

Enrollment Starts to Stabilize

The Detroit Public Schools enrolled 48,610 full time equivalent students on Oct. 9 – the state’s fourth Wednesday count day. The district lost about 2,500 students but fewer than expected.

“It wasn’t the precipitous decline we’ve had over the last few years,” said DFT President Keith Johnson. “But we still have work to do to stabilize enrollment.”

Johnson said the good news is that we didn’t lose 5,000 students.

The district set a goal of enrolling 51,000 students this fall after a door-to-door campaign encouraging parents to come back to the public schools.

The Michigan legislature increasingly allows charters to compete for students for profit, weakening the district by siphoning students. It is suspected practice, however, that many charter schools hold on to students until after count day. Then they return to the public schools.

“We know they do,” Johnson said. Parents return to DPS when they realize the few resources available to their children in charter schools.

Johnson said layoffs are the worst case scenario from the enrollment numbers.

“We have had a proactive discussion with the district and our attorney,” Johnson said. Since seniority cannot be the sole determinant for layoffs, if there is a release of teachers, it does not go by the numerical evaluation score, he said. It would be determined by category (e.g. highly effective, effective, minimally effective, ineffective). Within a category, seniority is the tie-breaker, Johnson said. For recalled teachers whose prior evaluation was expunged, there is no evaluation.

“Hopefully with leveling of staff, teachers will have positions in overcrowded schools.”



DFT executive board members (from left) Steve Portnoy, Wanda Lundy-Colquitt, Keith Johnson, Edna Reaves, and Emergency Manager Jack Martin.

Emergency Manager Visits the DFT

New DPS Emergency Manager Jack Martin visited the DFT Oct. 3. The Cass Tech grad had a candid and lively discussion with the DFT executive board and postponed his next engagement to continue listening to members.

The meeting was an opportunity for the union to discuss issues facing the schools.

“I’m starting to get concerned about the good people leaving Detroit Public Schools because they’re stuck on steps,” said executive board member Steve Portnoy. Steps were frozen by former EM Roy Roberts.

“Other people left before they really wanted to go because they didn’t see a future here,” Portnoy said.

The discussion ranged from the lack of income gains to classroom supplies to a new dress code policy.

With priority schools, transition plans and so many assessments, board member LaShawn Sims said it is difficult to do it all with only two preps at the elementary level.

And with all of this facing members, why was there recent interest in a teacher dress code?

“Of all the things we have to do as a district, why was that the number one thing?”

DFT trustee Marcus Walton asked Martin.

Martin said the new emphasis on teacher dress was his idea.

“I own that because I thought black males need us as role models,” Martin said.

DFT President Keith Johnson said he received many complaints about instituting a dress code for professionals.

“I’d characterize this as a solution looking for a problem,” Johnson said.

Board member Lisa Scott told Martin teachers are shouldering the costs of supplies, in the hundreds of dollars. Others said teachers still lack ink, paper and working copiers.

Martin projected a different leadership style than the last two emergency managers, saying he rarely gets angry and he wants to learn about blatant issues that can easily be solved.

“If someone’s screwing up, I’m going to do what I got to do,” Martin said. “If someone’s being jammed, I’m not going to put up with it.”

Martin said he hasn’t had issues working with unions during his extensive experience in the public sector.

“I’ve gotten along with unions just fine.”

Don't Believe the Myths About Common Core

The Metropolitan Affairs Coalition strongly supports Common Core Education Standards that set forth clear and consistent objectives as to what children need to learn to succeed and be competitive. It is time to dispel myths and focus on why these standards should be enacted.



David Hecker

Common Core standards were developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the bipartisan National Governors Association, with input from teachers and school administrators. They set forth consistent academic expectations for all students at every grade level in math and English, and have been adopted in 45 states.

These standards reflect knowledge

and competencies that students should possess to compete in a global economy, including critical thinking and problem solving. The standards were developed by experts, grounded in evidence, internationally benchmarked and provide a coherent framework to prepare students for college and careers.

Common Core standards are not a curriculum – they are learning standards. Teachers and school districts still make decisions at the local level about educational materials and how the subjects are taught.

By not supporting Common Core standards, too many students risk continued need for remedial courses when they pursue higher education. They risk being unprepared for high-skill jobs, which remain unfilled and negatively impact our local economy. They risk being viewed as uncompetitive by colleges and employers who can select graduates from across the nation where the more consis-

tent and rigorous Common Core Standards are in place.

In 2010, the State Board of Education approved Common Core with the expectation that Michigan would embrace the same high learning standards as the rest of the country. Failing to implement the standards would be wasting the preparation and teacher training already underway in school districts around the state.

