



Baltimore Movement of Rank-and-File Educators

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Bmorecaucus.org

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BMORE Demands for Student Safety amidst the School Facilities Cold Weather Crisis

Baltimore City children attending decrepit school facilities without functioning heat and drinkable water is a tragedy that the state of Maryland created over decades of underfunding. They have repeatedly neglected their own definition of adequacy by 3 billion dollars over the past two decades alone, much of which would've prevented these circumstances before they happened. It's the state's constitutional obligation to correct this outrageous failure, starting this coming legislative session.

At the local level North Ave. has not properly responded to the challenging cold weather of the past few weeks, leading to inadequate learning environments and endangering the

health of all students, especially those with asthma, sickle cell anemia, and other sensitive conditions. There are policy changes that can immediately address this crisis. The Baltimore Movement of Rank-and-File Educators (BMORE) demand the following of the School Board and CEO Sonja Santelises:

► BCPSS policy explicitly state that students in school will spend their class time ONLY in spaces designed for learning that are warmer than 60 degrees. Relocation is an option for individual classrooms ONLY if there is an unused space in the building which meets these criteria. If no such space exists, the entire building should be closed.

► Principals be empowered to take and report temperatures, with the authority to close their school if the facility does not meet the above policy. This would decrease the time students and staff spend in harsh conditions while waiting for a small group of people to visit a large number of facilities to make a final decision.

► The development of contingency plans with city government to provide students whose schools are closed access to warm meals, safe spaces, and other essential services.

► A specific communication plan be developed collaboratively with all stakeholders to keep families aware of emergency issues. Currently, it is up to principals to decide what, when and how to communicate with parents in case of an environmental or safety issue. There needs to be a uniform and comprehensive system in place at the school & district levels.

We know Baltimore City Public Schools did not create these inhumane circumstances, but there are tools within their control to prevent harm and better meet student, teacher, and family needs. Winter isn't just coming, it's already here, and we need to act now.

Over 1,500 concerned citizens have already signed these demands in support. Visit the campaigns page at our website to add your signature in support of our demands.

Upcoming Dates of Interest

February 3: Black Lives Matter Week of Action Planning Meeting, Location TBD, 10:00am-12:00pm

February 5: BCPSS Curriculum Audit Forum, Location & Time TBD

February 5 - 10: Black Lives Matter Week of Action

February 10: BMORE Soup, Location TBD, 6:00-8:pm

February 13: BCPSS School Board Meeting, 2601 N. Howard St., 6:00-8:00pm

February 22: Investing in Parents Town Hall Meeting, Location TBD, 6:00-8:00pm

February 22: Cutting School Book Talk, Red Emma's, Starts at 7:30pm

February 27: BCPSS School Board Meeting, 200 E. North Ave., 6:00-8:00pm

Please see an expanded calendar at tinyurl.com/BMORECalendarEvents. If there's an event you think the community should know about, please email it to bmorecaucus@gmail.com and we'll add it to our calendar!

Kirwan Delay Puts Politics above the Needs of Kids

BMORE demands Md state government act now to increase school funding

In an act of true political cowardice that dooms Maryland children for at least another year of inadequately funded education, the state's Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, aka the Kirwan Commission, recently announced they would not be able to finish their work by the 12/31/17 deadline and would need several additional months to determine the costs of their recommendations.

The Commission began meeting in September of 2016, giving them 15 months to achieve their clear directive; yet after choosing a laid back, once a month meeting schedule, they suddenly can't complete their job on time.

Governor Hogan and most Democrats in Annapolis are equally willing to abdicate responsibility, fearful that releasing an expensive proposal requiring additional revenue will hurt their gubernatorial aspirations. Doing right by kids is a secondary consideration to the maintenance of party power.

Meanwhile, students in 20 of the state's 24 counties continue to suffer under inadequate funding according to the Department of Legislative Services 2015 study, a fact continually upheld by the courts and confirmed by multiple reports from independent consultants. Had the state's own definition of adequate funding been followed, Baltimore City students alone would have received over 3 billion

dollars more from the state over the past 20 years.

We cannot tolerate another year of education advocates making immoral political compromises, in order to maintain access and a seat at the table. A different path is possible, The Baltimore Movement Of Rank and file Educators (BMORE), demands what is right and just:

1. Until a new formula is created, RESTORE the Thornton formula to the funding levels it should be at today, had the inflation factor never been cut, and had the Geographical Cost of Education Index (GCEI) been funded every year.

