The Baltimore Educator

The official quarterly publication of the Baltimore Teachers Union

Healing Together

In this issue...

Page 2: President's Note
Page 4: BTU Benefits Committee
Page 5: Black Lives Matter AU Course
Page 6: Member Spotlights
Page 8: Member Shoutouts
Page 10: PSRP Update
Page 11: Healing and Forgiveness
Page 12: Student Editorial
Page 14: Teacher Burnout
Page 16: BTU Events

A Message from President Brown

Dear Members,

I've been fighting for people's dignity and respect long before I became President of BTU. And in my work as an organizer, I've learned that you can't fight from a place of brokenness or trauma forever. It's not sustainable. Sooner or later, things will break, whether it's your body, your will, or your heart. That's why healing needs to be at the center of how we engage with each other, with our work, and with ourselves.

Healing is work that we all must do on our own. For its own sake, but also so that we are empowered to show up as the best versions of ourselves for each other, and fight collectively for a better world. My position as the president of the Baltimore Teachers Union allows me to see so many examples every day of the incredible work done by BTU members who are all in various places in their healing journey. I'd like to give thanks to all those members who are able to intentionally lift up the people in their schools and worksites, and engage with full hearted integrity and wholeness. I'd also like to extend encouragement to all those who are still feeling the effects of the trauma you've experienced, whether it's recent or ancient. It's my hope that this issue's focus on healing provides some of the inspiration and encouragement we all need.

It's always my goal to keep healing at the center of my work for BTU, but just like the eye of a hurricane, that calm center is surrounded by a lot of frantic and impactful activity. Negotiations, the annual Maryland General Assembly session, ongoing contract enforcement, and our ongoing work to improve health and safety are all in full swing!

This spring, I am honored to be serving as the chief negotiator on behalf of the PSRPs of the Baltimore Teachers Union. The PSRPs are the hardest-working, most under-appreciated people in our schools, and I am proud to be fighting alongside them for their dignity and respect.

At the start of this year's legislative session, I represented the BTU at the Education Briefing to the Baltimore City Senate Delegation and the Baltimore City House Delegation and informed our elected officials of the challenges BTU members are facing, and urged them to take action.

One topic I discussed with both delegations is the need for expanded student voting on the Baltimore City School Board. Students on the school board have been an important ally, and in order to see the structural change we need, the directly impacted must have a strong decision-making voice. BTU members wrote testimony and spoke in favor of SB157/HB433, which will:

- create a new process for electing the student School Board Commissioner, with all 6-12 graders in BCPSS eligible to vote directly for their School Board representative starting in SY 23-24
- add additional voting rights for the student member of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners;
- create a task force to study paying school board members (Baltimore City has the only unpaid School Board in the state) and adding more students to the School Board

The district tried to weaken the bill and strip it of every meaningful change. Based on their resistance thus far, we cannot expect them to do the necessary and thoughtful planning and execution critical to

implementing this law with fidelity. In the coming months, we will need BTU members to apply to join the new School Board Task Force and monitor its progress so that we can ensure the faithful implementation of this law and make our School Board more democratic and representative of the people it serves.

The BTU filed a class action grievance due to a unilateral healthcare benefit change, in which BCPSS recently began charging $20 copays for chiropractor and acupuncture services. This has been resolved in BTU's favor, restoring tens of thousands of dollars to members, 700 of whom were directly impacted. This grievance remains active as we ensure that all affected members are properly reimbursed.

BTU filed a class action grievance due to contact tracing protocols not being followed by North Ave contact tracers. There were 2 hearings and we are currently waiting for the written statement that North Ave contact tracers have not been following protocol.

BTU filed a level 5 arbitration regarding a school's mandatory assignment of an after-school coach class. The hearing dates have been scheduled for March.

BTU filed several class action grievances on behalf of particular schools facing violations of the COVID health and safety protocols. These hearings and decisions on are on-going, with many scheduled for the coming weeks.

BTU filed a class action grievance on behalf of school-based secretaries and office assistants who were directed to report to work in schools on Jan 3, a district-wide school closure day, due to inclement weather (snow). The district directed 12 month school employees to report to work but the PSRP article VI.6 in conjunction with Policy EBCD and EBCD-RA states that school-based Secretaries and Office Assistants are not essential employees and non-essential personnel working at school locations are not required to report to work during system-wide school closures. The BTU is seeking additional pay for working on Jan 3 or an additional day off with pay, as well as that Policy EBCD and EBCD-RA be followed by the district in future district-wide school closure days due to inclement weather.

My team and I continue to meet with Labor Relations and BCPSS leadership to press for several Health and Safety protocol improvements, including:

- Clearer and faster testing protocols after a positive pool test
- More accurate contact tracing
- Improved responses to COVID-19 outbreaks

Member engagement is higher than ever, and I encourage more and more members to get involved with the BTU in the following ways:

- Amplify our health and safety demands above by contacting the School Board and voicing your concerns.
- Attending our next General Membership Meeting (June 6, 5:30 p.m.)
- Testifying at a School Board Meeting - instructions available at bit.ly/btutestify
- Attending an upcoming BTU committee meeting or the monthly BTU Executive Board meeting (check your email for the Executive Board registration link)

Thank you for everything you do to support your fellow union members, your students, your family, and yourself.

