

THE DETROIT teacher

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Detroit, 11, is National Winner in Academic Games

When math teachers Karen Simister and Willie Brown get their Academic Games team together to practice, they know it will pay off. The teachers bring back awards each year from state and national contests.

But they are up against stiff competition within the district alone. Thirteen DPS teams (four from Cass Tech, five from Bates Academy, and teams from Clippert, Schulze, Hutchins at McMichael, and Vernor) competed at the nationals. That meant they practiced at lunch time, after school and over spring break.



Winner Camyrea Barnes and teacher Karen Simister.

“We had to work twice as hard but that’s OK,” said Simister, a 31-year teacher. It all paid off. Sixth-grader Camyrea Barnes was the elementary

sweepstakes winner in the national Academic Games in April in Ripley, W. Va. Camyrea scored the most points and had the highest overall score in competitions in logic, math, language arts, and social studies in the elementary division. “I was surprised because I thought kids from Bates were going to get it,” she said.

Camyrea, a 4.0 student, is being mentored by Detroit Symphony Orchestra’s violinist Joseph Striplin, the DSO’s first African American violinist. To be in such an exclusive mentorship, Camyrea had to audition and has played with the DSO for two years.

Camyrea also attended the national Academic Games last year as the only fifth-grade girl on her school’s team with four sixth-grade boys.

“My dad told me it doesn’t matter if people talk about you, you still go on.”



Kurtis Brown, left, with teachers Marwan Wright and David Chapman and student Bakari Murrie, 11

Men’s Revolution at Mann School

It’s been almost 20 years, and Detroit teacher Kurtis Brown is still wrapping his head around it. *It* is the drive-by shooting and death of his younger brother at the age of 16.

“I couldn’t sleep for a year,” Brown, 38, says. At the time of his brother’s death, Brown was 19 and entering his second year at college. His brother, nearing football stardom at Henry Ford High School and a dynamic kid, was killed by someone he had never met. The chance conditions are something Brown has played over in his mind for years.

Why is life so cheap, he wondered? And what can I do to stop this destruction in my community? At lunch at Mann Elementary School on the west side, the computer teacher and his colleagues always returned to the same conversation.

“We ate lunch together every day and the topic, over sports, over everything else, was how we can have a more positive influence on our society,” Brown said. Soon Brown and seven colleagues launched a lunchtime program with 24

boys called Young Black Men Excelling.

They meet on Thursdays for formal and informal talks on leadership, discipline and responsibility. Primarily, they want to change the way black men are perceived as being unreliable and unmotivated. They want to teach young men to be responsible for their success and their families.

“At one time we had seven or eight black men at this school who came to work every day,” Brown said. “All of them had master’s degrees. Even though we were from similar places, we all had different personalities, different routes to get where we are. We had a variety of role models for the kids to see.”

For Brown, he wants to be what he didn’t have — a reliable and present father.

“I knew what it was like waiting for my father to pick me up and being disappointed when he didn’t show up,” Brown said. “I think quality time equals quantity time. How can you have quality if it’s only once a month?”

Brown, the father of two young girls, doesn’t feel a burden taking care of peo-

ple, even though at 19 he had to make all the funeral arrangements for his brother.

“I relish having the responsibility of being the one who’s depended on.”

ALERT!

Check the DFT Website Daily

We need members to stay abreast of union news. Our contract is up on July 1 and the district has little stability. We need our members to be updated, unified and vocal. The website is updated daily so visit DFT231.com and stay connected.

DUNCAN'S COMMENT OFF BASE

U.S. Secretary of Education calls DPS a "National Disgrace"

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan visited Detroit on May 13, nearly three months after saying that he was "losing sleep" over the quality of education in Detroit Public Schools.

The DFT responded with a

President's Report



Keith Johnson

poignant letter to Mr. Duncan asking him to meet with the leadership and membership to get a real understanding of the challenges we face as we provide a quality education to the students in our charge. Of course, Mr. Duncan did not respond nor accommodate our request. Nonetheless he did make an appearance in Detroit and I did have the opportunity to spend some time meeting with him and other local leaders.

An old adage suggests that a little information can be a dangerous thing; such is the case with Mr. Duncan. What little he knows about Detroit has prompted him to call our school district a "national disgrace," a moniker that is neither accurate nor deserved.

While Mr. Duncan was here, he paid a visit to Cody High School and had a most enlightening roundtable discussion with several Cody seniors, who by the way were extremely impressive. But he did not visit a classroom or engage in any dialogue with a Cody teacher.

He talks about Detroit accounting for more than half of the nation's dropouts, which is mathematically impossible even if all 95,000 plus DPS students were to all drop out of school at the same time. When Mr. Duncan wants to make a point about Detroit, like so many others, he embellishes and exaggerates the negatives while ignoring the total truth.

Detroit educators deserve better than what we are receiving from the secretary. While none of us are happy with the performance of our students in terms of graduation rates, test scores, etc., we also know that there are thousands of success stories in DPS.

While the cameras and reporters surrounded Mr. Duncan on his visit that morning, neither Mr. Duncan nor the media bothered to come to the Riverview Ballroom at Cobo Center that evening to witness 384 of our graduating seniors. These seniors have maintained a 3.5 or better GPA, scored at least 21 on the ACT, and exhibited exemplary academic and behavioral performance. They received Academic Excellence Awards and honored some of their teachers as Outstanding Educators



DFT President Keith Johnson held two meetings in May to address issues with school closings.

who made a difference in their lives.

