



Engaging & Empowering Educators

Monthly news for and about all members *Empower!*



June 2017

What Happened to Our Steps? (Part 2)

(Part 1 was featured in January edition of Empower and is also posted at BTUonline.com)



Why doesn't or can't the union get us our steps back? As a union steward, I get this question a lot. I'm going to explain it as best I can because I think it is important that everyone be informed about this issue. The bottom line is this, in 2011, the state legislature passed SB 736, which is now [Florida State Statute 1012.22](#).

First, they passed a law ending continuing contracts ([Florida Statute 1012.335](#)), so that **all people hired after July 1, 2011 would not be eligible for continuing contracts or the grandfathered salary schedule.** Additionally, **districts interpreted this to include people who were hired before July**

1, 2011, who had not yet worked their full three years to earn their continuing contract. All those teachers became annual contract employees, who by law have to be paid according to the pay for performance rules in 1012.22.

Then, in the pay for performance law (1012.22), they **tied the pay of the continuing contract teachers on the grandfathered schedule to the pay of the annual contract teachers on pay for performance.** In statute 1012.22, it states:

b. Salary adjustments

Salary adjustments for highly effective or effective performance shall be established as follows:

*(I) The annual salary adjustment under the performance salary schedule for an employee rated as highly effective **must be greater than the highest annual salary adjustment available to an employee of the same classification through any other salary schedule adopted by the district.***

*(II) The annual salary adjustment under the performance salary schedule for **an employee rated as effective must be equal to at least 50 percent and no more than 75 percent of the annual adjustment provided for a highly effective employee of the same classification.***

(III) The performance salary schedule shall not provide an annual salary adjustment for an employee who receives a rating other than highly effective or effective for the year.

(continued on next page)



Upcoming Events

- Jun 09 Last Day of School
- Jun 10 BTU Cookout
- Jun 19-21 BTU Summer PD Institute
- Jun 28 Executive Board Meeting
- Jul 26 Executive Board Meeting
- Aug 9 Steward Training
- Aug 12 New Teacher Orientation
- Aug 14-18 Employee Planning
- Aug 21 2017-18 School Year Begins

Steps Explained - Pt 2

(continued from page 1)

Any annual contract teacher who is rated highly effective must receive a raise that is GREATER than the highest raise given to any teacher on the grandfathered schedule. **This is why we have not seen *step movement*.** If step 19 is a \$10,000 raise, and everyone moves up a step, EVERY SINGLE annual contract teacher in the county who is rated highly effective must receive a raise that is GREATER than that \$10,000, regardless of how long they have been teaching. And that raise is permanent.

I have been teaching for 13 years and getting a 5% raise. My husband who has been teaching for 6 years, and is rated highly effective is getting a 5.1% raise. **This is purposeful.** They wanted to make pay for performance attractive to teachers so that they would give up their contracts for it. **The legislature wants us all to be annual employees that can just be fired at the end of any school year.**

I hear it all:

- Teachers who have been stuck on their step for years with no movement, just percentage raises, and are upset that there are teachers in the building making \$73,000 but they feel like they are never going to get there.
- Teachers who have been stuck on those last two steps, denied thousands of dollars of lost wages and losses to their retirement.
- Teachers on the top levels T & U, who are getting a \$2,000 raise, but for years were only given a one time \$500 bonus, who feel as veteran teachers, they also should get a 5% raise.
- Teachers on pay for performance, who can't get that elusive highly effective, so they are only getting a 3% raise.

This is designed to pit us against each other and it's working. The legislature knew that districts would not be able to afford to continue to allow step movement raises. The union goes through the district's finances each year. The money for step raises is not there, not as long as Florida Statute 1012.22 exists.

Annual contract teachers deserve to have continuing contracts like the rest of us. Those of us who are on the grandfathered schedule deserve to have our steps restored. **The only way that is ever going to happen is if we elect education friendly legislators and an education friendly governor. The current legislature is quite happy with the way things are.** They either aren't listening to teachers about these contractual issues or they aren't hearing from us.

