

# tabco Bulletin

Teachers Association of Baltimore County

Fall 2021

## President's Message - Cindy Sexton

As we finish our first quarter of the school year, the message from our members is clear: we are thrilled to be back in our classrooms with our students, but we are tired. The beginning of every school year is exhausting – setting up classrooms and worksites, gathering materials, developing relationships with our students and our coworkers – but this year is especially so. Some of our students have not been in a physical classroom since March 2020, some were

not engaged in the virtual instruction last year, some have chosen to remain virtual. We are introducing and revisiting procedures and rules regularly and dealing with new circumstances – not just making sure our students stay masked and physically distanced – but now TikTok challenges are added. What a start!

Educators alone know the challenges this school year brings. No one on the outside looking in really can understand what we do.

on a daily basis. Yes of course we are teaching our students, but this year, maybe more than ever before, we are doing so much more. The social emotional needs of our students are great. They are dealing with trauma and upheaval in their lives – and we are too! We are always told to give our students grace and meet them where they are. Educators need that same grace too. Every single day we are going above and beyond for our students but please – let's make sure we are taking care of us.

President's message Continued on page 2

## Recruiting Connections

Brianka Enck is a second-year middle school teacher who belongs to a unique cohort. Brianka began her teaching career online. Her first experience with teaching was staring at a screen via Google Meet, trying to engage students virtually. She had no opportunity to poke her head into a colleague's room to ask a question or seek some support. Her department chair never knocked on her door with an update on curriculum. Most of the faces that looked back at her as she taught them were colored circles with letters like T or M or D. Every teacher in Baltimore County knew the heartache of this reality, but Brianka's cohort never knew anything else.

It was at the end of this challenging year that Brianka signed up with TABCO to help recruit CATs to strengthen the network of communication from building to building. "Since last year was my first year and I didn't get to communicate much with the people in my building, I wouldn't say that I feel like an activist in education yet. But when I am actually in the building and talking to and meeting people every day I might." Brianka couldn't get involved with activities last year, but she anticipates she will in the year to come. It's part of why she signed up to be a CAT recruiter.

The CAT program began three summers ago. CAT stands for

Contract Action Team. Members of this team are also called CATs. CATs focus on the key changes in the major negotiations between TABCO and BCPS. They are different from the building rep in that the building rep has the responsibility of supporting all staff members when it comes to the contract. Building reps provide information and counsel members who feel wronged. They also sit with the Educator Council to discuss ways to work with, and support the administration. They attend the monthly rep assemblies and hold monthly ten-minute meetings to keep the staff informed of important TABCO initiatives.

## President's Message cont. from page 1

We need every single precious educator to work with our students. The shortage of educators in every area is nationwide and alarming – to call it a crisis is not hyperbole.

Share your stories with the school board and elected officials. Let me know what you are doing for our students and how it is different from any other time in history. Reach out to one of the many action teams or work groups at TABCO – they are meeting with BCPS leadership to address concerns and find solutions.

Our strength as a union will always be our members – showing up and standing up to make a difference. We are all TABCO – more than 8000 of us. Let us continue to work in solidarity so we can address our students' needs by addressing our educators' needs. We will keep doing the work guided by our TABCO mission statement... 'to empower ourselves to lead our profession and advocate for educators, students and the community'.

Thank you for all you do; I am proud to be your president



## Recruiting cont. from page 1

By contrast, the CAT in each school focuses solely on sharing information regarding issues that relate to contract negotiations. For example, this year TABCO and BCPS are renegotiating the health care contract. Additionally, when there was an impasse regarding the pay for the extra daily 15 minutes as well as when the 2% COLA would take effect (TABCO is demanding the pay begins retroactive to July and BCPS insists we don't receive the COLA until January. It will begin January 1) The CAT's goal was simply to keep every member in the building informed in real time about where things stand with the various negotiations. As one member of the recruiting team put it: the CAT lifts the bread from the full plate of the Building Rep. The Building Rep is still doing the heavy lifting, but at least this one essential responsibility is being handled by one (or two or three) people. That's what the CAT does. This is how TABCO wants to strengthen the network and keep the members informed

