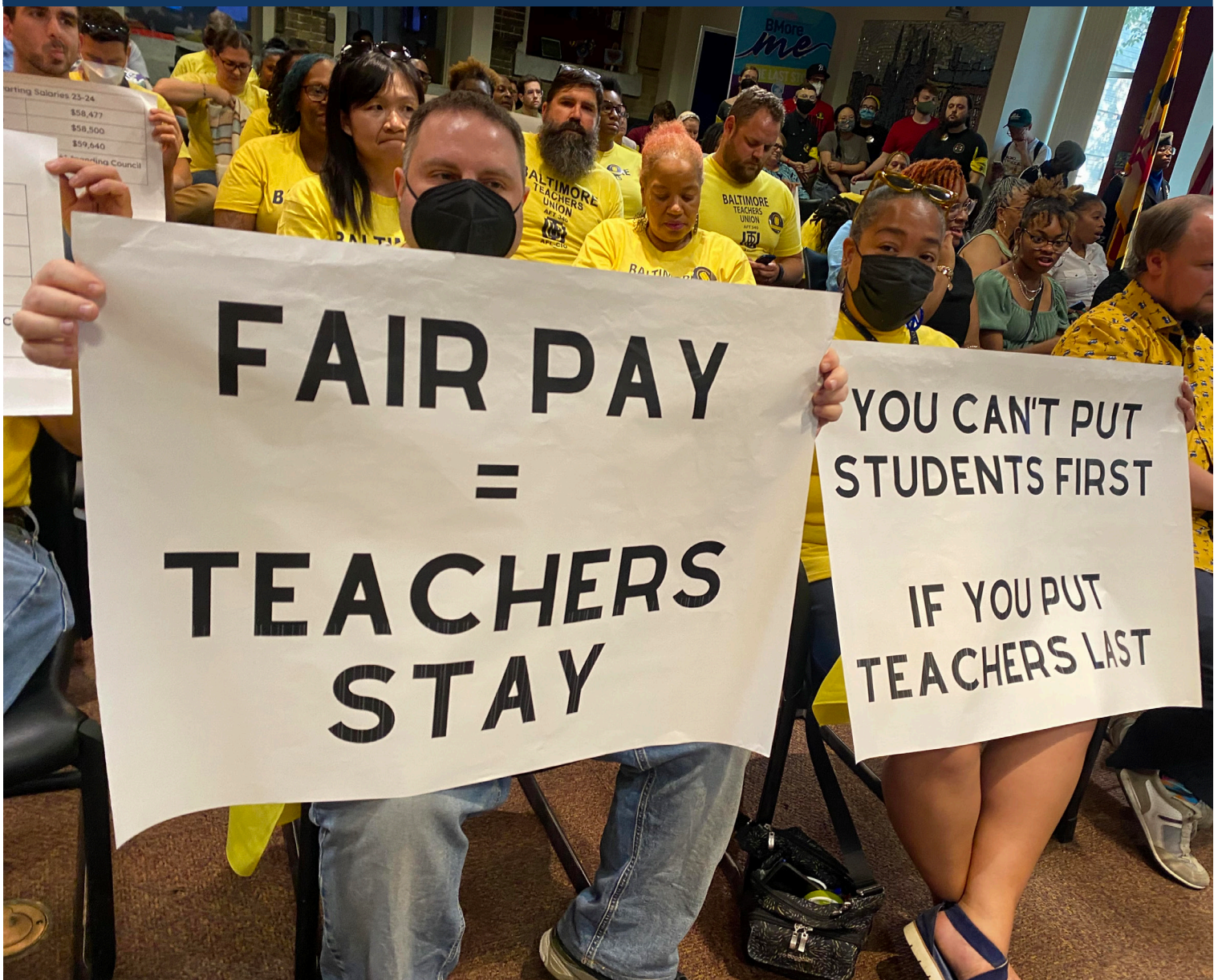




The Baltimore Educator

The official publication of the Baltimore Teachers Union



Fighting for Our Worth

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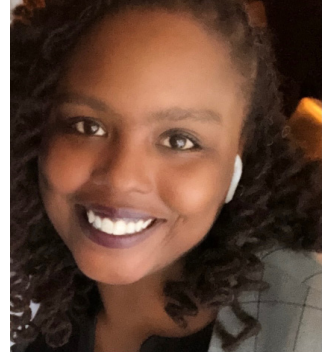
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A Note From President Brown

Dear Members,

I hope 2024 will be a year we tap into our strength, our voices, and our fight. I want us to remember that when we fight for what we deserve, we make our schools safer, healthier, and a place where students and adults want to be in community with one another. When we advocate for ourselves, we ensure that those who follow in our footsteps can avoid some of the same pitfalls and struggles that we have experienced.



