

THE BUILDING IS SOLD!

The Long Road to DFT's Financial Recovery

Now that the Detroit Federation of Teachers has sold its office building and moved to more affordable rented space, one would think our financial troubles are over. Unfortunately, we are not out of the woods.

We owed about \$2.8 million on our mortgage, and were only able to get \$1.3 million for the building. This means we had to pay \$1.5 million to get out of the building. Given that we will save over \$3 million over the next five years, this is still a very good move.

However, we did not have the \$1.5 million to pay off the mortgage. We used all our cash, borrowed \$350,000 from the bank, and got behind on our payments of per capita dues to AFT and AFT Michigan. This allowed us to pay off the mortgage, but we now have to repay the new bank loan, and about \$560,000 in delinquent per capita dues from this year. This is over and above the \$1.4 million we still owe AFT from 2006-08.

The bank loan must be repaid by June 30. This will not leave us enough cash to repay the per capita dues until late in the next school year.

One short-term consequence of our cash flow problem is that our delegates to the state and national conventions will not be seated this year. As reported at the March membership meeting, the national and state federations' constitutions preclude seating of delegates from a local that is in arrears.

Given that our delegates will not be seated, one might wonder why we are holding an election. Our constitution requires it. The DFT executive board voted to suspend this provision of the constitution, but we were not able to get a quo-



The former DFT building on W. Grand Blvd.

rum at a membership meeting to approve the exec board action.

"This financial state is ironic, given that we have five consecutive years of stellar performance financially," said DFT controller Mark O'Keefe. In the face of declining membership and lower dues income and staggering costs of our old office building, the DFT was able to run a balanced budget every year, without increasing DFT dues. (Some increases in AFT and AFT Michigan dues were passed through to members, others were absorbed by DFT).

"When Keith Johnson and I took office in January 2009, we were surprised by the severity of DFT's financial position," O'Keefe said. Audited financial statements showed that DFT's net assets were over \$4.4 million as of June 30, 2001. From 2001 to 2006, the union spent a million dollars more than it took in, reducing the net assets to \$3.4 million. In the three and a half years that followed, the union overspent by almost

\$3 million, reducing our net assets to under \$500,000 at Dec. 31, 2008.

Since that time, the DFT consistently balanced the budget, building its net assets up to \$2.1 million as of Feb. 28, 2014. Unfortunately, the net assets include the building at the price we paid for it, far above its actual value. When we closed the sale of the building, we recorded a loss of \$3.3 million, reducing our net assets to a negative \$1.2 million.

Just when our financial condition is the best it has been in years, our statements look the worst. With our reduced expenses, by June 2015, we should have repaid all delinquent per caps, and be in a position to prepare for the impact of some of the anti-teacher legislation that will hit DFT when our contract expires on June 30, 2016.

Just a reminder, half of the dues we collect, belong to AFT and AFT Michigan. We are grateful to AFT and AFT Michigan, who are essentially allowing us to run our union with their money.

Distain for Snyder Won't Get Him Out!

Anyone who has a job, belongs to a union, works in education, or is retired, has plenty of reasons to want Gov. Rick Snyder to be a one-term governor. A brief inventory of what has happened to the Michigan worker during his tenure provides us with a truck full of ammunition:

President's Report



**Keith
Johnson**

RIGHT TO WORK: Snyder flat out lied and told us that "right to work was wrong for Michigan," and right to work was "not on my agenda." Yet when the legislature passed it he couldn't wait to sign it. He then claimed he was doing it so the Michigan worker could decide whether he wanted to be part of the unions. Now they just reap the benefits and protections without investing in them.

EMERGENCY MANAGER LAW: After Michigan voted to set aside PA4, the cowardly legislature, in the darkness of night, passed PA 436, a nearly identical twin to PA4 that further enhanced the power of an emergency manager. By signing the bill, Snyder showed the will of the people is irrelevant if it conflicts with what he wants.

TAX ON RETIREES PENSIONS: Attempting to rebuild Michigan's economy on the backs of those who retired with a fixed pension now find themselves adjusting their lives because Snyder pushed for a tax on pensions. The "fixed income" was unfixed. This hurt the poor and elderly because of Snyder's disregard for the service they provided and the retirement they earned.

EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT AUTHORITY: EAA, Snyder's education "deform" model has been an abject failure, a feeble and rushed effort to use Detroit children as another urban experiment. In my mind this parallels the "TUSKEGEE STUDY" of the 1930s-40s, infecting black men with syphilis to study the long-term effects of the sexually transmitted disease.

The so-called "statewide recovery district" was supposed to improve schools where students consistently failed to meet state achievement standards. It is plagued by a lack of anticipated philanthropic funding, a dramatic drop in enrollment, a revolving door of staff and administration, and inexperienced teachers (mainly TFAs). The 15 schools in EAA have failed to address the intrinsic inhibitors to learning. Yet the governor and legislature are pushing for its expansion.

All of these factors should compel Michiganders, especially those of us in education, organized labor, and the working middle class, to get out and vote.