Well over a dozen TABCO members including several ESPBC members (instead of "CAT," ESPBC recruits are known as "Super E's") came together at the end of July to train and ultimately recruit potential CATs and Super E's. Members in every building were called with only a small fraction responding. Calling in the summer after this difficult year made it hard to hope for members to respond to the random calls, but the strategy paid off. A strong majority of all buildings now have a CAT.

Emily Salmon, a six-year elementary school teacher, joined the recruiting process for the first time this summer. Emily, like all the recruits, quickly discovered that

the first and most time consuming task for recruiting was not speaking to potential CATs/Super Es. The original goal was to speak to members and engage in honest conversations about the major concerns for the coming year. As members of ESPBC and TABCO, the recruiters could easily empathize and connect with those who answered their phones. It was from these conversations that the recruiters could pull the need for a CAT/Super E. This is how those deep concerns can be turned from thought into action. Action is the key. Information becomes action. "I feel like the caravans and the marches TABCO does are empowering, but this work (recruiting CATs) is more personal and more inspiring so that people will go to those other events." Emily signed up for TABCO at the booth at the New Teacher orientation and she sees herself as an activist. "As a first year teacher, I didn't respond to those TABCO emails or phone calls asking me to get involved but this recruiting experience has opened my eyes. But as I got closer to the rep in my building and started to get more involved I realized how important the work of TABCO is."

Emily, like all of the other recruiters, spent hours making phone calls. Most calls went unanswered and messages were not returned. "It hit me that there are real people at both ends of the calls, and a text back or a phone call back really meant a lot." That's why getting the chance to have a genuine conversation with a member was so important and so gratifying.

Recruiting cont. on page 4



# Upcoming Events

**Legislative Breakfast**  
Saturday January 8  
9am-11am  
<https://tabcoespbclegislativebreakfast2022.eventbrite.com>

**Understanding Your Retirement**  
Thursday, February 10  
4:30pm-6pm  
Integrated Financial Solutions (IFS)  
<https://understanding-your-retirement-february10.eventbrite.com>

# Remembrances

**Allan S. Blondell, 8/10/2021**  
Art Teacher, Overlea HS, 3.0 yrs. of service

**Vicki L. Hicks, 8/23/2021**  
English Teacher, Stemmers Run MS, 29.8 yrs. of service

**Alicia H. Gauger, 10/2/2021**  
Art Teacher, Woodlawn HS, 13.8 yrs. of service

**Gregory J. Fuhrman, 10/11/2021**  
Career Research & Development Teacher, Franklin HS, 27.1 yrs. of service

**Gladys M. Graham, 10/18/2021**  
Elementary Teacher, Colgate ES, hire date 8/18/2021



Income Protection Pays Cash Directly to You!

SHORT-TERM DISABILITY

HOSPITAL/ACCIDENT/DENTAL

CANCER/HEART

MATERNITY/SURGERY

CATASTROPHIC EVENTS

Aflac pays for doctor visits or wellness

Aflac pays for Accident, Illness, Pregnancy and Surgery

Aflac pays on top of sick-leave, sick-bank, weekends, and summer

Existing customer with questions?

Suzanne Herrmann (Benefit Advisor)

Office: 301.985.2020 | Mobile: 703.795.0406

Email: [suzanne\\_herrmann@us.aflac.com](mailto:suzanne_herrmann@us.aflac.com)

\*See brochure for exact payouts, limitations, exclusions, and policy descriptions.

Maternity Coverage

Existing customer with questions?

Suzanne Herrmann (Benefit Advisor)

Office: 301.985.2020 | Mobile: 703.795.0406

Email: [suzanne\\_herrmann@us.aflac.com](mailto:suzanne_herrmann@us.aflac.com)

\*See brochure for exact payouts, limitations, exclusions, and policy descriptions.

