

PROVOCATOR

June 2021

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION VOLUME 51/NUMBER 5

DEDICATION
SOLIDARITY
PROFESSIONALISM
PRIDE
SECOND TO NONE



Council of Delegates Unanimously Passes Resolution for Smaller Class Sizes and More Support Services

A resolution calling for the Buffalo School District to use dedicated Federal funding to reduce class sizes and add support services was approved unanimously May 20 by the BTF Council of Delegates.

The resolution, which was submitted to the Buffalo Board of Education, calls for the largest BPS classes be reduced from 32 students to a maximum of 13 students.

Class size reductions are requested for every grade and subject in elementary and secondary schools, as well as for Honors and Regents classes, Vocational, Physical Education, Music and Art, labs, and even study halls.

In addition, the proposal demands caseloads be reduced for Counselors, Social Workers, Psychologists, and Attendance Teachers.

According to the resolution, the District is due to receive approximately

\$200 million in American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds and an additional \$89 million from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA Act). About 20% of the ARP funds are to be utilized to address “learning losses”.

Class size studies and analyses have shown that reducing class size, especially in districts with high poverty rates like Buffalo, improves student performance.

The Harvard Magazine, one of the most referenced studies on class size, said school districts with high poverty went from being far below the state average to above average academically when class sizes were reduced.

In a four-year study on children in kindergarten through third grade, researchers found students in classes with fewer classmates progressed faster than those in larger classes regardless

of where the schools were located. The experiment involved 79 schools with a total of about 6,400 students from inner-city, urban, suburban, and rural areas.

“After four years, it was clear that smaller classes did bring substantial improvement in early learning in cognitive subjects such as reading and arithmetic”, the Harvard Magazine reported.

Overall, research shows that students in smaller classes perform better in all subjects and on all assessments when compared to their peers in larger classes.

In addition to reducing class sizes, the resolution calls for additional decisions regarding the funding earmarked for the District be made by each school’s Site Based Management Team (SBMT) composed of a variety of shareholders.

The resolution, in its entirety, can be seen on page 4.

BTF Seeks State Investigation into Cyberattack on Teachers’ Personal Data

An investigation into the breach of personal information during the cyberattack against the Buffalo Public School District has been requested by the Buffalo Teachers Federation.

The BTF requested an investigation by New York State Attorney General Letitia James on May 26 after numerous attempts to get answers from the District were ignored.

The BTF also filed a Notice of Claim on May 22 with the State Attorney General’s office notifying the District it will be proceeding with litigation to open separate negotiations on damages and future protections against cyberattacks.

A response to the BTF’s Notice of Claim to the Buffalo Public School District had not been received by press time.

The March 12 ransomware attack on the District’s computer network systems has left employees vulnerable and in the dark about the extent of exposure there was to personal information.

Numerous requests to the District by the BTF have resulted in unanswered

questions, frustration, and fear of the unknown.

In a letter to AG James, BTF President Philip Rumore said the BTF requested information regarding which members were affected by the cyberattack and whether any personal information had been compromised. The BTF requested this information from the District on March 25 and 29 as well as April 26 and 29.

Phil said he received no response. However, on May 11 either the District or an entity called Kroll sent letters to thousands of individuals, including current and retired BTF members, notifying them their personal information may have been breached. The letters did not identify the specific personal information of each individual affected.

Citing Technology Law, General Business Law, and Education Law statutes that require individual notifications in the event of this kind of data breach, Phil said statutes have been violated. He said because of these violations, the affected individuals

haven’t been able to take protective steps for their personal information.

“BTF respectfully requests that your office conduct an investigation into this breach of personal information to ensure the District is acting in compliance with New York State law, including proper notification to affected individuals, and take such other legal action as appropriate to protect the victims of this cyberattack,” President Rumore wrote to AG James.

APPR Suspended

As the Provocator was going to press, we learned that Governor Andrew Cuomo signed the legislation we were fighting for that eliminates APPR requirements for tenured and probationary teachers for the 2020-2021 school year.

This is good news and will prevent teachers from being adversely affected by APPR as a result of the pandemic.



HONOR AND TRUST

Being elected President by the most dedicated and finest teachers anywhere, is truly a great honor.

To me, these are not just words, they have always expressed my true feelings.

The officers, which includes the Executive Committee members, are committed to working together to continue to earn that honor and trust.

And yes, "trust."

You have put your trust in us to work together in your and our students' best interests.

We have many challenges, battles and obstacles ahead; however, we will, as we always have, not give up until we have met and overcome all of them.

Thank you, again. Please believe you are the most dedicated and finest teachers anywhere, because you are.

Elections Committee Issues Report

At the May 20 Council of Delegates meeting via Zoom, the BTF Elections Committee reported on the results of the 2021 election of officers.

In a show of continued support, BTF President Philip Rumore was re-elected for an unprecedented 21st term. Phil and his running mate, VP Rebecca Pordum, ran as a team. Also re-elected were BTF Secretary Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan and Treasurer Joseph Montante.

The elected officers and their positions, listed in rank order of votes received, are:

President/Vice President

Philip Rumore/Rebecca Pordum

Secretary

Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan

Treasurer

Joseph Montante

Elementary Teachers PreK – 6

Trisha Rosokoff
Sophia Howard-Johnson
Janine Schuster
Ruyvette Townsend
Rachel Binda-Lis
April Hall

Secondary Teachers, 7-12

Rich Nigro
Melissa Kenney
Dennis Brancato
Lynn Garcia
Chris Salamone
Sue Raichilson
Eve Shippens

K-12 Teachers

Mark Mecca
Nicole Herkey
Amy Flynn
Gregory Sawicki
Susan Baker
Ellen Malone
Desiree Breckenridge-Barnes

At-Large

Michael Mecca
Tom Anthony
Brian Meyer

With electronic voting in place, participation in the election increased to 1,599 of the 3,806 eligible voters (42%) who cast ballots in the 2-week long election.

The Elections Committee consisted of Mary Favata (Chair), Brian Hilton (Secretary), Kathleen Kinney, Gabrielle Lockwood, Chelsea Waz, and Janine Williams. Retiree Barb Russo assisted with typing and proofreading of the election issue of the Provocator.

