The Baltimore Educator

The official quarterly publication of the Baltimore Teachers Union

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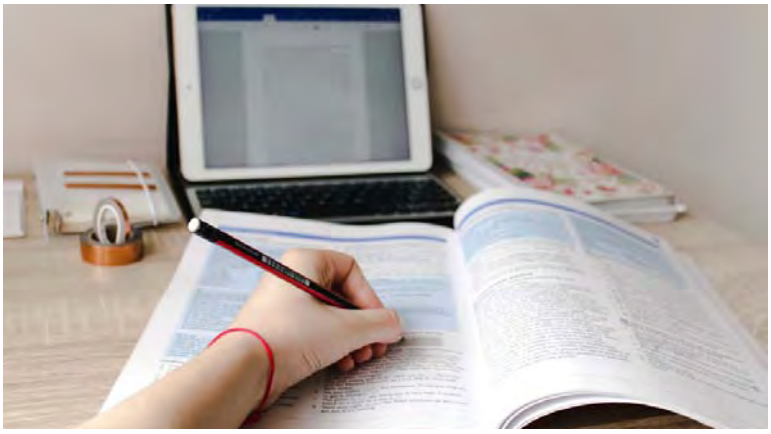


Distance Learning Across Digital Divide

By Iris Kirsch

Educators are the perpetually unsung. I'm glad that grocery store workers are finally getting the recognition they have always deserved, but it stings to see teachers and PSRPs working their fingers to the bone, trying to meet the needs of our students and be told they're lucky to have a job and a paycheck and then forgotten. I thank you from the bottom of my heart, and sincerely hope we can be with our students soon, providing the care and instruction they need.

As educators across the country scramble to teach students at a distance, much has been made of the digital divide—the gulf between those families with consistent internet connectivity and enough computers for each family member to be online simultaneously and those families with one smartphone and a neighbor's internet password. While this is a very real concern, we should consider whether computer literacy is our top priority, or whether we can make better use of this sudden, unstructured time to help our children grow into the adults we want in our future.

There is a lot to be said for including robust technology education for all students. When my high school students hear that they will be required to turn in certain assignments typed, many panic. Even when they can use computers at school or at the library, their typing skills and general computer literacy are so lacking that the task seems impossible. And telling them that, in 1999, when I started college, the expectation was that all assignments, including journal entries, would be typed, always results in a few students blurting out "That's why I'm not going to college!"

Article continues on page 18

A Message from President Brown

I am excited to introduce the second issue of the Baltimore Teachers Union's new quarterly newsletter aimed at furthering our union's democracy and deepening our fight for educational justice in Baltimore. The COVID-19 crisis has thrown everyone into uncharted territory that brings about new challenges daily. Our members have navigated this transition to long-distance long-term learning with grace and vigor.

You are connecting with students emotionally and academically despite massive technology disparities and vague and incomplete guidance, all on top of family responsibilities that would be full-time jobs in and of themselves amidst this global pandemic. The BTU has been fighting every day to ensure your professional autonomy and personal obligations are protected from micromanaging and rigid supervisor overreach.

Our leadership team has successfully negotiated essential employee pay and personal protective equipment ("PPE") for Community School Site Specialists now supporting with food distribution to our families.

Our Field Representatives are supporting members whose rights and needs are not being properly respected. Our staff has worked tirelessly to communicate with membership frequently and in a variety of formats. We will continue to update our Coronavirus FAQ google document as a central hub for information during constantly evolving circumstances.

We have begun hosting our weekly email blasts and updates on our website and are re-posting the content for safe discussion on our private Facebook Group. Over two thousand people viewed our first ever Facebook Live Stream with PSRP Chair Sandra Davis, COVID-19 point person Zach Taylor, Public Relations Coordinator Candance Greene and myself.

We'll continue to listen to your ideas on how to best communicate so that you can be informed on the issues that matter most to you. You deserve nothing less than professional and prompt responses from BTU field staff and towards that end I have implemented a new policy that member communications must be responded to within 24 business hours. If BTU Field staff do not get back to you in that time, please email Tiffany McCallister, Office Manager, at tmcallister@baltu.org.

Disasters of this scale expose and exacerbate already existing inequalities that confront our entire state. These inequalities such as the digital divide are felt even more acutely by the families BTU members serve. The 2013 American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau ranked Baltimore 261 out of 296 cities surveyed when it comes to households with internet connections. Disaggregated data shows that lower-income and racial minority households are disproportionately disconnected from the internet and lack desktops, laptops, and electronic tablets at home. I am working with Baltimore City Council members to provide the necessary emergency funding to equip our young people with the tools they need to navigate long-distance long-term learning, participate in Baltimore's YouthWorks program, and maintain social and emotional connections to their loved ones.

The union's work expands beyond the city level, and in a normal year, we would be in the streets celebrating the Maryland General Assembly's passage of the Blueprint for Maryland's future, the most significant infusion of resources into Maryland's public schools in multiple decades. Your emails and phone calls to legislators, attendance at rallies, and policy feedback resulted in legislation that was greatly improved from its original first reader version. We will continue to fight for the reform's full funding, implementation, and revisions where necessary. I remain honored to serve as your president. Together, we are a force for change in our city and state. When we fight, we win!

In Solidarity,

President Diamonté Brown

BTU Wins Compensation and PPE for Site Specialists

by Tishea Lester

I have been a Community School Site Specialist (CSSS) since November 2019. I was so excited about my position and the opportunity to give back. I felt like I now had a career that is rewarding and fulfilling. Since the pandemic forced schools to close on March 16, 2020, and changed my usual job, I was given countless opportunities to give back and help the community in a resourceful way. On March 27th, positions as site leaders were developed for CSSS to service the 18 locations that were providing packets and meals for Baltimore City students. My colleagues and I volunteered to work at the sites to make sure our families in the community were serviced. We had no intention of getting extra pay to do the job that we loved and were passionate about.