These students are receiving millions of dollars in scholarships and have been accepted to universities such as Harvard, Columbia, Michigan, Purdue, Notre Dame, MIT and other prestigious universities across the state and country. While these students are not the rule, they are far more than the exception.

There is no denying the fact that we have a lot of work to do to improve education in Detroit Public Schools. We must review and embrace innovative approaches to delivering instruction and addressing the challenges facing our students. However Mr. Duncan needs to review the backyard he left to go to Washington. Chicago schools are still experiencing their

own challenges and collectively they are faring no better than Detroit.

Chicago has a graduation rate of just about 51 percent, and that is after seven years of leadership under Mr. Duncan. While that figure represents a 7 percent increase, that is only 1 percent a year – a figure we can easily match and surpass.

We are not, never have been and never will be a national disgrace as a city or as a school district. But unlike Mr. Duncan and others of his ilk, we will never attempt to pad our own image by making disparaging remarks about others, without first getting an understanding of what their needs are and how we can help them.

We are DPS and we are better than that.

At the Detroit News, It's No Show Nolan

It was a slow news day when we visited the Detroit News Editorial Board on a Wednesday in April. No planes falling out of skies. No assassinations. The meeting was scheduled a month in advance.

The Detroit Federation of Teachers leadership was looking forward to finally having a dialogue with the person who can't seem to find a good thing to write about in Detroit's 200 schools, about its 95,000 students, and least of all, its 5,500 teachers.

A meeting scheduled a month in advance. Still editor Nolan Finley, with his myopic, apparently unchangeable world view, couldn't manage to attend the meeting. Maybe news editors, unlike teachers, have three-hour, two-martini lunches. We waited 90 minutes and Nolan Finley was a no show.

Simply put, Nolan Finley can dish it out but he can't take it.

We told the reporters who covered for him how disappointed we were that Mr. Finley, who only writes negatively about us, didn't show up.

"Oh I'm sure he's disappointed too," a News reporter said. Why is it OK to finesse us? Why is it OK to diss the teachers who are in the trenches and the mainstay of education in Detroit? And then not even face them when you have a standing appointment?

And what about the News' in-the-box thinking on everything? Take merit pay. Do they have ANY other reform ideas besides merit pay or is that the only one? It's hard to imagine that teachers will give more because there's a monetary incentive. Do they really think teachers are holding back their talent and enthusiasm for the day they get better pay?

If it's such a great idea, why doesn't the News propose merit pay across Michigan? Why is it not a ral-

lying cry in their editorials for teachers in Bloomfield and Livonia, Grosse Pointe and Warren?

Speaking of its support of merit pay, its opposition to seniority, and its indignation over budget deficits, perhaps the Detroit News should put its money where its mouth is. To become solvent as a business and a more current news source, why doesn't the News get rid of those curmudgeons who oversee the editorial page? Apparently, they haven't been in the schools (or the real world) in years while they sit within blocks of Detroit schools?

How about hiring some new, diverse columnists who might actually reflect the makeup of the metropolitan area? Let's start by getting rid of seniority at the News. It might be bad for Nolan Finley, but great for the rest of us.

It looks like the Detroit News could use a little reform itself.

THE DETROIT teacher

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Editor — Margaret Weertz

UPDATES...

Retirements Announced

The following DFT members have announced their retirements: Loretta Wood, Richard Slade, Marcelle Brown and Chalonie Hoelscher. If you have retired in the last six months and would like it announced, please call the editor at 313-875-3500 ext. 776.

Chapter Chairs to be Elected

Notice to DFT chapters: You must elect your chapter chairs by the end of this school year. Send in the names of the new chairs to Holly Sabotchick, assistant to the president, ASAP so they may take effect in September.

DFT Members Must Update Information

This is a contract year. The union must update its database with current addresses and telephone numbers in order to keep members informed. Even if you have updated your address and other information with the district, you must also notify the union of these changes. Mail this info by June 12 to the DFT, by fax (313-875-3511) phone (313-875-3500) or mail: 2875 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, MI 48202.

Name: _____

File #: _____

New home address: _____

Email address : _____

Telephone: _____

Cell or home (circle) _____



EASTER BASKETS FOR ALL

The students in Earlene Carter's second-grade class at Loving Elementary School received Easter baskets April 9, thanks to her sisters in the Order of the Easter Star Adah Chapter 125 in Detroit. The sisters donated 25 baskets heaping with treats and toys. Carter is pictured above far right with her students.

Birney Students Learn from High School Leaders

By Samele Ambrose

The Birney Elementary School Student Council attended the City Wide Council Meeting April 22 to learn from high school student leaders across the district. Birney students took the DOT bus to Breithaupt to attend the meeting. Birney sent 25 students from kindergarten through sixth grade, and their advisors, Samele Ambrose and Arlice Nobles.

offer for students ages 12-18.

Leaders from the DPS Social Studies Department talked about the lack of medical services and clean water, and the need for improved liv-



Our elementary students were excited to be in the presence of high school students. The students were greeted by Council President Sonae Burks and Vice President Douglas Brooks, who briefed them on the procedures and protocol for the meeting.