CASH TO YOU!

Pays your salary for five to seven weeks, and covers you and your child in hospital or ICU

Pays in addition to Sick-Leave and Sick-Bank and during the summer (Ave. \$4,000-\$8,000)

Pays five to seven weeks for normal birth of the baby or any other complications in pregnancy

Also pays when out of work for sickness or off-the-job accident

Short-Term Disability

Pays averaging \$30 to \$120 a day, TAX FREE, 7 days a week!

1. Pays in addition to all other benefits

Sick Leave, Sick Bank, FMLA, Holiday, and Summer

2. Protects for a short time -- 3-6 months+

After an Accident, Illness, Pregnancy, or Surgery

3. Flexible benefits!

Based on your needs and salary. You can also take the program with you when you leave or resign

4. Starts after a short wait -- 1-8 days+

No wait for Accident; even for Weekends & Summer! 7+ Day Wait for Illness, Pregnancy, and Surgery

Existing customer with questions?

Suzanne Herrmann (Benefit Advisor)

Office: 301.985.2020 | Mobile: 703.795.0406

Email: [suzanne\\_herrmann@us.aflac.com](mailto:suzanne_herrmann@us.aflac.com)

\*See brochure for exact payouts, limitations, exclusions, and policy descriptions.

Why choose Aflac for individual Worksite Benefits?

Aflac pays cash directly to you if sick or hurt. Pays benefits and it is your decision how to use the money

Aflac pays in addition to all other insurance or sick-bank/days

Aflac could make payments to your family members for Illness/Surgery/etc (sick-bank only covers your health)

Aflac pays you quickly while you focus on recovery

Existing customer with questions?

Suzanne Herrmann (Benefit Advisor)

Office: 301.985.2020 | Mobile: 703.795.0406

Email: [suzanne\\_herrmann@us.aflac.com](mailto:suzanne_herrmann@us.aflac.com)

\*See brochure for exact payouts, limitations, exclusions, and policy descriptions.

## Recruiting cont. from page 2

The recruiters didn't pitch the idea of becoming the CAT/Super E. Instead, they asked the member about who was trusted and respected in the building. The philosophy is simple. If the CAT/Super E is going to send out emails or make direct contact with members in the building, the CAT/Super E must be someone people will listen to. By asking members from each building who was trusted and respected, the overlap of recommendations would make it clear who might make a good CAT/Super E. At that point, the recruiter could contact those recommended people and ask them if they would make the commitment to help their colleagues and strengthen the union. Knowing that the candidate had the support of several members of his/her building often worked to inspire the member to say yes.

Again, compared to the building rep, the CAT's/Super E's duties are small and focused: keep everyone up to date on the major negotiations as they happen. If the negotiations are faltering and an action is being planned (like the march on Annapolis several years ago or the car caravan of last year). The CAT/Super E can use email or make announcements at the 10-minute meetings or even have a quick impromptu meeting to get the word out.

This is the first year for the ESPBC Super E program, but the CAT program began two years ago. Many members who were CATs last year agreed to be a CAT again this year.

Patrice Harris, a 14-year veteran teacher and Building Rep from Arbutus Middle, has worked with two different CATs in the last two years. "When you're called to action to support an initiative, you aren't necessarily interacting with other members. You're generally gathering in a place and being made a number. With this recruitment, you're actually engaging with union members. And actually hearing and listening to what their issues are." Like Brianka and Emily, Patrice points out the connection that was necessary in order to find those members who would agree to be CATs/Super E's

Amy Blackwell switched careers 17 years ago and describes teaching as a job for which she can't believe she gets paid. This was her first-year recruiting CATs. As her children have grown up, giving Amy more time, she has become more and more involved with issues in education. This experience recruiting CATs has been different because "I actually get to talk to people. I'm asking them about their concerns. I'm getting to take the time out to get to know someone. Some people are very open about whatever their concerns are." She feels enlightened about the problems others are having that might not be problems for her or for those in her building. "It was a great learning experience."