Great, but not enough. We MUST invest in the campaign to defeat Snyder and his reckless agenda. We must commit dollars to the campaign of those who are our enemies.

Mark Schauer, the presumed Democratic candidate for governor, will not be able to match Snyder dollar for dollar because he elected to use matching campaign funds from the state. Therefore WE, those of us who have been most adversely affected by the Snyder regime, must contribute to our COPE and PAC campaigns.

While you may not know Schauer, WE KNOW SNYDER, and we must not let him continue his relentless assault on the working class in Michigan, particularly those of us in labor.

If between now and the November

elections EVERY DFT member were to contribute \$100 to our DFT/COPE, we could raise more than \$400,000 ON OUR OWN. This could not only defeat Snyder, but those of his ilk, including the SELLOUT DEMOCRATS HARVEY SANTANA AND JOHN OLUMBA (who now claims to be independent). These two turncoats sold out the children of Detroit and other economically disadvantaged children by voting for EAA expansion.

We MUST reclaim the governor's office and AT LEAST ONE HOUSE of the legislature.

We have witnessed four years of devastation imposed by Snyder. Imagine what he can do in another four years without having to concern himself with another re-election campaign.

If you don't like it, then do something about it. DONATE AND VOTE!

Contributions may be made to AFT Michigan COPE, and mailed to AFT Michigan, 2661 E. Jefferson, Detroit MI 48207 or dropped off at the DFT office.

THE DETROIT
teacher

The Detroit Teacher is the official publication of the Detroit Federation of Teachers, American Federation of Teachers Local 231, AFL-CIO. Member of the Union Teacher Press Association, International Labor Press Association & Michigan Labor Press.

Editor — Margaret Weertz
mweertz@dft231.com
313-875-6776

Time to Question Zero Tolerance?

By Edna Reaves
DFT Executive Vice President

The push back on zero-tolerance and the school-to-prison pipeline reports are leading to a fast track on new legislation for school reform. Zero tolerance arose as a means of addressing students who brought guns, knives, alcohol, and drugs on school grounds. Obviously, these weapons and substances are extremely dangerous and life threatening.



Edna Reaves

When applied correctly, the objective was to keep schools safe and create the optimum opportunity for students to learn.

But over the years, zero-tolerance has been applied to just about any school rule. Often a student received the severest punishment for a very minor infraction regardless of the circumstances.

Just as the dress code policy was established to prevent students from flaunting gang insignia and colors that might spark confrontation and violence, zero-tolerance was meant to deter violence. Unfortunately, it became overused and the consequences didn't always fit the infractions.

For example, I worked with a teacher who demanded suspending a child for not bringing a pencil to class. This is a classic example where zero-tolerance was misused, the type of situation that gets attention, and was sensationalized. When a child showed up to my class without a pencil, I would have one ready and tell the student I was deducting points for each day I had to supply a pencil.

Just last week, I was in a classroom where a teacher wanted a preschooler suspended for throwing a tantrum in class. When I asked what kinds of strategies had she used to correct the situation, she responded that she called the parent. We have to use more strategies and find better alternatives to suspension from school.

There was a time when in-school suspension was an option, but that required funding to staff the detention center. According to the Department of Education and the Justice Department, there is "a troubling pattern of zero-tolerance school discipline policies that disproportionately impact minority students in general, but also trickle down to the nation's youngest students."

It is reported that more than 5,000 preschool students are suspended at least once and about 2,500 were suspended more than once. What is our current alternative?

Our prior contracts had language that gave teachers some authority to remove students who were disruptive in order to carry on with the lesson, but was flexible enough to allow the counselors and administrators the option to apply the appropriate discipline for the infractions. In the case of a student who refuses to bring a pencil and other necessary supplies to class, a counselor or administrator could admonish the student and send the child back to class. If a child assaults a teacher, however, the consequences of the student's actions were explicitly spelled out.

The "school-to-prison pipeline" phrase is associated with the

latest in educational reform policies that are filtering down to the classroom. Politicians have already begun to craft language to enact laws to supposedly identify problems and produce solutions. Their premise: teachers and administrators are not educating our students and pushing them out the door and into the juvenile justice system, creating criminals who are overcrowding our prisons.

National focus on discipline reflects the political attitude that everything wrong with education occurs in the classroom. As if we were not blamed enough, teachers and "teacher unions" are blamed for turning our students into criminals and putting them on the school-to-prison pipeline track.

Given all of the state and national attention on zero-tolerance and the school-to-prison pipeline reports, DPS has implemented the Michigan Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi), a behavioral and academic support program. Just last month, DPS decided to take the Restorative Practice program district wide. Cody and Osborn high schools piloted the program last year and experienced a degree of success.

According to DFT President Keith Johnson, our union presented the Restorative Practice program to the district about four years ago, but the "powers that be" didn't see value in it. Success will require intensive training for teachers, students, and administrators to properly implement this program. My hope is that this practice, unlike conflict resolution, will be well implemented and will sustain itself well beyond the funding.