The students witnessed a very well organized City Wide Student Council meeting and saw Roberts Rules of Order being implemented. Our students were very impressed and look forward to student council activities when they reach middle school.

NAACP Youth Program Director Latonya Henry talked about the many programs and activities they

ing conditions for the residents of Dakfar, Africa.

The students watched the video "The Promise," written by high school students from Danberry, Connecticut, who are encouraging all high school students to participate in a Dimes for Africa fundraiser. The monies will be given to the organization Doctors without Borders who are giving their time and medical expertise to the residents of Dakfar, Africa.

When we returned to Birney, our public relations representative, first-grader Yaiqab Johnson, made a school wide public address report of this wonderful trip.



Detroit Students Exhibit Art at DIA

The Detroit Institute of Arts showcased more than 200 pieces of artwork produced by Detroit Public School students in a special exhibit during May. The stunning and skillful pieces, including puppets, ceramics, watercolor and oils, beg the question: Who teaches these kids such techniques? Answer: Detroit Public School Art Teachers. Pictured above, Roberto Clemente art teacher Frank Squeo and second-grader Joseph Quinterros.



Detroit Teachers Attend Historic Union-Led Workshop

The Detroit Federation of Teachers took an historic step by leading a union-driven workshop day focused on reform models initiated by local unions across the country. The workshop educated teachers about reform models so they can make informed decisions.

Teachers and union leaders from New York, Chicago, California, Washington, D.C. and Ohio convened in Detroit to introduce ways Detroit might reform its schools amid a siphoning of students and a severely depressed economy.

Sharing the stage with DFT President Keith Johnson was AFT President Randi Weingarten, Emergency Financial Manager Robert Bobb, Acting Superintendent Teresa Gueyser, Chief Academic Officer Barbara Byrd-Bennett, and AFT Michigan President David Hecker, as well as other DPS union chiefs.



Randi Weingarten

Johnson told the 6,000 teachers and administrators assembled that either the DFT finds reform models it can embrace or it will be left out of the discussion on the reform of Detroit education.

"In order for us to improve, we must have reform," Johnson said. Teachers need to be in on the discussion and not "dictated to." Taking a first step, the DFT brought in models of pay differentiation, peer review, school redesign and school based decision making that were initiated by unions across the country.

"How many schools have been turned around by blaming a teacher?" Weingarten asked. "How many kids have seen success by blaming a teacher?" Weingarten said it is common, but not right, that teachers are blamed for all the ills in society.

"There is no one who knows better what works in education than those who walk the walk," she said. Weingarten says the most important path to school reform is through collaboration. She said we need to stop talking about "accountability" and start talking about "shared responsibility." Johnson called the historic day a success.

"I was overwhelmed with, number one, the turnout and, number two, the reception we received," Johnson said about May 26. "That was very moving."



GOMPERS CELEBRATES MAGIC OF MOTOWN



Every student got into the act May 5 when Gompers Elementary School celebrated the Magic and Music of Motown. While Detroit celebrates 50 years of Motown, our schools are exposing students to a historic musical era they didn't know. At Gompers, even the fathers had an act, performing Marvin Gaye's "What's Goin' On." Pictured below with students are music teacher Johna Treadwell and third-grade teacher Dolly Osandusky.



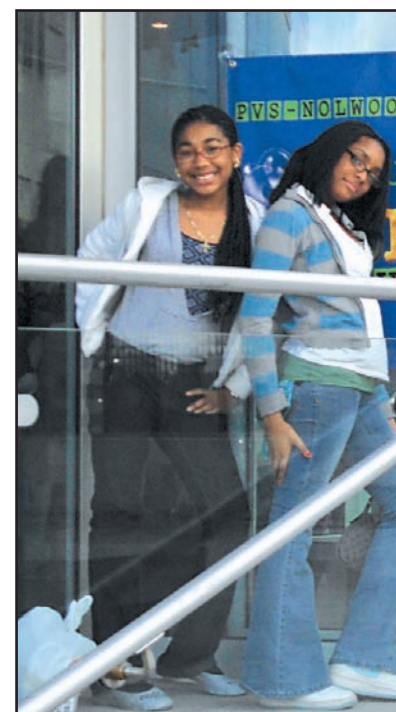
THE DETROIT NEWSM

Creating for the

By Demetria Hoskins, Science Teacher

Detroit Public Schools students competed in the regional YOU be the Chemist Challenge on March 19. The competition was held at Next Energy in Detroit and sponsored by PVS-Norwood Chemicals of Detroit.

Mary McLeod Bethune Academy's team — Charles Fonkeng, Zhane Hibbit, Cierra Huston, Brianna Sanders, and Shanice Schley — consisted of three seventh-graders for the Chemistry Challenge and two eighth-graders for the Chemistry Demonstrations.



The complete list of winners:
3. Yaw Wiafe Akenten (A.L. H

After six rounds of chemistry-based questions and one this competition. Zhane prepared for the state competition

What makes this a teammates, Cierra



knew when I asked the students and their families to do the

The Bethune Academy team was supported by Ms. Letti Colquitt, and parents. In the end, eliminated competitors r



Renaissance High School Yearbook Wins Honors

By Lillie Gladney

The Renaissance High School yearbook staff has been recognized by Taylor Publishing with an Award of Excellence honoring its accomplishment in yearbook design and coverage. In honor of the hard work produced by the Renaissance High School yearbook staff, the cover is featured in the 2009 Yearbook Yearbook. Renaissance's yearbook advisor is Pamela Daniels-Nichols, pictured above.