BTF at a Glance

BTF President

Philip Rumore

BTF Vice President

Rebecca Pordum

BTF Treasurer

Joseph Montante

BTF Secretary

Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan



BTF Executive Committee Members

Pre-K-6

Rachel Binda-Lis, April Hall,
Sophia Howard-Johnson,
Trisha Rosokoff, Janine Schuster,
Ruyvette Townsend

7-12

Dennis Brancato, Patrick Foster,
Lynn Garcia, Melissa Kenney,
M. Sue Raichilson, Chris Salamone,
Eve Shippens

K-12

Susan Baker, Amy Flynn, Nicole Herkey,
Ellen Malone, Mark Mecca,
Gregory Sawicki, Elizabeth Spiro-Carman

At Large

Tom Anthony, Marc Bruno,
Mike Mecca

BTF Headquarters Staff

Philip Rumore, *President*

Joseph Montante, *Presidential Assistant*

Rebecca Pordum, *Presidential Assistant*

Tim Connick, *NYSUT Counsel*

Jenna Burke, *NYSUT Labor Relations
Specialist*

Matthew Kibler, *NYSUT Labor Relations
Specialist*

Robert Mueller, *NYSUT Labor Relations
Specialist*

Visit Our Updated Website
www.btfny.org

PROVOCATOR

BTF Provocator Staff

Joseph Montante, *managing editor, photo editor*
Chris Salamone, *editor*

The *Provocator* is the official publication of the Buffalo Teachers Federation. It will be published five times during the 2020-2021 school year as a service to BTF members and interested parties in the community. Subscription price is included in BTF dues.

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The BTF is an affiliate of NYSUT, AFT and NEA.

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Letters to the Editor

BTF Donates to Klimczak Center for Nonviolence

Thank you for your generous gift in the amount of \$250 to the SSJ Sister Karen Klimczak Center for Nonviolence for a Bronze sponsorship of our April 18 program "Media Madness: Offering Youth Alternatives to Violence."

We are grateful that you have chosen to support our program with Dr. Frederick Gelsey, director of the Homicide Education and Prevention Project. From inner city murders to suburban school shootings, the media affect youth with regard to race or geography. This is why with our April 18 event we are launching a new program in urban, suburban, and rural communities, the Youth Homicide Education and Prevention Media Arts Project.

Since I sent the sponsor solicitation letter, the event planning committee has decided that we will not be charging a ticket price, but rather asking for donations to the new project during the Zoom presentation. The BTF logo will be on the advertising screen.

Thank you again for your generosity!
Warm regards,
Vivian Waltz, Director

WNY Peace Thanks BTF for Donation

We at the Western New York Peace Center couldn't be more grateful for your generous donation of \$125 during 2020! Your support is truly making a difference both to our local community as well as in the networks we are building regionally, nationally and internationally.

Your donation has made possible the work of our nine taskforces, our outreach, rallies, marches, panels, workshops, film showings and more. We unite the struggles to strengthen our community and help build a movement for real social change. We work proactively to reduce violence by working with children, families, individuals and groups. All these actions, reactive and proactive, have never been more necessary. Please accept our thanks and appreciation for your faithful support and participation!

Sincerely,
Vicki Ross, Exec. Director
WNY Peace Organization

BTF Donates to Mounted Sheriff's Division

Recently, we received your donation which was so very generous, especially in light of our current situation.

Thank you so much for your continued support of the equipment fund: it goes a long way to keeping our riders and horses safe.

Hopefully, next year we will be back to normal, and you'll be hearing my ugly voice again! Have a safe, prosperous, and blessed year!

Deepest Regards,
Emmett Green
Fundraising Office,
Erie Co. Sheriff's Mounted Div.

BTF Helps Fund 16 Million Meals in WNY

Thank you for your gift of \$500 to the FeedMore WNY Foundation. Because you chose to give, thousands of Western New Yorkers of all ages can put nutritious meals on their tables.

Through home-delivered meals, meals served at congregate "Stay Fit" dining sites and our network of 371 partner hunger-relief agencies and programs, FeedMore WNY provided nearly 16 million meals for our neighbors facing hunger in 2020 – almost four million more meals than what was provided in 2019!

Thank you again for helping us distribute "more food" and do "more good" in WNY!

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Lucas, Director
Strategic Gifts

BTF Donates \$3000 to Variety Club Telethon

Once again, the BTF and Buffalo teachers opened their hearts and donated \$3,000 to the 59th Annual Variety Club Telethon.

Due to the pandemic, the Telethon, which benefits the Oishei Children's Hospital, was produced and presented from both the studios of WGRZ Channel 2, and the Variety Club Headquarters, in Lancaster, February 27-28. The presentation was streamed LIVE at wgrz.com.

Because of Covid-19, donors this year were limited to two presenters. The BTF, usually represented by a number of teachers, was represented by President Philip Rumore and Vice President Rebecca Pordum.

BTF Donates to Say Yes Summer Camps

On behalf of everyone working on the Say Yes Buffalo Partnership, in the midst of the COVID-19 global health pandemic, among others, we thank you so kindly for the recent grant of \$1,000 from the Buffalo Teachers Federation in support of our Summer Camp Initiative.

This grant will tremendously support Say Yes Buffalo's 2021 summer camp program which includes academic support, enrichment, physical activity, social emotional supports visual and performing arts plus virtual field trips.

In difficult times as these, we are most grateful for your partnership and support of our efforts to address the education needs and challenges of students in grades K-12.

Thank you again for your generosity and kind support!

Gratefully,
David Rust, Exec. Director
Say Yes

Community Heroes Event Supported by BTF Donation

On behalf of the 2021 Community Heroes Awards chairpersons, the National Federation for Just Communities of WNY, Inc., (NFJC), Board and myself, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for supporting the event shown on WGRZ-TV May 19 and 20. We looked forward to recognizing our Community Heroes for their outstanding contributions to WNY.

Again, I thank you for honoring our community leaders and for your support.

Sincerely,
Rene Petties-Jones, President



BTF Delegates Pass Resolution Calling For Smaller Class Sizes and More Support Services

The resolution below, calling for smaller class sizes and additional support services, was approved unanimously by the Buffalo Teachers Federation’s Council of Delegates, the BTF’s highest governing body. The Council is composed of teachers from all BPS schools/sites and were elected by their colleagues.

Whereas: While many students have made progress during the extremely difficult circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, many have not; and,

Whereas: Many students have suffered significantly academically and socially/emotionally; and,

Whereas: While summer school programs will be of some assistance to students, they will not enable all students to overcome the academic and social/emotional harm that was done to them for over a year; and,

Whereas: Our students need and deserve full time/full year/multiyear (2-3 years) support, rejuvenate and succeed programs...nothing less; and,

Whereas: Class Size studies and analyses have proven that reducing class size, especially in districts with “the lowest per-capita incomes”, not only significantly improved student performance in grades K-3 (Pre-K was not studied as it was not available in all schools, but obviously would have provided similar results) and in grades 4-7 and obviously also in 8-12; and,

Whereas: In the most referenced study, the “Harvard Magazine”, the “regular class size” was 22-25 students and the reduced (small) class size was 13-17 students (attached); and,

Whereas: The maximum elementary class size for Buffalo students K-3 is 30 and 4-6 is 32; and,

Whereas: Districts with the greatest percentage of the “lowest per-capita incomes” went from “far below the state average to above average” as a result of the class size reductions; and,

Whereas: Greatly increased support services to address the social and emotional harm done to our students are also critical; and,

Whereas: Said greatly increased support services must include, but are not limited to, reduced caseloads for school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists,

attendance teachers, etc.; and,

Whereas: While a District City Hall administrator, in answer to a parent at a District Reopening Committee meeting wanting to have concerned and caring parents allowed to reenroll their child in a grade, callously referred to this as “an amputation”, the BTF supports a parent’s right, after consultation with the teacher and District staff, to do this as they know what is best for their child (children); and,

Whereas: The BTF has and will continue to advocate for the following:

- Substantially reducing class sizes, class loads, and caseloads in all grades beginning in September 2021. If schools need to be reopened, the reopening planning process should take place immediately.

