

# THE DETROIT teacher

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December 2009

## OPPORTUNITY IN A CRISIS?

### *Detroit Federation of Teachers Look at Historic Moment*

**T**he Detroit Public Schools are caught in a perfect storm of crises. Enrollment is declining. The city is in an economic depression. Finances are depleted. And too few students are graduating and prospering.

But DFT President Keith Johnson says it also represents a critical opportunity.

As Rahm Emanuel, President Obama's chief of staff, said: "You never want a serious crisis to go to waste."

Johnson and Emergency Financial Manager Robert Bobb held a press conference Nov. 24 to showcase what that opportunity to remake the district could look like. They issued a joint covenant, drawn up to agree on principles to remake the district into one of achievement and accountability.

"We have to embrace opportunity, the opportunity to transform and evolve this school district into what it once was," Johnson said. "Somewhere along



**DFT President Keith Johnson, center, with Financial Manager Robert Bobb and Chief Academic Officer Barbara Byrd-Bennett.**

the way, we may have lost focus."

The conference was held Nov. 24 to announce that a tentative agreement with far-reaching reforms was imminent.

Bobb conceded that the teachers have seen many new initiatives and

promises before. He credited the May 26 Cobo Hall professional development day as the turning point in working with the union on reform.

"We have a financial emergency but we also have an academic emergency," Bobb said. "We have an emergency of parent involvement.

We have no option but to improve overall student achievement." Johnson said he may represent a different perspective but not a different focus.

"Reform doesn't have to come at the expense of the rights of our teachers," Johnson said. "But the days of union versus management have to end right here, right now."

Johnson addressed critics used to confrontational negotiating.

"Some people question why is the president of the DFT working so closely with the emergency financial manager? Why shouldn't I?" he said. "As an educator I have the responsibility to make sure the children of Detroit have the same education I had and my children had."

"We are not going to improve education by doing the same things," Johnson said. "We have to do something different if we're going to improve. Each side is very passionate. We may have different paths to our destination but the destination remains the same."

## President's Report

### TENUOUS NEGOTIATIONS WILL BENEFIT DFT/DPS

**P**reserving salaries and benefits, preserving jobs, avoiding layoffs, instituting educational reforms, and avoiding bankruptcy are among the challenges facing the DFT bargaining team as we negotiate a new contract with Detroit Public Schools.

With so much attention focused on Detroit's schools, particularly the high dropout rate, low graduation rate, performance on standardized



**Keith Johnson  
DFT President**

As a result we were compelled to

tests, etc., the demand for educational reform in our schools was unrelenting. At the same time our membership made it clear that it did not want to bear the cost of the school district's fiscal ineptitude.

incorporate our respective skills and expertise to ensure that we negotiated a contract that was fair and equitable to the district and the Union. At the same time we had to operate within the context of the district's fiscal reality as well as developing a template for educational reform.

I am so fortunate to have Executive Vice-President Mark O'Keefe and Financial Analyst Patrick Falcusan on our team. Their knowledge of

finance, budgets and business operations have been an invaluable asset to the DFT in these negotiations.

Their ability to meet with the district's finance people to dissect and analyze line by line the budget and the legacy deficit allowed the DFT to develop a plan to address the challenges of the district's \$259 million deficit, the proposed reduction in state funding, and the impending

**See PRESIDENT on Page 2**

# DFT/DPS WILL BENEFIT FROM NEGOTIATIONS

## PRESIDENT, from Page 1

threat of bankruptcy while at the same time minimizing the financial impact upon our members.

### The District's Financial Woes are Real Not Imagined

Anyone who attempts to tell you that DPS's financial woes are not as serious as portrayed is fooling you as well as themselves. What I have termed as a perpetual blend of fiscal mismanagement has placed the future of DPS in serious jeopardy. The misuse and flawed management of the district's finances, including paying for positions that were not budgeted, ultimately caught up with DPS.

