

## EDUCATORS, STUDENTS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS WIDEN INQUIRY ON SCHOOLS

*THE BEU IS SUPPORTING 2 UPCOMING PROJECTS -- JOIN US!*

### BRINGING JOY BACK INTO THE CLASSROOM -- A COMMUNITY DIALOGUE ABOUT BROOKLINE SCHOOLS

*WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 6:30-8:30PM, MAIN LIBRARY*

### STUDENT MEETING: BROOKLINE PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

*WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 4:00-6:00PM, BIG STUDIOS*

-- MORE INFO ON BOTH AT [BROOKLINE.MASSTEACHER.ORG](http://BROOKLINE.MASSTEACHER.ORG) --

## BEU UNITED FOR AUTHENTIC LEARNING

There's a saying in the labor movement, "United We Bargain, Divided We Beg" and in Brookline, there are clear signs of growing unity as the union prepares to negotiate with the School Committee. In a set of recent forums, BEU educators discovered that they share a vision for creating schools that can serve the needs of the whole child in our diverse district.

These open BEU discussions that unite and empower employees stand in contrast to the district's prevailing approach to communications. Effective workarounds do happen, to be sure, but the dominant approach to communication under the current central administration tends to limit deep analysis of our District's achievements and what achievement means.

To gather information, non-aligned administrators tend to rely on narrow standardized data and surveys with generalities and scattered anecdotes. They meet with isolated individuals or

small groups without reserving time for the entire staff to evaluate in an open way how things as a whole are going. Sometimes, the senior administration relies on staff meetings that are famous for their constrictive agendas, which stymie efforts to get to the bottom of a problem. In these ways, they narrow the focus to addressing specific, isolated issues, leaving the institutional nature of the problems and challenges unaddressed.

BEU forums, by contrast, have not hesitated to analyze how things are going in a holistic, systemic, and qualitative way. Members discussed the relationship between issues such as equity, inclusion, differentiated instruction, collaboration, and overall school culture.

Soon, students, parents, and the larger community will also be holding discussions of the current state of the Brookline Public schools (see above). Out of all of these events will come

## BEU CALENDAR

### 403b Enrollment Workshop

*Nov 15, 3:10 – 4:15 pm*

*BHS Mailroom next to MLK*

### Reps Council Meeting

*Nov 19, 3:15—4:45pm BHS*

### Public Forum:

#### Bringing Joy Back into the Classroom

*Nov. 28 see [brookline.massteacher.org](http://brookline.massteacher.org)*

#### “Nothing About Us, Without Us, is For Us” Participatory Action Research Project

*Nov. 28 Student co-researcher meeting  
see [brookline.massteacher.org](http://brookline.massteacher.org)*

### Grievance Team Meeting

*Nov. 26 3:15-5:00pm BHS Rm. 258*

### Executive Board Meeting

*Dec 3, 3:15 – 5pm BHS Rm. 258*

a picture that BEU negotiators will use to inform our bargaining proposals. They will design these to respect adults and children alike, aiming to help achieve respect and equity for all, and thereby improve the education that our schools deliver.

The holistic vision that is emerging from the forums would prioritize authentic learning for both children and adults.

The educators are defining authentic learning as that which reserves time and space for human beings to express themselves on their own terms, rather than being driven by standardized approaches. This can only happen if student loads and caseloads are

# You WIN!



## **RECENT UNION SUCCESSES...and ways YOU can protect your rights and keep your union strong.**

I think of our contract as a “justice-structure” that makes sure we are respected as professionals and that our working conditions enable us to do our best work with kids. As we head into negotiations, here’s a brief rundown of some recent wins for YOU that your hard-working Grievance Committee, Negotiations Team, and BEU leadership have been able to secure:

### **Summer workshop hours for BHS co-taught courses restored:**

This summer BHS regular and special education teachers found out that the usual number of paid summer workshop hours they got to work together to prepare for the new year had been unilaterally cut in half. You organized together and successfully argued how critical this work is on behalf of our most vulnerable students, and the district agreed to restore that crucial planning time.

### **Credit given for graduate coursework:**

This summer, teachers who were promised a certain step because of graduate coursework discovered after they were hired that some of their graduate credits had been denied. Our union successfully advocated that they be restored to the step they had been promised when they agreed to work for Brookline.