A number of our elementary schools have recently been trained in the MiBLSi. I would encourage the district to allow those programs to continue and give them time to produce some results before pulling the plug and forcing the Restorative Practice model on them. I'd urge the district to let each program we've already invested in run its course. Then we'll have some empirical data to show which program produces the best results.

Your Name Here

Support COPE, Public Education and You

In May we are printing the names of every DFT member who contributes to the COPE political action fund. COPE chair Ivy Bailey is asking every DFT member to contribute at least \$10 by April 25. If every one of our 4,000 members contributes \$10, we can raise more than \$40,000 to fight the anti-teacher sentiment in Lansing.

A free, equal and quality education is one of the great foundations of American society. Public education, especially in Detroit and other urban areas, is rapidly being eroded. Lansing legislators have eliminated seniority, gutted tenure rights and weakened your union protections.

The DFT must make its voice heard in Lansing in November 2014. Make your \$10 payment TODAY to AFT Michigan COPE, and mail it to AFT Michigan, 2661 E. Jefferson, Detroit, MI 48207 or drop it off at the DFT, 7700 Second Ave., Suite 427, Detroit MI 48202.

THE DETROIT NEWSMAKERS



It's a Small World After All

Carver S.T.E.M. Academy celebrated March is Reading Month with guest readers. University of Michigan linebacker Cameron Gordon stopped by to read to students and spoke with fourth-graders about setting goals. He even took time to sign a few autographs. Gordon is pictured with his sister-in-law, third-grade science teacher Agatha Gordon.

Detroit Teacher Leaves for Abu Dhabi

By Ann Crowley

There is life after DPS. I left Dec. 31, retiring on a reduced pension and not benefiting from any packages or sick day payout. I left because it was time to go even though it was probably the scariest jump I ever made. DPS and DFT had been part of my life for 28 years.

I am teaching in Ghayathi, in the United Arab Emirates, about an hour from the Saudi border. Once out of Abu Dhabi you hit instant desert.

A teacher from Houston and I decided to live together to have more space and live in somewhat of a city. There is a bank, post office, and bus station in the town of Ruwais. We will drive 70 miles to our different schools, which are not too far apart.

The school district is providing us with a driver. The district will pay for our apartment which takes up half of the fourth floor of a five-story high rise. Only women are allowed to live in our building. That is the way it is in the western region of the UAE. Men and women live separately.

It has been a crazy few weeks adjusting to living in a desert resort while I await housing. It looks like I will be living in a house with four bedrooms, five bathrooms, two living rooms and two balconies, one of which overlooks the Arabian Gulf.

This country made a serious commitment to having the citizenry fully bilingual and literate by 2030. Fifty years ago this was one of the poorest nations in the world without a real public school system. The government understands that funding education is necessary for the future of this country.

They waste no expense bringing educators from everywhere to teach the young people. The opposite seems to be true in the U.S. Viewing life from the Middle East, I see the U.S. falling further behind as young people bear the cost of cuts in education.

The professionalism I am encountering with teachers from across the globe makes me feel teaching is a craft people discover is also part of their heart. They continue to tweak their craft because they believe in the dreams of those who have big lives ahead of them.

I do love it here. Driving to work we see camels every day. They graze in the sand and today one was actually riding in the back of a small truck.

Young teachers prefer the active New York/Los Angeles lifestyle of Abu Dhabi. There are a few young folks out here. It is a tough life if you are looking to have social weekends. But I appreciate the peace and solitude. The culture is very interesting and there is much to appreciate about it.

I miss my DFT friends and old union life.



Ann Crowley, left, with a teacher from Virginia Beach at a hotel in Abu Dhabi.



JROTC Revs Up at CMA

The JROTC program at Communication and Media Arts High School has been busy this year. The JROTC color guard presented the colors at its first lacrosse game on Jan. 4 (on the right). Cadet Dajanay Johnson, above, volunteers at CMA's Adopt-A-Child event Dec. 6.



Meet the Dr. House of St. John Hospital

Every day, Dr. Louis Saravolatz assembles 60 doctors from St. John Hospital to figure out what's wrong with their patients. But work in a real hospital is different than on TV.

"What's wrong with Dr. House?" Saravolatz asked students at Career Day March 28 at Marcus Garvey Academy.



Dr. Louis Saravolatz with Carol Bennett, the Marcus Garvey Ed Tech librarian who organized Career Day.

House's two deficits — rudeness and drug addiction — quickly emerged. "We would have his license taken away," Saravolatz said, "You can't be on drugs. You can't be disrespectful to patients. That's for Hollywood."

Saravolatz, Chief of Internal Medicine at St. John Hospital, mesmerized seventh-grade science students with stories of infections, like maggots and worms found in patients' orifices. His expertise is infectious diseases.

Hour Detroit magazine recognized Saravolatz as one of the area's most respected physicians for infectious disease.

The Cass Tech grad concentrates on AIDS and MRSA. He graduated from the University of Michigan Medical School about the same time as the famous Dr. Ben Carson became a doctor.

Saravolatz urged students to consider studying biology, microbiology or medicine.

Although doctors graduate from medical school around age 32, he said, there are many careers in medicine, including nursing and radiology. "I leave you with this suggestion," he said. "You have lots of time to think about it."