A top heavy administration, ineffective use of supplemental funds, overtaxed the general operating budget. As the district continued to hemorrhage students (losing more than 100,000 over the past nine years), DPS continued to operate under-utilized schools, fall behind in paying vendors and contractors, continue poor practices in financial management, and waste valuable funds needed to properly educate Detroit students.

Caught in the middle of this malaise are the DFT members who were continually required to do more with less of the vital supplies, materials and support needed to deliver instruction.

In order to effectively address these

issues, cuts and changes have to be made, and some of them will impact us. The number of health care options will be reduced. Chief among them is the likely elimination of traditional Blue Cross. Simply put, DPS can no longer afford to carry the self-insured status required with Blue traditional.

Unlike the HMOs, DPS pays a premium for health care coverage with traditional Blue. When a member receives medical service, the BC/BS card facilitates the receiving of the service. The doctor or hospital then bills the Blues and the Blues in turn direct bill DPS. This is a costly venture the district cannot afford.

The DFT has worked to negotiate a series of cost-cutting measures that will not reflect a loss in perpetuity for members' salaries. It is important that the divide between Detroit teachers and our counterparts in the area and in other large urban cities doesn't widen. At the same time we must also act to prevent additional members from being laid off.

### Reform Does Not Come at the Expense of Rights and Benefits

The reform initiatives we have been negotiating do not require the forfeiture of members' rights and benefits, yet they are necessary in order for us to move the quality of education forward. Peer Assistance and Review (PAR), shared decision making, teacher-driven professional

development, and other reform initiatives help answer the demand for educational reform without compromising member rights.

Some of our brothers and sisters have attempted to perpetuate the lie that DFT has relinquished seniority rights, made members at-will employees, and put teachers in a position where they would be evaluated by their building peers. Please do not allow these scare tactics by those who wish to maintain the status quo, and are resistant to any and all reform measures, dupe you into believing that reform equates to loss.

None of us can be satisfied with the direction this school district has taken over the past decade or more. We cannot pretend that reforms are not needed and that change isn't necessary for educational growth. We can either drive the educational reform train or be run over by it.

I believe that the more we drive educational reform through our Union activity, the more teacher friendly reform will be. If we allow reform to emanate from the top down, we will only perpetuate what we have complained about for years; that those farthest from the classroom continue to tell us what should happen in the classroom. This is our opportunity to embrace, define and take ownership of our profession and the destiny of our school district.

### We Cannot Afford to Wait on All That is Needed to Improve DPS

While we encourage the support of the negotiated reform measures, we also acknowledge that DPS still has much work to do. All the reform initiatives in the world won't matter if DPS doesn't address the issues of safety and security, availability of books, supplies, and materials, smaller class sizes in grades 4-12, as well as the much needed instructional support personnel such as social workers, psychologists, attendance agents, nurses, etc. to help address the multitude of deficiencies in the lives of DPS students.

DPS needs to develop and enforce an attendance standard for students and a zero tolerance position for violence against DPS staff by parents or students. We cannot, however, wait for DPS to do all that it must do for us to do all that we can do.

We are the masters of improvisation, continually doing more with less. We know this going in yet we continue our dedicated service to the Detroit community. We continue to take the blame for what goes wrong, and are seldom credited with what goes right. We understand that our reward lies in the minds and hearts of those students who come back to say thank you, and to those who go on to lead productive lives.

This contract will help that proud tradition to continue.

## Optimist Club Honors Top Detroit Students

Mumford senior Marcell Jones credits his mother's involvement in school and a caring teacher for much of his success. He says Mumford geometry teacher Kimberly O'Neill developed a deep interest in Jones and his path.

"She's the type of teacher who cares about her students," he said. Jones and 19 other students from Mumford, Detroit International Academy, Northwestern, and King High schools were honored Nov. 12 for their achievements by the Optimist Club of Central Detroit at the Mayflower Congregational Church.

At each school, the club honored an ROTC male and female student, the student council president, the senior class president and the principal's selection of a deserving student.

The annual event is part of the Optimists' "Bringing Out the Best in Kids" program. The club encourages

achievement in kids and sponsors essay and oratorical contests, youth appreciation and much more.