On Friday, April 3rd, someone from the Baltimore Teachers Union contacted me with the message that the school district would be compensating on-site workers including CSSS. The BTU felt like we were putting our lives on the line and wanted the District to compensate us for it. They realized that we had a big responsibility and it required a lot of our time and hard work during this risky Coronavirus time. The BTU wanted to compensate us for more than what Baltimore City Public Schools was offering. They also cared about our health and wanted to make sure we were protected and had the correct materials provided for us. I was included on many phone calls with the union leadership and the district as a CSSS representative. We were able to come to an agreement of $250 per week/$50 a day with protection equipment (gloves, masks, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap in bathrooms) as well as back pay. This was such a rewarding experience and made me feel like the BTU really valued and appreciated their members.

Adequate School Funding Matters, and Maryland Has Never Done It

by Corey Gaber

On Tuesday, March 17th, legislators in Annapolis passed the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, legislation that would provide all of Maryland's youth adequate education funding for the first time in the state's history. The reform package is popular amongst voters and economists: 74% of Marylanders support personally paying more in taxes to improve public education, and the fiscal benefits exceed the large cost by 2034, with Marylanders fully recovering their investment by 2046 according to the Sage Policy Group. Yet the Blueprint's common sense reforms have provoked significant opposition, bolstered by the old myths that we already tried spending more on our schools and increased spending doesn't actually make a difference in student outcomes. Let's take a moment to bury these falsehoods once and for all.

Two decades of state government data show clearly that Maryland has NEVER adequately funded its public schools, and peer reviewed educational research spanning a full century proves that more money DOES improve educational outcome.

In 1996 Judge Joseph Kaplan ruled in Bradford vs. Maryland State Board of Education that Baltimore City's students were being denied their constitutional right to a thorough and efficient system of free public schools and the state entered into a consent decree requiring an infusion of resources so that City students received an adequate education when measured by contemporary standards.

In 1999, the independent consulting firm Metis was hired by the state to quantify the meaning of "adequacy." From that point forward the state had a specific standard to measure the gap between how much funding Maryland's schools were actually receiving and how much they would be receiving were they adequately funded. This "adequacy gap" was used to help develop a new equitable statewide formula that was codified into law in 2002.

Huge investments were made into education and the adequacy gap shrunk from 1.09 billion dollars in 2002 to 0.1 billion by 2008. Sadly, this was the closest Maryland would ever come to adequately funding its public schools.

After the nationwide recession the legislature decided to save money by cutting elements of the formula and ceasing to adjust it for inflation every year. As a result, the adequacy gap ballooned to 1.53 billion in 2017, an even larger chasm than when the courts first ruled that the state was in violation of its constitutional mandate.

	4th Grade Math	8th Grade Math
2000	221	271
2009	243	288
2019	238	280

	4th Grade Reading	8th Grade Reading
2002	217	263
2009	226	267
2019	219	264

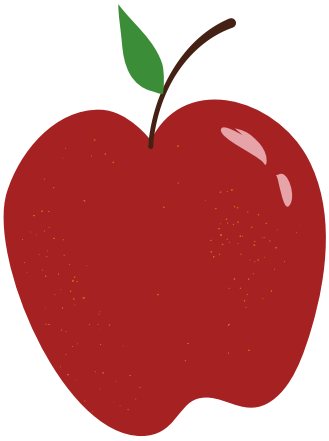
Let's remember that this astronomical resource deficit doesn't even represent what excellent funding for our kids would look like. After all, Maryland's private schools that serve the wealthy children of the elite charge $25–40,000 a year! Based on the state's own definition of adequacy as upheld by the courts, quantified by independent consultants and codified into law, Maryland has never tried sufficiently funding public education (much less progressively or for a sustained period of time).

Now let's tackle the second half of the myth propagated by the Washington Post Editorial Board, Governor Hogan, Secretary Brinkley and the Maryland Public Policy Institute that spending more on education doesn't actually produce better outcomes. Rutgers Professor Bruce Baker, who specializes in education funding research worked in collaboration with the Shanker Institute to conduct a comprehensive review of the empirical evidence on whether, and how, money matters in education. They concluded:

- "Schooling resources that cost money, including smaller class sizes, additional supports, early childhood programs and more competitive teacher compensation...are all positively associated with student outcomes."
- "...money matters, resources that cost money matter, and a more equitable distribution of school funding can improve outcomes."
- "On the whole...the things that cost money benefit students, and there is scarce evidence that there are more cost-effective alternatives."

Sure enough, when analyzing the Nation's Report Card, the largest ongoing assessment of what U.S. students know and can do, we see a clear correlation between adequate funding and student outcomes. When Maryland ramped up it's funding with the implementation of the Thornton formula starting in 2002 average scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in both reading and math, 4th and 8th grades increased significantly. After cutting the formula in 2009, every single one of those average scores decreased significantly.

Put simply, when funding went up, scores went up, when funding went down, scores went down. Now imagine the academic progress Maryland's students could have made, and the difference that would have made in their lives and in the trajectory of Maryland's economy had we reached full adequacy in funding and then maintained that standard! Despite what the powerful say, spending on education does matter, and Maryland has never tried it. Perhaps now is the time to start.



MEMBER APPRECIATION
#BTUSPIRITWEEK

Join us in these fun activites to celebrate YOU!

Monday 5/4: Mental Health Healing in your Pajamas
Post a selfie in your PJs on the BTU Private Facebook group page from 11am-6pm. Every 20th post will receive a gift card!

Tuesday 5/5: TikTok Tuesday
Make a TikTok video of the Don't Rush Challenge, or one representing your school, and post it on the BTU Private Facebook group page. The video that receives the most likes receives a prize.

Wednesday 5/6: Wellness Wednesday
12pm-1pm Meditation Lunch & Learn
Enjoy your lunch and listen to the Mindful Meditation webinar. During the interactive demonstration we will explore the union of mind and body while teaching meditation techniques in order to reduce stress and gain equilibrium.

