2025 BTU Officer Election
Meet the Teacher Chapter Candidates

(Bios appear as submitted by candidates)

Bios are also on the BTU website: https://baltimoreteachers.org/2025-btu-officers-and-delegates-elections/

Candidate for President

Diamonté Brown

Work site location: BTU

Educational background: 2013-2015 Grand Canyon University, Secondary Education, MA; 2000-2004 University of Michigan, Sports Management and Communications, BA; 1996-2000 Baltimore City College High School; 1993-1996 Roland Park Elementary/Middle School; 1988-1993 Harford Heights Elementary School; 1987-1988 Padonia Elementary School

Employment history: 2019–Present President - Baltimore Teachers Union—Baltimore, MD; Create and manage the union's budget and revenue strategy; Recruit and retain members; manage union staff; Represent the union at public events and key stakeholder meetings; Lead organizing efforts and strategic vision-setting; Oversee board governance and website management; Respond to member concerns and lead conflict resolution; Build and maintain internal and external partnerships; Negotiate contracts and lead quality assurance and communications; Drive membership engagement and professional development initiatives; Manage union facilities and advocate for education legislation.
2016–2019 English Language Arts Teacher (Grades 8–11) - Baltimore City Public Schools—Baltimore, MD; Taught engaging English Language Arts curriculum to middle and high school students; Provided instructional leadership and mentorship to fellow English teachers.
2014–2016 Literacy Instructor -Mayor's Office of Employment Development—Baltimore, MD; Taught students aged 18–24 seeking GED certification; Instructed across all core subjects: math, reading, writing, social studies, and science; Increased literacy levels for 90% of students with high school diplomas but low proficiency; Designed the academic curriculum for YouthBuild (Housing Authority of Baltimore City)

Views and goals: During my administration, the Baltimore Teachers Union won historic contract protections for both Teachers and Paraprofessional & School-Related Personnel (PSRP). We secured the highest salary increases in more than a decade and preserved our healthcare benefits. I led efforts to restore the union's financial health by eliminating budget deficits, cutting unnecessary expenses, and growing our membership to record levels. We also fought for—and won—the right to online voting, making BTU elections more accessible.
Transparency and communication have been central to my leadership. We launched a contract tracker, shared regular updates, published board meeting minutes, and created a private BTU Facebook group to keep members informed and connected.
Looking ahead, we are focused on deepening member engagement and building a truly member-led union. Together, we will continue using our collective power to improve schools, support students, and push for the broader social changes our communities need and deserve.

Candidate for Teacher Chair

Cristina Duncan Evans

Worksite location: BTU

Educational background: MAT from Johns Hopkins, 2008; BA in History from Dartmouth College, 2006; Advanced Professional Certificate: Secondary Social Studies

Employment history: Cristina Duncan Evans has been a Baltimore City educator for 15 years and has taught every grade from PK-12. The first ten years of her career were spent as a high school social studies teacher at Dunbar, Carver and Baltimore School for the Arts. She then became a Library Media Specialist, and as a resource teacher, she taught all grades at James McHenry Elementary Middle School in West Baltimore. In July of 2019, Cristina was appointed by President Brown to serve on external assignment as the Director of Education Initiatives.

Views and goals: As Teacher Chapter Chair, I have worked to ensure that educators' voices are central in every conversation about our schools. I've led with transparency, built power through organizing, and fought for fair contracts, better working conditions, and respect for our profession. I've prioritized member engagement—from school visits and one-on-one conversations to our growing political

action efforts. If re-elected, I will continue pushing for workload relief, stronger protections against retaliation, and greater educator influence in school decision-making. I'll also keep fighting for the schools our students deserve—fully funded, well-staffed, and grounded in justice. Together, we've made real gains—and there's more to win.