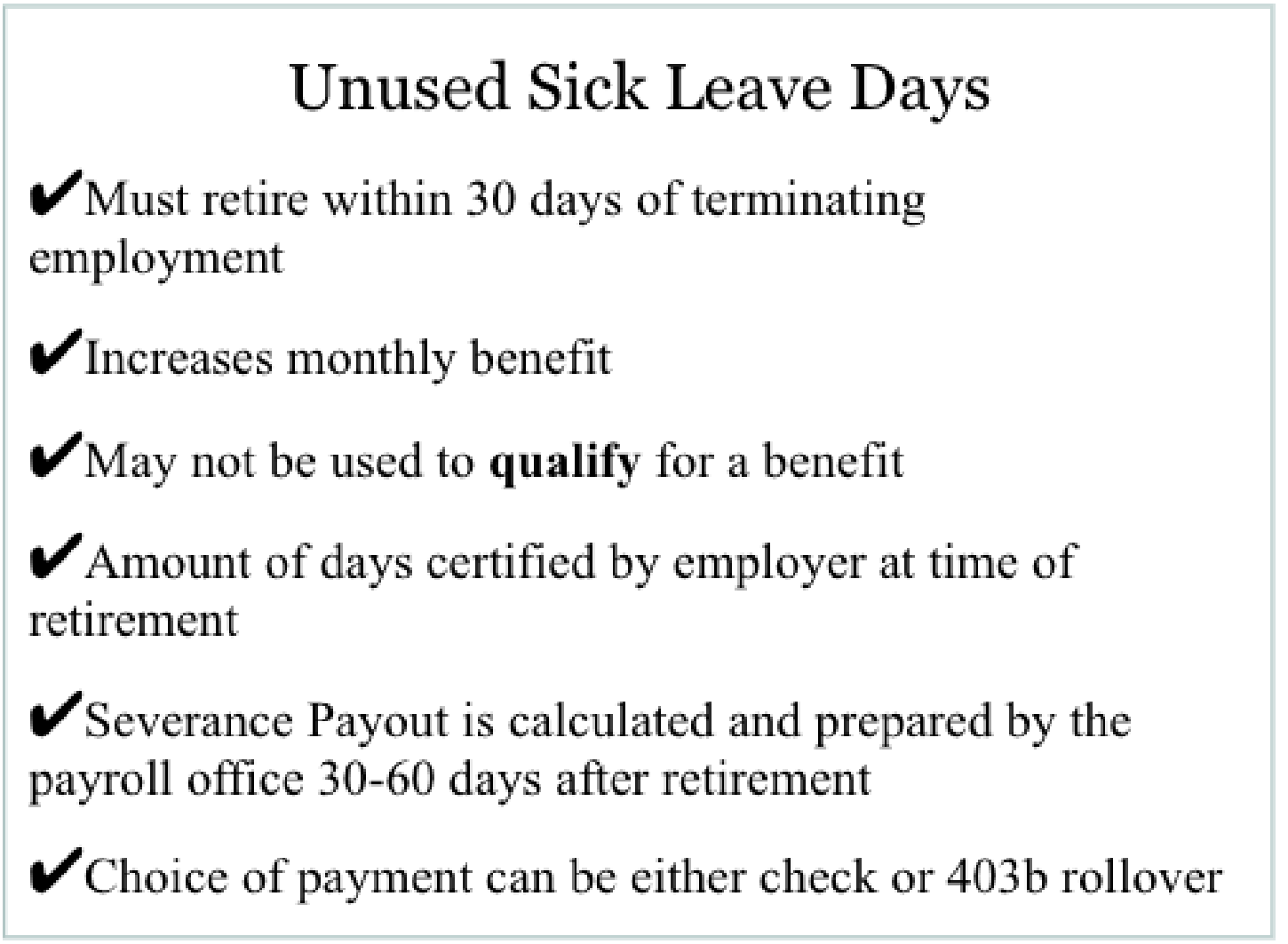
In solidarity,

President Diamonté Brown

The Baltimore Educator is the official quarterly magazine of the Baltimore Teachers Union. It is published by the BTU Communications Committee. BTU members are encouraged to submit articles of no more than 1,000 words by emailing communicationscommittee@baltu.org. Organizations interested in placing an advertisement in the Baltimore Educator may also contact us at the address above. The submissions deadline for the next issue is May 2, 2022. The theme of this issue will be "Lifting Young Voices," so articles by or about Baltimore students are highly encouraged. Read the Baltimore Educator online at https://www.baltimoreteachers.org/category/newsletter/.

From the BTU Benefits Committee

The Benefits Committee has hosted 2 virtual Retirement Info Sessions so far this school year. Check out this informational slide from the latest Retirement Info Session...