I want to highlight some of the issues the BTU has been fighting for and will continue to fight for:

- This school year, the BTU took the district to impasse over the **Teacher Chapter Contract negotiations**. We began these negotiations in February 2023, but by the fall we had made slow progress, and we did not have any meaningful engagement from the district on compensation and several workload issues that we know are important to members. The impasse proceedings began in December 2023 and continued over four days until late January 2024. I hope by the time you are reading this we are in the midst of ratifying the tentative agreement. Throughout negotiations and impasse, with the support of hundreds of members who attended job title meetings, provided input over email and on Facebook, called the BTU office, and attended membership meetings to hear updates, the BTU was able to fight for what we know members deserve on compensation and so much more. I look forward to sharing and celebrating those wins with you all.
- The new year also brings the re-opening of the **PSRP Chapter Contract**. The current agreement expires in June 2024. As I write this, I have sent a request to district leadership to begin bargaining, but I have not yet received a commitment to schedule these negotiation sessions. I hope by the time you receive this update, we will have begun negotiations so that PSRPs can receive a timely update to their compensation for 2024 and beyond, as well as updates on other important issues that affect our valued PSRPs. The BTU will continue to fight on your behalf and follow your lead as we chart a path forward together.
- Throughout this winter and spring the BTU will continue to negotiate what a **new pathway structure looks like for the Teacher Chapter members** starting next school year. BTU's goal is to keep our current pathway structure, add on an additional pathway to satisfy state mandated NBC pathway requirements, and make it so that people can move automatically every year AND be able to use AUs to accelerate their movement. Essentially, we will be fighting to keep what we have and make improvements. The School Board does not want to keep our current pay structure, but have failed to provide any comprehensive details of what a new system will look like.

On these issues and so much more, please continue to stay engaged with the BTU website (baltimoreteachers.org), BTU social media pages, and our weekly email blasts. We need all members to be ready to fight with us to ensure that district leadership does not continue to mistake silence for acceptance.

In Solidarity,
President Diamonté Brown



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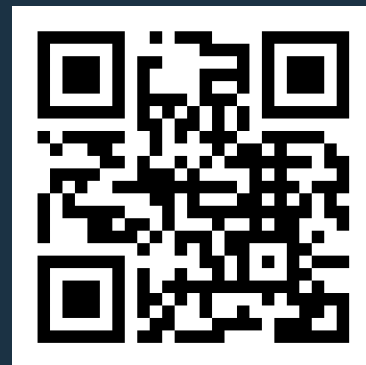
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Know Your Contract: School Based Options

By Kelly Hope, BTU Field Organizer

There has been some confusion going around about the District's expanded calendar pilot program, so this article will address School Based Options. If a school participates in the District's expanded calendar pilot program, sometimes called Extended School Year, it will have to follow the process for School Based Options outlined in Section 7.19 of the Teacher contract. The school year is only one of the four items that can be voted on by teachers to change from the current contract language. The other three items concern the school week (7.2), school day (7.3) and available prep time (7.8).

Here are the steps that need to be taken for School Based Options (SBO) to happen based on the contract language found in Section 7.19:

1. The BTU Building Rep at minimum needs to sign off on a vote. The CEO, Union President or BR can veto a vote before the teachers even vote.
2. There needs to be a secret ballot vote held at the school for teachers to vote.
3. If 80% of the teacher chapter bargaining unit members vote for the SBO, the change will take place for one school year.
4. In the case of extended hours or additional days, the staff will be paid additional compensation in proportion to the salary scales provided in the contract book. There are a few exceptions for some job titles.
5. The BTU President and CEO will monitor the SBO if passed.
6. Every year there needs to be a vote taken so the above process needs to be repeated annually.

The expanded calendar pilot program the District is rolling out is available ONLY to K-8 schools this year. Based on Section 7.19, there needs to be a vote in favor of the change by 80% or more of the teacher chapter members for the school to be considered by City Schools for the expanded school year option. After the interest vote is taken, the administration at your school will share the information with the District. City Schools will then look at the schools that are interested and select 3-4 schools to participate in the expanded school year option for the 2024-2025 school year. If your school is selected as an official expanded calendar school, an official vote must take place.

School administrators probably have started some conversation with staff about expanding the school year. They may have even asked for an interest vote to take place to see how many people are interested in working at the school if there was an expanded calendar. BTU has asked the District in December to cease holding votes until BTU leadership can meet with District staff and the process outlined in the contract can be followed. If you are concerned about how this process is being handled at your school, please reach out to your field staff immediately. Their phone numbers and email addresses can be found on the Baltimore Teacher Union website.

Below is the relevant section of the Teacher contract book. You can find it on page 32-33 in the Teacher (purple) contract book or the online version.