4:30pm-5:30pm Zumba
This fun and interactive session will definitely relieve some stress and get your heart rate going. If you are interested in participating, please download the ring central app before the class.

Thursday 5/7: Throwback Thursday
Post pictures of your days in your schools.

Friday 5/8: Fun Friday Virtual Happy Hour & Karoke sponsored by Black Professional Men
Join us on the BTU Private Facebook Page from 5pm-7pm for Happy Hour and Live Karaoke. Music by DJ 5Star!

Join us in these fun activites to celebrate YOU!

The Transition to Online Learning: Organizing 101 for All Teachers

By Robin Bingham

"Plight--Fight—Insight." A three-word phrase Willie Baptist, strategist for the Poor People's Campaign, likes to use to sum up three of the pillars of good organizing.

Plight: Identify the problem. Fight: Figure out the leverage, the power dynamics, and how to address the problem. Insight: Think it over, study history, find out what others are doing, trouble shoot. And do it again.

The three parts don't go in order—they are in constant tension with one another, informing one another, all three necessary.

Might—a fourth pillar—refers to the people, the actual organized power, that is the force moving the other three, and is defined by another good-to-live-by maxim: Organizing happens at the speed of trust.

As the dust settles (has it settled enough to see what we are doing?) and the Baltimore Teachers Union turns to face the fall-out from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to think strategically. On the cusp of winning huge monies for education through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation based on the Kirwan recommendations, Baltimore Schools were looking forward to a steadily brightening future: 80% increases in funding for special education students, more funding for high poverty schools, universal Pre-K, increased salaries for PSRPs and teachers, just to name a few of the priorities. Suddenly, as stay-at-home orders from COVID-19 shut down most sources of revenue, the initial state funding that had been designated to begin paying for this future was redirected to our COVID response, the special session that would have ensured that the law go into effect immediately despite a veto from the governor has been postponed possibly until after the governor's deadline to create our state budget, and the state revenues that would have funded the bill going forward are all in jeopardy.

On March 12, the day Governor Hogan announced the first round of school closures, teachers were dashing around completing their SLOs. Administrators were dashing around completing their second observations of teachers.

Testing Coordinators were dashing around inventorying the technology they'd need for the huge battery of testing that happens every year in April and May. And students, largely unaffected by all these preparations and internal workings (aside from the heightened stress of the adults, the multiple meaningless post-tests, practice tests and random lessons that seemed a little more put-together and thought out than usual followed by a pizza party), went trundling back and forth between school and home.

"The special session that would have ensured that the law go into effect immediately despite a veto from the governor has been postponed possibly until after the governor's deadline to create our state budget, and the state revenues that would have funded the bill going forward are all in jeopardy."

Very few of us realized that the distance between us, once paved by the linoleum tiles of our school buildings, was about to become a chasm we could only bridge with the help of the echoing chambers of Google Classrooms in which someone always forgets to turn off their microphone.

But what was unleashed on March 12th when Governor Hogan announced school closures was nothing less than a full-scale organizing training for all of us. Faced with the challenge of continuing to hold school, the past month has been a boot camp in learning how to reach families and students, bring them into our orbit, follow up relentlessly to get them into meeting spaces to talk with us.

Relationships have become long-distance, countless hours have been spent calling, texting, WhatsApping families, speaking to distant relatives as we track down phone numbers, spending hours figuring out what technology students have access to, how to get them other technology, asking students to show up to meetings, calling them when they don't, all so that they can participate in our classes, and continue some semblance of their education.

Out of all this, we've garnered some extremely accurate and useful information. We've learned exact numbers of families who have computers, tablets, phones, working phone numbers, televisions, internet. Only 3 students in my daughter's class have yet to join their 11am daily Google Meeting. In the classrooms that I work in, that number is well over half and daily attendance, while slowly rising, still hovers in the single digits. Those who filled out the tech survey have also shared whether they need food assistance. Of the 182 respondents at our school, 72% need food. Someone citywide has that number for all schools. I hope they are looking at it, thinking about it; it may be the only thing that matters for some of our students.

Which brings us to the big question: What for? What are we organizing our students for? Education is a human right, and our job right now is to continue some semblance of an education through this pandemic. But the herculean effort and the resulting tiny pile of breakthroughs we are having at cracking the digital divide are enough to make us realize that we really need to think through the content. This stuff is too big to just be grabbing whatever off the internet, or modifying and accommodating for the district-purchased TV curricula on Channel 77.

We need a space to think—all of us together. We need shared insight on the plight we face, and that our students face—in order to prepare ourselves for what is likely to be an unprecedented fight to protect the right to a free, high quality education.

But the hours and hours we've spent connecting our parents, families and students together through these online platforms are a wonderful opportunity for coalition building. Coalitions of teachers, students, parents and multiple organizations have always been the engine driving the wins in any struggle.

"Education is a human right, and our job right now is to continue some semblance of an education through this pandemic. But the herculean effort and the resulting tiny pile of breakthroughs we are having at cracking the digital divide are enough to make us realize that we really need to think through the content."

All of these new online connections and the insights we've gained from a month of outreach can be the basis for growing our strength as a union. Could what we learn during this unprecedented spring be the insight we need to win better approaches to learning, smaller class sizes, an end to the racist high stakes testing, and making sure our students and families have the human right to an education secured, as well as the right to housing, food, and incomes?

Could all this work to get people onto a Silicon Valley app be elevated to real organizing opportunity to fight for housing, food, good schools? Couldn't we leverage all these newly forged connections to bring our families into our orbit, to link up with other organizations also thinking about food, housing, jobs and our children's futures? Let's think of these two months as a special union training in organizing and learn what we need to know to build strength and power for schools that we all love.