Learning How to Get Services at Drew

Charles R. Drew Transition Center, on Detroit's west side, held its third annual Community Agency Fair March 21. The fair raises awareness of support services for people of all ages who have disabilities. Some of the services include guardianship, help with finding employment, advocacy, health insurance, transportation and respite care, to name a few.

Several community agencies were represented during the all day event. Franklin Shorter, the Drew teacher who organized the fair, was commended for pulling together a great event for students and parents.

"It was so good," said teacher Marta Lazar. "I walked my class through it and they asked questions and took people's cards. They were very interested."



FAQs About the Employee Severance Plan

By Patrick Falcusan
DFT Retirement Counselor

Due to the Employee Severance Plan (ESP), a large number of DFT members have decided to retire this year. This has generated numerous questions regarding retirement. Below are the answers to many of the questions that members have been asking.



Patrick Falcusan

Q1: I am taking the ESP. Will this automatically make me eligible to retire and to begin collecting my pension as soon as I leave DPS?

A1: No. The ESP has no connection to

your ability to retire and to begin collecting your pension. In order to retire and to collect your pension as soon as you leave DPS, you must be eligible to retire based on the requirements established by the Office of Retirement Services (ORS).

Q2: What are the requirements for retiring and to immediately begin collecting a pension?

A2: In order to retire and to immediately begin collecting a pension, you must:

- Be at least age 46 with 30 years (or more) of service credit (MIP) or;
- Be at least age 55 with 30 years (or more) of service credit (Basic) or;
- Be at least age 55 (but less than 60) with 15 years (or more) of service credit (this is called an early reduced pension) or;
- Be at least age 60 with 10 years (or more) of service credit.

Q3: If I am entitled to receive a pension based on the requirements shown above, will I also receive health, dental and vision insurance?

A3: Yes, almost everyone who meets the retirement requirements shown above will be eligible to receive health, dental and vision insurance. If you elected to continue paying 3 percent to cover retire-

ment healthcare insurance and you leave DPS and immediately begin receiving your pension, then your pension will include health, dental and vision insurance. (You will pay 20 percent of the cost of the premium[s] and ORS will pay 80 percent of the cost of the premium[s]).

However, if you are retiring with an early reduced pension or at age 60 with less than 30 years of service credit, then in order to get the full insurance subsidy, you must have earned one-tenth (0.1) or more years of service credit in each of the five school fiscal years immediately before your retirement effective date, or at least one-half (0.5) year of service credit within the two school fiscal years immediately before your retirement effective date. In either case, you must be employed in the month before your retirement effective date.

Q4: When I retire, do I have to continue with the same health insurance provider that I had with DPS?

A4: No. When you retire, you will have five different health insurance providers from which to select. No matter which provider you select, your premium cost is the same. (Blue Cross costs the same as HAP. HAP costs the same as Blue Care Network. Blue Care Network costs the same as Priority etc.).

Q5: I will be over 65 when I retire. Will I need to sign up for Medicare Parts A and B?

A5: Yes. If you (or your spouse) are over 65 when you retire and you want insurance through ORS, then you (or your spouse) will need to sign up for Medicare Parts A and B. If you don't already have Medicare Parts A and B, you will want your effective date(s) for coverage to begin to be the same as your retirement date (July 1 or Aug. 1). Medicare will be primary for insurance coverage and ORS will provide you with a gap policy that will be secondary.

If, when you apply for Medicare at your Social Security office you are given a form to be filled out by your employer (DPS), take the form to the 10th floor of the Fisher Building (HR), (make an extra copy first in case the form gets lost) along with a copy of your Separation from Serv-

ice form. After someone in HR fills out the form, return the form back to the Social Security office.

Q6: Who determines if I am eligible for a pension and the amount of my pension - DPS or ORS?

A6: ORS determines if you are eligible for a pension and the amount of your pension. Your pension comes from the State not from DPS.

Q7: I filled out the forms for the ESP. Do I still have to fill out retirement forms?

A7: Yes. The ESP has no connection to your retirement and to your pension. You must go to your miAccount (michigan.gov/ors) to complete your on-line application.

Q8: Can I fill out a paper retirement application?

A8: No. You must fill out your retirement application on-line using your miAccount.

Q9: What if I don't have a miAccount?

A9: You must set up a miAccount in order to retire and apply for a pension.

Q10: When should I fill out my on-line retirement application?

A10: If you are retiring July 1 (your last day with DPS being June 30), fill out your on-line retirement application in early April. If you are retiring Aug. 1 (your last day with DPS being July 31), fill out your on-line application in early May.

Q11: How do I notify DPS that I am retiring?

A11: When you retire (or resign) from DPS, you do so by filling out a Separation from Service (SFS) form. If you are taking the ESP, then your SFS form was a part of ESP application included in your packet from EPC. If you are not taking (or are not eligible for) the ESP, then you would go to the 10th floor of the Fisher Building (HR), ask for two SFS forms, fill them both out, get them both date-stamped and take one SFS form with you for your records. You would do this before May 1 if you wished to be paid for your sick days.