7.19 School Based Options

The Board and the BTU have jointly agreed to the following terms regarding school based options “SBO”:

A.

- The CEO and the BTU President shall monitor SBO waivers and implementation.
- The Joint Governing Panel shall assist the SBO waiver process and implementation.
- An independent audit and electronic online survey will be conducted yearly with input by the BTU on content of survey, scope of the audit and the final report.
- All schools are available for full implementation of SBO subject to CEO and BTU President monitoring of SBO waivers and implementation.

B. Safeguards & Protections

1. SBO limitations

- SBOs shall be limited to selected parts of Article VII – specifically sections 7.1 (School Year), 7.2 (School Week), 7.3 (School Day), and 7.8 (Available Prep Time).

2. Implementation of SBO

- Any additional hours or school days worked as a result of SBO votes shall be paid pro-rata at the contract rate.
- 80% vote of teachers is required by secret ballot vote.
- All proposals for contract waivers must be submitted to the CEO and the Union President fourteen (14) days prior to a vote on the waiver.
- Vetoes (Vetoes can be implemented before submission of SBO to teachers for vote) by the:
 - Building rep
 - BTU president
 - CEO
- Unless renewed all SBO's shall sunset at the end of the school year.
- There shall be no more than one waiver of any contract provision per vote.
- There shall be no retaliation or arbitrary or capricious action by principals against any teacher, including, but not limited to, negative evaluations or transfer out of school for any position taken on an SBO issue.
- The Board will comply with Article 6.2.B.

C. Charter Schools

If a charter school's authorization includes an extended school day, the procedures of Section 7.19.B shall not apply; however compensation for the extended school day shall be negotiated pursuant to Section 7.3.E. If a charter school's authorization does not include an extended school day, but the charter school seeks to add an extended school day to its program, the procedures of Sections 7.19.B and 7.3.E shall apply.

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PSRP Update

Frequently Asked Questions About the PSRP Contract

The BTU PSRP Member Engagement Team, Keysha Goodwin and Shari Brown, have revised our FAQ about the PSRP contract to include additional questions. More frequently asked questions and answers will be published in the next issue of the Baltimore Educator. The information/language provided can be found in the Paraprofessional and School Related Personnel Chapter Contract (2020-2022) in print or online at baltimoreteachers.org. Here are some frequently asked questions with the answer and supporting language from the contract.

Do I have to eat in the office or classroom? No.

Do I have to work during my lunch? No.

ARTICLE VI

School Calendar and Hours

D. Lunch Periods

1. All employees shall be granted a duty-free lunch period during each work shift. Whenever possible, the lunch period shall be scheduled at the middle of each shift.
2. In those work sites in which the BCPSS has heretofore provided lunch facilities, BCPSS will either provide adequate facilities or stagger lunch breaks where necessary to insure each employee, other than a Paraprofessional, with a full forty (40) minute lunch period. Employees shall be allowed to leave the work premises during duty-free lunch periods.
3. If an employee's unpaid, duty free lunch is interrupted because of operations and the employee is not given time during his shift to finish lunch, the uncompleted portion of the lunch period shall be paid at the appropriate overtime rate.

Do I have to stay after my work shift until the last student gets on the bus? No.

Do I have to work when there is Back to School Night, Literacy Night, or a School, Family and Community Council meeting? No.

ARTICLE VI-A

Overtime

This Article VI-A applies to non-exempt employees covered under this Agreement.

A. All hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours scheduled within a work week shall be considered overtime and non-exempt employees shall be compensated at the rate of one and one-half (1½) times their normal straight time rate of pay. All paid leave shall be counted as hours worked in the computation of overtime.

B. Compensatory time shall not be used as an alternative to overtime pay.

[...]

G. The Board shall not vary or rearrange work schedules to avoid overtime. Staggered schedules are permitted.

H. The Board will make every effort to pay for overtime hours worked within two (2) pay periods following the pay period in which such overtime was worked.

What is my probationary period? 1 year from your hire date.

ARTICLE XV

Discipline and Discharge

C. Discharge, Reduction in Pay or Suspension for More Than Thirty (30) Days

1. The Board shall not discharge any employee who has completed their probationary period nor shall the Board reduce in pay or position or suspend any employee without just cause. The employee will be promptly notified in writing giving reasons for any discharge, reduction in pay or position, or suspension for more than thirty (30) days. The probationary period shall be for a period of one (1) year.

Do I get reimbursed for traveling and parking expenses for my work assignment? Yes.

ARTICLE XX-B

Transportation

A. Travel Allowance

The Board shall provide employees with a travel allowance in accordance with the business standard mileage rate as prescribed by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Employees shall also be reimbursed for the use of any parking facility expenditure they incur as part of their work assignment as authorized by the Board.

