



Baltimore Movement of Rank-and-File Educators

Issue #2, November 2017

Bmorecaucus.org

Contact us at bmorecaucus@gmail.com

BMORE Caucus Responds to DACA's Termination **Begging for a Birthright**

On September 5th, President Trump announced that the federal government will phase out the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. This action is based in a racist denial of human rights. Its justifications are cloaked in patriotism and reveal a particularly dark cowardice.

The people who are targeted by this harmful public policy are the students, families and educators of Baltimore City. Dreamers deserve to have the full measure of their rights protected and not live in the shadows. As members of a community we have an obligation to act to protect this incursion against their well-being. President Trump's actions are an attack on our community.

Here are some resources for how you can get involved and receive support:

► Check out Baltimore's CASA de Maryland and Esperanza Center for info on workshops such as: DACA info sessions & renewal legal clinics, Know Your Rights, Bystander Trainings, and many others. They are offering to host sessions at schools!

► Support or join Organized Youth in Education (OYE), a student-coalition advocating for immigrant rights. They meet regularly at Digital Harbor, City College, Poly, and Patterson high schools.

BMORE Responds to DACA, continued on page 2

By: Christina Duncan Evans

This week dozens of Baltimoreans gathered together at Poly to attend the hearing of the Kirwan Commission. The Kirwan Commission is tasked with re-writing Maryland's school funding formula, with the goals of equity and adequacy in mind.

Everyone I heard speak was persuasive and on-message, with well researched claims backed up by moral and ethical appeals. I myself used some of the time during the hearing to read letters my students had written to the Kirwan Commission, asking for more money so that they could have the resources to fulfill their dreams. I am alternately inspired and outraged by what I heard and read. Inspired to see so many people mobilized in a critical fight for our students, and outraged that children in America and the adults that support them have to beg for what should be a birthright.

As we ask for more funds, we must to continue to openly critique a system that is indifferent to a child's human potential based on their color or zip code. The Republicans who control the governor's office and state agencies and boards have already baldly made this about race and class, signaling that they

Begging, continued on page 2

Upcoming Dates of Interest

October 23: Community Conversations, St. Veronica's Church Hall, 6:00-8:00pm

October 23: Open Enrollment Begins

October 24: School Board Meeting, 200 E. North Ave., 6:00-8:00pm

October 28-29: Organizer Training for Education Workers, Alternative Press Center, 2239 Kirk Ave., For more information, please contact mike.pesa@gmail.com

October 31: Baltimoreans for Educational Equity House Meeting, 2601 N. Howard St., 6:00-8:00pm

November 3: Open Enrollment Ends

November 6: Professional Development & Parent-Teacher Conferences

November 14: School Board Meeting, 200 E. North Ave., 6:00-8:00pm

November 29: Unity Rally, Location & Time TBD

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!

The Missing Context behind PARCC Scores, explained

By: Corey Gaber

Decades of educational research show that family income and other outside of school factors impact student achievement more than anything else, but the mainstream media's reporting completely misses this academic consensus. If the Milwaukee Brewers happened to face the New York Yankees in the World Series this year, TV commentators and print reporters would have a field day with the difference in payrolls. The Evil Empire's 2017 salaries exceed 200 million, while the Brewers' top out at 63 million. Having over 3 times the resources of your opponent is a clear advantage that will result in better outcomes. It's not impossible to overcome, but it is reality and an obvious factor to acknowledge as unfair. It would be shockingly poor journalism to neglect this disparity.

When Maryland's students take their annual state mandated standardized tests every spring, the PARCC assessments, which are intended to measure student progress in reading and math, the Baltimore Sun and other outlets regularly commit this journalistic neglect. Reading their coverage of the results, one would think that curricular choices, administrative decisions and teacher performance were the causal factors. What's glaringly missing from the conversation is the number one factor according to decades of accessible research.

Many studies have shown that family income and outside of school factors account for 60% of the variance in student test scores. (Haertel, 2013; Borman and Dowling, 2012; Coleman et al., 1966). Only 20% of the variance is attributed to work inside of the school building, and only half of that falls within teachers' control (American Statistical Association, 2014). Put another way, out of school factors are 6 times as powerful an effect on test score results as classroom teaching!

