

## DFT Ratifies 3-Year Contract

With feelings ranging from angry to realistic, the DFT membership ratified the 2009-2012 contract Dec. 18 by a 64 percent yes vote. The tally was 3,578 to 2,031.

The contract represents a historic moment for the DFT. It puts in place major union-driven reforms and is cast as the most progressive teacher contract in Michigan.

It held the line on teacher salaries when other districts are seeking cuts. But it includes a \$250 per check deduction over 40 pay periods that members may cash out upon retirement or resignation.



The day after a Dec. 6 informational meeting at Cobo Hall, the teachers

lounge at Webster Elementary School lit up with discussion about the contract.

"I'm not really happy," said third-grade bilingual teacher Jesus Pena. "What I don't see in the contract is justice for what we do in the classroom. I speak, write and read Spanish. I had to get 21 credit hours for that. If it was so easy to teach, everyone would want to come into the classroom."

But Pena says he likely would vote for the contract because he didn't want 1,500 people to lose their jobs.

"You have to look at the whole picture," Pena said. "If you look at it from a positive way and compare yourself with what's going on around you and in Detroit, we're blessed."

Several Webster teachers said they disagreed with critics of the negotiating team, who are leading a recall of the union leadership.

"I'm for the contract," said teacher June Price. "I feel we have a very professional bargaining team that got us the best contract."

Several members said the Cobo meeting was usurped by no voters while other members had questions about changes in insurance coverage and other specifics of the contract.



In the teachers lounge at Webster Elementary School, teachers (above and left) discussed the new contract.

"My feelings are Chrysler and GM filed for bankruptcy," Price said. "Their budget was more than ours to begin with. DFT members can not expect nothing to happen."

"We all have to tighten our belts," said kindergarten teacher Gabrielle Patterson. "Maybe you can't go out to dinner four nights a week."

Several Webster members said those contesting the ratification and leading the recall effort did not repre-

sent their views.

The DFT Election Committee, which is elected by the membership, certified the vote at 1 a.m. Dec. 19. It took more than seven hours to re-count the ballots, which had been calculated earlier in each school by a building representative and a union committee member. The election was the same process followed for 40 years, conducted in the open, and under observation by the membership.

## Thoughts on the Ratification and Recall

By Keith Johnson, DFT President

I want to express my appreciation to DFT members for the ratification of the 2009-2012 Collective Bargaining Agreement between the DFT and the School District of the City of Detroit. This appreciation is tempered by the fact that none of us, including me, are happy with some of the contents of this agreement, particularly the financial aspect and the impact upon our members.

The district's perpetual fiscal mismanagement put the district and the DFT into a position where hard and unpleasant decisions had to be made, decisions that were critical to the survival of both the Union and the school district.

As president of the DFT, I have the ultimate responsibility for the decisions that are made during negotiations and how they will affect our membership. However I am not a one man show. I was fortunate to have an

outstanding bargaining team that I heavily relied upon to come to the conclusions we reached.

Executive Vice-President Mark O'Keefe's experience as a CPA, chief financial officer, auditor and controller made him an invaluable asset in understanding the corporate/business approach in determining what options the district could possibly exercise to eliminate a cumulative deficit of \$400 million. Mark was able to digest, dissect and analyze district financial reports and help to formulate strategies to minimize the direct impact upon our members while addressing the budget crisis.

Financial Analyst Patrick Falcusan, who knows the district's financial history and budget better than anyone

else I know, collaborated with Mark to determine how we could operate within the district's fiscal reality and find cost-saving measures that would allow us to maintain many of the benefits that have been earned through 42 years of collective bargaining while allowing the district to reduce its direct spending.

Their combined efforts to avoid any negative impact on paychecks included a plan to have a large percentage of our salaries categorized as bonuses. This would have saved the district tens of millions of dollars in retirement fund contributions, but after several trips to Lansing, this plan crashed and burned. What resulted is the

See PRESIDENT on Page 6

# NAEP Test Reactions Miss the Mark on Responsibility

People throughout Detroit were angry, frustrated and embarrassed when the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) were released on Dec. 8 and rightfully so. However, the anger is misplaced and so is the bulk of the responsibility.