Want to find out more about retirement? Come to the next virtual Retirement Info Session on March 30, 2022 at 4:30pm. Look for registration information in the BTU member email blast.

Check out the video and slideshow from the Retirement Info Session on January 18, 2022.

Want to join the Benefits Committee and help plan information sessions for members like the Retirement Info sessions? The Benefits Committee meets on 2nd Wednesdays at 5:30pm.

Email: benefitscommittee@baltu.org to get the virtual meeting link!

Black Lives Matter At School AU course concludes its second year

By Delana Penn

For the 2nd year, this winter, BTU members took part in an AU Course that brought Black Lives Matter into the classroom. As part of this Professional Development experience, course participants learned about systemic inequity, the Black Lives Matter Movement, intersectionality, and practiced creating lessons and resources that uplifted and affirmed black lives.

The Black Lives Matter movement provides an approach to understanding and uprooting racism and inequality in our society and in ourselves. At its core, racism is a powerful system that creates false hierarchies of human value and behavior. The BLM movement extends beyond race to the way we regard people of different ethnicities or skin colors and the way we treat people of different sexes, gender identities, and body types. Racism intersects with class, culture, and geography and even changes the way we see and value ourselves.

BTU Members Delana Penn and Ashton Hampton facilitated the course based on their experiences leading both students and adult learners in how to remove personal and racial bias and to understand the role racism plays in their classrooms. The goal of the BLM course was to train teachers on how to be inclusive with intention while promoting student success both in and out of the classroom, and to create instructional materials that support valuing and affirming students' culture and identity.

Love is the center of healing PSRP Spotlight: Alisa Carter

Alisa Carter is a Student Wholeness Specialist at ConneXions, where she has returned for a second year. Prior to working at ConneXions, Ms. Carter worked for two years at another charter school in Baltimore City.

What is your role as a Student Wholeness Specialist?

As a Student Wholeness Specialist, my role is to provide social and emotional support to the school community. Students are referred to the Student Wholeness Room where the five core competencies of SEL are implemented into the session. Through proactive efforts, I build meaningful relationships with students so that they know to self-refer to the student wholeness room when in need. Additionally, I connect with all school staff, community partners, and parents to identify collective needs to further support the students.

This issue's theme is "Healing Together". As ConneXions' SEL coordinator, how do you help create a healing and supportive environment for students and staff at your school? What does social and emotional learning mean to you and why is it important? What has SEL looked like in your school during this especially challenging year?

I am intentional about building relationships with staff and students. On a daily basis, I am visiting classrooms, present in the hallways and cafeteria, greeting students when they arrive and wishing them a safe journey when they depart. I am vulnerable with my students so that they can see my authenticity. Once children deem you 'real' they begin to feel safe and can receive love. It is challenging for humans to heal or learn if they do not feel loved. I speak love into them every day. That's also the basis of SEL in my opinion. Feeling safe and loved allows you to see things differently. You can think more clearly to make smarter decisions. You can show empathy for others because your defenses are no longer drawn. Safety and love are at the core of SEL.

To support our staff, I check in with their emotional needs and make myself available for classroom support or as a listening ear. I help to empower them by validating their classroom space, connecting them with families, supporting their SEL efforts, and providing appropriate resources. When there is conflict in our building, we bring students and staff together for restorative circles to mend the relationship, understanding the delicacy of our current times.

What inspired you to choose this career? What is your favorite thing about it?

I love the fact that I don't have to be anything else besides myself. Social emotional learning is who I am as a person. Before I ever heard of SEL, I was aware of the importance of these skills and lived by the same principles of growth. This position has certainly improved my emotional intelligence and continues to help build my professional development skills.

Apart from your main job as SEL coordinator, do you have any other roles or projects you are involved with (inside or outside of school)?

On a school level, I am a member of the Green Team where we work with students and parents on our school's courtyard and garden as well as the Hospitality Committee, the Family and Community Engagement Committee, and the Student Support Team. Soon, my mindfulness after-school club will begin where students can practice yoga, meditation, have meaningful dialogue with their peers, and enhance their SEL skills. Outside of ConneXions, I also work with a domestic violence and sex trafficking hotline.

What does being a BTU member mean to you?

As a BTU member, I feel like I am a part of a greater sum. I feel supported and protected by the union and its advocacy efforts. Additionally, BTU's member benefits are relevant to my needs.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

I am proud to be a part of the ConneXions family. I couldn't imagine working at any other school. The culture of our school is positive, loving, and family-oriented. To even have this opportunity with BTU shows how much I am supported by my ConneXions family.

Healing in all shapes and forms
Teacher Spotlight: Janelle Rollocks

Janelle Rollocks is a dance teacher and a mentor for first year teachers at Baltimore Leadership School for Young Women (BLSYW), where she has worked for the past three years. Before teaching in Baltimore, Ms. Rollocks worked for 11 years at a New York affiliate of BLSYW: The Young Women's Leadership School of Brooklyn.