It makes sense when you think about it. A child fully nourished with healthy foods, well rested from a comfortable bed, with

PARCC Scores, continued on page 4

BMORE Responds to DACA, continued from page 1


► Contact your congressional representatives and tell them you support a #CleanDREAMAct without conditions that would hurt our community, like funding for "The Wall" or additional money for ICE enforcement.

► Visit WeAreHereToStay.org to educate yourself on what the changes to DACA mean for our students, families, and community. find out about large actions and events you can support and share.

► Worried about your next ICE check in or want to help? Search "Sanctuary Streets" on Facebook to join their coalition of volunteers who accompany people to the Baltimore ICE office and Immigration Court.

You have the right to:


1. Identify yourself with your name
2. You don't have to answer any more personal questions
3. Say that you want to speak to a lawyer
4. If they attempt to search you, your car, your home, or your belongings, say that you DO NOT consent to the search.
5. If you are arrested you have the right to:
 - Remain silent
 - Speak with a lawyer (DO NOT sign anything before this)
 - Make a call
6. Remain calm and act respectfully



www.wearecasa.org

Usted tiene derecho a:

1. Identificarse con su nombre
2. No tiene que contestar preguntas personales
3. Decir que quiere hablar con un abogado
4. Si intentan revisarlo a usted, su coche, su casa, o sus efectos, diga que NO CONSIENTE.
5. Si le arrestan tiene derechos de:
 - Guardar silencio
 - Hablar con un abogado (NO FIRME nada antes de eso)
 - Hacer una llamada
6. Mantenga la calma y sea respetuoso



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Begging, continued from page 1

won't increase funding without accountability, and implying that marginalized people can't be trusted with equality. It's an argument as old as Reconstruction.

This wouldn't happen if so many of our children weren't black and poor. This wouldn't happen if we lived in a society that acted with integrity and upheld its principles.

People have been saying this for decades, and we now have a once in a generation chance to demand more for our

children. This conversation needs to be different. We need to be grounded in a vision for educational equity that acknowledges the historical debt that racial injustice has enacted on marginalized people.

Our demands for equity can't be couched in terms of compromise. Instead, we must do so in the belief that Baltimore City's children are owed an education that allows each one to develop their talents to the fullest possible extent instead of replicating the contemporary schema of oppression.

Beyond the Yellow T-shirt

Building solidarity, rank-and-file power within our school communities

By: Mike Pesa

The Baltimore Teachers Union held a “Day of Solidarity” on October 6th. On that day, teachers and staff were told to wear yellow BTU t-shirts (which most BTU members don’t have) to “show your solidarity”. That was all the information we were given.

My co-workers had a lot of questions. Solidarity with who? Around what issue or demand? What is the goal of this action? What is the next step? Sadly, I don’t think our union leaders even thought about those questions before they announced this poorly-planned event.

Worse, I’m not convinced that our leaders really understand the meaning of solidarity. For too many years they have spent more time collaborating with our bosses than building rank and file power in our schools. Now that they are finally faced with a school board that doesn’t believe in “labor peace”, they have no idea what to do. Fortunately, some of us do.

It’s time to move beyond the narrow and ineffective model of top-down “business unionism” that BTU leadership (and most other unions in America) currently practice. We have seen again and again how relying solely on contracts and “the process” has left teachers and staff members high and dry and has led to a general sense of disempowerment among education workers. It’s time we change that.

We need to get back to the core of what a union really is -- or at least, what it should be -- which is the workers themselves organized democratically to take direct action on the job in order to gain power in the workplace, improve our working conditions and accomplish whatever goals and priorities we collectively choose to pursue (including goals that address the needs of the broader working-class community).

100 or 150 years ago, this was simply called a union, and worker self-organization and collective action was viewed by millions of Americans as the natural way to improve their jobs and their lives.

But over the past century, union leadership has been increasingly consolidated into the hands of a small elite of bureaucrats and a large apparatus of paid staff members and professional organizers and “business agents”. At the same time, the U.S. Government has gradually given legality and limited protection to unions with one hand while with the other hand constraining them to a sterile and bureaucratic “labor relations” process that inherently favors management over workers and replaces class struggle and mass action with lawyers and backroom deals.

The result is that most Americans view unions as “outside organizations” and most union members (who have by now become a small minority of the nation’s workforce) feel alienated from their unions and at best see them as a sort of insurance service that they pay into in order to receive benefits or protections.