MAC joins a broad array of supporters from all walks of life and political persuasions who believe that Common Core is in the best interest of Michigan's students. We urge the Michigan Legislature to adopt and implement the Common Core standards without delay to ensure that our children are prepared academically to meet the challenges of the future.

David Hecker

AFT Michigan President
MAC vice chairman

Phil Bertolini

Oakland County deputy county executive/CIO
MAC board chairman

This letter was printed in the Detroit Free Press on Sept. 26, 2013. The Legislature has adopted Common Core Standards.



DFT President Keith Johnson and Vice President Nadonya Muslim, along with the DFT executive board, met with the new DPS Emergency Manager Jack Martin at its Oct. 3 meeting.

THE DETROIT teacher

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Updates . . .

Retirements Announced

The following DFT members have announced their retirements Carol Ahmed, Joyce Austin, Brenda Berkowitz, Irene (Debbie) Dennisuk, Patrice Elem, Judy Furlow, Virginia Graham, Lori Johnson, Wanda Lundy-Colquitt, Delphine Horton, Hollie Pena, Teri Roberts, Sharon Schultz, Debbie Stanislawski, Hendrean Williams and Debra Washington. If you have retired in the last six months and would like it announced, please call the editor at 313-875-6776.

Preschool Teachers Luncheon

Detroit preschool teachers, both working and retired, are invited to a Preschool Teachers Luncheon on Sunday, Dec. 8 from 2-4 p.m. at the Longacre House in Farmington Hills. The cost is \$30. To register, email Mary Helen D'Angelo at mhmelon@yahoo.com or Elizabeth McHugh-Quevy at emcquevy@yahoo.com.

Keith Johnson Goes to "Jail"



DFT President Keith Johnson was "locked up" to raise money for the Muscular Dystrophy Association on Oct. 9. John Edwards, of the Detroit Fire Department, visited the DFT office to apprehend Johnson. The union leader raised nearly \$1,000 in a few hours for the cause.

A woman makes 78 percent of what a man makes, unless she's in a union.

How to Take the Fear Out of Your Evaluation

I'm getting lots of calls from members who have terrible anxiety over their annual evaluations. It's understandable, not everyone is an extrovert and at ease in front of their peers. But evaluations are mandated by the state and are here to stay. And I'd posit, they're a way to show how good we are.

I'm not delusional, I do realize some principals are unskilled at evaluations. Some look through their personal lenses and evaluate according to how they would teach the lesson, while others let personal biases toward the teacher interfere with the process. There are even a few who have spent very little time (if any) in the classroom and I question whether they are qualified to conduct the observations. A small number of administrators have used the observations as a form of intimidation and skew the data for their own agenda.

Evaluations should be based on your talents not your relationship with your administrators. For those very reasons, it is imperative that you document the dates, times, and any unusual circumstances associated with the observation. Your notes will come in handy if and when you have an appeal.

After lots of conversations, here is my thinking: It's best to own it, study it, practice for it, and know what administrators are looking for. The main goal is to make sure you shine all the time. Knowing the criteria will help you enhance what you do well and strengthen your identified areas for improvement.

Here's what I would do in advance of my evaluation:

- Obtain a copy of the rubric. Know the criteria and everything you will be evaluated on.
- Mastering the process will lessen the fear. Like studying for a test, if you know what's going to be covered, why not study, learn and practice.
- Document everything you do to improve your teaching. Document every video you download and watch.
- Take photos of your classroom. Keep copies of student work, test scores, projects, etc., anything that demonstrates student growth. Start collecting now and don't wait.
- Keep track of ALL school activities you are involved in or attend.
- Invite your administrator to come into your classroom when you are teaching a unit you feel is wonderful and you are confident teaching. Be the first to issue an invitation.
- Get feedback after each observation. If necessary, ask for support when needed.
- Remember that your success is measured by the success of your students. You are the expert on how effective you are with each of them and they are your true evaluators. — Good luck!



Edna Reaves

THE DETROIT teacher NEWSMAKERS



Photos by Crystal Williams

Knocking Out Cancer at Carver

Patriaka Rossell's second grade class at Carver STEM Academy did its part to "knock out" breast cancer. During Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October the class participated in several activities to learn about the disease and was certain to raise awareness by wearing the signature pink.



Renewable Energy for Second-Graders

Scott Meloney of Second Attention Strategies and Coleen Riley of the S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Program visited Patriaka Rossell's second-grade class to demonstrate how to make electricity through wind. They talked to the students about renewable energy, food production and resource management. The students were very attentive and had plenty of questions. The speakers promised to return to continue the conversation and include them in the demonstrations.