Labor Unions in Action!

by Alan Rebar

Working people have mounted a growing campaign of labor action, as bosses and governments fail to protect us from the virus. Locally, nationally, and worldwide, both union and nonunion workers are fighting back. A very important note: a rolling sickout is going on all the time, as workers in all sorts of industries, especially medical and cleaning, call out because they are terrified. There is no way to calculate the numbers of workers involved. This writer knows a worker who did it and so did numerous of their coworkers. It is also being reported in some news articles. Also note that workers are taking similar labor actions in the same industries all over the world. This is one of the most important strike waves in the two and half century history of modern trade unionism.

Teachers/PSRPs
Leading the way among teachers are members of the New York City local, the United Federation of Teachers. With New York developing into the county's first major hot spot, New York's mayor and school board refused to close the 1.1 million student school system. UFT members launched an online sickout campaign over the March 14-15 weekend. This appears to have been the decisive factor forcing the sudden closure of NYC schools on March 16th. Just before schools everywhere began to close, St. Paul, Minnesota teachers went on strike for two days to force the local school board agree to a fair contract.

Locally, our BTU was in the forefront for coronavirus safety measures weeks before the Maryland state shutdown of schools. We were fighting for sanitation measures to be put in place, and for the School Board to plan for the worst. The Board ignored BTU! Since the shutdown, BTU has led in the fight for safety, and for technology equity. BTU is supporting a campaign by and for public housing tenants, to provide emergency food supplies in their own community, against the opposition of the housing authority.

Baltimore
Johns Hopkins University graduate students are workers. They teach or do research for the university. With the campus shutdown, grad students built a campaign to fight for what they needed, such as financial support, extended research and dissertation deadlines, and other protections. Baltimore wastewater workers walked out of the Patapsco treatment plant on March 31st, demanding safety measures. The AFSCME union won higher pay and security for state hospital workers in Maryland. Postal workers in Dundalk sicked out on April 2nd. Local Amazon warehouse workers have protested for safety protections.

Nurses and other workers from Jacobi Medical Center demonstrated twice in the past month, for personal protective equipment and against an unfair sick leave policy. Photo: Dave Sanders / NYSNA, cropped from original

National
Suddenly everyone has discovered what unions have always said: Medical workers and low wage workers in cleaning, retail, restaurants, warehouses, delivery, manufacturing and other sectors are ESSENTIAL. These essential "frontline" workers are getting a lot of "free" respect, when what they need is higher pay and personal protective equipment (PPE).

Frontline workers have leapt to the front line of the labor movement. The scale and widespread nature of their protests, walkouts, sickouts, and official strikes is inspiring. We only have room to summarize this upsurge in the labor movement.

Warehouse Workers Amazon workers at a New York City warehouse walked out and protested for protections. The lead organizer, Chris Smalls, was fired - for fighting for life itself!

Medical
Workers are fighting back with protests and walkouts (NYC, Detroit, California) demanding PPE. One NYC hospital "6 feet" protest quickly won protections. Doctors and nurses elsewhere are being written up, suspended, and fired for wearing PPE! Both the IAFF firefighters union and the National Nurses Union have issued national calls demanding PPE for first responders. Individuals and small groups began campaigns to start small scale production of masks and face shields for hospitals, in response to government supply failures. The United Steel Workers and a coalition of building trades unions have made huge national solidarity donations of PPE to medical workers. Medical professionals sent a public letter to ICE calling for the release of detained immigrants, to slow the spread of COVID.

Public Transit Detroit bus drivers walked out and won safety protections. They were followed by bus drivers sicking out in Birmingham. (To date, dozens of NYC transit workers have died of COVID)

Manufacturing
Fiat Chrysler workers in Ohio and Michigan walked out and protested, after coworkers tested positive. This had a ripple effect in production, shutting down other factories for lack of parts. They pointed out the virus is known to survive 72 hours on steel – which auto workers are surrounded by on the job. Shipbuilders followed with a strike at a Maine shipyard. GE workers facing layoffs walked out and protested, demanding factory retooling so they can manufacture ventilators.

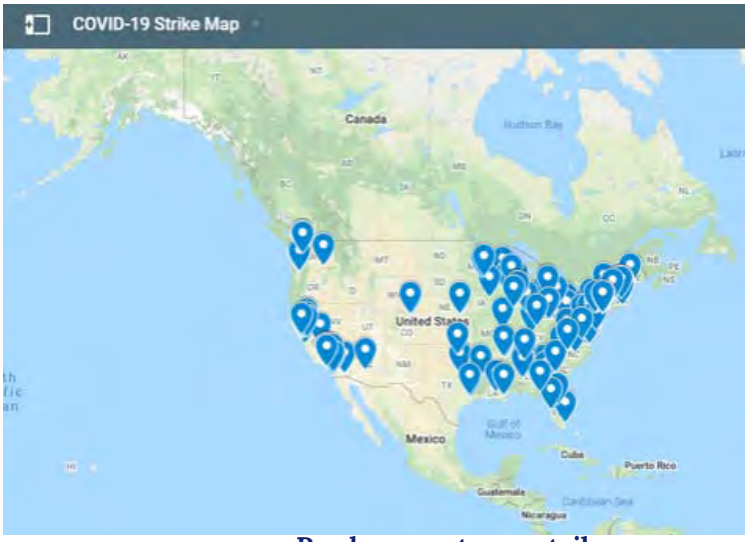
·Sanitation
Garbage workers in Pittsburgh went on strike because of lack of protection and COVID infections among coworkers. This was followed by the waste water workers' walkout in Baltimore.

Food and Restaurant
Workers walked out and protested outside a Perdue chicken processing plant and protested outside COVID safety concerns. The United Food and Commercial Workers won protections in Maryland which you can see in local Giants and Krogers. Workers are wearing gloves and masks, and even plastic face shields. Cashiers have plastic shields in front of the register, and the customer lanes are marked with big red warnings to maintain 6 feet. McDonald's workers have gone on strike in Los Angeles and Florida. Workers struck about 50 Chicago fast food restaurants. Whole Foods workers meanwhile staged a national sickout.