- Class sizes should be reduced to the following or lower:

Elementary	Maximum
Kindergarten	13
Primary Grades	13
Fourth –Sixth Grades	13
Secondary	
Honors and Regents English	100
Honors and Regents – Others	100
Basic English	80
Basic – Others	80
Vocational Trades/CTE	15
Industrial Arts	15
Home and Career Skills Economics	15
Food, Clothing, Home Economics – Others	15
Drafting	15
Computer Science	15
Music Classes	20
Art	20
Physical Education	20
Study Halls	25
Science Labs	15
Swimming	20
Advanced Placement	15
International Baccalaureate	15
English as a Second Language	15

Special Education Classes

Special Education classes shall contain no more than 65% of the maximum number of students prescribed by the Commissioner’s Regulations.

Reading Classes

- Student Support

School Counselors (1-100) Case Load
 School Social Workers (1-100) Case Load
 Psychologists (1-100) Case Load
 Attendance Teachers (1-100) Case Load

Whereas: Twenty percent (20%) of the approximately \$200,000,000 in American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds received by the Buffalo Public Schools are to be utilized to address “learning losses”; and,

Whereas: The Buffalo Public Schools has until 2024 to utilize said funds; and,

Whereas: An additional \$89,000,000 of Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA Act) funding is also available to assist our students.

Therefore, Be it Resolved:

That the BTF work with parents, NYSUT, NEA, AFT and all other appropriate organizations to ensure that the recommendations above, critical to enable our students to overcome the academic and social/emotional issues they face, are incorporated into the Buffalo Public Schools in September 2021 and, where supported by parents and teachers, other school districts’ “reopening” plans and budgets; and,

Be It Further Resolved:

That copies of this resolution be forwarded to all local, state and national leaders/organizations; and,

Be It Further Resolved:

That in Buffalo and where desired by parents and teachers in other school districts, the decision on the use of said Federal Funding should be made by each school’s Site Based Decision Making Team (SBMT); and,

Be It Further Resolved:

That if necessary, the BTF take appropriate legal and other actions to ensure that the spirit and intent of this resolution are realized for our students.

MOVED: Philip Rumore

SECOND: Rebecca Pordum



BTF Works with Good Food Buffalo Coalitions

Commissary kitchens for Buffalo schools, with local purchasing and food that's made from scratch is one of the many visions of a local food coalition in its effort to make good available to all.

The Good Food Buffalo Coalition (GFBC), composed of a group of local organizations, including the BTF, are working hard to bring fresh, quality food to Buffalo, while protecting workers, consumers and animals.

The BTF Community Engagement Committee, represented by Co-Chair Elizabeth Spiro-Carman, joined the coalition in April 2020 and was a perfect fit to assist with the multitude of issues regarding 'good food' and the effects on our Buffalo Public School students.

By then, GFBC had outlined its organizational goals of:

- Educating the community about our local food systems
- Combatting climate change
- Addressing environmental sustainability
- Boosting the local economy

However, the pandemic was well underway and Covid-19 affected aspects of the organizational goals.

For example, while Covid-19 raged and affected workers in the food industry nationally, GFBC made statements in support of protecting food workers. In our community, the concerns of local food workers in the meat supply business were front and center.

By June 2020, in an effort to educate the community about local food systems, GFBC began to address the disconnect between the public and farmworkers. GFBC reached out to immigrant workers, urban farms, food chain workers alliance, Black farmers, cafeteria workers (AFSCME), and farm workers throughout the state.

During this time, GFBC was noting that Buffalo Public Schools "Farm to School" had developed a 'chef challenge' wherein restaurants and students were paired, created a menu, and then, were judged in competition. This was meant to develop support for the value of "Farm to School". GFBC expressed concern that this activity did not actually reach or include BPS families or the BPS community. GFBC is looking for ways to improve this pairing.

During the summer and early fall of 2020, GFBC turned its attention to the NYS Black farmers by organizing "NYS Black Farmers Listening Sessions" in an attempt to create pathways between these farmers and the institutional market purchasers. This initiative was intended

to coordinate with the "FRESH ACT", a NYS Senate bill that would affect multiple constituencies and promote food access with established groups, especially BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) farmers. This act was tabled until January 2021.

Over the course of winter 2021, GFBC realized that their own committees were disconnected and lacking communication. This realization has led to a re-ordering of the self-governance policy, with upcoming votes on this issue. The upcoming votes also will focus on hiring full-time employees, including a position of leadership connecting the committees and two clerical workers.

GFBC also addressed the NYS Senate during hearings on "Diversifying Agriculture and Addressing Food Injustice". GFBC has pushed for inclusion of BIPOC farmers on all aspects of legislation on the topic. GFBC has re-focused attention on the 2017 "Milked" report, which dealt with migrant dairy workers of Central, Northern, and Western New York. The report revealed serious concerns for these workers who were charged with 24-hour, round-the-clock work in the milking parlors. This issue overlaps concerns for the BIPOC dairy workers and the issue of animal welfare.

Meanwhile, GFBC has met with NYS Assemblywoman (146th District) Karen McMahan, with the intention of building on-going support for GFBC issues.

Buffalo Grad Drafted by Green Bay Packers

Isaiah McDuffie, a 2017 graduate of Frederick Law Olmsted School and the son of Stevenson McDuffie, a Social Studies teacher at McKinley, was drafted in the 6th round by the Green Bay Packers as a linebacker.

McDuffie, who was the 220th overall pick in this year's draft, signed a four-year contract with the Packers. He played high school football for Bennett, where his father is the head coach, because Olmsted does not have its own team.

After graduating from Olmsted, McDuffie attended Boston College where he had a stellar career. In his breakout junior year, the 6'1", 227-pound future NFL player ranked 5th in the nation with 107 tackles.

BTF Gets Two Awards at NYSUT RA

Every year, the BTF goes above and beyond what is expected when giving back to the community and fighting for what's right.

For these extraordinary contributions, the BTF received two awards during the annual NYSUT Representative Assembly, held virtually April 30-May 1.

