

## BEU CALENDAR

**Oct 23 Grievance Team Mtg**  
*BHS Room 240 3:15pm*

**Oct 28 MTA Bargaining Summit**

*Sheraton Framingham 9:00-4:00pm (Contact Jess)*

**Nov. 1 Alliance for Brookline Schools Forum: "Whatever Happened to Recess?"**

*Main Library, 6:00-8:00 pm*

**Nov 8 Executive Board Mtg**  
*BHS Room 258 3:15pm*

**Nov 13 Reps Council**  
*BHS Multipurpose Rm 020 3:15pm (basement)*

**Nov 20 Grievance Team Mtg**  
*BHS Room 240 3:15pm*

## FORUM

**"WHATEVER HAPPENED TO RECESS?"**  
and other questions about the scheduling of Brookline's school day.

Join parents, educators and other concerned members of our community for Peter Gray's presentation, *"Play Deficit Disorder: A National Crisis and How to Solve it Locally,"*

Followed by a panel discussion about how best to balance play and learning in the school day.

Dr. Peter Gray teaches at Boston College and is the author of *Free to Learn: Why Unleashing the Instinct to Play Will Make Our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant, and Better Students for Life.*

**Wednesday, November 1**

**6:00 - 8:00 pm**

**Main Library, Hunneman Hall**

**Light supper at 6:00; program at 6:30**

Sponsored by  
The Alliance for Brookline Schools  
[www.ourbrooklineschools.org](http://www.ourbrooklineschools.org)

## TRUST Us!

Trust is the foundation for any relationship. You can't be a friend without a mutual relationship of trust. It is also true that companies and businesses depend on trust. Don't get us wrong. We're not suggesting that corporations are people and that they have the same rights as people do. However, while a company is not a person, its success depends upon its people.

Just like a friendship is built on trust, any effective work relationship depends on trust. Businesses demonstrate this every day in trusting their employees with vehicles and other expensive equipment, not to mention trusting employees with their most important asset, their customers. Likewise, employees trust their employer to treat them with respect, to pay them as agreed, to provide them with a safe and secure work environment.

Now consider public schools. Public schools are not companies that produce commodities. Nor are students and their families customers to be marketed to by educators. Public Schools are learning communities that are foundational to a democratic society. But one thing they share with businesses is they depend on trust.

### **School Committee: "Leave it to us"**

If three years of contract negotiations taught us all anything, it is how a school committee can cause trust to break down. This is complicated story that we don't want to oversimplify, so we will be specific in our examples.

Over and over again the BEU complained about shameful wages for Brookline's paraprofessionals. We knew this was causing a crisis in hir-

ing and retention. The crisis is with us still.

In February of 2017 the school committee released a report on the state of negotiations. In this report they stated that they had a plan that would increase para income by 28%. Much of the increase would come from adding minutes to paras' work-day.

The school committee insisted on its "management prerogative" to increase hours at will. That's not a way to build a relationship of trust with employees. Rather than negotiating this, the school committee opted to go it alone. That unfortunately draws comparisons with management of the fast food industry and its lawyers who care little when they say "you'll work when, and as much, as we alone decide and at a time we decide."

Despite our best efforts to get the question of added hours and scheduling into the contract the school committee insisted that doing this would be a deal-breaker.

As a management style, this approach is proving to be a poor one, indeed. A formal agreement would have given everyone information-consistent information--well in advance. This would have provided administrators and employees, their families and students' families, along with other members of the community, a shared understanding that everyone could implement together.

There would have been time for clarification and trouble-shooting. Preparations could have begun as early as March when the contract was ratified. Administrators could have begun to discuss scheduling with paras in the

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# HOW TO USE YOUR UNION



Dear Contract Corner,

*I know as a teacher, I am part of the BEU, but I'm not really sure how or when to "use" my union?*

*Signed,  
New to the Union*

Dear New to the Union,

There may be different times when you have a question about the contract and you're not sure who in your building you should ask. Your building union representatives and/or grievance representatives in your building are good resources for you when you have a specific question regarding the contract, your pay steps, scheduling or if you're feeling like your contract rights may be violated. **The building reps are primarily organizers and action oriented. If they don't have an answer for you, they know who to go to in order to get your questions answered. The grievance reps are knowledgeable about the contract and are specifically trained to help resolve disputes related to the contract.**

**You should know that you are entitled - by law! - to have union representation at meetings with administrators that might result in discipline.** If you're concerned about an upcoming meeting with an administrator, you should make sure that a union representative is present. Your union representative is someone who can attend the meeting with you so another person is present acting as a witness, at the meeting with an administrator. Never go into a meeting alone if you think there may be any kind of discipline from an administrator. If you don't have a union representative present, you have the right to end the meeting with an administrator. ***Also, if a BEU rep is not available, you can postpone the meeting until one can be found.***

The contract is long and confusing... but the contract is what protects us and allows us to be better and happier educators! **If you have a question, concern, or curiosity about the contract - contact your grievance Representative, listed at the end of this article.** We are knowledgeable about the contract and can get answers for you quickly!