President Cindy Sexton made it clear that health care would be the biggest issue. CATs will hopefully help members become aware of the negotiations from beginning to end. "There's going to be give and take on both sides. If people don't like what we've got, then they will be able to understand the process. If there's a time when we will need to rally the members to fight for a better deal, they will be aware of what we're doing and why we're doing it."

Summer Recruiting cont. on page 5

## TABCO Bulletin

Volume 54, Number 1 FALL 2021  
Circulation: 8799

The newsletter of the Teacher's Association of Baltimore County, an affiliate of the Maryland State Education Association and the National Education Association

1220 E. Joppa Rd, Building C,  
Suite 514, Towson, MD 21286  
Phone: 410-828-6403  
Fax: 410-337-7081

**President: Cindy L. Sexton**

**Vice President: Marcie Cooke**

**Treasurer: John R. Wilkins**

**Secretary: Frank R Soda**

**Board of Directors:**

**District I—Howard Jackson, Bev Folkoff, Seth Rich**

**District II—Ken Benjies, Vernon Fains, Charles Fluharty**

**District III—Taylor Boren, Katherine Mullen, Anna Weisberg**

**Bulletin Editor:**

Derek Letsch  
[derek.tabco@gmail.com](mailto:derek.tabco@gmail.com)

*The Bulletin is published four times throughout the school year. Your suggestions and letter th the editor are welcomed. Publication of submitted materials are subject to approval, editing, and/or space availability. Names will be withheld upon request.*



While the building rep will be aware of the negotiation process, having a CAT being responsible for nothing but sharing this information with members in the building is critical according to President Sexton. She recommends that CATs share all information with as many members in the building as possible. “Even if you can’t get them to all show up to meetings, get as many as you can and let the word pass about what we are doing and why we are doing it and help them see how it really does affect every single one of our members.” President Sexton underscored what the recruiters have said again and again which is that members need to be heard. “They also appreciate learning “why. Why is something happening? They want the communication and the clarity about this was the process and this is how it ended up being resolved this way.” After a year of feeling like members were isolated and in the dark, it’s clear that what members want now is to know what is going on.

One disheartening observation made by all of the recruiters is the disenfranchisement of so many members. Educators often find themselves having to pick and choose the issues that will capture their attention and often teaching duties leave little time for activism. But the pandemic and the ransomware have clearly had a crippling effect on engagement. Recruiters felt overwhelmed by the lack of response from members. It was the summer and educators are off duty, but still the recruiters were surprised by the reactions. Some of the frustrations of members became a pushback against both BCPS and TABCO. These members were looking for answers to questions that have no quick solutions.

One of the many things lost last year was communication and information. In talking to members this summer, it was obvious to the recruiters that members were disconnected. This reality makes the need for CAT and Super E’s so critical this year. While there was some frustration, many recruiters described heartwarming conversations with members who were glad to be heard by their union. Amy Blackwell described how she was able to get members to talk to her just by saying “I’m here. I want to listen to you. I hear you, and I want to take your concerns back to TABCO.” Members often expressed their gratitude. Emily Salmon noted that her conversations with members about their concerns left them “fired up. And then it was like...what are we going to do about it?” The authentic conversations with members were often gratifying because both people involved were union members who ultimately care about their colleagues and their schools and their students most of all.

The lock down as well hybrid teaching taught Brianka Enck a lot. Like any teacher, these experiences challenged her on many different levels. As a first year teacher, she learned the power of multitasking. But she also gained a confidence that might have taken a few more years without the pandemic. She learned that being involved and being conscious of the many issues that surround the classroom is critical. This is a lesson that sometimes doesn’t come until several years down the road. While it may have been a struggle to hear the frustrations of some of the members with whom she spoke, it also helped her see the power of a union. “There’s always going to be difficulties, but you have to figure out a way to look at it from a positive perspective. You can’t allow the difficulties to impact you internally. This is me talking from one year of teaching, so I don’t know how I am going to feel about it in a few years. However, I try to be positive and not let negative things bring me down.”