Can I be mandated to perform another assignment/classification? No.

ARTICLE XX-D

No bargaining unit member shall be regularly assigned work that is ordinarily assigned to and performed by other employees or other bargaining unit members. For example, a paraprofessional shall not be assigned to perform the duties of a secretary.

What are the limits on other duties as assigned? PSRPs are not hired/assigned by the Board as gardeners, maintenance, crossing guards, traffic monitors/directors, custodians, etc.

ARTICLE XX-E

E. The Board shall not unreasonably require any bargaining unit personnel to perform tasks that are not within the employee's job descriptions, or for which they have not been adequately trained. The Board also shall not ask or require any bargaining unit personnel to be responsible for the work of any outside contractor.

F. If the occupants of any bargaining unit positions have been required, as a matter of routine, to perform higher rated work, work for which they are not trained, or work that is not within their job description, the Board shall upon demand of the Union commission a job classification study to reassess the value of their work. The Union and the Board shall negotiate the rate of compensation for any newly created classification.

If you are a PSRP substituting or covering a class for more than one hour, you are entitled to compensation. If there is a pattern of you serving as the special or resource teacher then you may be entitled to compensation.

Currently, short term substitute rate is from day 1 to day 10 and long term starts on the consecutive 11th day. Document in your log/notes, sign a substitute book, and/or have an email indicating that you and the administrator (or the one acting on their behalf) agree to pay you for substituting.

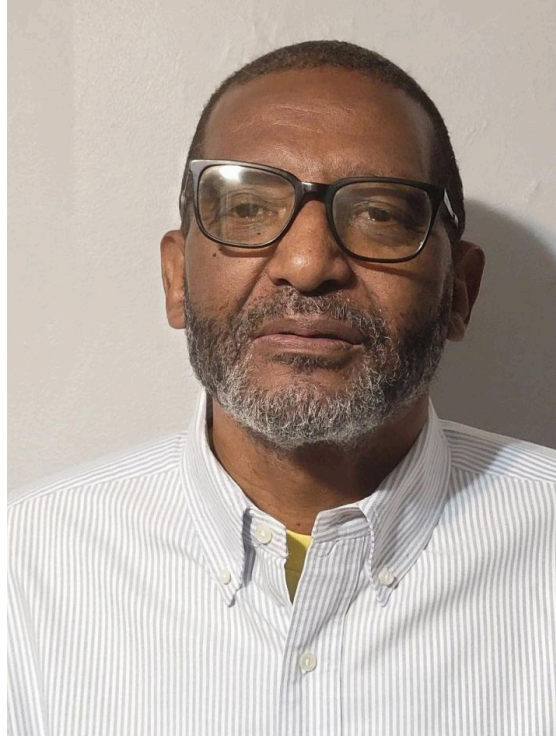
To inquire about Out of Title Pay and Substitute Pay, do the following:

Submit a salary review to start the inquiry process to payroll@bcps.k12.md.us

Become familiar with your contract and if you ever have any questions or concerns, please reach out to the PSRP Member Engagement team or [contact your field representative](#). We are here to support you!

PSRP Spotlight: Larry Gaines

Larry Gaines is a Special Education Paraeducator at the Stadium School. He has worked as a paraeducator in BCPSS for the past 18 years and has worked with Baltimore students for 22 years. Mr. Gaines is a former Building Rep, and is also the President of his neighborhood association. He has previously served as the Chair of the Baltimore City Parent Community Advisory Board and as the PTA President for two different schools.



and thank you in their own special way, that's priceless.

Have your duties changed during the course of being a paraeducator? If so, how have you handled the changes?

The field of education changes as children, teachers, and administrators change. It is like water. It flows and changes directions; Therefore, you have to be very flexible and willing to adapt.

You have great relationships with your students, families, and colleagues. How do you nurture those relationships?

What inspired you to become a paraeducator?

My journey to become a paraeducator has always been to advocate for children and the community. I started off volunteering at my children's school as a Boy Scout leader. This led me to being involved in working with kids in the Baltimore City Public School System for 22 years. I was asked to be a member of the PTA, resulting in me becoming PTA President at both of my children's schools. As a result of my dedication and work ethic, an administrator hired me into the school system permanently 18 years ago as a paraeducator.

What motivates you to continue to be a paraeducator?

I have a natural motivation – I was already working in the schools and I continue to enjoy working in schools. I wear many hats as a paraeducator from working in the cafeteria, to cleaning school grounds, to sitting with students, and meeting/greeting parents on a daily basis, just to name a few.

What is your favorite thing about being a paraeducator or working in the school system?