Delivery
Instacart and Amazon workers carried out national sickouts demanding protections. UPS drivers also tried to organize job actions to protect themselves.

Paydayreport.com posted an interactive COVID strike wave map. They recorded 81 strikes, including a walkout by workers at an assisted living facility in Loudon, VA; Hershey chocolate warehouse workers in Hershey, PA; fast food workers in Raleigh, NC; and sheet metal workers on the job at a casino in Philadelphia.

Visit the website to learn more!



Paydayreport.com strike wave map

Alan Rebar is an ESOL teacher at Sinclair Lane Elementary and Vanguard Collegiate Middle School. He has been a BTU member for 23 years.

Know Your Contract: Leaves & Attendance Teacher Chapter Article 15 PSRP Contract Articles VIII and VIII-A

by Cynthia Sjoquist, BTU Field Representative

Over BTU's 80+ years, our union has negotiated more than TWENTY types of leave! Your contracts are here to protect your right to these leaves but it can be overwhelming. This is a quick breakdown of the more widely used leave types: some practical applications, processes and your entitlement, as well as a list of all leaves in both contracts. If you have questions about any of these Leaves, please email me at csjoquist@gmail.com. This article will also briefly look at BCPSS Board Attendance Policy, and--while not a direct part of the contract--explain how your contracted rights to due process can protect you if you run into attendance issues.

TYPES OF LEAVES

Sick Leave (15.2 and VIII.F): Accrued Sick Leave Days are for care of your personal illness, injury, care of a child, or for the birth of a child.

- Tenured Teacher Chapter members = 15 Sick Leave Days/SY
- Probationary Teacher Chapter Members = 10 Sick Leaves Days/SY
- ·PSRPs= 13 Sick Leave Days/SY
- Teacher Chapter Members can accrue up to 315 Days. There is no limit to the amount of time PSRP members can accrue.

Sick Leave Bank (15.4 and VIII. G): All members must reenroll every time the Sick Bank reopens, which is usually every 12 to 18 months, depending on when the Sick Bank needs to be "refilled" with new days. By joining the Sick Bank, members agree to donate one of their Accrued Sick Leave Days. In the event that a member is out for an extended period and exhausts their accrued leave, they are eligible to apply, for up to 30 days.

Sick Leave Conversion (15.3 and VIII.F.13): Accrued Sick Leave Days may be converted into cash. For every four days of unused sick leave accrued in the last 12 months, a member is entitled to one day of cash while keeping the remaining three as sick leave. This happens before Christmas Eve every year.

Personal Business Leave (15.6 and VIII.K): One Personal Business Day/SY. Three Personal Business Days that can be charged to members accrued Sick Time per SY. Requests must be submitted at least two days in advance (except where circumstances prevent it) and cannot be unreasonably denied.

Job Related Injury (15.5)/Accidental Injury (VIII.L): Members who sustain an injury as a result of an accident connected to their job duties will be placed on Job Related/Accidental Injury Leave with NO LOSS of pay. Such a leave will extend until the member has been released for work by their doctor for UP TO one year.

Religious Holidays (15.15 and VIII.I): Two Days with pay for religious observance. Additional days may be taken with loss of pay OR by using Personal Business Days.

Bereavement Leave (15.16 and VIII.A): Four days with pay for the loss of parent, grandparent, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother, sister, husband, wife, child or grandchild (including those in this group who are step, half-blood or foster relations) or another member of the immediate household. One Day for any family member not listed above.

Other Types of Leaves Include:

Type of Leave	Where You Can Find It in the Contract
Maternity Leave/Maternity Disability	VIII.B
Field Trips	15.7
Other Leaves of Absence without Pay	15.8 and VIII.R
Sabbatical	15.9 and VIII.U
Professional Meetings	15.10 and VIII.W
Matrimony	15.11 and VIII.C
Family/Parental Care	VIII.J
Birth of a Child	VIII.J
Graduation	15.14. and VIII.O
Education Leave	VIII.P
Funeral of a Faculty Member	15.17 and VIII.E
Military Leave	15.18 and VIII.D
Jury Duty/Civil Leave	15.20 and VIII.M
Leave for BCPSS/Union Service	15.21
Paid Leaves of Absence	VIII.N
Communicable Disease	15.1 and VIII.H
Leave for Office of Human Capital Examinations	VIII.X
Political Leave	VIII.Y
Building Representative Leave	VIII.Z
Vacations	VIII-A

IMPORTANT NOTE: An employee that misses more than 60 days will receive an Effective/Proficient Evaluation score for the year.

Wondering if you have enough Life Insurance?

We offer payroll deducted life and disability income insurance designed to meet the needs of Maryland Public School Employees

- Available outside of open enrollment
- Convenient payroll deduction
- Contactless application process
- Guaranteed and immediate coverage for life insurance
- Reviews of current insurance plans

To learn more, contact Educators Financial Group
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educatorsfg.com facebook.com/Educatorsfg/

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Serving those who serve our community for over 50 years

ATTENDANCE POLICY BREAKDOWN

Absences

Occasions	Action	Looks Like
3	Oral Caution	Meeting with Admin, possible note to file stating "verbal warning"
5	Written Caution	Meeting with Admin, Signed Letter to File, Copy to BTU
7*	2nd Written Caution	Meeting w/Admin, Signed Letter to File, Copy to BTU, Copy to North Ave
>7*	Discipline	Meeting with Human Capital, Recommendation up to termination

*** 8 occasions for 12 Month Employees**

Records of occasions are kept for the length of the contract (10 or 12 months, not calendar year)
For every 60 consecutive work days of perfect attendance, one occasion will be dropped.