Candidate for Teacher Vice-Chair

Kelly Hope

Worksite location: BTU
Educational background: Bachelor of Science in Biology, Towson University; Master of Education in Educational Leadership, Grand Canyon University; Certified in: Biology (7-12 grades)
Employment history: Kelly has been working at BTU for also three years as a Field Organizer. As a Field Organizer Kelly supports about 25 schools. Before Kelly transitioned to her role as a Field Organizer at BTU, she had 15 years of experience as a teacher in Baltimore City, teaching Biology. During her time as a teacher, she also served as a facilitator for City Schools, helping with science curriculum and practices. In the last few years of her teaching career, she focused on teaching sheltered instruction Biology specifically for English Language Learners (ELL), which likely involved adapting content to meet the needs of students who were developing their English language skills while also learning complex scientific concepts.
Views and goals: I love teaching, and Baltimore. I want the union to stand strong in supporting teachers and PSRPs by enforcing the contract, increasing membership engagement, and collaborating with the district to ensure City Schools students receive the education they need and deserve. I am not afraid to roll up my sleeves and get to work to make these improvements happen. A vote for Kelly Hope is a vote for everyday educators who want to be valued and supported so they can become the motivational teachers City Schools students deserve.

Candidate for Teacher Secretary

Jocelyn Providence

Worksite location: 415 Baltimore School for the Arts
Educational background: 2013 B.S.-Environmental Science; 2014 M.A.-Environmental Policy & Design; 2016 MS- Educational Studies- Mathematics; 2024 M.Ed.- Transformational Education Leadership
Employment history: I have worked for BCPSS from 2014-present
Views and goals: Power in Negotiations: negotiated the most added protections to both the Teacher & PSRP contracts in decades, while protecting our healthcare & securing the highest raises in 10 years.
A Fighting Union: under our leadership the BTU won COVID testing & other safety agreements for staff & students over the district's initial rejections.
Union Management: returned the union to financial stability by reversing historically high budget deficits through cutting expenses & raising record high membership enrollments.
The Members ARE the Union: we fought & won for online voting ballots for BTU elections permanently.
Transparency: from updates on negotiations & union finances to providing Executive Board minutes & starting the private BTU FB account, we have worked to ensure members are informed.
Our goals are to increase engagement among BTU members to have a truly member-run union that maximizes incentives & transparency and overcome any adversities or threats to public education. I also want to make sure that we are working towards educational justice and active members of our Baltimore City community!

Candidate for Teacher Treasurer

Zach Taylor

Worksite location: BTU
Educational background: BA Miami University; MAT Johns Hopkins University; Collective Bargaining Certificate - AFT/Cornell University
Employment history: Zach Taylor has worked in City Schools for 18 years, teaching Social Studies, Language Arts, and ESOL. He has worked at Calverton, Civitas, and Commodore John Rodgers as a middle school teacher and Building Representative. For the past six years he has worked at the BTU, focusing on negotiations, membership growth, member support, union administration and finances, and union-district interactions.
Views and goals: During the last six years I've worked with union member leaders across the school system to increase transparency, build union power, and win at the negotiating table. Together, we've added the most contract protections in decades while also securing the highest raises in a generation while also safeguarding our healthcare. We negotiated a just transition with the end of the AU system, and we also secured the highest raises ever for veteran PSRPs. We also have won several landmark grievances, further protecting staff from unfair labor practices. With the union's highest membership in over a decade, we will build on this foundation to empower broader participation in our union by increasing support to members in each and every school and worksite. The BTU is strong when members have the power to protect their working conditions and ensure students have what they need to succeed. Vote the BROWN SLATE!

