

THE DETROIT teacher IT

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Davis Aerospace High School Where Students Can Fly. Literally!

The high school that teaches Detroit teenagers to fly airplanes and fix engines is one of only two in the country. Yet, many people in Michigan don't know Davis Aerospace High School exists.

"We're one of the best schools in the district," says Andrew Hester, a power plant teacher at the school.

Founded in 1943 during the war effort to train pilots and mechanics, the school still exists on the grounds of the Detroit City Airport near Lynch Road and Van Dyke. It serves 200 students on an application basis for careers in aviation. Students graduate to become pilots, yes, but also pursue careers in aviation medicine, law and business.

Davis consistently makes Adequate Yearly Progress, the state's measurement of success. A

comprehensive high school with math, English, social studies and science, Davis was named one of America's best high schools by *U.S. News and World Report* for three consecutive years.

Junior Simya Williams, 16, tells her friends that she flies, which feels like riding a roller coaster. "They're amazed. They say, 'I don't believe you.'"

Davis is very concentrated in science and technology with courses in robotics, avionics, electrical instruments, drafting and welding. The school is acquiring a new flight simulator and has a fleet of four planes.

"Something like this you can't beat," says 30-year U.S. Air Force veteran Walter Cook, an ROTC teacher. "This is the only school in the nation that does this."



Flight Instructor Cliff Miller, above, with Davis students.



Emergency Financial Manager Bill Devastating to Detroit

As the Wisconsin legislature voids collective bargaining for public employees, a no-less devastating bill is making its way through the Michigan legislature.

Bill 4214 passed the Michigan House in late February and a similar bill was in the Senate at press time. The bill would allow an emergency financial manager broad powers to change or void any part of a collective bargaining agreement he doesn't like. And it would prohibit collective bargaining for five years after the EFM leaves.

EFMs are in place in three cities in Michigan — Pontiac, Benton Harbor and River Rouge — and one school district — Detroit.

"This bill would be as devastating as the Wisconsin law," said DFT president Keith Johnson, who went to Lansing on several occasions to testify and lobby against the bill. Union leaders said the bill assumes the local collective bargaining units have not made concessions to help with the fiscal crises in their communities. But,

like Detroit teachers, they have.

In addition, EFM Robert Bobb is still negotiating several draconian options to pay off the \$300 million long-term debt.

There's more.

At the end of the 2010-11 school year, DPS' budget should be in balance, with revenues and expenditures matching up. However, next comes the 2011-12 school year. The founda-

tion grant is being reduced by \$447 per student. Student enrollment is predicted to drop by 8,000. The employer retirement rate is going up by four percentage points and DPS' special purpose funds from the state are being cut by \$10 million.

The effect of all of these changes on DPS' bottom line is a negative of approximately \$100 million.

It remains to be seen how this budget can be balanced.

ATTACKS ON COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ARE UNWISE AND UNWARRANTED

Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, New Mexico, Ohio. What do these states have in common? Aside from being in financial distress, as is most of America, they are all trying to balance budgets on the backs of the working class, particularly those who are public employees – teachers, firefighters, police officers, clericals and others who provide invaluable public service.

The aim is to eliminate the right to

President's Report



**Keith
Johnson**

collectively bargain, and to give an entity such as an Emergency Financial Manager the right to terminate parts or an entire collective bargaining agreement negotiated in good faith.

What those (mainly Republicans) pushing these legislative agendas choose to ignore is that it is not the collective bargaining agreements that are causing financial distress. **IT'S THE ECONOMY, STUPID!**

Collective bargaining is not the impediment to fiscal solvency, it is the catalyst. Union brothers and sisters are acutely aware that our economy is struggling. We understand that in order for fiscal recovery to take place we must all make sacrifices. We also understand the importance of "buy-in"

by those who are being asked to make the sacrifices. That buy-in can only occur when fiscal reform is done **WITH US, NOT TO US.**

It was through collective bargaining that the Big 3 – Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler – were able to restructure their corporations by renegotiating agreements to avoid or come out of bankruptcy.