Also, if you are still an active employee

(Continued on Page 7)

FAQs ABOUT SEVERANCE PLAN

(Continued from Page 6)

of another Michigan public school district or community college, you must sever your relationship with that other district and/or community college before you retire.

Q12: I was buying time through payroll deduction (a TDP) and I wanted to pay off the balance (or part of the balance) on my TDP. What do I do?

A12: Call the DFT office (313.875.6783) for instructions.

Q13: What happens to my pension if I resign rather than retire when I leave DPS?

A13: The status of your pension depends on whether you are vested or not vested, if you are planning on working for another Michigan public school district, how old you are, how many years of service credit you have and a host of other variables. If you plan on resigning, call the DFT office (313.875.6783) to get answers for your unique questions.

Q14: I have 26 pays. If I retire, will I continue to be paid all summer?

A14: No. If you have 26 pays and you retire July 1, you should receive a regular check July 8 and the balance of your four remaining summer checks will then be bundled together and should come in one large check in early to mid August. If you retire Aug. 1, you should receive a regular check Aug. 5 and a three-day check Aug. 19. The balance of your two remaining summer checks will then be bundled together and should come in one large check in early to mid September. Traditionally, the last, final check has been a paper check mailed to your home.

Q15: I have 22 pays. When will my last check come?

A15: Your last regular check will come Tuesday, July 8.

Q16: When will my first pension payment arrive?

A16: If you filled out your on-line retirement application three months before your retirement date, then your first pension payment should arrive on the 25th of the same month that you retire. So, if you retire July 1, your first pension payment should arrive July 25 and if you retire Aug. 1, your first pension payment should arrive Aug. 25.

Q17: When will my new health, dental and vision insurance begin?

A17: If you retire July 1, then your new insurance will begin July 1. (Your DPS insurance will stop June 30.) If you retire Aug. 1, then your new insurance will begin Aug. 1. (Your DPS insurance will stop July 31.) If you filled out your on-line retirement application three months before your retirement date, then your new insurance cards should arrive at your home the month before you retire (in June if you retire July 1 and in July if you retire Aug. 1).

Q18: When should I apply for my Social Security if I want it to begin as soon as I retire?

A18: Apply for your Social Security three months before you want it to begin.

Q19: If I retire and I wish to work, will I have an earnings limit or other restrictions?

A19: After you retire, ORS is very concerned about any earnings that you receive if you go back to work for a public school district in Michigan - including charter schools and community colleges - so read the rules below very carefully.

If, after you retire, you are hired by a public school district in Michigan - including charter schools and community colleges - as an actual employee of that school district, then ORS will impose an annual earnings limit of 1/3 of your final salary average (around \$21,000 if you have a BA and around \$24,000 if you have a MA or MA+30). If you go beyond your earnings limit, your pension and healthcare insurance will be suspended for as long as you continue to work and you will have to pay back to ORS all of the pension money (and the cost of your insurance premiums) that you received during the time you earned money beyond your earnings limit. (Be extremely cautious about working for charter schools since almost all of their employees are hired through a third party and not by the charter school itself.)

If, after you retire, you work for a public school in Michigan - including charter schools and community colleges - as a private contractor or vendor and perform a core service (ORS decides what a core service is), your pension and healthcare insurance will be suspended for as long as you continue to work and you will have to pay back to ORS all of the pen-

sion money (and the cost of your insurance premiums) you received while working as a private contractor or vendor in a core service.

If, after you retire, you are employed by a third party and perform a core service for a public school in Michigan - including charter schools and community colleges - your pension and healthcare insurance will be suspended for as long as you continue to work and you will have to pay back to ORS all of the pension money (and the cost of your insurance premiums) you received while working for the third party in a core service. (Almost all employees of Michigan charter schools are employed by a third party. Almost all substitutes in almost all Michigan public school districts are employed by a third party.)

If, after you retire, you remain in Michigan and work in a private school or in private industry, ORS will not impose an earnings limit.

If, after you retire, you leave Michigan, you can work anywhere you want - including public and charter schools - and ORS will not impose an earnings limit.

As of this writing, you can work at the EAA, and ORS will not impose an earnings limit. (Be aware that there is pending legislation that would eliminate this exception.)

Social Security has its own earnings cap (currently \$15,480) when you are between the ages of 62 and 66 (67 for some). Go to Social Security's website for more information about working while collecting Social Security (ssa.gov).

Q20: After I retire, how long do I have to wait before returning to work?

