

# The Beacon

The Official Publication of the Belmont Education Association

BEA Telephone: 993-5860  
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## President's Message

Time passes, sometimes years and some things never change. Once again the elected town officials are at it: treating town employees as nothing but hired hands.

At the last Selectmen's meeting the selectmen voted to change the current 75/25% split contribution rate for the PPO medical plan to a 50/50% split for active and retired employees, starting on July 1. What ever happened to negotiations?! Never mind that the parties: every union in Town, the selectmen, and the school committee members shook hands and even signed an agreement on the negotiated split of 75/25 two years ago. Never mind that the contribution rate was negotiated in "good faith". I guess it just doesn't matter. They chose to disregard what is legally and morally right.

So what does this mean for our members and retirees who are on the PPO plan? It means that the current contribution amount will more than double for active employees. For retired employees, some who dedicated their entire career to the children in Belmont, those who are on a fixed income, will see their rates also double. Single retired teachers, living out of state have no choice but to stay on the PPO plan. They will now see their rates more than double. Does that seem fair? And retirees have no recourse; retirees don't have unions to defend them. But active employees do!

The BEA will not sit back idly and allow the selectman to treat their staff with little or no respect. We will do what is necessary under the law. We immediately filed a claim with the Massachusetts Division of Labor Relations Board. We have met with the police, firefighters, highway, secretaries, and library unions leaders and they are equally frustrated with the selectmen's actions.

You know, this is a choice that the Selectmen made. They could have met with us; in fact the IAC (Insurance Advisory Committee) met just last week. They could have talked to us. But instead, with total disregard to the membership of the unions the selectmen made their choice, their choice did not include state-mandated negotiations.

Next year we start negotiations for three new contracts (Units A, B, and D). Given the actions of the selectmen is it possible to go into negotiations in a spirit of collaboration? As a union we have been down this road before. My message to the selectman: Talk to us, don't treat us like hired hands, that has not worked in the past, and it will not work in 2009.



In order to keep our BEA and MTA records up-to-date, please email Sue Gorman at CMS with any name or address changes. Thank you!

## Dispelling Myths about Teacher "Tenure"

Education Historian Diane Ravitch on Teachers' Unions  
Reprinted from "American Educator", Spring 2009

Since February 2007, two leading figures in education, Deborah Meier and Diane Ravitch, have been debating public education-its strengths, weaknesses, improvement strategies, and more-in a blog called *Bridging Differences*. (A complete archive is available online at <http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/Bridging-Differences>) The following is excerpted with permission from Diane Ravitch's post on February 3, 2009.

RECENTLY, AN OLD FRIEND who is a businessman and philanthropist sent me a copy of a speech that he gave at Channel 13's Celebration of Teaching and Learning. For many years, he and his family have very generously supported a school for gifted children in one of New York City's poorest neighborhoods. The main conclusion of his speech was that the obstacle to educating all children well is the union, because the principal cannot hire and fire and assign teachers as he or she wants. He asked me what I thought of his ideas.

I responded that I was puzzled. The unions don't seem to cause low performance in the wealthy suburban districts that surround our city. They don't seem to be a problem for the nations that regularly register high scores on international tests. If getting rid of the unions were the solution to the problem of low performance, then why, I asked him, do the southern states-where unions are weak or nonexistent-continue to perform worse than states with strong unions? And how can we explain the strong union presence in Massachusetts, which is the nation's highest performing state on the National Assessment of Educational Progress? I suggested that low performance must be caused by something else other than teachers' unions. I have not yet received a reply, so I suppose he is thinking about it.

It actually doesn't seem to be all that hard to get rid of incompetent teachers. It appears that 40 percent of all those who enter teaching are gone within five years, according to research that I have seen. In every district, to my knowledge, teachers do not gain due process rights for three years (in some places, it takes five). During those three to five years, their supervisors have plenty of time and opportunity to evaluate them and tell them to leave teaching.

