

# THE DETROIT teacher

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NOVEMBER 2008

## High Schools Get 18-Year-Olds Registered

**K**ettering West Wing student Paul Carter registered to vote for the first time in his life on Oct. 3. The 18-year-old practiced for Election Day by putting his ballot through the scanner.

At least 20 Detroit high schools rallied to get their 18-year-old students registered to vote, according to the City of Detroit Department of Elections.

“We’re really, really pushing trying to get people registered,” said election coordinator Michael Williams. “We’re trying to get them to know the importance of how their vote counts.”

Williams said the next challenge was to get people to actually vote. Registering and voting is meeting a

generational divide, Williams said.

What’s the attitude of many 18-year-olds?

“Their vote doesn’t make a difference,” Williams said. “That’s basically what they believe.”

At Kettering West Wing for students with special needs, teacher’s aide Duwayne Darby constructed a bulletin board of the parties, candidates and issues.

“We stay even,” he said.

Coordinator Sharon Moore said parents of 18-year-old special needs adults often forget that their children have the right to vote.

“Our students have a right to have their voices heard,” Moore said. “Even parents sometimes forget that their children have reached the age of majority. They might not understand all of the issues but they choose who they want. We’re neutral. We don’t tell them who to vote for. They’re parents may but we stay neutral.”



Marlon Brown, of the City of Detroit Department of Elections, and Kettering West Wing Coordinator Sharon Moore, help newly registered student Paul Carter practice voting.

### Michelle Obama Visits the DFT

Michelle Obama visited the DFT offices on Oct. 2 to watch the Biden-Palin debate and address supporters at Obama’s Michigan Campaign



Michelle Obama

Headquarters — located on the second floor of the DFT Building.

The potential first lady talked about spending time with the Biden family at the Democratic National Convention and seeing their values

in action. Michelle Obama asked the supporters to “work hard and pray hard” for Obama’s ascent to the presidency. She asked the supporters to work hard after the election “because we can never go back to where we were.”

## Anger at Leaders Expressed at Open Forum

**A** DFT Open Forum on Oct. 16 was telling for its abundance of anger by students, parents and teachers — and its lack of district and public officials in attendance.

“This shows we are still in a crisis — this place should be full,” said Ivy Bailey, who organized the event at Frederick Douglass High School to find solutions to the financial and academic crises in the Detroit Public Schools. “Don’t think anybody was not invited. Just for the record, they were all invited.”

“There is not a board member or a council member here,” said parent Katina Hill. “We have a



Fewer than 200 people attended the Open Forum Oct. 2 to discuss the crises facing the Detroit Public Schools.

board we elected that ...we need to take this to.”

Superintendent Connie Calloway and several members of the school board attended a finance committee meeting scheduled at the same time as the Open Forum.

Still frustration was at a peak. “I’m tired of getting blamed for the incompetence of our leaders,” said Marilyn Peoples, a physical education teacher at Bennett Elementary School.

Several high school students said they feel frustrated by wanting to achieve in a system that seems indifferent to them.

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# Layoffs Compound the Suffering in Detroit

Last night I sat at a school board meeting and watched the board vote to layoff social workers, psychologists and speech pathologists. We already have teachers laid off waiting for December to come.



**Virginia Cantrell**

President's Report

This is simply demoralizing.

This is how this school district has been operating. Layoff notices. Rescission notices. More layoff notices. This is a mess and it's not right to operate a major school district in such a cavalier and sloppy manner.

It's obvious there is no plan — the board operates on a daily basis.

The board called a meeting last night on the guise of discussing the shootings at Henry Ford High School. The meeting did nothing to make our schools safer. The

meeting was used to issue more layoff notices.

None of you need to be told that families in Detroit are suffering. The Great Depression II is not news to us. We in Michigan — and Detroit especially — have been suffering much longer than just a month ago when the bubble burst on Wall Street.

But it seems like news to this school board. Do they realize what pain and hurt they are causing so many families — and mostly children — when they issue these large-scale layoffs?