For the second time, the BTF earned the Ken Kurzweil Social Justice Recognition Award for

- Advocating for educational justice and funding equity
- Supporting initiatives to combat hunger and poverty
- Demonstrating labor solidarity at events and protests
- Upholding solidarity with LGBTQ community
- Fighting for racial and social justice
- Championing women's issues, history and rights

The BTF also received the Community Service Award for participating in the Variety Club Telethon and Read Across America; feeding more than 200 families through the annual Thanksgiving Food Drive; contributing more than \$50,000 to local charities; and awarding \$3,000 in scholarships to the Peter P. Tycz, II Memorial Scholarship Foundation and University at Buffalo Foundations, Inc.

Did You Know...

That days of sick time allowance granted at full or half pay shall be credited as days of service for increment purposes? This important provision of our contract can be found in Article XXVIII A (1)(b) and means that using paid sick days will not prevent you from reaching the 160 service days needed in most cases to move up a step on the salary schedule.

Extended Pay Plan Dates Set

Extended Pay Plan disbursement dates for the summer are:

- July 16
- July 30
- August 13
- August 27

The number of disbursements you will receive has been pre-selected by you. If you have questions, please call the BTF.

Six Teachers Named Teacher of the Year

Six BPS teachers were named “Teacher of the Year” and another was honored as Trailblazer for 50 years of teaching, during the Virtual 2021 Excellence in Education Awards. The Awards, hosted by Friends for a Better Buffalo, were presented on May 2. The organization, founded by Buffalo Board of Education member Terrance Heard and his wife Nina, was created to unite businesses, non-profit organizations, corporations, governmental leaders and concerned citizens for the purpose of uplifting the community and presenting various charitable events throughout the year. Their projects and events are designed to shed light on our community of unsung heroes, businesses and organizations that perform charitable good works and humanitarian efforts.

Trailblazer of the Year

Sharon Sobierajski, a Social Studies teacher at Frederick Law Olmsted School #156, was named Trailblazer of the Year for teaching Buffalo students for the past 50 years.



Teachers of the Year are:

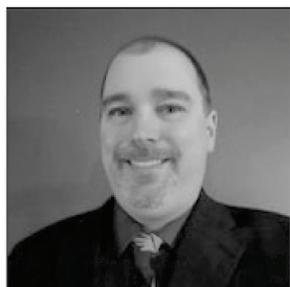


•**George Davis**, Music & Arts, Math, Science, Technology Preparatory School #197

•**Kim Jones**, Counselor/Social Worker of the Year, Buffalo Academy for Visual & Performing Arts, School#192



•**Timothy Aguglia**, Special Education Teacher of the Year, Lorraine Elementary, School #72.



•**Barbara Fitzgerald**, Support Staff of the Year, Coordinator, Hamlin Park Claude & Ouida Clapp Academy, School #74



•**Michael Meyer**, Technology Teacher, 7th-8th Grade Teacher of the Year, School #81

•**Matthew Frank**, Math Teacher, High School Teacher of the Year, McKinley Vocational High School #305



7th thru 8th grade

- Alba Gomez, Spanish, Frank A. Sedita Academy #30
- Amanda Sperrazza, CT/RR, William J. Grabiarz School of Excellence, #79
- Anthony L. White II, Social Studies, Harriet Ross Tubman School #31
- Eric Miller, Math, Frederick Law Olmsted, #156
- Jason Hall, ELA, Highgate Heights #80
- Kimberly Holzman, Math, West Hertel Academy #94
- Linda Zakrzewski, Home & Careers, School #81
- Lisa Ried, CT/RR, Harvey Austin Elementary School #97

High School and Early College

- Kira Mioducki, coordinator, Research Laboratory HS #366
- Annette Miller, Science, International Preparatory #198
- Corey Pelczynski, English, Math, Science, Technology #197
- Dana Pryor-Moncrieffe, Science, Frederick Law Olmsted #156
- Dawn Weihrich, Science, Research Laboratory HS #366
- Dr. Dan Haick, Business, Riverside Academy #208
- Felice Brooks, Urban Education, McKinley Vocational #305
- Jennifer Benitez, Social Studies, International Prep #198
- Joanna Fogarassi, ENL Division of Multilingual Education, #18A
- Nicole Roche, French, City Honors #195
- Nicole Miller, ENL, Lafayette International High #207
- Peter Lojacono, Italian, Hutchinson Central Technical High #304
- Rachael Short, ENL, International Prep #198
- Natalie Schnorr, English, South Park High School #206

Counselor or Social Worker

- Alycia Tomaino, Social Worker Frederick Law Olmsted #156
- Erika Vertigan, Social Worker, Harvey Austin Elementary School #97
- Jose Correa, Social Worker, International Prep, School #198
- Kenneth Boone, Counselor, MST Middle School #196 @ #39
- Leslie D. Petties, Counselor, East Community High #309
- Luis Maisonet, Social Worker, D’Youville Porter School #3
- Sterling South, South Park High School #206

(continued on page 7. See: Teacher of the Year Finalists)

These BPS teachers were finalists in these following Teacher of the Year categories:

Music & Arts

- Holly Hudson, West Hertel Academy School #94
- Kelly Salas, International School #45
- Laura Minor, North Park Community School #50
- Rebecca Moda, City Honors, #195
- Rose Falcone, Harriet Ross Tubman, School #31
- Rachel Lyons, Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts, #192

Support Staff

- Amanda Spears, Support Math, Stanley Makowski Early Childhood Center #99
- Amy Luraschi, coordinator, Arthur O. Eve Early Childhood Center, #61



Teachers of the Year Finalists (cont. from Page 6)

Early Childhood Education and K through 3rd Grade

- Allison Rudyk, ENL, Southside Elementary #93,
- Blair Belcher, Pre-K, Herman Badillo Bilingual Academy #76
- Bridget Jakubowski, Grade 3, Marva J. Daniel Futures Academy #37
- Deborah Jax 8:1:1 Stanley Makowski Early Childhood Center #99
- Meghan Benimoff, Grade 1, Marva J. Daniel Futures Academy #37
- Melanie Pyne, Grade 1, International Prep #45
- Shari Blake, ENL, Stanley Makowski Early Childhood Center #99
- Candace Young, Grade 3, Early Childhood Center #82
- Jasmine Davis, Grade 2, Harvey Austin #97
- Maria Northrup, Grade 1, Stanley Makowski Early Childhood Center #99
- Mayra Benitez, Grade 1, Herman Badillo Bilingual Academy #76
- Sheryl Klubek, Grade 2, Discovery School #67