Lateness

Occasions	Action	Looks Like
3	Oral Caution	Meeting with Admin, possible note to file stating "verbal warning"
5	Written Caution	Meeting with Admin, Signed Letter to File, Copy to BTU
7*	2nd Written Caution	Meeting w/Admin, Signed Letter to File, Copy to BTU, Copy to North Ave
>7*	Discipline	Meeting with Human Capital, Recommendation up to termination

Records of Lateness occasions are kept for half of the contract (5 or 6 months).

IMPORTANT NOTE: Not All Leaves are Occasions!
You should not be charged an occasion for any of the following Leaves:

- Personal Leave
- Personal Business Charged to Sick
- Jury Duty/Court Witness
- Bereavement
- Educational Leave
- Administrative Leave
- Sabbatical
- Religious Holidays
- FMLA
- Graduation
- Matrimony
- Job Related Injury

Baltimore Teachers Union Member Appreciation Week

SPECIAL MORTGAGE FINANCE BENEFIT

Paramount Residential Mortgage Group, Inc. is proud to serve the dedicated men and women of the Baltimore Teachers Union. Our team members have been working hard to serve union members since 1998. We are pleased to announce a SPECIAL MORTGAGE FINANCE BENEFIT available to all members of the Baltimore Teachers Union and their families. This benefit provides the opportunity to take advantage of the MOST COMPETITIVE RATE AVAILABLE on the market today. We have a wide variety of loan benefits to match your needs. We, at PRMG, want to make your experience as pleasant and stress-free as possible by providing all your financial services under one roof. More information available at: OURUNIONPARTNERS.COM/BTU

YOUR BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- FREE APPRAISAL*
- FREE CREDIT REPORT*
- FREE 24-HOUR ONLINE APPLICATION
- CASH-OUT LOANS
- GRANTS AND CLOSING COST ASSISTANCE
- GET A FREE PRE-QUALIFICATION AND DETAILS TODAY!

USDA & VA ZERO DOWN PAYMENT LOANS!!

PURCHASE A HOME WITH:

1. Low to No Down Payment
2. Flexible Credit Scores
3. Closing Cost Assistance

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Help for Douglas Homes Residents

The BTU recently learned that residents of Douglas Homes, a public housing project in the Dunbar-Broadway neighborhood, were blocked from receiving donations to supplement the food given out by the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC), which, according to residents, was initially non-existent, and later insufficient, and of poor quality. The efforts to feed residents was led by Resident Advisory Board Delegate for Douglas Homes, Reverend Annie Chambers, who coordinated with several food pantries, including Living Classrooms, the Power House, The Free Farm, and the Franciscan Center to deliver groceries to seniors, the disabled, mothers of newborns, and other Douglas Homes residents that are unable to make it to a grocery store.

In late March, several Housing Authority staff members would not let the Franciscan Center deliver food to the residents of Douglas Homes. HABC representative said that giving away food on Housing Authority property violates Housing Authority rules. The director of the Franciscan Center arrived to clarify that their center is an approved food pantry that is allowed by Baltimore City to distribute meals and food during this crisis. The Housing Authority staff still denied him access to Douglas Home and said they would not allow them or other pantries to make food deliveries even during this crisis.

At that point, the Housing Authority made it clear that they would continue to deny drop offs from food pantries. Reverend Annie Chambers, who is coordinating the food drop offs, vowed to do everything in her power to get these groceries to the people in need despite the Housing Authority trying to stop her. The BTU acted to support the residents of Douglas Homes by making a donation of both cash and food.

Members also called the Housing Authority of Baltimore City to complain about the treatment of the residents and as a result of their actions and the actions of others across the state, Douglas Homes residents are now allowed to receive donations. However, HABC has continued to harass and make threats of arrest and eviction for Rev. Chambers and other residents and volunteers.

As this crisis goes on, food insecurity will continue to be an issue for our students and their families, and the BTU will continue to offer support to those in need. As educators, our care for children does not stop just because we are not in the physical spaces of our classrooms, and especially now, as we care for them and their well-being through this crisis.

We are asking members to get involved in community assistance actions. Advocacy, volunteer, and donation opportunities for members are ongoing through the BTU Organizing Committee. You can sign up for information or to assist with BTU's efforts on this Google form or donate directly to Rev. Chambers at https://donorbox.org/annie

Member Spotlight

Danielle DeCostanza, 2nd grade ELA Teacher at KIPP Harmony

What motivates you as a teacher?

My kids and coworkers, I honestly could not have asked for a better team and family to be a part of. My kids always want to learn new things and their love of reading makes teaching them that much more enjoyable! I also work with amazing educators that are constantly striving to be the best versions of themselves. Seeing this daily motivates me to be the best teacher I could possibly be.

What have you been doing to support your students and your coworkers during this challenging time?

As soon as I heard we would be out of school for two weeks, I immediately started making videos for my kids to watch online that went along with their learning packets. I wanted to make sure my parents and students had the support they needed to be successful and passed the videos along to my co-teachers to share with their students. I also posted read-alouds of books that had become top picks in our class to keep our school family strong. It was something the kids and I would look forward to.

In your opinion, what role should BTU be playing as we transition to distance learning?

I honestly think the BTU has done an amazing job at keeping everyone informed and also promoting conversation about distance learning and what it should like for us as educators. You guys have done an amazing job at answering our questions, supporting us through this transition, and giving members a place to not only share concerns but also ideas for things that have worked well for other members.

What is your favorite thing about being a BTU member?

I really appreciate the sense of community that the BTU brings. I feel as though I have a group of people to turn to for help and support, especially in times when I need it the most. I am really thankful to be a member.

Member Spotlight

Tamya Brown, Pre-K Paraeducator at Commodore John Rodgers Elementary Middle School

What challenges do you face as a Paraeducator and how do you meet those challenges?

My challenge as a paraeducators finding ways to maximize my students' school day with engaging lessons and fun activities. Most of their learning takes place in the classroom but there are gaps; such as lunch time, transitioning through the hallways and recess. I meet that challenge by developing educational lessons that will fit into the gaps.

What are some examples of things you do to engage the kids?