These companies took the wise step to work **WITH** the workers who produce the products they want consumers to purchase. As their profits increase, they reward the workers with profit-sharing bonuses.

This sends the message that labor and management are in this together; that as the corporation benefits so will the workers. It is essential that they work together to remain viable.

The DFT engaged in contentious negotiations with the DPS leadership because of the fiscal distress the school district was buried in. We had to make difficult, unpopular decisions to place DPS on a path to fiscal solvency.

The TIP plan, for which I have been vilified, was necessary to save the district \$52 million **WITHOUT CAUSING A PERMANENT 10 PERCENT PAY CUT**, not to mention the jobs of 1,500 DFT members.

Restructuring the elementary prep periods saved \$11.2 million **WITHOUT TEACHERS LOSING A DAILY PREP**. Limiting health care options and adjusting prescription drug coverage saved the district \$22 million by reducing the health care cost for the average member from \$11,000 to \$7,000 per member.



Happy 80th Birthday to the DFT

On Feb. 24, 1931 a feisty band of Detroit teachers, ignoring threats of reprisals from the school administration, was awarded a charter as Detroit Federation of Teachers Local 231. The DFT celebrates its birthday every year at its February General Membership Meeting. Pictured above is active member and teacher Vida Bonacci with a piece of birthday cake.

As unpopular as some of these decisions were, they allowed us to preserve jobs, salaries and benefits. At the same time, they allowed DPS to bring its expenditures in line with its revenues.

Had DPS been allowed to impose its proposals, rather than negotiate with us, the consequences would have been far worse. While it was still a heavy lift, it proved that the collective bargaining process is a vital cog to maintain stability.

To his credit, Gov. Rick Snyder has been clear in his position that he has **NO INTEREST** in attacking the collec-

tive bargaining rights of public employees. In an interview, the governor said he believes it is important to have a positive working relationship with the labor unions that represent public employees.

Let's hope that he can convey the position that we are a partner in the rebuilding of a better Michigan, not an enemy of it.

Attempting to rebuild Michigan on the backs of labor will break the backs of both, and we all LOSE.

The Contributions of Color

Detroit Public Schools celebrated Black History Month in many different ways. A. L. Holmes Academy rolled out one of the most outstanding programs, under the leadership of principal Leenet Campbell-Williams.

Second-grade teacher Aliya Sahadi wrote a phenomenal skit on the Montgomery Bus Boycott, in which students dressed in character of the South during the '50s. The bus driver with Rosa Parks beside him swayed with the bus's turns.

Another class wrote a play about Fredrick Douglass and one class showed the many everyday inventions made by Black Americans. Holmes



Spanish teacher Kelly Warnos with African-American heroes.

eighth-grader Jamel Lavender demonstrated Michael Jackson's moonwalk,

perhaps better than the King of Pop himself.

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Updates...

Retirements Announced

The following DFT members have retired: Forrest Chaffee, Dennis Bee, James M. Walls, Victor Williams and Madeline Wallace Wilson. If you have retired in the last six months and would like it announced, call the editor at 313-875-6776.

DFT Memorial Scholarship

The DFT Memorial Scholarship Fund is for students in the College of Education at Wayne State University who are willing to teach in the Detroit Public Schools after graduation. Anyone can make a contribution by sending a check or money order made out to the "DFT Memorial Scholarship Fund" to the DFT, 2875 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, MI 48202. Contributions can be made in memory

of a loved one or congratulating a graduate. The DFT makes a contribution to the fund in the memory of any DFT member who passes away. The DFT Retirees Chapter holds a 50/50 raffle at its meeting every month, with the proceeds going to the fund. Members also are encouraged to contribute to the fund. "The more money we get, the more scholarships we can give," says Barbara Ward, chair of the DFT scholarship committee.