Work from Renaissance will be seen and used as a standard of excellence by yearbook advisors, editors and designers across the entire United States.

Each year, Taylor recognizes less than 10 percent of yearbook programs with this honor. Featured yearbooks are selected by an independent panel of judges who look at theme concept, page designs, photography, secondary packages and covers.

"Having Renaissance High School featured in Yearbook Yearbook is an award with rewards," education specialist Judi Coolidge said. "Your outstanding work offers inspiration to thousands of other students who aspire to your level of excellence."

Radio DJ Coco Honors Schulze Students

Detroit radio personality Coco quit hanging around people who didn't think she was funny.

"You're funny," some of her friends said, "but you ain't funny funny." Good bye.

Coco wanted to be a comedienne. And those loved ones weren't going to stand in the way of her stand-up routine. The former nurse has been a comedienne for 12 years and can be heard on FM98 WJLB.

Coco visited Schulze Elementary School May 12 for a celebration of 66 students who performed well on the MEAP, thanks to program organizer and computer teacher Carole



Detroit comedienne Coco, left, with teacher Carole Lenton, right, and star students.

Lenton. She told parents that kids see everything.

"When I was growing up my mom was 50," she said. "It was do as I say, not as I do. I think we live in a different time now. If you want your kids reading, let them see you reading."

To the Magnificent Meapers, she told them to enjoy youth because it slips by.

"That's what happened to me, I went to bed at 10 and woke up at 46."

ROIT teacher MAKERS

Chemists Future



1. Antashe Howard (Hally). 2. Zhane Hibbit (Bethune).
Holmes). Alternate: Roy Soto (Phoenix Academy).

final elimination round, Zhane Hibbit placed second in
n in Midland on May 2 at Dow Chemical.
accomplishment remarkable is that Zhane and her two
Huston and Brianna Sanders, were given the study materials
12 days before the competition. I
debated about entering the contest because
of the time constraints but Alycia
Meriweather, DPS Middle School Science
Supervisor, encouraged me to allow
them the opportunity to try.

These students made note cards
and flash cards, played hang-man,
studied at home and on their lunch
breaks, and proved to me, and more
importantly themselves, that they were
up for the challenge.

I am so proud of them because I
his that it was an extremely large task to tackle.

icia Givens (Writing Teacher), Assistant Principal Alicia
rooted for Zhane as well. We are DPS!

Pasteur Hosts Curriculum Carnival

Games galore. That is, science, math, social studies
and language games. Games were the highlight of
the Curriculum Carnival at Pasteur Elementary
School May 15.

Oh, there was a clown, a face painter and popcorn too.
But playing mind games with the family was the real focus.
Hundreds of students and parents poured into Pasteur on a
Friday night in May. They wanted to be part of the fun.

“We’re trying to open up the school to the parents and
students to show them how to help their children with dif-
ferent subjects,” said science teacher Tracy King. “Instead
of watching TV, they can sit down and do games to
enhance learning.”

King and language arts teacher Nina Harris helped plan
the event, with an eye toward showing the community the
strengths of the school, which regularly meets Adequate
Yearly Progress.

“We’re trying to bring back the students, reach out into
our community,” Harris said. Pasteur is a Skillman Good
School, and is funded by a Skillman grant. Part of those
monies went to designing 35 curriculum boards that lined
the gym. The boards follow the Michigan curriculum
guidelines and serve as board games too.

The teachers were happy to re-establish the curriculum
night and it was a clear success.

“This is a good way to bring parents out.”



Teachers Nina Harris and Tracy King
helped coordinate the Curriculum
Carnival.

Fierce Competitors at Special Olympics



Students from A. L. Holmes were among the hun-
dreds competing in Special Olympics. At right are
student Angela Owusu and teacher Robin Bush.



Special education teacher Robin Bush knows a standout
when she sees one. Angela Owusu, 13, is such a student.

“She reads on a ninth-grade level,” says Bush, a teacher at A.L. Holmes K-8 School. Beyond
that, Angela seems to revel in competition.

“I like Angela because she motivates the other kids,” says Bush, a 15-year teacher. At a bowl-
ing excursion, the other kids lamented competing with Angela. “We already know who’s going
to win — Angela,” they told Bush. “I said, ‘You don’t know that.’”

Angela gets on the computer to find an answer. She reads chapter books and has worked all
year on her writing. Now her concern is where she’ll go to high school.

But those concerns were shadowed by a balmy day May 15. Angela and hundreds of other
Detroit students competed in the Special Olympics at Renaissance High School.

“This is a wonderful day because they can compete against each other and themselves,” Bush
said. “They’re real competitors.”

What Success Looks Like at Clark

For Detroit attorney Jerome Watson, the keys to success are specific.

"If you want to be a lawyer, you have to read two hours a night," Watson, an attorney with Miller Canfield, told students at Clark Elementary School on the east side.

Books, magazines, newspapers —

it doesn't matter, Watson said. But read you must. It's not enough to say, "Reach for your dreams, work hard." It's all in the specifics. So teachers at Clark brought in dozens of experts over two days to talk specifics.