What do you enjoy the most about teaching dance?

Arts Education (dance theatre, music, fine arts) is so important to a whole-child educational experience. I believe that all students can learn--they just learn differently, and learning through the arts was an outlet for me as a student. Because of the passion I have had for dance since the age of 3 and the love I have for teaching, when I put those two passions together, magic happens. I enjoy exposing my students to something new that's not what they may be used to. I try to create an open-minded mentality: "Try it—you may enjoy it!" During my undergrad studies at Howard University my professor told me the day you do not enjoy teaching is the day you should find something else to do because your students need the full you every day. That is what I try to do every day.

You are a mentor for first year teachers. Why did you decide to take on that responsibility? How do you approach your mentoring role? What advice do you give new teachers?

I wanted to be a part of the growth for new teachers pedagogically and socially, especially after returning to in-person learning after being virtual for over 18 months. I understand that the first few years at a school can be tough, but reminding teachers of their "why" and finding ways to be creative invigorates me. It was so important to have a mentor in my life who taught me and guided me not only in the classroom but also in life. He grounded me as a person and as an artist and in my career as a dance educator.

I approach my mentoring role by putting myself in the place of a new teacher again and trying to be compassionate of their needs, wants, struggles and frustrations. I try to be very transparent about my own practice and share that they are not alone in their feelings and experiences. Similar to our students who have unique learning styles, every teacher has their own unique teaching style and as a mentor I encourage new teachers to embrace their uniqueness. So, I try my best to encourage new teachers that it is okay if a lesson did not work out; you can always try it again.

This issue's theme is "Healing together". How do you help create a healing and supportive environment for students and staff at your school? How has your school community come together to heal during this incredibly challenging school year?

I try to provide a secondary outlet of relief. I utilize dance as a non-traditional way for students to connect to their issues and identify constructive and creative ways to work through them. I try to tell my students every day, "BE GREAT IN ALL THAT YOU DO!" My classroom is a safe space for all students and our staff community. I am constantly checking in with all staff members because we are all healing in different shapes and forms. Healing takes time and we have to be there for each other. As the song says in High School Musical "We are all in this together," and as the song says in The Wiz, "Can't you a feel a brand-new day?" As a school community we all try to find creative ways to build in healing with self-care and stepping back when you need to take a break. My school constantly encourages taking care of family and yourself, whatever that may look like for you.

What does being a BTU member mean to you?

Being a BTU member means community. I have a community of teachers that are working together toward common goals. It means I have support in areas that I may not understand and if something is not right, my community will have my back. BTU encourages teachers to be the best they can be and makes sure teachers feel supported as we navigate through this new normal.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Dance is not just a hobby but life skills, discipline, focus... Dance is 99% Brain, 1% Body!

BTU Member Shoutouts

- Shout-out to **Ms. Zilma Oliver**! Thank you very much for all you do for our students and staff! (From Dimitar Genchev)
- Shout-out to **Keshawna Ringgold** for her tireless work supporting her own student and the rest of the students in the class. She is one of a kind and we couldn't do inclusion the way we do without her.
- Shout-out to **Carol George**! If your school doesn't have her, I feel sorry for you!
- Ms. Phenicie at BLSYW is a rockstar! (From Andrea Bates)
- Shout out to **Ms. McGowen** at BLSYW for being an amazing 1st year teacher. (From Andrea Bates)
- Thank you, **Lisa Harrison**, for always being my go-to person for whatever I need. Academic talk is appreciated and I value our friendship. (From Lisa Hunter)
- Shout out to **Carol Brett and Kelly Hope** for their tireless efforts to keep Patterson High School going in the right direction. There is not enough appreciation, donuts, gold, flowers, and money in Baltimore City to show our gratitude for your tireless efforts. We are so lucky to have you two on our team.
- I would like to shout out **Robin Oliver** of Liberty Elementary School. Ms. Oliver is the HEART and PULSE of our school. She is a Griot and is all-knowing. She does her job with grace, love, understanding and strength. Every student, parent and staff member is blessed to have her working for and with them. We LOVE you Ms. Oliver (From The Liberty Family)
- Shout-out to our wonderful and hardworking secretary, **Ms. Tiffany Harris**. She runs the office at Walter P. Carter with love, care, and attention to everyone's needs: staff, admins, parents and students.
- Shout-out to **the teachers and staff at Woodhome Elementary Middle School** for supporting and affirming each other throughout this school year. We are making it together as a team and unit. (From Charnae Gauvin)
- Much love to **Morag Bradford** for being a massive part of organizing data and rallying parents and community members together for the successful 3-year renewal of Creative City Public Charter.
- Shout-out to **Ms. Patricia Rose** at the REACH! Partnership School for being a terrific team player and building terrific student relationships. Ms. Rose's students are always looking for her! (From Ryan Fan)
- Shout-out to **Melissa McDonald & Cindy Sjoquist** for assisting me with the certification process. They kept the district accountable and made sure that I was receiving the necessary information. (From Janeen Connor)
- Our **Lauren Clements** is an amazing Social Worker who supports not only the students but also the staff. She is incredibly hardworking, compassionate, and kind. We are so lucky to have her. (From your City Neighbors Hamilton team)
- Accolades to **Tina Wormley-Green** from Wildwood Elementary Middle School #088. Besides being an outstanding educator, as the BTU Building Rep., Mrs. Green strives to support and guide all of the teachers and paras at Wildwood through workplace key issues. She's simply THE BEST!
- This SHOUT-OUT goes to **Jasmine Cipko**! Jasmine keeps BTU members informed about BTU meetings and updates! Additionally, if you share a concern with Jasmine, she promptly finds a solution to the problem. (From a happy BTU member)
- **Dr. Parker** at PORT VLP consistently goes to bat for the teachers at PORT. He is relentless and dogged in his commitment to ensuring that the teachers at PORT are treated fairly, get the support we need and respected by admin. He is a superstar! (From Johna Schoenherr)
- Shout-out to **Beth Twohy** for all the effort and intention she's putting in for Q2 wrap up!
- Shout-out to **Shawn McKay** (From Iris B)
- **Kim Barnes** is an amazing and informative rep for us at "the Bend" North Bend Elementary/ Middle (From R. Winborne Moody)