"Many times all we hear are negative things that happen in the Detroit Public

Schools," said Stacia Little, past president of the Optimist Club. "But these students are a testimony for a school and the teachers who instructed them and the parents who raised them."



John M. Jones, Optimist Club board member, with students Marcell Jones, Candice Robinson and Neilson Jones.

**THE DETROIT** teacher

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# Updates...

## Retirements Announced

The following DFT members have announced their retirements: Betty Miles, Karen Bradfield, Carla Clavon, Linda Hargo-Whitfield, Jean Gailliard, Shermell Hooper, Freda Johnson, Anne Kalisz, Barbara Sulik, Jean Willis, Lawrence Stroughter, Philip Carrington, Elaine Goodrum Lee, Nina Moore, Emma Sims, and Judith Burchett.

## Update Your Information

It is critical for all DFT members to update their contact information, especially those members who are laid off. There have been instances when an employee is recalled but the DPS Human Resources Department doesn't have a current address or telephone number to recall him or her. Update your information both at the DPS Human Resources Department and the DFT. You must notify both institutions. Notifying one does not translate to the other. To update info with the DFT, call 313-875-3500 or fax updated info to 313-875-3512.

## MSPERS Health Care Changes

Medicare Advantage is being phased out by the end of 2009 and the original Medicare returns. You will need to locate your Medicare Card. If it is lost, call 800-772-1213 or go to <https://mymedicare.gov/> and apply online.

Medicare Part D remains in place for all Medicare members. There are no

## Keith Owens Speaks on Foreclosures



Keith Owens, director of communications for the Wayne County Treasurers Office, spoke on foreclosures to the DFT Retirees Chapter Nov. 17. Owens is pictured here with DFT Retirees Chapter member Virginia Stanch.

changes to dental, vision or hearing aid benefits. And, there will be no Social Security cost of living adjustment in 2010.

**The following impacts Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan PPO subscribers only:** HMO contracts (Blue Cross Network, Health Alliance Plan and Priority Health plans) are not included. A \$10 prescription drug premium will be added per month per contract.

Non-formulary drugs are NOT covered. Retirees pay 100 percent for non-formulary drugs when a generic is available. Only 2 percent will be affected and each will be personally notified. Medical exceptions may apply.

Annual deductible and copayment maximums: Deductible \$400 (\$250 in 2009), medical coinsurance maximum \$700 (\$500 in 2009), and pharmacy coinsurance maximum \$1,000 (\$800 in 2009).

Emergency room copayment is \$50 per visit, fee waived if admitted directly.

Mental health benefit is 90 percent coverage for outpatient and physician visits (50 percent in 2009).

Hospice benefit is expanded to 12 months versus six months in 2009.

New prescription drug benefits provider. Catalyst replaces MEDCO for mail order and BCBSM for local pharmacies. The transition is expected to be seamless as programs are similar. You will be getting a new card before Jan. 1, 2010.

If you lost your Medicare Card, call 800-772-1213. Or order online at <http://my.medicare.gov/>. You will need the following information: The exact amount of the last payment or the month and year you last received benefits in the last 12 months, your name as it appears on your SS card, social security number, date of birth, phone number and email address (optional). You may also need your place of birth and your mother's maiden name.

## Emma Holmes Passes Away

Emma Holmes, retired Detroit teacher and former secretary of the Detroit Federation of Teachers, passed away Oct. 24 at the age of 85. A Detroit booster, world traveler and outgoing personality, Holmes was well loved by many teachers and Detroiters alike. Holmes was a member of the NAACP and donated to the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. She taught in the Detroit Public Schools for more than 30 years.



**Students in the Junior Beta Club at Lessenger Middle School held a penny drive to put together food baskets for needy families in the community. They collected more than \$800 and 350 cans of food! For Thanksgiving they gave baskets to 10 families with turkeys and are giving more for the holidays. The baskets contained onions, celery, sweet potato pies, mashed potatoes, corn, peas, bread and butter, stuffing, gravy, seasoning, corn muffins, Pepsi and Kool-Aid. Pictured here are eighth-grade honor students and Beta Club sponsors (from left) Marcia Littleton, Hester Shoats, Phyliss Baker and Principal Bettie Reid.**

## Why Do I Stay Here?

After 31 years with DPS, Dora Turner is at her stride. She's been a media specialist for four years and is building the Taj Mahal of libraries at Clark Elementary School on the east side.