Then, when they have passed the three- or five-year mark, they have due process rights. They cannot be terminated without cause and due process. Although that is usually referred to as tenure, it really is not tenure. In higher education, tenure is an iron-clad guarantee of lifetime employment except for very egregious causes. Teachers do not have that. They have the right to due process. Many administrators would like to fire teachers without due process. I can't blame teachers for wanting protection from arbitrary administrators, especially now, when there are quite a few high-profile superintendents who like to grab headlines by threatening to fire teachers.

The right to form and join a union is one of the rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 23). I made several trips to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union before the end of the Cold War and met many teachers who were eager to belong to a union that would protect their interests. The state did not want unions or tolerated only faux-unions.

I read recently that membership in unions is now under 10 percent of the private-sector workforce. Former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich wrote in the Los Angeles Times not long ago that the unions helped our nation build a solid middle class. Now, in these difficult times, we may again see a turn to unionism, and for all the predictable reasons, having to do with protection from arbitrary and capricious management to economic security to the demand to have a voice in decisions about the workplace.

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- Congratulations to **Margaret Decker, Lindi DeLorio, and John Sullivan, Senior** who were elected Belmont Town Meeting Members in the April 6<sup>th</sup> town elections. Margaret is a computer Systems Specialist for the school department. Lindi is the wife of Ben DeLorio, mathematics teacher at the high school, and John (senior) is the dad of our very own vice-president (of the same name!). It's great to see town residents who care about education running for public office! **We want to encourage more individuals to do the same.** In the last BEACON I talked about the need for individuals to get politically involved. The BEA, the MTA, and the NEA cannot protect our interest without the help of individual members. Each of us as individuals has a responsibility to get involved. So once again when you are called upon you need to find the time to do what is requested whether that is contacting your elected officials, mailing postcards or letters, talking to your neighbors, or **maybe even running for office.** When we act individually as well as collectively we are a powerful voice, and the rewards are tremendous. And now is the time to get involved! Again congratulations to Margaret, Lindi, and John (senior), we look forward to working with you.
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# KNOW YOUR CONTRACT ...

## BEA Bylaws Governing Elections

### ARTICLE 10 - ELECTIONS

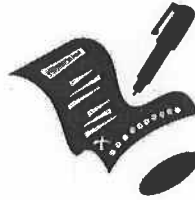
#### SECTION 1. DATE OF ELECTIONS

The general election of officers, Association Representatives, and elected members of the Negotiations Committee shall be held every two years on a school day between the twentieth (20) day of April and the twentieth (20) day of May, and a place, as designated by the Election Committee and approved by the Executive Committee.

#### ARTICLE 9 - COMMITTEES

The Unit A Negotiations Committee shall consist of the President, Vice President, and members elected by the membership during the biennial general election according to the following representation from the units of the Association:

- \* One (1) from elementary;
- \* one (1) from the middle school;
- \* one (1) from the high school; and
- \* one (1) special subject teacher (art, music, P.E., library/media, special ed.)



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MEDICAL AND DENTAL RATE INCREASES:	
• As of July 1, the following medical rates will apply:	
• NEW MEDICAL RATES:	
• PPO	50/50 premium split
• Family PPO	\$1,228.20 monthly
• Individual PPO	\$ 451.55 monthly
• HMO	80/20 premium split
• Family HMO	\$ 306.44 monthly
• Individual HMO	\$ 113.10 monthly
• NEW DENTAL RATES (July 1):	
• Family	\$ 97.00 monthly
• Individual	\$ 39.00 monthly
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## NOMINATIONS for BEA OFFICERS and REPRESENTATIVES TO THE PR&R TEAM

Nominations are open for the BEA Officers for 2009-2011. Nominations may be made for the following offices:

- President
- Vice-President
- Secretary
- Treasurer

Nominations are also open for the following Unit A Negotiating Team positions (3-year term):

- Chenery Representative
- Elementary Representative
- High School Representative
- Specialist Representative

Nominations must be BEA members. Please send nominations to Sue Gorman at the Chenery by Thursday, May 12.

