

## BEU Releases Platform for Negotiations

The BEU Negotiating Team has developed a bargaining platform to be submitted for approval of the union membership. The platform will provide the guiding principles for bargaining proposals that the team will then develop. The platform synthesizes contributions of hundreds of Brookline educators and members of the greater Brookline community. In the coming days, building teams will be asking you for feedback.

### TEACH THE WHOLE CHILD

We are committed to teaching the whole child in order that all students become good citizens, engage in critical thinking, tap into their talents, and develop a lifelong love of learning. Children deserve personalized and sustained attention from knowledge-

able and caring educators who have time to work with them effectively and tailor the teaching and learning to each student's passions, interests, and educational needs. Students deserve child-centered classrooms that support curiosity, critical thinking that challenges assumptions and honors rigorous scholarship, authentic inquiry-based learning, and social-emotional growth that respects difference.

The most important factors in providing quality education to students are those that prioritize non-standardized, individualized learning: proper staffing levels, small class sizes, and respect for the professional judgment of the educators who work most directly with the students. Smaller workloads secured by proper staffing will enable the rapid response time the school community deserves when urgent needs arise. Reasonable student-educator ratios allow time for adults and children to build the trust essential to taking academic and creative risks necessary for authentic learning.

Understaffing, the pulling of teachers and paraprofessionals from the classroom, mandates without designated time, over-reliance on standardized testing, inordinate data collection, restrictive rubrics, rigid scheduling, ex-

cessive initiatives, and a narrow idea of success are siphoning away time and focus from teaching and learning, resulting in students losing out on meaningful instruction, knowledge, and deeper understanding.

Educators deserve time built into their schedule to prepare rich curriculum for their students. They need time to engage in educator-determined collaboration that honors the expertise and diversity of our faculty. Educators need time and staffing to establish safe and organized learning spaces. Ample time allows educators to develop relevant curriculum, establish a variety of informative assessment methods, and communicate with staff and caregivers. Proper staffing ratios allow educators sufficient time during the school day to think and reflect, to help one another on their own terms, to listen to children, and to give meaningful feedback to their students.

Students are best served by:

- **educators with smaller caseloads and student-educator ratios.**
- **more educator control over their school day.**
- **safe and responsive classrooms.**
- **fewer curricular and instructional mandates.**
- **less focus on testing.**

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## SIGN THE "FUND OUR FUTURE" PETITION!

All across the Commonwealth, MTA members are becoming "citizen sponsors" of an MTA bill that will make the legislature pay for its unfunded mandates and to fairly compensate for the staggeringly unequal education that property-tax based school funding creates. Let your building rep know you want to sign, or download a sheet yourself and help them collect BEU signatures!

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO [MASTEACHER.ORG/FUNDOURFUTURE](http://MASTEACHER.ORG/FUNDOURFUTURE)**

### BEU CALENDAR

#### 403b Enrollment Workshop

*January 10, 3:10 – 4:10 pm  
Lincoln School Faculty Room*

#### Race Reels: Our Mockingbird

*January 10  
Pizza: 5:45, Film: 6 p.m.  
MLK Room, BHS*

#### MTA Winter Union Skills Conference

*January 12, Framingham  
All members welcome*

#### Reps Council Meeting

*January 14, 3:15—4:45 pm  
BHS Room 020*

#### Grievance Team Meeting

*January 28, 3:15-5:00*

## The Contract Corner:



Dear BEU,

I'm not sure about the whole "grievance" procedure thing. I like my supervisor and I wouldn't want to give her grief! Wouldn't filing a grievance make my administrators mad? I don't want them to think I'm not a team player. After all, we're all working really hard and none of us is in it for the money.

Aggrieved at Devo

Dear Aggrieved,

You're absolutely right. We are all working hard, even administrators! And we're all trying to do what's best for the kids we serve.

The contract is the structure we have for ensuring that our jobs are fair and doable, so that we can do our best work with students. Administrators understand that "grievance" isn't about giving them grief - it's the contractually negotiated process we have for working out difficulties and ensuring justice in our workplace.

But what's it all about? Below is a very brief summary of the grievance process:

(1) We always try to resolve difficulties informally, directly with the people involved. But if that doesn't seem to be working, then contact your Rep or a Grievance Team member. The Grievance rep will talk through the situation with you and see if it is a violation (on purpose or inadvertent!) of the contract. He/she/they may be able to help you resolve the situation anyway, even if there isn't a contract violation.