With dues check-off and closed-door negotiations, it is very possible for a union member to spend their entire career without ever having any face-to-face interaction with their union. Is it any wonder then, that we have become so weak that the conversation is no longer about what we can win but how much we have to give

up? Is it a surprise to anyone that many teachers and staff members who have been wronged by their administrators or the District choose to transfer, quit their jobs, hire a private attorney or quietly give up, rather than to ask their co-workers for support and fight together for justice?

It doesn’t haven’t to be this way. Let’s begin by taking steps to remind ourselves that the power to accomplish our goals is in our own hands, and that our employers need us, not the other way around.

The specific actions we take will necessarily depend on what we all want and on the goals we set together through an approach called solidarity unionism. But I’ll give you an example from a different type of workplace: About 10 years ago, workers at a Starbucks in New York City decided to form their own independent union. It wasn’t recognized as an official bargaining unit and in fact Starbucks did their very best to pretend that it didn’t exist at all, while their union-busting lawyers worked behind the scenes to crush it.

One issue at this shop was that a lot of the workers couldn’t reach some of the equipment without standing on their tip-toes and stretching, sometimes leading

T-shirt, continued on page 4

We, Too, Sing America

Marian Tibrey | 7th Grade | The Midtown Academy

Yo tambien canto, America

We are the underestimated people
They forget us when they need someone,
We are immigrants,
But that’s all they think of us.
When we hear them saying what they say,
We smile.
Tomorrow,
We’ll be there when we are needed,
And nobody will dare turn us down.

Besides,
They’ll see how great we are and be ashamed
To ask
They will see that our differences are the same
And that
Nosotros tambien cantamos, America

CHARM: Voices of Baltimore Youth is a student-led literary and arts magazine founded by Baltimore City teachers and students because kids’ voices matter. CHARM publishes Baltimore City students’ writing and artwork in a beautifully designed annual volume. To learn more about the magazine, contact CHARM via social media @charm-litmag or e-mail charm-litmag@gmail.com.

T-shirt, continued from page 3

to injuries. The union (that is, the workers) asked for a step-ladder, a very simple demand. Management ignored their request or made excuses. Several days went by and there was still no step ladder. So the workers brought in their own step ladder that was covered in stickers that said “Starbucks Workers Union” and placed it in full view of the customers. The manager immediately took that step ladder away but the next morning, without saying a word, management brought in a new step ladder. From that point on, the workers were able to use the step ladder instead of straining themselves.

Since we work in a school, solidarity unionism for us also necessarily means uniting with students, parents and the community whenever possible. This is easier said than done, but many of you have already been planting the seeds of such efforts. Rank and file teacher caucuses like BMORE (which are great ways to organize for solidarity beyond the individual school level) are working toward this goal, and in some schools, students have already organized themselves into groups like the Algebra Project. Parent and community organizations exist as well. So we won’t be completely starting from scratch.

Another aspect to solidarity unionism is that all workers at a workplace should be working together toward common goals. In our case, this includes not only the teachers, paraprofessionals and other staff members who are part of BTU, but also the custodial staff, cafeteria workers, hall monitors, and any other rank and file employee who is not in a management position. To that end, I would like to see us reach out to these co-workers and see how we can work together on common goals and/or support each other’s separate goals. I would like to see school-based Union Chapter Committee meetings become empowering spaces for everyone at in our schools who is not a boss. Only by working together & breaking down the barriers between us can we achieve our full potential.

If this sounds like a worthwhile goal to you, please join us for a two day solidarity unionism organizer training and strategy session on October 28-29th at the Alternative Press Center (2239 Kirk Ave). Sponsored by the Patterson High School Union Chapter Committee, this training will be facilitated by two teachers from Minneapolis who have been at the forefront of the social justice and educational reform movements in that city and nationally. For more information, please email Mike Pesa at mike.pesa@gmail.com. Bring ideas and a spirit of solidarity. Yellow t-shirts are optional.