I nominate \_\_\_\_\_ for the position of \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (by person making the nomination) \_\_\_\_\_

**This must be signed by the person you're nominating.** Please have them sign below before you send it to Sue Gorman.

I accept the nomination.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

# SWAP SHOP

**FOR RENT:** Cape Cod Vacation Home - spacious and cheerful 3 bedroom, 1&1/2 bath ranch in Harwich, close to rail trail and .2 mile from beach and boat launch at Long Pond. Wifi, cable tv, a/c s, large yard. \$1100/ week. Call Donna or Bill 203 269-8059 and leave message.

**FOR SALE:** Two unopened boxes of white subway tiles size 4" X 8". Total of 100 tiles (22.22 square feet). Purchased at Tile Showcase, made in England. \$50.00 E-mail Eileen\_w@comcast.net or 781.862.8128.

Do you have something you want to buy or sell? Place an ad in the Swap Shop! Send an email to Susan Dixon, Beacon Editor, anytime.

**FOR RENT:** Fabulous vacation house in a recreation community (Eastman NH, near Sunapee). Great place for kids and extended family gatherings! Comfortable 4 bedrooms (3 with their own bathroom and a 4<sup>th</sup> half bathroom for the bed/bunkroom). Well supplied kitchen. DVD/VCR (Stocked with kid movies). Check-out the Eastman community online (eastmannh.org). The place has so much to offer, right on site--golfing, tennis, lake swimming and raft, boat rentals (canoe, kayak, sunfish, paddleboat), hiking trails, health club, swimming pool, weekly themed summer camp for kids, restaurant. I'm happy to rent by the weekend (\$450), week (\$1200), month \$4000 or anything in between. Contact: Cheryl. e-mail school: cwilson@belmont.k12.ma.us. e-mail home: cw0191@verizon.net. Cell phone: 978-500-2987

## ICONTACT

Updates on the 2010 School Budget have been sent out via email to those BEA members who have registered on BEA IContact. If you have not registered and want to be kept updated you can register by taking the following steps:

1. Go to: <http://massteacher.org/members/locals/belmont/email.cfm>
2. Enter your username and password from your MTA card.
3. Enter your contact information and click Submit.

It is important to join iContact so that you receive important union messages that cannot be sent via school email.

## OPEN ENROLLMENT

Open Enrollment for Benefits will be held from May 4 to May 15. The Benefit Fair will be held on Wednesday, May 6th in the Selectmen's meeting Conference room at the Town Hall from 12:00 noon to 4:00 P.M.

- The BEA Executive Committee at the April meeting approved the slate of delegates to the MTA Annual Meeting of Delegates in Boston on May 1 and May 2.
- The nine delegates are:
- John Sullivan, High School
- Mike Bruno, High School
- Lisa Connell, Chenery
- Denise LaPolla, Chenery
- Susan Gorman, Chenery
- Julie Babson, Chenery
- John Hartunian, Chenery
- Elizabeth Hahesy, Chenery
- Paula Lazar, Wellington
- The Executive Committee also approved Denise LaPolla and Susan Gorman as the BEA delegates to the NEA-Representative Assembly to be held in San Diego on July 1 to July 6.

## Recommended Reading

Extreme Measures by Vince Flynn. A thriller featuring counterterrorism operative Mitch Rapp. The CIA has detected and intercepted two terrorist cells, but a third is feared to be loose and in the U.S.

Reading a good book? Forward the name and author, along with a quick review, for the next issue of the BEACON. Email [sdixon@belmont.k12.ma.us](mailto:sdixon@belmont.k12.ma.us)



**ATTENTION: TEACHERS FILING FOR RELICENSURE THIS YEAR:**

**THE DEADLINE IS JUNE 18, 2009**