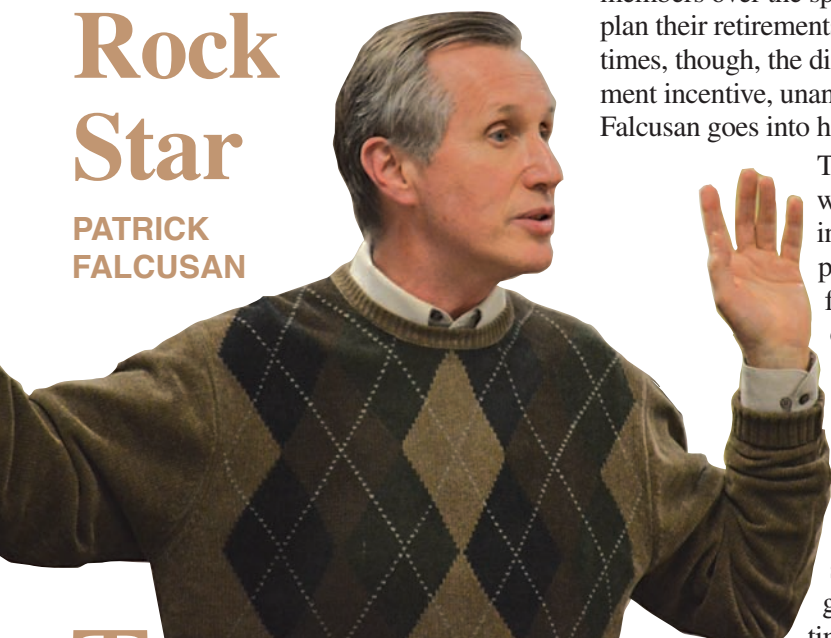
A20: After you retire, if you wish to work in a Michigan public school district (as an employee of that district), you have to wait 30 days before returning to work. There is no waiting period if you return to work in a job not connected to a Michigan public school district.

While I have attempted to answer the most frequently asked questions, there may be other questions I have missed. So, if you have other questions, give me a call (313.875.6783) or e-mail me (pfalcusan@dft231.com). If you e-mail me, please enclose your phone number(s).

You can also go to the ORS website (michigan.gov/ors) where many more retirement questions are addressed.

The DFT's Retirement Rock Star

PATRICK FALCUSAN



when the district announced a new severance incentive.

The DFT's retirement counselor for the last 15 years is known for his dedicated service to DFT members. He counsels members over the span of their careers to plan their retirements in advance. Sometimes, though, the district drops a retirement incentive, unannounced, and Falcusan goes into high gear.

Thankfully, Falcusan was alerted to the latest incentive. But a similar plan a year ago came from the district without the DFT's input. Unsurprisingly, that plan did not meet much success. It had three faults: it didn't pay the TIP money, didn't pay for unused sick days, and didn't give members enough time to think about it.

"Members look to Patrick for advice on retirement," DFT President Keith Johnson said. "If Patrick doesn't think the plan is in the members' best interest, he won't recommend it, and they won't take it."

Falcusan said he only wants success

for DFT members and DPS finances.

"If the ESP is successful," Falcusan said, "we don't care who gets the credit for its success – whether its DPS, EPC, DFT or all three – as long as people retire happily."

"There are other benefits as well," he said. "In the end, the ESP payments allow hundreds of our members to retire with financial security or resign and move on to another job. Hopefully this generates enough savings to allow those left behind to get step increases and a pay increase – and provide jobs for hundreds of new folks."

Falcusan dissected almost every possible scenario for assessing whether a member should take the ESP. He then ensured those frequently asked questions were posted on the DFT website and emailed to members.

DFT members are grateful. They write thank you notes and don't miss an opportunity to tell Falcusan that he's made a difference. He's there when they need him most, for one of life's biggest transitions.

"Thanks for this very thorough explanation," wrote Mark Crowley, a member from Maybury School. "You are a retirement counselor rock star!"

Twelve hour days. Nearly 700 personal counseling sessions. Thousands of calculations. Crunching numbers for years of service, age, savings, Social Security and tax sheltered annuities. This is Patrick Falcusan's life since February

The Mystery President of the DFT

Did you know there were five presidents of the DFT before Mary Ellen Riordan? We learned this while assembling the portraits of past DFT presidents. Since the DFT offices moved to a new, smaller location in February, several visitors have suggested we put the portraits of past presidents on the bare walls.

We called Dan Golodner, AFT Archivist at the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University. Golodner knows more about the history of the DFT than perhaps anyone.

"Actually there were four presidents and one mystery president before Mary Ellen," Golodner said. "I've stopped trying to find out who the mystery president was."

Why the mystery? Because early union activity was, simply put, dangerous. Many Detroit teachers wanted better pay and a union, but they didn't want to lose their jobs. Revealing their names would almost guarantee it.

According to Golodner, they met secretly in the basement of the YMCA as a reading group. It was very important during the 1930s that union activity was kept under wraps. Teachers were mostly women and they could lose their jobs. The mystery president was one of them. Perhaps she didn't want her name known.

Apparently Golodner did not stop looking. Just before we went to press, he found the mystery president. Her name was Olive Tilley and Golodner thinks she was the first president of the DFT from 1931-34.

"The DFT was underground in those years and instead of having an active teacher that could be fired," he said, the 14 radical teachers that founded the DFT thought a retired teacher would be better."

So the list of DFT presidents is: Olive Tilley, Frances Comfort, Florence Sweeney, Helen Moore Polaner, Antonia (Tony) Kolar, Mary Ellen Riordan, John Elliott, Janna Garrison, Virginia Cantrell, and Keith Johnson.