## President's Report



**Keith  
Johnson**

While it is convenient to lay the blame at the feet of classroom teachers it is equally convenient to ignore the incompetence and neglect of the decision makers who have failed to establish a sustained, consistent educational plan for DPS, demonstrate the quality of leadership and accountability commensurate with their responsibilities, and listen to the outcry from teachers lacking the supplies and support necessary to drive student achievement.

Here is a sampling of what has been a major contributor to the academic decline of DPS beyond what teachers are doing in the classroom:

- **A Revolving Door of Leadership at the top of DPS:** Since 1994, nine superintendents/CEOs/EFMs have taken the reins of DPS leadership: McGriff, Snead, Green, Adamany, Burnley, Coleman, Satchel, Calloway, and now Robert Bobb. There are 10 if you include the current, yet powerless superintendent Teresa Gueyser. Each of them has failed to address some of the basic impediments to student achievement, e.g. truancy/transiency, an established and enforced student attendance policy, adequate books and supplies upon student arrival, school violence, clean and safe environments for teaching and learning, and reduced class size in grades 6-12.

- **A Dysfunctional School Board:** Within the same time period so many school board members have been more consumed with winning a seat to use as a springboard to other political offices. In recent years, since the reinstatement of the elected school board in 2005, board members have been prone to focus more on personal agendas and personal conflicts than the development and implementation of a strong educational plan. Board mem-

bers have sought to micromanage the district rather than determining policy and getting out of the superintendent's way.

- **Lack of Necessary Books and Supplies:** A perennial problem has been the inability or unwillingness of the district to properly fortify teachers with the books and supplies necessary to educate children. Even this school year, as we are enjoying the holiday break, we have a number of schools and teachers without their full complement of books at all grade levels and subject areas. This is completely inexcusable and unacceptable.

- **School Violence and Lack of Support on Disciplinary Matters:** Students and staff have a difficult time focusing on instruction when schools are in chaos with gangs. Violence against students and staff and chronically disruptive students who get a slap on the wrist for serious infractions, send a message to other students that there are no serious reprisals for disruptive behavior.

- **Transiency and Truancy:** Without an enforced attendance standard for students, what is the real incentive for students to come to school? They know that no matter how many days they miss, it is still possible to pass the class. In addition, many of our students are in constant transit, some attending as many as three or four schools within the course of a school year. The continuity of instruction is lost as students have to adjust to new environments, make new friends, and establish new relationships with unfamiliar teachers. No matter what age, this is a significant change for any child and is an inhibitor to learning.

- **Administrative Pressure to Pass Students Who Don't Deserve to Pass:** Many teachers are pressured and intimidated by building and central office administrators when a large number of students in their classes receive failing grades. Rather than focusing on the reasons why students receive the failing grades, administrators focus on what the teacher "failed to do" to excite the students about learning. Never mind the student seldom came to class, never did the work, was chronically disruptive, etc. Too many administrators become more consumed with the failure rate than the proficiency rate. As a result you end up with an 11th-grader who reads at a third grade level. If they can't read, they won't learn.

- **External Factors Beyond the Teachers' Control:** Many of our students have social, health and person-



**DFT President Keith Johnson and Executive Vice President Mark O'Keefe discuss the new contract at a December 19 press conference.**

al challenges that are not adequately addressed at home or by government entities that impact their ability to learn. Some students have visual problems, hearing problems, other medical challenges that are not effectively addressed and impede their ability to focus on learning. If the students do not know their hearing or vision is impaired, they believe what they are experiencing is normal and do not communicate it with their parent/guardians. Other challenges such as hunger, shelter, adequate clothing, etc. also have an adverse effect upon student achievement and should not fall upon the teacher. Social workers, psychologists, school nurses, attendance agents, and other supplemental support personnel are needed to help facilitate the needs of students beyond the needs facilitated by the classroom teacher.

Finally let's look at the NAEP test in the proper context. There were roughly 1,700 students among 18,000 fourth- and eighth-graders randomly selected by agents outside of DPS to take this test, and many of those students received special services.

Although this doesn't diminish our disappointment or frustration over the results, it is not totally indicative of our students' proficiency, and certainly not an indictment against the commitment of our teachers and support staff.