- Robert Hunter, Grade 1, Community School #53

Middle School 4th thru 6th Grade

- Candace Dowdell, Grade 4, Highgate Heights #80
- Charles Bennett, PE, Harvey Austin #97
- Dawn Pasquale, Grade 5, Bilingual Center #33
- Gloria Lassiter, Grade 4, Lovejoy Discovery #43
- Lauren Belton, Grade 4-8, Harvey Austin School #97
- Lauryn Weatherston, Grade 6, International School #45
- Nicholas Paterson, Grade 5, City Honors #195
- Keisha Jacobs, Grade 5, Marva J. Daniel Futures Academy #37

Special Education

- Abigail Petri, Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts #192
- Adrienne Stachura, Hillery Park Academy #27
- Alison Zgoda, Burgard Vocational High #301

- Dawn Colosimo, Frederick Law Olmsted School #64
- Desiree Breckenridge Barnes, Emerson Culinary Arts #302
- Emily Zimmer, McKinley Vocational High #305
- Colleen Bowles, Frederick Law Olmsted #64
- Francesca Baas, B.U.I.L.D. Community School #92
- Kristen Fischer, Early Childhood Center, School #17
- Lauren Ryan, Marva J. Daniel Futures Academy #37
- Lisa Ried, Harvey Austin Elementary School #97
- Molly Borzelleri, Hamlin Park Claude & Ouida Clapp Academy, School #74
- Roselyn Kasmire, D'Youville Porter Campus, School #3
- Lisa Gionis, Emerson Culinary Arts #302
- Erin Hitchcock, Roosevelt Early Childhood Center #65
- Alyssa Braun, PE, Frederick Law Olmsted #156

Parents Should Decide If Retention Is Needed

The BTF wants parents to be able to decide whether their children need to repeat Pre-K -1st grade because of educational deficiencies caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

BTF President Philip Rumore has asked the New York State Department of Education and the Buffalo School District to allow parents to have their children repeat Pre-K, Kindergarten or 1st grade next year.

The request was made after a Pre-K parent said she was denied this option.

“While many students in the early grades made excellent progress learning virtually and in-person, some need further assistance,” Phil explained. “The BTF urges the state, where necessary, and local school districts, to allow the parents of children in grades Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K), Kindergarten and first grade to have their children repeat that grade, if they so choose.”

Phil said offering parents the same option for higher grades “should be up to local school districts” to decide.

The BTF also called upon school districts to use the significant incoming Federal funds to provide extra support to students who have fallen behind because of pandemic restrictions.



Teachers Needed for Interview Teams

At various times during the 2021-2022 school year, the Buffalo Board of Education will conduct interviews for placement of candidates on hiring lists for probationary, future temporary appointments and certain other positions.

Tenured teachers are needed in **all tenure areas** to serve as members of these interview teams. However, not all tenure areas may conduct interviews. Interviews may be scheduled during the school day, after school hours, or on Saturdays.

If you wish to serve on an interview team, please clip and submit the attached form to [Rebecca Pordum](#), Buffalo Teachers Federation, 271 Porter Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14201.

Interview Teams

I am interested in serving on an interview team. I have tenured status in the tenure area listed below.

Name	School	Position
Phone Number (Cell/Home)		Personal Email Address

I AM A TENURED TEACHER AND MY TENURE AREA IS:

BTF Sponsors BPS Virtual Graduations

Wanting Buffalo Public School seniors to have the graduation they always dreamed of, the BTF stepped up again to help make those dreams come true.

For the second year, the BTF sponsored the 2021 Virtual Graduations Program which will air on WUTV or WNYO on various dates this month.

Traditional graduation ceremonies were cancelled in 2020 and again this year due to the COVID-19 restrictions which limited the number of people who could gather in one place.

With the BTF's sponsorship, Buffalo schools could conduct their graduation during a 30-minute television slot.

The station billed the BTF for the event, which covered the cost of 30 minutes. Some schools used school funds to pay for a full hour.

In addition, BTF offered to aid any BPS high schools that requested assistance with their portion of the financial commitment.

Some schools are doing both virtual and in-person graduations, so they would have a video copy of their event to keep as a remembrance.

Retirees Remain Active

You don't have to say goodbye to your friends and colleagues when you retire. The Buffalo Retired Teachers Association (BRTA) will keep you busy and in touch.

The BRTA is open to all Buffalo teachers and administrators who are retiring. The BRTA hosts four luncheons during the school year, including the Fall Luncheon on the first day of school in September, Holiday Luncheon in December, Winter Luncheon in February, and the Spring Luncheon, held in May.

During June, BRTA men and women participate in the Annual Golf Tournament. Under normal circumstances, travel excursions are sponsored by the BRTA throughout the year, including international vacations, day trips to various locations within a 100-mile radius, overnight trips outside New York State, and theater trips to Shea's Buffalo Theatre.

And although retired, members of the BRTA don't forget the students. Each year, three \$1,500 scholarships are awarded to graduating seniors of the Buffalo Public Schools.

Life membership in the BRTA is \$150 and must be paid in full. Annual membership is \$12 per year.

For more information contact Linda Parada, membership secretary, at 875-3392 or online at www.BRTA.biz.

Welcome New Members

The following 52 teachers have joined the Buffalo Teachers Federation since the last printing of the *Provocator*. Welcome to the union!

Ahmed Akbar

Paige Anderson

Ann Aubertine

Luke Chambers

Maria Chvala

Michelle Croce

Amanda Dailey

Adam Didier

Jessica Dillon

Shawann Ealey

Michael Ertel

Shaunna Ginnane

Tatiana Gonzalez

Maura Gribbins

James Hall

Taylor Halter

Jodi Hammond-Axberg

James Harris

Elizabeth Hashem

Kelly Hathaway

Sarah Higgins

Jacqueline Jamieson

Anne Kokolus

Heather Kornowski

Brittany Kovacs

Anna Krivonos

Jessica Kubik

Karen Kummer

Eric Marlinski

Daniel Massey

Jason McNair

Melany Michalski

Samantha Moore

Alyssa Murcin

Darren Nahs-Day

Elizabeth Otwell

Natasha Perkins

Valerie Perry

Kaitlin Principe

Rebecca Robbins

Amy Rubino

Elizabeth Ruthenberg

Sarah Scala

Michelle Skelley

Joseph Smith

Melissa Spencer

Kari Szymaszek

Dominick Teoli

Jilliene Toler

Brianna Ware

Amanda Williams

Kimberly Zandi

Retirees Can Join NYSUT Retiree Council #44

Congratulations to the new retirees! As you conclude your time as an active teacher and BTF member, be assured that you are still a union member in NYSUT and AFT.

The year 2021 marks an important milestone. NYSUT Retiree Councils are celebrating their 30th anniversary. Established in 1991, retiree councils are a powerful voice for retirees, who continue to support the values and work of our union.

BTF members, upon retirement, become members of NYSUT Retiree Council #44 and join more than 250,000 NYSUT retirees. As a retiree, you can still take advantage of the many benefits that NYSUT offers its members.