2. Support Mary Washington's bill, which BMORE helped to

develop, ensuring gambling money stored into the Education Trust Fund is added to the formula funding, rather than simply replacing General Fund revenue that used to go to education.

This funding should not be locked away or slowly phased in. Priority must be given to communities and children most impacted by structural racism and the state's historical education debt.

We will organize fellow educators, students, and families across the state to pressure our current officials to meet these demands. If necessary, we will elect new ones who are willing to fight for our children.

Prolonged Exposure to the Cold Raises Risk of Illness

By Franca Mueller Paz & Michelle Glick

Cold conditions come with severe health consequences for both students and teachers. The scarcity of resources many BCPSS students and families face (such as access to adequate outerwear, flu shots, money for medical expenses, etc.) exacerbates their vulnerability.

All students are more susceptible to flu viruses and rhinovirus (the common cold) in the cold; these viruses are more stable, and therefore more contagious, in lower temperatures. Younger students and older teachers and staff are particularly vulnerable to being hospitalized and facing life threatening complications, such as pneumonia, as a result of contracting these common winter illnesses.

Cold air is considered a universal trigger of asthma, a condition which plagues 12.4% of Baltimore City adults and 20% of Baltimore City children, according to the Maryland Department of Health. Cold air can also cause severe health crises in students and staff who have sensitive immune systems (such as people with immune deficiency disorders, cystic fibrosis, sickle cell disease, and those who have undergone blood transfusions or cancer treatment).

Black Teachers Matter

By Christine Duncan Evans

In the late 1800s, children from Indian tribes were put on trains and sent to boarding schools sometimes hundreds of miles from their homes. Once they arrived, they were explicitly and implicitly taught that their culture and their people were backwards vestiges of the past.

School taught them that Indians were powerless in the face of progress and their improvement and development depended on emulating the behaviors of the adults in charge.

As a country we still wrestle with questions of success and assimilation. In modern educational policy, outsiders look at communities of color where the legacy of segregation and mass incarceration have left a major mark, and sometimes come to a similar conclusion as the educational missionaries of the last century.

To education reformers of the first decade of our century, urban schools should be made anew into places where “professionalism” and “high expectations” reign.

At my Teach For America Institute more than a decade ago, a white pre-service teacher tearfully and emotionally explained that she entered this work because she wanted her students to have a good life.

She meant that she wanted them to be able to get out of the hood. She felt comfortable, and maybe even righteous when she said this because among new teachers the missionary zeal was alive and well in 2006. This enthusiasm was reflected in policymakers who applauded teachers from prestigious colleges coming into low-income communities to teach.

They were not applauding the black teachers who came through Baltimore City Public Schools and graduated from Coppin State. The newcomers and policymakers spent little time in 2006 thinking about the effects of supplant-

ing a largely black teaching force with one that was increasingly white and not from Baltimore.

Ten years later, a teaching force that was at one point more than 60% black at one point is now closer to 30% African American. This drop has happened across all schools, but in the alternative schools and in the highest achieving high schools, it's the most damning and problematic.

In alternative schools, role models and relationships take on special significance and the presence of black teachers can make students feel more safe. In high achieving schools, where the excellence of the faculty is a point of pride, we're teaching our students about structural racism when the teaching force doesn't look like the rest of the city.

When black students leave their homes and enter into schools where a majority of the staff is white, it's impossible for them not to learn what the world is telling them about their own race, access to learning, and power. The effects of daily micro-aggressions multiply and compound until some students come to the conclusion that achievement and higher education isn't for them.

Notable books and articles have been written about the effects of the decline in black teachers (Lisa Delpit's *Multiplication is for White People* and Chris Emdin's *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood and the Rest of Y'all Too* are notable examples).

We need a larger local conversation about how we can stem the tide of black teachers who were discounted and counseled out of the profession at the height of reform. Teacher's Democracy Project has created a short film on this issue and during the Black Lives Matter Week of Action at Schools, BMORE will be hosting a conversation about this issue and what we can do.

We owe our students an education that affirms their identity at the same time as it ignites in them a love of learning.