Clark students were exposed to real-life physicians, carpenters, pastors, firefighters and attorneys at a school-wide Career Day. A new

teacher committee to bring fresh programs to the school convened this year when a group of former colleagues found themselves at Clark. Reunited, they formed a program committee and put on a Harlem Renaissance play during Black History Month and other events.

"They didn't have a lot of programs going,"



Carpenter David King uses a level to show students about carpentry.



Teachers Shellina Dearing, Dennis King, Gwendolyn Peoples and Detroit Fire Lt. Gerod Funderburg.

said Shellina Dearing, kindergarten teacher and one of the Career Day organizers. "And we're used to working." The teachers had the school and students polished for the event.

Watson went through the class, asking students what jobs they'd like to

do. He carefully listened, then told them the areas they need to be strong.

"You have to come to school every single day to learn math," he said. "If you shoot a thousand free throws, eventually you'll get better. That's the same way with math."

Bennett Elementary Celebrates Cinco de Mayo



Cinco de Mayo Parade at Bennett – Bennett Elementary School in southwest Detroit celebrated the regional Mexican holiday Cinco de Mayo with a parade around the school May 5. Students, staff and parents dressed for the occasion to celebrate the Mexican defeat of French forces at the Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862.

Dossin Elementary Holds Tech Out Day

If you're a little rusty with PowerPoint or Excel or you want to learn Garage Band, Dossin Elementary School is the place to learn it.

Dossin, a 21st Century School of Technology, opened its doors to parents, grandparents and neighbors to come in and build their computer skill set. But the community members didn't learn from the tech-savvy teachers on the day-long seminar on technology.



Technology teachers Sylvia Tillman and Angelita Davis

No, elementary students taught all of the 32 sessions, ranging from Microsoft Publishing to iMovie to Blackboard.

"I feel so much pride that they can do it," said media teacher Sylvia Tillman, after watching a third-grader

present PowerPoint.

When Barack Obama urged Americans to help their communities, Tillman and her colleagues asked what they could do. Since Dossin is one of the schools that presents at MACUL (Michigan Association for Computer Users and Learning), the teachers knew what they could give.

"Our whole staff wanted to help the community learn technology," said Tillman, a 15-year teacher. The staff is on one page with technology.

"We have no weak links," Tillman said. "Even our gym teacher is a techie." When a new member comes on staff, she doesn't have to be a techie, but she does have to be willing to learn. Then the staff trains the teacher.

Though the school received a \$50,000 Skillman grant spanning three years, the school doesn't have state-of-the-art equipment. However, they have state-of-the-art teachers and students.

"If you go to colleges, all the kids are on Blackboard," said teacher Katie Devaney. "All the kids do PowerPoint.

"We're not trying just to keep up with kids in the suburbs, we're competing with China."

Walking Toward a Cure for Autism at Marcus Garvey

By Evelyn Holmes

The ASD preschool students at Marcus Garvey Academy in the classrooms of Evelyn Holmes and Susan Dropiewski are meeting their goals and objectives (speech and language development, oral motor skills, imitative play, etc.) as well as bringing awareness of autism outside of the classroom. ASD teacher Evelyn Holmes planned an art project for students and parents for the month of April to celebrate Autism Awareness Month. "We owe it to our students to help bring awareness of this rapidly growing pervasive development disorder to the general population," Holmes said.

Local artist Terry Johnson, who was a major participant in painting the BEAUTIFUL postal scene mural in the Main Post Office on Fort Street in Detroit, did not hesitate to participate in the Autism Awareness Month project.

Johnson painted the gym shoes of students and staff members from both classes with the Autism Ribbon. They will wear their shoes on school outings. As you can see, Terry Johnson is a gifted artist and did a fantastic job! Stop by the Main Post Office and view the life-like postal scene mural in the lobby. The details of the mural are incredible. You may contact Mr. Johnson at terry@ruinyourignorance.com. Thanks Terry!



Detroit Teachers Rally in the Rain — Torrential rains didn't hold back Detroit teachers from rallying to have our voices heard April 30 in front of the Fisher building. Teachers want the Detroit Public Schools administration to know that we didn't cause the current budget deficit. Detroit teacher pay is in the bottom 10 of 83 districts in the metropolitan area, despite some of the most trying work conditions in the country. DFT President Keith Johnson said the union gave concessions in 2006 so the district could get its finances in order. Obviously, that didn't happen. "We have nothing left to give," Johnson said.

Barsamian Prep Center Builds Better Attitudes

Christina Dunn thought she'd meet tough kids when she entered Barsamian Preparatory Center. But the alternative high school in the New Center area surprised her.

"I'm about to have all these crazy kids who did bad things to people," Christina said. In reality, the former office building is well lit and furnished and has about 100 students. "It's easier to learn more here."

The students have been kicked out of comprehensive high schools for behavior violations like assaulting staff, gang fights, possessing firearms, criminal sexual conduct, or selling illegal substances. At Barsamian they get a second chance. They have five weeks of violence prevention education and learn how to better their attitudes.

Those serious violations, however, don't mean the students aren't bright with top grades.

Demarius Chrite, for example, carries a 3.8 gpa, got a 26 on the ACT, and writes the school newspaper almost single-handedly.

