MTA will soon be filing legislation calling for a 3-year moratorium on the use of standardized tests in evaluations, graduation requirements and school ratings. But it’s hard to tell yet if we can succeed in having it passed, so in the meantime,

your writing of, reporting on, and/or revising more standardized assessments remain on the horizon.)

Brookline educators are not alone in being buried under a growing pile of electronic and paper data, much of which does nothing to enhance the quality of caring, interpersonal relationships between you and the students you are working with now. Have you ever wondered if and when you would find the time to look at all the data, and use it in a meaningful way? Many teachers are questioning whether all of this data collecting helps to foster students’ investment in learning or a teacher’s ability to reach them effectively.

If all of the initiatives and mandates are supposedly such an improvement, then surely, there is less-useful paperwork that can be eliminated once the “new and improved” requirements are announced. *Who, in other words, is weeding the garden?*

Chicago teachers decided that they would have to be the ones to ensure that pruning got done. They united in their determination to limit wasteful time spent on paperwork. Thanks to the unity they forged, they have succeeded in getting the Chicago Board of Education (equivalent to our School Committee) to agree to the following:

If educators represented by the union are required to do addi-

tional paperwork (including digital) “on a regular basis”, then the administration “shall reasonably mitigate” the added workload by “eliminating other clerical work or paperwork.”

How does it all work? Last month, some Chicago teachers told me their story. (For a wonderful, more general oral history of the CTU’s recent successes, see *How to Jump-Start Your Union--Lessons from the Chicago Teachers*, available from the publisher at: Labornotes.org) The paperwork language emerged out of a district-wide set of discussions about bargaining proposals. It has been most effective, say the teachers, where the union has what they call “Professional Problems Committees” that get reports from members and bring them to principals. Simple surveys are available and they include room for suggestions of what is not serving students. But even more powerful is interpersonal communication. Grievances can be filed, but change is happening even when they are not.

Reports Xian Barrett, the new language is “shifting the discussion” and bringing about reductions because administrators and teachers must talk about the paper load. “A contract can’t just be about what management can and can’t do, but should hold them accountable for WHY we all do what we do at all. That is a conversation [teachers] will always win.”

DUE PROCESS

continued from page 1

A Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) who a student accused of physically hurting him in October, 2013, has been cleared of any wrongdoing by the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF). The union undertook its own investigation and challenged an initial finding of child abuse which was then re-

versed.

The union’s attorney brought forward staff members whose eyewitness accounts had not been considered initially. Their testimony showed that the original investigation had been incomplete. The 8-page decision detailed the BCBA’s honorable work (reflecting skills built over 14 years of unblemished professional practice). The decision concluded that she had

been subjected to “substantial prejudice” and concluded she had done “nothing inappropriate.”

While the BEU was successful in its defense of due process, the union does not have the means to win back the job for the BCBA because she did not yet have Professional Status. Whether she works in Brookline again or not is in the hands of the district administration.

FINANCE FOR EDUCATORS



Happy New Year! One of the cornerstones of Chinese philosophy and medicine is the Five Element Theory. It is a paradigm that uses the five elements of wood, fire, earth, metal and water to explain a myriad of phenomena in nature. In Chinese medicine, it is commonly used as a method to diagnose and treat illnesses. In the spirit of the Five Elements, I'd like to prescribe a five-step treatment plan for achieving financial harmony and balance in 2015.

1. **Consumer (Credit Card) Debt – The “Powers of Compounding” takes no prisoners!** If you pay the minimum payment of \$100.00 on a \$5,000 credit card loan – which typically requires a 20% interest payment – you will pay back \$10,840 over a 9 year period. The alternative is to double your monthly payment to \$200.00 and eliminate the debt in 33 months while paying only \$1,500 in interest. In short, debt grows exponentially and eliminating it is the cornerstone of a successful financial plan.
2. **Credit Card Score – As much as your reputation or “Good Name” defines you in life, a good credit score determines your financial options** from taking out a car loan to buying a house. You should check your FICO score for inaccuracies on a yearly basis. The big three: Experian, TransUnion or Equifax offer free seven day trials. Remember: Higher FICO scores = Lower interest rates on loans!
3. **Mortgage Refinancing – A penny saved with a mortgage refinance will earn you thousands.** The difference between today's rock bottom 3.88% for a 30-year mortgage and last year's 30 year at 4.50% is a significant \$111.00 per month and a savings of almost \$40,000 over the life of a 30-year loan. If you have a question about refinancing or obtaining a new mortgage contact our MTA mortgage broker: bpoirier@greenparkmortgage.com
4. **To Be Invested in Your 403(b) Should Not Be A Question – The benefits of creating a 403(b) retirement account are twofold:** One, you contribute pre-tax dollars to this account – money that is not taxed – and, in the process, your taxable income is reduced. If you make \$80,000 and contribute \$8,000, Uncle Sam only taxes \$72,000, possibly saving you up to \$2,000 dollars in taxes each year. Meanwhile, a 40 year old teacher who contributes \$8,000 each year will amass approximately \$500,000 by the age of 62, assuming a modest 8% return.
5. **Millennials, Money and the Roth IRA – For a generation that possesses a lot of student loan debt and attributed with the need to be remain in the “driver's seat,” one very flexible investment option to consider is a Roth IRA.** You fund this retirement account with post-tax dollars, and its benefits are numerous:
 - It's an autonomous, self-directed account, which is separate from teaching in Brookline. You're always in “the driver's seat.”
 - You can continue contributing to the account whether you're teaching or decide to switch careers.
 - Unlike a 403(b), the Roth provides you with the flexibility of withdrawing 100% of your contributions at any time and WITHOUT PENALTY. If you decide to buy a house, you can withdraw this money for the down payment.
 - If you're that 32 year old millennial who has yet to open an investment account, this is the year to open a Roth. If you contribute \$250.00 monthly for the next 30 years, you will amass the sum of \$400,000 by retirement at age 62.

–Robert Miller, Devotion

The President's Work

It is an exciting time for public education because a gentle giant that has not been so much sleeping as over-burdened is clearly standing up! In February, for instance, teachers who are negotiating contracts around the region are getting together to share ideas and forge alliances. Others are building a coalition with parents, superintendents, and school committees to publicly call for an end the testing madness.

Locally, educators and our colleagues in AFSCME Local 1358 (who do custodial, clerical, and food service work) are sponsoring a fun movie, *Pride*, on Feb. 9. It's about an alliance between laborers and lesbian and gay activists. All are welcome! Join Us! (See page 2)

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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