My philosophy for teaching is learning through play. I turn my lessons into games. This keeps my students focused and motivated to learn more. I'm excited for another year at Commodore because I work with an awesome team and teacher, Berol Dewdney, who shares the same philosophy. We teach a curriculum where students learn through play (Tools Curriculum).

How has the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures affected your job?

COVID-19 has affected our relationships with both students and parents in positive way. With consistent communication and one to one interactions it has made our lessons more impactful.

What do you miss the most about your students now that schools are closed?

So many things. Their cries, smiles, laughs, jokes, dance moves, how loving they are, the curiosity they have, the "realness" they bring, just everything.

Why is it important for PSRPs to be involved in the union?

In every profession you need a support system. A system where they meet the needs of the professional.

What would you like to see BTU focus on in the future?

I would like the BTU to focus on the value of having paraeducators in the classroom. I believe all grade levels should have a certified paraeducator in each classroom.

Member SHOUTOUT!

In recognition of all the awesome members we have all over the district, we are publishing these member-submitted shout outs. This is going to become a regular recurring feature for the Baltimore Educator so please send your shout outs to communicationscommittee@baltu.org

- **Ms. Ab** at Connexions has kept students, families, and teachers updated with resources during this crisis. (From Melissa McDonald)
- **Lynn Wynn** at Edgewood Elementary is a higher flyer as a Para. She has been trained as a teacher, and she works like a teacher.
- **Kozbi Simmons** at Patterson High School is a total rock star! (From Caroline Weiss and Alisha Marchewka)
- **Lori Raxenberg** teacher and **Ms. Luna,PSRP**, my sons Pre-K team. They make him feel special and loved everyday. (From Kelly Hope)
- **Zach Taylor** for keeping us all informed and sane. (From Ilena Lurie)
- **Ms. Carter** at Reach Partnership! (From Caroline Schmidt)
- **All of the teachers and Paras**. (From Leslie Kriewald)
- **Darnise Mickey**, teacher, and **PSRP Tamya Watson**. They are (From Fareeha Waheed)
- **Michael Donaldson** can work with the most difficult of middle school classes to get them interested in reading! (From Jenny Green)
- **Heather Osborne.** She started a YouTube Channel called Books from the Basement. (From Susan Sarudy)
- **Dora Cooper** continues to be dedicated to the knowledge, health, and safety of students. (From Keysha Goodwin)
- **Joshua Smith**, PSRP and Student Wholeness Specialist at Moravia Park Elementary - for doing a daily puppet show about the Coronavirus and social-emotional learning!
- **Mr. Terbeek** at KIPP Harmony! One of the greatest teachers I know.
- **Amanda Shipley** at CNH. You are amazing and go above and beyond for the kids everyday.
- **Justin Garritt** at KIPP Harmony who always goes above and beyond for his students. He works hard to ensure students truly understand math.
- **Teresa Bruce** does an amazing job with her students! She encourages her students to be active members of their community and to focus on giving back.
- **Ms. Joyce Carpenter**, a Para-educator at Hamilton Elementary Middle School. She goes above and beyond for everybody at school.

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to your students and their families!

cont'd from Page 1

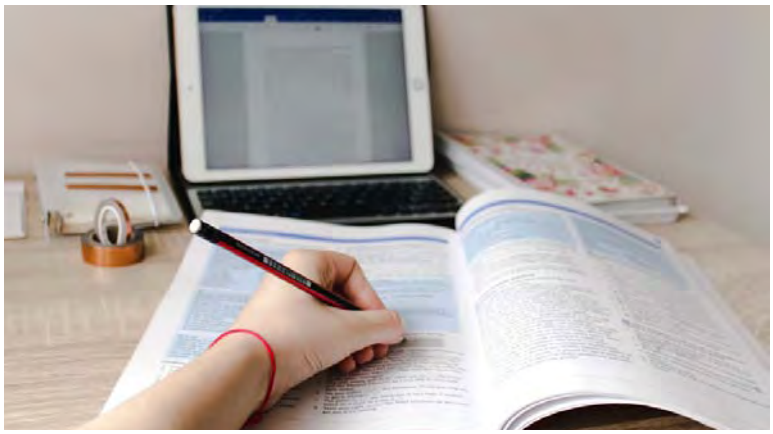
But seeing the students learn to navigate these tools and improve their typing skills and email etiquette is very rewarding. And many students have thanked me (some even by email) for preparing them for the digital world of college and careers.

As educators, we are constantly pushed to think that what we do this semester will make or break our students' lives. But as union members, we know that holding out for better conditions is a strong move. Now more than ever, we need to push back and insist that a few months of slower instruction that prepares the district for future success is far better than exhausting precious resources on gadgets that will make it harder to change course later.

The BTU, along with other agencies in Baltimore, has embarked on a campaign to secure funds from Baltimore City for more technology and internet access. This is an excellent medium-term strategy which could prove very useful for many students and educators (one of the paraprofessionals I spoke with was trying to interact with her students but had no laptop of her own!) both in the coming months and the coming years, without expending funds from Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPSS). However, it should be paired with a rethinking of the current and future ways we teach our children.

Driving my children to a park the other day, my daughter asked, "does that little boy have a computer?" Indeed, a tiny child, no more than 6, was walking down steep steps clutching an opened laptop. First, I was worried this boy was going to fall. Then, I thought of the resources that went into making that machine, the money BCPSS spent on it and how useful it could be in certain capacities in schools if it isn't smashed on the sidewalk. But most of all, I looked around us on that beautiful Spring day, seeing geometry in the architecture, poetry in the trees and wisdom in the face of the boy's caretaker, and felt so sorry that the big lesson he was getting is: if you want to know things, you need a computer.

There has been a scramble to get computers to students. The district has distributed laptops to hundreds of students as have many schools.



But is more technology what we want? The new "21st Century" buildings are hardwired with SMARTBoards and microphones everywhere. These, like the laptops we are now handing out, are designed to be obsolete within a few years.