She won two Laura Bush American Libraries grants; a \$5,000 grant in 2007, one of only two recipients in Michigan. She received another \$5,500 Laura Bush grant in 2009, the only one in Michigan.

Four full boxes of colorful books from DPS lay on the table waiting for homes on shelves.

Turner surfs the web to find ideas and grants to build her library. To date, she's been able to send 2,000 books home with students, thanks to First Books of America donations.

"I went on a lot of listings and emails to see what was out there," Turner says.

Why does she stay in Detroit?

"I stay for the kids. I love the kids. When you think the kids aren't listening, they are," she said.

One of the books she introduced



**Media Specialist Dora Turner with a Clark Elementary student.**

to her students was featured in a book fair. A student told his mom he knew the book. But Mom said that couldn't be. Sure enough he remembered it from Turner and the Clark library.

The neat and organized library is a haven at Clark. The kids, even kindergartners, know where to go to get their favorite books.

"They enjoy the library." Turner doesn't want to leave her library in just anybody's hands.

"I want to make sure everything goes into place."



## Coach Gets Helmets from Detroit Lions

By Charlene Uresy  
Spain School



Head Football Coach Andre Harlan (right), of Frederick Douglass High School and Academy, and a teacher at Spain School, has been featured three times in the Sports Section of the Detroit News, speaking about the success of his football team and the lack of equipment for his athletes. In one such article, after he talked about the lack of football helmets, each PSL team received 25 new helmets. Before then, he had to borrow helmets from other schools to outfit his team.

The Detroit Lions organization is familiar with the plight of DPS. The organization has a wonderful recycling project of donating gently worn football cleats to DPS. The Frederick Douglass Hurricanes were recipients of football cleats from this program.

This donation served as a good teaching lesson to the Hurricanes. They learned the Detroit Lions are concerned about their well-being. They learned that recycling is a good thing for them and the environment. They learned that Coach Harlan has worked hard, not only in preparing them for their games, but also in making sure they have the right equipment.

## Two Lessenger Teachers Win Supplies Lotto



Lynn Hepler and Amatullah Ahmed

Lynn Hepler kept the card with information about Adopt-A-Classroom. In a few minutes she filled out the online grant request for classroom supplies. Then she gave it to her teaching buddy Amatullah Ahmed.

Both Detroit teachers were adopted by Wayne State University to receive \$1,000 online shopping sprees for classroom supplies. They were among 16 Detroit classrooms adopted this year through the Helping Communities Help Schools, sponsored by OfficeMax and Jones New York in the Classroom.

The Lessenger School teachers were among those in 82 Michigan schools adopted this year to receive a total of \$16,464. They were notified Nov. 20 and were still beaming days later.

Like many Detroit teachers, Hepler had very few supplies. As a special ed resource room teacher, she took money from her own pocket to supply her classroom. She says \$1,000 will go a long way.

"I'm a very savvy shopper," said Hepler, a 30-year teacher. "I want to make it last." The cash will help Hepler get things she wants but can't afford to buy. To date she has spent \$47. I'm going to make that money work well for my classroom."

To learn more about the program and register, visit [www.adoptaclassroom.org](http://www.adoptaclassroom.org).

# THE DETROIT NEWS

## Building Strength and Bro

Sweat beading his forehead, Clark computer teacher Willie Wood, like a traffic cop, directed a dozen men to take spots in classrooms to read to children. The men – from Omega Psi Phi fraternity – took part in a national social action day Nov. 18, helping boys understand their role in their own success.