Fixing the Casino Money Bait And Switch, Explained

When state voters went to the polls in 2008 to vote on slot machines, Question 2 was only approved because it was for the primary purpose of providing funds to public schools. Pro-gambling ads featuring Stephanie Rawlings Blake and Jonathan Ogden talked about pumping hundreds of millions of dollars into our schools. The pro-gambling groups outspent their opponents 7-1, spending over seven million dollars in advertisements.

What ultimately emerged was not what people thought they had approved. The specific Education Trust Fund language passed created a bait and switch, “(c) Money in the Education Trust Fund shall be used to: (1) provide funding for public elementary and secondary education, through continuation of the funding and formulas established under the programs commonly known as the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act.”

What this means is that Casinos don't add a single cent to education that the funding formula didn't already mandate! The 100s of millions of dollars added to the Education Trust Fund were simply used to REPLACE general fund revenue that used to support the Thornton Formula.

Before casinos opened in 2011, Maryland spent 21 percent of its \$31 billion general fund revenue on public schools. In 2017, with revenues at \$42 billion, the state spends just 18 percent of its general fund on public schools. The casino money allowed general funds to be spent elsewhere.

The solution to this bait and switch is rather simple, alter the language of the Education Trust Fund this legislative session. Use gambling money put into the Education Trust Fund to do what people were sold it was going to do, create additional resources for schools. This means adding money on top of what the current funding formula already mandates, rather than simply replacing

Casino, continued on page 4

BCPSS, Don't ban "Buck"

Baltimore book inspires students

By Joshua Ober

Literature reflects reality, and reality isn't always pretty. But that cannot and should not ever be a reason to shy away from raw, authentic literature. Children do not know everything about the world, but they are not stupid. They know a lot more than most people think.

When we shy away from difficult language or conversations, we cripple young people for the future. Life is full of tough conversations, and what better way to approach them than through award-winning literature?

In five years of teaching "Buck" — a memoir written by M.K. Asante Jr., an associate professor at Morgan State University — to my freshmen at Digital Harbor High School, I have never had a complaint. I have worked with colleagues to ensure that we take the most appropriate approach toward teaching the themes within the text.

We do not read chapters or passages that contain material deemed unsuitable for freshmen. Instead, we examine the ways that violence and exposure to countless challenges shape the life of Malo, the memoir's protagonist.

Students then write their own memoirs in which they explore the myriad ways in which Baltimore has shaped their upbringing. These memoirs are stunningly powerful, heartbreaking and uplifting all at once.

Students who generally refuse to even pick up a pencil will spend week after week producing 10 or more pages about their lives, experiences and journeys to adolescence. They write poignantly about childhoods shaped by drugs, violence, incarceration and death, and they use "Buck" as a tool to begin thinking about the ways in which education can help them overcome many of the barriers in their lives.

And now, that tool has been taken from them: Late last month, following a parent complaint, district representatives said "Buck" would be replaced with another text because it was "not part of the approved curriculum."

When we take away literature that reflects the realities of many students' lives, we say to them that their voices do not matter. We don't question the reading of "Unbroken," in which a man has graphic intercourse with a duck.

We don't question the reading of "Night," in which a boy is slowly hung to death, people are beaten, tortured and abused, and babies are

thrown in the air as target practice. We don't question "Like Water for Chocolate" or "The Handmaid's Tale," both of which contain explicit sexuality. Nor should we. These are profoundly moving pieces of literature that can change lives and open doors for young people in Baltimore City. But why do we question and ultimately ban "Buck," a critically-acclaimed coming of age story?

Anyone who has ever read "Buck" knows that the inclusion of chapters about statutory rape and the school-to-prison pipeline serve to bring up discussions around difficult topics such as misogyny, oppression, racism and violence.

When we refuse to allow students to deal with these complex topics, we shelter them from their real world. Many students deal with these issues daily. Others do not, especially in a school as diverse as Digital Harbor.

However, even if students are not familiar with this life, they can benefit from seeing and learning about another world and beginning to empathize with those who do experience it. Taking away another diverse voice in literature removes another opportunity to learn to empathize.

The irony of removing this text is that the second half of the book takes us through Mr. Asante's transformation from living the life of drugs, strip clubs and violence, to finding his voice and understanding the power of words. He loses himself in the worlds of Orwell, Whitman, Hughes and Baldwin. He finds freedom and hope in words and dreams to use his talents to help others find their purpose. What a powerful message this could be for students on the verge of adulthood in Baltimore City Public Schools.