Antoine Heath has a 4.0 gpa and is



thriving at Barsamian.

"There's less drama here," Antoine says. "It's not enough people here so it's easy to get along with people."

French teacher Joann Olivache says the students stay for a year, then petition the student code office to get back into a comprehensive high school.

"But they don't want to leave," Olivache says. "They love it here. It's a small environment. Everybody knows everybody. One door you go in and one you go out."

Barsamian's success might underscore the need for smaller high schools in Detroit. The top students at Barsamian seem to think so.

"The other schools are too big," Christina says. "There are too many kids, especially kids who don't want to learn and are messing it up."

— DETROIT TEACHERS SPEAK UP —

WHY DO I STAY HERE? —

It's all about DeJuan. When art teacher Peggy Collrin thinks she can't go to work, she thinks about DeJuan. "There are times I'm very discouraged," says Collrin, who teaches at the Detroit Day School for the Deaf.

"You know how difficult it is to teach in Detroit. You have to go through layers and layers of administrative stuff to do simple things for kids. Sometimes I just don't want to get up. But I think if DeJuan can show up, what do I have to complain about?"

DeJuan is deaf and mostly blind. On top of that he has health issues. But Collrin, a Detroit teacher for 34 years, says he is her biggest teacher in life.

"He uses every moment he has to enjoy life. He looks forward to having a job one day." Collrin has known DeJuan since he was a healthy pre-



Detroit teacher Peggy Collrin and student DeJuan Carter

schooler, before a serious disease kicked in. A couple of years ago, he was not doing well.

"I had to come back to work to know he was still here," Collrin says. Today DeJuan's health is stable.

Like so many Detroit teachers, Collrin pours herself into her job. She is endlessly writing grants to build new programs at the school. She submits student artwork to the Detroit Institute of Arts, where eight of her students work was at a level high enough to be exhibited in the juried Student Exhibition.

Collrin is a mother of three adults and two grandchildren. After 34 years, she will need to take care of her own health and family. But leaving DeJuan and the Detroit Day School is an emotional and difficult decision she is putting off for one more day.

YOU TEACHERS!



By Thomas E. Van Hulle
Osborn High School

Have you ever heard that? Or have you ever "felt" that sentiment?

Well it's true; we teachers stand for something that often conflicts with

administration. Okay, this is not going to be just another anti-administration article, but I did hear that statement this year — YOU TEACHERS! It was offered with such disgust. It was so pejorative and pious. It was uttered by an administrator.

But not so fast...

Now, rumor has it that Mr. Bobb wants to eliminate some administrative positions. Oops! I wonder if union protection is still such a bad idea for these administrators. I recall this happened about seven years ago when many curriculum leaders were sent to the classroom. You have never seen such an unhappy group. Of the three assigned to my school that year, one was a good teacher, but the other two were just horrible to the students and other teach-

ers. One was so disgruntled, the principal found a promotion for her just to get her out of the building. Call me negative, but too often aspiring administrators are poor teachers. It seems as if they couldn't wait to get out of the classroom. But watch their changing attitude as new DFT members.

If administrators go back to the classroom, they won't mind seniority, if they have it. They won't mind collective bargaining. They'll take the pay and benefits. They'll even complain about the district's inability to recruit and maintain substitutes.

They won't like losing their preparation period to cover another class and they also won't blame themselves for using sick days. They will like their duty-free schedule. They will

like their uninterrupted lunch. And what about the P.A. system they were once so eager to use? I'm sure they will now consider it an interruption of instruction.

I bet many will think their lesson plans are for them and need not be "approved" by someone else. I bet discipline problems will be more of an issue — even the "out of seat" or "tapping on desk" referrals.

We teachers welcome all into our union. But please don't forget us, the real educators, when a new superintendent or initiative comes around and you find yourself finally out of the classroom. After all, when THAT whim changes, we'll still be here for you!

Stand fast DFT, education needs you most!

We Don't Need More Schools, Just Fix the Ones We Have

By Virginia Whitehead
Finney High School teacher

As a parent of four children who have all graduated from DPS, and a DPS employee, I'd like to respond to Mr. Alvin Sims statement in last month's Detroit Teacher concerning the need for the creation of four alternative high schools.

Even though I agree with some of the statements he made concerning the students and the teacher's working environment i.e., recycling AT (administrative transfer) students from building to building, and teachers having to lock their classroom doors, I disagree with his solution. In my opinion, we

need to "fix" the high schools we have.

I presently work in a high school where one third of the ceiling panels in the room are missing and the two-thirds that are left are water stained. In the rear of my room is a stack of old out-dated Spanish books, which no one uses since the Spanish teacher retired years ago (these high school students receive no foreign language before graduating).



Virginia Whitehead

The students comment frequently about the room and their ceiling and how no one cares about them. It's no wonder they are angry and disruptive.

While the creation of four alternative schools may "sound" good, I don't know if opening more schools while the district is threatening to CLOSE 50, makes good fiscal sense. Why not take the money you'll need to open more and use it to create a "sensible learning environment" in the schools you already have? Why not wire the rooms for computers, and fix the intercom system? Why not bring our schools up to the standard of those in the suburbs?

We have a ZERO TOLERANCE policy on violence and I feel the

administration and the teachers go above and beyond to do everything they possibly can to help students learn in spite of the condition of the "physical plant." But I also feel that if our schools were updated, our students could compete with the best of them.