If we aren't going to get involved, make our voices heard on these issues, and go out and vote, we can expect it to stay the same. You're angry and frustrated, so am I. We have to take that anger and frustration and channel it into something productive. **Join the union** if you're not a member. If you are, **Join COPE.** We're stronger together. The new leadership at BTU gets it, and they are fighting for us. **Join the fight. Get involved!**

*Melissa Falkowski, EP Steward
Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School*



To change this we need to elect education friendly legislators and an education friendly governor.

Remember your salary in 2018!

As another school year draws to a close, I look back proudly on BTU’s accomplishments in settling three contracts that made major gains for our teachers, our education support professionals and our technical support professionals.



Thanks to the diligent efforts of our negotiations teams—composed of our own BTU members—the vast majority of you are ending the year better than you began it, with higher salaries, more benefits and greater respect. I want to wish all of you a restful summer spent with family and friends, with time to rejuvenate and relax. Have a wonderful break, and see you in the August!

Anna Fusco
BTU President

Negotiations Highlights – EPs

- More than half of our educators received a 5% raise, with the rest receiving either a 3 or 4% raise.
- Two of the five preplanning days will be devoted strictly to teacher planning without any scheduled activities.
- 27 hours of professional development has been reduced to 24 hours.
- Teachers now have 2 work days to produce lesson plans when asked.
- Lesson plans may now be submitted electronically.
- Principal discretionary time has been reduced which allows for more planning time.
- Evaluations cannot be conducted during personalization period for high schools.
- In addition to highly effective annual contract teachers, those rated effective will now be placed on a priority list if surplussed from their school at the end of the year.
- Administration must submit evaluations within 10 working days of observation and educators have 25 working days to grieve and/or object to rankings.
- Teachers in block schedule will only be responsible for taking attendance and keeping order, with no instructional activity during personalization periods.
- Final decisions for evaluations will now be made by the Broward Teachers Union President and the Superintendent instead of school district administrators.
- All formal evaluations require a notice of two working days.
- New provisions have been added to the PDP implementation to protect educators.
- A labor management Collaborative Education Project was created to address case loads for school social workers, SLPs, ESE specialists, school psychologists and school counselors as well as to address interruption to teacher planning time and prep time.
- Designed stewards maintain summer school super-seniority.
- School social workers, school counselors, school psychologists, SLPs and ESE specialists are now guaranteed a substitute when it is known that an employee will be absent for at least 20 consecutive days.
- More than 200 pages have been updated to remove outdated programs, update job titles and to strengthen language to benefit members.

(continued on next page)

Your BTU Executive Officers

- Anna Fusco President
- Terry Lopez Preuss.... 1st Vice President
- Roosevelt McClary III..... Secretary
- Christopher Townley Treasurer

Broward Teachers Union
6000 N University Drive
Tamarac, FL 33321

954.486.6250 • Fax: 954.739.1803

A Look Back at Year 1



As I look back at my first year as vice president who has stood beside President Anna Fusco and seen many remarkable wins for all of our members, I feel great gratitude and humility that we've been able to accomplish so much for you.

I've shaken thousands of hands and heard hundreds of stories from members whose courage to speak up to make a stronger union and defend themselves from what is wrong has helped me to understand the seriousness of the work before us and I give you my pledge that I will continue to work diligently for YOU.



Terry Lopez Preuss

I'd like to say thank you to every one of our members who has given me a kind smile, a warm embrace and a friendly handshake at every school that I have visited and at every event.

Thank you all for your courage and your brave words of TRUTH to POWER... for standing up for yourselves and your fellow colleagues and those you lovingly teach daily.

Thank you to all the leaders who have risen along with us since July to make our union strong and vibrant and to the local leaders and school board leaders who have risen with us to stand for what is good for Broward and its people.

Thank you to every one of you who works every day to give gifts of learning to the students of Broward County, to your own children who attend our schools and to the children of the families who trust us to take care of their precious ones.