Candidates for Teacher Elementary School Vice Presidents

Angela Campbell

Worksite location: 27 Commodore John Rodgers Elementary/Middle School

Educational background: Bachelor's Degree at Coppin State University in addition to numerous post-Grad Professional courses.
Employment history: This is my 20th year as an educator, specifically for grades Pre-K to 2nd. I have also worked as a Gifted & Talented co-teacher.
Views and goals: I am running because I believe in the strength of our collective voice. My motivation comes from a deep belief that strong union leadership must be responsive, transparent, and grounded in the needs of its members. If elected, I will continue to focus on building union power across all school communities and strengthening the BTU's fiscal stability. My vision is to ensure our union remains proactive, inclusive, and fully engaged in the fight for fair compensation, improved working conditions, and educational equity for all. I am honored to seek your support as we continue this important work together.

Michael Canady, Jr.

Worksite location: 105 Moravia Park Elementary School
Educational background: B.S. in Business Management from Morgan State University; M.Ed. in Instructional Technology from Grand Canyon University
Employment history: I have 20 years of experience in Baltimore City Schools. For the past 14 years I have worked at Moravia Park Elementary School in several capacities from PSRP to classroom teacher. Currently I teach Computer Science. I have taken on progressive responsibilities including co-advisor for our Student Government Association and serving as coach for the school's Robotics team. I also co-chaired the school's Diversity and Equity Committee and served as Moravia's Union Learning Representative for several years. Most recently, I started the Schoolwide Student Announcement Team, helping students gain media, public speaking and video production skills.
Views and goals: My involvement with BTU has increased my awareness of the importance of hearing voices that reflect the diversity of the student body. If elected, I will support the president, and use my voice to increase awareness of the union and participation in its activities.

Cheryl Lynn Owens

Worksite location: 95 Franklin Square Elementary/Middle School
Educational background: Undergraduate degree American studies at Leslie University and master's degree in culturally responsive teaching leadership from Bowie State University.
Employment history: I've worked for Harvard University, Fidelity investments and Baltimore City public schools.
Views and goals: To activate teacher activism.

Chris Patterson

Worksite location: BTU
Educational background: MA Higher Education & Revolutionary Specialized Learning Systems , BA in Criminal Justice
Employment history: 8 YEARS IN EDUCATION
Views and goals: With over two decades of progressive experience across customer service, education, banking, and administrative operations, Ms. Patterson is a dynamic and results-driven professional known for her leadership, organization, and unwavering commitment to service excellence. She has spent the past several years making a profound impact in the field of education, working with Baltimore City Public Schools and affiliated programs in various roles that span classroom teaching, after-school coordination, and educational program leadership.
In addition to her education-focused contributions, Ms. Patterson has brought her administrative and customer support expertise to roles at the Baltimore Teachers Union and the Joint Governing Panel, effectively bridging operational efficiency with strategic oversight. Her proficiency in managing data, leading cross-functional teams, and delivering service with integrity reflects her strong foundation in both academic and business environments.

Candidates for Teacher Middle School Vice Presidents

Corey Gaber

Worksite location: BTU
Educational background: M. Ed., General and Special Education. Lesley University Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA, M. Ed., (Mind Brain and Education program) Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA, B.A., Philosophy, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA
Employment history: Corey Gaber has worked in Baltimore City's Schools since 2007. He most recently taught at Southwest Baltimore Charter School as a 5th and 6th grade Literacy teacher. He served as the BTU Building Representative, a position he had been unanimously re-elected to by the staff for 6 years. He also served on the BTU's charter school and COPE committees, and chaired the BTU Organizing Committee.
Views and goals: As a Vice President of Middle Schools, I will fight to ensure that teacher voice is front and center for all policy decisions that affect our work in the classrooms. I'm proud of the work I've already done with the current leadership that has reversed BTU's finances to put us in a healthy and strong position. I believe I can help continue to expand our power using my extensive organizing experience.