"Obviously there's a need for some guidance for young men on how to overcome some of the obstacles," said Wood, an 11-year teacher, who organized the event. The fraternity, founded at Howard University in 1911 boasts members from Dr. Charles Drew and poet Langston Hughes to the Rev. Jesse Jackson. It has four cardinal principles: manhood, scholarship, perseverance, and uplift.

"You don't give up because life gets hard," Wood told an assembly of middle school boys. To underscore this, Wood invited renowned Detroit poet Andre Johnson and motivational speaker Phil Black. Black grew up in Detroit and Highland Park with a single mother.

"I have no idea what you're dealing with," Black said. "I know what I dealt with and I know what's possible. I know where I want to be. And I know how bad I want to get there."

Black recounted many hurdles in his childhood. He saw his father only nine times until he died when Black was in high school. There were nights with candlelight when the electricity was turned off. And nights he went to sleep on a dinner of rice and butter.

Black was teased because he was dark skinned. He became so depressed at the age of nine that he nearly took his own life. At a party in 1997, he was shot in the face. Now the self-assured Black has inspired countless young men with his motivational speeches.

"No one can make excuses and achievements at the same time," he says. "We must choose one."

### I AM

By Andre "Kevlar" Johnson

*I was born to the land where brothers  
Process beef like taco bell  
But mama taught me well  
When someone turns a cold shoulder  
U gives em hell*

*And in my youth at times  
When it seemed that I wasn't in my right mind*



Clark teacher Willie Wood



WE WISH ALL OUR DFT MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES



# ROIT teacher MAKERS

## motherhood at Clark School



Teacher Willie Wood, third from right, organized a social action day for men with his fraternity.

*She always knew exactly what to say  
To get me back in line  
The sun shines whenever she brings her smile out  
So bright at night  
I swear she could make darkness call a timeout*

*An angel in my lifetime  
No exaggerations or lucid dreams  
To me it seems she's had wings since I was thirteen  
But if you try to cross her it's best you remember  
That sunny disposition can quickly turn into a Detroit December*

*Listen, she taught me cerebral calisthenics  
Exercises in mental fitness  
The cause for the pen in my hand like an extra appendage  
Plus, she told me in life there's no coincidence  
And the evidence me standing before you humbly*

*Because truth is only rebels give birth to revolutionaries  
She's half the reason I am whatever I am  
So stand and give a hand to the bulletproof man  
Because when you applaud me you thank her  
And I just want to do the same  
Not just when I rhyme but from now to the end of time*

*So there's no if's and's but's or maybe's  
I am my father's son  
But I am still my mother's baby*



## MAKING A DIFFERENCE ONE STUDENT AT A TIME

**Third-grader Letawin Richardson is shown eating lunch with Trix Elementary/Middle School Principal Denise Booker.**

By Tyra Smith-Dean

The newly appointed principal of John Trix Elementary/Middle School put out a challenge to third-grader Letawin Richardson to strive for academic excellence and be on his best behavior. Letawin answered the call and received lunch with the principal on Oct. 23. Principal Denise Booker and Letawin enjoyed delicious Wendy's cheeseburgers, fries, and drinks.

Letawin is in Evette Tripp's class of students who have special needs. In the past year Letawin experienced difficulty remaining focused on academics and behaving appropriately in the classroom and throughout the school. However with the continued support of his parents, classroom teacher and aide Brenda Hunter, and other staff including the school social worker, public safety officer, and office staff, and Principal Denise Booker, Letawin is definitely making progress. It takes a team of caring, concerned, and committed individuals to make a positive difference in the lives of students each day. "Students don't care to know, until they know you care."

## Flower Power at Sherrill



Sherrill 4th and 5th grade students learn cooperation and Science while doing community service on a fine October day in the Sherrill Elementary/Middle School yard. The students planted tulip bulbs to enhance the school sign. "We found lots of worms, but we know they are good for the soil," said one student. Another student told teacher Pamela Shriman "It was fun planting tulips. It was hard even though there were a lot of people helping. I hope they grow soon. Also I hope they stay healthy!"