- **Gillian Horn** works tirelessly to support and advocate for the teachers at Henderson-Hopkins. She always strives to keep members informed about and involved with BTU news and action steps. She fearlessly stands up for the rights of teachers and the best interest of students.
- **Lee Krempel**, English teacher and BTU Building Rep for Frederick Douglass High School, is a superlative educator who always centers his kids, and a supportive and resourceful building rep who never leaves a question unanswered. No matter how nuanced or obscure, Lee makes sure he finds an answer to every question we ask. We are grateful for his leadership and contributions to our school community. (From M. Mitchell)
- I'd like to shout out **Tameka Taylor** for always being available for concerns with admin and pointing me in the right direction for results. (From Jones)
- Shout-out to **Ms. Sewell** at Dallas F. Nicholas! Came into the Kindergarten and hit the ground running. She is doing a fantastic job of helping with literacy intervention and being a para in our continuously growing Kindergarten classroom. We are so glad to have you!
- **William Moeller** is an incredible member and building rep. For the past two years, he has been compassionate and caring as I've been on leave suffering with Long Covid. Since I became ill, Moeller has provided timely information about who I needed to contact to obtain long-term disability and connecting me with people who could provide assistance. He also still checks on me. That means so much to me. While I miss working in a school building, it makes me feel assured to know Moeller takes his responsibility as coworker, member, and BR seriously. (From Chimére L. Smith)

PSRP Update

See this update from the PSRP Negotiations Team

The BTU Negotiations Team commenced the first in a series of negotiations sessions on February 9, 2022. On this date, BTU met with representatives from the Board of School Commissioners to bargain for solutions to problems that PSRPs are advocating for. Our team is made up of 20 members, including experts from various job classifications, members of the PSRP Committee, and officers of the BTU PSRP Chapter Executive Board.

President Brown is leading the team as the BTU's Chief Negotiator. BTU came to the first bargaining session with 5 "Me Too" proposals. A "Me Too" proposal is a new part of the Teacher Contract that the BTU is seeking to add to the PSRP Contract. At the end of the first negotiation session, the union and the district agreed to sign Tentative Agreements on all 5 "Me Too" proposals, and the following articles will be added to the next PSRP Contract:

- VIII.A. Bereavement Leave
- VIII.S. Bifurcation of FMLA Bonding Leave
- XII.A.17 Right to Representation
- XII.A.18 Negative Comments

BTU Negotiations Team

Diamonté Brown
President, BTU, Chief Negotiator

Sandra Davis
PSRP Chapter Chair, Special Education Paraeducator, Renaissance Academy High School

Kellie Knight
Elementary School Vice President
Pre-K Paraeducator, Moravia Park

Chris Bilal
External Assignment, PSRP Member Engagement Specialist

Tishea Lester
External Assignment, PSRP Member Engagement Specialist

Dante Miles
School Bus Aide, Special Transportation

Lynette Gillis
School Bus Aide, Special Transportation

Tonisha Montgomery
Staff Specialist, Athletics

Isa Winder
Employee Engagement Associate, Human Capital

Ron Beazer
Special Education Paraeducator, Connexions

Takiyah Dingle
Secretary, Barclay Elementary Middle School

Martise Brown
Secretary, Edmondson-Westside High School

Renee Lang
Secretary, James McHenry Elementary Middle School

Keysha Goodwin
Pre-K Paraeducator, Johnston Square Elementary School

George Jackson
Special Education Paraeducator, Katherine Johnson Global Academy

Natalia Bacchus
Executive Assistant to President Brown

Cindy Sjoquist
BTU Staff, Field Representative

Clif Denby
BTU Staff, Field Representative

Zach Taylor
Middle School Vice President, Teacher Chapter, External Assignment,
Director of Negotiations and Research

Keith Zimmerman
BTU Attorney

District Negotiations Team

James Whattam
Chief Negotiator

Jerome Jones
Director, Labor Relations and Negotiations

Jennie Wu
Executive Director of Strategy and Continuous Improvement

Starletta Jackson
ILED, Secondary Schools

Deborah Myers
Administrative Services Manager, Special Education

Sheryl Atkins
Senior Legal Affairs Counsel

Healing requires forgiveness

By Patrice Pilgrim

No one can say that this pandemic has not impacted us all in some way. For some of us, that impact has been good - it has led to our growth on both a personal and professional level. In other instances, it has led to opportunities for reflections and reconsideration.