Sure that's not going to solve all the disruptive behaviors that go on in schools because a lot of those come from the home and there's nothing we can do about that, but if you're working in an environment that could potentially be unsafe, the teacher feels bad and if the teacher feels bad, the students are going to feel bad as well.

Open more, I think not. Fix the ones you already have!



Charter Oversight Questioned at Lobby Day 2009

DFT officials and more than 50 DFT members spent a day in Lansing May 13 lobbying state legislators on issues important to Detroit. Turns out, we had a little help from our friends.

Teachers from across the state dealing with charter schools in their backyards attended the event and vehemently questioned lawmakers on the unequal treatment of charters.

Why aren't charters on the lists of failing schools, when so many of them are clearly not the panacea they promised?

Why are charter school students able to return to a public school midyear, without the money following?

One educator, also a parent of an autistic child, said she interviewed dozens of charter schools and none would take her child.

During a panel discussion, the educators turned up the heat on four lawmakers — State Senators Ron Jelinek, R-Three Oaks, Wayne Kuipers, R-Holland, Mickey Switalski, D-Roseville, and Gretchen Whitmer, D-East Lansing.

Mike Pumford, education lobbyist and former Lansing lawmaker, told the 400 teachers present that more of them ought to run for state government “and take back this city.” Teachers need to return the discussion to quality education.

“You show me a school that is challenged and I’ll show you a challenged community,” Pumford said.

Multiply the room by a hundred, Pumford said, and a single charter school operator gives more money to state lawmakers than all those people combined. Is it any wonder, Pumford said, that charters have an ear in Lansing?

Notice Regarding Union Security Agreements and Agency Fee Objections

As a general matter, employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement containing a union security clause (such as Article 4, sections A-C of the DFT-Detroit Board of Education collective bargaining agreement) are required, as a condition of employment, to pay an agency fee equal to normal union dues. While the wording of these clauses is not perfectly uniform, none require more than the payment of this agency fee to retain employment.

Under the DFT’s current policy on agency fees, employees who are not members of the union but who pay agency fees pursuant to a Union security clause may request a reduction in that fee based on their objection to certain kinds of Union expenditures. Such persons are termed “objectors.” Employees who do not elect Union membership or wish to terminate same shall notify the Union President in writing. Non-members are not eligible to attend Union meetings, run for Union office, serve as building representatives, vote on ratification of the collective bargaining agreement or participate in special benefits for members.

The DFT agency fee year runs from October 1 to September 30 of each year.

Briefly stated, the DFT’s agency fee procedure works as follows:

1. The agency fee payable by objectors will be based on the DFT’s expenditures for those activities or projects normally or reasonably undertaken by the Union to represent the employees in the bargaining unit with respect to their terms and conditions of employment.

Among these “chargeable” expenditures are those for negotiations with the employer and employing departments, enforcing collective bargaining agreements, informal meetings with representatives of the employer or employing departments, discussion of work-related issues with employees, handling employees’ work-related problems through the grievance procedure, administrative agencies or informal meetings and union administration. In the past, approximately 85 percent of the DFT’s expenditures have gone for such activities. Reflected in this percentage is the chargeable portion of the affiliation fees (per capita) paid to AFT Michigan and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

Among the expenditures treated as “non-chargeable,” which objectors will not be required to support, are those for community service, legislative activity unrelated to wages, hours of working conditions of represented employees, certain public relations activities, support of political candidates, cost of affiliation with organizations (and unions) other than the AFT and AFT Michigan and members-only benefits. In the past, approximately 15 percent of the DFT’s expenditures have gone for such “non-chargeable” activities. The percentage of the AFT’s expenditures on “non-chargeable” activities has been generally between 20-25 percent and 6 percent of the AFT Michigan’s expenditures.

2. Those fee payers who file timely objections will be given a full written explanation (“report”) of the basis for the reduced fee charged to them. The report will include a more detailed list of the categories of expenditures deemed to be “chargeable” and those deemed to be “non-chargeable,” and the independent certified public accountants’ report showing the Union’s expenditures on which the fee is based. Objectors will have the option of challenging the union’s calculation of the reduced fee before an arbitrator, pursuant to the AAA Rules of Impartial Determination of Union Fees. Details on the method of making such a challenge and the rights accorded to those who do so are found in the DFT’s current policy on agency fee objections, a copy of which will be provided to objectors along with the report.
3. Written objections must be received by DFT by September 30 of each year. Agency fee payers who are new to the bargaining unit may object within 30 days of receiving this notice, either in the new employee packet or in the Detroit Teacher (where necessary, retroactive to the commencement of their union security obligation and for the duration of the current agency fee year) and employees who resign union membership may object within 30 days of their resignation. Employees filing late objections for either of these reasons should so indicate in their letter of objection.
4. The letter of objection should include the employee’s name, address, and school at which employed. Objections must be sent to: Agency Fee Objection c/o DFT, 2875 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, MI 48202.

Please visit the
New DFT Web site
www.DFT231.com

MR. FINLEY, Don't Pretend to Care about Detroit Children

The following is a written exchange between DFT President Keith Johnson and Detroit News Editorial Page Editor Nolan Finley.