# FAMILIES A HAPPY AND SAFE HOLIDAY SEASON

# Grants...

## Blockbuster Funds

Blockbuster receives many requests for contributions on a daily basis. Its guidelines require meeting one of more of the requirements: a focus on the film or video industry, addressing the needs of children or families, having clearly defined and measurable goals, or supporting a Blockbuster initiative, such as employment. Deadline: ongoing. For info, visit [www.blockbuster.com/corporate/corporateGivingGuideLines](http://www.blockbuster.com/corporate/corporateGivingGuideLines).

## Instrument Donations

The Fender Music Foundation supports music programs from around the country by donating instruments and equipment for music instruction. Instruments and equipment of up to \$5,000 in value are awarded, as well as announcement systems and microphones. Deadline: ongoing. For info, visit [www.fendermusicfoundation.org/grants](http://www.fendermusicfoundation.org/grants).

## Music Education

The NEA Foundation and the National Association of Music Education are providing grants up to

\$5,000 to teachers, students and groups for teaching music as improvisation to middle and high school students through innovative ideas and methods. Deadline: Feb. 1, 2010. For info, visit [www.neafoundation.org/pages/educators/grant-programs](http://www.neafoundation.org/pages/educators/grant-programs).

## Technology Funds

Best Buy's Teach @15 Awards empower teens to make an impact on their education by nominating their schools and voting during a 15-day period to win \$500-\$1,500 Best Buy gift cards for their schools. The purpose is to enable teachers to purchase technology to enhance learning. Eligible schools serve grades 7-12. Deadline: ongoing. For info, visit [www.bestbuyinc.com/communityrelations/teachawards](http://www.bestbuyinc.com/communityrelations/teachawards).

## Scientific Innovation

The Toshiba/NSTA ExploraVision Awards invite student teams and their coaches to enter a challenge designed to get young people interested and excited about science and technology. The competition asks students to

design an invention that addresses their view of future technology. Four teams winning first prizes will receive \$10,000 U.S. Savings Bond for each student. Second prize wins a \$5,000 bond and much more. Deadline: Feb. 2, 2010. For info, visit [www.exploravision.org](http://www.exploravision.org).

## Libraries

Each year the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Library Association devise a theme for the We the People Bookshelf, a program to provide new hardcover books for libraries. This year's theme is "A more perfect union." The program aims to strengthen the teaching of American history and culture through libraries and has donated more than 13,000 books. Deadline: Jan. 29, 2010. For more info, visit [www.publicprograms@ala.org](http://www.publicprograms@ala.org).

## Mini Grants

The Pay it Forward Foundation is based on the principle of service that benefits others, who in turn do something to benefit others, so it grows

exponentially. Eligible projects benefit a school, neighborhood or community and receive up to \$500. Deadline: Feb. 15, 2010. For info, visit [www.payitforwardfoundation.org](http://www.payitforwardfoundation.org).

## Student Videos

C-SPAN's StudentCam 2010 Competition invites middle and high school students to submit documentary videos on one or two themes: our country's greatest strengths, a challenge the country is facing. Students can work individually or in teams up to three students. Prizes go up to \$5,000. For info, visit [www.studentcam.org](http://www.studentcam.org).

## Essay Writing

Students in grades 5-8 can enter an essay contest and win valuable software and an Apple iPod Touch from Cambium Learning Technologies and Kurzweil Educational Systems. The contest is the Courage in My Community Writing Challenge. Middle school students are asked to submit an essay of two pages or less on courage. Deadline is Feb. 12, 2010. For info, visit [www.courageinmycommunity.com](http://www.courageinmycommunity.com).