The theme for this issue of the Baltimore Educator is "Healing Together." I ask this question - how do we ALL find it in ourselves to heal or at least begin the process of healing? How do we ALL move forward towards creating what a new 'normal' will look like after this pandemic?

They say that to forgive is to heal, but I say that in order to truly heal, one must be able to acknowledge the error that has occurred. Healing is about moving past and looking forward to bigger and better things.

I remember once, as a little girl, someone had taken my favorite book. I cried for days when I realized that my book was gone. I carried on and eventually learned that someone that I counted as a friend had taken the book. I confronted that friend and through a series of events, was able to regain possession of my book. She tried to apologize to me, but I wasn't having it. For weeks afterward, anytime I saw her, I would get mad. That 'on sight' rage grew until it began to impact my other social relationships and eventually my academic performance in class.

My teacher eventually sat me down and shared this thought with me. She said that "rage is like a cancer. If left unchecked, it will grow and grow until it consumes you. You will not be able to heal until you are able to forgive your classmate." At first, I tried to ignore her words and hold on to that rage. Eventually, I got to the point where I realized that she was right: I would not be able to heal until I had forgiven my classmate and moved on.

Now I know that it was just a book, and that I was just a child, but the impact of my teacher's words and that very powerful lesson still remains. We have all been wronged, offended and disrespected at some point in our lives - whether personally or professionally. We've had to deal with the rage that came with whatever that incident was and we've had to find a way to move past. Some of us have tried to accomplish this without forgiving, and some of us have forgiven and made an authentic effort to move past this hurt.

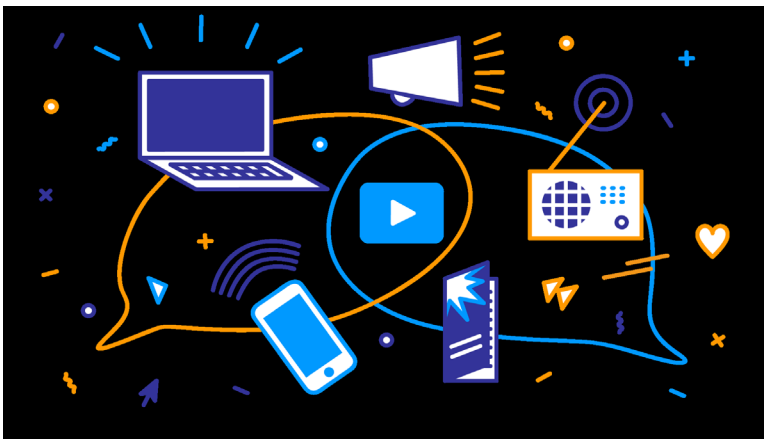
We cannot continue to grow as professionals or as individuals, if we cannot find a way to forgive and move towards a place of authentic forgiveness. If we cannot do this, then healing will continue to be only a concept and not a reality.

To close, I ask that as we hurtle ever closer to the close of schools for the summer, I ask that we all take a bit of time and think about how we can take steps in our own healing and forgiveness, and support the healing of all those around us. Being a bit more deliberate and intentional to forgive others as we work through the various situations that will arise will help us move one step closer to true healing.

Join the BTU Communications Committee!

We need more members to help with:
The Baltimore Educator newsletter/magazine
Social media, blog, and other web content
Creating informational materials for members and the public
Fact checking and answering member questions
Making videos and graphics, maybe even a podcast
And more!

Meetings are virtual on the 4th Thursday of every month at 5:00 PM. All BTU members are welcome! Email communicationscommittee@baltu.org to get connected!



Student editorial: New legislation would give students a real voice in school leadership

By the Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City

Earlier this year, we submitted a student editorial to the Baltimore Educator detailing the expanding crisis in City Schools regarding lack of protections for sexually harassed and bullied students and structural inadequacies in the system of assault reports. As the new semester begins, we pivot to Annapolis, where consequential legislation is currently before an audience of our state lawmakers—legislation that would open up North Avenue to students and give the student body a voice.

The ineptitude of the School Board as it currently stands needs no introduction to Baltimore teachers, who understand student frustrations on that front better than most. As mandated by state law, we have one Student Commissioner at on the School Board, responsible for representing 80,000 students in School Board meetings, voicing our concerns to our elected officials, and pushing for policy changes inside and outside of City Schools.