We are under assault... not because we do not do enough and not because we do not do it well, because testing, curriculum and technology vendors see local, state and national education coffers as a means to create profits for greedy corporations and school reform proponents.

In an unprecedented collaboration, the Broward Teachers Union, the School Board of Broward County and many community groups and activists in our communities, are ready to work together to stand with one unified voice for the welfare of public education in Broward and those of us who diligently work to serve our communities and the schools and students we love.

We must take this stand in the face of state and national legislatures who want to dismantle public education with drastic budget cuts and misguided investments in charter schools for the benefit of the few who invest in testing and for-profit charters and school "reform".

Together we must stand strong and refuse to be the next Detroit or the next Chicago! Not here. Not in Broward!

I have great gratitude that the School Board of Broward County has joined BTU to stand against this and to save our lowest-performing schools from charter takeovers, save ALL our public schools in Broward County, and demand adequate funding to serve our public schools.

As you take your summer break and look back over the past year, **I hope you will enjoy the fruits of your labor and that you will remember the lives you touched and the students you inspired to greatness.**

May you have a restful summer to recharge your energies and know that when you return in August, BTU will be hitting the ground running and we will stand with YOU... each of you... for your students... for the parents who trust us with their children... and for every public school in Broward County.

Terry Lopez Preuss

BTU 1st Vice President

BTU to the Rescue

President Anna Fusco and Vice-President Terry Lopez Preuss, made an appearance at my daughter's fundraising event on April 23rd at Harris Art Studios in Hollywood. Not only did they mingle with the crowd and paint rocks for an art piece to be donated to Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital, but they also promised to continue to be a part of the annual event. **In addition, the Broward Teacher's Union contributed \$500 toward the event!**



Every year, since my Gracie was diagnosed with a life threatening brain tumor, **I have vowed to “pay it forward,” and help others in need.** On the anniversary of her surgery date, I put together a painting party at Harris Art Studios in Hollywood. Gracie has always loved to paint, before and after surgery. The owner of the art studio! Kyle Harris, graciously hosted the painting party that I called a “Celebration of Life.” That’s just what it was. A celebration of Gracie’s “new lease of life,” a second chance if you will.

I had quickly learned after Gracie’s surgery that rehabilitation is crucial for recovery. Insurance companies authorize a specific amount of therapy visits a year. Once the authorized therapies have been completed, patients are said to have “exhausted” their benefits which means the insurance companies will not cover any more visits. The money raised goes to the pediatric rehabilitation department; specifically to help families who would otherwise not be able to afford additional therapy.

BTU came to the rescue with their generous contribution. Isn’t that what it’s all about? Helping others? The BTU fights for the rights of teachers, and reaches out the neighboring communities to provide support in so many ways. **Whether it’s a rally, or a town hall meeting, or a fundraiser benefiting members of the community, the BTU is there for you!**

*Mary Carr, Teacher
Pioneer Middle School*



The BTU Retirees have been busy the last few months. The group visited the Stage Door Theater to see A Boy from Brooklyn and visited the Isles Casino for a buffet lunch and some fun on the slots. The closing activity this year was a luncheon and fashion show at Lago Mar Country Club. The Tuesday group will meet all summer. The first Tuesday of every month will be the book club at BTU. (Except for July 4th).

Two of our members participated in the Retiree New Leader Training Seminar at AFT. They will be leading an effort to expand our advocacy of education and other issues while increasing our membership. (More information on this exciting initiative will be announced soon.)

The BTU/R Board is already planning activities for next year. Dues will again be \$65. (\$24 for lifetime FEA members.) Members who pay dues by August 31 will receive a reduced rate for the September members only luncheon .

Have a wonderful summer.

*Carol Fischer
President, BTU/R*



I would like to thank the Negotiations Team for their hard work during the negotiations session for the 2016-2017 contract year.