Over the past five years, I have watched students find inspiration in the brilliant pages of this memoir. But now, students will not get to experience the power of his words. They will not see a man fall in love with literature. They will not see him find a purpose bigger than himself.

And they will not be inspired to pen their own moving, passionate stories. I will still find a way to reach my most challenging students, because that's what good teachers do. But I wonder how many stories will go untold now that "Buck" will go unread.

Joshua Ober (joshober6@gmail.com) teaches at Digital Harbor High School in Baltimore City. This article first appeared in the Baltimore Sun on December 10, 2017.

Casino, continued from page 3
General Fund revenue that used to go to education.

BMORE has teamed up with Delegate Mary Washington to propose legislation accomplishing this goal. After going public with her intentions, Maggie McIntosh and Joan Carter Conway proposed their own solution to the casino bait and switch, a constitutional amendment, which would be voted on directly by MD citizens. We strongly favor Mary's approach, and here's why.

Washington's bill is filed for this legislative session, meaning it would alter the law ASAP. McIntosh's is a ballot initiative, meaning it won't even be voted on until November, and certainly not implemented any time soon.

Additionally, Washington's timeline forces the governor's hand BEFORE the election cycle instead of giving him a pass until after he's re-elected.

McIntosh's initiative asks for a multi-year phase in, as if Baltimore City students should continue waiting in under-resourced classrooms and buildings.

We know that justice delayed is no justice at all, which is why Washington's bill asks for Education Trust Fund resources to be put in addition to the formula immediately.

Finally, Washington's bill contains maintenance of effort language to ensure accountability so that future political tricks like the one that landed us here in the first place won't be repeated.

For these reasons, the Baltimore Movement Of Rank and file Educators see a clear choice for fixing the casino money bait and switch. We stand with Delegate Mary Washington in her plan to deliver an equitable funding solution to the problems facing school districts like Baltimore City.

Plans for new school causing current buildings to be neglected

By Micheal Flamini

The planned new school building for Patterson HS will benefit future students while current Patterson students are being left behind in a crumbling building filled with maintenance issues the district ignores.

Because it seems like a waste to spend money on a school that will be destroyed, students and staff in the old building are forced to work in either intense cold or heat, unable to fully focus on their work.

As the old building falls apart piece by piece, the groundbreaking date for construction on the new school gets pushed back further and further. The school district gets money from city and state taxes but they refuse to fully repair the older building simply because it is marked to be torn down.

As the staff and students wait and try their best to work with little to no funding, it gets harder to work 100%.

We understand why the district does not want to waste money on a school that will be replaced, but we cannot sacrifice students today for a distant future. As a student myself, I at times find it hard to stay motivated in these conditions, as do most students.

How are we supposed to excel in this old, falling apart building with bugs and mice everywhere?

Are we supposed to learn happily and productively in these conditions? Impossible.

No student should be forced to work, and no teacher should be forced to teach, in these inhuman conditions just so the district can save money. It is unfair, unprofessional, and unacceptable. We deserve better.

Micheal Flamini is a senior at Patterson High School. An earlier version of this opinion column was originally published in the Patterson Press, Patterson's official student newspaper. See the original at www.pattersonhs.com.

Did You Know?

Each school year, City Schools loses roughly 10% - 15% of its teachers due to resignation, retirements, and dismissals/non-renewals. Based on these attrition trends, the district hires roughly 500 - 600 teachers annually. In addition to hiring teachers with traditional backgrounds in education, City Schools contracts with three organizations that provide alternative recruitment and teacher training assistance.

The images below demonstrate the heavy reliance the district has on these program, and their relative success at retaining teachers. Note that the third image does not include the number of teachers with traditional backgrounds joining the district this year, which is over 300 teachers based on presentations made to the school board. -Zach Taylor

New Teacher Cohort SY2015-16: Separations from SY2015-16 to Present							
SY1516 New Hire Pipeline	Total SY1516 Cohort	SY1516 (9/1/15- 8/31/16)		SY1617 Preliminary (9/1/16- 6/26/17)*		SY1516 and SY1617 Total (9/1/15- 6/26/17)*	
		# Separations	% Cohort	# Separations	% Cohort	# Separations	% Cohort
BCTR	126	28	22.2%	15	11.9%	43	34.1%
TFA	100	18	18.0%	35	35.0%	53	53.0%
UT	37	6	16.2%	2	5.4%	8	21.6%
Traditional	365	103	28.2%	46	12.6%	149	40.8%
Total # of SY1516 New Hires	628	155	24.7%	98	15.6%	253	40.3%

*COMAR deadline for teachers to submit resignations is 7/15/17. Data reflects separations processed as of 6/26/17 and includes resignations as well as separations initiated by the district for performance or discipline-related issues and non-renewals
*The average years of service for all teachers in the district is approximately 10 years.