Voting for Election Committee March 10

Nominations for DFT Election Committee members closed at the Feb. 10 general membership meeting. The vote will take place at the March 10 general membership meeting. Voting is from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Anyone in line at 5:30 p.m. will be allowed to vote. Make sure you bring your 2011 membership card.

Moses Field Hosts Science Fair



There's a rebirth going on at Moses Field, a center based program for three- to 13-year-olds who are autistic or cognitively impaired. Fired up under the leadership of new principal Letanya Dandridge, the staff organized monthly committees to focus on a school-wide activity.

The "January Committee" named January "Science Month." The staff conducted the first science fair in many years. More than 17 science projects took on the topics of how much waste one classroom produces to whether ice melts faster than snow.

The students even conducted an experiment on which type of food the birds in their courtyard preferred. Answer: bread.

"Everyone was focused on answering the big question," said Barbara Branhan, above, an art teacher with a specialization in curriculum. "They could actually see the birds come to our courtyard. It's been a phenomenal month."

The school aims for hands-on activities and opportunities for the students to interact. All of the activities are aligned with the Michigan Extended Grade Level Content Expectations (EGLCEs).

DETROIT FEDERATION OF TEACHERS 2010 DUES FOR TAX PURPOSES

Full Dues	\$880.84
Three-Quarter Dues	\$660.63
Half Dues.....	\$440.42
Quarter Dues.....	\$220.21



Hamilton Helps Gleaners

Hamilton School's 21st Century After School All Stars know the meaning of giving. They hosted a school-wide food drive for Gleaners. Students collected over 700 canned goods. "We have learned a lot about philanthropy," said student Dawnisha Fisher. Another student, Floyd Braham said, "It feels good to help others." "It is important for students to understand that they have a responsibility to help others in their community," said Jacqueline Blakely, site coordinator for the program.

What Story Are You Telling?

When I decided to leave a successful career in business to teach elementary school in Detroit, I heard a lot of second-guessing from friends and colleagues. I learned to brace myself for questions about what I would be teaching (not college or high school?), where I would teach (not the suburbs?), who I would teach (Detroit Public School students?), and how much I would make (an 80 percent pay cut!).

So when my dentist, who I have known my entire life, asked me about my career change, I was prepared for the worst. He said, "I have a patient who teaches in Detroit." After a long pause he shocked me by saying, "She really likes it."

I still remember the sense of validation that gave me. My dentist may have never set foot in a Detroit Public School, but he was saying good things about DPS by simply repeating what he had heard.

Unfortunately, it's not just the good news that gets repeated. People form lasting opinions about us based on the stories we tell and others retell.

Our jobs are directly tied to enroll-

ment. As enrollment drops, our ranks are further reduced. We lost over half our members in the last 10 years, and will lose more as parents take their children out of our schools and out of our city.



Mark O'Keefe

Let's keep this in mind as we decide which stories to tell out of school.

This is undoubtedly the most trying time in our district's and union's history. The epic financial crisis has helped prompt the legislature to act quickly on legislation that would effectively eliminate our collective bargaining agreement and prohibit collective bargaining for five years or until receivership is terminated.

We need to speak loudly about the problems with proposed legislation as we offer better alternatives. We also need to tell about the successes that we help create everyday in our classrooms.

Come to Our School Because It's Good!

By Charlene Uresy

Detroit Public Schools are changing rapidly, making sweeping changes to attract new students and bring back those who left.

The Parent School Shopper Fairs (three on consecutive Saturdays) sponsored by Excellent Schools Detroit was a public notice to do just that. Spain School was among the 46 public, private, and charter schools at Fellowship Chapel Church selected to participate on all three days.

The Saturday was bitter cold, but teachers at Spain gave up a portion of their day to enthusiastically express to parents and children why Spain School is a great school!

Parents literally shopped from table to table, to learn what the different schools had to offer their children. Spain teachers mentioned classes such as: physical education, swimming, dance, band, orchestra, drama and computers. They also highlighted extra curricular activities like DAP-CEP, boys and girls bas-

ketball, cheerleading, Academic Games, mentoring, and a nationally recognized chess team, to arouse the educational desires for their children.