### **Fair(er) para pay:**

Our paraprofessionals are crucial to the success of so many programs and classrooms, yet the district has insisted on paying some paras less. Our union successfully won increased pay for two more groups of paras: all 1:1 aides (not just those in specialized programs) and paras in the Bridge Alliance program.

### **Paras properly paid for subbing:**

When paraprofessionals substitute for teachers, they should get sub pay. Our union won a grievance in which paras who hadn’t been paid at the proper rate got the \$\$ they were owed.

### **Para lunches:**

Our current contract guarantees a 30-minute lunch for our hard-working paras. We know that such duty-free breaks are crucial for the mental and physical well-being we deserve, not to mention our ability to be fully present for and responsive to the children we work with. Don’t voluntarily work through lunch!

## **Safe, appropriate staffing levels:**

Our current contract holds that if there are more than 65 students in a room, the district must provide a second adult to supervise and ensure student safety. Be sure to ask for this coverage.

**NOW WHAT?** As we go into negotiations, here are some other ways to protect your rights as a professional and employee:

- (1) **READ YOUR PAY STUB CAREFULLY.** Mistakes happen, so be vigilant to make sure you’re getting the compensation you’ve earned
- (2) **CHECK YOUR STEP.** Again, mistakes happen. You should have received a notice with your current salary and step level - be sure to double check that it’s correct.
- (3) **REPORT MISSED LUNCHES AND PREPS.** Lost or moved lunches and preps have become a systemic problem. Please report if this has happened to you at: <http://tinyurl.com/subbing-or-lost-lunch-prep>
- (4) **SHOW UP!** When the Negotiations Team unveils our new contract proposals, or if/when we’re asked to come to School Committee meetings or other events, we want to show up in force. The School Committee notices. The more of us that show up, the stronger the bargaining position of our Negotiating Team, and the better the contract we’ll get.

YOU are the union, and YOU make the union strong!

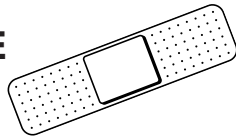
**-Alisa Conner**

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

Deb Allen (Devotion, retired)  
Alisa Conner (BHS)  
Jody Curran (Driscoll)  
Hillary Golden (Lincoln)  
Mark Goldner (Heath)  
Rich Gorman (BHS)  
Noah Gronland-Jacob (BHS)  
Jen Hanaghan (BHS)  
Cathy Heller (BHS)  
Kathy Hitchcock (BHS)  
Anna Maclver (Runkle)  
David Weinstein (Pierce, retired)  
Jessica Wender-Shubow



## YOUR HEALTH CARE



The Brookline PEC (Teachers, Firefighters, Police, Engineers, AFSCME, Teamsters and Retirees) represent us with the Town when bargaining healthcare agreements. We continue to have a Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) to help members and covered dependents pay a portion of special copays and deductibles we incur. These reimbursements apply to active and non-eligible Medicare GIC subscribers only.

- Up to a maximum reimbursement of \$150.00 for outpatient surgery co-payments per occurrence with a maximum of four reimbursements per plan year, per each subscriber and his or her covered dependents under that plan
- Up to a maximum reimbursement of \$500.00 for inpatient hospital care co-payments per occurrence with a maximum of four reimbursements per plan year, per each subscriber and his or her covered dependents under that plan.
- A \$50.00 reimbursement for emergency room co-payments per occurrence.
- Up to a maximum reimbursement of \$100.00 for high-tech imaging (MRI, CT or PET scans) co-payments per occurrence starting with the third occurrence. All high-tech imaging services must be related to the same serious and/or chronic medical condition and must occur within the same plan year.

The Town has appropriated \$70,000 for this year. It is referred to as HRA funds. If the funds are exhausted by eligible claims for reimbursement, no further payments will be paid by the Town. The Town's reimbursement shall be prioritized based on the date that eligible claims are received by the Town. The Town must receive eligible claims within 90 calendar days of the billing date. To be eligible one must have documentation of claim, proof of payment and a completed HRA voucher. One can obtain a voucher online at Brookline's Human Resource Department or email me and I will forward the form to you.

After April 30th, if there are funds left in the HRA account, one can submit more claims if you have previously incurred your limit. BEU will notify members if more funds are left so you can apply for this further reimbursement.

Please feel free to email with any questions or concerns.  
Take care....2sheilaleach@gmail.com

---

Authentic, continued from page 1

small enough for educators to guide students in project-based learning and community building. Time must be reserved for each and every person to express and develop themselves as whole human beings and to do this collaboratively with one another, not as projected outcomes of reductive measurements.