We acknowledge that we must improve the outcomes of our stu-

dents, and we embrace the accountability. However we must hold the district accountable for providing us with all of the resources, human, monetary, and materially necessary to make this a high performing school district and make the mantra of "centers of excellence for every child, in every school, in every neighborhood" more than just a cliché and a sound bite.

**THE DETROIT** teacher

(ISSN 0011-9695)

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 and Michigan Labor Press.

The Detroit Teacher is published monthly, except for July and August, for \$4 per year by The Detroit Federation of Teachers, 2875 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, MI 48202. Periodical Postage Paid at Detroit, MI.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to The Detroit Teacher, 2875 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, MI 48202.

Editor — Margaret Weertz

# Updates...

## Michigan History



Retired Detroit Public School teacher Joel Marwil (above) and his family are featured in the 50th Anniversary Edition of Michigan Jewish History. Marwil's father and mother, Milton and Lenore, opened the Marwil Book Company in 1948. The Marwil Bookstore is still operating on the campus of Wayne State University on the corner of Warren and Cass and Joel still works in the store.

## Retirements Announced

The following DFT members have announced their retirements: Linda Sanders, Barb Sonsara, Victoria Baldwin, Carol Cartwright, Annette Jenkins, Gwendolyn Johnson, Anthony Jones, Anna Moss, Rosalind Rogers, Sonia Stewart, Franklin Tanton, Anastasia Tessler, Barbara Thomas, Barbara West. If you have retired in the last six months and would like it announced, call the editor at 313-875-3500 ext. 776.

## COPE \$10 donations

Several DFT members contributed to the 2009 COPE \$10 campaign and were not listed in the Detroit Teacher. They are Naomi Moore, Judy Givens, Terri Leonard, Yolanda Stewart, Gonzalee Sullivan, Franklin Tanton, Chantay Williams, Marvin Chatman, Anisha Jordan, Jerry Jones and Vanessa Rasheed.

## Blackwell Teams with Christmas Gifts

In the principal's office at Blackwell Institute, there was no room to sit. The diminutive principal Patricia Hines was hidden behind mounds of Christmas gifts for staff and community members, parents and students.



This is one of the many times Hines and her staff and students give to the community.

"If we don't show the love, there's no hope," she said. Hines works with Detroit Healthy Start East, giving resources to single parents and their families. Hines says it's important for the kids to give and receive, and to see adults giving and receiving.

"We may not have a lot but we have something," she said. "We're dealing with people who don't have anything at all."

One recipient told Hines that Blackwell adopted her family and it was the only gift they had.

"I felt really inadequate because it wasn't much," Hines said. "We're

happy to bring joy to the kids.

Children don't understand not having Christmas."

Meanwhile, down in Tish Giacalone's first grade class, the St. Clair Shores Moose Lodge brought Christmas gifts to her class. Every child in the class got a new coat, gloves, hat and toys.

"We've been working with her classroom for about six years," said Moose Lodge member Amber Rosenbroch. "It's a very overwhelming experience. They make us feel very welcome. They come up and hug us and make us presents and give us gifts when we come."



## FESTIVITIES FOR TODDLERS

Detroit Public School children were treated to face painting and holiday activities on Dec. 4 at the DFT Hall, thanks to the Early Intervention Diagnostic Center, which works with children from birth to three years old who have special needs.

# Lower the Lifeboats

By Patrick Falcusan  
DFT Retirement Counselor



Patrick Falcusan

Now that the new contract has been approved, it is time for many of you who planned to retire by July 1, 2010 to take advantage of a portion of the contract that expires by Feb. 15, 2010.

It is time for you to leave the ship (think cruise ships) and go into port (think retirement). But in order to have some extra spending money, here is what you need to do now. (More information will come in upcoming issues of the Detroit Teacher about what the Retirement System requires you to do during March and April).

For all teachers who planned to retire by July 1, 2010, it is imperative that you notify the district on or before Feb. 15. Here's what to do:

- Go to the fourth floor of the Kahn Building and ask for two Separation from Service forms.
- Fill both out.
- Check the retirement box. Put July 1, 2010 for the retirement date.
- Have the person at the counter date stamp both forms.
- Keep one for your personal records.
- Keep it in a safe spot in case the district loses its copy.