"We can't wait and look forward to learning more in the STEM program," said Crystal Williams, a Carver teacher.

SVS Vision Visits Carver



SVS Vision technicians visited Carver STEM Academy with their Mobile Eyes program in October. SVS Vision services Carver's students approximately four times a year. If students need glasses, they are able to select a frame on the spot. This partnership was coordinated by Carver's Communities In Schools Site Coordinator, Brenda King, and Kittie Bolte, the Director of Patient Services for SVS Vision.

We're on
Facebook!
Check us out at

www.facebook.com/DFT231

Art Back in the Classroom

When automotive designer Carol Hofgartner started volunteering in Detroit schools, she brought fellow designers with her to show students how art can lead to a career in the automotive industry.

Hofgartner brought some projects and told the kids, "You can do this in your art class."

"Well Ms. Carol, we don't have art class," she was astonished to hear a student say.

Now Carol and her husband Stephen Hofgartner are the founders of Art Road, a non-profit that aims to bring art back to the classroom.

"Our goal is every child in Southeast Michigan having art as part of their normal curriculum," Stephen Hofgartner said.

Cathi Anderson, also with Art Road, says the students are doing "first class work."

Art Road is raising money for the cause and anyone can donate by going to www.artroadnonprofit.org.

Art Road and artwork from Charles Wright Academy was featured Oct. 24 at the Filmore Theater for the launch of Lear Corporation's next generation of automotive seating fabric and leather.

After more than five years, Carol Hofgartner still volunteers weekly in art class at Charles Wright.

THE DETROIT teacher NEWSMAKERS

Art class took Carol Hofgartner on the road to become an automotive designer at Lear and then back to art class.



Stephen Hofgartner, co-founder of Art Road, with art created by Charles Wright Academy students.

Lights on After School Celebration

Statistics show that youth crime often occurs between 3 and 6 p.m. — after school lets out but often before parents get home from work.

"After school programs are a safe haven for students," said Sylvia Tillman, a 21st Century coordinator at Gompers Elementary School. Tillman and Gompers staff members held a Lights On Afterschool celebration like schools across the country to support afterschool programs and urge government officials not to cut these worthwhile programs. Even the Empire State Building was lit up for the occasion.

Gompers students seemed not to notice the sleet when they took their hand-made signs and hit the rainy pavement outside to sing and light hot air balloons into the cloudy skies.

"Gompers keeps kids safe," said 8-year-old Zaniya Jones. "But sometimes during fire drills they get hurt but we're trying to get kids to stop."

Teacher Valerie Jarrett agreed. "We're a safe haven. We're here from 3-6 p.m. everyday."



Gompers teacher Sylvia Tillman launches a hot-air balloon at a Lights On Afterschool celebration.

DETROIT FEDERATION OF TEACHERS NOTICE REGARDING UNION SECURITY AGREEMENTS AND AGENCY FEE OBJECTIONS

As a general matter, employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement containing a union security clause are required, as a condition of employment, to pay an agency fee equal to normal union dues. While the wording of these claims is not perfectly uniform, none require more than the payment of this agency fee to retain employment.

Under the Detroit Federation of Teachers' By-Laws and policy on agency fee objections, employees who are not members of the union, but who pay agency fees, pursuant to a Union security clause, may request a reduction in that fee based on their objection to certain kinds of Union expenditures.

The policy provides an objection period each year followed by a reduction in the objector's fee for the twelve months beginning with the start of the school year. Briefly stated, the Detroit Federation of Teachers' objection procedure works as follows:

- The agency fee payable by objectors will be based on the Detroit Federation of Teachers' expenditures for those activities or projects normally or reasonably undertaken by the Union to represent the employees in the bargaining unit with respect to their terms and conditions of employment. Among these "chargeable" expenditures are those going for negotiations with the employer and employing departments, enforcing collective bargaining agreements, informal meetings with representatives of the employer or employing departments, discussion of work-related issues with employees, handling employees' work-related problems through the grievance procedure, administrative agencies or informal meetings and Union administration. In the past, approximately 85 percent of the Detroit Federation of Teachers' expenditures have gone for such activities. Reflected in this percentage is the chargeable portion of the affiliation fees (per capita) paid to the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

Among the expenditures treated as "non-chargeable," which objectors will not be required to support, are those going for community service, legislative activity unrelated to wages, hours or working conditions of represented employees, certain public relations activities, support of political candidates, cost of affiliation with organizations (and unions) other than the AFT and members-only benefits. In the past, approximately 15 percent of DFT's expenditures have gone for such "non-chargeable" activities. The percentage of the AFT's expenditures on "non-chargeable" activities has been generally between 20-25 percent.