The DFT has a deep and wide history, full of strong presidents and brave activists. Learning about these leaders, their struggles, and the very real dangers of unionism makes one appreciate the need for courage when times seem difficult and overwhelming.



Dan Golodner

The Value of Good Sleep

By Lory Armstrong
Detroit International Academy for Young Women

Did you know that lack of sleep can be linked to problem behavior, poor school performance and poor health? Sweet Dreamzzz, Inc. is committed to improving the health, well being and academic performance of young children, by emphasizing healthy sleep habits. Sweet Dreamzzz provides informative presentations, interactive games and home tools

for students to understand “why” and “how” to get a good night’s sleep.

In January, Sweet Dreamzzz gave Detroit International Academy for Young Women students toothbrushes, toothpaste, crayons, a READY magnet, beanie babies and a book to take home for its annual Pajama Jam.

The Pajama Jam is an evening gala that rewards students for hard work during the first semester. The gala is for elementary students who earned enough “Paw Points” from teachers and staff during the second card marking. The students earn points by completing all class work and homework and for remembering behavioral rules during the school day.

On March 6, during Sleep Awareness Week, Sweet Dreamzzz presented its R.E.M. (Rest, Educate, Motivate) pro-

gram to students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

Students were taught to relax, eat a healthy snack, wash, brush, and turn off the TV to get ready for bed. The presentations were interactive and included powerful visual aids, such as showing how much sugar is in a can of soda. The students got READY posters to color and hang up as reminders of bedtime rules. They also received a bedtime bingo game in order to review the healthy routines.

The organization, One Hundred Women Who Care – Motown, provided grant monies for sleeping bags and tee shirts for the R.E.M. Program. The bags were provided during the R.E.M. sessions and kept at school for use on World Sleep Day, March 14, 2014.

On World Sleep Day, the students came to school with a good book, a pillow and a teddy bear and rested on their sleeping bags after lunch. At the end of the day, they got a healthy snack, a Ready-Relax-Read contract to have signed by a parent, their sleeping bag and tee shirt to take home.

We are committed to improving the health, education and well being of the students at Detroit International Academy for Young Women. The students now understand the “how” and “why” of healthy sleep habits.



Why Do I Stay Here?

Over a 30-year career as a Detroit teacher, LaWanda Gray-Anner has gone from doing lesson plans, grades and assessments on paper to computer. She has gone from days of creative teaching to endless mandatory testing. She has worked under an elected school board, then a reform board, appointed superintendent, a CFO, an Emergency Financial Manager and Financial Manager.

One thing stays the same: she wakes at 5:30 a.m. to drive to a job she loves. "I know what I'm doing is going to help my students in the long run," said Anner, a second-grade teacher at Golightly Educational Center in Midtown.

Anner doesn't downplay how difficult teaching has become.

"You are monitored all the time," she said. "There's so much data." Even with the state linking evaluations to student progress, Anner rises to the challenge. But she also knows the truth.

"What if these kids come to school hungry or don't come at all," she says. Still she works hard and doesn't fear reprisals.

"I have the notion that if you're doing what you're supposed to do and you're giving it your all, how can someone fire you?" she said. Anner, with an excellent attendance record, has been working since she was eight. Her other interests — she's a singer in the band "Persuasion" and a karaoke host — refuel her tank.

How does she measure success?

Another teacher will get her former student and say, "You can



tell they were in Anner's class." More proof, her students come back to see her all the time.

"She's just a star," said Dr. Sherrell Hobbs, principal of Golightly. "When you go in her classroom, you see the level of experience, the knowledge of teaching and learning exhibited there."

Anner has been a DFT building representative or alternative for more than a decade. "She's so genuine in the way she supports teachers," Hobbs said.

"Her students come back to look her up," Hobbs said. Last year during "Lemonade Day," the national event that urges students to explore entrepreneurial projects, Anner landed on TV. The next day the office was flooded with phone calls from former students.

Anner, Hobbs says, is that special teacher everyone holds in their heart. "People never forget her."

Literacy Extravaganza at Mackenzie

Mackenzie students came out dressed as princesses and dancing to Pharrell Williams' "Happy" for the school's Literacy Night March 26. The extravaganza featured free books, reading circles, and teachers dressed as authors.

Community leaders like Detroit City Councilman Gabe Leland of District 7 read favorite books. Leland read the "Cat in the Hat."

"We wanted to involve families and celebrate National Reading Month," said Vanessa Parnell, DFT executive board member and Mackenzie teacher, who organized the event. Parnell saved books from the DFT's First Book giveaway to give to students at the event.

The mood was half party and half community event. Jamyra Truitt, 11, was thrilled to be present and grateful to Mackenzie teachers for organizing the fun.

"Mrs. Parnell, she's number one," she said. "I'm happy."





Jerry L. White students Cache Clay and Alexis Stewart with teacher Patricia Moore.

Jerry L. White Students Win at Science Fair

It's no mystery why Patricia Moore's special education students place among 1,600 regular ed and honor students at the Science and Engineering Fair at Cobo Hall each year. Six of her students won awards this year.