Also in the new contract, non-teachers will get paid for banked sick days at the same rate as teachers. For non-teachers (social workers, psychologists, counselors etc.) with 142 sick days or less, they would do better under the old formula and, if they plan to retire by July 1, 2010, they should notify the district before Feb. 15, 2010. For non-teachers who have more than 142 sick days, they would do better under the new formula, so they should NOT notify the district until after Feb. 15, 2010.

The new contract flips the formula for sick bank payouts. Here's what it looks like:

Old Formula	New Formula
First 70 days (50 percent) = 35 days	First 70 days (20 percent) =14 days
Next 70 days (20 percent) =14 days	Next 60 days (25 percent) =15 days
Next 60 days (25 percent) =15 days	Next 70 days (50 percent) =35 days
Total 200 days =64 days	Total 200 days =64 days

### Daily Rates of Pay

BA	\$328.06
MA	\$381.66
MA+30	\$385.35
Dr.	\$386.93



## Van Zile Students Purchase Shoes for Children in Africa

Gestures of sharing, caring and volunteering have been part of the Van Zile School community for over 12 years. Even in these rough economic times, Van Zile children learn about selflessness while embracing real world concepts and lessons about what it means to be philanthropic and how to make a difference. Under the leadership of the Van Zile Philanthropy Committee and student council, a school wide fundraiser entitled, "Tis the Season of Giving" was set in motion to purchase shoes for children in Africa. This effort paid off, allowing the students and staff to raise \$936 – enough money to purchase over 250 pairs of shoes. The biggest lesson learned: children can lead the way and make a difference in the lives of others. Pictured with students are teachers Dorothy Roger and Sandra Hughes.

## Greetings from the President and First Lady

Marsha Chapman, a teacher at Keidan Special Education Center, got a signed Christmas card from President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama. "I was kind of down and depressed that day and when I got home this certainly brightened my day," Chapman said. Chapman mailed the President a news article about herself and student Jesus Lewis. Lewis was choking on a bagel and Chapman gave him the Heimlich maneuver. When he calmed down, he told Chapman, "I can't die now. I got to meet Barack Obama."



## Crockett Teachers Raise \$30,000 in Donations

Crockett teacher David Smokler got wind that the Beverly Hills Club, where he's a member, was getting new exercise equipment and donating its old equipment.

"I hear you want to get rid of your exercise equipment," Smokler told the owner. The owner was eyeing a donation to the Israeli Defense Forces. But he found that the shipping of the equipment would be very costly.

*"I think we have about the biggest and best gym in the city," Smokler said.*

"Why not a donation to the Detroit Public Schools?" Smokler asked. Smokler happens to be a friend of club owner Steven Satovsky and seems to have connections in all directions.

Smokler's father practiced law with Congressman George Crockett in the



Crockett Athletic Director Robert C. Sugar

Maurice Sugar law firm that represented the UAW when it was organizing. His family was friends with Crockett's wife, Ethylene, whom the school is named after, and who was the first black female obstetrician and gynecologist in Michigan.

Satovsky was agreeable to

# ROIT teacher MAKERS

## Teacher Snares Equipment



Giles and teacher David Smokler stand before \$30,000 of equipment.

...nate the equipment if DPS  
...uld come and get it.  
...ockett athletic director  
...bert Giles got on the mis-  
...ion.

Giles called the administra-  
...n and five huge semis  
...ent out to Beverly Hills to  
...ck up 23 gleaming pieces

of equipment. Now the  
weight room has machines  
for every body part, is freshly  
painted and all the machinery  
sits on a reinforced rubber  
floor.

“I think we have about the  
biggest and best gym in the  
city,” Smokler said.

## Teachers Rally for Student Essay Contest

Reginald Ayala doesn't think it's a big deal he won a Disney Dreamers essay contest that will send him and his mother to Disney World.

He doesn't think it's a big deal that he's one of three winners in Michigan.

“Everybody's making it a bigger deal than it is,” says Ayala, 17, a Westside Alternative Academy student.

Behind the scenes English teacher Suzanne Boldiszar prompted Reginald and 45 other students to write biographical essays that include their dreams for the future.