This event was very important to Principal Ronald Alexander and his teachers. That is why Spain had eight teachers at the fair on the first Saturday. Attending were: Assistant Principal Venisha Combs, Yolanda Graves, Kimberly La Greair, Charlene Uresy, Brenda Jones, Arthur Davis, Debra Blocker and Lokia Wilson.

It was easy for them to talk about Spain, a school they love and encourage others to come and love too.

Education in DPS is also about getting on board the "I'm In" campaign and increase awareness of the Alumni Association. At Spain, hundreds of students have returned over the years, sharing how Spain helped to educate and shape their lives.



Spain teachers at the School Shopper fair (from left): Charlene Uresy, Venisha Combs, Debra Blocker and Kimberly La Greair

THE DETROIT NEWSM

BARSAMIAN TEEN

Almost nothing slips out of John Rybicki's mouth without symbolism, imagery or a metaphor. The poet-in-residence at Barsamian Preparatory Center is teaching the alternative education students every minute.

The students seem to have plenty of emotional terrain to cover with Rybicki. "The best writing seems to come out of the earthquake of the human heart," Rybicki says.

The 49-year-old poet has been working for two months with the students to unleash some of the pain or experiences that got them expelled from traditional Detroit high schools. But it can be a challenge.

"They clatter around with suits of armor," said Rybicki, who is commissioned to do 25 sessions with the students through InsideOut, a Detroit based organization that works with more than 6,000 Detroit students to write and publish their poetry.

Ann Hegarty, the English and humanities teacher Rybicki works with, had a tough first year at the school. The 35-year teacher has 11 years in alternative ed. Still, Barsamian gave her a run for her teacher's certificate.

"When I started here, I hit them with my best stuff and usually my best stuff works," she said. "But the kids can be really rough and mean."

Enter Rybicki, himself the product of a tough Detroit upbringing.

"I was a high school dropout and a two-time runaway," he says. His Huckleberry Finn childhood gave way to a moment at 12 years old when he said, "I have to write this down." Now he is an author of three books and holds two degrees and a masters of fine arts from Western Michigan University.

The school has seen a poetic turnaround since Rybicki arrived.

"This whole school has now embraced this notion that I can be a poet, I can express myself," Hegarty said. She says the students are not there because of lower skills but because "they never sat still enough to listen to themselves and others."

Now every student is listening and trying out words, which satisfies Rybicki.

"When I leave here, I feel the light dripping from my tennis shoes."

Students Snowshoe at the Winter Special Olympics

Jacqui was like a china doll. The 11-year-old is small and fragile. She complained and tired easily when physical education teacher Maciej Litkowiec took her outside to walk in the blustery weather with snowshoes.

"I told her to take her time," Litkowiec said. But she saw the other kids and something changed.

"She got it in her head that she needed to emulate the other students," the Moses Field teacher said. Litkowiec said Jacqui is becoming a stronger athlete by the day.

Litkowiec took Jacqui and four other Moses Field students to Traverse City in February to compete in the Winter Special Olympic Games. It was the first time the school participated. Moses Field is a center based program

for three- to 13-year-old autistic and cognitively impaired students.

"These kids are not going to be the same when they come back," Litkowiec said. "This is a lifetime experience for them. They'll see 3,000 students competing." What's more, the kids get to participate in opening and closing ceremonies, dances, sled and snowmobile rides, and stay at the Traverse City Resort Hotel.

"It really helps when the principal is behind you," Litkowiec says of principal Letanya Dandridge. He wants to introduce the ambulatory students to different experiences, more cardiovascular activities and outdoor sports. He'll introduce bicycling in the spring.

"I'm so pumped up," he said. "These kids cannot be written off."



Physical Education teacher Maciej Litkowiec with his students practicing snowshoeing.