- Cyrilla Bradley – Transportation Services
- Robert Carlough – BECON
- Virgil Cruz – School Applications
- Scott Gillen – Building Department
- Clara Knowles – PPO
- Kim Murray - Budget
- Carolyn Steele – Westwood Heights Elementary
- Steve Feldman – BTU Field Rep, Co-lead negotiator

A negotiation is not an easy task. It requires patience, strategy, and respect. It is understanding what the majority of the unit wants, creating language and explaining the intent of the language to the team across the table in a professional and respectful way while maintaining composure when they disagree. It is knowing that no matter how great you think the agreement is, not everyone will be happy. It is sleepless nights wondering if the language you present helps or hurts the unit in the long run.

The process takes many hours of sitting around a table and discussing the smallest detail of the language you want propose, so every person on the team can agree on the intent and how it will affect the unit. We at times lose our patience with each other and frustrations boil over, but in the end we go to the table as one voice. So I just want to thank all of you for the job you did and I look forward working with you again.

Thank you for continued support.

Matt Decker
BTU TSP Vice President

BTU Scores Successes for Members

Teacher Reinstated With Back Pay

BTU recently won a major appeal filed on behalf of former Boyd Anderson High School math teacher Steven Yerks. The state's 4th District Court of Appeals ruled that school administrators and the school board unfairly used the results of a flawed evaluation to fire him in 2014, and ordered that he be reinstated with three years of back pay and benefits and that the district pay his attorney's fees. BTU estimates that the district will likely pay out more than half a million dollars to Yerks, who has been unable to find another teaching job. Congratulations to Mr. Yerks, his FEA attorney Mark Kelly, and BTU field staff rep Steven Feldman on this major victory.

ESPs Win Retroactive Pay and Stipend at Plantation Park Elementary

The ESPs at Plantation Park Elementary School, who were not receiving a Behavioral Complex Student Incentive payment for their work, now have been paid two years of retroactive payments per the contract and will now receive their contractual stipend of \$1,500 per year.

Field staff representative Cami Accesus found out that the ESPs were not receiving the stipend and brought it to the attention of Employee and Labor Relations and filed a grievance on their behalf. The district agreed that the stipend should be paid, yielding \$3,000 in back pay for each paraprofessional plus the agreement to pay the stipend per the ESP contract.

BTU, School Board Resolve Class Action Arbitration for Literacy Instructional Coaches

BTU also recently won a class action arbitration that pays literacy coaches who should have received payment for attending professional development courses outside of their work hours, but did not. Thanks to the positive ruling, all literacy coaches received the \$15 per hour payment for attending the trainings in 2014, with the majority receiving payment for 5 hours of professional development (\$75).

BTU Member Eleanna Hurst Named Broward Teacher of the Year

Spend a few minutes talking to 2018 Broward Teacher of the Year Eleanna Hurst of Collins Elementary, and it's easy to understand why she won the prestigious honor from the Broward School District: she's one of the most motivational—and motivated—people you've ever met.

"I'm pretty self-motivated about learning new things," says the third grade teacher and team leader, a native of Nevis who has been living in Florida full-time since 2002. "I'm always looking to develop my professional skills, whether through a formal degree program or by taking professional development workshops that BTU or the district offer. This summer I'm going to focus on learning more about Canvas."



A 2001 graduate of University of Miami with a finance degree, she didn't decide to pursue teaching until 2003, when she became a substitute and teacher assistant. After obtaining her temporary teaching certification by passing the Elementary Education K-6 Subject Area Exam and the general knowledge and professional test, she began teaching full-time as a kindergarten teacher while completing the qualifications through Alternative Certification track offered by Broward County Public Schools. She then pursued a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Nova Southeastern University, finishing in 2006. After her master's, she earned her endorsements in multiple subject areas, and became nationally board-certified as an Early Childhood Generalist in 2008. **I'm always looking onward to "what's the next thing I can achieve?"**

At Collins, in addition to kindergarten, Hurst has taught first grade, second grade and now, for the last two years, third grade. **"I have a really unique vantage point because I have taught every primary grade," she says. "I get to see kids begin understanding that letters make words and learn to read, and discover that reading can be cool. I love seeing the light bulb go off when a student 'gets' something for the first time."**