Retired members serve as delegates to the NYSUT, NEA and AFT conventions where they represent the interests of their retired colleagues as well as support the issues important to active teachers.

RC #44 partners with retirees from Western New York (Retiree Councils #1, #2, and #3) to plan activities for its members

Traditionally there is a September luncheon to welcome new retirees, a winter holiday luncheon and a retiree conference in the spring. These events

provide members the opportunity to network with retirees, keep up to date on member benefits, legislation, and other issues pertinent to retirees.

There are a variety of activities retirees can engage in. RC #44 members volunteer at The Teacher's Desk, participate in the Making Strides Walk, make phone calls to support NYSUT-endorsed candidates, to name a few. Despite the pandemic, the retiree council has stayed active and involved.

Members can also participate in workshops and trips. You can keep informed of all our events through the RC #44 newsletter and by following NYSUT Retiree Council #44 on Facebook.

Retirees do not pay dues to belong to NYSUT. RC #44 has a voluntary participation fee that is collected each year.

Upon retirement, you are no longer a member of NEA unless you join as a lifetime member and pay a membership fee. This will enable you to continue to enjoy all the benefits of membership.

If you have any questions, please contact Sara Rodland, president of RC #44, at 689-9561 or by email sarasarasara2008@live.com.



Fundraising Project Is a Lesson Students Won't Soon Forget

When we get thirsty here in Buffalo, we turn on the faucet and pour ourselves a tall glass of cold water. It's so normal, we do it automatically, without thinking.

But as some of our ENL students will attest, this is a privilege not everyone shares.

"Many of my classmates have no idea what it's like to be thirsty. We have plenty of water to drink here in the United States", stated Luwam Mobae, a student from Eritrea, a country in East Africa.

Mobae and about 30 students and staff participated in an empathy "walk for water" around I-Prep's 14th Street Campus. Many of the students lugged huge containers of water to bring awareness to the obstacles some people face just to have the simple necessities of life.

"Every day, about 1,400 children die from diseases caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation", explained Lawrence Toole, the I-Prep teacher who organized the walk. "But it doesn't have to be that way. There are simple solutions that can help provide clean water to communities around the world."

To tap into those solutions, Toole and his students have started an awareness and fundraising campaign to help an organization called Charity: Water, which develops water projects around the world. Toole said many of his students had to "walk for water" themselves before their families came to America.

He said the service project came about after talking with a few students who had to walk several miles each day to get water for their families in their home countries.

"Often times that walk was dangerous and the water was contaminated", Toole explained.

So far, the students have raised about half of the \$3,000 goal they set. Charity: Water guarantees 100% of the money donated is used to build clean water projects. When the projects are complete, they will send donors photos and GPS coordinates of the community that is helped.

Toole, a Social Studies teacher and National Honor Society advisor said his students created a slogan to help raise awareness of the water crisis cause.

The slogan asks people to
"Drive for Five"

- spend 5 minutes on the charitywater.org website
- share on your social media with 5 friends
- donate \$5 to help bring clean water to those in need.

Toole, who has been teaching in the District for 20 years, has been at I-Prep for the past six years "working with amazing immigrant and refugee students", he said.

To connect the project to his curriculum, Toole created a lesson unit around the project that focused on economics, foreign policy, and environmental issues.

Now that Mr. Toole and his students have started the ball rolling, he said this is the first of many events.

"I am not stopping with this one project", Toole said. "I will continue this mission of bringing clean water to those who don't have the access to it."

To donate to the clean water campaign, go to charitywater.org.



Despite Pandemic, Cat in the Hat Visits Newborns to Promote Literacy on Read Across America Day

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual March 1 Read Across America and celebration of Dr. Seuss's birthday went on as usual, but on a much smaller scale.

Under normal circumstances a half-dozen or more retirees dress up as the Cat in the Hat and go to various schools to read to elementary school children. Several others visit newborns and their moms at area hospitals to deliver gift bags and encourage reading to begin on day one.

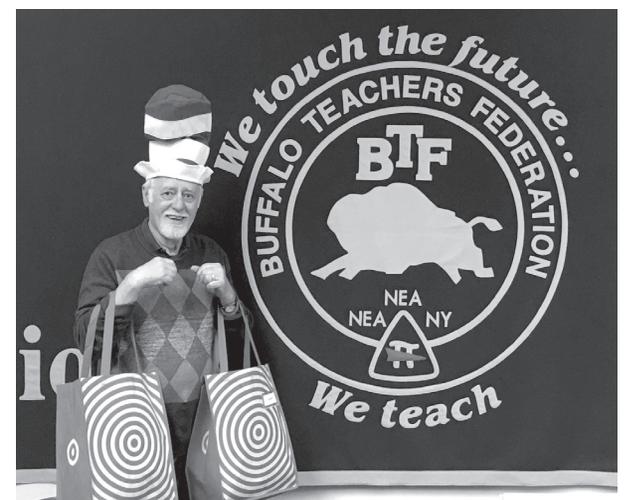
This year, however, schools had their own celebrations without outside visitors and two retirees, Stan Nowak and Floyd Kruschke, made the annual visit to maternity wards.

"Reading is entertaining and educates at the same time. It's a basic life skill that can also transport a child to many different places when they read. That's why the BTF and its membership are extremely happy to involve ourselves in Read Across America Day. This helps promote an interest in reading, which really should be a life-long enjoyment for each and every one of us", BTF President Philip Rumore said.

Read Across America Day is a nationwide event sponsored by the National Education Association (NEA). It is aimed at spreading the message that reading is important, fun, and opens the joys of reading as an integral part of every child's life.

The annual Read Across America Day always coincides with the late Dr. Seuss's birthday. This year would have been his 117th birthday.

The BTF's involvement in Read Across America Day continues the long and proud tradition of BTF programs aimed at the city's public school children and local community.



Stan Nowak picks up gift bags from the BTF office to deliver to newborns at local hospitals

BTF Releases Auditor's Report

2019 - 2020



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INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

The Executive Officers
Buffalo Teachers Federation, Inc.

We have audited the accompanying balance sheets of Buffalo Teachers Federation, Inc. as of August 31, 2020 and 2019, and the related statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; this includes the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditors' Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audits. We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditors' judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. Accordingly, we express no such opinion. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Buffalo Teachers Federation, Inc. as of August 31, 2020 and 2019, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

March 18, 2021

BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION, INC.