(2) Level 1: The Grievance person will send an official letter to your administrator summarizing the contract violation and asking for a specific solution (or "remedy"). If the administrator agrees, the grievance is resolved.

(3) Level 2: If the administrator denies the grievance - i.e., disagrees that it was a contract violation - then we can send an official letter to the Superintendent. There may be a hearing at this point where the parties get to make their cases. If the Superintendent agrees with the union's interpretation and remedy, the grievance is resolved.

(4) Level 3: If the parties don't agree, the next step would be a hearing in front of the School Committee.

(5) Arbitration: If the SC denies the grievance at Level 3, then we have to decide whether or not to go to arbitration. This involves \$\$, and we bring in MTA lawyers to help shepherd us through the process.

The Grievance Team decides when and whether it makes sense to move through the levels, and at any stage of the process, the parties might figure something out.

But WHAT does it make sense to use this process for? Here's a very short list:

- If an administrator expects you to give up your lunch or prep to do something
- If you're not getting paid properly (CHECK YOUR PAYCHECK!)
- If the evaluation process isn't being followed
- If your schedule gets changed without proper notice
- If due process hasn't been followed in the event of discipline from your supervisor

If you're not sure your situation involves a contract violation, reach out anyway! We can help handle all sorts of issues that need resolution, not just contract violations. Don't hesitate to contact a Grievance Committee Member, call the BEU at 617-277-0251 or email [BEU-MTA@hotmail.com](mailto:BEU-MTA@hotmail.com) if you have any questions about situations in your job.

Sincerely,

Your Grievance Team Members:

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)

Sue Zobel (Lincoln)

Jessica Wender-Shubow

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## EQUITY AND RESPECT

Brookline should demand a just school system that promotes racial, gender, and class equity for students and staff alike. Students have the greatest educational opportunities when schools ensure equitable working conditions for all educators. Students stand to lose if their teacher, paraprofessional or related service provider is unfairly saddled with unexpected new assignments. Fair schedules uphold the dignity of adults and youth alike by giving employees flexibility in responding to challenges that inevitably arise. Top-down bureaucratic control that disregards the human impact of scheduling decisions is detrimental to students and educators. Students should be able to depend on their educators having reasonable and equitable daily and weekly schedules. Educators and students should not be expected to absorb the stresses of understaffing.

We recognize that teaching is a professional endeavor, and that educator autonomy and academic freedom promote creative growth and student achievement. Educators should be supported in exercising discretion in determining, within established guidelines, the organization, pedagogy, curriculum, student assessment and presentation of a course of study. Students are best served by:

- **equitable, realistic work assignments and autonomous time for staff.**
- **respect for staff expertise that reflects varied backgrounds, perspectives, and**

**teaching philosophies.**

- **equitable and robust resources and staffing across the District.**
- **staff that is organized into a strong union that protects the dignity of the work done by educators.**

## COMPENSATION

Brookline students directly benefit from highly qualified and dedicated educators. A competitive salary ensures that Brookline will attract and retain the best educational professionals. Especially among our paraprofessionals, wage increases are critically needed to encourage our current members to stay in the district and to attract new paraprofessionals. Pay must be, at the very least, a livable wage.

One job with a reasonable workday should be enough to live a quality life!

Students are best served by staff:

- **that have equitable compensation and benefits based on the principle of equal pay for comparable work.**
- **whose good will is neither taken for granted, nor exploited.**
- **who have compensation packages that respect their professionalism and the dignity of their work.**
- **whose pay is fair, competitive, consistent and dependable.**

## SYSTEMS AND OPERATIONS

Systems and operations within our district should be designed and implemented first and foremost to serve the needs of the students and educators. Administrators should limit

paperwork wherever possible and ensure that educators are trusted as the experts best able to make decisions about their craft. Collaboration rooted in mutual respect depends on clarity and transparency in the assignment and processing of administrative tasks. All educators should have access to information well in advance, enabling them to understand, plan for, and assess combined work expectations. Educators' feedback and input should be solicited and valued. Educators' concerns should be a known and answered with timely, respectful communication and transparent follow through from the Central Administration.