Look for the CAT in your building. Talk to them. Attend the meetings they organize. Read the emails they send. They are your direct link to what is going on with some of the most critical issues we have facing us this year. Like all of TABCO, they are your ears, and they are there to help you connect... something we truly missed last year.

### Virtual tutors needed!

- Math (all levels)
- Chemistry
- Physics
- English
- SAT Prep.
- Spanish
- Reading
- Special Ed.
- Elementary Subjects



Please contact  
[professionaltutoringservice@comcast.net](mailto:professionaltutoringservice@comcast.net)  
or 410 486-3464.

### Firing Our Bosses at the Ballot Box

It’s twilight on a perfect Thursday in August, and a group of educators are meeting under the New Lake Pavilion at Oregon Ridge. A new school year is ahead of them but there are even bigger tasks for this committee. This is GRAS, TABCO’s government relations committee, and while there are several items on the agenda, it is the school board election that dominates the easel at the head of the picnic tables. Attendance is strong. These educators have something else on their mind besides the start of school. It’s the school board. Changing the school board is the bulk of the agenda for tonight.

GRAS’s chair, Eugene Johnson, works with TABCO UniServ director Ben Forstenzer to lay out the road map for transforming the board into a pro-student, pro-education, pro-educator body. The goal is to mobilize members and partner with community stakeholders to get the word out about what voters can do in June and in the fall to build a better board.

“We know that this year is going to be a lot like last year in that we know there are going to be curveballs, but we know there are two big ideas that we have to wrap our heads around today.” The group sitting in the dwindling sunshine nods. “We are going to fire our bosses this year.” There are some cheers and a few laughs. However, Johnson smiles and indicates that this expression is a joke but the real plan is to hold the school board accountable for the choices they made to either support “equitable and safe” or not. That’s idea one.

Last year produced a mountain of unprecedented and unanticipated shifts in policy that were often after thoughts or malfunctions. In several cases, hindsight the board and other members of BCPS leadership might have made different choices, but at the time those choices were ostensibly made in the best interest of everyone.

The members of GRAS, however, would argue that too often decisions were not made in everyone’s best interest. There were too many times when the board seemed scattered and divided and cruel according to several at this Thursday meeting. They did not seem to be working in the best interest of the students, educators and the communities of Baltimore County. It was a sobering education for all, but the lessons were not lost on Johnson, Forstenzer, and the members of this dedicated committee.

“We live in a democracy, and we can organize our voices to speak as one and to hopefully change some hearts and minds and win some seats on the school

board.” The plan is simple: knock on doors. GRAS is developing a strong, well-organized blueprint for targeting specific districts and then calling on members to volunteer to knock on doors and talk to the stakeholders who could vote to help create a school board that can do much more to support students and schools and educators in Baltimore County.

A few names of people who are either almost committed to running or who could be convinced to run were shared (and met with cheers from the group). The deadline for declaring isn’t until February, so all potential candidates have time. Now that GRAS and TABCO leadership have seen the gaps and weaknesses of the current board, the real job is to find candidates who could not only replace current failing members but find new members who bring experiences and skills that could help the board move forward and towards building that equitable school system that is the dream of everyone huddled together far up the hill under this pavilion.

Anyone who logged in to the board meetings online could testify to the fact that the meetings were a study in inefficiency. Opinions of some of the board members range, but certain key members earn powerful condemnation from a variety of educators who painfully watched and even documented the meetings. It’s hard to find the one TABCO member who would declare that the meetings were pleasant and productive. In fact it’s always the opposite no matter who you ask. In July, student school board member, Christian Thomas declared “we are broken” when describing the actions of the school board from the year before. He described his shame over the way the school board allowed itself to function so toxically with so little harmony. GRAS understands how essential this next election will be. Firing their bosses seems to be a popular notion.