New Teacher Cohort SY2016-17 Attrition			
Approximately 21% of the SY 2016-17 new hire cohort separated from the district after their first year of teaching, as of 6/26/17.			
New Teacher Cohort: SY2016-17 Separations from Beginning of SY1617 - Present			
SY1617 New Hire Pipeline	Total SY1617 Cohort	SY1617 Preliminary (9/1/16 - 6/26/17)*	
		# Separations	% Cohort
BCTR	112	23	20.5%
TFA	97	15	15.5%
UT	34	7	20.6%
Traditional	275	67	24.4%
Total # of SY1617 New Hires	518	117	22.6%

*COMAR deadline for teachers to submit resignations is 7/15/17. Data reflects separations processed as of 6/26/17 and includes resignations as well as separations initiated by the district for performance or discipline-related issues and non-renewals

Resident Teacher Pipelines: Anticipated Need for SY2017-18				
Subject Area by Certification	Number of New Hires by Resident Teacher Pipeline*			Total
	Baltimore City Teacher Resident	Teach for America	Urban Teacher Center	
Early Childhood Education	10	8	6	24
Elementary Education	12	11	13	36
ESOL		10		10
K-12 - World Languages		3		3
Spanish		3		3
Secondary - English	12	10	2	24
Secondary - Mathematics	9	21	6	36
Secondary - Science	11	8		19
Secondary - Social Studies		3		3
Special Education	17	18	8	43
Grand Total	71	92	35	198



Educators Across the Country Organize #BlackLivesMatter Week of Action in Schools February 5-10, 2018

Check the upcoming events and BMORE's social media to participate!

Last year, Seattle and Philadelphia educators organized Black Lives Matter actions in their schools. This year, many more cities including New York, Chicago, Boston, D.C., Baltimore and more are joining efforts to organize a Black Lives Matter Week of Action in our Schools the week of February 5th through February 10th.

In these times of emboldened racism and xenophobia, we must listen to and elevate the voices, experiences, and history of our fellow citizens and communities under attack. The goal of Black Lives Matter Week of Action in Schools is to spark an ongoing movement of critical reflection and honest conversation in school communities for people of all ages to engage with critical issues of racial justice.

This week of action builds on the momentum of the national Black Lives Matter movement and will take place in cities across the U.S. to promote a set of local and national demands focused on improving the school experience for students of color. The national demands include:

- End Zero Tolerance. Focus our Schools on Restorative Justice.
- Black Teacher Pushout Ends Now! Hire More Black Teachers in our Schools.
- Black History/Ethnic Studies Mandated K-12.

The 13 guiding principles of the Black Lives Matter movement will be highlighted during this week of action as a means of challenging the insidious legacy of institutionalized racism and oppression that has plagued American society since its founding. There will be events, both online, and in each city, throughout the week, as well as curriculum resources for lesson plans and activities based upon the 13 Guiding Principles of Black Lives Matter.

Each day will explore 2-3 guiding principles of the Black Lives Matter movement. During the day in schools, teachers across the country will implement Black Lives Matter Week of Action curriculum designed for pre-K through 12th grade classrooms. In the evening, there will be events for educators, students, stakeholders, and community members to actively engage in the movement.

- Monday, February 5th: Unapologetically Black, Restorative justice, empathy and loving engagement
- Tuesday, February 6th: Diversity and globalism.
- Wednesday, February 7th: Queer affirming, trans affirming, and collective value.
- Thursday, February 8th: Intergenerational, Black Families and Black Villages.
- Friday, February 9th: Centering Black women.

If you are interested in obtaining curricular resources, learning about the events in your city and or exploring the different ways you can get involved visit on our facebook page [The National Black Lives Matter in Our Schools](#).