Our Student Commissioner, most recently Ezra Horwitz, spends many hours a week attending policy meetings, Board calls, organizational discussions, and other work that could otherwise be spent working on schoolwork, sports, or extracurriculars — merely to vote on next to nothing and present their lack of ability to effect change to the student bureaucracy when they're up for re-election the next year.

Then, come election time, it's only an exclusive group of student leaders and bureaucrats, not the wider student body, that elects the Student Commissioner. Students don't know about the elections nor would they have reason to vote if they did, when they are denied participation and left woefully uninformed due to a lack of communication of the process to the student body.

The Senate Bill 157 (along with its sister, House Bill 433), seeks to remedy many of these problems with a number of reforms. Firstly, it seeks to permit two Student Commissioners on the School Board rather than one. Secondly, it provides for the Student Commissioners to be elected by all City Schools students between 6th and 12th grade as opposed to the current system wherein the Board collaborates with the Associated Student Congress to select the Student Commissioners in a non-transparent, backroom process.

Like the Baltimore Teachers Union, much of the Associated Student Congress has been engaged in the efforts to transition towards an elected school board. In extensive written testimony to Annapolis and directly to Union members, we outlined that the direct election of and voting rights for the Student Commissioners is an integral part of that gradual effort.

In our efforts to help pass this bill, our position has been rather unfairly misconstrued by North Avenue, who have inaccurately claimed that we have, in private litigation with them, signaled our opposition to the direct election of the Student Commissioners and the support of regressive School Board amendments to the bill that would de-tooth the proposed reforms and essentially render the legislative effort useless. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The fact that the body responsible for the selection of our Student Commissioners and, in many ways, the only student group with any say over the district's policies, has been one of the loudest voices for the dismantlement of its own

power in favor of the student body at large, should be telling to educators and the general public. The student body is dissatisfied with the status quo, and if anything, the events of the last year have demonstrated that without tangible efforts on the part of North Avenue to reach out to students and make their voices feel heard, constructive dialogue between student and City Schools leaders will be impossible.

Student organizers from SOMOS were forced to circulate a viral petition, garnering thousands of signatures, in a fruitless effort to get North Avenue to consider the possibility of a temporary freeze back to virtual in the face of the Omicron variant. Coalitions of students joined in efforts by educators and union organizers to raise money for high-filtration masks when the District refused to finance the safety of its students. Earlier in the school year, students walked out at numerous schools across the city as City Schools turned a blind eye to sexual harassment and assault in the classroom, putting its head in the sand.

As the bill continues through the legislative process, we would urge the Baltimore Teachers Union to reinvigorate the efforts it has ben leading for weeks now to provide the student body with a foot in the door at North Avenue. We so often find ourselves enraged at BCPSS, unable to have our concerns even granted the decency of an audience. To every teacher reading, join the students of City Schools in supporting our right to a fair seat at the table. Send a clear message to your State Senator.

We stressed in our last submission to the Baltimore Educator that silence does not bring change. Nearly three months later, that message rings truer than ever. To effect change, we must first be willing to make others listen to our voices.

Editor's note: In the interest of promoting authentic student voice, BTU made this space available to the students of the ASSCBC for a topic of their choosing without restriction.

Teacher Contract Section 13.9 Right to Representation

When a teacher is notified to appear for a meeting or an investigatory interview which may lead to discipline, including, but not limited to, reprimand, suspension, or dismissal, the teacher shall be advised of their right to representation prior to the beginning of any such meeting or interview and shall be given a reasonable time to arrange for representation.

Teacher Burnout

By Michael Donaldson, PhD

Teacher "burnout" is a real phenomenon. The National Education Association estimates that almost two-thirds of all educators throughout the country consider leaving the teaching profession at some point or another in their career. Sadly, half of those teachers who do consider leaving the profession, in fact, ultimately resign from their job. Even more daunting is that over 40% of new teachers are so disenchanted by their career choice that they leave the profession in its entirety within their first five years.

To further compound the issue, teacher "burnout" rates are higher in areas where there is more need. The estimated rates of teachers leaving the field are approximately 50% higher in Title I schools and 70% higher in schools that primarily serve students of color. Not only does this fluctuation in staffing come at a great cost to the development of students but researchers suggest that it costs taxpayers roughly two billion dollars a year.

The statistics shared in this introduction are probably not new to you. If you have been an educator in Baltimore City long enough, you more-than-likely know of someone - if not several people - who have left the field. According to a survey of teachers in Charleston, South Carolina earlier this year, former teachers have reported that while money can be a factor in their decision, a lack of support and respect from education stakeholders including (but not limited to) district and school leadership are the primary culprits.