Behind the scenes teacher Nadonya Muslim sent the essays in on deadline. Muslim enters the contest and uses it as a class assignment every year. She has been told she is the only teacher to produce three winners. This time Reginald's essay took the prize.

“He really puts a lot of thought into what he writes,” Boldiszar said. “He took a look at himself, took the time, thought about it. He said it from the heart.”

Ayala will go to Orlando Feb. 19 for a weekend seminar to learn how to accomplish his dreams. Speakers in varied careers will address the 100 winners. The winners will bring back prizes, experiences and a sense of the importance of planning out dreams.



## 45-Year Teacher Returns as Helper

Ronnie Robinson retired last July after 45 years of teaching elementary physical education. But several times a week he returns to Charles Wright Academy to make sure the machine is well oiled.

“I'm happy to retire from the system,” Robinson said. “But I'm mad as hell retiring from the children.”

On Dec. 10, he returned to the school to teach kids the Jingle Bell Rock dance. On Dec. 16 he played Santa's helper and entertained the preschool children's dreams and desires.

Preschool teacher Sue Gordon fed Robinson a history of each child. “This is Ja'Quan Marshall. I had his father Raymond Marshall.”

“This is Julius. His father just deployed to Iraq.”

Robinson showed all the patience and interest of Santa.

“Can you count?” Robinson asked a girl. — “Yes.”

“Can you count to one million and one?” — “No.”

Robinson has a deep history with the DFT, serving on several committees with President John Elliott and working to get coaches paid for their time.

Since retirement he took on a part-time job and volunteers and loves fishing. “I'm not much for staying home.”

# Teacher Begg and Wins Big for Students

The kindergartners in Alison Pikur's class were dazzled for the holidays in a fashion as glitzy as if they were in on the Las Vegas strip.

The strip came to them.

MGM Grand put on the ritz for 14 kindergartners at Coffey School. Teacher Alison Pikur last year called MGM to request donations. They replied that they give coats, hats and gloves.



"But some of my kids will get nothing," Pikur insisted. "I realized Christmas was going to be tough for them and that really bothered me."

A child at heart, Pikur really wanted toys for her kids. In the end, she got more than her dreams. DeeDee McKinney Odom, MGM director of public affairs, brought an entire Christmas party to Pikur's class.

"You know this is my school," said Odom. "So I came back home."

MGM sent a troupe of employees to sing carols. They sent a pastry chef to help the students decorate cookies. There was pizza, juice, and flavored milk. Pikur got a \$50 Meijer gift card for each student to buy anything she wanted.

"I don't know what the other teachers do, but I beg real well," she said. Each child received a blanket, several toys, and an M&M candy cane.

"I'm not sure what's going to happen at home," said Pikur, "so this is my way or ensuring they have a good Christmas."



**Coffey teacher Alison Pikur, right, asked MGM Grand Director of Public Affairs, DeeDee McKinney Odom, with Pikur at left, to help her students celebrate Christmas.**



## Thoughts on the Ratification and Recall

### PRESIDENT from Page 1

Termination Incentive Plan (TIP) that allows the district to reduce its costs by \$36 million for the duration of the plan, but allow members to receive their investment of up to \$10,000 when they leave the district.

AFT Michigan President David Hecker connected us with strategists and experts from our parent organization, the American Federation of Teachers, including AFT President Randi Weingarten, and other AFT local leaders to develop educational reform initiatives that will empower teachers to drive educational reform rather than having reforms imposed upon them. David also worked with legislators, department heads and the governor to help preserve our bargaining rights and bring forth cost-saving ideas in health care that would maintain the level of service and quality for members and their families.

Labor Relations Administrator Mershira Oliver was a tremendous asset because she had her finger on the pulse of what our members experience on a day-to-day basis and has worked extensively for the DFT on professional development ideas, cur-

riculum and supply concerns, and the practical needs of our members.

Retired DFT and executive board member Paula Trilety, whose extensive knowledge of past achievement and the history of the DFT through bargaining, helped us to establish the rationale for our insistence on maintaining seniority rights, the sick bank cash-out, and elementary prep periods. Paula was also a copious note-taker, which proved valuable when the district attempted to ignore discussions and positions taken by both sides throughout the bargaining process.