Right now there is no support for families in Detroit without decent-paying jobs. Right now there is unprecedented financial stress in homes. This is a cause of hurt and suffering to the children who come to us each day.

We need to voice our opinion to everyone we know. Don't layoff people who provide a service. Don't continue to waste the



**Detroit Mayor Ken Cockrel Jr. visited DFT President Virginia Cantrell to talk about issues in the Detroit Public Schools.**

money all over this district and then say there's not enough to employ teachers. We need to say enough is enough is ENOUGH!

Since these layoffs will become

effective Dec. 21, I'm writing to my friend:

"Dear Santa Claus: I'm asking you to deliver to the Board of Education at their respective homes one large lump of coal for each stocking. And as you go up the chimney, whisper: Merry %^&\*(@ to you!"

## We Have a New Look

Margaret Weertz, here, editor of *The Detroit Teacher*. In this issue we're introducing our new look. Since I came here six months ago, I've been able to review similar union publications around the country. I regularly get the *New York Teacher* and other teacher union publications. After looking at so many, I thought, "*The Detroit Teacher* is really, really good."

So why redesign? For one, it's been almost 10 years since our last nip and

tuck. And even though we're good looking, like our national election, we deserve something newer, better and fresher.

You don't do the same teaching year in, year out. You don't deliver the same curriculum you did 10 years ago. You are current and so are we. We want to bring you relevant articles on trends in teaching. We want to showcase what the best and brightest educators are doing right here in Detroit. We want to keep strong and

unified as a union. And to do that, we need good communication.

By the way, thank you for the job you do. We're here to support you in your important work. Let me know what you think of our new design at: [mweertz@dft231.com](mailto:mweertz@dft231.com).



**Margaret Weertz**

Photo by LISA CERVONE

**THE DETROIT** teacher

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Editor — Margaret Weertz

Visit the *New* DFT Web site

[www.DFT231.com](http://www.DFT231.com)



# Updates

## Retirements Announced

The following DFT members retired this year: **Cecilia Totty, Ethel Price, Joan Snead, Angela Boyer, Emily Watkins.**

If you have retired in the last three months and would like it announced, please call the editor at 875-3500 ext. 776.

## DFT Odds & Ends

- If you are emailing the DFT, please include your phone number in your email. The DFT can receive email but OUTGOING email is down.
- If you need to fax the DFT, please fax us at (313) 875-3511.
- When you leave a voicemail, please remember to include your telephone number so we may return your call.

## DFT Scholarship Seeks Funds

The DFT Memorial Scholarship Fund awards scholarships to students in Wayne State University's College of Education. The fund, established in 1954, honors the retirement of Florence Sweeney, who in her 30 years with the Detroit Public

Schools served seven years as vice president and nine years as president of the DFT.

In 1974, the name was changed to the Sweeney-Comfort Fund in memory of Frances Comfort, first president of Local 231. The name of Helen Bowers, who served as DFT executive secretary and Detroit Teacher editor, was added following her death in 1994.

The three women whose memories we honor with these scholarships were major forces in getting a teachers union established in Detroit. The Sweeney-Comfort-Bowers Fund became the Memorial Fund in 2002.

The purpose of the fund is to assist students who are preparing to teach, preferably in the Detroit Public Schools. Criteria include cumulative GPA of 3.0, demonstrated financial need, and demonstrated evidence of social and intellectual maturity.

The fund is supported principally by family members' and DFT members' donations in memory of teachers who have died. The DFT executive board donates yearly in honor of deceased members. Donations also are raised by a 50-50 drawing at Retirees Chapter meetings. Donations can be made to the fund and sent to the DFT, 2875 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, 48202.