My passion is working with children who have special needs. I enjoy celebrating with them on special occasions and seeing the joy on their faces. When children achieve accomplishments

Relationships are nurtured with patience. I must have patience with myself, co-workers, children, and administration. The ability to wait for something without getting angry or upset is a valuable quality in a person. Sometimes when talking and listening to children, parents, and staff, I have to sometimes verify what I heard, then verify that I understood what I heard, and then verify how to deliver a response. You build relationships over time with patience, trust, and understanding, and when you are willing to ask questions and not assume you have all the answers.

Why are you involved with educational politics?

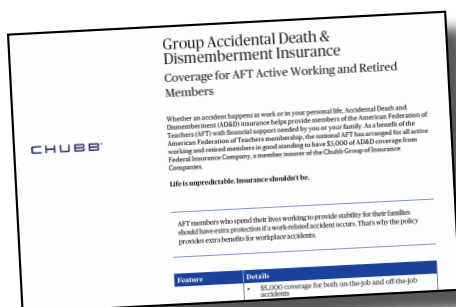
I am involved with the politics of education because it is the driving force of our jobs, our security, for today and tomorrow. Sometimes you have to lift up your voice to say whether you agree or disagree and not just back down and depend on politicians and administrators to do what's best for you. That's why I feel being a part of a union gives me the collective voice to raise awareness. It's a learning process to go through, but in the end my voice is heard.

Story continued on p. 13

Members!

Did you know your BTU membership also entitles you to member benefits through the AFT and AFL-CIO?

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In the last few years, we have added new benefits that meet the moment, such as free trauma counseling to support recovery from personal and workplace challenges, NewsGuard to help discern fact from fiction online, and Summer to minimize student loan repayments.

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Teacher Spotlight: Andrea Carrington

Andrea Carrington is an 8th grade science teacher, 8th grade team lead, and Step Coach at Baltimore Leadership School for Young Women, where she has taught for the past five years. Ms. Carrington has worked in the education field for over 15 years, including work with nonprofit organizations in the education field such as the Children's Defense Fund and the YMCA.



One of your colleagues said that your "creativity in the classroom encourages our students to not only learn, but to love science." What kinds of things do you do to foster that love of science and learning in your students?

My classroom is my student's playground. One day you can come in and everyone is engaged making their own synthetic gummy worms through experimentation to solve world hunger. Another day, we are standing in the school hallways/staircase between the basement and second floor foyer doing an egg drop experiment to display Newton's Laws of Motion. And another day, my students are sitting on their favorite floor spot or swivel chairs completing their research projects. My priority is not only for my students to excel academically but to have fun in science. I am a very hands-on teacher and encourage my students to move and think creatively for themselves. I am a music lover and pride myself on having an eclectic playlist - the students joke about it all the time. I can go from Michael Jackson to smooth jazz at any moment. I am a firm believer that music (and food) bring people together. There is a lot of music in my classroom - whether it is completing our Smart Starts, a super competitive review game, or Starbucks study time.

Learning for me is all about connecting with your students and building upon what they know. I use their culture, experiences, and prior knowledge, and infuse it into their everyday learning. Science is everywhere - literally. So with that, we can make scientific connections

to almost every aspect of our lives. Some of the real life conversations in my classroom are eye-opening and life changing. We get to understand each other on a deeper level and build a stronger community. My students participate in a lot of scientific inquiry, which teaches them how to think critically, process information, and make informed conclusions/decisions. I have high expectations for all of my students and hold them accountable for their learning. Ohhh - and we laugh...A LOT!

You are also the 8th grade team lead at your school. What does that role entail?

As the 8th grade team lead, I am responsible for creating a positive and engaging culture and climate for the 8th grade community (staff and students), planning 8th grade end of year activities, creating monthly incentives that students work to earn and holding them accountable for in school behaviors. I love being a team lead just as much as I love teaching. One of my favorite 8th grade events to plan is the 8th grade Step Up Ceremony. It is such a joyous event and seeing how happy students, families, and teachers are in that moment is rewarding. My students are one step closer to their life goals, and we played a part in that. I am passionate about exposing students to memorable opportunities that they may not experience on a daily basis. I work with my team to find creative experiences outside of Baltimore and even Maryland for our students to participate in. One of my favorite experiences with my students was the end of year 8th grade trip in 2019. We traveled to North Carolina for a weekend jam-packed with activities, one of which was white water rafting. WHEW - what a memorable weekend!

In addition to teaching science, you are a Step Coach. Tell us a little bit about the Step program and what you do there.

LETHAL LADIESSSSS! I am the Head Step Coach of the Lethal Ladies of BLSYW (LLOB) Step Team - THE number one Step team in Baltimore! LLOB is a Step program that fosters sisterhood, academic scholarship, and service in the community. We are an award winning Step team that competes internationally. You may have also seen LLOB on the big screen as the team was featured in the American documentary film "STEP." Fun fact - I am also one of the choreographers for "STEP." I have been the coach for several years now and I absolutely LOVE my team. Those girls and my other assistant coaches bring me joy.