DFT Recording Secretary and classroom teacher Felecia Clark could speak based upon current classroom experience on the challenges facing teachers today, particularly at the elementary level. Her input on revising the approach to professional development that is teacher driven allowed us to argue for professional development activities that had practical and immediate application to students and teachers.

The reason for a team is to use their skills and expertise to formulate positions and decisions, and I optimized

the use of my team members and gave them the latitude to lead us where we needed to go. We held each other up throughout these tenuous negotiations.

While many of our members are upset about the immediate impact this contract has upon them, we had to think of the short- and long-term effect upon all of our members and the future of this Union from the teacher on step 5 who, in addition to a 10 percent reduction in salary, would have remained on Step 5 for the next five years, to the 38-year veteran who was looking forward to the sick bank cash-out to boost her retirement. We had to consider the substitute, the ed tech, and the accompanist for whom a 10 percent pay cut or the loss of their job altogether would have caused irreparable harm, to the teacher at Step 9 looking forward to that big financial boost that comes with going to Step 10.

Without the cost-saving components of this agreement, more than 1,500 members with less than 14 years seniority would have lost their jobs. Those remaining would have lost many of the benefits and experienced permanent reductions in salaries that would have been a loss in perpetuity. Because of this agreement, bankruptcy is off the table, the district will save approximately \$130 million over the life of the contract, and more than 1,500 jobs will be saved. These

were hard decisions but they were the right decisions.

A dissident group has now launched a recall campaign against me, accusing me of violating my duties as president of the DFT. While I take their actions seriously, I know their allegations are not true and serve no one's interest but their own. Not once have they come up with a recommendation as to what I could have done differently as chief negotiator, other than to encourage members to withhold their services.

While I understand their frustration, I condemn their irresponsibility and their willingness to jeopardize the lives and livelihood of DFT members. I was not and never will be willing to gamble with the careers of our members unless I know there is clear and present evidence that the district can afford more than it is willing to offer.

Should the recall effort prove successful and I am removed from office, or if I am defeated in the next general election, I will accept the will of the membership, but I also know that at all times I worked and acted in the best interest of this great Union and its members.

I was elected to preserve, protect and defend the constitution and rights of the DFT. If doing my job costs me my job, I can live with the decisions I made. I know they were right, and so does the team that worked with me.

# FAQs on the 2009-2012 Contract

## 1. What happens to my TIP account in a bankruptcy?

A bankruptcy is less likely now that the contract is approved, but is always a possibility. Our attorneys have advised us that in the event of a bankruptcy, your TIP account would have greater priority than the claims of other creditors.

## 2. If I die, what happens to my TIP account?

A death is treated the same as a retirement. The money you are owed would be paid to your estate.

## 3. Does the Termination of Service Bonus mean I get an extra \$1,000 when I retire?

No, the "bonus" is the return of the TIP money that was deducted at \$250 per pay. Your bonus can't be more than the amount that was deducted from your checks.

## 4. Do all members get \$250 deducted under the TIP?

No. Assistant attendance officers, accompanists, members who work less than .5 FTE, and hourly workers including substitutes, will not have deductions under the TIP.

## 5. How will my TIP money be repaid?

You have three options.

- Option 1: cash payment, \$10,000 gross, net about \$6,000.
- Option 2: Deposit entire \$10,000 in a tax-sheltered annuity.
- Option 3: Buy time from the retirement system. Your \$10,000 will buy one year, which is about an extra \$1,000 each year for the rest of your life.

## 6. I have 200 sick days. Can I still cash them out?

Yes, and you will get the same amount under the new formula as the old (64 days worth up to \$25,000).

### Old Formula

First 70 days (50 percent) =35 days  
Next 70 days (20 percent) =14 days  
Next 60 days (25 percent) =15 days  
Total 200 days =64 days

### New Formula

First 70 days (20 percent) =14 days  
Next 60 days (25 percent) =15 days  
Next 70 days (50 percent) =35 days  
Total 200 days =64 days

## 7. I have fewer than 200 sick days. Are they worth as much under the new formula?

No, unless you are a non-classroom teacher.

## 8. Is it too late to get paid under the old formula?

No. If you turn in your retirement papers by Feb. 15, 2010 and retire by July 1, 2010, you will be paid under the old formula.