## Detroit Counselor Attends World Forum



In August, Dr. Sandra Morgan, a counselor at the Detroit School of Arts, attended the 2008 World Forum of the American and British Biographical Institute at St. Catherine's College in Oxford, England. Morgan was among five American ambassadors and the only one from Michigan. Some 45 nations were represented from Angola to the United States. Attendees included princesses, a baroness, a Nigerian chief, doctors, and business people. Symposiums were held on health, science, technology, research, art and the literary world.

# Avoid the “Unsat” track

What should you do if your principal and supervisor have started observing your teaching skills, and you fear they want to put you on the “unsat” track?

Get angry? Become defensive? Put your head in the sand and hope everything turns out okay?

Obviously, none of the above is correct. What you should do, according to DFT Labor Relations Administrators, is take action immediately.

Contact your Building Rep and your Labor Relations Administrator so you can work out a strategy to keep your job. Take a personal inventory of your teaching and classroom management skills.

Teachers who are being observed should ask themselves the following questions:

- Are my classes quiet and orderly versus loud and disruptive?

Teachers should develop specific classroom management procedures. For example: Have class work ready to distribute when students enter the room, or have students begin bell work activities immediately upon entering the room.

- Are my daily lesson plans complete?

Lesson plans should include the objective, the subject matter to be covered, the time allotted for the lesson, page numbers, closure activities and homework. Plan ahead. It's a good idea to have three or four weeks of detailed plans prepared in advance.

- Is my classroom attractive and conducive to learning?

Make sure you change and update material on the board. Place students' work on display.

- Do I spend most of my time seated behind my desk?

Move around the room. Do not spend more time behind your desk than on your feet interacting with your students.

- Am I falling more and more behind on correcting papers?

Papers must be corrected and returned in a timely fashion. This provides teachers and students with crucial feedback.

- What would be my answer if I were asked, “Are students learning in your classroom?”

Keep your records in order so you can document your answer with hard facts.

- What's my attendance and punctuality record?

Be on time for work and have a good attendance record. We expect that from our students; we should demand it from ourselves.

If most of your answers to the above questions are negative, it's time to make important changes in the way you teach.

According to the LRAs, classroom discipline and a teacher's ability to impart knowledge are the two areas most often targeted by principals and supervisors. Following the suggestions mentioned above will help put you on the path to a successful observation period.

The DFT contract contains detailed procedures that must be followed before a teacher or other DFT member can be terminated for unsatisfactory performance.

By Nov. 1 at the latest, the teacher must receive formal notice of his or her deficiencies; an Individual Development Plan (IDP) must be prepared in consultation with the teacher.

The IDP must identify areas of assistance (such as having an assigned peer coach, professional development or demonstration lessons by observers) that will be given to the teacher between the receipt of the IDP and March 15. The IDP can also include assistance that the teacher requests.

If the administrator fails to provide the assistance agreed upon in the IDP, the evaluation process is terminated.

The stated purpose of an observation is to help teachers do a better job. It is important that teachers hold the administrator to the steps agreed upon in the IDP. Teachers must demand that they receive the help that is outlined. Teachers should ask their administrator for specific recommendations on ways to continue improving teaching skills.

From Nov. 1 to March 1, information sessions may be held to discuss a teacher's progress. This five-month period gives the teacher time and opportunity to improve his or her skills.

By March 15, the teacher, the principal/designee, the content specialist and the teacher's representative will meet to determine if the teacher has met the IDP standards. If the teacher has met the standards, the evaluation procedure stops. If the teacher had not yet met the standards, a second and final set of observations, one by the principal/designee and one by the content specialist, will be held from March 15 to May 1. A teacher who receives an unsatisfactory rating will face discharge.

However, the LRAs stress that the evaluation process need not lead to an “unsat” rating.

“Make sure your grade book, attendance and lesson plans are up to date,” says LRA Mershira Oliver. “That's the foundation for successful teaching.”



# Park Service Beckons Science Teacher

There are no bad sunrises or sunsets in the Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona. So Detroit teacher Laura Speegle didn't miss one in her eight weeks as a park ranger there this summer.