ROIT teacher MAKERS

NS GET POETRY



Outside My Window

By Kameron Pleasant

Mr. Pugh sits in the garage
in a rocking chair checking
out the cars and enjoying
the sunny sky. Sometimes
when I walk over there
he lifts up his leg and pulls
out a whiskey bottle and just starts
drinking. He has a three car garage
and sits in the middle of it
beside his broke down white Range Rover.
Sometimes he asks me to go
to the store and buy him a cigarette.
I'm like a ping pong ball ricocheting
off the light and dark bricks
of my street. I bounce from store to garage,
store to garage passing him those cigarettes.

Once I went a couple of weeks
without seeing Mr. Pugh.
One day on my way home
from school I saw the delivery man
dropping
off oxygen tanks. Mr. Pugh was in the garage
sitting in his rocking chair
inhaling the oxygen.

Sometimes Mrs. Pugh passes
in and out of the garage
like the smoke
from Mr. Pugh's lungs.

Loving School Optimist Club Wins Souper Bowl

By Fatima N. Plater

The Loving Eagles Junior Optimist Club at Loving Elementary School held a school-wide canned food drive as part of a national youth-led movement of giving and serving. School participation takes place during the week leading up to Super Bowl Sunday.

Students at Loving learned vocabulary related to the hungry

through crossword puzzles, discussions and games. Principal Vernice Gaines offered her support to the drive and assisted with PR. Maria Davis, co-advisor of the club with retired Detroit teacher Fatima Plater, invited William Whitfield, founder of the S.E.A.S.O.N.S. Ministry to speak to the club regarding the problem of feeding those in need in our community.

The Loving Eagles Junior Optimist Club collected over 860 cans of food for the S.E.A.S.O.N.S. Ministry, which feeds the hungry outside the Tsunami Center in the Cass Corridor.

The Green Bay Packers may have won the Super Bowl, but the Loving club is flying high from winning the Souper Bowl of Caring for the hungry in their community.



Detroit Schools Place First and Second in State Chess Tourney

By Charlene Uresy

The Spain Elementary School Chess Team walked into the Michigan State Association Chess Tournament poised and confident -- ready to do battle -- despite being an hour and a half late.

The team's bus was late picking them up. Their confidence, however, came from participating in the state competition (for kindergarten through sixth grades) last year and placing. More confidence came from winning first place in this year's Elementary Detroit Metro Scholastic Chess League Tournament.

At Michigan State University, Spain placed second to Detroit's Bates Academy in the state-wide competition. Spain would have tied for first place with Bates if the team had arrived on time.

Coach Elana Webster, sixth grade math teacher, and assistant coach Bryan Wilson,

were thrilled with the performances of their students. The competition drew school districts from all over the state — Ann Arbor, Grand Rapids, Okemos, Rochester and Southfield.

Spain's chess team loved being on Michigan State's campus and was in awe over how big it is. The students also enjoyed the experience of competing against so many schools. Coach Webster and the team handled the disappointment of not placing first with great sportsmanship. They were pleased that the first- and second-place teams were from the Detroit Public Schools.



First row (from left): Bryan Wilson, Immanuel Arrington, Daniel Britton and Marcus Badgett. Second row: Coach Elana Webster, Ophelia Joseph, Aini-Alem Robertson, Destiny Willis and Darius Britton.

DFT Leadership Team

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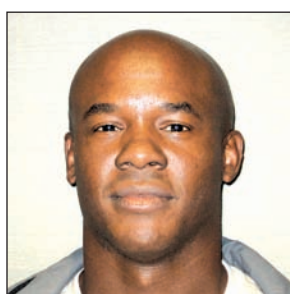
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LaSHAWN SIMS

Coach Gets Teachers Past Fear of Computers

Karen Bartman has mastered the art of teaching. Now she has to learn to do it digitally.

The idea of keeping attendance and grades on Zangle, working with her colleagues in Google Docs, and Skyping with her students put dread in the stomach of the Burns Elementary School teacher.

Sylvia Tillman came to hold her hand.