PARCC Scores, continued from page 2

high quality health care, a computer at home and in school, a safe/quiet place to work and read, and a history of investment in their needs will outscore a student lacking all of these necessities. The 2017 PARCC data fits the pattern of test scores correlating most heavily with income. Take for instance the FARMS (Free And Reduced price Meals, a measure of poverty) rate of the top 10 scoring middle schools compared to the bottom 10. (See the graph on the bottom left of this page)

The average student poverty rate for the top ten scoring schools is 4.7%, or about one in every twenty students. The bottom ten scoring schools on the PARCC test have an average of 99.6% of their students living in poverty, basically twenty out of twenty students. This phenomenon is larger than the usual rich Howard County vs. poor Baltimore City narrative. When narrowing our focus to Howard County middle schools we see that the richest, Clarksville, tops the charts with an 81% passing rate. The poorest middle school, Lake Elkhorn, has the lowest passing rate at 27%. Coincidence? I think not.

When adding in the racial compositions of these schools (average of 7% African American in the top ten, and 97% African American in the bottom ten) the stark nature of Maryland’s segregation reveals itself. Antero Pietila’s “Not in my Neighborhood” details the impact of racist laws and policies throughout Maryland’s history which created our current geography of rich white enclaves and pockets of concentrated poverty filled disproportionately with people of color. As a result of property values determining levels of school funding, Maryland schools in the greatest need are the most under-resourced. When we deny this history, we end up wrongly attributing the differential in outside of school factors to individual flaws rather than to racism and longstanding government policy.

The media’s ahistorical reporting and complete omission of the primary factor impacting PARCC scores misdiagnoses the problem and potential solutions. It leads politicians to blame students, teachers, and administrators working in our toughest schools. Instead, we need to see the data for what it is – a cruel critique of our unjust and inequitable society, and the policies that have helped to create it.

TOP TEN SCORING MD MIDDLE SCHOOLS			
School	County	FARMS rate	AA students
Clarksville Middle	Howard	2%	5%
Folly Quarter Middle	Howard	2%	5%
Herbert Hoover Middle	Montgomery	3%	7%
Thomas W. Pyle Middle School	Montgomery	2%	3%
Chesapeake Charter School	Saint Mary's	7%	9%
Urbana Middle	Frederick	5%	7%
Burleigh Manor Middle School	Howard	7%	9%
Robert Frost Middle School	Montgomery	6%	5%
Cabin John Middle School	Montgomery	8%	12%
Severna Park Middle	Anne Arundel	5%	4%
AVERAGE		5%	7%
BOTTOM TEN SCORING MD MIDDLE SCHOOLS			
School	County	FARMS rate	AA students
Calverton	Baltimore City	100%	97%
ConneXions: A Community Based Arts School	Baltimore City	100%	99%
Excel Academy @ Francis M. Wood High	Baltimore City	100%	98%
Fort Worthington Elementary	Baltimore City	100%	97%
Garrett Heights Elementary	Baltimore City	99%	89%
Harlem Park Elementary	Baltimore City	100%	99%
K.A.S.A. (Knowledge And Success Academy)	Baltimore City	100%	96%
N.A.C.A. Freedom and Democracy Academy II	Baltimore City	97%	97%
National Academy Foundation	Baltimore City	100%	86%
Rognel Heights Elementary/Middle	Baltimore City	100%	99%
AVERAGE		100%	96%

WHAT BMORE WILL FIGHT FOR

At the school site:

- Fair and equitable evaluations
- Rich, meaningful, and stimulating PD
- Organizing teachers to exercise a stronger voice in school-based decisions

At the BTU:

- Negotiations that are open to the public
- Accessible BTU election and contract voting
- Quicker response to communications and the grievance process

In the district & state:

- Greater funding
- Smaller class sizes
- More counselors and support staff
- Health Care
- Child Care
- Good jobs / Living Wage
- Criminal justice reform
- Fair Development
- Affordable Housing
- Immigrant Rights
- LGBTQ Rights

Did You Know? BCPSS student enrollment has continued to decline this school year, with reportedly 1,500 fewer students than last year. One bright spot, however, has been the growth of English Learners (ELs) in Baltimore. The number of ELs reached 4,619 students during the 2016-2017 school year, nearly double the number from six years ago when the district had 2,465 ELs. The growth was particularly fast during the last school year.