Through a National Park Service program, Speegle was trained to become a teacher-ranger to teach and advocate about wildlife and the parks. She will conduct workshops for other Michigan teachers on her experience and use some exciting lessons from the park with her students.

"I'm a classroom teacher who can't sit still and has to find exciting things to do," said Speegle, an elementary teacher at the Detroit Children's Museum. Every summer, Speegle looks for a new adventure to enrich her classroom. It all started several years ago when Speegle's school,

Courville, became a NASA Explorer School, one of 50 throughout the country.

After that, the opportunities snowballed. Speegle gets emails and alerts on educational programs around the country. In her bag of goods, she brought back lessons on southwest archeology, desert animals, Pueblo ruins, and more. At the Children's Museum she is able to give guided lessons on dozens of topics free to all Detroit teachers and their classrooms.

Speegle, who was a second-grade teacher last year at Nolan, likes her new assignment at Children's Museum. She's able to get right at the core of what she learned and wants to teach students.

"You're able to reach more children," the 16-year teacher says.

The science teacher loved her adventures out West with bobcats and coyotes, pack rats and poisonous snakes. And she loves to come back each summer refreshed.

"I was ready to get back to work," she said. "I missed children."

*The Detroit Children's Museum, at 6134 Second Ave., is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Detroit teachers may choose from a variety of lessons and bring their classes free. For more info, call 313-873-8100.*

## Peregrine Falcon Visits Carstens Elementary

Carstens Elementary School social worker Gail Nawrock likes to bird watch. As a member of the Audubon Society, she saw information on its website about an Urban Birding Program for schools and sent for a kit.

Students record the birds sighted in a 10-minute period. Nawrock passed the kit on to science teacher Elbert Bennett, who was pleased to have a field activity for the students.

One day, Bennett was on his way to lunch and noticed it was very still outside. Normally, there were squirrels, rock doves and starlings in the trees and lawn around the school. He looked around and saw a peregrine falcon, poised to gather some lunch. It then flew to a tree by the school.



The school enlisted the help of retired Butzel art teacher Barbara Baldinger, who has been active in peregrine recovery. Since then, the students and staff have been on the lookout.

The Urban Birding Program is sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology ([www.birds.cornell.edu/celebration/GettingStarted/kit](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/celebration/GettingStarted/kit)).

# THE DETROIT NEWSM

## Going Green at Golightly

Susan Bloodworth thinks respect for the environment starts young. The second-grade teacher at Golightly Educational Center had a dream of a student planting a tree in kindergarten and watching it grow for all of her years at the school.

Thanks to a \$5,000 Lowes grant, Bloodworth and the Golightly students installed a veritable park on the rim of the preK-8 school.

Each grade now has a park bench and motto, tree, decorative rock and display unit.

"They would plant the tree, watch it grow, and see it thrive as they grow," Bloodworth said.



Golightly students and parents learn to size a hole large enough for planting the ball of a tree.



# ROIT teacher MAKERS



Joel Logan, Susan Bloodworth, and student Michael Jenkins mix cement for installing benches at Golightly.

This is Bloodworth's second success at getting a grant. By raising its MEAP scores to the "aspiring" category, the middle school won a \$15,000 Skillman grant for professional development.

Was it difficult to write the Lowe's grant?

"Nope," Bloodworth said. She said a 500-word grant application did the job, garnered the grant.

The project — Growing with Golightly — incorporates 10 recycled plastic lumber park benches underneath 10 trees. The children dug holes for the benches and planted the trees with the help of Hector Logan and his son Joel Logan.

"They learn the benefits of trees, that they are habitats for animals, provide shade and oxygen, and improve the looks of the school and neighborhood," said Sarah Haller, director of environmental education with The Greening of Detroit, which helped with the project.

Bloodworth wants the students to learn the process of planting a tree, maintaining and keeping a tree alive. Bloodworth said the project was more work than she thought, especially finding the recycled plastic benches that would be indestructible.

