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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2025

Wu long on school vision, short on details

Some successes, but deeply rooted problems will be tough to solve

By John Hilliard
GLOBE STAFF

Mayor Michelle Wu declared an ambitious goal for Boston Public Schools on Tuesday: Take a district that was on the verge of a state receivership just over three years ago and transform it into the nation's best school system.

Wu laid out that vision in her first State of the Schools speech. But many in the school community said

the mayor didn't acknowledge many of the internal failings that have bedeviled the system for years and will be major obstacles to achieving such a lofty goal: a persistent achievement gap between Black and Latino students and their white and Asian peers; more than a third of Boston schools are classified as underperforming by the state; and shortcomings in helping students who are learning English and those with disabilities.

Another problem looming from

outside: a presidential administration threatening sweeping cuts to school funding.

Critics lauded Wu's ambitions. The mayor noted that under Superintendent Mary Skipper, the Boston public schools are improving, and now outperform 10 of its comparable peer districts.

She outlined other progress, too: a long-term facilities plan to adjust for declining enrollment; reductions in chronic absenteeism; gains on some statewide testing scores; ex-

pansion of prekindergarten programming; and new bilingual education programs. Meanwhile, an improvement plan that BPS brokered with the state in lieu of receivership ended in June, but officials have committed to fulfilling its goals, including improving bus service and programs for English learners and students with disabilities.

"Our families can't wait around for our schools to catch up. We feel, every day, how fast our future grows up," Wu said Tuesday. "We are the oldest public school system in the

WU, Page A10

Rates cut to lowest level in 3 years

Shutdown's data blackout complicates Fed's task

By Colby Smith
NEW YORK TIMES

The Federal Reserve cut interest rates on Wednesday for a second time this year, despite officials having only a partial view of how the economy is faring because of the government shutdown.

The central bank voted to lower borrowing costs by a quarter of a percentage point as the lapse in funding for the government stretched into its fifth week. Until lawmakers reach a deal, the Bureau of Labor Statistics and other agencies have stopped collecting, analyzing, and publishing official statistics tracking the job market, consumer prices, spending, and a range of other metrics.

Wednesday's decision brought interest rates below 4 percent for the first time since late 2022. But it was a divisive vote, with two officials dissenting for different reasons.

Stephen I. Miran, the newest member of the Fed's Board of Governors, voted for a larger, half-

FED, Page A10

SHUTDOWN
DAY 30

10
Failed Senate votes

Sept. 19
Date of last session

594,048
Workers furloughed

35 days
Longest-ever shutdown

'Everything has been washed away by flood waters, and so the situation is . . . very bad.'

SUPERINTENDENT COLERIDGE MINTO, head of the St. Elizabeth Parish police in Jamaica

A nightmare in the Caribbean



ODELYN JOSEPH/ASSOCIATED PRESS

A shelter for families in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, displaced by gang violence was flooded Wednesday by Hurricane Melissa.

Still-powerful hurricane hammers Cuba, Haiti after roaring through Jamaica

By Nazaneen Ghaffar, André Paultre, Jovan Johnson, and Michael Levenson
NEW YORK TIMES

Hurricane Melissa blasted Cuba and Haiti with torrential rain and howling winds on Wednesday, inflicting even more damage just hours after it devastated parts of Jamaica, ripping the roofs off homes and hospitals, flooding villages, and littering roads with trees and electrical poles.

In both Haiti and Jamaica, the authorities began to tally the dead. Around 20 people, including children, died in a Haitian community where swollen rivers spilled into homes, and at least three bodies were found in St. Elizabeth, a hard-hit parish in southwestern

Jamaica, where Melissa struck the island as a Category 5 hurricane.

In that parish, the storm left a "complete disaster," said Floyd Green, the agricultural minister. "Entire buildings have collapsed," he said, adding that he had heard reports of villages where "every single house is without a roof."

Two of the three bodies found in Jamaica were in the Black River area, and the third was in the Galleon Beach area, said Superintendent Coleridge Minto, the head of the St. Elizabeth Parish police. It was not immediately clear how the people had died. But he said the parish's church, tax office, council office, supermarket, and bakery had been badly damaged.

"Everything has been washed away by flood waters, and so the situation is, in fact, very bad," he said, adding that there was "an urgent need for support."

Communication problems and power outages were hampering the authorities' ability to assess the full scope of the devastation. Nearly 80 percent of the country was without electricity Wednesday morning, said Dana Morris Dixon, Jamaica's information minister.

"I know so many people have said they cannot reach their families in western Jamaica. That's because of damage to the telecoms infrastructure," she said.

About 25,000 Jamaicans were staying in

HURRICANE, Page A7

For a potter in bonds, some justice

MFA, in a first, restores slave's works to family

By Malcolm Gay
GLOBE STAFF

As an enslaved man in the 1850s, David Drake spent his days creating clay pots in the manufactories of South Carolina's Old Edgefield district, an area then renowned for its stoneware. Drake had lost a leg and been torn from his family. But he was a master craftsman, and the pots he made — big jugs used primarily for food storage — often included something extraordinary: his signature, "Dave," along with poetic inscriptions of humor, defiance, and longing.

With those messages, illegal for an enslaved person to write, Drake's pots eventually became collector's items, held by some of the country's most important museums, the Museum of Fine Arts among them. But as MFA curators began planning a 2023 show about enslaved potters, a thorny question emerged: Can the museum ethically own artworks that were effectively

DRAKE, Page B5

Behind the levee: The forgotten communities at risk

In Mass., 330,000 people rely on inland barriers built decades ago now challenged by climate change

Second in a series.

By Sabrina Shankman
GLOBE STAFF

CHICOPEE — Catherine Gonzalez knows the water always wins.

She remembers being 5, riding on her father's shoulders as he trudged through chest-high water to escape to higher ground in Santa Isabel, Puerto Rico. As Hurricane Hortense barreled through in September 1996, the river overflowed its banks, taking her home and belongings, but thankfully not her family. Others weren't as fortunate. After 20 inches of rain, flash flooding, and mudslides, at least 18 people were dead.

In the wake of the devastation, Gonzalez and her family followed relatives to Chicopee, a town defined by its relationship to two rivers — the Chicopee and the Connecticut. A

WHEN THE FLOODS COME

place less prone to hurricanes. A place that was supposed to be safe. But Gonzalez worries it brings dangers of its own.

Gonzalez, who is 34, lives in the Willimansett neighborhood, six houses up from a levee along the Connecticut River. The levee is meant to protect her and roughly 9,000 of her neighbors, she knows, but she fears the river will one day spill over, swallowing whatever stands in its way.

"It's a little scary that it's there, to be honest with you," said Gonzalez, who, like many others in Massachusetts, ended up living near the levee after being priced out of other areas.

Should the levee near Gonzalez's home fail, a 26-foot deluge could inundate the tight-knit

LEEVEES, Page A6



BARRY CHIN/GLOBE STAFF

Catherine Gonzalez with her son, Kyrie Cortez, 8, and daughter, Paula Cortez, 16, stood atop the levee that is a few houses away from her home in Chicopee.

President Trump acknowledged that the Constitution makes him ineligible for a third term, seemingly closing the door on the possibility. A2.

Quincy Mayor Thomas Koch said he'll propose a smaller raise for himself after residents expressed outrage. B1.

Sweepy hollow

Thursday: Windy, with rain late. High 55-60. Low 52-57.

Friday: Clearing, still gusty. High 60-65. Low 45-50.

Weather and Comics, D5-6.

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