Before diving into how district leadership and decision makers, specifically in Baltimore, have increased the likelihood of burnout, it would be a glaring mistake not to point out the role of students and parents. Many caregivers are disgruntled about the amount of time their child has been out of school during the pandemic and have misplaced resentment. Students have also returned to the school setting in which the expectations of behavior are sometimes vastly different than those at home. This has led to a volatile and unsafe environment in too many classrooms. Frustratingly, parents who accost teachers unnecessarily and students who demonstrate aggressive and dangerous behaviors face minimal consequences if any. Many educators feel equipped to deal with difficult parents and challenging behaviors inside the classroom. The blatant lack of respect and understanding by district leadership, however, is not something that teachers are willing to endure in a far-too-often thankless job.

During the 2020-2021 school year, teachers were expected to teach virtually with the same efficiency as if they were in person. They were held to high standards and were accountable for student achievement regardless of the circumstances. Teachers were still formally observed and given an overall rating on an ineffective – to – highly effective scale. All of this came as teachers worried about their health and the health of their loved ones and students, the risk/benefit analysis of a mandated vaccination, and the worry around the reopening of schools.

Since returning to in-person learning this year, several people associated with North Avenue have insisted that they are concerned about the mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing of those who staff schools. This does not come across as being genuine as double standards continue to present themselves.

At the irritation of some union members, email messages have been sent – almost on a weekly basis - to remind educators what has been done by the district to ease the unequivocal stress staff have experienced over the last several years. Decisions to provide sporadic wellness afternoons, providing extra days for holiday weekends (which will need to be made up), and a shift in academic scope and sequence have been routinely highlighted, albeit with a few messages that question the work ethic of teachers being squeezed in from time to time.

Although these decisions seem like a way to improve mental and emotional wellbeing, they simply gloss over the continuous stressors that district leaders impose on educators. This year, the school system continues to use School Performance Plans and Student Learning Objectives to rate teacher effectiveness. Additionally, this year the system also issued a declaration that all teachers were to complete a Student Learning Plan for every one of their students. These stressors have affected staff. They, however, do not compare to the stress some teachers are now feeling over the unannounced formal observations that are taking place in the second semester. This new way of assessing one's job performance is being

done at a time when teachers are not even certain as to who will be out on quarantine. Furthermore, these unannounced formals are being completed without adjusting the teaching framework to reflect our circumstances and without any input from teachers.

The words "self-care" and "mental health" have been thrown around haphazardly by the school system. Under the guise of worrying about its teachers and staff, the district has thrown in a sprinkling of half-days throughout the rest of the year and has extended the school year to allow teachers off around two holidays. What it hasn't done, however, is alleviate the pressure on staff by postponing the unannounced formal observation or getting rid of the evaluative piece of the SLO. Furthermore, the school system holds strong and still refuses to provide additional planning periods for teachers -as teachers in grades k-5 are still only guaranteed three planning periods a week – making it impossible for teachers and staff members to truly practice self-care when the school day comes to an end.

It will take drastic action from leaders at North Avenue if teachers are going to stop "burning out" because they work in Baltimore City. The mass exodus and high teacher turnover is not just an optics issue. It is a real issue that has a negative impact on the life experiences of the most vulnerable of children. Instead of speaking about mental health, perhaps, city leaders could request open conversations with teachers who are not afraid to speak up. Then, maybe, just maybe, steps could be taken to allow educators the space to take care of their mental health and be the teachers our city needs them to be.

BTU OFFICER AND DELEGATE ELECTIONS 2022

2 Ways to Vote:
Mail-in Ballot voting April 22nd - May 24th
In-person voting May 25th, 12pm-6pm
4 Locations TBA
All BTU members may vote in the BTU Election.

Not a member yet? Here's the link to join:

https://join.aft.org/form/baltimore-teachers-union/local/00340/membership-application-and-dues-deduction-authorization

For more information, visit: https://www.baltimoreteachers.org/btu-2022-officer-and-delegate-election/

Upcoming BTU Events and Meetings

For a complete list of committee meetings please visit the calendar on the BTU website

April 2022
April 1 - Paraprofessional Appreciation Day
April 6 - Half Day
April 7 @ 6:00pm - Executive Board Meeting
April 11 to 18 - Spring Break
April 19 @ 5pm - Special School Board Meeting
April 26 @ 5:00pm - School Board Meeting
April 27 - Administrative Professionals Day
April 27 @ 4:30pm - BR Meeting

May 2022
May 2 to 6 - BTU Member Appreciation Week
May 4 - Half Day
May 8 - Mother's Day
May 10 @ 5:00pm - School Board Meeting
May 12 @ 6:00pm - Executive Board Meeting
May 13 - PD Day and PSRP Conference
May 18 - Half Day
May 24 @ 5:00pm - School Board Meeting
May 25 @ 12:00-6:00pm In-Person Voting for BTU Elections
May 30 - Memorial Day

June 2022
June 1 - Half Day PD
June 1 @ 4:30pm - BR Meeting
June 6 @ 5:30pm - General Membership Meeting
June 9 @ 6:00pm - Executive Board Meeting
June 14 @ 5:00pm - School Board Meeting
June 15 - Last Day of School
June 19 - Juneteenth & Father's Day
June 28 @ 5:00pm - School Board Meeting