"We can do this. You can do this," Tillman, a technology coach, told her. The very resistant and reluctant teacher gave it a whirl.

Now Bartman actually loves Zangle. She is on her way. Her husband bought her a laptop for Christmas, to boot.

Bartman was not the only tech resistant teacher at Burns. Practically everyone was. But that has changed.

In a tiny computer lab at Burns, some two dozen teachers, including the principal, huddle on Wednesdays for a

webinar and Fridays from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. They have signed up for an on-line course that is costing them \$25 each, taught by Tillman, and earns them 12 SBCEUs or four credits toward their masters degrees.

Better yet, they are learning to use technology to make their jobs more efficient, team teach, differentiate instruction, grow parent involvement, and make students responsible for their homework.

"My students will be able to Skype me if they have a problem at night," said Era Benson, one of the teachers who is raving about the "The 21 Things for the 21st Century Educator" program Tillman is facilitating. The teachers range from very tech savvy to petrified. By the end of the course, all of them will be ahead of their peers because of the Ingham ISD program and because of Tillman.

"She is the guru. She is the leader,

the one who helps us," says Era Benson, a third-grade teacher. "She's so wonderful."

The teachers will create their own homepages and Wiki accounts, visit educational websites, learn technology tools to collaborate, and play academic games they will introduce to their students.

Erika Taylor, a younger teacher, says students enjoy technology so it's incumbent that teachers integrate it into the curriculum and their everyday lessons.

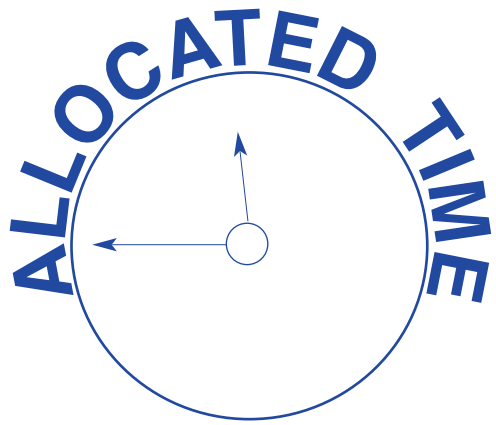
"There's lots to keep them motivated because kids like to be on the computer," says Taylor. This all in the nick of time for the arrival of the district's Netbooks.



Pictured above are teachers Era Benson, Sylvia Tillman and Erika Taylor.

"What I'm happy about is Detroit takes Zangle to the next level," Tillman said, who has a state education technology endorsement. "There is so much stuff in there to make our life easier."

Teachers can visit the website by going to www.21things4teachers.net.



By Jeana Harper, PAR Consultant

It only makes sense: Teachers who spend more time teaching a specific content area have students who achieve at higher levels in that area. We know it, but have we really thought about it?

All of us have our strengths and weaknesses. When we teach what we love and know, our students definitely benefit. Test scores and our students' enthusiasm show that our zeal for this content is manifested. It's all about allocated time or the "opportunity to learn."



Jeana Harper

States and school boards create policy regarding the amount of time allocated for learning. Of course student achievement is not dependent only on how much time we allocate for learning. An array of factors impact student achievement such as: improving leadership skills of principals and teachers, ensuring teacher quality through job-embedded professional development, and using data to meet student needs. High expectations for all students, parent involvement, and supportive learning environments are essential to quality instruction. (AFT, Foundations I, Time On Task)

Let's start with ourselves first because we are the only ones with complete control over what we do. I

have taught Spanish for many years. My students excelled in speaking. This was to be expected because I spent a great deal of "allocated time" on activities that were communicative. I allocated time for reading and listening too. But I have to admit, the time allocated for writing was not as much as for speaking. Subsequently, my students spoke more than they wrote. When I realized this, I worked diligently to even out the time allocated for each aspect of language learning.