# Roll Call...

## — Detroit Federation of Teachers Membership Meeting — November 12, 2009

Academy/Americas  
Adult Educ./Eastside Center  
Ann Arbor Trail  
Bagley  
Barsamian  
Barton  
Bates Academy  
Beckham  
Bennett  
Bethune  
Blackwell  
Bow  
Boykin CEC  
Breithaupt CTC  
Brown Academy  
Bunche  
Burns  
Burt  
Burton  
Campbell  
Carleton  
Carstens  
Carver  
Cass HS  
Central HS  
Central-Attendance Center  
Chrysler  
City HS  
Clark  
Clemente  
Clippert  
Cody-Upper HS

Coffey  
Communication Disorders  
Cooke  
Cooley HS  
Cooley-North Wing  
Crary  
Crockett CTC  
Crockett HS  
Crosman Alternative HS  
Day School/Deaf  
Denby HS  
Detroit International  
Academy  
Detroit School of Arts  
Detroit Transistion  
Center-East  
DFT Office  
Dixon  
Drew  
Drew Attendance  
Duffield  
Durfee  
Earhart  
Early Intervention  
Diagnostic Center  
Edison  
Edmonson  
Ellington  
Emerson  
Farwell  
Field, M  
Finney HS

Fisher-Upper  
Fitzgerald  
Ford HS  
Gardner  
Garvey Academy  
Golightly CTC  
Hally  
Hancock  
Hanstein  
Harding  
Harms  
Henderson  
Holcomb  
Holmes, A.L.  
Holmes, O.W.  
Howe  
Hughes, L.  
Hutchins  
Hutchinson  
Jamieson  
Jemison  
Jordan  
Keidan  
Kettering HS  
Kettering-West Wing  
King Elem.  
King HS  
Law  
Lessenger  
Logan  
Longfellow Annex  
Longfellow-SSW

Loving  
Ludington  
MacDowell  
Malcolm X Academy  
Mann  
Mark Twain  
Marquette  
Marshall, T.  
Mason  
Maybury  
McColl  
McFarlane  
McKinney  
Mumford HS  
Murphy  
Neinas  
Nichols  
Noble  
Nolan  
Northwestern HS  
Office of Mathematics  
Office of Science  
Osborn HS  
Osborn-College Prep Academy  
Owen  
Parker  
Pasteur  
Pershing HS  
Phoenix  
POHI/VI/Turning Point Academy  
Priest  
Psychological Services

Pulaski  
Randolph CTC  
Renaissance HS  
Retirees  
Roberson ELC  
Robinson  
Sampson  
Schulze  
Scott  
Sherrill  
Southeastern  
Southwestern  
Spain  
Stewart  
Taft  
Thirkell  
Trix  
Trombly  
Turning Point Academy  
Van Zile  
Vernor  
Vetal  
Wayne  
Webster  
Western HS  
Westside Alternative  
Westside Multicultural  
White, J.  
White, K.B.  
Wilkins  
Wright Academy  
Young



# You Should be a Building Representative

By Sidney Lee

Crockett High School

**T**axation without representation – that's what you have if you are teaching at a school where there is no DFT building representative.

And why is this important? Because you have no voice and no one to support you in your endeavors to be a highly qualified teacher with all the resources you are supposed to have.



Sidney Lee

We deserve our conditions if we don't stand up and speak for ourselves and others. Remember we all pay union dues and certain services are supposed to follow as a result. So stand up and be counted.

Have I not yet inspired you to take up the cross and follow me in the picket line for public education? Then listen to my story.

I come from a union family. My father was a proud member of the UAW Local 600 at Ford Motor Company in Dearborn. I have many memories of the strikes and what they meant to my family. My father modeled union behavior, and taught us to do the same. He did not cross picket lines and neither did his children.

I remember two incidents when I was younger. When I went to Wayne State University, the professors went on strike. I was told when I got there on the bus, if a picket line was in front of my building, to get back on the bus! I knew he would look at the news and know whether I obeyed this directive. Lucky for me, there was no picket line.

Another time, I was a new teacher at Burroughs Junior High. I was told if the engineers were on strike, not to break their line. They were and

teachers then did not break that line. We lost a day's pay but solidarity was the sign of the times.

I have been a union representative since 1984. I have won battles and lost battles but I have never lost a war. Children are being educated and graduating against all odds. Teachers are still fighting the war against everything from poverty, abuse, and equity for their students and themselves.

If this is your fight, which it is, look around your school and in your classrooms. Teachers are making a difference and need your support. Children need your support too. Someone must take up the cross and carry it high and proudly. If you are a leader and all teachers are, you need to step up to make sure you have someone and something to lead.