## 9. I am not a classroom teacher. Am I still limited to the maximum of 70 sick days?

No. Counselors, psychologists, social workers and all other bargaining unit members who were previously limited to 70 days will be able to be paid for 200 days under the same formula as the teachers. This is worth up to \$11,000 more than the old formula.

## 10. Is the 1 percent increase in the fall of 2011 guaranteed?

Yes.

## 11. How is the amount of the January 2012 raise calculated?

If enrollment increases by less than 1 percent, there is no raise. Otherwise, the raise will be the percentage increase in enrollment minus the shortfall in state aid, if any, rounded to the nearest .5 percent. So your January 2012 raise will be 0 percent, 1 percent, 1.5 percent or 2 percent.

## 12. Does enrollment have to be higher than it is today?

No. The percent increase in enrollment is based on the actual fourth Wednesday count in September 2011 compared to the budgeted enrollment in the district's budget published July 1, 2011.

## 13. How do you calculate the state aid shortfall?

The shortfall, if any, would be calculated by the actual per pupil state aid for the 2011-2012 school year, divided by the budgeted amount.

## 14. How much will my health insurance cost?

You will get exact information from the district in your open enrollment package.

Estimated Annual Cost to Employee (estimates only)

	Total	HAP	BCBS-PPO1	BCBS-PPO2
Single	\$375	\$475	\$1750	\$950
2 Person	\$785	\$1000	\$4650	\$2800
Family	\$1000	\$1170	\$6500	\$4300

## 15. What will my dental insurance cost?

The final rates will be announced by the district and included in open enrollment package. Our best estimate of the cost is:

	Delta	Delta Care
Single	\$50	\$40
Two person	\$75	\$75
Family	\$120	\$120

## 16. What happens if I am assigned to a priority school and I don't want to be?

That can't happen. You have to apply.

## 17. If my school becomes a priority school and I don't apply, or I apply and I'm not accepted, do I lose my job?

No. Human Resources will assign you to another position. All your rights, including seniority are intact.

## 18. Can principals fire employees in priority schools for any reason?

Principals cannot fire employees.

## 19. Can a principal decide not to keep you at a priority school?

Yes. But the member must be informed of the basis for the findings (third paragraph from the bottom, page 25.)

## 20. What happens if I am not asked to return to the priority school?

You retain the same rights (including seniority) as any other member (page 26, item 10, first paragraph).

## 21. If Human Resources doesn't find a position for me, I become a CTAL. Does that mean I take a pay cut?

No. Your pay and benefits remain intact.

## 22. Can I lose my job if I am still a CTAL after one year?

No. The district is required to find a placement for you. (page 26, item 10, third paragraph).

## 23. Do members in Priority Schools lose their seniority rights?

No. You still have all the rights of other DFT members.

## 24. Will members at Priority Schools be "at will" employees?

No, you will still have all the protections of your contract: seniority and tenure.

## 25. Is the TIP bonus over and above the TIP money deducted from our checks?

No. It's the same money. The "bonus" is how you get it back.

## 26. When will the insurance changes take effect?

Open enrollment will be in January, with the changes effective Feb. 1.

## 27. The contract says we get 10 sick days in the first year. Is that the first year of the contract, or the first year of employment?

You get 10 days in the first year of employment.

## 28. Will there be a charge for office visits on the HAP plan.

Yes, \$20.

## 29. Why did DPS propose the TIP plan?

They didn't. They proposed a pay cut and freezing salary steps. The union proposed the TIP plan, which is a temporary reduction that you get back. Also, the guaranteed raise in the third year will be on top of the current salary, not on 90 percent of the current salary.

## 30. Since the opt-out plan is eliminated, does that mean I have to be on the district's insurance?

No. It just means you won't get paid to opt out.

# Teachers Can't Stand Alone

## A Letter to Robert Bobb

By Kurtis Brown  
DFT Executive Board

I am writing this letter because I am seriously concerned with the educational climate of Detroit Public Schools. I have been a teacher with



Kurtis Brown

the district for 15 years. In my time here I have seen countless efforts to correct our community ills with each ending in failure. I was wondering why the one research-based, statistically proven strategy has yet to be given a

shot: Lower class sizes lead to improved student performance. Money has been poured into our district and national reform is the new flavor of the month, but I have yet to see any mention to class size reduction. It is very apparent that you are interested in seriously turning around our school district; a reduction in class size will place us on the right track.