Dear Mr. Finley:

I read your May 6 editorial comment regarding my decision as president of the Detroit Federation of Teachers to unionize charter schools in Detroit.

As usual you distort the truth on our motives and perspective on charter schools. The reality is that charter schools in Michigan are not regulated by statute nor collective bargaining. Our goal is not necessarily to cause charters to fold, but to hold them equally accountable relative to establishing a clear and concise curriculum, measureable objectives, certified teachers and administrators, and accessible to all students including those with special needs.

You attack the right of due process, just cause, paying into a retirement system, and competitive salaries and benefits as though they are the true impediments to quality instruction. You often cite CBA's (collective bargaining agreements) as barriers to educational quality. I challenge you to find one provision in our contract (if you've ever read it) that impedes student achievement or teacher accountability.

Everything I do as president of this union is designed to create the optimum opportunity and environment for teachers to teach and students to learn. If you ever had the nerve to talk with me face to face you would understand what my motivation is.

Perhaps you are a new breed of segregationist; one who wants children in Detroit to be divided into two groups. One group that can be taught in a clean, safe and wholesome environment where parents are compelled to take an active role in their child's education, where books and supplies are readily available and schools are for-profit institutions that will eliminate any behavioral or academic problems and no regulations or accountability systems.

The other could be dirty, gang and violence plagued institutions where teachers and students are subject to violent threats and attacks, having their cars and personal items stolen,

yet being held accountable despite not being adequately equipped with the basic materials necessary for quality instruction.

Me, I want every Detroit child to receive a quality education, and I know that despite the dysfunction that has plagued DPS, our students continue to out-perform students in the same failing charter schools that you seem to champion. While all charters are not failures, you are hard-pressed to identify those that are not.

You know where to find me Mr. Finley, why don't you stop by sometime? You might accidentally learn something!

Nolan Finley: Talk to me when the school district staffed by the teachers you represent isn't the worst in the nation.

Keith Johnson: Why not talk to me now Mr. Finley? What schools have you visited? I can take you to some schools in some of the toughest areas of the city where teachers remain enthusiastic about their commitment to their students, students are excited about their education, and great things are occurring. But you aren't interested in those stories are you? It is too convenient for you to sit back in your office and bash a group of overworked, underpaid dedicated teachers who spend thousands of dollars out of their own pockets to purchase supplies and materials that their employer should provide.

Why do they do it? Because their students need them, that's why!

You're not interested in those teachers who have paid the rent for their students so they wouldn't be homeless, bought food so they wouldn't be hungry, and bought clothes so they wouldn't be cold, dirty, or ragged.

You don't care about those teachers, for example, who will be honored next Wednesday by Detroit students who single them out for making a difference in their lives. These are the students who make the superintendent's achievement lists, graduating seniors who have performed well, tested well, and are going off to college.

You're not interested in the 2008 graduating class from Finney High School, a class of only 162 students who received more than \$2.7 million in scholarships last year, including Adaishia Pickett, who received \$190,000 in scholarships and scored 28 on the ACT, or Victor Jones who received \$202,000 in scholarships and is now on a full ride scholarship at U of M, and just finished his fresh-

man year with a 3.7 GPA. These kids came from one of the toughest neighborhoods and schools in the city, but they achieved because of the dedicated staff at Finney.

You don't want to talk to me because you know I can negate all of your negative rhetoric about DPS. I don't deny that the district is and has been dysfunctional. But those teachers I represent commit their lives and their futures to these students, something that is apparently beyond your level of comprehension and appreciation.

Take up my challenge and take a walk with me to see what is really happening in our schools, not just what you want to print to defame us and attempt to humiliate us. Something that you will never do.

Nolan Finley: You got that right. I don't care about your teachers, your union, your jobs or your benefits. I care about Detroit's schoolchildren, three-quarters of whom are being failed by a system the DFT is very much a part of and you still have the gall to defend. And as long as you stand in the way of children having a shot at a quality education and hope for the future, I don't care much about you.

Keith Johnson: You don't give a damn about Detroit's children otherwise you would not attempt to vilify the very people who give them the

chance to be a success. I don't need you to care about me. I have been where you don't have the guts to go. When was the last time you were in a classroom? Fifty years ago? You ever taught class in an inner city K-12 school? Of course not.

You are pompous and self-righteous and a step above ignorant when it comes to knowing what it takes to educate children.

I have dedicated the last 30 years of my life to educating children. What have you ever done for a Detroit child?

You will never hear me defend a teacher who does not do their job. I want the best and most dedicated teachers working in this system. But I will not stand silent when people like you condemn those who consistently sacrifice of themselves to give our students love, guidance and a chance to learn. As tough as my brother Bill was on DPS in his editorials, he was never as insulting and mean-spirited toward the teachers as you.

Like I said, you don't have the guts to take a walk with me in our schools to see what my teachers are doing and doing without. Your cowardice betrays your passion.

Nolan Finley: As I said, the miserable results posted by the system you're invested in speak for themselves. Your self righteous ranting doesn't change that basic truth.

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.

JUNE

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| 1 | Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m. |
| 4 | General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m. |
| 5 | Building Representatives Dinner at the Doubletree Hotel, 4:30 p.m. |
| 8 | School Social Workers, 3:45 p.m. |
| 12 | Last Day for Teachers |

Have a Wonderful and Safe Summer