You must lead with dignity, and persevere in the field of education. The fight is not easy, but the rewards are substantial. The smile on a child's face when he or she succeeds is icing on the cake. Graduation days are priceless.

The DFT has been fighting for quality in the classroom for almost 80 years. The rewards have been great and the paybacks devastating. But through it all, students have excelled because someone heard them cry, laugh, cuss and fuss, but listened to their voice. It was a teacher and collectively we got the job done.

If you are in this position for the long haul, then you must not fight the battles without the full support of a team. We need team members in all buildings to step up and be heard and counted. Can we count you in?

Become a DFT building representative; it's hard but rewarding work. At the end of the day, maybe the end of the week, but definitely on graduation day, you have made a difference.

See you at the union meeting!



## Schulze School Honors Veterans and Soldiers

Schulze Elementary School teachers know how to show appreciation. The staff hosted a breakfast and ceremony Nov. 10 for veterans and soldiers in their community in honor of Veterans Day.



"Teachers, I'm very proud of you," said Principal Brenda Lyons. "You put on a good program."

Lyons said the school wanted to honor those who put so much on the line for others.

"I feel deeply because I have a father who served," Lyons said. "But I feel more deeply because I have a son serving. It's not easy being a soldier and it's not easy being a mother of a soldier."

The students learned about Veterans Day and the causes of World War II from Randolph Gere, a veteran of the Gulf War.

"Tomorrow when we have this half day of school, everyone should walk out of this school in silence," Gere told the students. "It's very important to end this war because we always have to remember the soldiers. We have a lot of people in this city who we are sending overseas. They will not be able to come home for Thanksgiving and Christmas and their children's birthdays."

"We have a lot of soldiers and a lot of veterans who have been injured," he said. "You have to keep these individuals in your prayers."





# Fifth-Grader Writes School Song

Performing arts teacher Marlon Hannah integrated music with his school's MEAP challenge. Why not design songs, cheers, dances and raps around the school's motivation to perform well?

Out of the challenge came a whole program Charles Wright Academy students performed on Nov. 2.

Hannah, pictured at right with teacher Michelle Ballard, gave a special challenge to talented fifth-grader singer Nia Jackson.

"I gave her an assignment to come up with a song," said Hannah, a 24-year Detroit teacher.

Hannah discovered that Nia Jackson already had a history of performance.

"I just happened to be at church and low and behold, who do I see singing before 5,000 people?" Hannah said.

Nia stepped up to the challenge and created her song.



## SCHOOL SONG

Charles H. Wright

Come in and take a seat

Charles H. Wright

Gets you ready for the MEAP

There's so many places for so many faces

I'm in

So come on and join in, if you don't

You'll miss your chance

For the best school year ever

Charles H. Wright

Is my school you see

Charles H. Wright



# We Need More Days of Instruction

*In reference to the Detroit Free Press' article "Classroom Spending Pays Off for Schools" (11/6/09)*

I agree that spending money in the classroom — teachers, aides, libraries, guidance counselors and social workers — at the expense of administrative costs is important. But the number of instructional days the school district provides for children is equally important.

First, there is a direct link between the number of instructional days and academic achievement. The greater the number of days of instruction, the more the children tend to be ready for college - especially in English and Math, based on the latest ACT exams.

The Garden City School District provides 173 days of instruction, which also contributes to academic achievement due to additional days of teaching. Moreover, the state of Michigan's average is about 171 days, and some school districts provide substantially less than that.

Bottom line: The number of instructional days the school district provides for children is an important link to achievement, and it increases the preparation of students for college admission especially in English and Math.

**Dr. Arthur J. Divers**  
Retired DPS Educator  
Detroit, MI

## 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.

### DECEMBER

- 8** Retirees Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.
- 8** Social Workers Chapter Meeting, 4:00 p.m.
- 10** General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 17** Psychological Services Chapter Meeting, 4:30 p.m.

### JANUARY

- 7** Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 12** 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.