Melissa McDonald

Worksite location: 325 ConneXions: A Community Based Arts School
Educational background: B.A. in English from McDaniel College; M.A.T. from The University of Maryland Notre Dame; National Board Certified in Adolescence and Young Adulthood/English Language Arts

Employment history: Melissa McDonald brings 16 years of experience as a Baltimore City public school teacher. Her first 8 years she taught at the Alternative Learning Center and Digital Harbor High School and now has been teaching ELA at ConneXions: A Community-Based Arts School for 7 years. Melissa serves as the BTU Building Representative at ConneXions and has served as chair and now as secretary for the BTU New Educator Steering Committee. Melissa also worked on the BTU Negotiations Committee for the 2023-2026 teacher contract.
Views and goals: If elected I want to continue to organize around issues which directly impact teachers, especially the issues surrounding new educators. I want to continue to advocate for improvements for new educators so that we can increase retention and make educators feel more supported. I have been the BTU Building Representative at ConneXions for the past 7 years and aim to continue to be a voice for educators. Vote Melissa McDonald for Middle School Vice President so I can continue to work to improve working conditions for BCPSS educators!

Candidates for Teacher Senior High School Vice Presidents

Shelly-Ann Higgins

Worksite location: 178 Excel Academy at Francis M. Wood High School
Educational background: Graduate certificate from Johns Hopkins in Urban Education; Master of Education in Health and Physical Education; along with a Bachelor's of Science in Justice Studies with a minor in Women's Studies from Frostburg State University
Employment history: Shelly-Ann Higgins has taught at Excel Academy @ Francis M. Wood Alternative High School for the past 24 years, which her entire teaching career. She taught both Health and Physical Education for the first 15 years, but has been teaching Health exclusively for the past 9 years. Since summer 2022, she has been working at the Fine Arts Camp under the direction of Chan'nel Howard.
Views and goals: Having served as the Vice President for Senior High Schools for the past 5+ years, I've seen and helped the Baltimore Teachers' Union attain unprecedented contract wins for both teachers and PSRPs. One area that is of personal note is for the international teachers. My vision and goal is to continue on the trajectory that we've started, and to reach higher heights such as having a fully elected school board; teachers gaining the right to strike; pushing for a cap on classroom sizes; all staff and students have a safe and secure working environment; ensure all international staff and students are treated with dignity and respect; and etc. I will continue to work collaboratively with the union to address these issues and more. I still believe that City Schools can only get better if ALL stakeholders work in tandem to achieve a common goal = healthy, successful students.

Michael Pesa

Worksite location: 405 Patterson High School
Educational background: BA in History from Kent State University, Masters in Education (Secondary Social Studies) summa cum laude from Temple University
Employment history: I began teaching in BCPSS in 2008. Since 2011, I have taught at Patterson High School, where I also served as building rep for several years. I've taught Modern World History, U.S. History, American Government, and several electives. I'm also the advisor for my school's student newspaper, the Patterson Press. Prior to that, I was a substitute teacher, an after-school program coordinator, a historical tour guide, and an organizer for nonprofit organizations.
Views and goals: If re-elected, I plan to continue building on the progress made under President Brown. Our members are the union and I'm committed to increasing member engagement, democracy, and transparency. I support organizer training for all members so we can develop the skills to take effective direct action. I aim to continue building alliances with parents, students, and community organizations to fight for shared goals like fair funding, smaller class sizes, closing the Digital Divide, holding the School Board accountable, upgrading facilities, and defending the rights of all students and staff.
I'm proud of what we've achieved in recent years: negotiating major raises, protecting our healthcare, increasing protections for teachers and PSRPs, restoring financial stability, increasing membership, making voting more accessible, keeping members informed, and ensuring that every member's voice is heard.
VOTE FOR THE BROWN SLATE--THE UNION WE DESERVE!

Candidates for Teacher Special Services Vice Presidents

Diana Desierto

Worksite location: 7 Cecil Elementary School
Educational background: I am a proud graduate of Loyola College of Maryland where I received both my Bachelor's and Master's in Speech Language Pathology.
Employment history: I have been a Speech Language Pathologist in the City schools since 2007. I started my career at William S. Baer School and am currently at Cecil Elementary! I have serviced children through Infants and Toddlers, Head Starts, and multiple schools across the district including: Abbottston, Moravia, Hamilton, Gilmor, Monarch, Friendship, Louis T Murray, Montessori, and Callaway! I currently am on the Executive Board as VP Special Services and co-chair of the International and special education Committee.