With such an upbeat outlook on life, Hurst—whose husband, Dane, teaches at Bair Middle School—has no hesitation when asked what she would tell a new teacher, or an experienced one. "First, I'd say don't get overwhelmed. Pick one or two things you want to do very well and focus on that, and don't get distracted by all the other things you could do. Don't get discouraged. Find one thing to be happy about every day. Constantly try to improve your skills or you'll get bored. Don't give up—keep pushing forward. And if you have faith, it will help you get through the more difficult times."

To an experienced teacher she says she would add that when times are tough or they feel unmotivated, "it's important to go back to the reason why you became a teacher and draw strength and ideas from that, and that taking care of your health is paramount to continuing to be a great teacher."

The mother of 12 and 10-year-old sons and a three-year-old daughter is always on the go except for the Sabbath, the one day a week when she rests.

"What excites me every day is knowing that I get to come in and make sure my students are prepared for the world out there," she says. "I can create a learning environment where they can feel safe making mistakes and learning from them. I am blessed."

Florida Legislature: No Friend to Education

On May 3, Senate President Joe Negron and House Speaker Richard Corcoran announced that they could not get a budget completed in time to meet the 72 hour “cooling off period” required by the Florida constitution in order to end the session on Friday, May 5, so an extension of the session was required. The Speaker and Senate President then finished their budget work, late that afternoon

After a weekend of combing through conforming bills and the budget, Legislators went back into their chambers at 1 pm Monday and proceeded to vote on the budget, conforming bills and the tax package. They adjourned Monday at 8:52 pm, after **passing a bill to gut public education**, legislation that changes the default on Florida’s retirement system, a \$75 million tax package including a 3-day back-to-school sales tax holiday and several other sweeping conforming bills.



Budget

When the governor rolled out his budget recommendations in January, we had reason to believe that our public K-12 schools might see funding that was a modest increase from the lean years, funding that covers the growth in district operational costs, and importantly, funding that recognizes Florida has a growing teacher retention and recruitment problem. The Senate’s original proposal also gave us hope, but the House proposal put school districts on a starvation diet.

The House and Senate passed a budget that turns its back on our children and public schools. The budget will dig our public schools deeper into budgetary holes and will fail to properly and adequately fund costs and growth to advance the 2.8 million students that attend our schools each day. **This budget utterly fails to recognize the importance of funding in retaining and recruitment of the high quality educators our students deserve.**

The state budget that passed by the House 98-134 and the Senate 34-4:

- Spends just \$24.49 more per student – a 0.34% increase.
- Reduces the base funding (BSA) for each student by \$27.07 (or a -0.65%). **In fact the proposed 2017-2018 BSA is lower than the 2007-2008 BSA from a decade ago.**
- Offers the lowest increase in overall education funding since 2011-2012 – providing just \$241.4 million statewide or 1.2%.
- Fails to restore per student funding levels seen almost a decade ago. In 2007-2008 per student funding was \$7,305. This proposed budget would be less at \$7,220.72.

When you combine the paltry budget numbers with the mandate that school boards split their millage rate with charter schools, cuts to homestead property taxes, and proposals to reduce the Required Local Effort (RLE) – the portion of education funding paid primarily by local property taxes – the end result is less money on both a state and local level for public education.

This budget clearly shows us that the Legislature fails to prioritize students and schools. When will they understand that our public schools are the key to continuing a vibrant, growing economy?

(continued on next page)



Reduction in Force (Layoff)

As the school year comes to a close, please take time to read Article 14 of the ESP contract (below) pertaining to the layoff procedures. This is the time when some members could be notified of being placed on layoff due to budget constraints for next school year.

Article 14:1 Reduction in Force.

Permanent employees who have been laid off shall have the right of recall within their classification in the order of the bargaining unit seniority when unit vacancies occur, provided the employee is qualified to perform the work.