Forstenzer makes it sound like a simple math equation. We subtract those members (via their own choice to leave or election) who bring strife and dysfunction and intolerance and add new members who bring ideas of unity and efficiency and compassion. That’s the basic gameplan, but finding those candidates will take time and effort. GRAS has a plan for that vetting process as well. It’s clear that GRAS has a plan for it all.

Door knocking is a simple idea, but it demands serious planning. Much of this evening’s meeting was centered around how this process has to happen in order to make a positive change in Baltimore County. Johnson noted that “we have a lot of momentum in our association to stand up and say ‘we want to take an active role in influencing the primary and general election.’” He points out that in the previous election



cycle (the first time Baltimore County citizens had the opportunity to vote for a school board) the difference between winning and losing in the primary was only a few hundred votes. Those are votes that could be won for candidates that TABCO backs if members can canvas and knock on doors and talk to voters directly about issues that can improve our schools dramatically. Getting to help “fire the bosses” also means we get to help hire the bosses. “Thankfully, within a Democracy, that is something that is within our reach.”

Johnson sees the plan and presents it to the group in simple and direct terms. Find out who is running. Vet them and back those candidates who want the same things we want. Go out and talk to voters. Let them know that these educators who are campaigning are doing it to make the future for Baltimore County students better, safer, fairer, and possible. This year, the committee knows (like just about every BCPS educator) more about what the school system needs, and vetting candidates will be much more focused and narrow than at any other time. The faces of the members of this committee say it all: they are clear and empowered and ready to act.

Johnson reminded members that the dues money that we pay to TABCO “cannot be used for political purposes.” This is part two of his presentation. He sees the PAC blitz is an important fundraising tool that is necessary to support those candidates that TABCO will eventually endorse. These meetings are taking place at schools all across the country. Any response

from members will significantly increase the odds of victory in June and November. GRAS has been innovating a variety of political awareness actions. As was noted, there have been a series of actions that have produced powerful and positive effects, making differences that would not have been possible without their efforts. Several members at this meeting were able to recall former actions that had great results. The group prides itself on being efficient and successful and compassionate.

As Johnson made very clear, the ultimate success of this whole campaign for change will rest on the shoulders (and the soles) of hundreds of other members who choose to volunteer to help “get the word out” about those candidates who will bring the change we need. “HI, I live down the street...you may have seen me walking my dog...and I am a public school educator...this is why I care....can I talk to you a little bit about why this race is important to us all?” This “script” will likely come from the heart of most BCPS educators. They have endured such a trauma with a school board that is “broken.” The members of GRAS know that TABCO members speaking to voters in the neighborhood where they live or the neighborhood where they teach can launch a conversation and create a connection between teachers and stakeholders over something about which they can all agree: the return of good education in Baltimore County. GRAS knows that won’t happen without a change at the top. But they have a plan. They have a solid plan.

### Editorial: Whiplash

I feel like there's been a whiplash effect to the pandemic. I'm realizing more and more that I am not myself. And I'm not okay. I'm a teacher, but I think it has affected me and my colleagues much more than it has the kids. After all, my students have never been in 7th grade before. Everything is new to them regardless. But we teachers have been where we are now before. And I think we expect things to be as they were. I think we are ignoring the fact that we are now and forever changed. The familiar routines of the last 10 years or 15 years or 30 years are never coming back. And so I find myself stepping into footprints that used to be familiar but are now the wrong size. I see myself gazing up at a whiteboard or an American flag and I believe they are the same but the truth is they are not. I'll never see anything the way I saw it before COVID.