As teachers, let's look at our instructional practices and find areas we can spend more time to ensure our students have a balanced education. We can ask ourselves:

- Are we using our time efficiently? The few minutes at the beginning and end of the day are precious. Preview (bell work) and review activities are wonderful ways of power-packing instructional time. Exit passes can be great review strategies where students write what they learned on an index card in order to go home or to the next class.
- Do our lesson plans reflect sufficient time for each required subject or concept? (Not too much, but not too little).
- Do we use varied approaches in our delivery of the lessons and in classroom activities?
- Do we focus on the quality of the lesson and not the quantity of time?
- Do we take advantage of the technology and instructional supports that the district provides such as Learning Village?
- Do we read professional development literature and attend as much quality professional development as possible?

There is only a certain amount of time to teach, but it is up to us how we spend that time and how we balance what we deliver to our students. A balanced education is just as important as a balanced diet. They both determine the quality of life for generations to come.

Grants...

Chemistry

The ACS-Hach High School Chemistry Grants support high school chemistry teachers who seek funds for projects or lessons that transform student learning, foster student development, and reveal the wonders of chemistry. Grants up to \$1,500 are available to high school chemistry teachers with innovative and exciting ideas. Deadline: April 1, 2011. For info, visit hach@acs.org.

Arts and Humanities

The VSA Playwright Discovery Program recognizes young playwrights in middle or high school who examine how disability affects them or their world and express their views through writing plays. Young playwrights with or without disabilities may submit a play. Winners receive a \$2,000 award and travel to Washington, D.C. to see their plays performed at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts. Deadline: April 15, 2011. For more info, visit info@vsarts.org.

Healthy Students

Students in grades K-12 who sign up for the Fuel Up to Play 60 Program can participate in a healthy eating and activity program as well as having the chance to win rewards for themselves and their schools. School staff may start a program in their school or serve as Program Advisors. The program, sponsored by the National Dairy Council and the National Football League, gives incentives to students for healthy eating and engaging in 60 minutes of activity daily. Winners receive \$100 gift cards. Deadline: March 31, 2011. For info, visit www.fueluptoplay60.com.

Service Learning

WaysToHelp.org is offering teens opportunities to volunteer and participate in service learning projects with grants to support their efforts. The WaysToHelp.org site makes it easy for teens to learn about and take action on 16 important issues. Grants vary and are awarded on a monthly, ongoing basis. For info, visit www.WaysToHelp.org.

Fruit Tree Planting

The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation based in California is

dedicated to planting fruitful trees and plants to combat global warming, strengthen communities, help alleviate hunger, and improve surrounding air, soil and water. FTPF programs donate trees to places where the harvest will serve communities for generations. Public schools are eligible for the "Fruit Tree 101" program, which creates edible orchard classrooms to provide students with environmental education opportunities and a source of organic fruit for improved school lunch nutrition. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis and are available online. Visit www.ftpf.org/fruit-tree101.htm.

Technology

In an effort to bridge the digital divide for under-privileged children, GTECH After School Advantage provides grants of computer labs to eligible programs by schools. These computer centers provide inner-city children ages 5 to 15 with a meaningful and fun learning experience during after-school hours in a safe environment. GTECH provides up to \$15,000 worth of equipment for computer labs for minority and at-risk children on an ongoing basis. For info, visit www.gtech.com.

Adopt-A-School

FedEx Social Responsibility, the charitable arm of the FedEx company, supports communities and works extensively with programs such as Junior Achievement and Adopt-A-School. The company also supports organizations that enhance education in the following areas: technology, global economics and trade, cultural diversity, and innovative programs. FedEx give grants on an ongoing basis. For info, visit communityrelations@fedex.com.

Capital Campaigns

The Kresge Foundation provides challenge grants to help nonprofit organizations with their capital campaigns designed to improve facilities. The foundation will award grants on an ongoing basis ranging from \$100,000 to \$2.5 million for eligible capital improvement projects. Elementary and secondary schools that primarily serve students with physical or developmental disabilities are eligible. For info, visit www.kresge.org.