But after seeing the entire school outside, the staff coming together, parents helping to dig, and camaraderie taking over the project, who can put a price tag on that?

"I'm so proud," Bloodworth said. "This is one of the most important things I've done besides raising my daughter. I look outside and see those benches and I just love it."



Kindergarten teacher Rick Rodriguez does an alphabet dance with his students at Beard Early Childhood Center.

## *"Take a Picture of Me"*

Rick Rodriguez knows that parents will scan school literature to see if their kids are pictured. Hmm, great way to get them to read the classroom newsletters he sends home.

Rodriguez, a kindergarten teacher at Beard Early Childhood Center in southwest Detroit, uses snapshots of his students in his newsletters, on their lockers and mailboxes, and for classroom graphing.

To date, he has thousands of photos of cute kids. His photos are often used by the district in its literature. He maintains that he is just an amateur and uses a simple digital camera.

"My trick is to move in close," said Rodriguez.

In addition, Rodriguez tries to incorporate technology into his lessons. At his former school, he programmed lessons into a Smartboard. Unfortunately, he doesn't have one at Beard. Rodriguez is the kind of person who will help a colleague with technology. He readily offers his photos to publications in the name of the cause.

"I have the advanced kindergarten class," he said to his students. "I have a deal with the principal that I get who?" He looks toward the kids.

"The cute kids," they shout.

"And who?" Rodriguez asks.

"The smart kids."



Photo by Rick Rodriguez

## Best Friends of 35 Years Write Children's Book

Maria Pappas Braxton loved meeting her best friend for lattes. But she heard her friend's dream of writing a children's book one too many times.

"Let's just do it," said Pappas, a 15-year math specialist at Stephens Elementary School. "Frankly I was getting tired of hearing it."



Maria Pappas

Pappas and her friend, Denise Coughlin, a former Certified Public Accountant and mother of three, spent a year writing, picking an illustrator, and finding a publisher. The book "The Petal Pals Beat the Heat" got published this year by NK Publications in New York.

"It was one of the best experiences I ever had," said Pappas, who wrote the book under her maiden name.

"The Petal Pals Beat the Heat" features four flower-characters — Rose, Violet, Daisy and Lily — and their friend, Bling, a hip-hop singing bumblebee. The pals desperately need to cool off after playing in the hot sun. Despite encountering obstacles, the pals prove that teamwork and cooperation work. This is the first book in a planned series of three.

"We thought it would be mainly a girls' book but the boys really like and identify with Bling," Pappas said.

"The best thing is I did it with my best friend."

For information about *The Petal Pals*, visit [www.petalpals.com](http://www.petalpals.com).



# Many Express Their Anger at the Open Forum

## OPEN FORUM, from Page 1

"I'm attending Vanderbilt University in the fall," said Chelsey Hall. "I feel like Detroit students aren't given anything."

"I want to be part of a system that has expectations of me and knows I can succeed," student Luba Burdette said.

A 2007 graduate said: "In the age when a black man can be a presidential candidate, a black child cannot get an education."

"It's no longer acceptable to have a separate and unequal system in Detroit," said attorney George Washington. "There's not a crisis in education in Bloomfield or Birmingham or Grosse Pointe. They're walking into U of M."

One parent said she was tired of being asked to support teachers during strikes, and the administration during student count days.

"When it comes time for count day,

we sent our kids to school because we want the money. We parents have been taking it all the time and maybe it's time for the parents to strike," said Tamara Wills.

Many in the audience tried to analyze the crisis and the lack of attendance.

"There's no one here that needs to hear it," said Cassandra Wells. "The people who can do something about it are not here."

The 200 people gathered agreed on one point: their leaders and elected officials should have attended. Clement Lett, legislative aide for Michigan Rep. Bettie Cook Scott, told the group that it needs to get active in Lansing.

"If you fight among yourselves, they're not going to do anything," Lett said. "You're not there. You don't voice your expression of anger in Lansing where it matters. I implore you to come to make your complaints."