I'll never be who I was before COVID. And I don't think I have adequately acknowledged that until right now. It's like I am just a few inches shorter and my voice is just a few notes lower. I lost more than 18 months. I lost a part of myself and now I talk to my colleagues and I can tell that I am annoying all of them. I am annoyed with myself. Because what I lost is more than just what happened when I went into isolation. I also lost what I had before I came out of isolation. Because we were down the rabbit hole, but while we were down there we were living and breathing and evolving. But we were breathing the air of the rabbit hole, and our lungs changed. Our eyesight changed. The way we spoke changed. So when we came back to the surface, there was something different about us. But we ignored that and raced back into a former version of ourselves. But we weren't the same. We didn't fit that old skin. And the

awkwardness is something we haven't really talked about. Well this hit me today, and I realized that something about me dissolved and disappeared and died down in that rabbit hole. And that wasn't necessarily such a bad thing, but it's not coming back. As I said our voices are different. And yet we speak to each other as if everything is the same. I'm not going to do that anymore. I'm going to try to tell myself that when I speak I don't really recognize my voice. And that's okay. But I'm going to have to learn how to speak all over again. I'm going to have to learn how to do a lot of things again... but for the first time. Because this might not be wonderland, but I've got to keep my head. I almost lost it and now I'm holding on to myself by my jaws and my shoulders and my rib cage. I'm holding on for dear life because honestly that is exactly what is at stake now that we're outside the rabbit hole.

## A Voice Tapestry: The Voices of BCPS Educators Collected

**I just wanted to share some things about the VLP. We've had several teachers quit. Long term subs stop showing up. I feel drained especially since the beginning of Covid. They keep asking for more and more and it seems that we need to keep giving more and more. It's been painful to go through the sludge of bureaucracy without the joyful moments that come from the artistic expressions that feed many of our students. My kids had math skills I thought they wouldn't and then don't have new skills I thought they would. Everything is a roll of the dice. I am willing to share my feelings, but would like to be anonymous. I don't see myself lasting very much longer either. And I know I'm not alone. I saw your message on our BCPS Facebook group. I just wanted to say that this is my 27th year of teaching for Baltimore county. Okay. So I am year 17.5. The difference between when I started in '04 and today... is night and day. People used to believe that what we do on a daily basis mattered. Now? Folks are dispirited. I have never been more exhausted, depressed, anxious, overwhelmed, and under appreciated in my life! The admin is trying their best but it just feels like the county doesn't care. I have a class with about 50 students in it. We are so packed in that class that the kids cant socially distance at all. I just sit at my desk and try to stay back. I just had \$125 deducted from my paycheck and I don't even have anyone to call. I'm just exhausted and it's one thing after another. I have over 30 years with BCPS. I taught during the Stuart Berger years. I taught when we were furloughed because of the county's budget shortfall. I taught when they added 15 minutes- unpaid- to every day for weeks to make up hours lost for snow days and when they made us work on Memorial Day for the same reason. I have never felt as let down and disrespected by BCPS as I have over the past year and a half. I have 20 year veteran teachers ready to walk. I don't want my name or position used if you decide to use any of this info. I would like my comments to be anonymous of course. As of today, 10/2/21, we STILL have teachers who have not received reimbursements due, are not getting correct salaries, are not getting correct contributions into college savings accounts, etc. No subs. My best friend has a teacher at her school who had her arm broken by a student (bcps) Every now and then they have some ideas to lighten the weight for teachers but they discriminate. I feel hurt because of this: they offered 6 CPD credits for the virtual effort invested during Covid, but it seems that those 6 credits can't be**