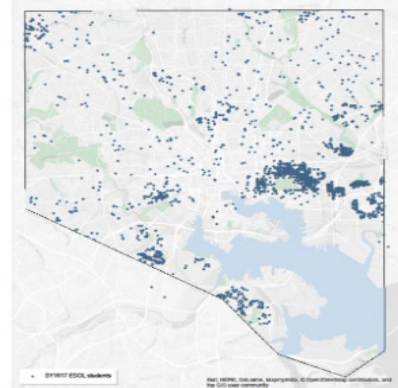
Contrary to popular conception, nearly half of the EL population was born in the United States (43%). While particular schools have large concentrations of ELs, EL enrollment has occurred throughout every region of the city. The data below was presented at a school board meeting this June as part of a yearly update. -Zach Taylor

English Learners in Baltimore City Schools

District Enrollment- 82,354

EL Enrollment- 4,619

ELs as a Percentage- 5.6%



Place of Birth and Languages Spoken by ELs in City Schools

Country of Birth

1. USA (1,989)
2. Honduras (686)
3. El Salvador (496)
4. Guatemala (176)
5. Dominican Republic (111)

Language Spoken in the Home

1. Spanish (3,418)
2. Arabic (202)
3. Nepali (113)
4. English-based Creoles & World English (92)
5. French (52)

Our ELs are from 82 countries and speak 69 languages.

English Learner Student Distribution

School	EL % of enrollment
Wolfe Street Academy	58.9%
John Ruhrah Elementary/Middle	53.2%
Highlandtown Elementary/Middle #237	43.7%
Highlandtown Elementary/Middle #215	42.5%
Patterson High	37.9%
Graceland Park-O'Donnell Heights Elementary/Middle	30.9%
Charles Carroll Barrister Elementary	30.0%
Fallstaff Elementary/Middle	28.3%
Holabird Elementary/Middle	27.1%
Lakeland Elementary/Middle	26.5%
Commodore John Rodgers Elementary/Middle	23.7%
William Paca Elementary	21.5%
Benjamin Franklin High	21.2%
Armistead Gardens Elementary/Middle	20.1%

Population of EL Students	Number of Schools
200+	4
151-200	3
101-150	10
51-100	7
26-50	13
11-25	8
1-10	71

A Student reflects on Extreme Heat at Patterson High School

By: Leroy Noble

At Patterson High School, students need to have an altercation against the heat. The temperatures in these classrooms are sky high. I'm talking about rooms reaching a top notch of 114 degrees.

That's really hard to believe until you're in this hot place. Try to learn in these schools that are like a desert without a single cactus. The city waves us away but wants us to be successful. How can we do this in conditions that feel like a hot oven? This makes no sense.

Students, teachers and staff all feel these hot and confusing temperatures. The people in this school are sweating like they are playing sports. That's not right. Why though?

The answer to that is the city and state governments because they might need the money for roads, etc. But they manage to find the money for new youth correctional facilities. I wonder why?

All of this is part of the school-to-prison pipeline. Students aren't coming to school because of the no air conditioning situation. It makes



Political cartoon by Sharena Lawson, senior journalism student at Patterson High School

students turn to crime, etc.

The people in charge from the city and the state have air conditioning to work in their offices. What about us? How can we be successful without it? Maybe if they were in the situation we are in, then they

would feel the difference.

And this is why no one likes the state. They get the money from taxes anyway. I just want to know what to do about this and how to do it.

Leroy Noble is a junior at Patterson High School in Balti-

more, Maryland. He wrote this article in Ms. Kerry Graham's English 3 class in response to intolerable heat conditions at his school that were reported by the Baltimore Sun in late September of this year.

BMORE's 6 Principles

1. We stand for a union that **organizes educators**, responds to their concerns, **practices democracy**, and uses activism to fight for social justice.

2. We respect **meaningful teaching** and learning that supports students as **unique individuals**. Educators and students alike deserve **opportunities to grow** and **equitable assessments** of our performance.

3. We know that rich, holistic educational experiences are impossible with a **better resourced environment**. We know that a **strong contract** allows teachers to fully invest themselves in their work.

4. We work to **amplify the power of educators, parents, and students** in the decision making process at the school, district, and state level.

5. We will work to counteract Baltimore's history of disenfranchisement by **intentionally promoting the voices and leadership of educators of color within our group**.

6. We will **advocate** for policies that address the **social and economic challenges** of our neighborhoods and city.