What does being a BTU member mean to you?

Being a BTU member means that I have a fully supportive group of people who are willing to

help myself and others grow professionally. It also means that I get to be a part of a community of educators who I can learn from and turn to in times of uncertainty. During my professional journey, I have received some of my best support from members of the BTU - THANK YOU!

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I know we are in trying times right now - all educators can feel it. But - when the expectations begin to feel impossible, remember that because of YOU, today someone smiled, learned something new, became more confident and felt loved. Don't give up!

BTU Shout-outs

- I would like to shout out **Aisha Richards** at Leith Walk Elementary Middle School for ALWAYS going above and beyond. She is knowledgeable, helpful, positive, and great to work with. Aisha is truly LEGENDARY! (From Jeana Patti)
- Shout-out to **Dryden Epstein**! She's awesome and is an amazing school counselor and leader. Her passion for her job is admirable.
- Shout-out to **Aisha Watson**, my school counseling mentor. She's a major resource and is very funny and encouraging. (From Christiana Morris)
- Shout-out to **Ms. Atienza** at Claremont. She is a resource to early career and veteran educators. Ms. Atienza consistently works to support her staff and encourage others. Thank you!
- Shout-out to **Karlene Bravo Bowen** at the BAER school. Karlene is a resource and a rock to her colleagues! (From Nathan Ferrell)
- Shout-out to **Erica Walther**, Literacy Coach at Cecil. She goes above and beyond for our students and staff. She is creative and dedicated to her students to promote better reading skills! And she has the most fun classroom ever! (From Diana Desierto)
- Shout-out to **Andrea Carrington**, science teacher and 8th grade team lead at BLSYW! Ms. Carrington is the definition of positive influence and accountability for our students. She has engaging lessons in and out of the classroom. Whether it's hands-on lab activities or coaching an award-winning STEP team, she leads our students to excellence in everything they do. We are so lucky to have Ms. Carrington!

StEP: Advocating for better education in BCPS



By Dianny Dicent, Western High School student and co-founder of StEP

Students, Educators, and Parents for Better Schools (StEP) is a coalition of students, educators, and parents who want Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) to provide a better quality of education. To bring about these changes, we have focused on decreasing class sizes and caseloads, achieving a fully resident-elected school board, and securing a \$5,000 raise for all BCPSS teachers, paraeducators, and school resource professionals (PSRPs).

My name is Dianny Dicent. I am a student at Western High School and a co-founder of StEP. Like many other students, I have been impacted by the lack of quality education in BCPS. In my school, I am part of the Teacher Academy Pathway, a program that prepares students for careers in education. This year, my class is composed of 6 students. This is the smallest class I have had in my high school career, allowing me to see the difference between how my needs as a student are being met in larger and smaller classes.

In my smaller class, I feel seen and heard. Smaller classes give students and teachers the time and the space to build a comfortable and respectful learning environment. There have been so many times when a student from my smaller

class feels off, and our teacher takes the time to acknowledge us and help us. The other students in my class also take their time to be there for one another. I yearn for the connections and interactions that smaller classes provide. In larger classes, I must fight for my voice to be heard. I have been in classrooms where the teacher doesn't even know my name due to the many students in that class. Sometimes, there is no time or space for my needs to be met in the classroom. I want to voice my concerns and feel valued and respected in a classroom.

Students benefit from small class sizes as they receive more individual attention from teachers and fewer class distractions in their learning. Teachers and staff benefit by focusing on assisting students' social and emotional needs, building stronger connections, and being more available in students' learning. Parents benefit as they can be pleased that their kids are in a comfortable and safe learning environment that promotes community values where peers act supportively, and teachers listen. Smaller class sizes and caseloads help to increase meaningful connections, participation, and focused productivity. The Baltimore Teachers Union wants to make class size and caseload caps part of their contract: they want to ensure that there are ways to prevent class sizes caseloads that are so large that special educators can't deliver the services required by law.

As someone deeply invested in the educational landscape of Baltimore, I have witnessed the impact that decisions made at the School Board level can have on students, teachers, and parents. Growing up in this community, I experienced firsthand the importance of having voices that genuinely represent the diverse needs and aspirations of our students. Currently, there are 12 members of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners. Of these, three are elected, but only 2 have full voting power. The student member, who is also elected, has only partial voting powers. The remaining nine are

appointed by the Mayor. With only a fraction of members elected and given voting power, there is a missed opportunity for more inclusive representation. This directly impacts students, who deserve to see their voices reflected in the decisions shaping their education. Why is the only student representative not given full opportunity to advocate for the needs of students? As a product of Baltimore's educational system, I believe that true change starts with democratic participation. Allowing every member to contribute their voice and vote creates a collaborative environment where decisions are made in the best interests of the students, who are the most impacted. Students, educators, and parents want to be given the choice of who will be in charge of the education system.