DFT Executive Board member Ivy Bailey, left, and DFT President Virginia Cantrell, right, talk about Detroit Public School issues on the Frankie Darrell Show Oct. 12.

## Grants

### Science Grant

Toyota partners with the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) to offer financial support for K-12 science teachers who are implementing exciting, innovative science programs in their classrooms. The Toyota TAPESTRY program provides support and grants up to \$10,000 for those teachers dedicated to improving instruction and exciting students about science. The three project categories include environmental science, physical science, and integrating literacy and science. **Deadline:** Jan. 21, 2009. For info, visit <http://tapestry.nsta.org>.

### Young Scientists

The Zula International-NSTA Early Science Educator Award recognizes teachers in preK-2 who introduce innovative science inquiry programs to very young students. Eligible awards must be members of NSTA, CESI, NAEYC or National Head Start Association (NHSA). Funds of \$400; \$1,000 to attend NSTA national conference are offered. **Deadline:** Nov. 30, 2008. For info, visit [awards@nsta.org](mailto:awards@nsta.org).

### Bluegrass Music

The International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) provides matching grants to support bluegrass programs in the schools. The IBMA offers grants of \$200 for schools that intend to host programs showcasing bluegrass music.

**Deadline:** ongoing. For info, visit [info@ibma.org](mailto:info@ibma.org).

### Family Literacy

The National Center for Family Literacy and Toyota are seeking nominations for the Toyota Family Literacy Teacher of the Year Award. The \$7,500 award honors educators with positive results in working with families on literacy through early childhood education, school-based programs, adult literacy and ESL programs, parenting education, library literacy programs, and community literacy programs. **Deadline:** Dec. 5, 2008. For info, visit [ToyotaTeacher@famlit.org](mailto:ToyotaTeacher@famlit.org).

### Tech Education

The Astronauts Memorial Foundation (AMF), the Space Foundation and NASA are offering the Alan Shepard Technology in Education Award of \$500 for a K-12 educator who has made outstanding contributions to technology education. **Deadline:** Jan. 16, 2009. For info, visit [amfreg@amfcse.org](mailto:amfreg@amfcse.org).

### Sports Grants

Liberty Mutual's Responsible Sports Community Grant rewards youth sports organizations that receive certification by registering with and taking Responsible Sports courses and quizzes. A \$2,500 community grant will go to 20 organizations registered with Responsible Sports this year. Register your youth sports

organization first, then encourage supporters to take part in the self-paced Responsible Sports Parenting and Responsible Coaching coursework. **Deadline:** Nov. 30. For info, visit: [webmaster@responsiblesports.com](mailto:webmaster@responsiblesports.com).

### Recycling Grants

The Coca-Cola Foundation supports school drop-out prevention and other education initiatives. The foundation seeks to improve quality of life in communities, focusing on water stewardship, healthy and active lifestyles, community recycling and education. **No deadline.** For guidelines and grant compliance package, visit <http://www.thecoca-colacompany.com>.

### Science Programs

The Drug, Chemical and Associated Technologies Association and the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) are honoring an excellent science program with a \$2,500 grant for students in grades 6-12. Applicants must demonstrate effective teaching in science that helps students become interested or expand their interest in exploring science. **Deadline:** Nov. 30, 2008. For more info, visit [awards@nsta.org](mailto:awards@nsta.org).

### Library Award

The Sara Jaffarian Award, sponsored by the American Library Association, the National Endowment for the Humanities

and the American Association of School Librarians honors exemplary humanities programs performed by elementary and middle school libraries. A \$4,000 grant will be awarded. **Deadline:** Dec. 1, 2008. For info, visit [publicprograms@ala.org](mailto:publicprograms@ala.org).

### Film Projects

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences funds grants ranging between \$5,000 and \$15,000. The organization encourages the appreciation of the motion picture as an art form and vocation. **Deadline:** Jan. 15, 2009. For info, visit <http://www.oscars.org/grants>.