Be aware that your BEU reps can also help resolve disputes between colleagues. In an intense working environment like a school, interpersonal disputes will inevitably arise. Don't let these fester - and don't go to an administrator to complain about your colleagues. You may have a close working relationship with an administrator, but be aware that all administrators hold power and this power can be used carelessly. Too often complaints about our colleagues result in discipline by administrators. Instead, use your BEU reps to help resolve these conflicts. Many BEU reps are experienced educators who have a great deal of experience resolving conflicts in a professional manner; it's always best to try to resolve these conflicts with help from our trusted BEU colleagues.

In short, your union representatives are great resources in your building. Your union dues pay for the stipends for building reps, grievance reps and other BEU office holders - so you are entitled to get help from them. Don't be afraid to use the BEU!

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)  
Cathy Heller (BHS)  
Anna MacIver (Runkle)  
Shelley Mains (BHS)  
Susan Moreno (BHS)  
Jill Sifantus (BHS)  
Susan Stark (BHS)  
David Weinstein (Pierce, retired)  
Jessica Wender-Shubow



## TRUST US

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spring, individual adjustments could have been agreed to well in advance, Payroll could have been notified. All who would be affected would know what to expect and do.

### **How has the lack of a formal agreement been working?**

Instead we have had unevenly implemented arrangements that were not explained in advance. This has left employees and administrators alike confused and administrators burdened. All have been left to scramble to explain changes and to adjust to them. Mistakes have been made in pay leaving employees who live close to the economic margin with cause for anxiety.

### **Sudden efforts to change hours and with that, pay, in the midst of a school year**

Having failed to negotiate with the BEU any added work time, the school committee left problems of haphazard and unilateral decisionmaking to continue. Here's another illustration: paras who have dedicated themselves to working for after school homework

centers at a particular pay rate have suddenly been told that their pay will change, and for some, cut. This after they worked for weeks trusting their paycheck would contain the pay they expected when they agreed to do the work. Pay is a mandatory subject of bargaining. Now time will have to be found to address the damage done.

### **Arbitrary salary differences & change in schedules foster low morale, distrust, and inefficiency**

The failure to trust paras as problem solvers at the bargaining table is now sucking up hours and hours of time of the BEU, of supervisors, principals, and central administrators. These are hours that could have been spent on delivering services to children. Payroll is spending time it does not have, and worst of all a critical part of the staff is still confused about what they are earning.

Contractual salary schedules honor the fairness principle of equal pay for comparable work. This fosters cooperation instead of competition. In our final example of lack of trust-building, the school committee also insisted, on an overly simplistic notion that an hourly rate increase for just some of

the paras would solve their para labor shortage. It hasn't.

Again and again, the educators on the BEU negotiating team tried to explain to the school committee that their list of who would get a pay differential was arbitrary and artificial.

Furthermore, with para positions unfilled, teachers are being encouraged to violate their contractual duty free lunch and prep periods to fill in for the lack of paras. Surely, a more fair contract would create a more efficient system.

Is it a surprise that just two months into the school year, the central administration is discovering we were right all along? They now want to increase pay for another limited group of paras while the year is underway.

The BEU's approach to negotiations has been rooted in the principle that those who do the work on which an institution depends have insight into what the institution needs to function well. The BEU will continue to insist that bargaining in good faith is the most efficient and effective means to solve systemic problems. Not to mention, it improves morale of all involved and deepens trust.

-- *Bob Miller & Jess Wender-Shubow*



## YOUR HEALTH CARE

### **OPEN ENROLLMENT UNTIL NOV. 22 FOR BEU-SPONSORED LONG-TERM DISABILITY INSURANCE**

The BEU-sponsored Long Term Disability program is designed to pay monetary benefits (60% of your salary tax free) for extended periods of time (this can be to age 65 or beyond) when an injury or illness prevents you from earning an income. The benefit does not conflict with other contractual benefits. This payment is in addition to those.