Growing up in this community, I've had the privilege of witnessing the incredible impact that teachers and school staff have on students' lives. Their dedication, hard work, and passion for education are truly commendable. However, I've also seen the challenges they face due to financial constraints, which deeply resonates with me. The need for a \$5,000 wage increase is not just about numbers; it's a recognition of the invaluable contributions that educators make to the lives of our children. It was unsettling for me to know that one of my favorite English teachers had to work two jobs to be able to support herself and her family financially. I've observed the dedication and numerous hours she invests in her lessons, encompassing her presentation approach and the time she dedicates after school to instruct her students. As someone who has seen the positive ripple effect of motivated and supported teachers, I understand the transformative power this increase can have. Teachers and PSRPs are the backbone of our education system, and their commitment deserves to be acknowledged and rewarded. This wage increase is not merely a financial boost; it's a morale booster that can lead to increased dedication, motivation, and ultimately, better outcomes for students.

Having grown up in Baltimore and experienced the highs and lows of our education system, I understand the pivotal role that quality education plays in shaping the future of our community. The three key demands we've outlined – caps on class sizes and caseloads, a fully democratic school board, and a \$5,000 raise for educators – are not just ideals. They are the seeds of positive change, and your action is the water that will help them grow. By adding your name in support of our petition, you are lending your voice to the collective call for change. Your signature is not just a signature; it's a symbol of solidarity with the students, teachers, and parents of Baltimore.

Please sign StEP's petition at <https://sites.google.com/view/step-for-better-schools>. You can reach us by email at stepbaltimore@gmail.com or Instagram at @stepbaltimore.

PSRP Spotlight

Story continued from p. 13

What else would you like to share?

As an advocate for non-verbal children, I think we need to take sign language to another level, not just for the deaf, but the non-verbal as well. I don't want to see it changed, just made into one universal language for both the deaf and the non-verbal population. My employment with Baltimore City Public Schools resulted from working and advocating for kids, giving me a networking opportunity to communicate and collaborate with professionals in the educational field. As a result of my advocacy, I have been the chair of the Baltimore City Parent Community Advisory Board, PTA President at two school sites, and I currently serve as the president of my Neighborhood Association.

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¹In the survey Best Health Insurance Companies of 2023 by Insure.com, Kaiser Permanente as a national enterprise is rated #1 overall among 60+ insurance carriers. In the NCOA Commercial Health Plan Ratings 2023, our commercial plan is rated 5 out of 5, the highest rating in the region. The 2022 Commission on Cancer, a program of the American College of Surgeons, granted Three-Year Accreditation with Commendation to the Kaiser Permanente cancer care program. The Mid-Atlantic Permanente Medical Group is the largest multispecialty medical group in the Washington, DC, and Baltimore areas and exclusively treats Kaiser Permanente members. Permanente doctors are recognized as Top Doctors in Arlington Magazine (2023), Bethesda magazine (2023), Northern Virginia Magazine (2023), Washingtonian magazine (2022), and Baltimore magazine (2022). According to NCOA's Quality Compass® 2023, we're rated 5 out of 5 in 31 measures, including: controlling high blood pressure, glucose control and blood pressure control (140/90) for diabetes, breast cancer screening, colorectal cancer screening, childhood and adolescent immunizations, and postpartum care. Quality Compass is a registered trademark of the NCOA.

²When appropriate and available. If you travel out of state, phone appointments and video visits may not be available in select states due to licensing laws. Laws differ by state.

³App services may not be covered under your health plan benefits and may not be subject to the terms set forth in your Evidence of Coverage or other plan documents. These services may be discontinued at any time without notice. Psychiatry is not included in the myStrength Complete membership. Telecoaching is not available to members ages 13 to 17. myStrength® is a wholly owned subsidiary of Livongo Health, Inc.

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ULR's Corner:

How to get certified in ESOL/ELD

By Patty Kirby

Certified teachers are always in high demand. This is especially true for ESOL/ELD (English for Speakers of Other Languages/English Language Development) teachers. According to the June 2023 presentation to the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners, multilingual learners (MLs) continue to be the fastest-growing student group in City Schools and have doubled in number since 2016. It should be no surprise that Baltimore City Public Schools started this school year with several ESOL/ELD vacancies.