Views and goals: As a related service provider, I get to meet and work with so many amazing educators across the City. During these past six years on the board, I have heard so many positive comments from members about how the leadership under President Brown has been more transparent, has shown increases in membership participation during contract negotiations, demonstrates fiscal responsibility, and encourages committees to actually do the work. I want to continue building a Union who lifts people up—a union that continues to hold our district accountable for their decisions and to empower the strong voices of our members. As an elected member of YOUR Executive Board, I will continue to fight for related service providers to earn respect for our profession, advocate for better caseloads/workloads, and provide support for all new international educators! Vote for the Brown slate!

Brittany Johnstone

Worksite location: BTU
Educational background: Ed.S. (Education Specialist) in Child, Family and School Psychology with a concentration in Early Childhood School Psychology, University of Denver, 2016; B.A. in Liberal Arts, St. John's College, 2011
Employment history: Brittany Johnstone has been employed with Baltimore City Public Schools as a school psychologist since 2016. She has worked at several schools in the district, including Hazelwood EMS, Sarah M. Roach Elementary, and New Song Academy, Walter P. Carter EMS, Coppin Academy High School, and Thomas Johnson EMS. Brittany previously worked for Aurora Public Schools in Aurora, CO as a school psychologist, and for the Colorado Department of Education.
Views and goals: As a Special Services VP, I will continue to work to ensure that the rights of related service providers are considered in all aspects of BTU's operations, from negotiations to professional development. I pledge to continue to work to educate my partners within BTU and at Central Office about the unique role related service providers and special educators play in the education system, and engage with ALL educators in Baltimore City to listen to your concerns.

Steven Mednick

Worksite location: 454 Carver Vocational- Technical High School
Educational background: Masters in Social Work, from the University of Maryland, School of Social Work.; B.A.in Psychology, from Brooklyn College; Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Employment history: Steven Mednick has been a Baltimore City School Social Worker for 21 years. He has worked on the Elementary, Middle, High School levels and has been a BTU Building Representative in numerous schools.
Views and goals: If reelected, I would continue to support President Brown's austerity BTU budget plan, which has dramatically curtailed staff expenses, this coupled with the historic increase in membership, has led to turning a large deficit into a profit. Regretfully, the reduction in revenue was due to the Supreme Court's Janus decision and the increase in BTU expenses was attributed to the former BTU administration's decision to renovate BTU Headquarters for 3 million dollars. This ill-conceived project, by the Progressive Party, was not even finished, due to being extremely over-budgeted. There were also roof leaks that led to a mold situation.
As an advocate for the rights of BTU members, in the numerous schools that I have worked over the years as a BTU Building Representative, I have made your needs a priority in skillfully negotiating positive changes in schools for you, with principals. I will also work passionately to reverse the ill-conceived decision by the District to not repair all the locks in schools, despite us showing conclusively that having the ability to lock a classroom will save lives if an armed intruder enters a school.

Candidate for Teacher Vocational Education Vice President

Dewitt Doss

Worksite location: 400 Edmondson-Westside High School
Educational background: Canisius College (B.S.) Physical Education 2004; Canisius College (M.S.) Athletic Administration 2005; Towson University (Admin 1) 2020
Employment history: Edmondson-Westside 2013-Present; Renaissance Academy 2011-2013 Augusta Fells Institute of Visual Performing Arts 2007-2010
Views and goals: As the Athletic Director at Edmondson-Westside High School for the past 13 years, I have been dedicated to creating an environment where student-athletes can thrive—on the field, on the court, and in the classroom. I believe that every student has the potential to succeed and that athletics serve as a powerful vehicle for teaching life skills such as time management, discipline, accountability, and perseverance. My goal has always been to positively impact every student I encounter, using sports as a tool to instill values and provide life lessons that extend far beyond high school. Watching students grow into responsible, motivated individuals is the most rewarding part of my work.