- Objectors will be given a full explanation of the basis for the reduced fee charged to them. The explanation will include a more detailed list of the categories of expenditures deemed to be "chargeable" and those deemed to be "non-chargeable," and the independent certified public accountant's report showing the Union's expenditures on which the fee is based. Audited financial information relating to the chargeable, non-chargeable expenses of the AFT will be provided at the same time. Objectors will have the option of challenging the union's calculation of the reduced fee before an arbitrator, pursuant to the AAA Rules on Impartial Determination of Union Fees. Details on the method of making such a challenge and the rights accorded to those who do so are found in the DFT's By-laws and policy on agency fee objections, a copy of which will be provided to objectors along with the explanation of the fee calculation.

- Objections must be received by DFT each school year. In addition, agency fee payers who are new to the bargaining unit may object within thirty days of receiving this notice, either in the new employee packet or in the Detroit Teacher (where necessary, retroactive to the commencement of their union security obligation and for the duration of the current agency fee year) and employees who resign union membership may object within thirty days of becoming an agency fee payer. Employees filing late objections for either of these two reasons should so indicate in their letter of objection.

- The letter of objection should include the employee's name, address, and school at which employed. Objections must be sent to: Agency Fee Objection, c/o Detroit Federation of Teachers, 2875 West Grand Blvd., Detroit, MI 48202.



Support People, Not Banks

More than a dozen protesters took to the streets in front of Detroit's Motor City Casino on Oct. 3 – the fifth anniversary of the federal bank bailout.

"Bail out the people, not the banks," the protesters chanted. Banks acting irresponsibly got immediately bailed out when they hit trouble in a swift bipartisan move on Oct. 3, 2008. Five years later, the holders of underwater mortgages and student loans have seen little relief.

The government bailed out the banks with \$700 billion of taxpayer money. Five years later, very few meaningful reforms are in place. Many experts say the country is vulnerable to a new crash. Meanwhile, working people with cuts in their pay and pensions have absorbed the pain imposed by the banks.

"We call on all activists to fight banker-imposed austerity here in the U.S. and worldwide," said a statement by the Coalition for an International People's Assembly Against the Banks & Against Austerity, who sponsored the protest.



Keeping the Customer Satisfied

By Mark O'Keefe
DFT Controller

Like most DPS teachers, I started teaching when we had job security, overcrowded schools and overcrowded classrooms. Parents of Detroit children had little choice about where to enroll their children. And we were not worried about recruiting more students, most of us had too many.



Mark O'Keefe

Now over half of Detroit children are enrolled in non-DPS schools, and over half of DPS jobs have disappeared. In some cases, parents enrolled their students in suburban schools or Detroit charters. In other cases, the parents did not take their children out of our schools, we just gave the schools away to charter

operators or EAA, the state-run city-wide school district. (I will start calling it a state-wide district as soon as they take over a school outside Detroit.)

With the loss of seniority, Detroit teachers have lost all job security. While many teachers have lost their jobs through no fault of their own, those of us who are left must do what we can to show parents that their best option is to keep their children in DPS schools. Our jobs, and our school district, will not be here for long unless we keep the customer satisfied.

To its credit, DPS has embraced this fact and is working to train all employees in customer service. I remember my own experience working in retail and trying to comprehend the wisdom in the adage "The customer is always right." I quickly learned that if you argue with a customer, you no longer have a customer.

There is an art to customer service. A grocer told a cashier that some jackass had asked him for half a head of lettuce. He turned around to see the man standing right behind him. Without missing a beat he said, "And this fine gentleman

would like to buy the other half."

For teachers, there are many tricks to the trade. When giving bad news to a parent, make it a "sandwich." Say something good, give them the bad news, and then work in another compliment.

For my own peace of mind, when I had to call home to report bad behavior, I would call another parent to report good behavior. On one occasion the call went to voicemail. When I called later and spoke with the parent, she said she saw my name on the voicemail and had already punished the child. We both felt awful when I told her I was calling to report good behavior. Lesson learned: If I had made more calls about good behavior, the parent would not have assumed that a contact from the teacher is always bad news.

It's a new ballgame here at the union too. Over half of our employees have also lost their jobs, and those of us who are left must also keep the teachers (our customers) satisfied. How are we doing? If we can do a better job, please let us know. But don't just give us the bad news. Let us know when we get it right too.

Hustle Lessons a Huge Success

If DFT members didn't know it before taking hustle lessons on Tuesday nights, now they know what the "cha cha place" is.

John King III, owner of Dancers for Life School of Dance, has conducted the first three sessions out of six for DFT and sister DPS union members. Members learned several line dances so they can look good on the dance floor at clubs and weddings. But they came away with so much more.