For details, see post at [brookline.massteacher.org](http://brookline.massteacher.org)

### **TOWN & SCHOOL UNIONS NOW NEGOTIATING CHOICE OF HEALTH INSURANCE PROVIDER**

Our health care agreements are negotiated by the PEC (Public Employees Committee) and the Town administrators. All Brookline municipal unions are represented on the PEC. Jessica Wender-Shubow and I represent all BEU bargaining units, both active and retired. On June 30, 2018 our current GIC health care agreement expires. We are reviewing and analyzing GIC plans and options for a new agreement (July 2018 through June 2021). We are concerned that beginning in July 2018, GIC enrollees will face changes in what insurance plans are offered. This could include the inclusion of new carriers or simply a consolidation of the six insurance carriers currently offered. We have a deadline of December 1, 2017 to renew with the GIC. We are also reviewing a three year plan designed for Brookline from Blue Cross Blue Shield. Their plan is competitive and we are looking at it very seriously. However, its rates are only fixed for one year and if we leave the GIC, we will not be able to re-enter for three years. We will be bringing a recommendation to you very soon. Jess and I welcome your input.

Please remember the HRA (Health Reimbursement Arrangement) helps to cover copays when you have to visit the ER, have inpatient or outpatient procedures or a series of MRI imaging sessions. We negotiated a fund to reimburse some of these copay amounts, so please use it. Do not use for it your Flex Spending Benny Card which is your money.

-*Sheila Leach, PEC Rep*

# FINANCE FOR EDUCATORS

## MUCH ADO ABOUT TARGET DATE FUNDS, MORTGAGES & WILLS



**Investing with a Target** – Let's begin with stating the obvious about investing for most Americans. It's daunting, confusing and unnecessarily complicated. Most investors are simply overwhelmed and unprepared to evaluate an investment products suitability. People are overmatched by the intimidating, jargon-filled fund prospectus and rarely appreciate the corrosive impact of hidden fees on a mutual fund's long term returns.

What if I could offer you a simple, low-cost, professionally managed, one-stop investment fund? If you're interested, I'd like you to introduce you to the highly rated Vanguard Target Retirement Series of funds. Target-date or life-cycle funds provide investors with a diversified portfolio of index funds that operate on auto-pilot. Like clockwork, your portfolio regularly rebalances ensuring you have the right mix of investments. In fact, a Target Date fund's investment strategy is age sensitive and automatically reduces the portfolio's risk profile as you get closer to retirement.

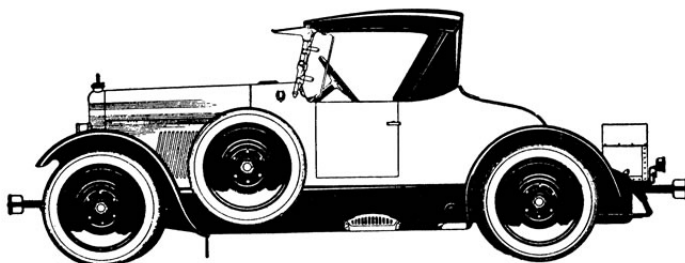
**Next Enrollment Workshop:** Pierce School lunchroom, Thursday, November 9 at 3:15 pm. Please bring your smartphone and laptop.

**Saving on a New Mortgage or a Refinancing** – Does half a percent or even a quarter of a percent really make that much of a difference in your mortgage payment? Absolutely! The difference between an interest rate of 3.78% and 4.28% translates into a savings of \$1,000 per year and \$30,000 over the life of a 30 year loan! If you're exploring the possibility of refinancing or purchasing a home, you should take advantage of the MTA's discounted mortgage program with Berkshire Bank. The contact person is Bill Poirier, Senior Mortgage Consultant: bpoirier@berkshire bank.com. (Countless BEU members have participated in this program over the years.)

**You Need a Will!** – According to a recent survey, 78% of Millennials do not have a will. If you die intestate – without a will – your assets will be governed by the laws of "intestate succession." In the case of a married couple in MA, you might be surprised to learn that your surviving spouse is only entitled to receive 50% of your assets with the remainder divided amongst relatives – some of whom you may not like. In short, don't wait like Prince until "the party over" and "Oops out of time." Create a simple will for as little as a couple of hundred dollars with LegalZoom, RocketLawyer or USLegalWills.com.

Bob Miller is the BEU Financial Consultant and a retired Devotion teacher, you can reach him at: odysseus7@comcast.net

*-Robert Miller, Devotion*



## The President's Work Negotiations

*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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*Amie Buchman, Communications  
Chair*

*Jessica Wender-Shubow, President*