Important Information About the Retirement Process

By Patrick Falcusan
DFT Retirement Counselor

It appears that once again there will be a large number of retirements from the district this year. Several questions always pop up when folks retire:



Patrick Falcusan

What happens to my health care? When does the payment for my sick days come? When does my pension start, etc.? Below are many of the answers.

Q: What happens to my health care?

A: Your district insurance will stop the last day of the month you retire (June 30 for those retiring July 1). Your new retirement insurance will start the first day of the month you retire (July 1 for those retiring July 1).

Q: What happens to my pay?

A: For those retiring July 1, one more regular check will come in July (both for 22 pays and 26 pays).

Q: I have 26 pays and retired July 1.

What happens to the four checks that normally come in the summer?

A: Those four checks will come along with other monies owed you in one big final check.

Q: When will I get my final check for sick days, TIP monies, last four checks, etc.?

A: In most cases, the final payment will come in mid to late August for folks retiring July 1. If you are sheltering or buying time with any of this money, you must have notified the district ahead of time.

Q: When will my pension begin?

A: Most folks retiring July 1 will get two pension payments in August: one payment in mid August and one payment at the end of August.

Q: Can I work after I retire?

A: You can not work for a school district that is part of the retirement system for one month after you retire.

Q: If I get a job after I retire, will I have a limit on how much I can earn?

A: New rules about working after retirement became effective July 1, 2010.

1. If you work for a school district that is part of the state retirement system and you become an

employee of that school district and are paid directly by that school district, you will have an earnings cap of one-third of your final salary average — \$20,000-\$24,000 for most folks.

2. If you work for a school district that accepts state aid — all charter and public schools — but that district uses a third party to pay your wages, your pension and health care will stop as long as you are receiving wages from the third party.
3. If you become a consultant for a school district and are paid as a consultant and not an employee, your pension and health care will stop as long as you are receiving wages from that district.
4. If you work somewhere that is not accepting state aid — a private school, in private industry or a public school in another state beside Michigan — you can earn as much as you want.

Q: Will collecting Social Security impact how much I can earn?

A: Yes, between 62 and 66 (or your full Social Security age) there is a Social Security annual limit of approximately \$14,000 on how much can be earned without impacting your Social Security.

After 66 (or your full Social Security age), Social Security does not have an earnings cap. The pension system's earnings cap will remain in place the rest of your life.



PASSPORT TO AFRICA – Carleton Elementary School literacy coach Marietta Thomas, above right, organized a literacy project Feb. 16 based on learning the customs, cuisine and literature of the African continent. Each class in grade kindergarten through third organized an activity and hosted guest speakers and readers. “We introduced multi-cultural literature based on its quality and literary merit,” Thomas said. The 18-year Detroit teacher posted signs on each class introducing an African country, its flag, and a map of where it’s located. Teachers and guests introduced students to such treasures as “The Egyptian Cinderella”, “Abiyoyo” and “Learning to Swim in Swaziland.” Some teachers went all out in African dress like second-grade teacher Sansulan Lucas, pictured above left with students.

Calendar

All meetings will be held at 2875 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, unless otherwise noted. Dates and times are subject to change.

MARCH

- 10 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 15 Retirees Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.
- 15 Attendance Agents Chapter Meeting, 4:00 p.m.
- 15 School Counselors Chapter Meeting, 4:00 p.m.
- 17 Early Childhood Chapter Meeting, 4:15 p.m.
- 21 Special Education Chapter Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 31 Educational Technicians Chapter Meeting, 3:30 p.m.
- 31 Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.

APRIL

- 7 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 11 Special Education Chapter Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 12 School Social Workers Chapter Meeting, 3:45 p.m.
- 12 Attendance Agents Chapter Meeting, 4:00 p.m.
- 12 School Counselors Chapter Meeting, 4:00 p.m.
- 14 Early Childhood Chapter Meeting, 4:15 p.m.
- 19 Retirees Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.
- 18-25 School Closed, Spring Break