Nor can determining proper caseloads and student loads be separated from this need for authentic collaboration. Such practice requires more time than does effort to "on-board" teachers onto an essentially top-down agenda.

A school system that truly shares decision-making with staff collectively bargains working conditions such as caseload, student load, equitable assignments, time collaboration and scheduling. Collective bargaining compensates for unequal power, and educators are well aware that such power matters. Collective bargaining lets educators reach agreements to which administrators can be held—thus collective bargaining is itself a kind of collaboration. It is having a voice with power.

Pay and benefits must reflect respect for the educators involved, including

paraprofessionals. Fair compensation helps with retention, securing sustained and sustainable relationships which benefit from the wisdom and community that is rooted in shared experience and ongoing partnership.

Finally, educators are calling for authentic learning through professional development that emerges out of respect for the expertise and needs of educators (paraprofessionals, teachers, and related service providers) themselves. Authentic PD is collaborative; it does not sit isolated educators in front of screens delivering commercial fare. All of these issues can be addressed at the bargaining table.

# FINANCE FOR EDUCATORS

## MUCH ADO ABOUT GOOD INVESTING BEHAVIOR



The “return gap” is a financial enigma enveloped in a conundrum and tightly wrapped with a red ribbon riddle. How else can you explain the puzzling results from a recent study about the dramatic disparity in investment returns between the average investor – that’s you - and the S&P 500 – a proxy for the U.S. stock market – over the past 30 years? The study by Dalbar, a Boston-based investment research firm, demonstrated that the average investor generated a meager 3.7% annual return over the past 30 years while the S&P stock index returned 11.1%, adding up to 300% more over those same 30 years.

What’s the explanation for this investment aberration that defies logic? How is it possible for an individual investor to underperform the market so consistently and dramatically? The answer is simple and unambiguous: emotional investors behave badly when confronted with extreme market volatility. They sell when the market is low and, of course, foolishly buy when the market is high. In the process of selling and buying at the most inopportune times, investors fail to capture the long term returns of their mutual fund.

One of the more compelling examples of the adverse impact of the “return gap” unfolded in 2008. Following the dramatic, 35% market decline during the financial crisis, scores of spooked investors withdrew their money, at the market low and at precisely the wrong time. The “return gap” for those panicked investors with their money in cash was exacerbated in 2009 when the market rebounded 26%. Since they had parked their money in cash, they missed the opportunity to participate in the market rebound, pare their losses and narrow the “return gap.”

So what’s the solution to bridging this persistent “return gap” for the average investor? Avoid the inclination to be influenced by either fear or greed and adopt an investor’s temperament, a mindset that avoids following the crowd and resists the urge to time the market either at its top or bottom. In the words of Warren Buffet; “The most important quality for an investor is temperament, not intellect. You need a temperament that neither derives great pleasure from being with the crowd or against the crowd.”

An automatic credit card solution: In a recent study from Nerd Wallet, the major reason why people consistently pay bills late is ..... - “They forgot.” I hate to state the obvious, but the solution is to register for “automatic payments.” In the process, you will not only save money but also improve your FICO score. (This advice also holds true for making student loan payments.)

**November 403b Enrollment Workshop at BHS: Thursday, November 15 at 3:15 pm in the faculty room. Please bring your laptops.**

*-Robert Miller, Devotion (Retired)*

### **The President’s Work**

The BEU negotiating Team has initiated the bargaining process with the School Committee. Meanwhile plans for an open process are underway. The BEU believes that the community and all BEU members should have a part of the process.

We are excited that Grade 7-12 students are stepping up to be co-researchers in the Participatory Action Research project. If you know of students who might be interested, have them email us.

*Members of our units should be receiving weekly news briefs. Let us know if you’re not getting yours!*

*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. While the current right-wing U.S. Supreme Court has recently supported efforts to weaken unions by eliminating fair-share fees, all educators in our district benefit from the contractual protections, bargaining power, and unity of the BEU. So colleagues look to one another to keep the union strong by becoming a member and participating in the work of the union.*

### **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](mailto: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:*

*[brookline.massteacher.org](http://brookline.massteacher.org).*

*All members are encouraged to join using a personal email address.*

*Colleen Muldoon, Communications Chair*

*Jessica Wender-Shubow, President*