Balance Sheets

August 31,	2020	2019
Assets		
Current assets:		
Cash	\$ 600,262	\$ 518,802
Receivables, net (Note 2)	164,353	179,727
Prepaid expenses	24,890	24,549
Investments (Note 3)	4,310,578	3,609,186
	<u>5,100,083</u>	<u>4,332,264</u>
Property and equipment, net (Note 4)	85,579	103,529
	<u>\$ 5,185,662</u>	<u>\$ 4,435,793</u>
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Current liabilities:		
Current portion of accrued post-retirement health care benefits (Note 7)	\$ 21,800	\$ 20,000
Accounts payable	15,304	10,835
Accrued expenses	104,230	95,137
	<u>141,334</u>	<u>125,972</u>
Accrued post-retirement health care benefits (Note 7)	2,337,631	1,725,842
Net assets without donor restrictions	<u>2,706,697</u>	<u>2,583,979</u>
	<u>\$ 5,185,662</u>	<u>\$ 4,435,793</u>

See accompanying notes.

2

BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION, INC.

Statements of Activities

For the years ended August 31,	2020	2019
Revenue:		
Member dues	\$ 3,508,030	\$ 3,500,212
Investment income (Note 3)	704,428	87,210
Rent	128,470	126,822
Advertising and other	5,090	13,455
Total revenue	<u>4,346,018</u>	<u>3,727,699</u>
Expenses:		
Program	3,236,667	3,210,991
Management and general	489,127	426,469
Total expenses	<u>3,725,794</u>	<u>3,637,460</u>
Excess of revenue over expenses	620,224	90,239
Post-retirement health care benefit obligation (Note 7)	(497,506)	(632,803)
Change in net assets	122,718	(542,564)
Net assets - beginning	2,583,979	3,126,543
Net assets - ending	<u>\$ 2,706,697</u>	<u>\$ 2,583,979</u>

See accompanying notes.

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BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION, INC.

Statements of Cash Flows

For the years ended August 31,	2020	2019
Operating activities:		
Change in net assets	\$ 122,718	\$ (542,564)
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash flows from operating activities:		
Depreciation	23,243	24,059
Net (gain) loss on investments	(564,942)	89,838
Changes in other operating assets and liabilities:		
Receivables	15,374	(50,371)
Prepaid expenses	(341)	1,894
Accounts payable	4,469	(6,275)
Accrued expenses	9,093	1,787
Accrued postretirement health care benefits	613,589	636,168
Net operating activities	<u>223,203</u>	<u>154,536</u>
Investing activities:		
Purchase of property and equipment	(5,293)	(7,557)
Purchase of investments	(6,908,929)	(11,029,412)
Proceeds from sale of investments	6,772,479	10,919,576
Net investing activities	<u>(141,743)</u>	<u>(117,393)</u>
Net change in cash	81,460	37,143
Cash - beginning	518,802	481,659
Cash - ending	<u>\$ 600,262</u>	<u>\$ 518,802</u>

See accompanying notes.

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BTF Auditor's Report, cont.

BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION, INC.

Notes to Financial Statements

1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies:

Organization:

Buffalo Teachers Federation, Inc. (the Federation) is the bargaining unit for teachers employed by the City of Buffalo Board of Education (the Board of Education).

Cash:

At various times, cash in financial institutions may exceed federally insured limits and subject the Federation to concentrations of credit risk.

Receivables:

Receivables from member loans and the Federation's affiliate and national and state organizations are stated at the amount management expects to collect from outstanding balances. An allowance for doubtful accounts is recorded based on management's assessment of the collectability of individual account balances and historical trends. Amounts outstanding after management has used reasonable collection efforts are written off through a charge to allowance for doubtful accounts and a credit to receivables.

Investments:

Investments are stated at fair value based on quoted prices in active markets.

Property and Equipment:

Property and equipment is stated at cost, net of accumulated depreciation. Depreciation is provided over estimated useful lives using the straight-line method.

Income Taxes:

The Federation is a 501(c)(5) organization exempt from taxation under Section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Functional Expense Allocation:

The financial statements report certain categories of expenses that are attributable to program and supporting functions. Some expenses require allocation on a reasonable basis that is consistently applied. The allocated expenses include personnel and related benefits, occupancy and office, public relations, and professional fees, which are allocated based on employee responsibilities and occupancy.

Use of Estimates:

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported in the financial statements and accompanying notes. Actual results may differ from those estimates.

Revenue Recognition:

The Federation represents contract, probationary, and temporary teachers of the Buffalo Public Schools and provides a variety of benefits to its members including legal representation and financial assistance. The Federation's main source of receipts is dues collected from its members by their employer, the Board of Education, on a bi-weekly basis from the end of September through July. Dues revenue is generally recognized and collected during the service period.

Subsequent Events:

Management has evaluated events and transactions for potential recognition or disclosure in the financial statements through March 18, 2021, the date the financial statements were available to be issued.

2. Receivables:

	2020	2019
Affiliate (Note 6)	\$ 110,206	\$ 102,783
National and State Organizations	43,649	73,681
Member loans	80,790	80,790
Interest and other	9,708	2,473
	<u>244,353</u>	<u>259,727</u>
Less allowances for doubtful member loans	80,000	80,000
	<u>\$ 164,353</u>	<u>\$ 179,727</u>

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8. Financial Assets Available for Operations:

The Federation's primary source of financial assets are member dues, rental income, and investment income, which are acquired throughout the year to help meet the Federation's cash needs for general expenditures. If necessary, the Federation also has access to a \$100,000 bank demand line of credit (Note 5).

The Federation's financial assets available within one year of the balance sheet date to meet cash needs for general expenditures consist of the following at August 31, 2020 and 2019:

	2020	2019
Cash	\$ 600,262	\$ 518,802
Receivables	164,353	179,727
Investments	4,310,578	3,609,186
	<u>\$ 5,075,193</u>	<u>\$ 4,307,715</u>

10. Expenses by Nature and Function:

	2020		2019	
	Program	Management and General	Program	Management and General
Per capita dues	\$ 2,330,604	\$ -	\$ 2,343,176	\$ -
Personnel	648,375	334,011	532,949	274,549
Occupancy	44,653	19,137	37,392	16,026
Office supplies and expenses	50,974	28,837	74,064	43,030
Public relations and contract enforcement	88,289	-	100,594	-
Professional fees	-	94,243	-	72,302
Other	73,772	12,899	122,816	20,562
	<u>\$ 3,236,667</u>	<u>\$ 489,127</u>	<u>\$ 3,210,991</u>	<u>\$ 426,469</u>
Total		\$ 3,725,794		\$ 3,637,460

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3. Investments:

	2020	2019
U.S. Government securities	\$ 800	\$ 1,258
Common stock	1,175,939	1,218,997
Mutual funds	1,763,453	1,438,328
Corporate bonds	35,996	69,962
Certificates of deposit	481,924	520,907
Money market	852,466	359,734
	<u>\$ 4,310,578</u>	<u>\$ 3,609,186</u>

Investment income is as follows:

	2020	2019
Interest and dividends	\$ 139,486	\$ 177,048
Net gains (losses)	564,942	(89,838)
	<u>\$ 704,428</u>	<u>\$ 87,210</u>

4. Property and Equipment:

	2020	2019
Land	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000
Buildings and improvements	463,417	463,417
Office furniture and equipment	182,386	182,386
Computer equipment	140,543	135,250
	<u>811,346</u>	<u>806,053</u>
Less accumulated depreciation	725,767	702,524
	<u>\$ 85,579</u>	<u>\$ 103,529</u>

5. Short-Term Borrowings:

The Federation has available a \$100,000 bank demand line of credit with interest payable at prime plus 3.5%, secured by substantially all assets of the Federation. The line is subject to the usual terms and conditions applied by the bank for working capital financing, and is subject to review annually. There were no amounts outstanding under the line at August 31, 2020 and 2019.