Candidates for Teacher Members-At-Large

Rochele Chambers

Worksite location: 130 Booker T. Washington Middle School
Educational background: Coppin State College, Baltimore, MD , Bachelor of Science, Mathematics Major, Computer Science Minor; Loyola College,

Baltimore, MD, Master of Education, Curriculum and Instruction
Employment history: Baltimore City Public School System - 2002 - Present
Middle School Mathematics Teacher, Mathematics Instructional Support Teacher, Canton Middle School (2002-2008); High School Mathematics Teacher, Edmondson Westside High School (2008-2009); Middle School Mathematics Teacher, Mathematics Representative, Bluford Drew Jemison STEM Academy (2010-2014); High School Mathematics Teacher, Mathematics Representative, Secondary Special Educator, Renaissance Academy (2014-2018); Secondary Special Educator, IEP Team Associate, Special Education Department Lead, Carver Vocational Technical High School (2018-2023);
Mathematics Intervention Teacher, Mathematics Lead, Math Coach, Booker T Washington Middle School for the Arts (2023-Present)
Views and goals: I'm running for Baltimore Teachers Union Executive Board Member at Large to help make our union stronger and more inclusive for every educator - teachers, paraprofessionals, and support staff. My focus is on ensuring good communication between the leaders and members, fair contracts, manageable workloads, and better pay. I'm dedicated to providing more opportunities for professional learning and making sure our students get the resources they need. I will work to build stronger connections with the community and make sure all members have a say in decisions. I believe we need to be brave when making education decisions and protect public education in Baltimore.
I lead by listening, doing what's right, and standing up for others. Educators deserve respect, support, and a place in all important talks - and I will work hard every day to make that happen.
Together, we can make our union better.

Leilani Jones

Worksite location: 405 Patterson High School
Educational background: MA-Teaching, Coppin State University, 4.0; BS-Management, Coppin State University, 3.6; AA-CCBC Essex, 3.59; Admin I Certificate, Coppin State University, 4.0; AP Calc AB Certificate,; Goucher College, 4.0
Employment history: BCPSS 21 years
Views and goals: As an elected Member-at-Large for the Teacher Chapter for a 3rd term, it will be my honor and goal to continue to work with other elected officers to serve the members of our BTU by fighting for the rights of all our members, voting at all meetings, remaining active in various demonstrations to ensure our staff and students reap the benefits they are due, as well as create equitable legislation to protect our staff and students from discrimination of all kinds.

Franca Muller Paz

Worksite location: 480 Baltimore City College
Educational background: University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, Masters of Science in Education, Urban Teacher Program, May 2012 ; Goucher College, Baltimore, MD, Bachelor of Arts, Psychology Major, Cognitive Studies & Latin American Studies Minor, May 2010
Employment history: Educator since 2010, Baltimore City Educator since 2013
Views and goals: Franca Muller Paz is an educator since 2010, BTU Building Representative since 2018, and current Teacher Chapter Member-at-Large. A Baltimore City Teacher of the Year Semifinalist, Fulbright-Hays participant, and Baltimore Sun “25 Women to Watch” honoree, Franca has worked to help families, students, and educators build power to fight for bargainable class size, affordable housing for educators, education funding, fair internet access, Multilingual Learner rights, and more across Baltimore and Maryland.
If re-elected to the Member-at-Large role, Franca is committed to listening to the voices of teachers, students, and families to fight for the issues that deeply impact them at the local, state and federal level. She is determined to see Baltimore schools fully funded; increased protections for immigrant educators, students, and staff; a developed diverse educator pipeline from Maryland Colleges; and the restoration of an educator's ability to strike to improve teaching and learning conditions for students and staff.