"I looked at the boards at Cobo Hall," said Moore, a 34-year Detroit teacher. "And said, 'You guys are in the top 10.'" Moore's Jerry L. White students competed against elite schools from across the metro area, including Cass Tech and Renaissance.

Perhaps it's because Moore keeps pushing for quality work from her moderately cognitively impaired students.

"I tell them you can do everything regular ed kids can do," she said. "I tell them, 'Be creative, go beyond 100 percent.'"

To learn about the scientific method and prepare for the contest, Moore's students do research, create data binders and write brochures. A sample tri-fold in Moore's classroom spells out exactly the information students need for their own boards.

Alexis Stewart studied "How to Grow Colorful Crystals into Rock Candy" while James Hollifield did, "What No

Batteries!" about an alternative way to generate power. Both students won awards of excellence. They also built self esteem, says Moore.

When she came to Jerry L. White four years ago, Moore saw a need for the science department to do more with the students. She started taking them to the science fair. She branched out to hosting a spelling bee. Each of her students has a job portfolio with resume, business card, essential phone numbers, and life skills information like the Secretary of State requirements to get a driver's license.

Several of her students will enroll in extended education at Wayne State University this fall. Four students will be trained and employed with Blue Cross in September.

While some of the students have difficulty in the interview stage of the science fair contest, the judges are amazed at the quality of the boards.

Moore expects her students to model her, putting in a lot of effort and taking pride in the results.

"I'm teaching them to do outstanding work," she said. "Because that's how I am."

The Myth of Failing Schools

By Mark O'Keefe, DFT Controller

Successful people tend to be inner-directed. They view themselves as masters of their fate. They feel their accomplishments and failures are primarily due to their own actions. Those who are not successful tend to be other-directed. They feel others are keeping them down. They see themselves as victims.

The current fashion of labeling schools as "dropout factories" or "failing schools" perpetuates this victim mentality. This implies that if children could escape these failing schools, they too could succeed.

This removes accountability from the one person most able to influence the student's success — the student!



Mark O'Keefe

I spent 12 years teaching in a school that struggled to make Adequate Yearly Progress. I charted my students' progress with pre-tests, interim tests, and post-tests long before it was required. The results were consistent from year to year. The students who came to school regularly, stayed in my class the full year, and paid attention, improved by more than one full grade level. Those who transferred midyear, had poor attendance, or poor effort, did not advance a full year.

Was I a good teacher for some students and ineffective for others? Was our school a good school when we had low transiency and suddenly a failing school in years with high transiency? Will shuffling these students from public schools to charter schools to EAA change the results for those who are not willing to show up and do the work?

With all the emphasis on teacher accountability, the elimination of seniority, and the decimation of due process protections formerly contained in the teacher tenure act, it is time to stop placing all blame on the teachers.

As a student, if you do not attend school regularly, you will fail. If you come to school and make no attempt to learn, you will fail. The school is bricks and mortar. It did not fail. If you fail to show up and fail to give your best effort, the failure is all yours.

DFT Gets Spanish Books to Southwest Detroit Kids

Liliana Tejeda is a reader. In a school contest, she read 600 books so far this year. Still, the 8-year-old wants to learn to speak and read Spanish. Her mother is Mexican American and her father is Dominican.

"At home I have a lot of books I could read," says the Earhart School student. "I love reading."

Liliana and her mother ventured to the Bilingual First Book & Literacy Fair March 29 at St. Anne's Catholic Church in southwest Detroit.

When the DFT and sister unions organized the delivery of 46,000 free books to Detroit in January, several teachers said they wished there were Spanish language books for their new immigrant students.

Bilingual educators say getting students literate in their first language is an academic advantage, while also building second language literacy. Edna Reaves, DFT executive vice president, made it her mission to get the books. She called the AFT and First Book, the non-profit organization that collects surplus books from publishers and re-distributes them to disadvantaged children. First Book delivered the truck of 46,000 books.

Hundreds of books in Spanish were available at St. Anne's. Dozens of students and parents showed up at St. Anne's to pick

books, as well as see a puppet show, and do literacy themed crafts.

"I'm thrilled with the success of the event," Reaves said. "These children were so grateful."



Edna Reaves, DFT executive vice president, and Rick Rodriguez, a Maybury Elementary School teacher.



Earhart student Liliana Tejeda and her mother, Erica Negron.

All Meetings start at 4:30 p.m. Dates and times are subject to change.

April

- 3 Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
(IBEW Hall, 1358 Abbott, East of Trumbull)
- 15 Retirees Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.**
(Triumph Church, 2760 E. Grand Blvd.)
- 18-25 Spring break (schools closed)**
- 28 Schools reopen**

May

- 1 Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
(7700 Second Ave., Detroit, MI 48202)
- 8 Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
(IBEW Hall, 1358 Abbott, East of Trumbull)
- 20 Retirees Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.**
(Triumph Church, 2760 E. Grand Blvd.)
- 26 Memorial Day, Schools Closed**