### Technology Teacher

The Foundation for Technology Education is offering \$1,000 grants in honor of Dr. Donald Maley to support teachers furthering technology education. The technology educator must be a member of the International Technology Education Association and must be planning or continuing his or her graduate education. **Deadline:** Dec. 1, 2008. For info, visit [itea@iteaconnect.org](mailto:itea@iteaconnect.org).

### Early Childhood

The Terri Lynne Lokoff Child Care Foundation recognizes the important role that child care teachers play in providing early education. Grants of \$500 for the teacher and \$500 for the program are available. **Deadline:** Dec. 5, 2008. For info, visit <http://www.tllccf.org>.

# Give Vocabulary a Boost

Understanding word meaning is, of course, fundamental to learning. That's why it's so important for children to expand their reading and listening vocabularies, as well as their productive vocabularies — the words they actually use when they speak and write.

Emphasizing words and vocabulary in your daily classroom activities can go a long way toward increasing your students' productive vocabulary. This, just like reading, will help them in all areas of their education. Here are a few activities that may help boost vocabulary:

- Concentrate on using different and interesting words when you speak to your students, both individually and as a class. For instance, tell them that their work has a great deal of *merit*, or congratulate them on doing a *splendid* job. Or ask a student to close a door that's *ajar* to keep a draft from *seeping* into the classroom.

- Send your students on a "word hunt." As a homework assignment, ask them to collect words that are

new to them or sound interesting or funny. These may be words they hear on television or the radio or from friends or family; or those they see in books, newspapers or magazines.

Have students read their words aloud to the rest of the class, discuss them, and then use the new words in oral and written presentations.

- Be on the alert for clever word usage in the literature and textbooks your students are reading. As such words come up, point them out to the class and ask what the words mean. Have the students use the new words in a sentence.

- Play name games. Several games exist for various age groups that give students the opportunity to play with rhyming riddles, create and evaluate definitions, and describe words and concepts. Whenever possible, incorporate these games into your spelling or language arts classes. Encourage students to play the games on their own during recess or free time.

*Cut & Paste*

## Working on the "Write" Stuff

Good communication skills are an essential part of today's fast-paced technological society. Students will need to write well and make themselves understood in almost any profession or occupation they choose.

Clear, concise writing is not only vital for excellent communication and understanding, it is also important as a tool for thought. It helps students learn how to think things through clearly, logically, and thoroughly, as well as how to define and explain ideas.

There are several ways writing can be worked into your daily classroom routine. Some of these suggestions may work for you:

- Write to your students. Leave them notes with kudos like, "I'm proud of you. You did a great job on your spelling test." Kids will not only begin to cherish and value the printed word, they are likely to respond in kind.
- Urge your class to compose at the computer. Keyboarding is much easier than handwriting — ideas will flow more freely and writing will be accomplished faster.
- Have your students pretend they are reporters. Ask them to interview and write about their family members, best friends, classmates, or other teachers or school staff. Make a project out of assembling the interview into a class newspaper. Do this on a monthly or quarterly basis.
- Put a new spin on book reports. Suggest that your students rewrite a section of the story from a specific character's point of view, or ask them to predict what that character may be doing in 10 or 20 years and write about it.
- Encourage students to keep a daily journal at school. Ask them to write about their experiences both at home and in the classroom. At the end of the school year, suggest that they take the journal home and continue writing throughout the summer.
- Send a letter home once a week. Have students write letters to their parents each Friday, describing what they did in class during that week, what projects or special assignments they completed, and what they feel they learned.