In my humble opinion, in order to have true success, each component of education needs to be analyzed and evaluated. The role of the teacher can't stand alone. A teacher's effec-

tiveness is contingent upon many variables from their administrator to the parents to the community at large. The focus of the school and district should be to develop productive citizens with an opportunity to reach their potential. All variables must work in concert to provide each student what they require to be successful.

The district is the head of the educational focus of the schools and thus should lead by example and formulate the game plan. Once the game plan is formulated, it needs to be effectively communicated to the schools. At that point it is the schools' responsibility to execute the plan, but everyone needs to be on the same page and buy into the plan, starting with what research has proven to be successful. The district is also responsible to provide the schools with the tools necessary to complete the task at hand. They should provide the training and support needed to be successful. I find teachers more than willing to accept responsibility when they are playing the game on equal playing fields.

The administrators are essentially the coach of the team. They need to manage the teachers. They distribute the tools and make sure all needs are met. They are to keep the teachers informed on district information.

The most important variable in our equation is the parents. It is impossible to leave their importance off the table when considering student achievement. I am not one who would use this as an excuse, but I would like to be realistic.

The value one places on education, the overall perception of education, and how educated people act, play a major role in students' performance.

We have kids having kids. Thus, many parents are learning how to be responsible and accountable for another's life. Raising kids is a tough job for anyone, but it is much more difficult when you are not mentally ready to accept that challenge. I am not trying to denigrate the parents of our students, but I understand the daily struggles they experience. It is my belief that providing support to parents through workshops or classes is just as important to the academic success of a student as any other factor. I believe that all parents want what is best for their children and would willingly undergo any and all training to give their kids a better shot at living a productive life.

We have participated in a self-destructive cycle long enough playing political games with our children's futures. When are we going to take a serious look at doing something differ-

ently, something other than pointing the finger at each other, something other than blaming each other for what we all played a role? The fact of the matter is you will be hard pressed determining which part of a bike is the most important. Without handle bars you can't steer. Without brakes you can't stop. But without the wheels you won't be able to roll. All are important and all are needed to work together in order to go anywhere. We are in desperate times and need to work collaboratively to correct the problem. The better you do your job, the better I can do my job. The better parents send students to school prepared to learn, the better teachers will be able to teach. The better teachers teach, the better our community becomes. This is the way you grow our district, by providing citizens with what they need and want. Mohandas Gandhi once said, "Be the change that you want to see in the world." This is what we must do as a community. We must be the change we want to see, because the way we have been going has not worked.

I read that you want to be in charge of the entire scope of the district. That is a lot of responsibility that I would hope is not motivated by political aspirations. The community believes in you. I hope you do what is best for them.

### DFT Calendar for Election of Delegates to:

**2010 AFT Convention**  
(20 plus Executive Board)

**2010 AFT Michigan Convention**  
(20 plus Executive Board)

**Jan. 15, 2010 (Friday)**

**OPEN NOMINATIONS:** Nominations and acceptances may be mailed to P.O. Box 02010, North End Station, Detroit, MI 48202, OR hand delivered to the DFT office during office hours. Announcement of election will be mailed to schools with appropriate rules and procedures.

**Jan. 28, 2010 (Thursday)**

**CLOSE NOMINATIONS:** Nominations and acceptances by 4:00 p.m. for Post Office and by 5:00 p.m. in the DFT office for hand delivered.

## Calendar

All meetings will be held at 2875 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, unless otherwise noted. Dates and times are subject to change. The DFT telephone number is 313-875-3500.

### JANUARY

- 12** School Social Workers Chapter Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 14** General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 19** Retirees Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.
- 19** Educational Technicians Chapter Meeting, 3:30 p.m.
- 21** Psychological Services Chapter Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 30** Building Rep Workshop, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

### FEBRUARY

- 1** Special Education Chapter Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 4** Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 4** Preschool Chapter Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 9** School Social Workers Chapter Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 11** General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.