6. Transactions with Affiliate:

	2020	2019
2021	\$ 21,800	
2022	22,200	
2023	46,200	
2024	47,600	
2025	49,000	
2026 - 2030	262,000	
	<u>\$ 448,800</u>	

The Federation also remits payment of certain SBF personnel and other expenses for which it is reimbursed. Amounts owed to the Federation from SBF at August 31, 2020 and 2019 included in receivables were \$110,206 and \$102,783.

7. Post-Retirement Health Care Benefits:

The Federation provides postretirement health care benefits to all retirees who attain age 55 with fifteen years of service. Employees who retire after September 1, 2016 contribute annual amounts ranging from \$300 to \$900 depending on insurance coverage. It is the Federation's practice to fund these benefits as incurred. The measurement date used to determine the benefit obligation is August 31st of each year.

The status of the postretirement health benefit plan at and for the years ended August 31, 2020 and 2019 is as follows:

	2020	2019
Accumulated postretirement benefit obligation (APBO)	\$ 2,359,431	\$ 1,745,842
Accrued postretirement benefit obligation (benefit liability)	2,359,431	1,745,842
Accumulated adjustment increase to net assets available for benefits	(50,225)	447,281
Benefit cost	125,571	12,123
Benefits paid	9,488	8,758

At August 31, 2020 and 2019, the following items included as adjustments to net assets available for benefits had not yet been recognized as components to benefit cost:

	2020	2019
Net gain	\$ (50,225)	\$ 447,281

	2020	2019
Weighted-average assumptions used to determine benefit liability:		
Yearly health care premium increases	6.00%	6.00%
Discount rate	2.25%	3.50%
Yearly retiree contribution increase	3.00%	3.00%
Weighted-average assumptions used to determine net periodic benefit cost:		
Discount rate	3.50%	4.00%

Expected future annual benefit payments:

	2020	2019
2021	\$ 21,800	
2022	22,200	
2023	46,200	
2024	47,600	
2025	49,000	
2026 - 2030	262,000	
	<u>\$ 448,800</u>	

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Q&A: Know Your Benefits

The Dennis Licherelli Sick Leave Bank

What is the Sick Leave Bank and what are the benefits?

The Sick Leave Bank, now named in honor of Dennis Licherelli, the late Labor Relations Specialist who helped found it, was established in 1973 as part of contentious contract negotiations that nearly resulted in a strike.

The purpose of the Sick Leave Bank (SLB) is to provide assistance to teachers who would otherwise be forced to take medical leave without pay. All days in the SLB are sick days that our union brothers and sisters have donated from their own accruals in order to help those who are in need.

These are not days given by the Board, therefore the SLB trustees have a responsibility to all SLB members, as well as to the SLB itself, to follow strict guidelines to maintain both the solvency of the SLB and the integrity by which claims are processed and paid.

It is important to remember that as public sector employees, teachers are not covered by New York State disability. The only days available are the sick days that are personally accrued, the Board extensions we are eligible for after 10 years of service, and days from the Sick Leave Bank.

What should I consider before joining/making changes to my SLB membership?

Membership in the SLB is required to be eligible for benefits. Anyone who wishes to enroll in the SLB or change their membership must do so now for the changes to take effect in the following school year.

The process requires sending completed SLB enrollment and BPS payroll authorization cards (purple and gray) to BTF headquarters by June 25, 2021.

Benefits are calculated based on the member's current donation to the SLB, as delineated in the SLB guidelines table.

If, for example, a member's donation allows them access to 40 days, that does not mean that the member has a bank account with 40 days of his or her own. This only means that if the medical leave is warranted and authorized by a physician (or licensed psychologist/psychiatrist in the case of a mental

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health diagnosis), the member may be granted up to 40 days for that particular illness for which the claim was filed. The member should not use their personal days until after their SLB days are exhausted.

If I use the SLB, must I wait before using it again in the future?

SLB benefits will be granted only once per 12 month period (with the exception of psychiatric conditions), provided the member returns to work for a period of 12 calendar months. In computation of the twelve-month period, summer months are counted.

In cases involving psychiatric conditions, the SLB will consider requests separated by 36 months from their last SLB usage date.

Can the Sick Leave Bank be used for maternity?

Yes. There is no pre-defined amount of maternity time for members, but normally 6 to 8 weeks can be granted. In order to receive benefits, the member must be under the ongoing care of her doctor and the doctor must certify that it is medically necessary for her to remain out of work.

What about mental health diagnoses?

Whenever a mental health diagnosis is made (including, but not limited to generalized anxiety disorder, postpartum depression, or depressive disorder), the diagnosis must be made and certified by a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist for the member to be eligible for benefits.

Members are not eligible to use the SLB for a future mental health diagnosis for three (3) years following return to work from the first illness.

Is there a lifetime maximum number of days I can use?

Yes. It is calculated by taking the total number of days the member donated in the five years before filing the claim and multiplying that number by 10. This means that someone who donates two days per year over five years will have a lifetime max of 100 days, while a person who donates four days per year over five years will have a lifetime maximum of 200 days.

Therefore, the lifetime maximum number of days available to a member potentially could be increased. If the member had been donating fewer than four days per year, an increase in donation will increase the lifetime maximum, thereby allowing the member access to more SLB days for a future illness. Even if the member has donated four days per year and used up all 200 lifetime maximum days, the member is still eligible for up to 60 life threatening/terminal illness days.

What if I have a life threatening/terminal illness?

All SLB members are eligible for up to 60 life threatening/terminal illness days that are above and beyond the lifetime maximum days. These days can only be granted once in a lifetime and they do not count against the member's lifetime maximum usage.

We are here to help you through your time of illness so that you can focus your energy on healing instead of worrying about financial stability.

More details, including the Guidelines for Sick Leave Bank, are available on the BTF website at www.btfny.org.

Dennis Brancato, Trustee
Sophia Howard-Johnson, Trustee
Melissa Kenney, Trustee
Maria Baker, Alternate Trustee

June 25, 2021 is the Deadline to Enroll or Make Changes to your Sick Leave Bank Membership for 2021-2022