"It's fun," said retired Renaissance High School teacher Gracie Wooten. "I can't dance but I enjoy it. I have two left feet." Still Wooten broke her knee recently and sought the physical therapy and also the fun.

La nell Lasenby attended all the sessions. What does she like about it?

"The fun, the camaraderie, the exercise."

Edna Reaves, DFT executive vice president, asked Colonial Life insurance company to sponsor the lessons, which are free to members. Reaves said she wants to build on that togetherness. Apparently it's what members really wanted, with more than 130 members attending so far.

"I love it," said Lenore Ellery, an active DFT member. "It is absolutely wonderful. I love the solidarity amongst my DFT brothers and sisters."



John King III teachers hustle lessons at the DFT.

Changing the World at Western International High School

Western International English teachers Tara Baker and Avis Renee Taylor conducted a project to teach students that change in the world starts right at home in Southwest Detroit.

Western's ninth- and 10th-grade pre AP and honors classes, taught by Baker and Taylor, partnered with the service learning organization, buildOn. BuildOn's mission is to break the cycle of poverty, illiteracy and low expectations through service and education.

Baker and Taylor, who was recently honored as an Excellent Educator by her inclusion in the 2013 edition of "Who's Who in Black Detroit," sponsored by the Michigan Chronicle, called the project "Chalk for Change."

The photos show students' chalk messages in the "Chalk for Change" project, where they learned about great change agents in history. Students analyzed Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream Speech," discussed change and revolution in history, and wrote journals. They discussed and presented ways to inspire positive change in today's world.

Finally, they sketched messages of change on the sidewalk in Clark Park, across from Western, to share and inspire positive change in the community. They chose topics including recycling, gang violence and hunger.



Tara Baker



Avis Renee Taylor



How You Can Teach Respect

By Ron Seigel

In Detroit and Highland Park October was proclaimed "Respect Month," a time for adults with influence over young people to talk with them about respect.

However, teachers can do this year round.

This seems more necessary than ever because disrespect has become more fashionable. Teachers easily recognize how kids act disrespectfully to gain respect from those in their peer group, like the class clown, the school bully and the delinquent.

Boys often identify disrespect with masculinity, see it as part of their sexual identity, and are ashamed of not being aggressive.

Can we persuade kids to give others the respect they so desperately want themselves? Teachers might do so by emphasizing areas in their subject that deal with respect.

In literature classes, teachers can examine the wise and foolish ways characters seek respect, whether like Shakespeare's Richard III by grabbing power or like Pip in Dickens' "Great Expectations," they reject themselves, their roots and those they love in order to be accepted by others.

Some like Estelle in "Great Expectations" or Cinderella's stepsisters practice what some psychologists call relational aggression, undermining people's self respect, subverting their sense of self, and forcing them to accept a demeaning definition of their identity.

Works by minorities show the struggle of those living through a continual relational aggression and finding the strength within themselves to deal with the continual disrespect of others. Love stories often involve respect (and disrespect) between men and women. Hero stories deal with individuals trying to maintain the values of respect against bullying people or bullying monsters.

In history, teachers can show groups struggling for respect and groups trying to deny it. It might be shown that much of American history, for instance, involves many people coming to this land to find respect and dignity, but then denying it to others, whether Native Americans,

African American slaves or later immigrants.

In some classes teachers can discuss respect between boys and girls in dating situations. Some can teach techniques of mediation and conflict resolution to settle disputes with respect for all concerned.

Physical education teachers can emphasize that sportsmanship includes respect for those who lose and those who make mistakes.

Teachers can get free information and suggestions by calling (313) 728-2350 or write the Respect Month Committee, 10 Ferris Street, Room 106, Highland Park, Michigan 48203. And per-

haps you can share your own ideas, suggestions and insights. Please do.

Ron Seigel is a freelance writer based in Highland Park, Mich.

Can we persuade kids to give others the respect they so desperately want themselves? Teachers might do so by emphasizing areas in their subject that deal with respect.

All meetings will be held at 2875 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, unless otherwise noted. All Meetings start at 4:30 p.m. Dates and times are subject to change.

November

- 7 Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
- 11 Veterans Day, Half day of school**
- 14 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
- 19 Retires Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.**
- 28-29 Thanksgiving Holiday, schools closed**

December

- 5 Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
- 8 Preschool Teachers Luncheon, 2-4 p.m.**
Longacre House, Farmington Hills
- 12 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
- 17 Retirees Chapter Holiday Luncheon,**
11:30 a.m. at Breithaupt Career & Technical Center
- 23 Christmas Break, schools closed**