Seven years ago I was teaching high school health, but I wanted to get an additional content endorsement. I took an ESOL class at UMBC and then took the ESOL Praxis, not realizing there was a huge need for ESOL/ELD teachers. I was hired the next year as an ESOL/ELD teacher in an Elementary/Middle school. It has been a great move! I work with students with various English proficiency levels from Pre-K through 8th grade. My students come from all over the world and speak a wide variety of languages. I work within the general education classroom with some students and in small group pull-out sessions with others. Working with students in Pre-K - 8 allows me to see how academic skills, content, and vocabulary are connected from grade to grade within the Wit and Wisdom curriculum. One thing I love about being an ESOL/ELD teacher is that



I frequently get to work with the same students over several years, which allows me to see my students grow academically and socially. Students who receive ESOL services continue getting services until they receive a 4.5 or higher on the annual WIDA ACCESS test. The test is quite rigorous, so it's a great achievement, and one to be commended and celebrated when they exit!

How do you get certified in ESOL/ELD? To get an ESOL endorsement, teachers who currently have a valid teaching certificate (SPC or APC) need to take and pass the ESOL Praxis 5362. In some cases, teachers may need to take the Teaching Reading: Elementary Education Praxis 5205 as well as the ESOL Praxis 5362 to add the endorsement to their existing professional certificate. It may be helpful to take an ESOL class before taking the Praxis, but it is not required. Thinking about making a content change? There are lots of opportunities for ESOL/ELD teachers. Come join us!

Patty Kirby is currently an ESOL/ELD teacher at Hampden EMS (where she serves as the Union Learning Representative) and Margaret Brent EMS. She has worked for Baltimore City Public Schools for 19 years, and has been an ESOL teacher for the last 7 years. You can reach out to Patty at pkirby@bcps.k12.md.us or Sarah Dukeshire SEDukeshire@bcps.k12.md.us to learn more about becoming certified in ESOL/ELD.

The Baltimore Educator is the official magazine of the Baltimore Teachers Union. It is published by the BTU Communications Committee. BTU members are encouraged to submit articles of 1,000 words or less by emailing communicationscommittee@baltu.org. Organizations interested in placing an advertisement in the Baltimore Educator may also contact us at the address above. The submission deadline for the next issue is April 15, 2024. Read the Baltimore Educator online at <https://www.baltimoreteachers.org/category/newsletter/>.



The Baltimore Teachers Union

AFT 340 AFL-CIO
 Seton Business Park
 5800 Metro Drive, 2nd Floor
 Baltimore, MD 21215-3209

Upcoming BTU Events & Meetings

February 2024

Feb 6 @ 5:00pm - [ULR Meeting](#)
 Feb 8 @ 6:00pm - [Executive Board Meeting](#)
 Feb 13 @ 5:00pm - [School Board Meeting](#)
 Feb 16 - Wellness Day - BCPSS and BTU Closed
 Feb 19 - President's Day - BCPSS and BTU Closed
 Feb 27 @ 5:00pm - [School Board Meeting](#)
 Feb 28 @ 4:30pm - [BR Meeting](#)

March 2024

Mar 1 - Asynchronous Learning Day
 Mar 5 @ 5:00pm - [ULR Meeting](#)
 Mar 7 @ 5:00pm - [General Membership Meeting #3](#)
 Mar 11 - Online Voting Begins for [Delegate Election](#)
 Mar 12 @ 5:00pm - [School Board Meeting](#)
 Mar 14 @ 6:00pm - [Executive Board Meeting](#)
 Mar 15 - [BTU PSRP Conference](#), Professional Development Day
 Mar 18 @ 4:30pm - [BR Meeting](#)
 Mar 21 - Online Voting Ends and In-Person Voting at BTU for [Delegate Election](#)
 Mar 25-29 - Spring Break - BCPSS and BTU Closed

April 2024

Apr 1 - Spring Break - BCPSS and BTU Closed
 Apr 2 @ 5:00pm - [ULR Meeting](#)
 Apr 5 - Early Release Day
 Apr 9 @ 5:00pm - [School Board Meeting](#)
 Apr 11 @ 6:00pm - [Executive Board Meeting](#)
 Apr 23 @ 5:00pm - [School Board Meeting](#)
 Apr 24 @ 4:30pm - [BR Meeting](#)

May 2024

May 1 - International Workers Day
 May 7 @ 5:00pm - [ULR Meeting](#)
 May 9 @ 6:00pm - [Executive Board Meeting](#)
 May 14 - Primary Election Day - BCPSS and BTU Closed
 May 15 @ 5:00pm - [School Board Meeting](#)
 May 17 - Professional Development Day
 May 22 @ 4:30pm - [BR Meeting](#)
 May 27 - Memorial Day - BCPSS and BTU Closed
 May 28 @ 5:00pm - [School Board Meeting](#)
 May 31 @ 5:00pm - [General Membership Meeting #4](#)