Classroom and Teacher Assistants can be placed on lay off up to one year and Program Assistants up to 1 year and 6 months before terminated from the district.

If an ESP is placed on layoff, and they fail to accept 1 of the 3 vacancies offered for which they qualified, they shall be removed from the layoff list and no longer be employed by the school district.

It is very imperative that you stress to members if they are placed on layoff to please read this article in the [contract](#) in order for them to know their rights!

Over the years, we have been able to work with the district in reducing the number of ESPs going on layoff every year to a minimum. If you have questions or concerns, please contact BTU ESP Vice President Bernie Kemp or your BTU Field Rep.

To verify who your field rep is go to the ["Who is your Field Rep"](#) page on BTUonline.com.

Florida Budget & HB 7069 (continued from page 9)

In addition to the budget, the House and Senate passed HB 7069, a last minute bill assembled in secret behind closed doors that included measures which had previously been voted down! Most notably it included the controversial so-called "Schools of Hope" bill provisions that give away huge amounts of taxpayer dollars to out-of-state, for-profit charter companies.

BTU, along with the District and Broward PTA have mounted campaigns calling for the Governor to Veto both. Numbers have been running 4-1 in favor of a Veto.

On June 2, after similar secret, closed-door meeting with Senate President Negron and House Speaker Corcoran, Governor Rick Scott signed a new state budget into law, but not before he vetoed nearly \$12 billion.

The governor vetoed money for public schools as part of the budget deal. Legislators will hold a special session next week, where they are expected to increase the amount going to schools.

Rumors have swirled that the secret, closed-door sessions included a promise from the governor to not veto HB 7069, something the governor has denied. **Keep up the pressure!** Send the governor a message:

<http://tinyurl.com/Vetonow>

Governor Scott:



Homestead Exemption Info for Members



As your Property Appraiser, it is my responsibility to ensure that all residential property, commercial property and tangible personal property are valued correctly and to assist our residents in receiving tax saving exemptions. This makes certain that property owners pay only their fair share of property taxes – no more, no less. Please note the deadline for timely filing for Homestead and other exemptions was March 1; however, you can still late file for these valuable exemptions until September 18, 2017.

Homestead Exemption

You are entitled to Homestead Exemption if, as of January 1, you both own and have made the property your permanent residence or the permanent residence of a person who is legally or naturally dependent on you. The bottom line is the basic Homestead Exemption saved a Broward homeowner in 2016 anywhere from \$627.99 to \$1,053.22 (depending upon your city's millage rate) in annual tax savings for all homes with a value of \$75,000 or higher.

Portability

Homestead Exemption does not transfer from property to property. If you had a Homestead Exemption on another Florida property in 2015 or 2016 and moved, you **must** file a new application for your new residence. Florida's Portability law allows property owners to transfer their "Save Our Homes" benefit earned on a previous Homestead property to their new Homestead property. This can result in significant tax savings to a property owner.

Note: a Portability application transfers any tax savings you have earned, but it does NOT transfer your Homestead Exemption from one property to another. You **MUST** first apply for a Homestead Exemption in order to be eligible for Portability.

For a list of all other available exemptions for qualified individuals, please [visit our website at www.bcpa.net/homestead.asp](http://www.bcpa.net/homestead.asp)

June 1 Estimates

On Friday, May 26, my office released the June 1st Estimate of Taxable Value for the various taxing authorities. There was an overall increase in taxable value of 9.3%, including new construction, with the taxable value for existing properties increasing 7.9% in the county. These values are used by the county, school board, cities and other taxing authorities to set their budget for the upcoming fiscal year. The final values will be available on July 1. The June 1 estimates along with other recap and use code summary information is available on our website at www.bcpa.net/2017TaxRollInfo.asp.

If my office can ever be of assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 954.357.6904 or by [email at martykiar@bcpa.net](mailto:martykiar@bcpa.net). <mailto:martykiar@bcpa.net>

Take care,

Marty Kiar