Reading courses, so people who need to take the Reading Courses for recertification can't enjoy the "gift." The point was to reward all teachers for having done the same thing: overworked. At the end, it seems to be, once again, a partial recognition because they can't bend one rule once in our lifetime. Pathetic. My best friend has her Admin 1 and cannot get a job because they are ignoring her, too. So I don't want to blame everything on lack of subs or the behavior of kids. I think another piece of morale at our building is that the faculty room is closed and our staff meetings are in the auditorium instead of the cafeteria so we can't spread out. Just kinda weird. Before COVID and the ransomware attack the workload was getting exponentially worse each year. Since March 2020, I feel things have gone completely off the rails. The levels of incompetence and negligence are astounding. Teachers are frustrated because kids are refusing to work. They don't participate in class. They don't turn in any work. They all offer coach classes. They give multiple chances to students to complete assignments. There is a shortage of staff (teachers, subs...) and who suffers the most immediate consequences? Us. I have no confidence in BCPS leadership to get things back on track and make all of this right. They have harmed so many people, caused so much needless anguish, worry, and stress. People are not being paid correctly- or at all. People's insurance has been messed up. People's personal information was hacked- AFTER the ransomware attack- which makes me think they have learned nothing and/or simply do not care and/or are ridiculously incompetent and have too much hubris to admit they're in over their heads. I think from most of the teachers I speak with are only still hanging on because of benefits and fear of not finding another job. A family member of mine transferred from another district to BCPS and wants to resign already. I teach kindergarten and most of my students act like 3-4 year olds. I've never called for behavior support in my career and this year I've called at least 10 times. I've been scratched, pushed, hit, kicked, and punched in my face. If I could afford to retire I'd do it tomorrow without looking back. I feel like I can't grasp the exact feelings...I'm sorry! I've never seen morale this low. The majority of teachers I know have admitted to looking for other jobs— this is also true of many in administrative positions. People don't believe that BC has their back; they don't believe that BC has our best interests at heart. I spend all of my days trying to track down kids who don't log in or participate. We have no secretaries. Obviously because there are so few of us ha-ha. So many of these problems could have been prevented. We just

received word last week that we could work from home because that is the only way to get subs to work for the program. BCPS keeps telling us we are all part of TEAMBCPS. But we are not feeling like a part of any team beyond our own schools. Our schools are a strong team despite the poor leadership coming from Greenwood. Morale is very, very low in the VLP right now. Sorry to vent For me it's like they don't care. I don't know what they are going to do when they have no teachers at all to teach all these kiddos... Now employees are being exposed to COVID and having to use their own resources to be tested, and use up their sick leave if they have to quarantine. So we have teachers teaching multiples classes at once, up to 70 kids at once on the library or auditorium because there aren't enough subs or people to cover. Our admins are covering classes too, multiple times a day. Because of this, disciplinary reaction time is low, simply because they aren't able to do their jobs either. The lack of clear, honest communication is disheartening. To get falsely positive emails on Fridays that never truly address the real issues facing our teachers and students is a weekly slap in the face. At my school the feeling is that we trust people at the building level, but not the higher-ups at Greenwood (or are they still working from home??) When I read people's comments and posts in the Facebook group, it seems every school is doing things differently, with wildly varying work conditions throughout the county. Every time I think we've seen the worst of it, some new, more ridiculous problem occurs. And yet those of us working directly with students just keep trudging along, trying to do our best for the kids. And that's how they've "got" us. They know we care about our students, so they know they can keep pushing us, mistreating us, gaslighting us. It's laughable that we paid consultants over \$1 million to tell BCPS Greenwood about issues that staff have been saying to deaf ears at Greenwood for years. It also seems that the more they pile on us, the less we are able to protest any of it, because we are spending so much mental, physical, and emotional energy just trying to keep our heads above water. We feel used and abused. Our school is down over 10 positions and up 200+ students from any prior year in the past five. I have multiple colleagues that aren't getting paid correctly on a daily basis, some that finished masters plus 30 or 60 years ago (2019) and never got their salary lane advance. Colleagues whose time isn't correct from before the ransomware attack, and BCPS is either incapable of addressing it or doesn't care enough to do so. It's hard to tell. But everyone is basically fed up with being treated like garbage by BCPS. Sorry to vent.