When a company invests in training and developing workers, those workers become long-term assets for the company. The BTU is constantly fighting an uphill battle to get North Ave to put more effort into retaining veteran educators. If we want our students to get the education they deserve, there is no investment that will bring us there like keeping the great educators we have and carefully, slowly recruiting more Baltimore-bred, primarily black people into our ranks. Every dollar spent on computers is a dollar we don't have to retain and attract the best educators.

This may seem like a false dichotomy. If we get the funding we deserve, and Kirwan may be taking us in that direction, why can't we have both?

The sad truth is, as teaching goes online, teachers become expendable. Aldous Huxley recommended making films of "the best teachers on every academic level," and simply showing those films in every classroom in the country. He claimed, in 1956, that the "time has now come for these mechanical resources to be exploited systematically."

It almost seems funny until you think about the SMARTBoards and audio systems in the new buildings, and how much teachers are being encouraged to rely on technology. We are told that students won't be engaged without something up on the screen, but many of the best educators know that's simply not true.

Ms. Moe Roberts, a Pre-K Instructional Para at Curtis Bay Elementary, said “the emotional support, the love,” is what keeps the most vulnerable children coming back to school. She gave out her personal number, because many parents are frustrated and some need support, “On the emotional side,” she told me, “a parent might need to vent.” And parents aren’t the only ones.

Teens are experiencing extreme stress from being away from their peers and from having their freedoms curtailed. They could figure out the class video chat, but many don’t believe they’ll find fulfillment. Despite the allure of technology, nothing motivates pre-teens and teens as strongly as relationships. In the classroom, even with prescribed curricula, educators can modify in real time based on student need. That’s not always possible online.

BCPSS has put up week-by-week curricula for every grade level, maintaining the narrow focus of Common Core despite cancellation of standardized tests. After hearing from a parent, “you’d need a law degree to interpret the guide!”, I looked at these materials. I couldn’t imagine being a parent who has to work, has three children in school, all in different grades, trying to navigate these lessons. It would be next to impossible.

Everything is disjointed: what a child in second grade is doing has nothing to do with what her fifth grade brother has to do. And what their tenth grade sister is doing in math has nothing to do with what she’s doing in Spanish. Given the strains on everyone’s time and patience right now, this doesn’t seem sensible.

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Some teachers are breaking away from the district’s curriculum. Sean Martin, English teacher at City Neighbors, has created “simple daily reading and journaling assignments that offer young people choice.” He says this gives “the opportunity for young people to build a genuine, personal daily reading, writing, and thinking habit and then to share it in their own ways and at their own pace with peers.”

This is education. This is self-directed inquiry which leads to real growth. But it's not quite as easy to do this in Mathematics as it is in Language Arts.

Here's my solution: get together educators from all grade levels, all subjects, ESOL, SPED, paras, counselors, etc. and have them create one project-based curriculum for all students district wide. The first unit could be Genealogy. There would be myriad assignments, each appropriate for different students in different circumstances. Everyone could interview elders in their families. Younger students could write simple stories and draw pictures, older students could write questions and organize narratives that proved points or told stories, blending quotations with their own thoughts. All students could do historical and geographical research about the time periods and places in question. Children could re-write parts of their story in other languages and publish the stories in many forms, both text-based and multi media.

Children could learn the science of biology and genetic selection, with different lessons aimed at different levels. Exponential growth of families through generations and time lines both create a wealth of opportunities for math problems for children of various ages.

This structure would allow families to work together, rather than fighting for space and technology. It would center the knowledge of family elders and bring people together, rather than making parents and grandparents "look dumb" as they try to navigate district requirements. And it would give students opportunities to collaborate with their peers from school, who are now often only accessible through online video games full of hidden menaces.

We need not wait for the bosses to implement this. Educators at any school can get together (virtually), create alternative, project-based lessons, and share them widely. Differentiated pieces do not need to be labeled by grade level, as living, breathing children do not develop at the same rate intellectually any more than they do physically.

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Educators can suggest lessons for each student within the larger framework which, if done thoughtfully, will make everyone feel they have a unique and valuable contribution to make. This will allow us to transition away from chasing down work-packets and fielding requests for tech support and step back into our proper place as educators teaching skills alongside self-love, critical thinking and creativity.

And let's not give up on in-person schooling. A long-term view reveals that the mental and emotional health of children should be at the forefront of all our decisions. Let us consider the world we want for our grandchildren and work today to create it.

Upcoming BTU Meetings & Events

May

5.4-5.8 Member Appreciation & #BTUSpiritWeek
Variety of virtual activities the BTU has organized to show our appreciation for our amazing members! See the Private Facebook Page for details.

5.9 BTU Local Primary Poll Deadline
The results of this poll are the primary piece of data that will inform the COPE Committee's endorsement recommendations to the Executive Board.

5.11 May Employee Evaluation Input Engagement Virtual Meeting
Meeting focusing on Support and Development. Agenda includes a panel discussion and small groups.
4:00pm-6:00pm

5.27 Virtual Building Representative Meeting
Link will be emailed to Building Representatives
4:00pm

JUNE

6.1 June Employee Evaluation Input Session
Topic: TBD More information will be available on our website.

6.9 School Board Meeting
Location information will be available on our website as we get closer to the date.

6.21 Father's Day

We Need YOU to contribute to the The Baltimore Educator !

We are are looking for members to contribute to the **Baltimore Educator**. If you have expertise you want to share with the membership, have an article (**1,000 words max**) to submit, or want to share a lesson that has been successful in your classroom, please email **communicationscommittee@baltu.org!**

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BTU Private Facebook Group?

We have created a "Members Only" private Facebook Group to discuss topics that are pertinent to BTU members.

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***Share Information**
***Be Informed**

Click here to join!

When requesting to join the group, please share your real name in the space indicated, not your Facebook name. This will help us to verify your membership and expedite group acceptance.