Brookline schools are best served by:

- **written, clear, consistent procedures negotiated and agreed to with the union well in advance of implementation**
- **of all paperwork tasks, taking existing workload into consideration.**
- **clearly communicated opportunity to apply for, and be considered for, open positions.**
- **more opportunity and mechanisms to attract substitutes (day-to-day and long-term) and address other staffing shortfalls in school buildings.**
- **written communication protocols that respect educators' insight and expertise.**
- **limits to the introduction of new operational procedures and requirements without training and pay.**

BEU educators are confident that agreements on these issues will enhance and protect what our schools do best, and improve the education we deliver.



## OUR HEALTHCARE

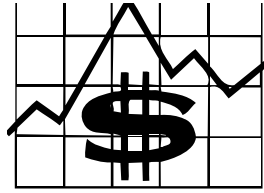
The Public Employees Committee (PEC) will be meeting with the Town Administrators on Jan. 9. Our agreement remains in effect until a new one is agreed to. The Town makes no secret of the fact that they would like to change the "83%-17% split" in the Town's favor, which would mean higher premium costs for employees. Jess Wender-Shubow and I, as members of the PEC will be representing you at these new negotiations.

Are you using your Benny Card effectively? Remember not to use your Benny Card for copays at ER visits, inpatient or outpatient procedures, and third or subsequent high-tech imaging procedures. If you use your Benny Card at the time of service, you cannot claim our HRA benefit. We earned the HRA reimbursements, so please use them when necessary. Take care....2sheilaleach@gmail.com,

-Sheila Leach, PEC Rep

# FINANCE FOR EDUCATORS

## A FICO PRIMER



It's just not "Fair," not to mention confusing, trying to understand your FICO score issued by the eponymous Fair Isaac Corporation. What does it mean to be assigned a score of 650, 750, or the magical & elusive 850? What factors contribute to the FICO scoring that can range from 350 to 850, and what are the financial implications for your day-to-day life?

Let's begin with an explanation of the FICO scoring formula that takes into account five factors:

1. Payment history (35%) — Do you consistently pay your credit cards bills, student loans, or mortgage payment on time? Put all bills on automatic payment!
2. Debt, amount owed (30%) — Again, do you pay your bills on time and avoid maxing out on credit cards? The solution is to maintain low credit card balances and pay bills on time!
3. Length of credit history (15%) — It takes time to develop good credit. Maintain your existing accounts, avoid closing accounts, and regularly use your credit card.
4. New credit (10%) — Opening up a new credit card sets off an alarm. Maintain the status quo with your existing accounts for at least year.
5. Credit mix (10%) — It's all about the variety of debt. Ideally your debt includes both credit card and installment loans. (Consider an interest-free 0% loan from Best Buy).

A low FICO score is hardly the Mark of Cain. Unlike Cain, you can atone for your financial sins and improve your FICO score with a systematic plan, patience, and a willingness to embrace a more disciplined approach to managing debt. Here's the plan:

- Obtain your FICO score, review it, and dispute inaccurate information.
- Set up automatic payments on all loans, especially credit cards and student loans.
- Pay your credit card bill twice a month and consider doing the same with a student loan.
- Don't open up any new credit cards or close any old ones.
- Change your banking behavior for six months and add twenty points.\*
  - Make regular transactions with your checking and savings account.
  - Never, never overdraw.
  - Maintain a balance of at least \$400.00 for a minimum of 6 months.

"Don't let poor scores stand in the way of your dreams." I lifted this line directly from the recommended myFico website, and it's not an understatement. A "good" FICO score of 750 is both a gateway and a litmus test for access to your financial dreams.

\*This change is part of the new UltraFICO score credit calculation. It's a new opportunity to raise your score – up to 20 points - by more effectively managing your money.

**403b Enrollment Meeting: Thursday, January 10, Lincoln School Faculty Room at 3:10 pm!**

*-Robert Miller, Devotion (Retired)*

### The President's Work

Negotiations preparations are underway involving all of our members and the community. We are disappointed that the School Committee has refused so far to allow the community to silently observe negotiations. For now, we have let them know we'll be bringing members into the sessions.

It's also a shame that the district has refused its obligation to negotiate over Instructional Leadership Teams. On March 5 the BEU is taking the district to the Dept. of Labor Relations to answer to a charge of Unfair Labor Practice.

*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. 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 being a member and participating in the work of the union.*

### THE BROOKLINE EDUCATOR

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Email: [beu-mta@hotmail.com](mailto:beu-mta@hotmail.com)

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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; Jess Wender-Shubow, President