*Cut & Paste*

# CHRISTMAS BAZAAR



**Saturday, Nov. 22, 2008**  
**9 a.m. – 5 p.m.**

**Teachers and Community  
Members Welcome**

**Where: Detroit Federation of Teachers  
Office**

**2875 W. Grand Boulevard**  
**(NE corner of W. Grand Blvd. and Lodge Fwy.)**

**COST per table: \$50 each**  
(Available on first come first served basis)

For further information, please contact:  
**Sandra Ambrose, Samele Ambrose & Sidney Lee**  
**at (313) 875-3500, ext. 779**





# Emerson School: From Reading to Reptiles

Emerson elementary students didn't expect real reptiles to be *that* real. Myrtle the turtle probably got a bit nervous with 29 first-graders looking on.

"It peed," a student announced.

"Well, they do the same things we do," said Kim Sherwin, an interpreter for the Belle Isle Nature Zoo. Sherwin brought the turtle and a snake to let the children touch and discover reptiles.

"When a snake sticks their tongue out, they're not trying to be mean, they're trying to smell you," explained Sherwin.

Sherwin was invited to Emerson by science teacher Kunjan Vyas, who wants to give students experiences with nature they might not have oth-

erwise. While still working to improve, Vyas has solid science scores that underscore her work in hands-on science.

Emerson teachers made a push in many areas this fall. In October, the school's Jumpstart reading campaign joined preschool through first grade readers around the country to simultaneously read "Corduroy" — a book by Don Freeman about a little bear with a missing button who wanted a friend and a real home.

"We're making reading fun," said first grade teacher Pam McIntosh. "There was a big nation-wide push to read that one story on the same day. It makes them feel that they are not isolated in this room. They feel a part of the bigger picture. The Emerson family joins the U.S. family."



## Girls Face a Catch 22

By Ron Seigel

Last month I described how boys are often brainwashed into associating their sexual identities with aggressiveness, the capacity to cause other people pain. Girls, however, are often pressured into associating femininity with pleasing others and basing their sense of self-worth on other people's approval.

Psychiatrist Rosalind Wiseman wrote in her book "Queen Bees and Wannabees" that since adolescent girls see being accepted by others as "a matter of life and death...the world (especially school) can be a very scary place."

The brainwashing boys and girls face are not as different as they look. Both involve a psychological regimentation. If pressures to be masculine force boys to hide or repress all emotions except anger, psychiatrist Mary Pipher notes that girls are pressured to "abandon their true selves and take up a false self." Boys often act aggressively and cause pain, not because they are freer, but because they consider this necessary to be accepted by their own peer group. The desire of girls for acceptance can result in a mean competition for popularity and the establishment of cliques, which result in creating pain.

Wiseman notes, "As soon as you define your role and group, you perceive others to be outsiders. It's hard to put yourself in their shoes and, therefore, it's easier to be cruel to them or watch and do nothing."

Pressures on both sexes create problems in learning. Boys who do well in school are often labeled nerds or geeks. Girls often fear they will be considered unattractive for being too smart.

In many ways, though, girls are in a Catch 22. Wiseman noted that all too often their self-worth is tied up with achieving "an impossible standard of beauty," created largely by the media and advertisers for commercial purposes. However, those who are social and outgoing often find that they and their ideas are not taken seriously and Pipher noted those that are "too attractive" are often "seen primarily as sex objects."

While girls often are pressured to base their self-worth on the approval of boys, boys' fears of being feminine create a hostility toward girls combined with pressures to "prove their manhood" by having sex with as many girls as possible. Wiseman suggests this unhappy mixture of pressures can lead to deception, abusive relationships and date rape. Wiseman urges adults to encourage girls to challenge "the culture that creates such problems," so they can "reach their full potential."

*Ron Seigel is a freelance writer from Highland Park, 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.

### NOVEMBER

- 6** Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 11** Half-Day, Veterans Day
- 13** General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 17** Social Workers Chapter, 3:45 p.m.
- 18** Retirees Chapter, 11:30 a.m.
- 22** Christmas Bazaar, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- 24** Special Ed Chapter, 4:30 p.m.
- 26** Schools close at end of day, Thanksgiving Recess

### DECEMBER

- 1** Schools Reopen
- 4** Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 11** General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 19** Schools close at end of day, Christmas Break